СТАТЬИ / ARTICLES

WHY GOD WAS AN ICONOCLAST?
THE VISUAL AND THE PICTORIAL
IN BIBLICAL HIEROTOPY

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This study's point of departure is a question: given that the Old Testament God so categorically prohibits all images, why is His Word, i.e., the Bible, so full of visions and visual imagery? In this paper, the issue is discussed in terms of a distinction between the visual, broadly understood, and the pictorial, relating in a narrow sense to graphic artefacts. I argue that mental images are distinct from and, in a sense, superior to pictures. The latter are contrasted with an 'enhanced' visual imagery that includes sensory and motor images as well. Holistic units of these 'enhanced' visual memories are termed as 'image-experiences'. The first and most important quality of the 'enhanced vision' is its spatial character, which can even predetermine the emotional key of the response. This is particularly the case with 'limitless' natural spaces, such as the sea, the skies, or mountainous landscapes. The complex structure of the natural sublime and its affinity with divine imagery is discussed using the concrete example of the modern European aesthetics of mountains in its historical evolution. Then the paper turns to the hierotopic approach, according to which the spatial experience of religious imagery emerges from organized ensembles of sacred objects and symbolic pointers, conceptualised as spatial icons. Another important quality of the enhanced visual is in its organic link with movement and action. Image-experiences are lived through rather than passively watched. Calvinist visual theology provides a remarkable example of an iconoclast ideology, which explicitly supports the 'enhanced visual' and shows a way to develop it into a form of understanding and transforming the world. The motional/actional aspects of the 'enhanced' visual are further discussed in terms of a hierarchical model of motion control proposed by Nikolai Bernstein in which two kinds of spaces are defined: first, space as a geometric medium of locomotion defined by delimiting surfaces and dynamic constraints; secondly, spaces of purposeful tool-mediated activity as collections of meaningful objects. Our human talent for identifying things by unclear or incomplete features is instrumental to our ability to recognize objects in drawings and photographs. The Bernsteinian system helps to explain why the perception of 2D images is dominated by object-oriented parsing. Hence, there is a danger that the response to pictures be reduced to subject-object interaction in which many important holistic qualities of the enhanced visual would be lost. Hierotopic creativity – the construction of sacred spaces – can be seen as a strategy to mitigate these dangers by integrating image-pictures into higher-level spatial constructs of enhanced visuality.

ПОЧЕМУ БОГ БЫЛ ИКОНОБОРЦЕМ?
ВИЗУАЛЬНОЕ И ИЗОБРАЗИТЕЛЬНОЕ
В БИБЛЕЙСКОЙ ИЕРОТОПИИ

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Отправной точкой данного исследования является вопрос: если Бог Ветхого Завета категорически запрещает любые изображения, то почему Библия полна видений и зрительных образов? Поиск решения проблемы приводит к выявлению принципиальных различий между фигуративными изображениями-картинками и живыми зрительными образами, включёнными в жизненный контекст. В данном исследовании плоские изображения противопоставляются «живому визуальному», которое также включает чувственные, двигательные и действенные образы, обогащающие зрительные воспоминания или плоды зрительного воображения. Первое и главное качество «живого визуального» – его пространственный характер, который сам по себе может предопределять эмоциональный регистр восприятия, как например в случае «безграничных» природных пространств, таких как море, небо, горные пейзажи. На материале становления европейской эстетики гор обсуждается сложная структура природного сублимного и его родство с религиозными образами, пространственную природу которых концептуализирует иеротопия. Два основных понятия иеротопии, пространственная икона и образ-парадигма, представляют собой пространственные образы, порождённые организованным ансамблем сакральных элементов. Визуальная теология кальвинизма даёт важный пример иконоборческой идеологии, которая не только явно опирается на «живое визуальное», но и указывает путь его развития в форму познания и преобразования мира. Второе важное качество «живого визуального» – его органическая связь с движениями и действиями. В иерархической четырёхуровневой системе управления движением, предложенной Н. А. Бернштейном, возникают две модели пространства: во-первых, геометрическая модель среды, в которой осуществляется движение, и, во-вторых, совокупность осмысленных задействованных предметов. Способность зрения идентифицировать предметы по неясным и частичным признакам проявляется в их успешном распознавании на картинках. Восприятие плоских изображений оказывается содержательно обеднённым именно потому, что оно определяется попредметной расшифровкой изображений и лишено важных холистических черт «живого визуального». При этом иеротопическое творчество оказывается эффективной стратегией преодоления этих ограничений путём включения фигуративных изображений в пространственные конструкции «живого визуального».

Ключевые слова: видение, изображение, иконоборчество, сакральное пространство, иеротопия, перформативность, атмосфера, ментальный образ, движение, действие, Н. А. Бернштейн.

Preface

Some time ago, I was teaching a Sunday school class in our local Baptist community. For education and entertainment, I illustrated biblical stories with classical paintings. The kids were rather indifferent, but the headmistress was not. She could not clearly explain what was wrong with my use of pictures, but something was wrong… As I understand now, in her view, I was trying to insert an unwanted intermediate layer between the minds of the students and the Word of God. The children were expected to internalise the biblical stories in a strictly personal way, appropriate them as THEIR stories, not as an artist's fancy. I had to admit that there was indeed some mismatch between the tough austerity of the biblical texts and the colourful attractiveness of the paintings. My career in the Sunday school was over, but I still could not quite understand in what sense pictures hindered the study of the Bible? Was it merely a stubborn sectarianism, or was there more to it?

A few years earlier I had written a paper on the theme of fire in the Bible, which was accepted by the same audience with much appreciation. Although I did not illustrate the paper, it was full of visuality – from the burning bush to "our God is consuming fire" [Simsky 2013]. So, what is the difference? Why are images good when they stand in the text but become dangerous when they are painted? At this point I read a book on the Puritan visual culture by Dyrness [Dyrness 2004], and the issue became clearer: the borderline was not between vision and reading/hearing but between pictures and mental images. Pictures show something external, whereas mental images belong to us and are enriched with diverse associations, in first place actional. Through further reading, I learned about the modelling of spaces via the interplay of vision and movement. The storyline of this essay, from biblical mental images to performative spaces began to take shape…

Introduction

With the immense corpus of theoretical literature around the Bible and its interpretation, it is easy to lose sight of the simple fact that the Bible itself is not a theoretical book at all. Being mostly composed of narratives and visions, the Word of God is highly dynamic and intensely visual in character. The authors of biblical books appear to be wholeheartedly absorbed in a passionate effort to win readers' hearts by evoking their emotions and igniting their imagination. In stark contradiction to the theological tradition engendered by Bible reading, they rarely, if ever, resorted to logical arguments. The breathtaking imagery they use as a rhetorical device might be ambiguous or even unclear in its message. Its main thrust is to overwhelm the readers with the greatness of God in all His Glory. In order to feel awe, one does not necessarily have to understand…

Although the Old Testament God has strictly forbidden the Israelites to represent anything in celestial or earthly realms[1], the history of His relations with them

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[1] "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or in the earth

unrolls as a series of dramatic stories conveyed with vivid imagery, appealing to visual imagination and calling for the use of visual aids. Nevertheless, iconoclasts of all times seem to have taken prohibitions of images at face value[2]. Iconoclastic ideas have had a profound impact on all three major religions of the Book. Even Christianity with its materialized Divinity was subjected to at least two major iconoclastic explosions, those of the Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Reformation. After the dust has settled and icons and religious paintings have taken their assigned places in churches and museums, the Bibles we are reading are still not illustrated, and most devotees would meditate with their eyes closed.

In this work I have chosen to sympathise with the iconoclast point of view in order to better understand what is gained by the prohibition of pictures. The issue at stake is discussed in terms of a distinction (and a tension) between the visual and the pictorial. *The visual* will be broadly understood as lived visual experience taken together with its traces in memory and its reconstruction through imagination. *The pictorial* is what it says: pictures. The questions can be formulated as follows: is the pictorial a fair match for the live visual experience, or only its weak shadow? Is visual theology a matter of picturing or a matter of imagining?

In the constructivist spirit[3], we shall consider vision as an embodied and active process of perception intertwined with movement and action[4]. To avoid lengthy excursions into cognitive science, we shall plausibly, albeit some-what simplistically, assume that the action-oriented structure of lived experi-ence is somehow reflected in the inner realm of memories, imagination, and thinking and subtends a wide range of internal activities, such as daydream-ing, reading a book, or mental replays of past events[5]. Within the paradigm of

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beneath or in the waters below" (Ex. 20:4, NIV). "… watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether shaped as a man of a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird than flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below" (Dt. 4:15–18).

[2] Although these commandments are at the core of iconoclastic argument, the scope of the prohibitions is unclear. Is it only about sculptures (idols)? And what if an image is made for purposes other than worship? We read in the Bible that David placed "cherubim of olive wood" in the Holy of Holies to guard the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kgs. 6:23). One can justify David by saying that it was done without the purpose of veneration, but the cherubim evidently played a role in worship, and it is not clear how far the wooden cherubim stood from their celestial prototypes in the eyes of contem-porary beholders.

[3] We mean here in first place the radical constructivist program rooted in the work of J. Piaget on child development [Glasersfeld 1995; Steffe 2007].

[4] Movements are distinct from actions. In the nutshell, an action is a unit of conscious purposeful activity, while movement is what implements actions. Actions can always be described verbally, while the realm of movements is mostly non-verbal, even if we are aware of them. For example, to tie a shoelace is an action with a stable name, while the required finger movements are not concep-tualized but are rather taught by imitation and repetition. The distinction between movement and action is further detailed in the last section.

[5] The ontogenesis of inner world of thoughts, mental actions, emotions and memories has been in the focus of research since the end of the era of behaviourism by the middle of the last century. Recently,

enaction[6], reading the Bible appears to be an active process of engagement with the reality of a myth. Virtual enacting of the biblical world is a complex synthetic experience, combining, among others, empathy, visual imagination and mental co-action[7]. Sensorimotor imagery as well as the constructs of visual and actional imagination merge together into a life-like virtual reality, incomparable in its import to viewing a picture or a statue. Is this what iconoclastic cultures and movements strive to support when they prohibit images?

We thus arrive at a paradoxical idea: maybe the tendencies to discourage the pictorial within Abrahamic traditions were meant to encourage the much richer mental imagery, which is conceptualised in this work as 'enhanced visual'?[8] Its multifarious visual, sensory, and actional components come naturally bundled together in holistic units[9] which we term as 'image-experiences'. These are essentially spatial images of existential rather than pictorial nature. They resemble live recollections and memories of events and convey the sense of being somewhere or participating in activities. Image-experiences are quite different from image-pictures in the sense that they are virtually lived through rather than passively observed. Whereas pictures are objects of a special kind, representing things external to (and often remote from) ourselves, image-experiences are something that happens to us.

Derek Melser has conceptualized thinking as a variety of action and explained mental action as a normal physical action which execution is held in check [Melser 2004]. The emotion of anger, for example, is thus understood as prohibited (tokenized, in Melser's terms) act of aggression. Drawing upon Melser's theory of thinking and asserting essential unity of physical and mental actions, I put forward the concept of an 'action-thought' [Simsky 2021 a].

[6] The paradigm of enaction makes a radical break with the formalisms of information processing and internal representations [Chomsky 1975; Tye 1991] and grounds cognition in action-based interaction with the world [Stewart et al. 2011]. In this paradigm the roots of mental life ramify through the body and environment [Thompson 2007; Gallagher 2005; Damasio 1999; Lakoff, Johnson 1999; Maturana, Varela 1998]. The principles of 'enactivism' are largely compatible with activity-based approach developed by the Soviet psychological school (Rubinstein, Leontjev); as noted by V. Lektorsky, both can be joined under the common title of "constructive realism" [Lektorsky 2018].

[7] The perception of the actions of others goes through instinctive mimicking, which can be more or less inhibited (i. e., remain 'mental') [Freedberg, Gallese 2007]. This is also true of actions observed in pictures or spoken of in language (action-verbs are perceived as commands). I am not aware of any research dedicated specifically to the hidden biomechanics of reading, but it seems natural to suggest that reading about actions of others works similarly to the observation of actions and that reading experience includes virtually living through the imagined actions and emotions of the protagonists. The term 'co-action' is thus understood in the sense similar to 'co-experience' or a Russian 'soperezhivanie' (сопереживание) [March, Fleer 2009; Blunden 2016].

[8] I was musing on other versions of the term, particularly 'lived visual' or 'live visual' (in Russian "живое визуальное"), where 'live' would have a meaning similar to 'live appearance'. Mimicking programming jargon, one can also think of 'visual++'. In any case, this term implies dealing with a snippet of lived experience and its impression in memory that would preserve all its essential aspects. The way to experience 'enhanced visual' is to live through it via live activity, mental replay or a rehearsal of events or actions.

[9] 'Holistic units' can be understood as 'units of analysis' in a Vygotskian sense, i. e., as indivisible 'cells' of something, exhibiting all or most of the qualities of what is being analysed.

Having a strictly personal character, image-experiences are natural building blocks of the inward religiosity based on a personal man-God relationship. It is for this reason that our exploration of the visual versus pictorial dichotomy echoes the visual theology of Calvinism. In the teaching of Calvin, live visuality is asserted as the foundation of faith, whereas pictures are dismissed as being inadequate to encapsulate authentic spiritual experience. Being grounded in movement and activity, image-experiences support active worldviews.

In order to unearth the actional roots of image-experiences, we shall turn to the four-level model of motion control [Bernstein 1990], which helps us to understand how humans model the spaces they use via movement and action. This approach sheds new light on the performative character of sacred spaces – an epitome of human space-making – as studied using the concept of hierotopy[10]. Hierotopic creativity integrates image-pictures into the meaningful texture of sacred spaces, thus curbing their provocative representational powers[11] and subsuming them into the spatial constructs of the 'enhanced visual'[12].

The sense of the Divine and sublime mountains

The Bible is intentionally unclear on what God is, but it is clear about the attitude that one should have towards Him. While trying to explain God and rationally understand His justice, believers might move away from a true way of knowing Him, that is by self-abasement before His greatness, by love, trust, and sincere worship. This attitude is a relation of devotion, dependence and belonging, similar in nature to the mother-child relationship. A baby does not have to understand what her mother is in a wider sense; the fact of their connection and accompanying sense of warmth and safety are what matter. The same is true of religion: it is the relationship with God that is of importance, more than the knowledge of what He really is.

Once a child grows up, she will at some point begin drawing humans with lines and ovals – and she will draw her mother as well. In these drawings, her mum will look pretty much the same as other humans – the picture will capture little of the emotional richness of their bond. The mother, however, will not

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[10] Hierotopy is the creative activity involved in the making of sacred spaces as well as the branch of humanities which studies examples of such creativity [Lidov 2006 a; Lidov 2009 a], also see Wikipedia on 'hierotopy'.

[11] According to David Freedberg, the power of images is in their propensity to substitute a pictured representation for a live subject [Freedberg 1989]. Iconoclasm is just another manifestation of this power; to attack an image is to acknowledge the reality of its impact [Freedberg 2021]. The impact of images is so strong that it provokes extreme modes of human behaviour, such as fanatic veneration of them as well as mass destruction.

[12] The iconographic programs of specific sacred spaces are discussed in numerous hierotopic case studies. The role of icons in hierotopy was thematized on the theoretical level in [Lidov 2016; Simsky 2020]. In particular, the extreme forms of icon veneration which provoked Byzantine iconoclasm were later restrained by the invention of the post-iconoclastic sacred space with its accent on liturgical themes. In this sacred ambience, the faithful did not have to divide attention between the Eucharist and icons because both were harmoniously integrated in the same sacred space.

frown at (nor forbid, of course) her sketchy portraits – but only because these pictures will never have any impact on their actual connection. There is no danger that in child's eyes the picture will ever replace her live mother – even when she is absent[13]. Maybe the jealous and ever-present God of the Old Testament had stronger reasons to fear images as unwanted substitutes for an authentic personal connection? Maybe this was His way to tell the Israelites that His presence in the world is strong and real, and that any attempt to build a direct relationship with Him shall miss the target if the focus shifts to images? Or maybe His message is more general: we should not over-rely on what we see, and that the invisible truth might be truer than a visible illusion?

The sense of the Divine does not belong to the five physiological senses given to everyone by birth. It is a complex mental construct, which helps believers to give the world a religious interpretation. When we call it a *sense* instead of a *theory*, it is only to accentuate its holistic non-verbal character as well as its relative independence from formulaic doctrines. Although the doctrines differ dramatically between religions, believers of different confessions are praying with a similar 'prayerful' expression that betrays comparable experience. What do we know about this universal core of religious consciousness?

Rudolf Otto has conceptualised the non-rational aspects of religion by introducing the concept of *numinous* [Otto 1936]. He attempted to characterise verbally something that is ineffable by nature and can be described only via emotional facets of the feelings it evokes. The *numinous* is something that stirs the mind with the inseparable mix of awe and fascination, fear and excitement, dread and admiration. Although our response to the numinous can be characterized only by the list of contradictory emotions, this is not due to its vagueness or weakness. We deal here with a strong and definite feeling, a response to the 'wholly other' (in Otto's own terms). It is primarily because of this explicit and pronounced otherness that the numinous does not lend itself to being pictured. Indeed, how would you portray 'wholly other'? Otto thought that music is the most adequate expression of the numinous in art. But if the numinous is not picturable, let us turn to a closely related and more immanent category of the *sublime*, applicable to all genres of art.

The story of the sublime lays bare the complexity of the emotional structure of 'existential' senses as well as the difficulties they present to visual arts. The sublime implies the perception of something overwhelming, gigantic, or potentially dangerous perceived from a place of safety, such as a storm at sea observed from the shore, or a corrida observed from the amphitheatre [Doran 2015]. Let us look in some detail at just one example – mountains[14]. Before the term 'sublime' came to be used to conceptualize a bunch of feelings evoked by mountains, Early Modern alpinists tried to convey their experiences by combining diverging emotions and inventing paradoxical idioms, such as "terrible joy" or "joyful fear". This kind of linguistic creativity was clearly a bit awkward. The real emotion

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[13] Of course, this is not that simple; the dialectics of presence / absence with respect to images is touched upon further in the paper.

[14] In what follows I quote [Simsky 2019], see also [Nicolson 1997].

was a powerful integral experience – even transformational; once lived through, it remained in memory as a unique experience of grandeur and sublimity.

It is owing to compound experiences of this kind that classical aesthetics was complemented with the very non-classical concept of the *sublime*. Indeed, mountains are not beautiful at all in a classical sense[15]. They came to be seen as magnificent owing to their dimensions and their propensity to fill up space. Mountains are majestic ruins[16] and their way to make our hearts beat is quite different from our response to, say, classical architecture. The strategies to store and retrieve visual experiences engendered by mountains are also different. If a classical statue can at least partly be represented by a good quality photo, taken from a carefully chosen angle, with mountains it simply does not work: the photos of mountains are never as impressive as live views. Live experience of mountains is existential; it is something that happens to us.

Mountains are easy to recognize in photos, but no photo will evoke a true sense of being there – unless you have already been there and are able to recall your live experience. A photo will adequately work as an illustration in a geography textbook or a tourist guide, but it might fail to represent personal experience with mountains. The heart of an alpinist is more likely to beat at the sight of his trusty ice axe and a pair of worn-out boots waiting in his basement or attic for the next Alpine destination – because they invoke his recollection of how it really was: with howling winds, a heavy backpack, and an abyss just one step aside… those moments of enacting the world and life lived in full… Sometimes, the ice axe has more to tell than a photo camera…

It is instructive to follow the historical evolution of the representation of mountains in fine art [Simsky 2019]. Starting with 'ugly' mountains of the Renaissance, the story moves on to the cartographic mountains of the Swiss Reformation and to the cosmic grandeur of Bruegel's Alpine landscapes, conveying religious admiration of God's work. Further on, the cultivation of sublimity of the 18th century met with challenges in the domain of visual arts. Indeed, the emotional response to mountains can hardly be represented by contours and colors, however naturalistic. Even with all the learned suspension of disbelief that we draw on when viewing images, pictured mountains seem to be far away and not really very high. Simply put, even if mountains in photos are realistic, they do not impress because they look small.

The modern standard of depicting aesthetically appealing mountains was formed in the second half of the 19th century by enveloping the sublime in classical aesthetic forms. Neoclassical mountains are monumental temples of natural beauty exemplified by aesthetical yardsticks, such as the Alpine Matterhorn or Mont Blanc. In such paintings, mountains were posited at moderate distances,

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[15] The famous book of Edmund Burke thematizes the juxtaposition of the sublime and beautiful. It is worth mentioning that Burke's notion of beauty is, in agreement with the spirit of the epoch, rather subjective than classical. It conceptualizes feelings of peace and pleasure rather than eternal standards of harmony and balance [Burke 1990].

[16] In the foundational book of Thomas Burnet, which marked the beginning of European admiration for mountains, they were explained as ruins of the Flood [Burnet 1965].

their contours gracefully smoothed, the colours in harmony. This way of representing mountains engendered a lasting tradition and has currency up to this day[17].

Conspicuously, a similar approach gained ground in representing the Divine within the Byzantine world. Indeed, what is, in a nutshell, the Eastern iconographic style if not a combination of divine sublimity and classical standards in representing humans? Just look at the 'yardsticks' of Eastern Orthodox iconography, such as the Holy Mandilion, the Theotokos of Vladimir, or Kievan Eucharistic mosaics. In those masterpieces of sacred art, the objective component of classical human beauty balances out the mysticism of a viewer's personal relationship with depicted divine figures. By endowing an icon with 'eternal' classical beauty, its relational aspect acquires stability and timelessness. Together with the likenesses of the Saviour and His Holy Mother, the emotions addressed to them are also, in a sense, canonized. Maybe this is why God disliked images? Having enormous powers and influencing us profoundly, images use (or misuse?) their impact. They shape and even standardize our living relations with the Divine and direct our emotions as well as the ways of expressing them into safe traditional channels.

The mystery of representation: presence or absence?

The visual is much more than a picture. It involves other senses and, most importantly, a sense of space, which, even if essentially based on vision, is also based on a bodily sense of movement and being in space. Moreover, visual memories, even if they convey what feels like a single moment, store in fact a snippet of spatiotemporal experience together with its sense of past and future[18]. Such an experience is embedded in space and time and grounded in a sense of live existence. A visual memory might be virtual and fleeting but it retains all the qualities of a lived experience except for its direct physical reality. A picture, on the contrary, being stable and physically real, is a chunk of dead matter that exhibits intriguing powers to represent living things [Gell 1998; Freedberg 1989]. But this representation, however illusionistic, is, well, an illusion. Pictures show something that is not. Presenting a visible object, they present, at the same time, its absence[19]. To elaborate this point a bit further, let us again turn to mountains.

The complexity of mountainous experiences is owed not only to the diversity of simultaneously evoked emotions, but also to a multifaceted character of constituent primary sensations, joining to form a single spatial image-experience: views, sounds, odours, as well as the emergent synthetic feeling of co-existence

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[17] John Ruskin's writings are foundational for the neoclassical aesthetics of mountains [Della Dora 2016, 193–199; Roussillon-Constanty 2008].

[18] Within the constructivist paradigm, the past and the future are mental constructs embedded in the experience of the present [Simsky et al. 2021].

[19] Remember René Magritte's famous « Ce n'est pas la pipe » ! Wider discussion on the issues of presence can be found in [Belting 1994; Freedberg 1989]

with the landscape. The sheer scale of mountainous vistas, breath-taking heights and depths sharpen the senses and engender the feeling of the limitless. This experience is essentially holistic. If you focus on one particular object in the landscape, the sense of the magnificent whole will disappear. A sense of being part of gigantic scenery is not reducible to any number nor configuration of pictures, however realistic. The very sight of a picture, either lying on a table or hanging on a wall sends to our consciousness a clear signal: "You are NOT there! You are at home, and this is just a piece of paper."

More generally, one important function of fine art is to substitute images for real things[20], i.e., to show what is absent. It is not a coincidence that portraiture has its source in funeral images. It is equally important that the icons of saints function similarly to their relics[21]. In fact, even portraits of Roman emperors were part of the same funerary tradition because the emperor, being a half-god, was already half-dead[22]. Whereas our imagination is trying to enliven our memories and bring something to life, the primary role of pictures would rather be to show something not directly available in the here-and-now or to portray somebody already dead. Maybe this is the reason why some people do not like their portraits taken?[23] Maybe we think it is too early to count ourselves among those who cannot assert their presence without a portrait?

Pictures remind us that life and death are just two aspects of a single process. The past is dying every moment giving birth to the present. To preserve the fleeting moment, the flow of time must be stopped as a running deer is stopped by a hunter's bullet. Perhaps there is a reason why photos are not just *taken* but also *shot*. In real life there are only two possibilities of being fully static: it is either to be represented in a portrait or to be dead – these two modes of existence are inevitably linked. A living thing can be immortalized only by taking it out of the flow of time. It is only by dying that eternal life can be achieved. A family album is a herbarium. A church covered with icons and saturated with relics is the image of Heaven and a cemetery of saints at the same time. Taking the point to the extreme, whereas the visual imagination constructs virtual life, pictures display virtual death[24].

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[20] It is remarkable that first 'realistic' still-lifes displayed luxury items rather than objects of everyday life [Simsky 2018 b].

[21] The embedding of relics of saints into icons is quite revealing of this similarity [Bakalova 2017].

[22] Chiefs of totemic tribes were venerated as if they were already dead. The first kings that appeared in early agricultural societies were meant to be annual human sacrifices to warrant fertility and were venerated as such [Freidenberg 1998].

[23] The very expression "to take a picture" indicates that something important is taken from sitters when their likeness is created [Freedberg 2020]. Freedberg argues that he does not like his own portraits because what he says and does is more important than how he looks. Nevertheless, he admits further, the portraits survive the test of time better than writings.

[24] Cinematography is not included in our discussion of pictorial-visual dichotomy. Having the greatest representational power, it seems to cause the least protest from iconoclastic parties. Indeed, one cannot make an idol out of a filmed image, which changes every moment. One might wonder, what the God of Moses would say about Hollywood?

Sacred spaces and spatial images

The research on multifarious topics around sacred spaces has lately been consolidated under the general title of hierotopy. Hierotopy, as a discipline, studies the creative activities involved in the making of sacred spaces as well as perceptions of and responses to them[25]. The design and perception of sacred spaces have been analysed in terms of *spatial icons* and *image-paradigms*, both terms conceptualizing spatial imagery. A spatial icon is composed of elements distributed in space and animated by resonant collective response and live participation by the beholders[26]. Image-paradigms are instruments to analyse spatial imagery. They are visual mental models of sacred space design and roughly correspond to what we would call 'a theme' in music[27].

The response to sacred spaces is more than a sense of being there, as is primarily the case with landscapes, but rather a sense of active involvement and participation. According to hierotopic interpretation, a sacred space is essentially performative [Lidov 2006 b]. It is a place of actively and purposefully lived experience, a stage on which rituals unfold, or rather, it is the sacred action itself together with its environment. According to N. Isar's concept of 'chorography', the sacred space is a stage of Divine Dance defined performatively via movement and vision; it absorbs individuals and makes them part of a cosmic 'choros' [Isar 2000; 2003; 2006; 2011].

Our main mode of viewing photos or realistic pictures is quite different from our perception of spatial icons. It begins with an object-focused parsing of what is in a picture and ends in the interiorization of the content. The pictorial surface works as a dividing boundary between the viewer's space and the content space of an image, seen as if from outside. Being aware of this problem and seeking to erase the viewer/image divide and to unite both spaces into one, great artists of the past created huge canvases with life-size human figures in the foreground. A brilliant (and rare) example of this kind is Alexander Ivanov's "The appearance of the Messiah", where the space of the image seems to invite us to come in by stepping over the bottom bar of the frame and mingling with the group of figures around John the Baptist[28].

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[25] Hierotopy is best represented by a vast collection of research published in thematic books [Lidov 2006 c; 2009 c; 2013 b; 2017 b; 2019 a; Bogdanovic 2021]. I have previously argued that the genesis of hierotopy was a natural step in the evolution of contemporary studies of visual culture [Simsky 2020; 2021 a].

[26] The notion of a spatial icon can be understood via an analogy with the 3D installations popular in modern art. Hierotopy can be defined as the process which produces spatial icons [Lidov 2006 b; Simsky 2021 a]. Typical examples of spatial icons are 'New Jerusalems', symbolic re-creations of the Holy Land [Lidov 2009 c].

[27] The notion of an *image-paradigm* can be understood as a unit of analysis of the sacred space imagery [Lidov 2006 a; Lidov 2009 b; Simsky 2016; Simsky 2021 a]. It is a mental vision-idea that underpins both the design and the perception of the sacred space. Examples of *image-paradigms* in Christian hierotopy are as follows: Heavenly Jerusalem [Lidov 2009 c; Lidov 2013 a; Simsky 2018 a], Divine Fire [Simsky 2013], the Holy Mountain [Lidov 2019 b], the Temple Veil [Lidov 2014], the Rivers of Paradise [Lidov 2017 c], the Priesthood of the Virgin [Lidov 2017 a].

[28] As a side note, in today's visual experience, the computer screen occupies a special place, being a

The experience of sacred spaces can also be characterized in terms of 'atmospheres', a notion well known from everyday life but introduced only recently into the scholarly discourse [Böhme 2017]. An atmosphere is the emanation of the expressivity of things condensed in space. It is a feeling projected into space which renders the space emotionally tuned, as if charged with a certain mood. We encounter atmospheres practically everywhere: at home, at work, when visiting a stylish restaurant or a shop, in a garden or a park, etc. Experiencing an atmosphere is holistic: if you focus on a particular object, the sense of a whole will disappear. An atmosphere is, in this sense, not objective; it dissolves individual objects in a single all-embracing medium, somewhat similar to how mist works in a traditional Chinese landscape.

A typical example of an atmosphere is homeliness, that is, the sense of being at home in a familiar and warm environment. When we speak of a cosy home, we project into the space of a home our experience of domestic ambience. Needless to say, an atmosphere of a place cannot be captured in a photo. Feelings cannot be photographed. One could draw a house but not a home. The perception of an atmosphere is only possible via immersion in it.

Hierotopic approaches can be applied not only to real physical spaces, but also to the virtual spaces of literature[29]. Every story unfolds in a certain space, which manifests, from the reader's point of view, a kind of captivating force akin to the above-described sacred spaces. While reading a story, we tend to associate with its protagonists and virtually participate in its action that we vividly imagine not so much as a sequence of externally observable *mises-en-scène's*, but rather imagining them as our own actions. Pictorial illustrations to the story might partly support a 'theatre-like' kind of imagination, but not the sense of virtual participation.

Let us take just one example. Imagine you read A. Duma's "The Three Musketeers". A picture could help you to imagine what d'Artagnan looked like, but it is not likely to help you to live through his story in the first person. Rather the opposite is true: pictures will present you with an objectivized vision of how the protagonists and their activity might have looked in their own space and time, distinct from the reader's space and time. It is in this sense that pictures remain at a distance from the viewer. In contrast with the 'performative' feeling of live participation, they create and strengthen subject-object separation. The same dichotomy is at work with biblical imagery.

Picturing Heavenly Jerusalem

Of course, it is no accident that Christian iconography has achieved some success in representing humans. Indeed, icons always show a human side of the story. There is no icon without at least one human figure – and most have more. Icons, as we know them, humanize religion. They shift attention from God

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dynamic visual interactive tool, unlike anything that hitherto existed. The computer screen thus falls out of our visual versus pictorial dichotomy and deserves a separate investigation.

[29] A few studies of hierotopy in literature are available [Blank 2008; Bychkov 2013; Mlechko 2008].

to human actors. All major biblical events are represented iconographically via actions of human protagonists. If the theophany on Mount Sinai is the subject, what we see in icons is a large figure of Moses receiving tablets from a small hand protruding from a cloud. Such an icon shows this event as an episode of Moses' biography, but is this all that the Bible has to tell us about the Sinai theophany? Iconography tends to transform the Bible into a historical documentary, levelling the ups and downs of the unfolding drama into a more or less uniform stream of events. The perpetual tension of human-divine relations, which is the leading theme and main content in the Bible, is largely out of the scope. In medieval icons, Heaven and Earth merge to form a serene all-embracing pictorial atmosphere where men share the same space and time with celestial powers and where miracle are the norm. Do the descriptive pictures of this genre help the reader to get into the Biblical world or do they rather keep him out of it?

Some biblical episodes lend themselves to graphical representation better than others. Let us compare two biblical books dedicated to the themes of love: the Book of Ruth and the Song of Songs. One can easily imagine the Book of Ruth illustrated by a series of pictures. Because we are taught to restore events from pictures, most of us will see an illustrated Book of Ruth as a useful supplement to the story itself, enriching it with some useful details, such as style of clothes or agricultural techniques. The feelings of protagonists are manifest via the flow of events, i. e., more or less in the same way as they are given to us in the biblical text.

The case of the Song of Songs is quite different. Being a poem, it describes feelings, such as the happiness of love and desire of a union. It conveys the state of excitement and idealization of the beloved one. Picturing all this is next to impossible – and I never heard of any attempt worth mentioning. When subjectivity, emotions and relationships drive the bus, little remains for the fine arts – there is even no need for explicit prohibitions.

The above statement borders on truism – everyone knows that it is easier to illustrate a novel than lyrical poetry. Now we shall look at something less obvious – at the representation of visions. Visions are, well, visual, but are they pictorial? Take, just as one example, the famous apocalyptic vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Although it is characterized by the text in purely visual terms, picturing it true to its description is difficult if not impossible[30]. The truer to detail artists try to be when representing the text, the farther they get from 'how we see it'. Indeed, can anyone imagine a cube with a side of about 2000 km, with the walls of gems, 12 doors and the whole shining with Divine Light?

In fact, what the author of the Revelation is describing is not so much a physical entity, but rather a set of awe-inspiring qualities aimed at eliciting admira-

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[30] Because this work is focused on vision, we skip the discussion of doctrinal and soteriological aspects of such notions as Heavenly Jerusalem. In previous publications, I proposed to encapsulate religious experience in units termed as 'image-concepts' [Simsky 2016; Simsky 2018 a; Simsky 2021 a]. Our definition of 'Image-concepts' can be compared to Freidenberg's theory of how images merge with concepts: "(In the ancient Greek literature) concepts are as if on top of images and they have to be studied together. … image and concept form a single meaningful entity, which is dissected only by scientists" [Freidenberg 1998, 130].

tion and awe: grandeur, shine, preciousness, and a sense of God's presence. The visual aspects of such visions are not meant to combine into a realistic 3D object but are rather connected by their metaphoric values similarly to how words are connected in a sentence. In fact, what an artist would have to represent in lines and colors is not a definite object but sublimity at its highest, where it merges with the Divine to produce a powerfully majestic, aestheticized experience of the otherworldly.

In my previous work on the imagery of Heavenly Jerusalem I outlined a few devices successfully used by artists involved with the subject [Simsky 2018 a]. A common solution is to suggest instead of directly representing. The most refined example of this kind is the famous rotunda of St. George in Thessaloniki, where a lacework of fantastic architecture covers the dome as if coming down from Heaven itself [Lidov 1998 a]. Another popular solution was to use stock items of Jerusalemite imagery to invoke associations with the heavenly counterpart of the earthly city.

In the minds of Christian believers, the earthly and celestial Jerusalems are connected: they are both holy places where God's presence is at its highest – places where earth and heaven meet. It is only natural that the place of such a degree of holiness is not picturable, even if it is conveyed by a text via a set of visual features. When invoked by imagination, these features bundle up without forming a definite physical object. The vision may be visual, but it remains, in a sense, invisible, unimaginable in its entirety. Being a single vision, it does not necessarily correspond to a single physical object embedded in the physical space.

It is easy to come up with more examples. Divine Light is surely visual, but is it pictorial? Or, to take another example, how would you depict "eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully" on the beast's horn (Dan. 7:8)? In fact, difficulties representing Divine visions are not unexpected. What is truly Divine must be ineffable, hence invisible in a sense of earthly visibility. Even if it is characterized through its visual traits, the entire vision cannot be defined as a sum of these traits – trying to assemble such a sum to construct a single picturable object could easily end up in a caricature.

More on Biblical imagery

The main approach in this paper is ahistorical. I discuss 'the visual' and 'the pictorial' as general categories, ignoring their historical evolution[31]. My intent is to show that visual imagination (broadly understood) communicates a lot more than pictures are able to show. Pictures are no more than shadows of visual experiences and clumsy aids to visual imagination that rather ground its free flight,

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[31] An ahistorical approach lies at the deep core of any scientific method essentially based on universals. It tends to apply the same measures to different phenomena, discovering their commonality but ignoring their uniqueness. "Our problem is that we are talking and thinking in general abstract notions which inadequately generalize diverse phenomena (state, nation, democracy), hence we apply the same general categories to think and talk about very different things" [Freidenberg 1998, 11].

suppress its personal character, and discourage its intimate creativity. Even if these accusations are not entirely fair, in this study we intentionally take an iconoclastic standpoint for the sake of better understanding iconoclastic motivation and reasoning as well as the ensuing worldview.

However, historicity cannot be completely avoided. It is quite important to recognise that the Bible was written at times when visual imagination was the main mode of thinking and myth was not a fairy-tale apart from 'real' history but the one and only reality available[32]. Ideas were born in visual forms rather than as pure abstractions, and the distinction between imagination and other forms of thinking was blurred. Any myth is a good example of the 'enhanced visual'. Its visual appearance as a human story is complemented by its cosmic plan, which was originally perceived not as a separate set of symbolized meanings (as it appears to us upon analysis) but was from the very beginning merged together with the narrative plan, forming a single undivided reality of a myth. An illustrative picture would accentuate the aspect of biographical narration and reduce a myth to a folk tale.

Moreover, asserting the visual character of a myth is insufficient. Even broadening the statement by replacing 'visual' with 'sensory' is not enough[33]. The experience of the myth is, in first place, actional. It is the plot of the story, its actional backbone that keeps it together, while its sensory 'flesh' largely forms an accompaniment to actions. The most natural way of living through a myth is by re-enacting in, either in a ritual or internally, by mental engagement. Scientists argue about what came first – myths or rituals? Is a verbal myth merely an embellished account of a ritual? Or are the two born together? All that we know about rituals speaks of re-enactment. The nature of all initiatory mystery rituals is in intimate self-identification of the initiated with a divine figure within the re-enacted story. The same love for re-enactment, for 'as if' actions is evident in the games of children who are not yet indoctrinated with the plain matter-of-fact worldview of today's adults.

Visual imagination combined with virtual re-enactment is also a natural way to read the Bible and live in its world. Both narrations and direct descriptions of visions solicit the reader's imagination and empathy. While reading the Bible, Christians of all kinds, even the most iconoclastic, deal with the same imagery, which is simply based on the text. Just to give one example, a New England Puritan preacher, with all his iconoclastic convictions, could address his congregation in this way: "O Communicant, can you come to the foot of Christ's cross and see his wounds… Can you behold Christ thus cruelly used, nailed to the tree, bleeding and dying in your room? Can you see the heavens turning black, the sun drawing in its head, the earth quaking and the rocks rending at the sufferings of the Son of God…"[34]. The kind of response that the preacher was trying to evoke is a clear instance of an image-experience drawing on all the modalities of

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[32] For a review of approaches in mythology see [Beryozkin 2009].

[33] "A myth is to a much greater degree a sensual being than super-sensual" [Losev 2001, 57]. In my view Losev stopped short before appreciating an actional nature of a myth.

[34] This is a quote from a sermon by John Willison [Dyrness 2004, 245].

the enhanced visual. This response was a vision of a clearly spatial character and it could also be characterised as a 'mental spatial icon'.

But how about illustrated Bibles? Would they help to animate all this imagery, or rather muffle its emotional saturation and lived-in subjectivity? Or, would they wash away the ever-present but never-seen dialog with the living God, who always stays out of pictures even if being palpably present in the story? In the Bible Moses prays to God with all his strength, while in the picture he just stands with his hands raised to the sky. Will such a picture really help to boost reader's faith, or it will rather invite a blunt question: "Why do I have to believe that God exists if I don't see him?" The fact is that the vast majority of today's Bibles are not illustrated[35], with a notable exception of children Bibles, where simplified pictures match the simplified text.

Pictures appear and gain ground when external objects come in the focus of attention. Think of a prehistoric hunter drawing inspiration for tomorrow's hunting party in front of a mural displaying his potential prey. Murals substitute for live animals and make virtual targets, which help the hunter to mentally rehearse and tune up to his challenging task[36]. It is quite important that graphically represented targets of his action remain external to the hunter. The situation changes when the hunter learns the benefit of a sacrifice, namely that he can absorb and internalize the powers of the sacrificial animal or a god, incarnate in it [Hubert, Mauss 1964; Hocart 1970]. The meaning of the sacrifice is internal and does not lend itself to a visual representation.

Pictures can become a stumbling block not only for the spirituality of religion but also for its materiality, in particular, as it is epitomized in the sacrifice. Remember that Byzantine iconoclasm was justified by reference to the Eucharist as the only true icon of Christ [Gero 1975; Baranov 2010]. The deification of matter in Eucharist is clearly beyond the direct reach of iconography[37]. Hence, it is easy to state one more obvious weakness of pictures: they show the forms of things, not their essence, thus focusing viewer's attention on the appearance[38]. If the body of Christ is given in the guise of bread, it is only the bread that pictures can show.

When deprived of icon-images, Christian imagination inevitably turns to the Bible as the source of sacred imagery. The history of Protestantism teaches us that the removal of external imagery from worship helped devotees to "return

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[35] During first decades of the Reformation, Protestant Bibles were even more lavishly illustrated than Catholic Bibles [Benedict 1999, 33], but in 1580 illustrated Bibles were forbidden in Geneva, which promptly resonated across other Reformed communities [Dyrness 2004, 123].

[36] Modern research has shown that only part of zoomorphic cave art was linked to hunting. It appears that the cult of the chthonic fertility goddess was behind the creation of cave temples representing the life-giving uterus of the Earth-goddess and covered with images of procreated animal life [Gorshunova 2018].

[37] What cannot be directly depicted can be represented in a more subtle way. With regards to the Eucharist, this can be seen in Byzantine post-iconoclastic iconographic programs with their pronounced liturgical connotations [Lidov 1998 b].

[38] This is not that simple; it should not be ignored that images also have materiality [Pencheva 2010]. Material aspects of images are out of the scope of this work.

more completely to the intense, richly imagined world of the biblical primordium" [Bozeman 1988, 33]. Bereft of the shared imagery of visual arts, which would always tell its story 'in the third person,' the Protestant biblical imagination was rooted from the outset in a strong sense of personal involvement with the biblical narrative. From mental participation in biblical narrative as an aspect of reading or listening to sermons, Protestant minds turned to the re-enactment of the biblical narrative in personal as well as in national lives and, yet further, to the transformation of the world itself along the lines of the godly order [Dyrness 2004]. Since the surrounding world was understood as the "theater of His Glory", believers, their families and larger communities came to see their lives and activities as roles in a God-inspired drama they were acting out [Schreiner 1991].

The Protestant world was defined in biblical terms and populated by biblical characters. The flow of existence was seen through the 'eyeglasses of Scriptures' [Calvin b, 49]. To give just one telling example, the patriotism of the Dutch Republic had a significantly biblical flavour, drawing upon the stories and the imagery of the Flood and Exodus. The Dutch, as the "children of Israel" were led by Willem the Silent as a new Moses to the Promised land of Holland. Inundations were seen as cleansing Floods renewing Noah's covenant with God [Schama 1987; Simsky 2015]. In the next section the theological foundations of the Protestant visual theology will be outlined in greater detail.

The vision and imagination of the Protestant Reformation

The main quest of this research can be formulated as an inquiry about the 'hidden agenda' of iconoclasm. Is the prohibition of images directed against visual imagination in all its forms, or does it suppress only the use of external man-made images but, at the same time, encourages holistic mental imagery and creative internal imagination? I hope that at this point the reader at least partly agrees that the development of personal imagination may be a natural 'side effect' of any iconoclasm. But to bring the point home we need to find cases where this 'hidden agenda' was explicitly formulated, i. e., where iconoclast doctrines, prohibiting or limiting the pictorial, at the same time explicitly accentuated live visuality. Such case studies would help to reinforce our exploration of the pictorial versus 'enhanced visual' dichotomy by direct theological evidence. One important example of this kind is found in the Protestant Reformation, particularly in Calvinism.

Whereas Calvin rejected any attempt to picture Divinity as inherently inadequate, he asserted the iconic status of the whole visible world[39]. The whole creation, according to Calvin, is an image of God in which He "clothes himself, so to speak, … to present himself to our contemplation" [Calvin a, 25]. Inviting us to the knowledge of himself, He "… places the fabric of heaven and earth before our eyes, rendering himself, in a certain manner, manifest in them" [Calvin a, 24].

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[39] Similar ideas can be found in the works of other reformers. Luther, in particular "dramatically emphasized God's presence in every rock, leaf, tree, animal, cloud, and section of creation to such an extent that he sometimes sounds pantheistic" [Schreiner 1991, 116].

The magnificence of this world-icon is visible to everyone: "… on each of His works His Glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse" [Calvin b, 40].

Vision has a prominent place in Calvin's theology. God, being himself invisible, is visible in His Creation. Therefore "… we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold Him …" [Calvin b, 40] and "… it becomes a man seriously to employ his eyes in considering the works of God, since a place has been assigned to him in this most glorious theatre that he may be a spectator of them…" [Calvin b, 50].

Getting to know God in His works is a process of active embodied perception, akin to what we defined above as 'enhanced visuality'. It is a holistic existential experience, which involves all the senses. "We see, indeed, the world with our eyes, we tread the world with our feet, we touch innumerable kinds of God's works with our hands, we inhale a sweet and pleasant fragrance from herbs and flowers, we enjoy boundless benefits; but in those very things of which we attain some knowledge, there dwells such an immensity of Divine power, goodness and wisdom, as absorbs all our senses."[Calvin a, 23] This synthetic experience engenders the pious admiration of Divine wisdom and is abstracted into a special form of knowledge, which Calvin elucidates as follows: "… in each of the works of God, and more especially in the whole of them taken together, the divine perfections are delineated as in a picture, and the whole human race is thereby invited and allured to acquire the knowledge of God…" [Calvin b, 45].

In the latter quote, Calvin compares the visible world to a picture. This does not contradict his iconoclasm, but rather accentuates it in a peculiar way. Indeed, if God clearly calls us to worship Him in His creation – so magnificent but yet just an image – then how would we dare worship images of divine things made with our clumsy hands? According to the Calvinist doctrine, instead of piercing the clouds in vain attempts to encounter the Divinity in its seat, we should foster the right type of vision to be able to see God in His works. Everyone has eyes, but only some can see… This special way of seeing has 'enhanced visual' at its core but it goes beyond this to manifest itself as the highest form of understanding and faith. Indeed, what is seen cannot be argued about, whereas speculative truths can always be challenged.

A more detailed theoretical analysis of the Calvinist concept of vision is out of the scope of this work. We know that Calvinism inspired at least two distinct forms of visual culture: first, the Dutch Golden Age with its flowering of secular painting that, arguably, retained some of the iconic quality of the Calvinist vision [Simsky 2018 b]; secondly, the New England Puritan culture with its generally reticent attitude towards the visual arts coupled with extensive use of imagery in sermons, poetry, and meditation [Dyrness 2004]. The Puritan culture provide ample evidence for a purposeful use of imagination outside of the visual arts, particularly in preaching.

 Just to give one example, John Cotton, a famous New England preacher, used "repetition and parallelism to hold the image in the reader's mind, so that the total effect of the passage is not to strip away the metaphors but endow them

with life. The end result is that the meaning and the image (which often is visual and even tactile and not simply oral) are held together in a way that enhances the impact of the message" [Dyrness 2004, 178]. Referring the reader to the same book for further examples of creative poetic imagery, let us turn to meditation practices with a particular focus on differences between Catholic and Protestant imagination.

The Catholic imagination, drawing upon a stock of shared images, externalized in artistic form and available to everyone, was driven by the vivid imagining of scenes in which a meditator was mystically participating. The scene was imagined as if taking place in his presence and drew the meditator from his physical profane environment into the imagined sacred space populated with heavenly actors. In all cases the believer remained an observer of a vision external to himself. The goal of a Catholic meditator was to temporarily escape from the prophane world in order to appropriate and retain some of the sanctity gained by the short glimpse of the heavenly realm.

The Protestant imagination followed the opposite route. Devoid of ready-made visual clues, it worked through a highly personalised appropriation of the biblical narrative. Derived from the reading of visually rich and action-filled texts, it moved an adept to live through the story as if happening to himself, impersonating biblical characters and – further on – acting out his / her part in the earthly setting, which would thus take on some of the qualities of a sacred space[40]. The Protestant meditation was not an escape from this world but rather an acquisition of a new way of looking at. The meditator's actual environment would be remodeled into a stage on which a Bible-inspired drama of his or her existence would unfold. Instead of trying to encounter the holy by transcending the earth/heaven frontier, Protestants were importing sacred meanings into their actual daily lives[41].

The Protestant experience, even in its most mystical components, did not imply withdrawal from the world, but rather intensified the involvement in it. The intense desire to give new life to biblical semantics evinced an ambivalent motivation in which the conservative tendency to reorder life after ancient biblical patterns coexisted with the millenarist utopic urge to build heaven on earth. Even agriculture was endowed with religious meanings: the practice of surrounding towns with orchards and kitchen gardens was seen both as building a more comfortable and affluent future, and as re-making of the Garden of Eden. Indeed, God intended that a garden rather than a wild forest was a proper habitat for man, while uncultivated and barren land was a consequence of the fall [Dyrness 2004, 267].

The Protestant hierotopy was inspired by this active worldview. Every piece of land was ready to be converted into a sacred space shining with His Glory. But its sacredness was a subjective matter: one had to wear 'biblical eyeglasses' to

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[40] This phenomenon was previously characterized as 'Protestant hierotopy' [Simsky 2018 b].

[41] Barbara Lewalski, to whom I am indebted for this comparison of Ignatian and Protestant meditations, contended that this mindset engendered a uniquely Protestant type of poetry, namely the devotional lyric [Lewalski 1979, 149].

see the sacred dimension. Those devoid of a godly vision saw only farms in good order. Future secularization, evident in the 19th century, would dilute or even completely wash away the spiritual component.

The embodied vision and performative spaces

Philosophies of the past have given much attention to perception. It was studied as a stand-alone and self-sufficient part of human existence. Cognition was modelled as the computer-like processing of raw data passively collected by perception [Tye 1991]. The armchair philosopher figured implicitly as a stereotypical agent of cognition. This contemplative strand was dominant until the second half of the last century, when the leading role of activity and movement was recognized. "Action = cognition" has become the motto of this new science. Perception came to be seen as subordinate to activity, and its primary role to provide feedback data for action and motion control. Simply put, we got eyes because they help us move.

level	Feedback signals	Spatial orientation	Examples	Function in the system
D	What-vision	Object-filled space, topology	Cooking, (un)dressing	Conscious object-oriented actions
C	Where-vision and other senses	Stable external space, angles, distances, directions	Aiming, copying a drawing, walking on steps or slopes	Adaptation of motion, control of precisely directed motion
B	Proprioception	Body reference	Gymnastics, turning in bed, handwriting	Skeletal muscle coordination
A	Paleo-reflectory	Tropism (up/down)	Peristaltics	Tonus control

Table 1. Levels of motion control; based on Bernstein 1990.

Today's achievements of cognitive science have yet to make their way into the realms of art theory and cultural studies. The abundance of literature on embodied cognition and action-oriented theories of mind does not make the task easier[42]. Our search for a reliable guiding thread in a maze of facts and concepts brought us to the classical works of N. A. Bernstein, who developed a hierarchical system of motion control [Bernstein 1990]. The structure of his four-level system is presented in Table 1[43]. As Bernstein explains, the evolution of the central neural system proceeds not so much by the refinement of existing mechanisms, but rather by the formation of new layers of control which subsume older command centres and integrate them into higher-level activity while keeping intact

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[42] One approach is to analyze the 'power of images' by studying physiological mechanisms of response to the visual perception of fine art [Freedberg, Gallese 2007; Freedberg 2014].

[43] This table is a summary of corresponding sections of Bernstein's book and was first compiled by

their autonomous way of working. Similar to administrative hierarchy in organizations, each level uses its own sources of information, skills and command language, transparent to higher-level centres, which focus on the tasks on their levels. Each level is independent in a cybernetic sense, being able to close its controlling loops with the use of its own signalling / feedback system, the latter being of paramount importance for shaping the character of the level. Bernstein has divided the system of motion control into four major levels, each one being an independent control system – in a sense, a separate 'creature'.

The two lower levels of his system (A and B) are responsible for unconscious coordination of skeletal muscles and rely on proprioception for feedback, while two higher layers C and D – levels of movement and of action respectively – are both vision- and space-based and are relevant to the topic of this study. While level B is the realm of well-rehearsed automatic movement patterns, level C works with the model of absolute space where the movement transpires. It adapts the movement to spatial constraints. For example, level B executes the walking cycle, while level C ensures that we don't stumble. Level C enables us to walk up and down staircases or slopes and to avoid obstacles. The space of the level C is an empty stage available for locomotion. Its model is essentially geometrical. It knows all about distances, directions, shapes and surfaces. But it knows nothing about the goals of the movement – this is the competence of level D, which is responsible for actions.

Level D manages actions which organize movements as flexibly controlled processes aimed at achieving definite goals, typically with the use of tools. Actions also unfold in space, but this space is quite different from the space of level C. The level D space is filled with 'things', i.e., objects with meaning. If the level C space is geometrical, the level D space is topological. It is concerned with issues of availability and ease of access. The primary visual faculty of level D is to recognize things in visible objects. The space of level D is essentially a storage space.

The distinction between levels C and D and their spaces will help us to give a better structured definition of the 'enhanced visual', in which we shall also identify two levels. Following popular terminology, the spaces of levels C and D can be characterized as 'where-space' and 'what-space' respectively[44]. Our 'level-C creature' might be impressed by sheer dimensions of space and by its emptiness, the freedom of movement, safety and lack of obstacles. Level C mentality is in the root of our fascination with grand empty spaces, such as skies, seas, mountains, giant cathedrals with high domes, etc. On this level the sense of being in space and moving through it can still be devoid of any conscious goals. Tourism, for example, however tiring it could be, is still seen as a kind of leisure rather than a kind or work. This is because the essence of tourism consists in 'purposeless'

B. M. Velichkovsky who also completed it with higher levels [Velichkovsky 2006, 271]. In this work I use an abridged version of the table from an earlier paper [Simsky 2021 b].

[44] We mimic here a well-known distinction between two tracts of processing visual information: 'where-vision' (low level) and 'what-vision' (cortical). Within the framework of Bernsteinian approach, these two are signaling systems for levels C and D respectively.

going or staying somewhere and in resting our overloaded level D, perpetually tired of its obsessively calculative, ever-practical nature.

The distinction of level-C and level-D spaces helps us to identify two aspects of vision as they are integrated into activity. In our concept of the 'enhanced visual' the same two levels can be identified, although in the final analysis they invariably merge together. Both levels contribute in different ways to the performative nature of hierotopy.

 Level C forms the general spatial character of vision, a sense of being part of a space, the enjoyment of natural landscapes, and the fascination with vastness and freedom of movement. In hierotopy, level C is responsible for the holistic aspect of the perception of space as space, as distinct from a surface, the latter being a delimiting boundary of movement, while the former is its arena and support. This level contains the potentiality and even necessity of motion[45] and is, in this sense, performative. Level C deals with space as a stage for actions which unfold on level D.

The space of level D is a collection of things and meanings structured around purposeful actions. The development of level D in humans brought about an important innovation: the possibility of separating level D from lower 'executive' levels by mentally replaying actions without physically implementing them. Thus, actional imagination was born, being as entirely merged with visual imagination, as action is inseparable from vision. Level D creates a space of action – and of its mental re-enactment. In hierotopy, this is the ritual space – and, as its derivative – the interiorized space of mystical experience.

Level D vision focuses on the recognition of things, a skill in which we record high achievements. We are able to recognize a thing by a small piece, protruding from under a heap of other 'stuff'. We readily recognize an aeroplane in a small plastic model, devoid of almost all qualities of a real aeroplane. This object-recognition talent helps us to successfully meet such challenges as recognizing cars, houses and humans in children's drawings. The latter example lays bare the fact of the topological, rather than geometrical nature of our object-recognition, unmistakably revealing its level-D character: size and proportions do not matter, as long as the right number of legs, arms and eyes are connected by a 'correct' spatial relationship. Our object-recognition capability is tested, teased, played with, and at times stretched to the limits by modernist fine art with its simplified, distorted, disintegrated and outright abstract or even altogether disappearing forms.

Our well-trained skill in identifying things by vague or incomplete features is instrumental to our ability to recognize objects in drawings and photographs. The perception of 2D images is driven by object-wise parsing. The first (possibly implicit) question we ask ourselves while looking at a picture is: "What is shown here?" Chances are the response to a picture will remain on the level of subject-object interaction in which many important holistic qualities of the enhanced visual would be lost. In particular, the motion-dependent level C component,

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[45] As proven by Noe and others, visual perception is in itself a process of movement, and is possible only as such [Noë 2006].

responsible for embedding the level D objects into a geometrical space model, is inactive in the pictorial vision. Hence, the perception of 2D images is typically neither spatial nor performative.

Hierotopic creativity, by contrast, collectivises individual objects and images into an organized symphony with higher-level messages of its own. When a sacred space (as well as any other human space) is lived in, activities of C and D levels are merged in a natural way, and individual objects are 'dissolved' in a collective atmosphere animated by performative cooperation of all participants.

Vision and action. Questions and future work

The juxtaposition of the enhanced visual versus the pictorial might seem artificial and provokes many questions. Indeed, why do they have to be mutually exclusive? Why can they not be complementary? Come on, pictures can also spur imagination! How typical is the case of Calvinism with its explicit accent on vision? Are icons not engaging devotees to tap into holiness by internal self-making activity? Can we generalize our conclusions to other Christian confessions or sects, or to Judaism and Islam?

At this initial stage of this research, I am unable to provide satisfactory answers to all these and other emerging questions. Most of them are a matter of future work and require further elaboration of analysis to ameliorate a sketchy character of this work. In what follows I am trying to formulate a few possible directions of further research.

In this work, Byzantine icons were counted within the broad category of '2D images', which were characterized in general terms as any images depicting objects, persons and scenes external to viewers. But icons are known to be quite special and, in a sense, spatial images. They engage viewers into a live dialog with divine figures represented in them, and might even engender a transformational experience, triggering interior activity of 'inner making'. But this would not change our general conclusions because this experience stays within a general tendency towards asceticism and introversion typical for traditional Christianity. Icons engender elating timeless experience akin to Ignatian meditation which we juxtaposed to the Protestant this-worldly perspective on holiness.

Importantly, the case study of Calvinism shows a relatedness (if not a proven causal link) of an iconoclast ideology and a highly personalized action-oriented way of reading the Scriptures. Instead of imagining a story in a picture-like manner, i.e., as something taking place externally, the story is lived through as the readers' own action – and it continues in an active world view in real life. Can this statement be generalized? I am no expert in Islam, but at first sight it seems to be applicable at least to some groups who claim to enact Quran in their lives here and now. In fact, some flavours of Moslem iconoclasm are stricter than the Calvinist – and their acting out of the Scriptures can also be more direct and radical.

In the previous section we learned that vision and action come together. We act when we see, and we see when we act. But on the level of culture and formulaic doctrines one of the two likely takes the lead. There may be an interplay between vision-response (more contemplative) and action-response (just do it).

Calvinism was clearly on the contemplative side. Calvin did not accentuate the call to action as directly as his explicit appeal to contemplate the works of God. It is due to a tight organic link between vision and action that his call to see was translated into a call to act. Protestants are active in this world not because their doctrines explicitly call for it, but because of the this-worldly orientation of their vision. In other cases, the call for action could be more explicit.

Closing: through space and time

The very essence of the pictorial is to represent objects and humans-as-objects. The issue is whether that supports the visual imagination or rather inhibits it by prescribing a limited set of clichés? Without pictures we would never know how people, natural features and things look in the places that we never had a chance to visit. But if I want to imagine my trip to a faraway country, something along the lines of one of Jules Verne's novels, I have to mobilize my own imagination, using available images as a source of raw material from which to model my own visual story, combining stock imagery from pictorial sources with actional/visual experiences of my own.

Images help not only to travel through space but also to travel through time. Without photos I would not remember what my grandfather looked like. But if I wanted to recall him as a person with whom I was close, do I want to keep staring at his static photographed likeness? I would probably rather close my eyes to turn off the necessary but somewhat annoying visual display of the daily world, oversaturated with a tiring abundance of things and meanings, and focus on a mentally enacted dialog with him, my grandpa, approaching me from the realm of shadows… In the end, what my grandfather had to say is far more important than how exactly he looked. His photo represents only one fleeting moment of his ever-variable appearance. And it keeps reminding me that he is not with us…

Or, possibly, I want to place some of his mementos near his framed photo, creating a little 'hierotopic' space of his presence. The photo, however imperfect in the function of a standalone solo-substitute, can nicely serve as a kind of an 'altarpiece', a thematic title of my little sanctuary, if only as an indication of to whom this display of memory is dedicated. Keeping the portrait with its ambiguous 'present-but-absent' message at a respectable distance, I will be happy to have found the right place for it, curbing its somewhat disturbing powers by tight integration into the structure of its final homely destination.

Conclusions

This research was inspired by a question: why is the Bible so saturated with imagery if God himself explicitly forbade images? The approach to the problem was sought along the lines of comparing live visual experiences with the perception of pictures, the latter being impoverished in some important respects compared to the former. The embodied live visuality has a distinctly spatial character. It is enriched by sensorimotor images and intertwined with movement and actions. The instances of such imagery, referred to in this work as 'image-expe-

riences', may arise, in particular, from a sense of being somewhere or may have an 'atmospheric' character. The import of the pictures is ambivalent: representing something that is not present, they point, at the same time, at its absence.

The biblical imagery, despite its distinctly visual character, does not easily lends itself to pictorial representation. Biblical visions, for example, are described in the text in expressly visual terms, but they often are not imaginable as physical objects or scenes embedded in space and time. While the reader's attention is drawn to certain disjointed features of a vision, it may be hard to reconstruct a single picturable figure matching such a description. In fact, this is not surprising because the main function of pictures, in which they are known to be successful, is to represent objects, living beings and humans that can be identified by viewers, i. e., those that are already in some way known to them. Divine visions just do not belong to this category. They are unique and ineffable by nature; they even may appear to a medium in a trance. On a more general level, the intense feeling of God's strong but invisible presence, so characteristic of the biblical narrative, is an obvious challenge for the fine arts that are good at representing the visible side of the story.

The biblical narratives may engage imagination in two ways: (1) as theatre-like representations of events external to the reader or (2) as stories virtually enacted by the reader in the first person. When image-pictures are inhibited, the focus shifts towards the second, more holistic and personal modus of reading which can be analysed in terms of image-experiences. An actional mode of reading brings about a particularly tight association of the reader with the biblical reality and may inspire him to enact the biblical world in his own life.

Therefore, it is not surprising that iconoclastic cultures encourage active worldviews and a direct vision of the world 'as is,' not 'distorted' by the impact of visual clichés. Particularly, in the teaching of Calvin, live visuality has theological significance as a means to know God. The Calvinist vision is oriented towards this world, but it requires 'biblical eyeglasses' to see the iconic dimension of daily life and to use this vision as the basis of understanding and transforming the world.

Another way of dealing with the 'power of images' is found in the Byzantine culture where ensembles of icons populate sacred spaces, informing *spatial icons* and *image-paradigm*s which evince essentially spatial character. The perception of these hierotopic structures relies on the embodied 'enhanced visuality', subsuming the pictures as meaning-making elements into the overall hierotopic design. The hierotopic creativity appears to be a successful strategy to overcome the limitations of flat pictures by integrating them into the higher-level spatial imagery.

In closing – last but not least – it is shown that the performative character of sacred spaces is rooted in the genesis of all human spaces defined through movement and action.

Acknowledgements

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