

Images of Hell, Images of Heaven: Can Pictures Alleviate Human Suffering?

**Papers prepared for a
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
online workshop
held on May 30, 2023**



Budapest 2023

<https://mta.hu/english/scientific-sections-105963#2>

Images of Hell, Images of Heaven: Can Pictures Alleviate Human Suffering?
Papers prepared for a Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) online workshop
held on May 30, 2023.

Papers written by Petra Aczél (Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest; Vice-Chair, Committee for Communication and Media Theory, HAS), Valéria Csépe (Research Centre for Natural Sciences, Budapest; Full Member of HAS), Szilvia Finta (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), Cynthia Freeland (Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of Houston), Reinhard Hoeps (University of Münster/Westphalia), Franziska Meier (Universität Göttingen, Germany), Kristóf Nyíri (Chair, Committee for Communication and Media Theory, HAS; Full Member of HAS), Anna Peternák (Hungarian University of Fine Arts), Zoltán Szegedy-Maszák (Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design), Barbara Tversky (Professor Emerita of Psychology at Stanford University and Columbia Teachers College), Kristof K. P. Vanhoutte (Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa), Nicholas J. Wade (FRSE, Emeritus Professor, Dundee University). Workshop discussion directed by Petra Aczél.

© Committee for Communication and Media Theory,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences 2023

© the authors

Budapest: June 2023

ISBN 978-615-6448-31-6

Contents

Petra Aczél – Kristóf Nyíri

Preface 3

Barbara Tversky

Horror and Beauty: What Can Images Bring? 5

Valéria Csépe

Pictures of “Hell” in the Brain 11

Nicholas J. Wade

Hidden Images: Concealing to Reveal 19

Petra Aczél

The Rhetoric of Apocalypse 29

Szilvia Finta

The Future of the Everlasting Man:
Places of the Afterlife according to the Hebrew Scriptures and the
New Testament 35

Kristof K. P. Vanhoutte

The Long Rise from Hell to (hopefully) Heaven:
The Voyage of the Children from Limbo 43

Franziska Meier

Can Pictures of Hell Alleviate Human Suffering?
Seen Through the Eyes of Dante and Boccaccio 49

Reinhard Hoeps

Images concerning the Last Glance 53

<i>Kincső Szabó</i> Beautiful Disaster: Visual Framing, Emotions and the Saga of Catastrophe Images	59
<i>Cynthia Freeland</i> Uvalde Texas Murals of School Shooting Victims	63
<i>Kristóf Nyíri</i> Primordial Images	69
<i>Anna Peternák</i> Volcanoes Through the Camera of Katia and Maurice Krafft	77
<i>Zoltán Szegedy-Maszák</i> Will AI-created Pictures Make Us Happy?	85

Petra Aczél – Kristóf Nyíri

Preface

For the papers here printed, delivered at a May 30, 2023 online [workshop](#), the framework was the 196th General Assembly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, held on May 8–9, 2023, with attached scientific programs extending over the entire month. Our invited speakers had worked hard preparing the [abstracts and papers](#) which have then been uploaded to the workshop website. The organizers are deeply grateful to the participants, who represented six countries and some of the world's most distinguished academic institutions, enriching the vivid discussions with numerous disciplinary facets. They, indeed, provided a transdisciplinary view on a transcendental topic.

The depressing topics that triggered this workshop: Volcano outbreaks, wars, climate change, wildfires, floods, epidemics, mass murders, the brutality of so-called justice in bygone ages and today. Images of hell reflecting our hell on earth. How theology deals with the idea of hell, how art pictures it, how our brain reacts to it, how media past and present conveys it. Exploiting the experiences gathered in the course of the decade-long history of the Budapest Visual Learning Conference series, the Committee for Communication and Media Theory of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences organized the May 30, 2023 event, moderated by Prof. Petra Aczél, Vice Chair of the Committee.

Scholarship – not to speak of science – should deal with facts and with the truths derivable from those facts, not express emotions or draw political inferences. Still, with the present topics it was difficult, indeed unavoidable, to refrain from judgments explicitly per-

sonal. To cross the border and close the gap – to quote a famous post-modern formula – should today just as well be regarded as an appeal to slow down on the road to hell, a conservative appeal if you like. Might the message of this booklet be heard, and provide a tiny step towards a better future.

Barbara Tversky

Looking and Exploring

Heaven, Hell; is this a meaningful way to divide images? We spend our lives in space, interacting with other beings and things in scenes. Some support us, some harm. To survive, we approach support and avoid harm. Should we then prefer images of heaven? Still, harm threatens and images are not real. They allow us to enter worlds we may never experience and explore them in safety.

Some years ago, a pair of Soviet dissidents, Komar and Melamid, previously subversively satirical artists of Soviet realism, transplanted to New York, asked people all over the world what they desired in art. The majority culture-wide, race-wide, gender-wide, class-wide wanted a landscape in nature with a blue sky, water, and scattered people. Least desired was an orangish abstraction; their rendition resembled a Klee. Echoing this, the neuroscientists Ed Vessel and Nava Rubin found that people prefer representational art to abstract art. Allison Faye and I asked people what came to their minds as they viewed both kinds of art. People had far more to say, especially concrete things, about representational art.

Interpretations of this preference abound. Berlyne and other analysts of aesthetics pointed to familiarity; we prefer art that is just beyond our level of familiarity, our comfort zone, on a scale of increasing abstraction. Too familiar is too easy to comprehend, so boring; too unfamiliar stymies our understanding, The Goldilocks level, the level that is just challenging enough, rises with experience. Komar and Melamid had a complementary take. They proposed that pastoral landscapes bathed in blue absorbed viewers in moments of con-

templation. We are taken out of this world with its suffering and immersed into another world that is safe to explore.

As for abstraction, danger; people often seek some but not too much. There is much to be learned from confronting danger, and a bit of danger is unlikely to bring great harm. Balancing the benefits of challenge and excitement to the costs, fear, dread, injury, even death. Adding to the benefits, pride and relief. The worst didn't happen, we succeeded.

Stories can bring good news and bad news. Videos of frolicking cats and laughing babies, photos of delectable desserts, bring views and clicks. And smiles and joy. Bad news travels fast, goes viral, brings more eyes and ears and clicks than good news, and for good reason. Stories, news, gossip, art increase what we can experience in life by orders of magnitude. For bad news, stories absorb us in imagined danger, provoke excitement and fear, then relief and pride. Bad news carries lessons. There's more to see and understand when things go wrong than with things go right.

Unlike stories, works of art have no beginnings, middles, or ends. We are free to explore on our own just as we explore the world. Alan Prohm and I watched as people explored artworks varying in abstraction, using a mouse to track where they went and where they stopped. Remarkably, viewers explored along the same paths, pausing at the same places.

Entering is instantaneous, exploring takes time. We can be drawn to enter by any number of things, composition, color, topic, artist, recommendation. Exploring is interactive, we look and think, look and think. We make discoveries, we get confused, we contemplate, we get insights. Discoveries are exhilarating. We continue exploring as long as we find insight (or get exhausted). Exploring is an immersive state of flow that is pleasurable.

Whether by intuition or intent, good representational art has abstract compositions that attract, Cezanne's triangles, natural ones like Mont Sainte-Victoire and arranged ones like his bathers. After entering, the details provide reasons to explore, like the compelling images below of death and destruction. On the left, Ivan Allbright, *That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do*, Art Institute, Chi-

cago (Wiki Images); on the right, Anselm Kiefer, *Die Meistersinger*, SFMOMA (my image).



Countless other images of horror and suffering and pain reward, even compel, exploration, Goya's images of the terrors of war, Christ bleeding on the cross, Kollwitz's heart-wrenching drawings of poverty, De Kooning and Picasso's crazed women.

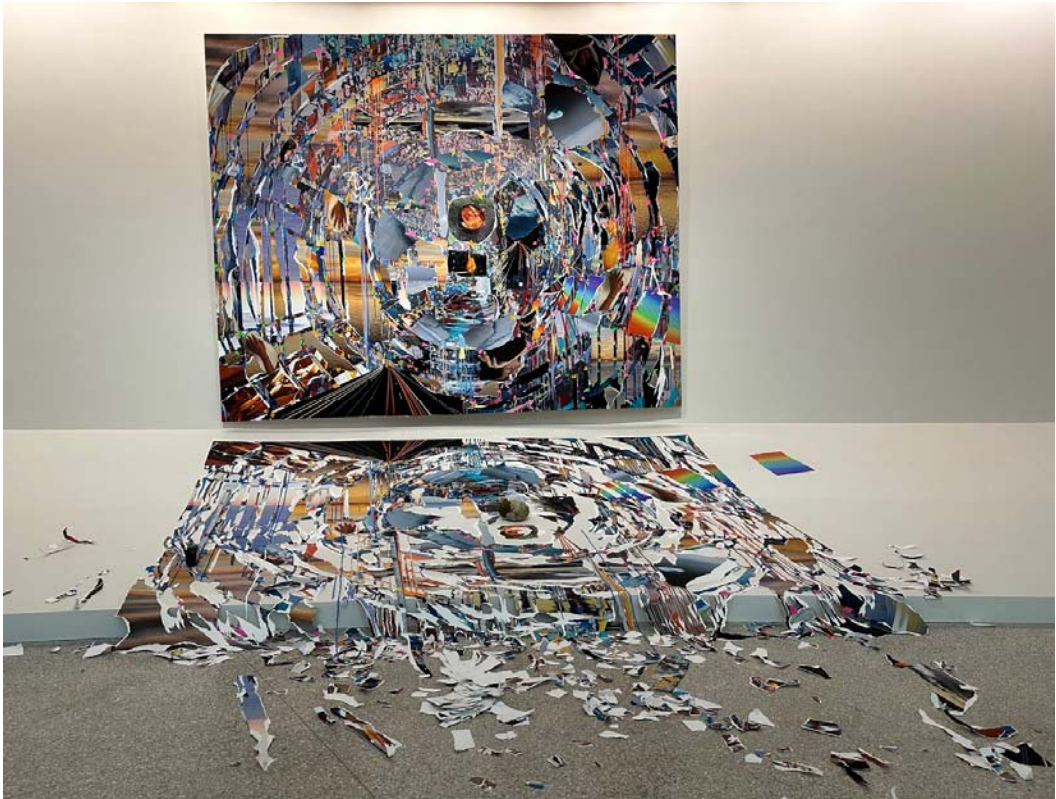
The best abstractions both draw us in and give us much to explore. Rothko's bold but fuzzy rectangles catch our eyes. We enter. As we explore, the receptors in our eyes habituate and dishabituate, forms configure and reconfigure, appear and disappear. We are engulfed in a blurry world. We wander the way we wander a city, there's no destination, just the wandering.

Similarly for recent Richters (my image from the SFMOMA), forms emerge, and reflections, abstraction becomes representational.

Close up (enlarge!) the brush strokes fascinate and confound, how does he do it?



Sarah Sze's frenetic visions of time pull you uncontrollably into a swirling fragmented vortex, a collage of actions and events, speeding on a highway, swooping through a dense city; unreachable in the background fragments of a slow soothing sunset, the entire scene reflected further fragmented on the floor (*Timelapse*, Guggenheim Museum, Spring, 2023, my image).



Exploring images of heaven can absorb us in pleasure and give us peace. Exploring images of hell can excite us, absorb us in empathy and fear and pain, give us relief. And peace. We need both.

Valéria Csépe

Pictures of “Hell” in the Brain

Not everyone likes to be scared. However, while some people spend a significant amount of money for scary pictures, horror movies, crime scene documents for experiencing excitement, many avoid them. So why is it that some people love all kinds of frightening experiences? Researchers may have various interests in studying love or hate for horror scenes, the psychological investigations usually show the main interest in the horror consumers' personality, the trait and state characteristics. What is behind? This is a critical question of physiological investigations, recently of brain studies using imaging techniques to know more about the possible biological constraints.

The Reasons of Watching Horrors

The first ever horror movie directed by Alfred Hitchcock (Figure 1) led first to a substantial outrage then to continuous popularity. Therefore, the question arises who the enthusiastic consumers of these movies are. According to the different statistics 60–70% of the population in many countries watch 2–4 horror movies per year. The most frequent reasons reported are the excitement experienced, as well as the accepted social excuse for watching these movies in groups.



Figure 1: The bathroom scene from Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960).

The more often mentioned reason for watching horror movies is excitement. However, we should also consider that the levels of being scared are different and the accompanying negative emotion is the slightest for unseen threats (see Figure 2), and largest for horror psychological in nature and scenes based on or close to real events.



Figure 2: Unseen threat realized by Alfred Hitchcock in Psycho (1960).

The Psychology behind Excitement Elicited by Horror Scenes

There is a consensus in the related psychological literature that exposure to and anticipation of scary acts stimulate in opposing ways and have an impact on our mental and physiological state.

- We consume horror to experience stimulation.
- Exposure to and anticipation of horror scenes can stimulate mentally and physically in opposing ways:
 - negatively, as fear or anxiety,
 - positively, as excitement or joy.
- We may seek horror to gain novel experiences linked to alternative realities, or to sense of accomplishment.
- Horror entrainment may provide safe experiences to live out curiosity about the human nature's dark side, being fascinated by extranormal capabilities.

An enormous number of the scary scenes has been introduced by the film industry since the *Psycho*'s June 1960 premier. Demons, aliens, scary creatures, like for example the Dementors or Voldemort in the Harry Potter movies have a special nature e.g., their sudden, unexpected occurrence. The accompanying emotion called jump scare seems to be different from the continuously increasing fear. As we will see later, jump scare recruits special networks in the brain. However, we should also mention that several movies have built horror scenes on brain imaging and surgery misused by criminals. Even demons may occur during magnetic brain imaging (MRI) scanning in a horror scene as it could be seen in the movie *The Possession* (see Figure 3). If MRI wasn't scary enough for many people!



Figure 3: Patient Scanned and the “Demon” Discovered.

However, the scenes are very scary because they look very natural. The secret behind is the technique used in production; a 3D model of the demonic creature and the source footage of some MRI sequences e.g., real slices of a human were created. Moreover, some volume rendering software called 3DView supported the production of slices of a real human MRI. While neuroscientists laugh on these scenes, average people get very much scared.

MRI to Look for the Brain Network Processing Score

Naturalistic functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) enabling analysis of different timescales of fear responses were used in a benchmark study performed by a research team from the University of Turku's PET Center. The results were published in the prestigious journal, *Neuroimage* in 2020 (see the title page on Figure 4). They measured the brain activity of volunteers watching some of the past century's most frightening horror movies while inside an MRI scanner and mapped neural activity in response to them.



Dissociable neural systems for unconditioned acute and sustained fear

Matthew Hudson^{a,*}, Kerttu Seppälä^a, Vesa Putkinen^a, Lihua Sun^a, Enrico Glerean^b, Tomi Karjalainen^a, Henry K. Karlsson^a, Jussi Hirvonen^c, Lauri Nummenmaa^{a,d}

^a Turku PET Centre, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

^b Department of Neuroscience and Biomedical Engineering, School of Science, Aalto University, Espoo, Finland

^c Department of Radiology, Turku University Hospital, Turku, Finland

^d Department of Psychology, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Figure 4: Title page of the fMRI study investigating the different involvement of neural networks in processing jump scare and gradually increasing fear.

To begin their experiment, the Finnish researchers established the 100 best and scariest horror movies based on their ratings, and the evaluations given by 216 “filmaholics”. The final ratings are shown on Table 1. Thirty-seven participants were scanned while watching two different horror movies, *The Conjuring 2* and the *Insidious*, both directed by James Wan.

Table 1

Top ten scariest movies in the survey. Title and year of release, alongside familiarity with the film, and scariness and quality ratings by those who had seen it, and also the number of jump-scares (where available). Selected movies indicated in bold.

Title	Year	Have you seen this movie?			Scary	Quality	Jump scares
		Yes	No, but heard of it	Not seen nor heard of it			
The Devil's Backbone	2001	4.2	6.3	89.6	8.5	10.0	4
The Wailing	2016	2.1	8.3	89.6	8.0	9.0	4
The Conjuring	2013	39.6	31.3	29.2	7.5	7.5	12
REC 2	2009	10.4	29.2	60.4	7.3	5.8	–
Insidious	2010	29.2	25.6	45.2	7.1	7.1	24
The Exorcist	1973	53.0	23.2	23.8	7.1	7.0	10
Goodnight Mommy	2015	4.2	10.4	85.4	7.0	8.0	1
A Chinese Ghost Story	1987	1.8	7.1	91.1	7.0	7.8	–
The Conjuring 2	2016	37.5	31.0	31.5	7.0	7.3	22
Under The Shadow	2016	2.1	14.6	83.3	7.0	7.0	9

Table 1: The “scariness” rating of movies to select jump scare.

The graded increase of scare, e.g., the start of slow increase of anxiety recruited brain areas of visual and auditory perception with elevated activation as response to the rising environmental threats. On the contrary, jump scare was associated with activity increase in the regions involved in processing emotion, evaluating threats and decisions. The authors interpreted this finding as preparation for a quick response.

These data suggest that acute and sustained fear are supported by distinct neural pathways.

Conclusions

Sustained fear amplifies the sensory responses to a large extent, and acute fear leads to increased activity in the brainstem, thalamus, amygdala, and cingulate cortices. Moreover, the brain regions activated in a different way by jump scare and increasing fear worked in concerted action suggesting that they are not independent and show an activation shift according to the impending level and proximity of threat.

Furthermore, research suggests that a well-functioning psychological frame may contribute to derive pleasure from being horrified. These frames are different in nature. The safety frame usually relies on the insight that the horrifying entity is physically distant. The protective frame is often based on psychological detach-

ment such as reminding ourselves that those whom we are watching are actors. Moreover, this protective frame may involve our confidence in controlling and managing the dangers we encounter, and we derive pleasure from it if we feel to control our feelings. The absence of any of these psychological frames reduces the preference for horror consumption, which may explain why some people stay away from spooky movies, terrifying pictures, scary novels, crime scene documents.

Nicholas J. Wade

Hidden Images: Concealing to Reveal

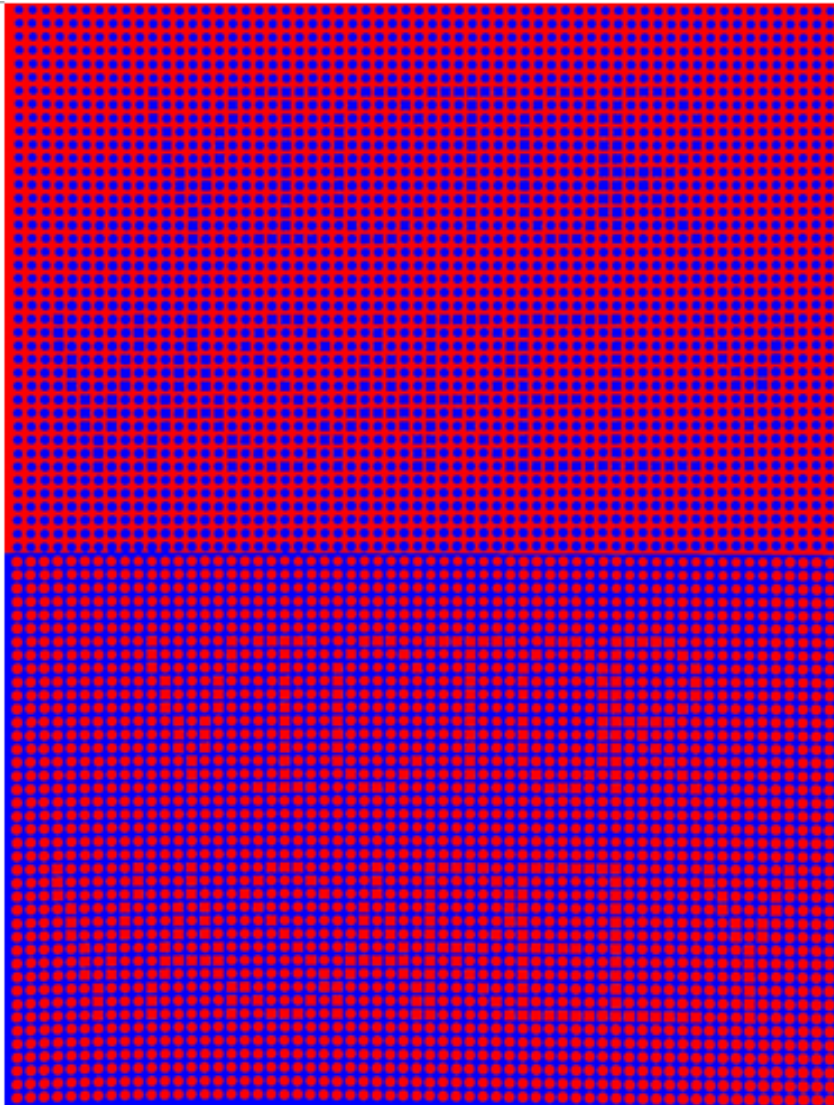


We have a seemingly insatiable appetite for consuming pictorial images and this is likely to grow. We even refer to depicted objects as if they were the objects depicted, as René Magritte indicated. As we move from paper to screen, the pictorial images that were flat and fixed become flat and/or moving. Despite this shift, pictures allude to the objects they represent rather than presenting them. It is for this reason that we need to examine the nature of

pictorial images themselves and to examine some of the other peculiarities of pictures.

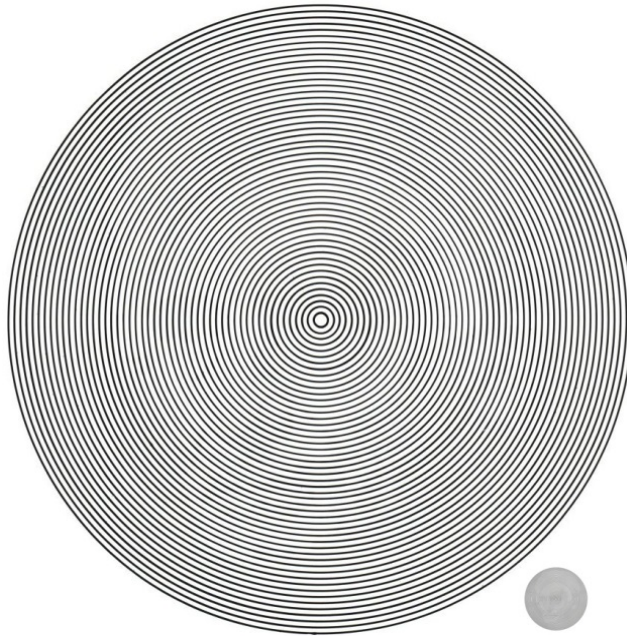


In the natural world, camouflage has evolved as a form of concealment which has served adaptive purposes of survival against predators or evasion of detection by prey. Similarly, images can be concealed graphically in order to evade detection or to render recognition more difficult. Artists and scientists have applied many techniques to this end. It is relatively easy to hide images in pictures, but this is of little value if they remain hidden. The skill is in revealing previously concealed images.



There are various ways in which images can be concealed, or more precisely, made difficult to detect or recognise. Images can be carried in some pattern or design, such that minor variations in the design define features which are not initially detected. The array of circles carries Victor Vasarely's name in squares and also his bespectacled portrait can be seen. The portrait requires some effort on the part of the viewer to discern it. Does that make it more mem-

orable? Does solving a perceptual puzzle reward the solver in some way? Are hidden images more effective in conveying messages than images that are clearly defined?



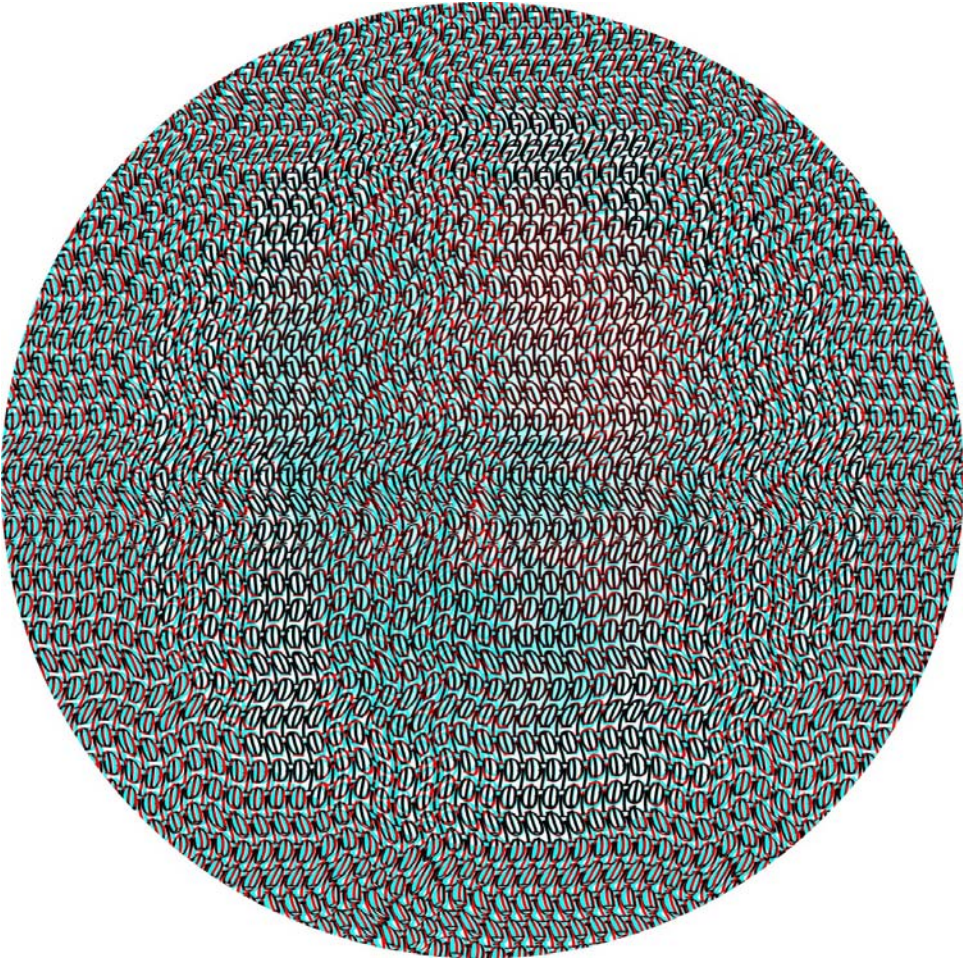
I call these images “perceptual portraits”. They combine a portrait with some motif associated with the individual portrayed. This can be seen with the portrait of Jan Evangelista Purkyně, who examined visual distortions in patterns like concentric circles. The concealed portrait can be revealed by defocussing the image so that the low spatial frequency portrait is not inhibited by the high spatial frequency contours of the circles. A variety of methods can be employed to reveal the previously concealed portrait: the pictorial image can be viewed from a distance or reduced in size; alternatively, the sharpness of the contours can be defocussed by squinting, removing spectacles (if they are worn) or shaking the head. Once revealed, the portrait cannot easily be concealed subsequently.

To the Reader.

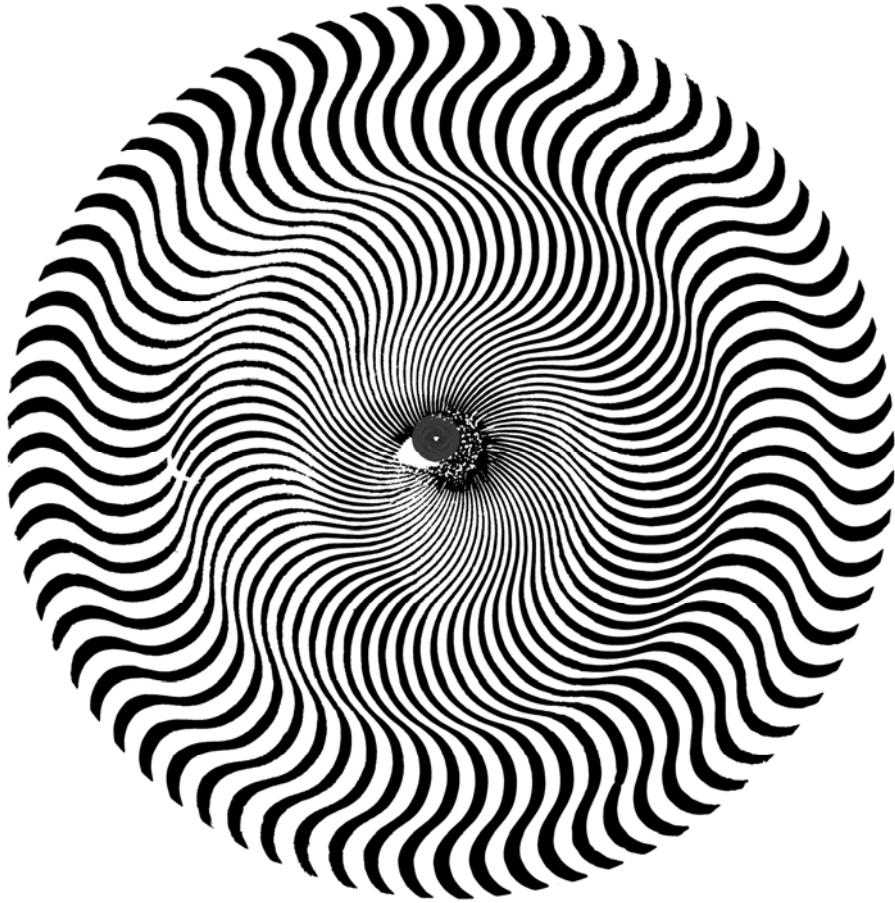
**This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Grauer had a strife
with Nature, to out-doo the life :
O, could he but haue drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would when surpasse
All, that was euer writ in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.**

B. I.

Printed and written words are pictorial images, too, and reading them can assist in concealing an image. In this case it is William Shakespeare's frontispiece portrait in the First Folio of 1623 combined with Ben Jonson's entreaty to the reader (on the facing page) to seek the essence of Shakespeare in his words rather than his image.

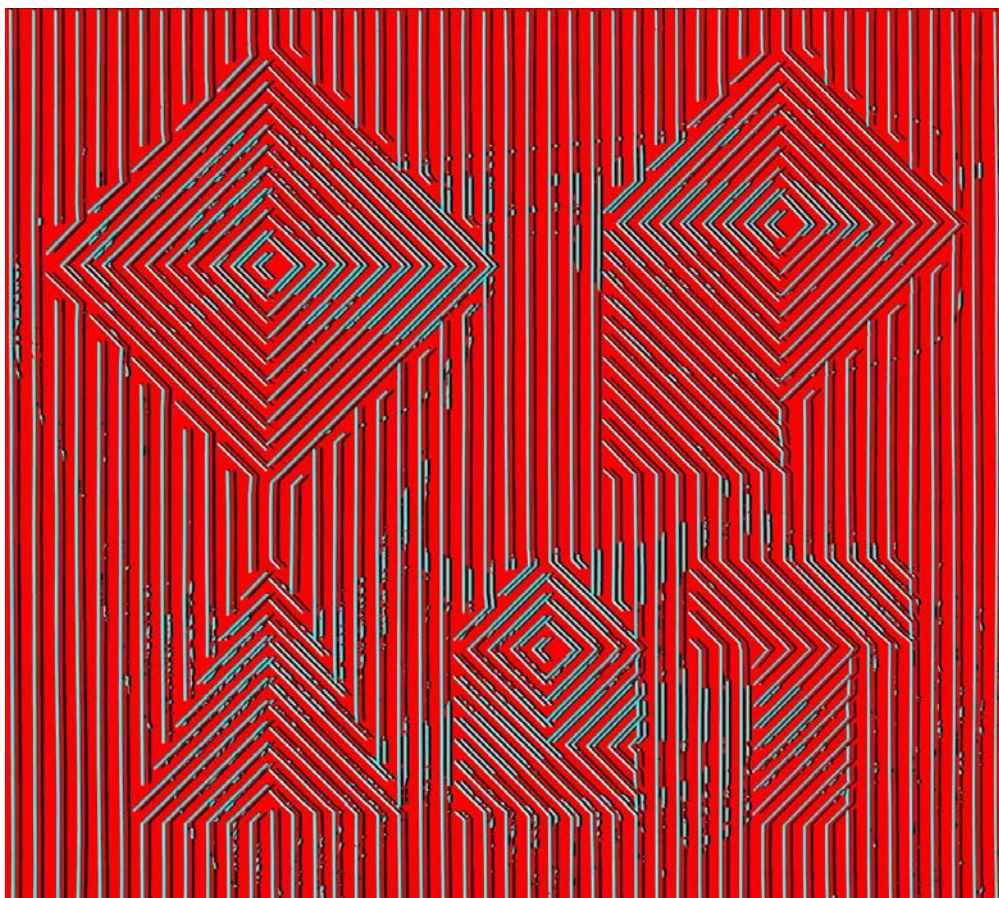


One of the most powerful techniques for concealing images is to utilize the fact that we have two eyes, and similar or different patterns can be presented to each eye using a stereoscope. When they are similar depth can emerge; when they are different binocular rivalry occurs. Béla Julesz devised computer-generated random-dot stereograms for hiding images in depth. In the anaglyph both depth and rivalry are present: the portrait of Julesz is concealed in a digital picture (made from 1s and 0s) but it is revealed in depth when viewed with both eyes through red/cyan glasses. Julesz also showed that coarsely digitized portraits are difficult to identify.



Content can be concealed either partially or completely by presenting clearly visible distractors in the pictorial image. Distractors direct attention away from the more subtle pattern variations that carry the hidden content. This image is a puzzle in several senses. Firstly, the pattern of radiating curves is itself enigmatic because it can be interpreted as an impossible three-dimensional figure – contours that appear as humps on one side seem to be hollows on the other. The distractor is a clearly visible eye in the centre of the pattern. The left eye is so well-defined that a search for its partner is not pursued. There is not only a right eye on the left of the pattern but

also a whole face with nose, lips, chin and flowing hair. The radiating lines surrounding the central eye follow the contours of the nose.



Two puzzles are presented in the final illustration. One concerns reading words within it and the other is a portrait that is carried by the lines. The words are defined by idiosyncratic letter shapes that speak to the enterprise that is embraced by them – Op Art. The face is presented at a spatial scale that initially conceals its recognition.

Having struggled to solve the perceptual puzzle, does this confer the solution with a memorial advantage? Do similarly hidden emotive images have a greater effect than explicit ones? These are questions that remain to be resolved.

All images © Nicholas Wade

Petra Aczél

The Rhetoric of Apocalypse

Apocalypse is an ancient, religious genre of discourse that depicts what is ahead of us. Embedded into the pragmatics of a prophecy it is thus a form of “future discourse” specifically geared towards the end of times, the final judgement, the doomsday of the world. Apocalypse reveals what is hidden from our present knowledge and it transcends future consequences from the merely rational outcomes of actual events. It is built on the fearful unknown which – in a sense – is future itself. As Juvenal put in *Satires* almost 2000 years ago “et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri”, that is, we often feel to “be doomed to darkness about the future”.¹

My proposition is that apocalyptic discourse has a societal function to interpret changes that people have difficulties to see as meaningful. As a way of speaking, it is rhetorical, because rhetoric is the formative force of situations where contingencies occur. According to the theory of rhetorical situation² rhetoric arises where exigences emerge while easily applicable rules or norms are not available or are less effective to be applied. Rhetoric is a discourse of societal and cultural changes and turning points. “There are tranquil ages, which seem to contain that which will last forever, and which

¹ Juvenal, “Satire 6”, in *Satires*, Loeb Classical Library, 2004, p. 555, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/juvenalsatires/2004/pb_LCL091.287.xml?result=1&rskey=EYGSN7.

² Lloyd Bitzer, “Functional Communication: A Situational Perspective”, in Eugene E. White (ed.), *Rhetoric in Transition: Studies in the Nature and Uses of Rhetoric*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980, pp. 21–38.

feel themselves to be final. And there are ages of change which see upheavals that, in extreme instance, appear to go to the roots of humanity itself”, as Jaspers³ described the so-called axial age. Richard Rorty⁴ also identified two kinds of social situations. The first is a stable situation in which people generally agree on goals but may disagree on the use of means. The second is the unstable situation – as a matter of fact, it is a rhetorical one –, where both goals and means are yet undefined, and disagreement may be typical. In periods of stability, people use literal language and apply arguments to solve practical problems. In times of uncertainty and change, however, people start to use words in new ways, creating new vocabularies and language, and metaphor and rhetoric are the primary tools for this. Rhetoric thus breaks the rules, creates new purposes, and, in doing so it invokes new conceptual frameworks and new situations. Therefore, rhetoric as a mode of discourse belongs to unstable human scenarios that most generally entail future outputs and impacts. Apocalypse is thus inherently rhetorical and fundamentally visual, painting a morally and existentially intense and dramatic future.

The present essay aims to cover three descriptive dimensions of apocalyptic rhetoric. Firstly, the distinguishable generic features of it, secondly, its types and finally, the stylistic character it displays. Stating that apocalyptic rhetoric is a long-surviving, persistent genre of discourse, the brief discussions of these three dimensions can provide approaches to the systemic analysis of how people narrate and argue for/against significant changes and the future.

³ Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, London: Routledge, 1953, p. 231.

⁴ Richard Rorty, “Deconstruction and Circumvention”, In R. Rorty, *Philosophical Papers: Essays on Heidegger and Others*, vol. 2, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 85–106.

Features of Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Apocalypse is about future on a cosmic scale. It is a visionary genre of divine forces, grandiose battles, vicious enemies, human sufferings and possible salvations. If rhetoric is generally about persuasion, then apocalyptic rhetoric is about transformation. As O’Leary⁵ argues its main elements are the authority, the time and the evil. The authority is a figure (prophet, preacher, politician, influencer) who names the evil and who constructs the audience’s experience of time, locating events and occurrences in(to) a divine plan. Barry Brummett’s⁶ list of elements reinforces the emergence of a figurehead in apocalyptic rhetoric while assures that there should always be an existential hole that is to be framed, grounding texts to which the figurehead can refer when interpreting changes, and instructions that are capable to guide people out of uncertainty, suffering and fate. Jonathon O’Donnell⁷ points out that apocalyptic rhetoric is a genre that voices dissatisfaction with the present, fear of the future, an imagistic vision and a pivotal moment at which everything should be clearly seen and understood and beyond which nothing will ever be the same again. Apocalyptic rhetoric is as visionary as identifying: it “creates clear boundaries between a community (the subject), which is righteous, pure, and good, and the source of their sufferings, which is wicked, corrupt, evil, and always externally sited. The latter group is abjected – constructed as things out of place that should not be – and their removal becomes crucial for the restoration of order.”⁸

⁵ Stephen D. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁶ Barry Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, New York: Praeger, 1991.

⁷ S. Jonathon O’Donnell, “Apocalyptic Rhetoric”, in *Gender: God*, ed. Sian M. Hawthorne (Macmillan Reference USA), 2017, pp. 297–311.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

Types of Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Apocalyptic rhetoric has at least three main subtypes, classified according to the 1) aspect it views changes from, the 2) fields and topics of change it discusses and 3) the societal scope it refers to. The first criterion distinguishes between religious and secular apocalyptic rhetoric. While the former includes the godly, the divine, and interprets change and fate by transcending the physical into the moral, the actual into the eternal, the latter envisions or translates changes without divine interventions, using science, expert knowledge or foresighting reports as its “grounding texts”. Climate rhetoric, technological, demographic or economic predictions can exemplify this approach.

In terms of topics and functional fields apocalyptic rhetoric can be either political, economical, technological or ecological. Political rhetoric is generally inclined to be apocalyptic, so that the emergent figurehead – the candidate – could serve as the interpreter of the existential hole, the exigence that citizens may have experienced but could not elucidate, the expert of good and bad, and also as an instructor of how to face the future. Economical apocalypses use expert knowledge as grounding texts and new vocabularies to form the narrative(s) of fatal economical decisions and their devastating consequences on a global scale. Similarly, technological and ecological apocalypses are about the doomsday of humankind caused by unleashed technological inventions and/or unchained human cruelty and ignorance towards nature. All these are fundamentally supported by scientific results and methods (see survey or data mining references in political discourses). Interestingly enough, fake science itself tends to be organically apocalyptic as it bases its main propositions on the fundamental confrontation between good (objective) and bad (distorted by power interests) academic intents.

Finally, by means of scope of reference apocalyptic rhetoric can either be societal-cultural, or individual. The latter is an offspring of the mediatized influencer-communication, that is the sensational style adhering to individual life- or consumer experiences. That is

why influencers metaphorically talk about “beast mode fragrances with killer sillage”, “make-up fails” and “diet disasters”. Societal or cultural apocalypses, on the other hand, serve as new mythologies in which man is forced into an eternal struggle against fatal forces and overwhelming power. An example of this in popular culture worldwide is the zombie apocalypse where human societies collapse because swarms of the dead who rise. The zombie apocalypse as a genre can also function as an allegory of actual fears from global epidemics or operational breakdowns.

Stylistic Character of Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Apocalyptic rhetoric is a genre that shapes human experience, framing feelings of uncertainty into states of disorientation or fear so that the awaiting catastrophic end could be better seen and felt. Because this way of speaking typically refers to the future, the one about which we have scarce knowledge, metaphors, pure statistics or nudges⁹ are applied to “paint” the picture of what is ahead. All three may be perceived by audiences without reflecting to their subjectivity (metaphors are chosen by the speaker), ambiguity (statistics: people tend to be rather bad at making sense of big numbers or pure data and their correlations), and intentionality (nudges are means of refocusing human attention to stimulate different decisions and new courses of action). Similarly, all three are aimed at exposing the truth, at revealing the shocking state of affairs. The use of these stylistic tools is generally not exclusive. In many cases, the metaphorical language explains the data, while the nudging function gives metaphors a special role.

⁹ A nudge is a semantic or physical intervention that is capable of pushing people into a desirable decision. It is a term applied by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein in their work titled *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). Nudges in communication provide new foci for human attention and consideration, by means of comparison, juxtaposition or framing.

Apocalyptic rhetoric is a permanent and pervasive genre of our changing times. With its ability to communicatively create future, it can be able to guide our imagination, influence our interpretation of feelings and experiences and thus inspire individual or societal decisions and actions. It is this capacity of apocalyptic rhetoric that should attract scholarly interest and invite academic insights to be discussed. The present essay could only wish to be seen as a brief and humble contribution to these interactions.

Szilvia Finta

The Future of the Everlasting Man **Places of the Afterlife according to the Hebrew Scriptures** **and the New Testament**

Belief in an afterlife is inseparable from ideas about the essence of man. According to the Holy Scriptures, man is a triune being, possessing not only a mortal body, but an eternal spirit and soul,¹ so his fate does not end with physical death. But what determines the eternal destiny of men? What happens after the body dies? The story begins in the Garden of Eden.

The Garden of Eden (*Gan-Eden*) was Adam and Eve's first residence, which was an earthly Paradise: they lived in communion with God, had everything and death was not known yet.² But man

¹ 1Thess 5:23, cf. Gen 2:7. See in detail: Derek Prince, *Foundational Truths for Christian Living*, Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2006, pp. 378–386; Kevin J. Conner, *The Foundations of Christian Doctrine*, Chichester: Sovereign World, 1988, pp. 125–129. “Man is spirit. ... Man is a synthese of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis.” (Sören Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1941, p. 9.)

² Gen 2:4–15, cf. Gen 3:1–24. The word *Eden* means: *delight, pleasure* (*Gesenius's Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000, referred to in the following as “Gesenius”). For more on Adam's Garden of Eden based on other ancient sources, see: Herman L. Strack – Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 4: *Exkurse zu einzelnen Stellen des Neuen Testaments: Abhandlungen zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Archäologie*, München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1979, pp. 1120–1130.

transgressed the commandment of God and sinned. As a result of the Fall, death became a part of human life, and man had to leave the Garden of Eden.³ Later, God did not leave men alone, but gave the opportunity to find a “place of repentance” and regain eternal life. At the same time, the person who does not find his way back to the Eternal during his earthly life is destined to eternal loss and suffering.⁴

According to the Scriptures, a decision for or against God can only be made in earthly life.⁵ After people die, their physical bodies go to the grave, but their spirits and souls go to a pleasant or an unpleasant place where they wait until resurrection of the body.⁶ According to the Scriptures, there will be a final judgment at the end of history, when every man will stand before the Eternal, be judged based on his deeds, and his eternal destiny will be decided.⁷ In the following, I would like to review briefly these intermediate or final dwelling places on the basis of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

The first and most important word is Heaven (*shamayim*), of which at least three is known for sure from the texts: the third Heaven is the highest Heaven, invisible to us at present, the dwelling place of God; the second Heaven is the planetary Heaven, where the heavenly bodies, galaxies, suns, stars are found; and the first Heaven is the atmospheric Heaven, which we can see with the naked eye, and which at the end of history will be rolled up as a scroll and melt with

³ Gen 3:1–24, Rom 5:12, 1Cor 15:20–21, etc.

⁴ Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 383–386. According to Kierkegaard, as somewhere every human is aware inside that he is an infinite being and that death as an ultimate possibility does not exist for him, he lives his life in despair whether he knows it or not. Kierkegaard, pp. 14–19.

⁵ Cf. Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 383–386. The Doctrine of Purgatory is controversial, it cannot be clearly derived neither from the Hebrew Scriptures, nor from the New Testament, so I will not deal with it in this paper.

⁶ About resurrection, see: 1Cor 15:23–26, 1Thess 4:13–18, John 5:28–29, etc. For more details, see Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 430–444., Conner, *op. cit.*, pp. 297–298.

⁷ E.g.: Rev 20:11–15. See more: Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 447–490., Conner, *op. cit.*, pp. 298–301.

fierce heat, and in its place will be a new Heaven, a new Earth, and a new Jerusalem.⁸ Another characteristic word is Garden of Eden (*Gan-Eden*), of which Adam's Garden of Eden is the prototype, which is an invisible dwelling place of souls, and in the future it will be the eternal abode of the righteous.⁹ The third word is Paradise (*Pardes*), which also refers to a magnificent garden, which in the New Testament is connection with the third Heaven, and in other ancient writings with the Garden of Eden.¹⁰ In the New Testament, the term "Abraham's bosom" (Hebrew: *beheyko shel Avraham*, Greek: *eis ton kolpon Abraam*) also appears in connection with the dwelling place of the righteous after death, and is also found in other Jewish writings.¹¹ These present and future abodes of the righteous

⁸ The word *shamayim* means: *heaven*, from where rain comes down, what is the abode of God and the angels etc. (Gesenius). About the third Heaven, see: 2Cor 12:1–4, 2Chron 6:18 etc., about the first Heaven, see: Gen 1:8, Rev 6:12–17, etc., about the new Heaven, new Earth and new Jerusalem, see: Rev 21:1–22:5. Cf. Conner, *op. cit.*, pp. 301–303. In some rabbinic and apocryphal writings we read of seven or ten Heavens (Kaufmann Kohler, "Heaven", in *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1901–1906, <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7440-heaven>).

⁹ Isa 51:3, Ez 28:13–14, cf. Rev 2:7, 22:2, etc. About the souls' Garden of Eden, see: Strack – Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 1130–1144. About the final Garden of Eden, see *ibid.*, Strack – Billerbeck, pp. 1144–1165.

¹⁰ The Hebrew *Pardes* (Greek: *paradeisos*) means *a garden, a plantation* (Cant 4:13, Neh 2:8, Ecc 2:5). The word comes from Persian, and it referred originally to a beautiful garden around the palace of the Persian kings, which included animals as well (Gesenius). Paradise is a currently existing site (2Cor 12:4, Lk 23:43, Rev 2:7, cf. *Tosefta*, Chagiga 2:2 cf. *Jerusalem Talmud*, Chagiga 2:1 and *Babylonian Talmud*, Chagiga 14b).

¹¹ Lk 16:22. The Greek word for bosom (*kolpos*) means: *the front of the body between the arms and the bosom of a garment* also (Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, electronic edition. International Bible Translators [IBT] Inc., 1998–2000. Greek formatting modifications and improvements made by Michael S. Bushell, 2001). Abraham is viewed as the warden of Paradise. About Abraham's bosom, see: Kohler Kaufmann, "Abraham's Bosom", in *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1901–1906, <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/362-abraham-s-bosom>.

are situated upwards, resembling beautiful gardens, filled with joy and the presence of God is there.¹²

In the underworld, like Heaven, there are several levels, and the most common word for it is *Sheol* in Hebrew, and *Hades* in Greek.¹³ The Hebrew *Abaddon* (*Avaddon*) is sometimes a synonym of *Sheol*, and it means *destruction*.¹⁴ In the New Testament we find the word *Tartarus*, (*Tartaros*), which is lower than *Sheol*, and is a prison or jail where the angels who sinned against God are imprisoned.¹⁵ The deepest level of Hell is the *Abyss* (*Abyssos*), which is in other words *The Deep* or *The Bottomless Pit*, where the demon spirits are.¹⁶

¹² Conner, *op. cit.*, p. 303. On the cultural-historical aspects of the idea of Heaven in later periods, see: Colleen McDannell – Bernhard Lang, *Heaven – A History*, Yale University Press, 2001; Bernhard Lang, *Himmel und Hölle: Jenseitsglaube von der Antike bis heute*, München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2003.

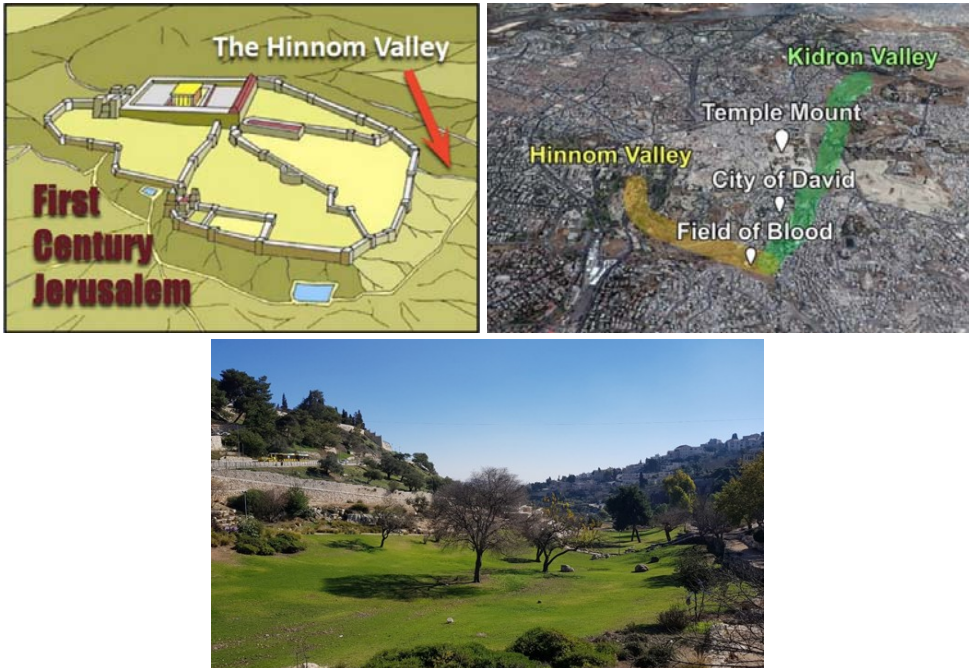
¹³ The word *Sheol* is a subterranean place, which is full of darkness, where are the shades of the dead, and sometimes it is attributed with valleys (Pro 9:18) and gates (Isa 38:10) (Gesenius). One possible root of the name is the verb *shaal*, which means: *to ask, to demand* (Gesenius, cf. Prov 30:15–16). Sometimes the word *Sheol* can refer to the grave, or more generally to the place of both righteous and unrighteous (Strack – Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, p. 1016., cf. Conner, *op. cit.*, p. 304.). It seems that Death and Hades are not only states and places, but also persons (Rev 6:8, see: Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 433–434.). About *Sheol* in details, see: Strack – Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 1016–1029.

¹⁴ Job 28:22, 31:12, with *Sheol*: Job 26:6, Pro 15:11 The word comes from the verb *avad*, which means: *to be lost, to perish, to be destroyed*, etc. (Gesenius). The Greek equivalent of it is *apoleia* (Mt 7:13, Heb 10:39, Rom 9:22 etc.). Names come also from the verbs: *Abaddon* / *Apollyon*, that a person in the New Testament (Rev 9:11).

¹⁵ 2Pt 2:4, cf. Jude 6. See more: Conner, *op. cit.*, p. 304. *Tartarus* in the ancient Greek culture was also a subterranean region, place of dark, where the wicked were punished for their evil deeds (Thayer).

¹⁶ Lk 8:31, Rev 9:1–11, 11:7 etc. cf. Ef 4:9. See more: Conner, *op. cit.*, pp. 304–305. In Hebrew it is for example: *tehom*, which means the *deep sea* (Gen 1:2, 7:11), the *lowest parts of the earth* (Ps 70:21) cf. *metzulah* is the *depth* of the see (Jon 2:4); *tachti*, which means *the lower, lowest storey* (Ps 63:9, Is 44:23), sometimes together with *bor*, which is *cistern, grave, sepulchre, prison* (Ez 26:20, Ps 88:6), cf. *shachat* is *a pit, a cistern, an underground prison* (Isa 51:14),

The next name for Hell – which is maybe the “final Hell” – is Gehenna, which comes from the Hebrew name of Valley of Hinnom (*Ge Hinnom*), and which was originally a historical site, located outside of the ancient Jerusalem.¹⁷



The Valley of Hinnom in the first century and nowadays
 (sources: 1. <https://www.olsenpark.com/Bulletins20/FS22.31.html>,
 2. <https://www.holylandsite.com/hinnom-valley> ,
 3. <https://www.wsbisrael2019.com/special-event>).

sepulchre (Ps 30:10), however the word commonly used for *grave* or *sepulchre* is *kever* (Gen 23:6, Job 17:1, etc.) (Gesenius). King of Abyss is Abaddon / Apollyon (Rev 9:11, cf. Conner, *op. cit.*, p. 305.).

¹⁷ Another name of it is The Valley of the Son(s) of Hinnom (*Ge-Ben/Beney-Hinnom*, e.g. Josh 15:8), and another is *Topheth* (2Kings 23:10), which means *spittle, which is spit upon* (Gesenius, Jer 7:31–32, Jer 19:6, 11–14 etc.), its new name will be The Valley of Slaughter (Jer 19:6). In the New Testament, see: Mat 5:22, 18:9, 23:15, etc. About the name, see: Kaufmann Kohler – Ludwig Blau, “Gehenna”, in *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1901–1906, <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7534-hell>.

In ancient times, idolatrous kings sacrificed children alive to Moloch here, and later the garbage from Jerusalem was carried here, which was constantly burned.¹⁸



Offering to Moloch

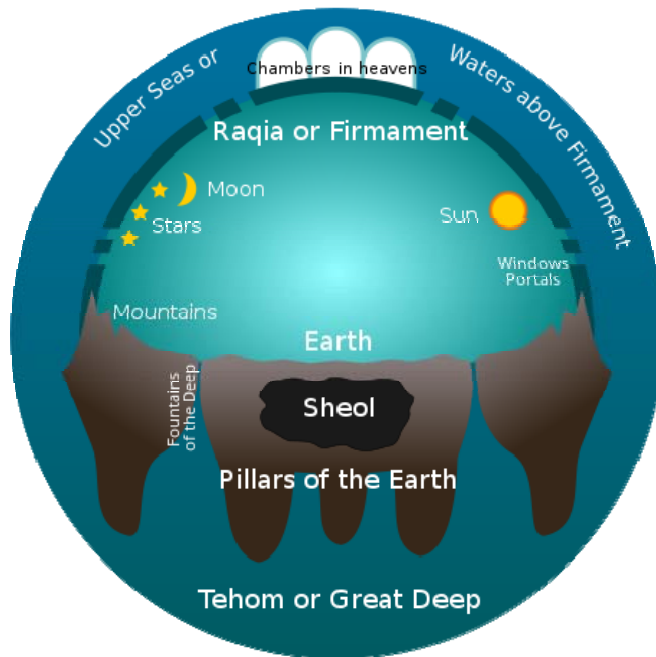
(Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us by Charles Foster, 1897,

<https://allthatsinteresting.com/moloch>).

The final location of Hell is disputed, however what is certain is that it is not a pleasant place, but a place of darkness, eternal punishment, unquenchable fire, tears, and suffering, from where there is no turning back.¹⁹

¹⁸ Kings who sacrificed to Moloch: Ahaz (2Chron 28:3) and Manasseh (2Chron 33:6). This is the place of fire (Isa 30:33), cf. The Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14 cf. Mat 18:9). For more details about Gehenna see Strack – Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 1029–1118, Conner, *op. cit.*, pp. 305–306.

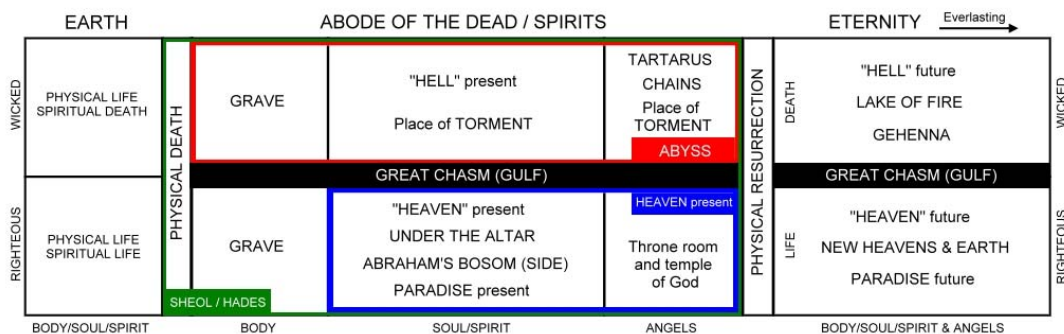
¹⁹ According to some views it will be a special place of the universe, but others see that it will be on Earth (2Pt 3:7, Rev 20:11–15, 21:1, Conner, *op. cit.*, p. 308). About its attributes see Conner, *op. cit.*, pp. 306–308.



Early Hebrew conception of the cosmos
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firmament>).

As we have seen above, in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, several words are used for Heaven and Hell, each giving an aspect of these places, and many images are associated with them, which can motivate men's deeds. It is also assumed that both Heaven and Hell have multiple levels and will be modified from their present state after final judgment. There is no passage between Heaven and Hell, and people can only influence their eternal destiny

during their earthly life, this may be one of the reasons why Rabbi Eliezer says: “Repent the day before you die”.²⁰



Places of afterlife
(<https://afterdeathsite.com/2016/09/14/is-sheol-my-destiny/>).

²⁰ *Mishnah*, Pirkei Avot 2:10. About the great gulf between Heaven and Hell, see: Lk 16:26.

Kristof K. P. Vanhoutte

The Long Rise from Hell to (hopefully) Heaven The Voyage of the Children from Limbo

On Friday 20th of April 2007, the world woke up to a series of strange newspaper headlines. Pope Benedict XVI had cancelled the *Limbus Puerorum*, the Limbo of the children.¹ That place where un- or newly-born children who had died before receiving baptism went, was now hoped to have never existed.

This realm of the beyond had been created, amongst many other religious, commercial, and socio-political innovations, during Europe's first, but often forgotten, great cultural revolution of the 12th-13th century. It was conceived to house these little creatures in their specifically paradoxical state. In fact, as they had not incurred in any personal sin but were solely weighed down by original sin, they had been relieved from any form of afflictive pain and only left open to privative pain. And even though some brilliant, albeit incredibly contorted (and, in the end, unconvincing) scholastic reasoning had attributed some forms of joy to these innocent souls, them being forever abandoned by God did still settle them with the harshest form of punishment conceived in Christianity.

That Pope Ratzinger had only been able to express his *hope* in the *overcoming* of Limbo's *existence*, is paradigmatic of the lasting

¹ The document in question was drafted by the International Theological Commission and had as title *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized*. It is freely available: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en.html.

uncertainty and delicacy of the topic. But this is not an exclusive Christian problem. Since its dawn, the death of newborns or fetuses has been a stumbling block for humanity itself, and the creation of Limbo can only be seen as a small step in the creation of some solace for these little creatures. Before, as is already evident from Paleolithic grave sites, these dead little creatures were feared and needed to be kept at a distance. They were considered as the *mors repentina*, or *mors immatura*; the sudden or untimely death who were thought to be able to return to torment the living. That also for early Christianity, as we, for example, find confirmed with St. Augustine, these creatures would be condemned to eternal damnation of Hell, should then not surprise.

The centuries that followed saw the pre-history of Limbo develop in a uniquely non-accumulative way.² Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Albertus Magnus, Alexander of Hales, and finally Bonaventure of Bagnoregio and Thomas of Aquinas all expressed themselves in one way or another on the fate of the dead-born or unbaptized dead young children. All were more considerate than Augustine (but they were not fighting the Pelagian heresy), but it will only be with Alexander of Hales, in the 12th century, that the final exit out of Hell would take place. Hell didn't make place for Heaven though, and although Limbo is not as cruel as Hell, it, as I already indicated, still shares the cruelest aspect of Satan's reign. And it will take eight more centuries for Limbo to make place, *hopefully*, for Heaven with Pope Ratzinger.

Why did it take so long for these innocent little creatures to make it out of Hell and probably into Heaven? It certainly wasn't because of the so-called parental indifference, as was hypothesized and theorized by, for example, Philippe Ariès.³ As a variety of

² For a concise history of the Limbo of the Children, see chapter 3 of Kristof K. P. Vanhoutte, *Limbo Reapplied: On Living in Permanent Crisis and the Immanent Afterlife*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

³ Ariès first phrased this hypothesis in his *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.

scholars and institutions like the Sanctuaries of Grace⁴ have demonstrated sufficiently by now, parents did care for the unhappy fate of their unborn or quickly dying prole as much as we do today. On the other hand, that the redemptive death on the cross of Christ and the sacrament of baptism stood at the center of our problem certainly did not help. Furthermore, that the Limbo of the Children remained, on a doctrinal level, so undecided, was unquestionably also detrimental to the inhabitants of this realm in the beyond. However, and although often not even considered, the absence of an adequate imagery of, first, the unbaptized Children in Hell and, secondly, in Limbo cannot be underestimated.⁵

This absence is indeed remarkable. Especially since, sadness and torture, and not beatitude, is much more prone to be rewarded by poetical songs and grand visual images. Dante's Hell, for example, is, by far, the preferred section of his *Divina Commedia*, and Purgatory too comes before Heaven. And so many more examples can be produced that confirm this "rule".

Both Limbos, however, seem to be an exception to that rule. And, interestingly, of the two Limbos, it is the victoriousness of Christ – generally depicted as standing on top of squashed demons as he liberates the innocent Mothers and Fathers – that is typical of the imagery of the Limbo of the Just, that greatly outshines representations of the Limbo of the Children. In fact, there hardly are depictions of the equally innocent little creatures that inhabit this particular Limbo.

⁴ The most important reference work on the Sanctuaries of Grace in Northern Europe is Jacques Gélis, *Les enfants des limbes: Mort-nés et parents dans l'Europe Chrétienne*, Paris: Louis Audibert, 2006.

⁵ For a history of pictorial representations of both Limbos, see Chiara Franceschini, *Storia del limbo*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017.



It would be “nice” to conclude by taking refuge to the words of Marc Bloch that “there where the theologians doubted ... artists certainly did not allow themselves to affirm”.⁶ But, even though this aspect certainly does have some importance in the problematics surrounding the death of the unbaptized children, it certainly does not suffice. The problem, indeed is not *just* theological. In fact, the Limbo of the Children consists of one of those few paradoxes that surpass categorization. It not only shows the limits of legal justice (and how this is always connected to moral and emotional injustice), but, above all, it shows the limits of language, all types of language, both linguistic and visual language.

⁶ [Marc Bloch, “La vie d’outre-tombe du roi Salomon”](#) (1925), in *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, p. 371.

Franziska Meier

Can Pictures of Hell Alleviate Human Suffering? Seen Through the Eyes of Dante and Boccaccio

As far as the Italian 14th century is concerned, I would say no. However, from Dante's *Divine Comedy* to Boccaccio's *Decameron* a shift in the reaction to Hell can be traced.

If we look at Dante's *Divine Comedy*, composed in the early 14th century, the realm of Hell showcases many different examples of human sufferings which draw from the standard set of practices of torture in the Middle Ages. In the beginning, the wayfarer is shocked by what he sees, senses, and hears. Eventually, he gets not only accustomed to it, but gradually learns that these physical torments are deserved punishment for vices or crimes. Moreover, he learns to approve of them, if not to actively participate in increasing the pain. His guide Virgil explicitly praises him for wishing ill to a furious sinner who is already enduring an eternal punishment. Looking at human sufferings in Hell requires from the onlooker as well as the reader's heart to harden.

Yet, although the wayfarer did learn the lesson, the poet who chronicles his travel through Hell is not really at ease with what he has learned. In the narration, a contradiction slowly emerges between the celebrated and trusted reign of divine Justice in which the individual is reduced to being an example of a vice or a sin within a clear hierarchical order and Dante's understanding that a human being cannot be reduced to representing a single sin. He is also repulsed by witnessing the extent to which the tortures are deforming the beauty of the human body. Thus, the pictures of exemplary pun-

ishments occasionally give space to the unfolding of the manifold aspects of human life, of the intricate half-conscious, half-subconscious reasons of behavior, in short: of the ambiguities and intricacies of human lives that call for understanding, empathy and compassion, even admiration. Scattered throughout the *Divine Comedy's Hell* whose undoubted purpose is to horrify and instill fear in the reader, are some mild signs of unease with God's Justice, with the very images of Hell. The picture of human suffering in Hell at times seems to challenge Dante's understanding of what is a human being.

If we now look at Boccaccio's description of the Plague in the *Decameron*, which is a sophisticated rewriting of Dante's Hell in a secular context, the human suffering soon becomes unbearable. Strangely enough, it seems to be only bearable if its cause, that is the epidemic is defined as an all-encompassing punishment sent by God for the citizens' vicious ways of living from which, incidentally, the righteous is not excepted. In the first weeks, the tremendous physical and mental impact of the Plague on individual people is intensely pitied. However, like the wayfarer Dante, the citizens end up adjusting. They harden their hearts and grimly start focusing on selfish strategies of their physical survival, among which also features the *brigata* who leaves Florence and tells novellas in the countryside. Furthermore, the images of Hell on earth, that is the devastation brought about by the Black Death, convey an idea of how difficult it is to remain compassionate once they face the overwhelming spectacle of human sufferings. More precisely, Boccaccio's *Decameron* highlights that in a calamity such as the Plague, humanity is never far away from bestiality. This is the very challenge that the concerned need to meet, most of all by feeling and continuing to feel compassion with those who suffer. By doing so they do not alleviate the suffering; however, it helps human beings to stay humane in face of the dreadful pictures of Hell.

In my view, a historical-mental evolution can be traced in the two Italian masterworks of the 14th century. Whereas Dante composes under the sway of the strong judiciary rules on which the popular government of the Florentine Guelphs was built, Boccaccio is a contemporary of popular governments that are about to introduce

other ways of controlling and disciplining the people. Moreover, he survives a Plague that sharpened his idea of living in a world that is still a creation by God, but highly marked by contingency. Whereas Dante was convinced of the superiority of human beings even if many of them may be degraded to the point of rendering them unrecognizable, Boccaccio emphasized the importance of compassion as a way of being / staying humane. Yet, the images of human sufferings on such a mass scale profoundly challenge the preservation of human behavior and relationships between individuals.

Reinhard Hoeps

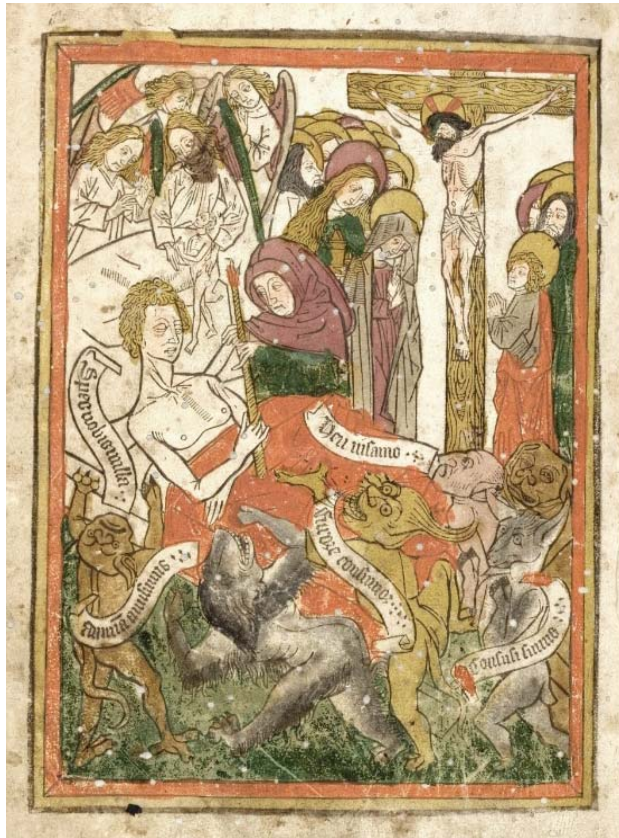
Images concerning the Last Glance

The art of dying (*Ars Moriendi*) as developed in the late middle ages means not only a spiritual agenda but also a corporeal preparation for one's own death. Several sermons and treatises give advices for preparing the death-room, especially for providing the death-room with images. Girolamo Savonarola advises images showing ill and suffering persons to prepare for one's own dying. Martin Luther recommends the exchange of images when death is coming nearer. Without any reservation concerning religious images (as known from the later struggle with Andreas Bodenstein) he demands to take away all images of death that are provided to attend one's lifetime and to replace them by images of those who overcame death.

According to this *Ars Moriendi* the last moment before dying is a moment of visual experience that requires images. So, visual representations of the very moment of dying show angels, beasts, a monk, a soul, Christ on the cross with saints, surrounding the death-bed, both images, mental images and real persons according to a scale between image and reality without distinction in a strict sense.

Images like this show how we have to understand the preparation for death in the late middle ages as a visual process with its own culture of images. But why should we need images while preparing our hour of death?

Hieronymus Bosch's so-called *Table of the mortal sins* (1505–10) explains a theological reason why the last moment in life is determined as a last glance. In the centre of the so-called last things



Ars Moriendi: The hour of death, 15. ct., coloured woodcut, 29 x 21,4 cm, Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 34, fol. 130v.

(in the four corners of the table) and of the circle with the deathly sins he shows the eye of god with the *Imago Pietatis* in its pupil: Looking at this table the beholder finds himself being looked at. Seeing God is the experience of being seen by God – as Nicholas Cusanus explained this in *De Visione Dei* (1453). With the oncoming last judgement Christ doesn't appear as judge but as the man of sorrows who shows his wounds, his pity and compassion. God's mercy occurs as a figure of visuality between God's initial view and man's answering view. This visual interaction concerning man's re-

demption requires images for its reasonable expression contemplated in preparation for one's own death.



Hieronymus Bosch: Table of the mortal sins, 1505–1510, oil on poplar, 119,5 x 139,5 cm, Madrid: Museo del Prado ©Museo Nacional del Prado

Depending on Christ's mercy the expectation of one's end is not as much figured as a trial but as a desire for seeing – the *Visio Beatifica*. The *Ars Moriendi* requires images because the passage from death to God is a visual occurrence. A very famous image made for the purpose of one's dying was created by Titian who's painting *La Gloria* (1551–54) by appointment of Charles Vth was provided for the last glance of the former emperor on his deathbed.



*Titian: The Glory, 1551—1554, oil on canvas, 346 x 240 cm,
Madrid: Museo del Prado ©Museo Nacional del Prado*

This painting is certainly not an image showing the exchange of views between God and human. Instead of this, this image shows the yearning for a view. So, instead of Christ's look at the beholder Charles sees himself looking for Christ's look. From his deathbed Charles sees himself on his knees praying. He wears his shroud while his crown is put beside him. While the Trinity is enthroned above in heaven Charles is accompanied, in some different kind of heaven, too, by his family and a number of saints and some characters of the

Old Testament floating in clouds. They build a kind of elliptical figure or a mandorla with an empty space in its centre. Noah stretches his ark above in this empty space – as a model of the church that Charles failed to reunite. But maybe a connection between the dove on the ark's roof and the dove-shaped figure of the Holy Spirit on top of this composition could be noticed. Titian's painting doesn't show a *Visio Beatifica*, but Charles's longing for it expressed by his prayer, assisted by his family and some saints and addressed to Maria and John the Baptist in her background, according to the traditional figure of *Intercessio*.

Expecting the last judgement Charles sees himself not worthy for redemption but relying on a widespread orchestration of intercession. This soteriological tension is a tension of seeing and not-seeing: Longing for seeing and for seeing to verify being seen, even not seeing but seeing instead. With the eschatological expectation of seeing God face to face in mind (1Cor 13,12) the preparation for dying is understood as an outlook towards a visual relation. This particular visual relation will find its suitable expression in visual figures and gives the reason for the need of images concerning the last glance.

Kincső Szabó

Beautiful Disaster: Visual Framing, Emotions and the Saga of Catastrophe Images

*“Images have artistic value, help preserve memories,
are useful for persuasion and effective communication”¹*

During the course of the twentieth century, war photography gained legitimacy both as a form of art and subject of scientific study, which transmits an ultra-realistic sense of capturing action while silently narrating emotions. Robert Capa², the most prominent war photographer of all time, engraved his name in the history of catastrophe visualization by capturing lifeless bodies on bloody battlefields, which took photography to the next level. In Griffin’s interpretation, a war photograph intertwines solidarity, patriotism, death, and sacrifice, which comprise the national symbols of photojournalism. He was the first to propose that a photojournalistic ethos has developed, which encourages reporters to bring the world’s dramatic events right into people’s homes.³

¹ One of the students’ answer in the online survey I conducted for the present research.

² Robert Capa (1913–1954), world-wide known war photographer and photo reporter of Hungarian origin, gained popularity during the Spanish civil war with his famous photo called “The Death of a Loyalist Soldier” (1936).

³ Michael Griffin, “The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism”, in *Picturing the Past: Media, History & Photography*, edited by Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999, pp. 122–157.

Recent years have proven that everything can change in nature, except human suffering. Fleeing from pandemics, earthquakes, and wars – events that caused a radical global reorganisation of world order and made an uncanny visual debut in the media as well.⁴ Hence, we cannot neglect a deeper understanding of such happenings, which are systematically epitomized by visuals.

Visual framing refers to how a photograph is composed and presented to the viewer. Depending on the framing of an image, a photograph can influence the emotions by directing the viewer's attention to certain aspects of the image.⁵ According to Scheufele, images are more compelling than verbal texts because they can better capture the focus of their audience due to aspects like connotations of witnessing and increased emotional involvement.⁶ This reasoning supports the idea that images may be more effective at activating cognitive schemata than verbal texts. The well-known “picture-superiority effect” of information acquisition also explains this power of images. Because of how “true-to-life” images are, readers are predicted to be less conscious of visual framing than verbal framing, which makes it harder to spot trends in visual news reporting.⁷

By explaining the key visual aesthetic differences that serve to distinguish each photographer's work, one can start to establish a connection between the artistic and compositional qualities of the photographs and the emotional impact that they hold for the viewer. This shifts the focus of photographs from purely documentary pur-

⁴ Cornelia Brantner, Katharina Lobinger, Irmgard Wetzstein, “Effects of Visual Framing on Emotional Responses and Evaluations of News Stories about the Gaza Conflict 2009”, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 88, no. 3 (2011), pp. 523–540.

⁵ Robert M. Entman, “Framing: Towards Classification of a Fractured Paradigm”, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 43, no. 4 (1993), pp. 51–58.

⁶ Thomas E. Powell, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Knut De Swert, Claes H. de Vreese, “A Clearer Picture: The Contribution of Visuals and Text to Framing Effects”, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 65, no. 6 (2015), pp. 997–1017.

⁷ Erin E. O’Flaherty, “The Art of War: The Impact of Aesthetics in War Photography”, MA Thesis, Dartmouth College, 2012.

poses towards a more nuanced examination.⁸ The viewer can develop a deeper knowledge of both themselves as viewers and the complex nature of war. Photographs, especially those taken during a destructive milieu, reveal a reframing and selection process that is anything but neutral and reflects the blending of the photographer's figurative and literal views with his or her subjects and environment.

For the understanding of the bouquet of aspects revolving around a visual artefact, Joseph Wenzel's triadic approach of *product-process-procedure* has underpinned a great amount of research so far in the science of image philosophy, yet few consider challenging this approach in the saga of a destructed world we live in. Based on the idea that a new visual syntax can be introduced in visual rhetoric, I propose that through aesthetic features war photography owns the power to depict a disastrous event in a healing, aesthetically pleasing manner, looking beyond pain and hopelessness. In other words, a textless image with aesthetically pleasant features may change the negative angle of a photo and slightly alleviate human suffering.

Therefore, three international award-winning photographs have been selected from the official webpage of *National Geographic*, which all received special attention in the field of photography and media representation. Each photo captures a different tragedy and has a different worldwide known war photographer. The chosen photos depict: 1. the Ukranian war by Emilio Morenatti (2022), the Turkish earthquake by Petros Giannakouris (2023) and an air raid alarm by Robert Capa (1939). In the online survey⁹ completed by university students, questions revolved around the interpretation of catastrophe images, the linguistic translation of the given photos, the emotions attached to them and the importance of visual artefacts.

"It is a more effective way to convey information than the spoken word, especially if you are not a good speaker", "It's so much

⁸ [Dona Schwartz, "On the Line: Crossing Institutional Boundaries between Photo-journalism and Photographic Art", *Visual Sociology Review*, vol. 5, issue 2 \(1990\), pp. 22–29.](#)

⁹ The conducted online survey stands in the first phase of research: no final results have been drawn; only preliminary observations are discussed in the paper.

a part of the stories, the narratives, the arguments, that we can't even imagine life without it", "Visuality is our primary and most important communication channel, and photographs are a reflection of this" – these are some of the thoughts of the respondents answering the question "Why are photographs important for us?" Students un-animously claimed that there is an inherent need for photographs, which encapsulates a storytelling vision of a war or its aftermath. Furthermore, respondents managed to linguistically translate all three presented photographs and make meaning of them. Although aesthetic features could be identified in the photos, few respondents claimed to evoke positive emotions, when perceiving them. Overall, war photography and visual framing entered the phase of rising: verbal documentation shifts towards visual, making catastrophes eternally encrypted. So, why does one need to live with images that may or may not alleviate human suffering? As one of the respondents noted: "Because we are afraid of forgetting".

Cynthia Freeland

Uvalde Texas Murals of School Shooting Victims



To see all the Uvalde murals in detail, visit <https://latino.si.edu/exhibitions/healing-ualde>.

A year ago (May 24, 2022) hell came to the small town of Uvalde, Texas, when a killer shot 19 children and two teachers at Robb Elementary School. Some children called for help, but disorganized police delayed more than an hour while the shooter repeatedly fired his AR-15 assault rifle. This weapon of war pulverized victims' bodies and faces so badly that the coroner could only identify some victims by their shoes (<https://www.texastribune.org/2023/03/20/ualde-shooting-police-ar-15/>).

Can painful thoughts of what those children went through be quieted by art? Artist and teacher Abel Ortiz of Uvalde thought so and organized a mural project to honor the victims. Public mural art has strong traditions among Mexican Americans. This goes back to the Mexican Muralism movement of the 1920s when artists like Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros aimed at political education (<https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/mexican-muralism>). In the 1960s, painters worked alongside activists for civil rights in the Chicano Mural Movement (<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/chicano-mural-movement>). Their art appeared in factories, neighborhoods, and community centers, showcasing political struggles and Mexican cultural heritage.

Artists from across Texas responded quickly to Ortiz's call for action and were matched up with portrait subjects. After talking with families, they created giant paintings on downtown buildings to memorialize the dead. Their work began during Summer 2022 in 100-degree Texas heat. Family members came to watch and talk, bringing snacks and cold drinks. Each family contributed suggestions and some even did parts of the paintings.

About her portrait of Jackie Cazares, artist Kimmie Flores said, "I just wanted to be part of the healing process as we mourn, grieve and move forward." (<https://www.statesman.com/in-depth/news/2022/10/25/healing-ualde-21-murals-memorialize-tell-story-robb-elementary-victims/69520352007/>.) Tino Ortega commented about his painting of Jose Flores, "His family shared with me that Jose had a smile that could lift up a room, and that is why recreating an image with him smiling fully was important." The Flores family helped work on the painting. Young Maite Rodriguez had hoped to become a marine biologist, a theme beautifully illustrated in Ana Hernandez's work. Family members assisted in doing the mural's fish and whale. Hernandez included Maite's favorite green Converse shoes because the girl "loved them so much." Maite was one of the victims who had to be identified by her shoes.

Mass shootings have occurred not just in schools but banks and grocery stores, churches and synagogues, movie theaters and concerts, even at a Fourth of July parade. Firearms are now (since

2020) the leading cause of death of children and adolescents in the US (<https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/29/health/us-children-gun-deaths-dg/index.html>). Some might think an artistic response to our insane gun violence should be more political, graphic and arresting. Think back to 1955, when Emmett Till's mother highlighted racial violence by insisting on an open casket at her murdered son's funeral, to "let the world see what has happened" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmett Till](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmett_Till)).

The Washington Post came close to deploying shock tactics in a recent pictorial essay that showed the damage assault weapons can inflict on bodies, especially on small ones. The piece used animations to show bullet trajectories and wounds. What makes this essay disturbing is that the *Post* used actual coroner's reports about two school shooting victims. The newspaper secured parental permission and included photos of the two boys alive. In this context, even the highly sanitized illustrations become unnerving. It is macabre to see white robotic figures retaining their serene gazes as their bodies are pierced multiple times by bullets with captions explaining resultant horrific damage (https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2023/ar-15-damage-to-human-body/?itid=lk_inline_manual_1). If art becomes too upsetting, people will look away.

The tasks of healing and protesting probably require different kinds of art. In recent work Kathleen Higgins has emphasized the special role played by aesthetics in rituals of grief and mourning.¹ Her idea is that death plunges you into an alternate reality. Amidst the isolation and confusion of grief, "Aesthetic gestures ... serve as the primary currency connecting the bereaved with other people." Higgins unpacks various notions of "containment" that aesthetic rituals can help with after someone's death: channeling grief, healing ruptures, marking out a secure space, and "containing" emotions to help promote closure.

¹ "Aesthetics and the Containment of Grief", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 2020, vol. 78, issue 1, pp. 9–20.

The Uvalde art project has evidently been helpful in the town’s grieving process. The paintings have become sites for conversations, sharing memories, and even picnics (“Healing Uvalde”, <https://latino.si.edu/exhibitions/healing-ualde>). All the murals are bright and cheerful. They use clear imagery with meaningful symbols. The kids wear their favorite clothes, do sports, care for pets, play games, and smile. These people who were family members and friends now occupy public space where they are literally larger than life. In the murals the children live on with their limbs whole and their faces fully restored.

Illustrations





Maps showing Uvalde in Texas.



Maite Rodriguez by San Antonio artist Ana Hernandez.



At Emmett Till's funeral, 1955.

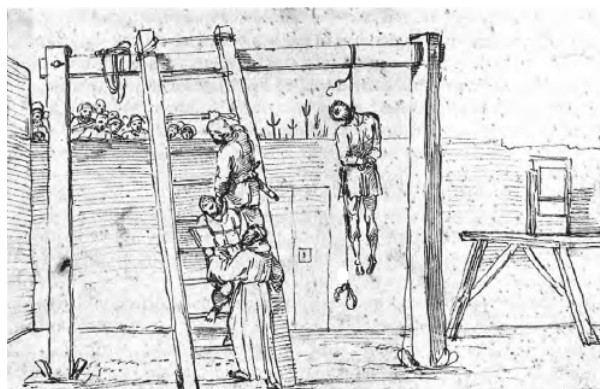
Kristóf Nyíri

Primordial Images

There was a custom in the Middle Ages: displaying to convicted persons led to the gallows pictures of the crucifixion of Christ so as to console them for the fate they were about to face. I will here begin with David Freedberg's description, and his doubts as to the effectivity,¹ of this institution.



Brother of the Archconfraternity of San Giovanni Decollato in Rome holding a *tavolatta* (from Corrado Ricci, *Beatrice Cena* [Milan, 1923]).



Annibale Carracci, *A Hanging* (drawing; ca. 1599). Windsor Castle, Royal Library. Reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

Source: Freedberg.

¹ Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 5–9.

“What comfort”, Freedberg asks,

could anyone conceivably offer to a man condemned to death, in the moment prior to his execution? Any word or action would seem futile... But in Italy between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, brotherhoods were set up to offer a kind of solace: and the instruments of consolation were small printed images. A fair number of these *tavalucchie*, or *tavolette*, as they were alternatively called, survive...

Preceding and during the execution, edifying words might be spoken. However, as Freedberg remarks, it is not clear “whether words or images were of greater consequences on such an occasion; and one might well feel that the whole business was ineffectual”.² This brings us to the issue of how, generally speaking, words relate to images, and to the underlying fundamental issue of how word language came into being.

It cannot be doubted that in the primordial beginnings human communication consisted but in facial expressions and gesture language.³ Then because of the advantages of communicating at a distance, and communicating in the dark – think of hunting – verbal language gradually emerged, the decisive recent book on the subject is that by Michael Corballis, *From Hand to Mouth: The Origins of Language*, published in 2002.⁴ Now note that prior to the emergence of word language human thinking of course could not have been thinking in words – the thinking behind facial expressions and gesture language was, necessarily, thinking in images. Taking a step back, *animals* obviously do think, and obviously think in images, the classic

² I have discussed Freedberg’s brilliant book at some length in my paper “[Images in Natural Theology](#)”, in Russell Re Manning, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 581–594.

³ For a summary of the literature see my “[Postscript: The Victory of the Pictorial Turn](#)”, in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri, eds., *Vision Fulfilled: The Victory of the Pictorial Turn*, Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences / Budapest University of Technology and Economics, 2019, pp. 251–267.

⁴ Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

work here is Darwin's 1872 *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. But let us take another step back and ask: What goes on in the mind of a primitive animal devoid yet of eyesight? Say what goes on in the mind of an earthworm digging its way through the soil when encountering a stone it has to circumvent? The formula that most fascinates me when wondering about this question is that by Titchener: "Meaning", Titchener claimed, "is, originally, kinaesthesia; the organism faces the situation by some bodily attitude... meaning is carried by all sorts of sensational and imaginal processes. ... And words themselves, let us remember, were at first motor attitudes, gestures, kinaesthetic contexts".⁵ Words build on imagery, but imagery, Titchener stressed, builds on the motor dimension.⁶ I venture

⁵ Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes*, New York: Macmillan, 1909, pp. 176 ff. –The question I am here grappling with is related to, but more specific, than the broad issue "schon die einzelligen Tiere, die Amöben, [sind] keine Automaten ..., sondern [besitzen] in ihrem freilich noch winzigen Lebenskreise einen keinen Spielraum für eine erste, einfachste Art des Lernens" ([Karl Bühler, "Die Krise der Psychologie", 1926/27](#)). I am obliged to Csaba Pléh for directing my attention to Bühler's paper.

⁶ Titchener's position was taken up and radicalized by Margaret Washburn. As she put it: "the whole of the inner life is correlated with and dependent upon bodily movement" (Margaret Floy Washburn, *Movement and Mental Imagery: Outlines of a Motor Theory of the Complexer Mental Processes*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916, p. xiii). A recent brilliant discussion of this topic is Barbara Tversky's *Mind in Motion – How Action Shapes Thought*, New York: Basic Books, 2019. – Historically, the first step was made by Darwin's half-cousin Galton, who in his 1880 *Mind* essay "Statistics of Mental Imagery" wrote: "scientific men as a class have feeble powers of visual representation. ... I am however bound to say, that the missing faculty seems to be replaced so serviceably by other modes of conception, chiefly I believe connected with the motor sense, that men who declare themselves entirely deficient in the power of seeing mental pictures can nevertheless give life-like descriptions of what they have seen, and ... otherwise express themselves as if they were gifted with a vivid visual imagination." The story then goes on with Ribot, Binet and James, and much later with Arnheim (see the section "The Visual and the Motor", pp. 26 f., in my ["Visualization and the Horizons of Scientific Realism"](#)). Highly relevant is John M. Kennedy's *Drawing and the Blind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Kennedy claims that "pictures in raised form can be understood by the blind, and

to sum up the first part of Titchener's message in the following way: When an organism encounters a problem, it reacts with a motor answer. If that answer is not equal to the problem, and if the organism is one gifted with sight, it then forms itself a picture of the problem – that is, it creates a specific mental image.⁷

The literature claiming that the immediate basis of thinking in words is actually thinking in images is vast, I have attempted to give an idea of that literature in my "Postscript", as well as in a number of other papers, of which I here single out my "[Images in Natural Theology](#)" (cf. note 2 above), quoting Romano Guardini, one of the most influential Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century, who in his 1950 essay *Die Sinne und die religiöse Erkenntnis*, "The Senses and Religious Knowledge", stresses the role images play in the depths of our subconscious, ready to enter consciousness whenever appropriate external stimuli reach us. The innermost core of a human being, as Guardini puts it, is in the end essentially dependent on images, "sein inneres Wesen kann im Letzten ... nur aus Bildern leben".⁸ Guardini here very clearly echoes C. G. Jung's notions of the collective unconscious and of "primordial images"⁹ – say the "mother" image, encompassing a newborn infant's image of its mother's smile, the moth-

... untrained blind people can make recognizable sketches of objects, situations, and events [by] raised-line drawing. ... the ability to draw develops in blind people as it does in the sighted."

⁷ The last lines here I have taken over from my "Postscript", cf. note 3 above.

⁸ Romano Guardini, *Die Sinne und die religiöse Erkenntnis*, Würzburg: Werkbund-Verlag, 1950, p. 65.

⁹ Let us note that Jung's notion of the primordial image does ultimately not involve visuality, but rather some unconscious readiness for acquiring content, say also visual content.

er reciprocating, or the evil mother not reciprocating, that smile. An image of heaven, or an image of hell.¹⁰



"Systema munditotius", the first mandala painted by Jung, in 1916

I am here reproducing a mandala printed in my piece [Forever Jung](#)¹²; for a number of other highly interesting mandalas by Jung see the same piece. Also, do look at Jung's explanation on why he urged his patients to translate into paintings their dreams and fantasies – often horrible primordial images.¹³

However, not all primordial images are depressing. Say the views, and images, of *high mountains* might for some express something that is actually felt to be spiritually elevating. Similarly with

¹⁰ The name Jung is not actually mentioned in Guardini's 1950 book, but he does refer to Jung e.g. in his 1946 *Der Heilbringer in Mythos, Offenbarung und Politik*, on p. 27. I am obliged to Prof. Robert A. Krieg, author of "Romano Guardini on Sacred Integration", for drawing my attention to this work.

¹¹ "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" ("Über die Archetypen des kollektiven Unbewussten", first published in 1934, rewritten in 1954), in *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, 9/I, §§ 16 and 21.

¹² Paper written in honour of Csaba Pléh on the occasion of his 75th birthday, Dunabogdány: 2020.

¹³ See my *Forever Jung*, pp. 11 f.



Caspar David Friedrich,
"The Wanderer above the Mists"



Albert Bierstadt, "Sunrise on
the Matterhorn" (1875)



Caspar David Friedrich,
"Oak in the Snow"

ancient, large *trees*. So too *flowers*, whether naturalistic or stylized, can give rise to a feeling for the tranquil beauty of the created world. Pattison refers to "Monet's many series of paintings of his Garden at Giverny. ... With each treatment of the subject", Pattison writes,



Claude Monet, "Water lilies" (1916)

"Monet seems to be moving further and further away from conventional concepts of imitation into the pure play of coloural presences. ... These paintings assure us, in an irreducibly pictorial way, that the world is a good place to be, that it is holy ground, that we may trust ourselves to the particularity of our carnal situatedness".¹⁴ On a humbler level, the image of any *plant* is a symbol of growth. Also, it is a symbol of transience, decay, and re-

birth. Heinrich Rombach sees in the basic experience of cultivating plants the fundamental possibility of religion.¹⁵

Still, high mountains claim many lives; trees are damaged by storms; flowers fade; plants are killed by frost or drought. Altogether my impression is that in a wretched world images represent suffering

¹⁴ George Pattison, *Art, Modernity and Faith: Restoring the Image* (1991), 2nd enlarged ed., London: SCM Press, 1998, p. 149.

¹⁵ Heinrich Rombach, *Leben des Geistes: Ein Buch der Bilder zur Fundamentalggeschichte der Menschheit*, Freiburg: Herder, 1977, p. 77.

rather than happiness. Word language, by its indirectness (say think of a Christian burial) might produce more consoling effects than images do. Perhaps this is one of the reasons – clearly not the primary reason – word language came into being.

Anna Peternák

Volcanoes Through the Camera of Katia and Maurice Krafft

Images of Hell sometimes have the power to attract and mesmerize the viewer, even though they represent a frightening spectacle. They can evoke a complexity of emotions at the same time, and their magnetism can be so strong that one might even risk his/her own life to see them, capture them, live among them.

This is the case of French volcanologists Katia and Maurice Krafft who spent 25 years (from 1966 to 1991) examining the mysteries of volcanoes, from an extremely close perspective, as nobody has ever done before. They took their cameras to capture lava flows, pyroclastic flows, their own scientific activities near a volcano, and also the damage caused by eruptions. Everything happens so fast during an eruption that it is impossible to observe all the important details while watching it, this is why visual documentation is essential for later studies. Besides, the Kraffts wanted to draw attention to the dangers of volcanoes through pictures in order to teach the importance of quick evacuations.¹ For this reason documentaries were

¹ Katia Krafft says in a TV interview (originally in French): “In Armero, those terrible mudslides came down and killed 25,000 people. We could have avoided it if we taught people to evacuate. Technical reports don’t mean a thing to people who don’t know about volcanoes. So we thought we’d make film programs instead. If we show a government images of the victims, the damage, the dangers, they might believe us, we might convince them.” The interview is included in the film *Fire of Love* (2022, directed by Sara Dosa) without referring to the source of this interview, only listing all the archives altogether at the end of the film.

made like *Inside Hawaiian Volcanoes* (1989), directed and produced by Maurice Krafft himself. In this film, a small part of the footage taken by Maurice Krafft was used to illustrate how volcanoes work, not taking much advantage of its aesthetic quality, just serving a functional role besides diagrams, charts and scientific explanation. But the images created by the Kraffts are much more than educational documentations. In fact, they created art, without knowing it. This is the opinion of those filmmakers who recently studied their life, editing and narrating their footage. Katia and Maurice Krafft left more than 200 hours of footage² and around 400.000 photographs³ of which very few have been published.⁴

² The footage is now in the archive of Titan Films, Geneva, Switzerland. Before that, it belonged to the archive of Image'Est, Nancy, France, but in 2022, Titan Films bought it. Werner Herzog mentions this information in a podcast: *The Director's Cut – a DGA Podcast*. Director Werner Herzog discusses his new film, *The Fire Within: A Requiem for Katia and Maurice Krafft*, with fellow director Jeremy Kagan in a Q&A at the DGA theater in Los Angeles, November 14, 2022, <https://www.listennotes.com/de/podcasts/the-directors-cut/the-fire-within-with-werner-PKfjvL8ksZa/>.

³ The vast collection of volcano images by Katia and Maurice Krafft are now the property of the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, France, <https://www.mnhn.fr/en/collections-of-prints-and-photographs>. Catalogue: <http://www.calames.abes.fr/pub/mnhn.aspx>.

⁴ The Kraffts were interested in art, they also collected artworks representing volcanoes: “They planned to turn their house into a museum, and they bought land near Hawaii’s Kileaua Crater, the so-called drive-in volcano, so that in their old age they could maneuver their wheelchairs to the crater’s edge. Over the years, they’d bought history’s most extensive collection of volcano art and rare books and films. They were scientists with the souls of artists, souls of fire”, John Calderazzo, “Fire in the Earth, Fire in the Soul: The Final Moments of Maurice and Katia Krafft”, in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 1997), p. 74.



Katia and Maurice Krafft,
from The Fire Within: A Requiem for Katia and Maurice Krafft (2022), directed
by Werner Herzog.

The documentary titled *Fire of Love* (2022), directed by Sara Dosa, mostly focuses on the strong, loving relationship of Katia and Maurice, and their enthusiasm towards volcanoes. Besides the breathtaking footage by the volcanologist couple and their team,⁵ this film contains lots of tv interviews and playful animations, explaining the outstanding work and life of the Kraffts. Maurice and Katia shortly appear in Werner Herzog's film *Into the Inferno* (2016) as well, their adventures clearly inspired this documentary which takes the viewer to the edges of different active volcanoes, exploring the myths behind them.⁶ Besides, Herzog created another beautiful film solely dedicated to the famous volcanologist couple, *The Fire Within: A Requiem*

⁵ The early expeditions of the Kraffts were filmed by friends, for example Roland Haas.

⁶ Werner Herzog's interest towards volcanoes is also reflected in his early film *La Soufrière* (1977) which is about a volcano predicted to erupt and about the only person who refused to be evacuated.

for *Katia and Maurice Krafft* (2022).⁷ Herzog states, “what I am trying to do here is to celebrate the wonder of their imagery” which he considers mysterious, grandiose, stunningly original. “It appears to me, the Kraffts were shooting a whole film about creation in the making. They just did not have the time left to edit it.”⁸ Katia and Maurice Krafft died in a pyroclastic flow on a volcano called Mount Unzen, Japan, on 3 June 1991.

Maurice Krafft claimed, “I am not a filmmaker. I am a wandering volcanologist, forced to make films in order to wander.”⁹ Herzog contradicts this statement while showing marvelous footage of lava flows in Hawaii, taken by Maurice Krafft: “They are no longer volcanologists. They are artists who carry us the spectators away in the realm of strange beauty. This is a vision that exists only in dreams.”¹⁰ In his film *The Fire Within...*, Herzog uses his powerful artistic skills to get the most out of the Krafft footage, to make the images shine by the thorough selection of the scenes, fine editing, diverse music, straightforward narration (by Herzog himself), showing images rather than talking. Herzog takes a step back to bring the

⁷ It is a coincidence that *Fire of Love* and *The Fire Within...* were made roughly at the same time, but independently from each other. Although Herzog started to work on this film two and a half years earlier, he could only finish it in 2022, a few days after *Fire of Love* was premiered in Sundance Film Festival, on January 20, 2022. He started his research in Image’Est, Nancy, but by the time he had to get the footage of the Kraffts for *The Fire Within...*, the footage belonged to the Titan Films. The Director’s Cut – a DGA Podcast. Director Werner Herzog discusses his new film, *The Fire Within: A Requiem for Katia and Maurice Krafft*, with fellow director Jeremy Kagan in a Q&A at the DGA theater in Los Angeles, November 14, 2022, <https://www.listennotes.com/de/podcasts/the-directors-cut/the-fire-within-with-werner-PKfjvL8ksZa/>.

⁸ Narration by Werner Herzog in *The Fire Within: A Requiem for Katia and Maurice Krafft* (2022).

⁹ Maurice Krafft in a TV interview used in *Fire of Love* (2022), without giving the exact source.

¹⁰ Narration by Werner Herzog in *The Fire Within: A Requiem for Katia and Maurice Krafft* (2022).

Krafft to the fore, but he is constantly present behind the images,¹¹ as the Kraffts would certainly not have edited their footage in this form, nor would have filled them with such a rich variety of meanings. It is worth mentioning Herzog's film *Lessons of Darkness* (1992) which contains surprisingly similar images, although the subject is completely different, showing a dreadful Hell on Earth, the Kuwaitian oil fields in flames and the extraordinary human effort to fight against the disaster.



Images from The Fire Within: A Requiem for Katia and Maurice Krafft (2022), directed by Werner Herzog.

The images of the Kraffts are superbly composed, showing keen observational skills. The tension comes from the contrast between the active, fast, dangerous volcano and the incredibly calm and slow human observation, highlighting a very important feature: motion. Volcanic destruction is presented as a strange memento mori, a

¹¹ A short reference to *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) is also present in *The Fire Within...*, a footage left by the Kraffts show people trying to tow a car up a hill with a rope in a forest.

still life of ruined objects, plants and corpses, dead and greyed out after an eruption, in contrast with the colorful lively figures moving in the dust – the volcanologists who explore the destruction, and the survivors returning to their damaged homes. The dimension, size, power, temperature is better sensed when a person appears on the screen; often the fragile figure of Katia Krafft, filmed by Maurice. John Calderazzo describes an excerpt from their footage as follows: “Maurice and Katia once filmed a pyroclastic flow at night. When I saw the slow motion sequence, the glowing rock chunks tumbling and bouncing endlessly through the dark made me think of rubies and sapphires, an eerie and beautiful avalanche of the planet’s riches.”¹²

Maurice Krafft explained once in an interview: “Both Katia and I got into volcanology because we were disappointed with humanity. And since the volcano is greater than man, we felt this is what we need. Something beyond human understanding.”¹³ They chose to alleviate their disillusionment by descending together into the inferno, studying and creating images of Hell, and thus undertaking a different kind of suffering, both in life and death. According to Maurice, “I want to get closer, right into the belly of the volcano.”¹⁴ It will kill me one day, but that doesn’t bother me at all.”¹⁵

The spectator also feels mixed emotions while watching these images full of tension: excitement and distress at the same time. Positive and negative feelings are equally present, inseparable from one another. The most powerful images are like that, effecting our minds in diverse, mysterious ways, rather asking further questions than giving “yes” or “no” answers.

¹² John Calderazzo, “Fire in the Earth, Fire in the Soul: The Final Moments of Maurice and Katia Krafft” in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 1997), p. 76.

¹³ Interview in *Fire of Love* (2022), without giving the exact source.

¹⁴ Maurice Krafft was planning for years to go down on a lava flow with a special boat; he could not realize this crazy plan, but he really went to a boat trip on a lake full of powerful acid, in Indonesia, 1971.

¹⁵ Interview in *Fire of Love* (2022), without giving the exact source.

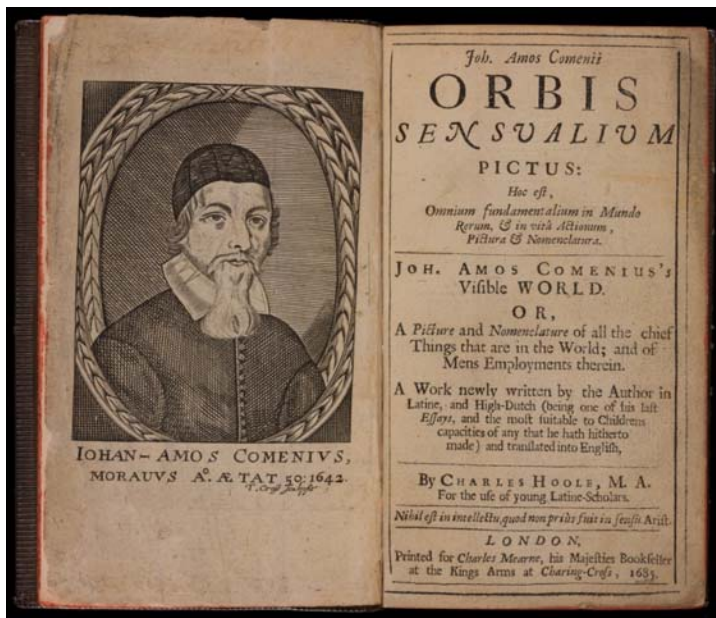


Images from Fire of Love (2022), directed by Sara Dosa.

Zoltán Szegedy-Maszák

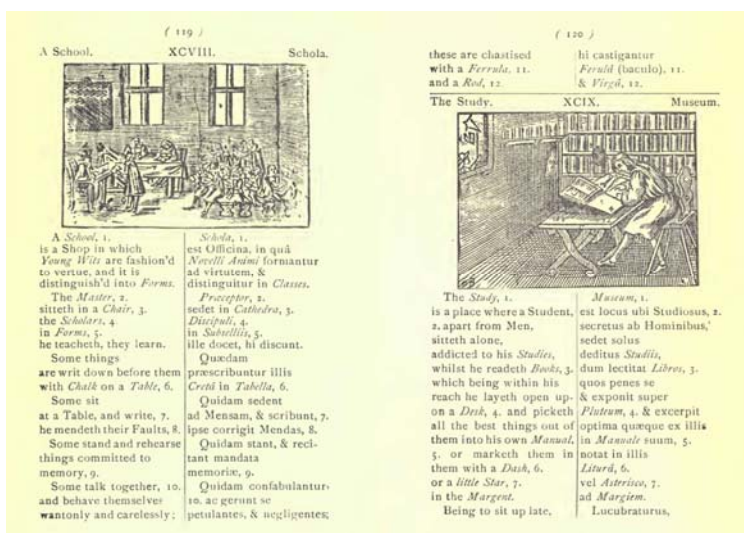
Will AI-created Pictures Make Us Happy?

The publication of the *Orbis Sesualium Pictus* in 1658 marked an undeniable turning point not only in education, but also in the media of knowledge transfer. Originally conceived by John Amos Comenius to disseminate Latin, the universal language of European culture, the pictorial dictionary later spread to many languages and went through numerous editions until the early twentieth century.



English edition of *Orbis pictus* from 1685.

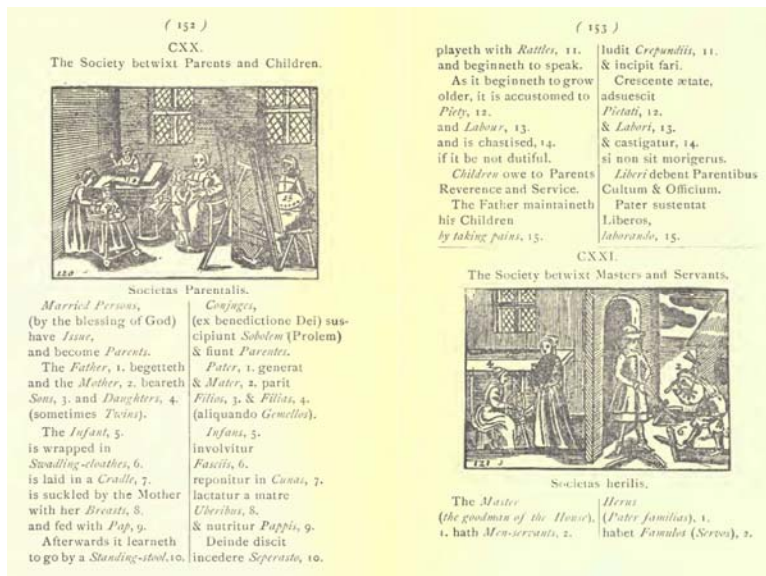
Comenius' work was the first illustrated textbook for regular classroom use, intended for more than just language learning. On the pages of the picture book, elements of the visible world appear mostly in the context of scenes, sometimes in the form of life images, reflecting the worldview, social patterns and behaviors of the time. Textual descriptions, adapted to the narrative structure of the images, are inseparable from the depicted, one without the other would be easily misunderstood. The function of annotated visuals is twofold: they serve both to provide cognition, including an understanding of the world around us and the mental components of culture, and to transmit this perception of the world to future generations.



Pair of pages from the late 1887 English edition of *Orbis Pictus*.

From the 2010s, our visible world is increasingly being mediated through photo-sharing and social media. Fortunately, most of our fellow human beings provide us with up-to-date and abundant visual material about their everyday life and typical situations, but mostly neglecting their textual description and interpretation. This shortcoming gave rise to the forerunners of what we now call arti-

ficial intelligence systems, which annotate photos with textual descriptions of what is being depicted and then sort them according to the labels.



Pair of pages from the late 1887 English edition of *Orbis Pictus*.

It is a trivial task for an algorithm to process image data consisting of many billions of pixel matrices and discover similar, or at least related structures in them. However, the patterns that can be juxtaposed tell nothing about what they depict – if I were not deliberately avoiding the term, I would say that the series of numbers do not mean or represent anything beyond themselves. That’s why it requires human assistance to create the annotated image databases needed for image recognition – very similarly to Comenius’ pictorial dictionary. By training computer programs on these, they can discover parallels, repetitions and similarities between numerical patterns and keywords. Empowered with this knowledge, they can be able to guess what any image (pixel matrix) they receive to judge is likely to depict.



Dávid SZAUDER, Midcentury sorrow.

Going a step further, generative algorithms attempt to create documents similar to those available on the web. Their starting point is the same as for image recognition programs, they just try to create as perfect fakes as possible based on the learned features and similarities.

Clement Greenberg wrote of kitsch in 1939:

Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money – not even their time.

The precondition for kitsch, a condition without which kitsch would be impossible, is the availability close at hand of a fully matured cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions, and perfected self-consciousness kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends. It borrows from it devices, tricks, stratagems, rules of thumb, themes, converts them into a system, and discards the rest. It draws its life blood, so to speak, from this reservoir of accumulated experience.¹

This describes exactly how the tools we nowadays call artificial intelligence work. Their perfection depends mainly on the extent to which they have access to what we understand by universal culture and art. However, access to pictorial information requires a textual description of what is depicted, i.e. an interpretation of the visual – much like Comenius’ pictorial dictionary.



Dávid SZAUDER, martini effect – (nitrogen narcosis).

¹ Clement Greenberg, “Avantgarde and Kitch”, in *Art and Culture – Critical Essays by Clement Greenberg*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1965, pp. 3–21, https://monoskop.org/images/1/12/Greenberg_Clement_Art_and_Culture_Critical_Essays_1965.pdf. Originally published in *Partisan Review*, 1939.

Many of the generative systems that produce images are free to try. To create an image, you need to describe in a few words what you want to represent, usually called a “prompt”. A growing number of websites specialize in selling prompts that are popularly considered to work well.²



Dávid SZAUDER, Midcentury sorrow.

It is also possible to redraw images uploaded, or parts of them, using generative artificial intelligence. This is exactly how Dávid Szauder’s amazing images published on Instagram are made: AI collages of subtly selected image parts, sometimes based on replacing image parts, sometimes based on just a few words of prompt describing the desired change, coloring, environment, mood etc.³

² The search engine of Stable Diffusion can be found at <https://lexica.art/> where image generation tools are also accessible. One example of marketplaces selling popular prompts for generative AI is promptbase: <https://promptbase.com/>.

³ Dávid SZAUDER is an outstanding contemporary visual artist. Brief introductions to his projects can be found on his website: <http://www.davidarielszaunder.com/>.



Dávid SZAUDER, geometric substitutions.

Looking at Szauder's pictures, we can all sense the visual irony, even the virtuosity, that can outwit the facsimile logic of algorithms that navigate from very practical caption labels. On both the creator's and the recipient's side, this is a skill that cannot be algorithmized.

In line with the interests of the companies that operate generative systems, there is a lot of hype around artificial intelligence, most of it negative. A glance at the promotions of sites that create visual fakes reveals at first glance a flood of kitsch; it is hard to imagine that such things have anything to do with value creation. Yet, from the point of view of the artist, these tools are no worse than pencils or brushes – Dávid Szauder's excellent work is a prime example. For the awakening artificial intelligence to be able to do something similar on its own, it would first have to understand and demand as an audience the visual content that cannot be verbalized; above all playfulness and irony.



Dávid SZAUDER, London delicatessen.

Publications by the Committee for Communication and Media Theory,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences:

Petra Aczél – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Communications Theory / Media Theory*
(https://www.academia.edu/37455512/Communications_Theory_Media_Theory_in_Hungarian_), 2018.

Petra Aczél – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Hogyan hivatkozzunk?*
(https://www.academia.edu/41222876/HOW_TO_CITE) – 2019.

Kristóf Nyíri, “HOW TO CITE? The Glory and Misery
of the (author, year) Reference Style”
(https://www.academia.edu/41222876/HOW_TO_CITE), 2020.

Petra Aczél – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Online Communication and the New World of
Scholarship* ([https://www.academia.edu/44372821/
Online_Communication_and_the_New_World_of_Scholarship](https://www.academia.edu/44372821/Online_Communication_and_the_New_World_of_Scholarship)), 2020.

Petra Aczél – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Images of Hell, Images of Heaven:
Can Pictures Alleviate Human Suffering?* (2023)

Volcano outbreaks, wars, climate change, wildfires, floods, epiemics, mass murders, the brutality of so-called justice in bygone ages and today. Images of hell reflecting our hell on earth. How theology deals with the idea of hell, how art pictures it, how our brain reacts to it, how media, past and present, conveys it. Exploiting the experiences gathered in the course of the decade-long history of the Budapest Visual Learning Conference series, the Committee for Communication and Media Theory of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences organized an online workshop on May 30, 2023. We here present the papers as written for the workshop, and uploaded to the http://www.hunfi.hu/nyiri/IM/IM_speakers.pdf site well before the event.

Petra Aczél, PhD, is Vice-Chair of the Committee for Communication and Media Theory, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She is Professor of Rhetoric and Communication at Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design, Budapest. Her main field of research, in which she has published widely in Hungarian and English, is the theory of rhetoric.

Kristóf Nyíri (1944), PhD, Dr. h.c., is a philosophy professor, Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS), and Chair of the Committee for Communication and Media Theory, HAS. He has held various visiting professorships in Austria, Finland, and the USA, and was Leibniz Professor of the University of Leipzig in 2006/2007. His main fields of research are Wittgenstein, the theory of conservatism, communication philosophy, the philosophy of images and the philosophy of time.