

Stijn Bussels

THE ANIMATED IMAGE

Roman Theory on Naturalism,
Vividness and Divine Power



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Herausgegeben von
Uwe Fleckner
Julia Gelshorn
Margit Kern
Bruno Reudenbach

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Herausgegeben von
Caroline van Eck
Uwe Fleckner

Stijn Bussels

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1 Mural painting of the Villa of Livia, trompe-l'œil of a garden (detail), 30–20 BC, Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano

INTRODUCTION

In Lucian's *The Lover of Lies*, a certain Tychiades has to listen to “many incredible yarns” in a conversation at the house of Eucrates. In vain the host and his guests, a group of self-declared philosophers, try to convince Tychiades that they have experienced diverse supernatural phenomena. For Tychiades, one of the most irritating moments occurs when Eucrates discusses the bronze statue of a Corinthian general which stands in his hall. The host explains without any hesitation or awkwardness how he and everyone else in his house treats the portrait as a cult image. They offer it sacrifices to cure fever. But for Tychiades things only get worse when Eucrates gives a detailed description of how this statue lives an everyday life:

[...] we all encounter him, sometimes singing, and he has never harmed anybody. One has but to turn aside, and he passes without molesting in any way those who saw him. Upon my word, he often takes baths and disports himself all night, so that the water can be heard splashing (19).¹

The account of the portrait's daily activities does not convince Tychiades at all. He regards the description as the purest nonsense. As good as the sculptor may have been, he could not have given life to bronze. Moreover, the statue is a representation of a human, not of a god. Thus Tychiades argues that making offerings to the portrait is futile. With these arguments he reveals himself to be far more high-minded than his host Eucrates. Tychiades claims to have “a powerful antidote to such poisons in truth [*alētheia*] and in sound reason [*logos*]” (40).

In this story, Lucian uses Eucrates as an example of how not to relate to images. The belief that a statue can live a life of its own is explicitly condemned as dangerous. The readers of the story are urged to follow Tychiades' search for *alêtheia* and *logos*. They should not accept the possibility of the animation of inanimate artefacts, such as portraits. Such prescripts were not unusual in the Roman imperial period. The conviction generally prevailed that those beholding an image needed to be aware that they were dealing with a mere representation and not with an extraordinary image possessing certain features of life, nor with a living being.

This book explores how authors from all over the Roman empire discussed the idea of the animation of images by trying to explain it with the help of truth and sound reason. Thus they distanced themselves from eager superstition and detrimental lies. Therefore, I will not only deal with discussions of portrait statues and other sculptures, but with discussions of paintings and other visual art and also of verbal images, such as descriptions and metaphors, as well as personages represented in theatre. The general conviction was that the sculptor, painter, writer, orator, actor and dancer created images that *represented* living beings. The concept of *mimēsis* (in the sense of 'representation by means of art'²) will be discussed more thoroughly later, but here I want to restrict myself to stating that the impact of a representation was related to the extent to which it could make the beholder aware of gods, persons, events or objects without their actual presence. However, although the image merely referred to its prototype, beholders might be able to believe they were observing not a representation, but the prototype itself, or that the image possessed particular attributes of life.

From the imperial discussions dealing with the belief in these kinds of animation of visual and verbal images, we can deduce three kinds of discourse. The first type can be placed in an epistemological context, and focuses on the mistakes made by viewers. Their presumption that the image has features of life and even that it *is* its prototype, is due to incorrect observation or the mental processing of it. Here, the animation of the image is in the mind of the beholder. This animation is totally reprehensible, as it contradicts the undeniable truth (the Latin *veritas* or the Greek *alêtheia*) that a mere representation stands before them. As the image is only thought to be alive because a mistake has been made, viewers need to correct their belief by making further and more careful observations or processing their observations more carefully in their mind.

A second type of discourse on the animation of images examines the role of the creator of the image. The artist, writer, orator or performer uses his craftsmanship (the Latin *ars* or the Greek *technē*). Images that elicit responses similar to those evoked by living beings can only be created by truly excellent craftsmanship. With regard to the visual artist, this *ars* can be linked to the concept of naturalism. As the imperial authors did, I will not use the term naturalism in the sense of 'resembling an object from nature', but of 'being likely to be natural, that is, not man-made'. It is the plausibility that a work of art is natural, not so much a precise similarity to a prototype, that is of primary importance

in naturalistic art. In a similar way to naturalism in painting and sculpture, the *ars* of the writer and orator was linked to the concept of *enargeia* or vividness. An evocative description, for example, can make a text or speech so vivid that listeners and readers are convinced they actually see the subject described present, right in front of their eyes. In this discourse, the animation of visual and verbal images is not seen as reprehensible, it is rather a clear proof of first-rate craftsmanship.

A third and last type of discourse concerns sacred images. If a god is represented, supernatural involvement of the prototype can lead to the animation of the image, generally a cult statue. Here, the god is seen as being responsible for the evidence of life which the image exhibits. The worshipper *believes* that the god animates the image to exert social agency on earth. Whereas in the context of cult statues ‘belief’ means being convinced that, if the gods deem it necessary, they can reveal themselves to the worshipper by means of extraordinary images, in the epistemological discourse and the discourse on *ars/technē*, ‘belief’ is an assessment following observation, which can be manipulated by the creator of the image.

These three ways of analysing the animation of images cannot be separated from one another. For instance, the excellent *ars* of a statue can be discussed as well as its intense cult. Together these discourses show that the animation of images had an important place in the thought of the imperial elite. It brings us to what intellectuals from all over the empire saw as being reprehensible and acceptable in beholding images as works of art or as cult images. Moreover, it touches upon Graeco-Roman ontological and epistemological problems. The barrier between life and death was explored — to what extent could the animated image be equated with natural or divine life? — as well as the conditions necessary to extract knowledge from observation.

There are many texts handed down to us from the imperial period which deal with this belief. Evidently, many authors felt the urge to discuss the animation of images. A set of concepts on the functioning of images was appropriated from Classical and Hellenistic writings for this purpose. This book will discuss the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans and the Stoics, as imperial authors engaged in dialogue with them to clarify their own insights into the animation of images. But often the same imperial authors wrote remarkable anecdotes about the powerful impact of images which ceased to appear as mere representations. This kind of particular story is rare before the imperial period. Therefore, it is interesting to look at attitudes to the animation of images during the imperial period, as the attempts to give a theoretical understanding of the animation of images can be related to particular anecdotes about animation.

By allowing Eucrates to declare that the bronze statue of the Corinthian general could live an everyday life, Lucian makes it clear that Eucrates has lost his sanity. As Tychiades continues to bear *alētheia* or *logos* in mind, he is clearly setting a good example to be followed. Tychiades can be seen not only as the alter-ego of Lucian, but as a general model for the imperial elite. Although the authors discussed throughout this book differed by

birth and specialisation and in language, genre and style, they nevertheless all dissociated themselves and their peers from the unconditional belief in images with attributes of life and from the belief that they were looking at a natural appearance instead of a representation. An educated and intelligent man must be able to give well-considered explanations of all earthly events based on direct observation and reason.

The conviction prevailed that there was a strict division between animate and inanimate. Thus images were rigorously separated from life. In Graeco-Roman ontological thought ‘living’ was related to ‘ensouled’. According to Aristotle’s *De anima*, a body cannot live without soul (both ‘life’ and ‘soul’ are named *psuchē*), since in the absence of soul the organs cannot perform their functions.³ A human body can only perform its functions — thought, perception, movement, and desire — when it is ensouled (the Greek *empsychos*).⁴

An inanimate body may look similar to an living body, but it is clearly different, as it is without life. Aristotle writes: “[...] each is in reality the thing capable of performing its function, such as an eye when it sees, while the one not capable [of performing its function] is homonymously [that thing] such as one dead or one made of stone.” By using the example of an eye made of stone, Aristotle makes it clear that he believes that no human is capable of creating life out of inanimate material. According to *De anima* there can be no two ways about it, a work of art cannot be equated with its prototype. The stone eye cannot see, in the same way as other representations cannot think, perceive, move or desire.

Although this conviction was predominant throughout the imperial period, outside the domain of ontological analysis, there remained certain ways in which it might be possible to animate an image. I have already mentioned the evaluation of visual images as works of art where the craftsmanship required to create the illusion of life was regarded as extremely important. Paradoxically, the masking of *ars* was involved in the evaluation of that *ars*. For example, in *Silvae*, Statius uses the verb *animare* to show that Apelles was able to give *anima* (the Latin equivalent for *psuchē*) to the figures in his paintings because of his craftsmanship (2.2.64). The *ars* to animate inanimate material was most often conditional on that visual image being naturalistic. Pliny the Elder uses the noun *natura* to define the natural appearance of a painting. The appearance of the image, its *natura*, is opposed to the means of achieving this appearance, the artist’s *ars* (35.103).

By temporarily suspending the barriers of reason between animate and inanimate, an image could be appraised as an exceptional work of art. In *The Lover of Lies*, Lucian’s alter-ego Tychiades shows how this can be done correctly. Before the portrait of the Corinthian general is discussed, Tychiades expresses his admiration for Myron’s discus thrower, since the statue could elicit the impression that the athlete had been brought to life. It looked “as if he would spring up all at once” (18). By expressing a belief in the possibility of a statue being able to move, the art of Myron is lauded. He is such a good artist that he can convince the viewer that the art work possesses attributes of life.

The animation of the statue was related to the skill of the beholder. Tychiades represents a fine example of the correct way for an onlooker to animate an art work, as he restricts himself to a self-conscious process of make-believe. A careful ‘as if’ is explicitly included in his account of Myron’s animation of the discus-thrower. Thus Tychiades does not stray into the excesses of his host’s belief in the everyday life of the statue of the Corinthian general. By means of a thorough approach towards an art work, beholders could prove their education, intelligence and dignified descent.

In this context we can speak of a ‘divided consciousness’. This concept is borrowed from film historian Tom Gunning.⁵ He uses it to discuss the impact of nineteenth-century phantasmagorias, and points to the fact that the beholders of these phantasmagorias admired the modern technique, at the same time as they were overwhelmed by the presumed presence of the monsters and the dead they represented. Similarly, in the imperial period, beholders were more paradoxically urged to be aware of the representational aspect of the work of art — they had to esteem its *ars* — but at the same time go along with the fiction of thinking they were witnessing a living being instead of a representation. The beholder’s *conscientia* combined the awareness of looking at a work of art and the conviction of being able to share in the here and now of its prototype.

Just like visual images, verbal images could be lauded for their capacity to suggest that they were more than mere representations. Literary criticism and the handbooks of rhetoric prescribed that among other things, a description had to be plausible, as only then was it imaginable; only then could it elicit mental images which created the impression that the image was not a representation, but the prototype. Thanks to this imagination, the beholder became convinced that they could see the event described in full vividness or *enargeia*. *Enargeia* was not a purpose in itself. It was meant to involve the reader or listener emotionally in the situation and persuade them that the event represented by the orator or the writer was not fiction or interpretation, but a reality, since they had mentally seen the event themselves.

In his handbook of rhetoric, the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian uses the example of a murder trial in which the prosecutor has to describe the murder in such vivid detail that the listeners think they have witnessed the event. They are thus strongly urged to convict the accused (6.2.31). Here, deception is involved, since the prosecutor gives his own subjective interpretation of the facts, but conjures it before the eyes of his audience as the bare facts. However, in this deception, neither reason (*logos*) nor truth (*alētheia*) are disregarded, as no supernatural forces are involved in the way that they are in Lucian’s *Lover of Lies*. Therefore, the handbooks of rhetoric and literary criticism present deception by means of the animation of images as an acceptable human tactic, extremely useful for persuasion.

Imperial authors attributed similar objectives of persuasion to naturalism in the visual arts. Here also, naturalism had to transform an imitation or interpretation into a truth. For instance, Pliny points out that portraits must show the persons represented in

such a way that they are clearly recognizable. However, at the same time, the portraits had to emphasise certain exemplary characteristics of their sitter, such as *fides*, *gravitas*, and *severitas*.⁶ This was made evident with fixed expressions. Thus naturalism went hand in hand with persuasion towards a certain interpretation, the dignity of the prototype. Just as vividness did in verbal images, naturalism in visual images had to convince the beholder of the truth of a particular view of reality, as the *ars* to express the eminence of the sitters merged into the *natura* of their countenance.

Certainly, neither the viewer of visual images, nor the listeners or readers of verbal imagery were deemed to go along entirely with the animation of the image. In the same way as looking at a work of art, a divided consciousness was needed for the reader or listener to an evocative text; they had to suspend their disbelief, but they also needed to be aware of the representational aspect. A judge or member of a jury was not expected to try to prevent a murder vividly described, and readers did not need to be totally convinced that the characters portrayed in a text lived an everyday life outside the text. Playing a character on stage posed the greatest problems in this context. There, representations were deemed to be a most particular threat that could lead to the ‘lunacy’ of total belief in their animation, since it was not lifeless material, but living men who gave form to the characters.

At moments of overwhelming belief in the animation of both visual and verbal images, viewers might make serious mistakes sufficient to harm their social credibility. The image then lacked another kind of vividness; not a rhetorical vividness, but one considered epistemologically. Here, not lifelikeness, but distinctness was at stake. Being unconditionally convinced that a representation was not a representation but a natural appearance was blamed on a lack of *enargeia*, clarity of observation or its mental processing. Eucrates and his guests repeatedly use the epistemological concept of *enargeia* to claim to have clearly observed some supernatural phenomena. They assert that the supernatural events they experienced were “distinctly [*enargēs*] seen” (28). By allowing them to claim this, Lucian shows that these men are not only superstitious, but also lovers of lies, since for Lucian it is simply impossible to observe purely supernatural phenomena in full vividness.

So this book will discuss how authors from all over the Roman Empire disapproved of unreserved responses to images as having all too obvious features of life, but many of them nevertheless also indicated that there was still scope for suspended disbelief in animated images. In the context of persuasion by artistic naturalism and rhetorical *enargeia*, the beholder was encouraged to animate visual and verbal images in a fantasising process similar to wishful thinking and daydreaming.

In addition this book will deal with another cluster of responses generally deemed acceptable; responses elicited by a belief in the supernatural animation of cult statues. To make a separation between these groups, I use the terms ‘art works’ or ‘works of art’ to refer to those images which were evaluated for their *ars* or *technē*. (We need to bear in

mind that our modern concept of art does not entirely overlap with that of the ancients, since not only the fine arts were included in the Graeco-Roman definition, but also the crafts and even rhetorical discourse and poetry.) In contrast to art works, cult statues had to be approached through a religious ritual in which the beholder was urged to try to connect with the prototype. Therein, the formal qualities of the cult image were not predominant. Naturalistic, non-naturalistic and aniconic statues were evaluated on the same level as objects of cult. Nevertheless, it was often deemed to be essential when encountering a cult statue to know who or what was represented. In *The Lover of Lies*, Lucian points out that believing in the gods is no superstition, however, believing in supernatural powers which are not related to the gods is. So it is foolish to imagine that a portrait of a Corinthian general could cure fever.

As divergent as the discussions of authors from the imperial period might be, total disapproval of a belief that a cult statue representing a god might have features of supernatural life is seldom expressed. Only those worshippers so shallow as to see divine presence in almost every image are more regularly condemned. Here, eager superstition turns up as a counter-example for the imperial elite. In this context, dealing with cult images does have restrictions similar to those that apply to dealing with rhetorical vividness or artistic naturalism. Many mistakes might be made, since the path towards the correct imagining of a divine presence is not an easy one. Often, faulty observation or its processing lead to beliefs formed in too much haste.

However, the social agencies elicited by images in a religious context and by images in an artistic, rhetorical and literary-critical context were generally deemed to be very different. Unlike the images depicted by means of human *ars*, the agency of cult statues was not primarily believed to be in the hands of men, but divinely determined. The ritual processes for approaching cult images went beyond a self-conscious play of technical appreciation by processing make-believe. The ritual process implied a gradual, but total surrender to the god represented by the statue. Besides, the gods might choose to show their presence in a statue by a sudden epiphany. In both ritual and sudden epiphany, the animation of the sacred image did not lie in the hands of mortals.



In the second decade of the twentieth century, Charly Clerc focused on Greek authors from the second century AD who dealt with responses to cult statues in *Les théories relatives au culte des images* (1915). As one of the first modern scholars to do so, he observed the difference in imperial ideas about responses to statues as either objects of art or of cult. More recently, the issues he identified have received close attention once again, thanks to scholars such as Deborah Steiner, Verity Platt and Jeremy Tanner.⁷ Whereas Steiner concentrates on Archaic and Classical writers on the responses to cult statues, Platt focuses on Graeco-Roman discourses on epiphany and representation. Tanner

examines, among other things, how, in the Roman period, Greek cult statues, and copies of them, became objects of art historical attention.

Jaś Elsner's work is also of great importance here. In 'Between Mimesis and Divine Power', the first chapter of *Roman Eyes*, which gives the general outlines of his latest research into imperial art, Elsner places what he calls the 'visuality of naturalism' next to 'ritual-centred visuality'.⁸ He clarifies that in the former the viewers project their own presence into the story, creating the illusion of seeing the event represented as a natural appearance. However, ultimately there is no contact. The viewers remain outside the world represented, as in Pliny's famous anecdote where the birds try to eat the grapes painted by Zeuxis, but only collide with pigment on canvas (cf. trompe-l'oeils such as *fig. 1* and *fig. 4*). By contrast, in ritual-centred visuality the main goal is contact. The viewers are worshippers, carefully preparing to approach the god via his or her statue. Eventually the viewers have to experience a connection with the divine.

Although Elsner's field of research primarily concerns the historical condition of looking, his findings also apply to my focus on the animation of images, and I will emulate Elsner by not putting the emphasis on a formal distinction between naturalistic, non-naturalistic and aniconic images, but by retrieving divergent visual methods of approaching images. To obtain a clearer discernment of the animation of images, the frame through which the images are observed is a major factor.

Besides Clerc's work, Julius von Schlosser's *Geschichte der Porträtbildnerei in Wachs* (1911) is a second early twentieth-century influence on this book, as it deals with the rhetorical use of naturalism. Schlosser examines how Greek and Roman authors discussing wax funerary images clarified the way in which these images blurred their representational aspect. He places this animation within political strategies. The example is given of a passage in *The Civil Wars* of Appian. It relates how the crowd had become incensed by Caesar's murder. Their anger was stirred up by a wax image of his mutilated body. The visual image became a clear evidence of the bloody murder. Naturalism led to revenge on Caesar's enemies, and the senate was burnt immediately after the image was displayed.

Schlosser's work precedes the recent increase of interest in responses to images of the Roman emperor. This book joins the ranks of those by historians of imperial art such as Olivier Hekster and Caroline Vout, who explore the barriers between representation and presentation of power in the Roman imperial period.⁹ Furthermore, Eric Varner focuses on the way in which statues were involved in a *damnatio memoriae*.¹⁰ Portrait statues were mutilated or destroyed as a way to publicly harm the sitter (*fig. 2*). Peter Stewart sites the responses to images of the emperor within the larger compass of the functioning of statues in Roman society as a whole.¹¹

Schlosser's study is also significant for its aim to widen the art historical scope. By drawing attention to the rhetorical use of naturalism in wax statues, Schlosser emphasises that for many centuries visual images were certainly not only regarded as objects that would give pleasure by virtue of their beauty. This awareness had largely disap-



2 Mutilated portrait of Maximus, later third century, marble, H. 0,42 cm, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek. Whereas the nose, the mouth and the eyes have been violently attacked, the refined sculptural details of the hair and the flesh are well preserved (see Varner 2004, p. 285).

peared in the generations after Schlosser¹², but David Freedberg put the animation of images on the agenda of art history once again. In *The Power of Images* (1989) he discusses responses ranging from idolatry to iconophobia and iconoclasm. However divergent these responses may be, he emphasises the strong similarities throughout history and across cultures, and tries to sketch the broad outlines of a history and theory of response to animated images.

I will not, as Freedberg does, look only at the antithesis between those who responded to images as having features of life and the elite authors who regarded this belief as a clear mistake; I will also concentrate on the question of why the elite authors emphasised this antithesis and yet permitted some aspects of the belief in animated images within the limits of reason and truth. Thus I will add to Freedberg's statement that "[w]e need not detain ourselves by rehearsing the many other descriptions of this kind in Pliny, since his abundant proofs of the skilful deceptiveness of works by artists like Apelles have entered the mainstream of high culture in the West."¹³ I am strongly convinced that putting Pliny's stories into their historical context goes beyond the well-trodden path, as it opens up issues such as the barriers between life and death, truth, persuasion and deception, natural and supernatural.

Moreover, Freedberg did not examine verbal images; this being one of the reasons why his book met with a mixed reception. Arthur Danto, for instance, writes: "It is a great failure of the book that it does not explore the parallel powers of images and words."¹⁴ I will complement Freedberg's pioneering work by focusing on the belief in the animation of visual and verbal images; in print, stone, wood, bronze, ivory, gold, silver or wax, or in theatrical performances, poetry or rhetorical speech or prose.

A last influential study is Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency*, posthumously published in 1998. Gell uses some of Freedberg's examples of responses to images believed to have features of life.¹⁵ He does not restrict himself to these responses, but concentrates on the broader field of visual images (which he confusingly all calls 'objects of art') which mediate social agency. Borrowing from Piercean semiotics, he defines the visual image as an *index*, a causal sign from which the observer can make "an inference about the intentions or capabilities of another person" (13). By urging the making of such an inference, the index does not just encode symbolic propositions about the world, but is used to effect changes in its environment, the so-called *art nexus*.

Next to the index, there are three entities which are involved in the art nexus. There are the *artists* "to whom are ascribed, by abduction, causal responsibility for the existence and characteristics of the index", the *recipients* or "those in relation to whom, by abduction, indexes are considered to exert agency, or who exert agency via the index" and the *prototypes*, the "entities held, by abduction, to be represented in the index, often by virtue of visual resemblance, but not necessarily" (27). All four entities can be *social agents*, as they can exert their agency in the art nexus. Any agent needs a *patient* or the object causally affected by the agent's action. Once again, the four entities can

also be patients, for they can all be subject to the intentions of the other entities in the art nexus.

One of the most frequent relationships in the art nexus concerns the artist, who causes the work of art to have an impact on the viewer. The artist as agent shapes the index: the patient. The index, in its turn, becomes agent, mediating agency with the recipient as patient, who submits him/herself to the index as spectator. But many other relationships are possible. For example, the recipient can be the agent when he/she is a patron and thus the cause of the actions of the artist as patient, and the prototype can be the agent by using his/her naturalistic portrait to control actions of the recipient, the patient.

Similar ways of framing the effect of images can be found in imperial writings on the visual arts. Many authors from the imperial period describe how men employ sculpture and painting, as well as speech, text and performance, to achieve changes in their environment. Thanks to Gell's theory, these imperial discussions can be analysed by looking at the social network in which the visual or verbal image exerts agency, and by pointing out who is involved as agent and patient. Thus his theory resulted in essays on the social mediation of imperial art works in Robert Maniura's and Rupert Shepherd's *Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects* and Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner's *Art's Agency and Art History*.¹⁶

I will use Gell's theory on the agency of images to consider how imperial authors thought that the belief in the animation of images served the intentions of the participants in social networks. In this way, I will link the agency of art with the belief in the image having features of life. Images which were able to elicit that belief were often seen as extremely powerful secondary agents. When an image ceases to be observed as a representation, the intentions of the primary agent can be strongly assisted for various reasons. For instance, many imperial authors saw it as powerfully beneficial for the image's agency if it was not obviously linked to the person who created it. If an orator wanted to persuade his listeners of the plausibility of his subjective image, the representational aspect could decrease the agency, since then the orator's construction of reality was too evident.

However, merely borrowing the findings from *Art and Agency* entails the risk of not considering all the aspects which imperial authors credited to the agency of animated images, since Gell does not see the image itself as *primary* agent. The anthropologist stresses that images "are not 'self-sufficient' agents, but only 'secondary agents in conjunction with certain specific (human) associates'" (17). If the impression is created that images have features of life or are natural appearances, Gell refers to the intentions of the artist or the recipient. In his discussion of the worship of images, for example, the anthropologist argues that the agency of cult images has to be related to the priest as primary agent.

This brought Caroline van Eck to state, in her 'Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency*, living presence response and the sublime', that Gell's "refusal to differentiate between aesthet-

ic and religious experience [...] is too reductive from an art-historical point of view: for Gell there is no difference between the behaviour of the art lover in front of the *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and the devotee in front of a religious image or object.”¹⁷ Although I do not want to equate responses to modern art with imperial responses to visual images, a difference similar to that described by van Eck will be an important concern for this book. By focusing on imperial authors who dealt with agency elicited by the belief that the cult statue has features of supernatural life, I will show that explanations other than the purely earthly were taken into consideration.



Each chapter takes as its starting point a text or series of related texts by an author of the imperial period. The first chapter focuses on the explanation of the animation of images as a purely human achievement by concentrating attention on Pliny’s anecdotes on extreme responses to naturalistic sculpture and painting. By focusing on (what we now call) social agency, Pliny purged the animation of its possible supernatural character. We have already seen that he discussed the belief in images being natural appearances within the context of the *ars* of their maker. This discussion will be juxtaposed with other texts dealing with the relation between the triad of naturalism, artist and beholder.

Pliny and other imperial authors also discussed the role of the owner. Members of the imperial elite displayed their wealth and good taste by owning and displaying excellent art. The fact that an art work could elicit the belief that it was animated gave an important added value to this presentation of riches. In addition, the persons represented could achieve social agency by means of the image. The belief in the animation of portraits increased their impact, as it often meant that these portraits would be accorded the same respect as the sitters themselves. However, this treatment might lead to undesirable results, such as the *damnatio memoriae*, where a bad emperor was harmed, post mortem, via his portraits by the mutilation or destruction of these objects. Particular questions arise in bringing all these stories together, such as why no stories survive about the conscious destruction of the naturalistic art of great artists such as Zeuxis or Praxiteles as opposed to the many accounts of *damnatio memoriae*.

The second chapter of this book elaborates on the rational contextualisation of the belief in animated images by focusing on verbal images and the concept of *enargeia* or vividness. Alessandra Manieri’s *L’Immagine poetica nelle teoria degli Antichi* (1998), and more recently Ruth Webb’s *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (2009) and Nina Otto’s *Enargeia: Untersuchung zur Charakteristik alexandrinischer Dichtung* (2009), have already pointed out that there are strong parallels between the concept of *enargeia* and Hellenistic and imperial ideas on visuality.

Starting from Quintilian’s discussion of the effect of *enargeia* in his *Institutio oratoria*, I will contextualise *enargeia* even more, focusing not only on the use of the term

enargeia and related terms such as *ekphrasis*, but placing the concept of *enargeia* within discussions about the belief in the natural appearance of verbal *and* visual images. It is important to do this, since most of the handbooks of rhetoric, and certainly the passage from Quintilian on *enargeia*, indicate that vividness of speech and text has strong similarities with naturalism in the visual arts.

Quintilian also refers to the epistemological use of the term or *enargeia* as distinctness. As we have already seen briefly, in epistemology *enargeia* is conceived as a criterion of knowledge. Lack of *enargeia* means that the observation of the deemed animation of an image is not distinct enough and therefore not sufficient to lead to incontrovertible knowledge. This is an important finding for this book, since two views on the animation of images are put forward using the same term. In the rhetorical and literary-critical discourse on *enargeia* (or vividness) animation is seen as extremely useful as it leads to strong persuasion, but for the epistemological search for knowledge, the belief in the animation of images is completely useless and lacks *enargeia* (or distinctness), since it has no accordance with the truth (*alētheia* or *veritas*). However, the rhetoricians, literary critics and philosophers had one point in common. They did not put animation in a supernatural sphere, but accentuated the role of man, be it the excellent maker or the mistaken beholder.

In the third chapter, I will contextualise these evaluations of animation based on the concept of *enargeia* by placing them within broader views on the creation and impact of artistic, literary and rhetorical representations. Starting from Callistratus' ekphrastic *On the Statue of a Bacchante*, I show that in Graeco-Roman antiquity, it was generally accepted that painters, sculptors, orators and poets started their process of creation from images which were formed in the mind as a result of inspiration or observation. These mental images formed the basis of paintings, sculptures, poems, rhetorical speeches and prose, which in their turn put the inspiration and observation of the artist before the eyes of the audience. The images that then arose in the mind of the listener or viewer could bring the original object of inspiration or observation to life.

These general views on the creation and observation of representations add significantly to the rhetorical and literary-critical ideas which the concept of *enargeia* raises, since they offer a supplementary insight in the role of the maker. Moreover, in contrast to the handbooks of rhetoric, the texts on creation and observation also discuss the role of the beholders. They can be seen as active participants in the animation of images, since they initiate a mental process of wish fulfilment. Further on, the contextualisation of Callistratus' *ekphrasis* will make clear that, in the Graeco-Roman period, the role of divine inspiration for the human creators of images was taken into account. Therefore it also becomes possible to acquire a better understanding of Roman ideas on the supernatural aspects of the animation of images.

The fourth chapter focuses on Lucian's essay *The Dance*, which enumerates the pros and cons of the pantomime. It is the starting point for a discussion of the theatre and

related performances, where the actual presence of performers and the vivid representation of the personages are closely connected. Responses to the performed images were often determined by the audience's conviction that the characters on stage were not actors, but real persons, and that what was being enacted was not a representation, but was really happening. Nevertheless, the audience was urged to comply with the conventions of watching a performance. They were not, for example, supposed to storm the scene in the attempt try to prevent an enacted murder.

In *The Dance*, Lucian takes into account that in the rhetorical context, the impact of *personae* (both 'persons' and 'personages') on the theatrical scene is weakened, by pointing to the fact that the theatre uses fiction, whereas rhetoric deals with facts.¹⁸ However, in the same breath, Lucian makes it clear that, outside the realm of the rhetoricians, it remains to be seen whether pantomime is less effective than rhetorical speech.¹⁹ Lucian joins the many anecdotes of pantomime dancers and actors who managed to move crowds because the beholders become convinced they had witnessed a tragic event. To explain the impact, Lucian points to the craftsmanship of the performers which enables them to excite animation. But other theatrical means were also discussed in the imperial period, such as the scenery, theatrical machinery, costumes and stage properties. Once again, the focus was on the *ars* of the creator of these images to explain the responses to representations and the belief that they were living beings. As in painting and sculpture, the onlookers also had responsibilities. They were often expected to have mastered certain theatre conventions. Only then could effective communication be achieved.

In the fifth and last chapter, Plutarch's writings on cult statues become the centre of attention. He describes responses to images whose animation is not explained by human intentions, but by the intentions of the god represented. In line with many other imperial authors, Plutarch does not accept the animation of the god in its statue as such. He urges prudence by describing how worshippers are often too easily convinced that they are dealing with gods in their images. However, Plutarch does not completely condemn belief in the animation of cult statues. This can be linked to the many imperial texts which describe actions directed to a cult statue through which beholders demonstrate that they believe its prototype is present, in a supernatural way, in the object. Throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity, aniconic, non-naturalistic and naturalistic statues were, among others, washed and anointed as living beings.²⁰ Besides, many texts describe the belief that cult statues showed clear features of life. They were believed to move, sweat, cry or talk independently.

For the Roman imperial elite it was generally accepted that inanimate material could not be animated, that personages were no persons and that depicted or described events were not straightforwardly witnessed. Nevertheless, the possibility was left open to discuss the animation of a representation without outright denunciation. The belief in animation was discussed as a means to praise excellent *ars*. Orators, writers, and visual and performance artists could shine by creating images in full naturalism or vividness. For

instance, a painter had triumphed if birds attempted to eat his painted grapes. For human beholders, several authors reserved a larger role than that of merely being deceived. Ideal beholders needed to have a 'divided consciousness': as well as making themselves believe they were seeing the prototype instead of a representation, they paradoxically needed to remain aware they were dealing with a representation.

This divided consciousness contrasts sharply with another way of believing in the animation of images. It was also generally acknowledged by the imperial elite writers that gods could use statues to exert agency on earth. The worshipper could approach some extraordinary images by means of a ritual to try to get the attention of a god. The fact that the cult image demonstrated characteristics of life was often seen as evidence that it pleased the divine prototype to have contact with the worshipper.

By concentrating on the thoughts of the imperial elite on the animation of images by naturalism, vividness and divine power, I am targeting a broad group of readers. This book is addressed to art historians whose interests include the diverse roles of art in Roman society; roles which became prominent once the mere representational aspect became less prominent. Besides, I would like to reach historians of rhetoric and literature with an interest in the strong impact of verbal images. I also want to reach theatre historians who would like to go beyond mere analysis of theatre texts and who are interested in the social agency of the performance. But what I primarily want to show with this book is that it is illuminating to bring these different fields of research together. Moreover, I hope that my readers are not only classicists, but also students and scholars of later periods, since thought post-antiquity concerning the impact of art works, cult images, evocative texts, speeches and performances can be clarified by antique concepts which deal with the animation of images.