

Picturing the New Testament

Edited by
ANNETTE WEISSENRIEDER,
FRIEDERIKE WENDT and
PETRA VON GEMÜNDEN

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Picturing the New Testament

Studies in Ancient Visual Images

Edited by

Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt
and Petra von Gemünden

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Preface

»Theology is also an institution of memory; in the subdivision of its departments it retains themes and questions and names in memory and forms the particularity of a discipline out of their historical connection. The relationship between ›religion and art‹ has no secured place within this ›memory system‹ of academic theology; it does not have its own discipline; thus it lacks an institutionalised memory, a place where themes and questions and names can be held together in their historical course.«¹

In his book *Bilderfragen. Theologische Gesichtspunkte* A. Stock analyses the relationship between religion and art via the institution of memory and seeks a disciplinary point of anchorage.

Yet if we look back over research into the relation between visual sources and New Testament texts it becomes clear that to date *memory* has not been revealed in any institutionalised form, but has merely appeared in a few topical areas.²

One approach has concentrated upon the horizon of visual images within particular *geographical areas*. This has lead, for example, to an examination of specific connotations of the seraphim in Is 6, connotations which may have been present among the text's contemporary recipients, especially against the background of related Egyptian representations.³ Stemming from their ›motif-historical‹ approach to geographical research, the ›Freiburg School‹ in particular (including e.g. O. Keel, C. Uehlinger, S. Schroer, and M. Küchler) has rendered outstanding service in illuminating biblical views of the world through the use of iconographic material.⁴

¹ A. STOCK: *Bilderfragen. Theologische Gesichtspunkte*, Paderborn et al. 2004 (ikon. Bild+Theologie), 61.

² Cf. the informative overview of iconography presented by O. KEEL: *Iconography and the Bible*, ABD 3 (1992), 358–374 (Lit.); S. SCHROER: *Ikongraphie, Biblische*, NBL 2 (1995), 219–226; CH. UEHLINGER: *Ikongraphie I–III*, RGG 4 (2001), 41–45. In contrast to New Testament research, one can indeed speak of an institutionalisation of visual memory for the Old Testament.

³ O. KEEL: *Jahwe–Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4*. Mit einem Beitrag von A. Gutbub über die vier Winde in Ägypten, Stuttgart 1977 (SBS 84/85).

⁴ Cf. A. WEISSENRIEDER/F. WENDT: *Images as Communication*, in this volume. Cf. for example also U. WINTER: *Frau und Göttin. Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt*, Freiburg (Schweiz)/Göttingen

A further approach has examined *ancient understandings of the world*. This can be seen in K.-H. Rengstorf's work on interpretations of the return of the prodigal son and in M. Küchler's examination of the way in which stars were understood.⁵ One aspect of ancient views of the world are the *political implications* of images; these have often been the object of research. In this vein, G. Theissen has interpreted the »swaying reed« of Mt 11:7 in its political dimensions, against the background of the pictorial programme of coins commemorating the grounding of Tiberias.⁶

A further approach concentrates upon the *theological themes* and reformulates these on the basis of the visual knowledge of the original recipients. Those themes, such as the cross, which due to their central meaning in the New Testament texts possess a multivalent character, are of particular interest in this respect.⁷

Finally one should mention the *graphic approach* which concentrates upon *pictorial programmes*. Ancient coins in particular, as an early form of mass communication and thus also as an effective instrument for propaganda, are invaluable here for reconstructing early Christian understandings of the world. The analysis of their pictorial programme can help to reveal the interwoven nature of economic, political and aesthetic relations.⁸

Clearly the above approaches and investigative interests are often intertwined: for example, political messages find expression through the minting of coins, and thematic connections occasionally have regional foci.

1983 (OBO 53); T. STAUBLI: Die musizierenden Kinder der Weisheit (Mt 11,16–19// Lk 7, 31–35), M. Küchler/P. Reinl (eds.): Randfiguren in der Mitte, FS H.-Y. Venez, Luzern et al. 2003, 276–288.

⁵ K.-H. RENGSTORF: Die Re-Investitur des Verlorenen Sohnes in der Gleichniserzählung Jesu Luk. 15,11–32, Köln/Opladen 1967 (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. Geisteswissenschaften 37); M. KÜCHLER: »Wir haben seinen Stern gesehen ...« (Mt 2,2), BiKi 44 (1989), 179–186.

⁶ G. THEISSEN: Das »schwankende Rohr« (Mt 11,7) und die Gründungsmünzen von Tiberias, IDEM: Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition, Freiburg (Schweiz)/Göttingen 1989 (NTOA 8), 25–61 = ZDPV 101 (1985), 43–55.

⁷ E. DINKLER: Jesu Wort vom Kreuztragen, W. ELTESTER: Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann, Berlin/New York ²1957 (BZNW 21), 110–129; IDEM: Das Kreuz als Siegeszeichen, ZThK 62 (1965), 110–119. Cf. also G. THEISSEN: Die Hülle des Mose und die unbewussten Aspekte des Gesetzes, IDEM: Psychologische Aspekte paulinischer Theologie, Göttingen 1983 (FRLANT 131), 121–161 and S. SCHROER: Der Geist, die Weisheit und die Taube. Feministisch-kritische Exegese eines neutestamentlichen Symbols auf dem Hintergrund seiner altorientalischen und hellenistisch-frühjüdischen Traditionsgeschichte, EADEM: Die Weisheit hat ihr Haus gebaut. Studien zur Gestalt der Sophia in den biblischen Schriften, Mainz 1996, 144–176 (= FZPhTh 33 [1986] 197–225).

⁸ Cf. L.J. KREITZER: Striking New Images. Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World, Sheffield 1996 (JSNT.S 134); as well as M. REISER: Numismatik und Neues Testament, Bib. 81 (2000), 457–488.

To a certain degree, the present volume connects to the investigative interests and approaches which have been raised to date, yet only insofar as these pictorial programmes are connected with historico-critical, textual exegesis and supplement this with further methodological aspects: It is not only textual exegesis which stands at the centre of this volume, rather also the exegesis of these pictorial programmes themselves. Thus, the idea behind this volume was that each author would concentrate, to differing degrees, upon one of four iconographic approaches (each of which will be outlined in the methodological introduction to this volume): K.C. Rowe und D.L. Balch participate on E. Panofsky (iconological); R. von Bendemann presents an interpretation in critique of O. Bätschmann, one of Panofsky's students. The »Freiburg School« is the methodological focus of attention for P. von Gemünden (motif-oriented) combined with metaphorology and structural analysis. The semiotic approach serves as the point of departure for G. Elsen-Novák and M. Novák while H.O. Maier seeks to create a connection between Panofsky's approach and semiotic method, as practiced by T. Hölscher. Finally, R. Amedick, H. Roose, P. Esler, A. Weissenrieder and F. Wendt base their contributions around social constructivism.

The primary interest here is the interpretation of visual sources, i.e. the focus lies upon the pictorial programme of a source rather than upon its extant »material remains«.⁹ Yet this certainly does not mean that the context of a pictorial programme – its *Sitz im Leben* – will not be considered within the interpretation.

Three perspectives come together in the title of this current volume. These perspectives seek to accentuate the problems outlined above and will be profiled in differing ways within the following essays.

Our title, »Picturing the New Testament. Studies of Ancient Visual Images,« refers first of all to the *source material* consulted here. In order to make the cultural backgrounds of the New Testament understandable from their context, we have examined ancient artefacts which generally would have been familiar (either directly or indirectly) at the time of the New Testament.

»Picturing the *New Testament*« refers secondly to the theological character of this study particularly with regards to the New Testament. Examinations into early Christianity by historians of religion, particularly the analysis of pictorial programmes, often fall suspect – against their intentions – to tracing religious faith back to non-religious factors and thus failing to provide any contribution to a theology of the New Testament. In contrast to such a position, the point of

⁹ The interpretation of New Testament traditions against the background of contemporary material culture is the task of archaeology, cf. here ST. ALKIER/J. ZANGENBERG (eds.): *Zeichen aus Text und Stein. Studien auf dem Weg zu einer Archäologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen/Basel 2003 (TANZ 42).

departure for the current volume can be summed up as follows: Cultural (–religious) images and (biblical) texts play a part in the production and reception of early Christian ideas. Their basis is always communication. Images and texts are a part of culture and thus also a part of a symbol system through which people seek to make themselves understood. Religion plays a part in this symbol system.¹⁰ A theology of the New Testament must be shaped by those deep structures of religious communication. Images from the Old Testament are commonly adopted, together with other culturally coded signs from the ancient world which have been religiously interpreted.

»*Picturing the New Testament*« refers finally to the question of methodological foundations.¹¹ The concept »*picturing*« itself already flickers and changes: on one hand between image and representation, and on the other between description and representation. We find a methodological decision in the background which connects these two levels with each other: pictorial exegesis and textual exegesis mutually complement and enrich each other. In their methodological introduction, Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt have suggested applying methods for the iconological, motif-oriented, semiotic and constructivist interpretation of images in understanding early Christian systems of communication. Iconological analysis examines a visual source against the background of that knowledge in the human sciences which was typical for the period; motif-oriented analysis investigates a thematic constellation in its differing expressions; semiotic analysis aims at uncovering deep logical structures; whereas constructivist analysis finally asks about the meaning of the visual process itself in its relation to the visual source. Their contribution is oriented toward practical application insofar as each represented method is accompanied by a summary of its main aspects and a list of selected questions, which may be of practical help when using these methods in the interpretation of media.

The title »*Picturing the New Testament*« provides the programme for the volume: it should serve to provide the reader with a first impression of the wide range of themes which exist in regards to visual artefacts in the books of the New Testament.

A first group of essays examines the synoptic gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

¹⁰ Cf. G. THEISSEN: *Die Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums*, Gütersloh 32003 (2000), 19ff.

¹¹ An interesting parallel to the investigative interest of this study arises when one observes the comparative change in research within archaeology and art-history. While up until a few years ago the important task of developing and opening up new source material, i.e. in archaeological digs, stood at the centre of interest together with the closely correlated »form analysis«, in recent times there has been increased interest even among these disciplines in methodological approaches.

The archaeologist Rita Amedick investigates an important aspect of Jesus' passion narrative: the crown of thorns. Royal and imperial images constituted part of the common experience in the world in which Jesus and his followers lived: contact with their expression in statues, paintings and coins was unavoidable. Royal ceremony and iconography played a major part in the mockery of Jesus during his trial. He had been dressed with a purple cloak and given a sceptre in a parody of royal attire. The crown of thorns was probably an imitation of the radiate crown worn by divine rulers. As the radiate crown was not a part of the actual insignia of Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors, the soldiers must have been drawing upon known portraits of rulers when mocking Jesus in this way. Knowledge of its meaning was shared with the authors and contemporary readers of the gospels.

David L. Balch has been occupied with the iconography of Pompeii for several years.¹² His current investigation focuses upon the interaction between Pauline teaching and the furnishing of Roman houses in the so-called ›fourth style‹, seen for example in the dining halls at the House of the Vettii. After fire destroyed much of Rome, Nero blamed and martyred Christians in his gardens, then built and decorated his *domus aurea* (64–68 CE) also in the early fourth style. The article briefly characterizes that domestic decoration, then focuses on an example from a medium sized town: decorations in dining rooms of the House of the Vettii in Pompeii. According to archaeologist and art historian V. Sampaolo, the dominant theme concerns divine power: Zeus and his children guarantee the order of the universe; paintings on the walls include examples from Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Antiope* and represent the deaths of impious figures such as Pentheus and Dirke. Art historian H.G. Beyen labels this ›amphitheatre art‹ both in Pompeii and in Roman Africa. Such domestic art illuminates the cultural context of the persecution in Mark, Hebrews, 1 Peter, Revelation, and Ignatius. 1 Clement actually refers to Christian women ›persecuted as Dircae.‹

›Why do the disciples sleep while Jesus struggles with death?‹, is the question which Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt focus upon. The account in the Lukan passion narrative remains incomprehensible when one understands sleep as a situation of inactivity or tiredness. This essay follows the cultural interpretation of sleep by investigating iconographic depictions as well as philosophical and medical literature. In Luke 22 sleep can be understood as the physiological result of the last supper with Jesus. Sleep has the literary function

¹² D.L. BALCH: The suffering of Isis/Io and Paul's Portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal. 3:1): Frescoes in Pompeian and Roman Houses and the Temple of Isis in Pompeii, *Journal of Religion* 83 (2003), 24–55. Cf. also: IDEM: Paul's Portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal 3:1) in Light of Paintings and Sculptures of Suffering and Death in Pompeian and Roman Houses, IDEM/C. OSIEK (eds.): *Early Christian Families in Context: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue*, Grand Rapids (MI) 2003, 84–108.

of a *cut*, marking a turning point and inviting a turn of attention toward other actors. Sleep as inactivity affords the sleeper the opportunity to reflect upon reality. A sleeper's understanding changes. In Luke 22 the sleep of the disciples makes an emphatic, proleptic encounter with the death of Jesus possible. His question, »Why do you sleep?« is a demand toward wakefulness aimed not only at the disciples but also at the readers of Luke's gospel. Yet it is the loss of Jesus rather than the sleep of the disciples which provides the actual anguish of this pericope.

This focus on the image of the apostles is also picked up in the essay by Annette Weissenrieder »*He is a god! Acts 28: 1–9 in the Light of Iconographical and textual Sources Related to Medicine*«. »He is a God!« exclaim the natives on the Island of Malta as Paul casts the snakes away from his hand and does not swell up and die (Acts 28:6). The divine attestation is partially answered by connecting the attribution of divinity to Paul in Acts 28 with representations of ancient doctors, especially Asclepius, to whom divine qualities were also attributed. A number of divine portraits of doctors occur on statues, reliefs, coins, and gems. Thus their acclamation of Paul as a god and the subsequent healing of Publius' father in Acts 28 gain striking relief when read against the iconographical background surrounding ancient doctors.

A second group of essays focuses upon the motifs of the Johannine corpus.

Petra von Gemünden's contribution, »*Weisheitliche Bilderkonstellationen im Johannesevangelium*«, examines the ways in which this gospel uses combinations of images found in sapiential literature. Von Gemünden, who already drew upon visual materials for the exegesis of biblical texts in her dissertation,¹³ assumes that a close connection existed between the images of water, bread and the vine in the Gospel of John, based upon ancient Egyptian traditions adapted by sapiential literature, especially in Jesus Sirach. As for the images – they can be understood in different ways. For example, in the Egyptian context the images of water, bread and the vine are associated with the dead, but in Jesus Sirach they are associated with the living. In the Gospel of John different chronological perspectives are connected in a specific way and marked by the specific eschatology of this Gospel. Von Gemünden also considers the impact of her observations on the overall structure of the Gospel of John and indicates some aspects of development within the Gospel.

The Johannine metaphor of Christ as the vine is examined by the art-historian Gabriele Elsen-Novák and the Assyriologist Mirko Novák. They are known for their discovery and work upon the royal tomb at the ancient Syrian

¹³ P. v. Gemünden: Vegetationsmetaphorik im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt, Freiburg (Schweiz)/Göttingen 1993 (NTOA 18), passim. For a consideration of iconography, cf. also her article »Pflanzensymbolik II.III«, TRE 26 (1996), 412–417 and »Tier-symbolik I.II«, TRE 33 (2002), 532–540.

palace at Qatna. As with several other examples, the vine metaphor as we have it in John 15:1–8 was strongly influenced by ancient Mesopotamian patterns. It can be traced back to the image of the vineyard as part of an artificial »garden of paradise.« Since a flourishing garden has always been a symbol of fertility in the dry regions of Mesopotamia, it was seen as a place of pleasure and became a synonym for civilisation. All the attributes of legitimate rulership were thus represented by such gardens. The paradise gardens and their ideological meaning were familiar to the inhabitants of Palestine in the period covering the formation of the New Testament; this can be seen even in the terminology used (God's »Paradise«). During this time, the vine not only became a part of the »artificial paradise« but also one of its symbols. All the ideological connotations of the paradise garden were connected with the ornaments of the vine and grapes. Therefore, one can view the vine as a »symbol of a symbol.« The vine metaphor awoke a chain of connotations in each reader and listener: *vine* = *paradise garden* = *fertility* = *power/civilisation/order*. Connected with it, Jesus was associated not only with the »charismatic king« as representative of God on earth, but also with the Mesopotamian and Levantine fertility god, who underwent a yearly cycle of death and rebirth.

Petra von Gemünden's second contribution »*Die Palmzweige in der johanneischen Einzugs Geschichte (Joh 12, 13) – ein Hinweis auf eine symbolische Uminterpretation im Johannesevangelium?*« is a revised version, including a great deal of new material, of her investigation of the image of the palm branch which was published in the *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* in 1998. Whereas New Testament exegetes have traditionally viewed the palm branch as a symbol of victory and celebration with political-national connotations, von Gemünden shows that this interpretation disregards an important alternative understanding of the image, namely, the palm branch as a symbol of life. In her analysis of the Johannine pericope of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem she suggests that the evangelist, aware of the polyvalent possibilities of connotation regarding this symbol, reinterprets the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with its national-political associations in view of Jesus' resurrection – symbolizing Jesus' victory as a victory over death.

What is John, the Seer's, attitude to the fall of the »great harlot« in Rev. 18? This question stands at the centre of Hanna Roose's contribution. Objects of everyday use, epigrams, and even a famous statue from Asia Minor show the degree to which Roman society scoffed at the fate of »typical« aging prostitutes. Once wealthy and attractive, living at the expense of her lovers, the prostitute loses everything in old age, ending up a drunken woman. With its image of the fall of the »great harlot,« Rev. 18 alludes to this stereotype and re-interprets the concept of old age with that of divine judgment. In »quoting« the lament of the kings, merchants, and ship-owners, John forces a role upon those who cooperate with Rome, which is ridiculous by the moral standards of Roman society it-

self. Thus, the Seer's rhetorical strategy does not only consist in opposing two different sets of moral standards, it also proves John's opponents wrong by their *own* set of moral standards.

Reinhard von Bendemann's article »*Lebensgeist kam in sie ...*« – *Der Ezechiel-Zyklus von Dura Europos und die Rezeption von Ez 37 in der Apk des Johannes. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnisproblem von Ikonizität und Narrativität* aims at analyzing the problem of the relation between visual narration, or »narrative art«, and a narrative text which implies and generates images. This analysis is undertaken in regards to a prominent test case. The famous Ezechiel-cycle at the bottom of the north wall of the synagogue of late-Hellenistic Dura Europos cannot be interpreted independently of the prophetic text of Ez. 37:1–14, in which *visio* and *auditio* are combined in the form of a narrative text. However, more important is the initial analysis of the cycle as a *painting*. This can be achieved by distinguishing careful iconographic description and iconological interpretation, which pays special attention to the pragmatic question of the image or the issue of its aesthetic reception. The second main part of the article deals with the reception of Ez. 37 within the early-Christian Revelation of John. The question whether one medium is superior in quality to the other leads finally to an impasse. Both artefacts are organized, albeit in different ways, on the basis of their special and complex medial conditions and their distinct symbolic language.

A final group is formed around observations upon the Pauline corpus:

Several articles pursue the question of the relation between image and representation. C. Kavin Rowe offers an interpretation of all of Paul's εἰκόν-references. It is well-known that (as yet) no extant, distinctively Christian material has been found dating from before ca. 200 AD. Scholars have offered many hypotheses regarding this absence, but texts from the New Testament have generally not been employed in the debate. In view of this lacuna, this essay asks if the Pauline use of εἰκόν sheds any light on the matter. After substantial exegesis and discussion of implications, the essay suggests that the Pauline dialectic, i.e. both rejection and acceptance of images, corresponds rather well to the absence and subsequent advent of distinctively Christian materials.

Annette Weissenrieder takes Rowe's essay as a starting point and concentrates upon one aspect: the »mirror metaphor.« According to 2 Cor 3:18, a glance in the mirror provides us with a glimpse of the glory of God. Did Paul here have in mind a particular mirror and a particular type of seeing? 2 Cor 3:18 reflects a theory of seeing that assumes a connection with a kind of impulse that comes from the object itself. A general belief in the ancient world was that both object and eye produced emanations of light. Ancient visual artefacts suggest that a mirror transforms rather than merely reflects reality. The representations of the Gorgon in the Campana Reliefs show that invisible realities can become visible in a mirror. And the representations of Narcissus show that the act of looking

can transform a person. All of the depictions in which mirroring plays a role have a remarkable common feature: participation in the mirrored image transforms the viewer.

The reconstruction of cultural codes – as represented through visual sources, and in their relation to the New Testament tradition – is aimed at a new, transformed and more complex formulation of theological ideas. By seeking a definition of the *imago Dei* and a deeper understanding of the ›two natures‹ doctrine, Sigrid Brandt displays an extension and enrichment of iconographic work within the field of systematic theology.

Philip Esler concentrates upon the Pauline athletic motif. Athletic competitions, especially the great ›Crown Games‹ such as the Olympics, played a central role in how ancient Greeks constructed their sense of self in an ἀγών-ridden culture that maintained honour as a central value. Visual representations of these contests offer important data on how the Greeks understood them. The aim of his present essay is to explore how an examination of the Greek games, in their social context as illuminated in ancient visual representations, can throw light on how Paul has used the ἀγών-theme in his letters. Not only is it suggested that one needs to be familiar with Greek athletics in order to properly interpret Paul's use of this theme, but that the visual material itself provides essential evidence for this task.

For many years Harry O. Maier has been occupied with the political implications of the Pauline corpus against the background of ancient iconography. His article aims at filling an important gap by reading Colossians in the light of imperial politics and especially imperial iconography. In the tradition of E. Panofsky, he seeks to bring literary texts and visual media together as a means of gaining an intrinsic understanding of the construction of meaning and social identity in early Christianity. Iconographical parallels offer important aspects for understanding the enthronement language of Colossians, its relation to the military language of triumph which it develops, and its celebration of an ethnic unity of peoples.

Several people have contributed to the development of this volume, and we would like to thank them here:

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Spring 2005

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Methods of Iconography

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Images as Communication The Methods of Iconography*

I. Introduction into the Methods of Iconography

»[...] so was erudition: for, in the treasure handed down to us by Antiquity, the value of language lay in fact that it was the sign of things. There is no difference between the visible marks that God has stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition. The relation to these texts of the same nature as the relation to things: in both cases there are signs that must be discovered. [...] [T]he Ancients have already provided us with interpretations, which we need do no more than gather together. Or which we would need only to gather together, were it not for necessity of learning their language, reading their texts, and understanding, what they have said. The heritage of Antiquity, like nature itself, is a vast space requiring interpretation; in both cases there are signs to be discovered and then, little by little, made to speak.«¹

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes a relation between visual and oral sources which may well be foundational. He addresses various aspects for which an interpretation of images could be central: such as the relationship between images and texts, the necessity of gathering these sources together and learning their particular language, as well as understanding images as both objects of interpretation and indeed acts of interpretation.

Our programmatic title, »Images as Communication,« takes into account the role that images played in the production and reception of early Christian ideas. The basis of these images has always been communication. Images and texts are part of culture and hence also part of a symbol system, and it is with the help of such symbol systems that people communicate.

In those sciences which deal with the interpretation of images, one has seen the development of numerous methods in order to interpret visual media. This

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¹ M. FOUCAULT: *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London/New York 1989, 37.

follows quite naturally since texts and images, as differing modi of expression, follow quite differing logics.²

In this introduction we will provide a description of selected methods which, in light of our discussion on »Picturing the New Testament,« appear to us as both particularly important and fruitful. This description will not cover all methodological approaches discussed in the arts, nor will it try to offer an exhaustive examination of the few methods introduced here. Rather it will offer a glimpse into the fundamental questions and intellectual orientations of these approaches.

We will include here Erwin Panofsky's approach as a ›classic‹ work in iconography. Panofsky had a formative effect on the essential elements of iconographic methodology and his work remains current in the contemporary discussion.

In the biblical sciences, the approach of the »Freiburg School« – centred around Othmar Keel – has been particularly formative. This method of understanding images with motifs will be presented in connection with Panofsky's iconographic-iconological way of thinking.

In the current methodological discussion in archaeology – which views iconography as one of its sub-disciplines – the questions raised by semiotics have become the main focus of attention. Such questions have been pursued by the archaeologist Tonio Hölscher: If one understands culture as a symbol system, then it is logically consistent to understand images both as a part of culture, and as elements of each valid symbol system. As a foundational representative of semiotic theory, this introduction will pick up the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. In what has now become a wealth of published semiotic theories, Peirce represents historically one of the discipline's most authoritative ›founding fathers.‹

Common among many, very different ›image theories‹ is the idea that images can not be viewed as simple visual reproductions of reality. A theoretical reflection upon this often implicit assumption is offered by constructivism. For this reason, we will introduce the constructivist approach, in its various forms, in connection with Panofsky, Keel and Peirce's theories, and ask how a method of image-interpretation might look if considered against the background of its own premises.

At the conclusion of each presentation, we will summarise the main theses and essential categories of each method. In order further to assist practical work with these methods, small vignettes will be offered together with a list of questions. These may be helpful when attempting to unpack visual media using these methods.

² On the relationship between texts and images, cf. Ch. UEHLINGER: Art. Ikonographie. Religionsgeschichtlich, RGG 4 (*2001), 41–43.

Due to its *comparative* similarity, we will introduce form-analytical method in connection with Panofsky's work. Form-analytical method has been adopted both in archaeology and iconography since the early twentieth century. Due to its supposed entanglements with contemporary, universalistic theories – above all with idealism – it was frowned upon for a long time as an independent method and has only recently, with a decidedly altered emphasis, experienced a renaissance.

II. *Images as the expression of a world of symbolic values:* *Erwin Panofsky*

In the first half of the 20th century, the art historian Erwin Panofsky presented a theory for interpreting visual sources which would shape current research. In countless studies, Panofsky developed a precise method which uses each interpreter's practical experience, culturally acquired knowledge and intuition in order to open up the possible meaning of a depiction.³

The horizon of Panofsky's thought opens out particularly impressively when one takes into view the audience of his essay *Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der bildenden Kunst*: here we have a reworking of Panofsky's presentation before the members of the »Kant Society,⁴ certainly on the condition that he report about principles which are of use to art historians working in iconography.⁵ On the one hand, we have Panofsky's efforts to develop his method in coherence with an overall philosophical system; on the other hand, he is seeking to develop the methodological tools necessary for the concrete work of interpreting images. Panofsky's primary interest is to present a heuristic model for the interpretation of images which is anchored in a comprehensive theory of the interpretation of reality, without itself raising claims to a universal, aesthetic interpretation of reality.⁶

³ PANOFSKY offers a standard description in his book *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, New York 1939 = *Studien zur Ikonologie der Renaissance*, Köln ²1997. Panofsky lent his method more precision and nuance in countless other publications. The critical analysis of Panofsky's method presented in this essay, will refer primarily to PANOFSKY: *Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der bildenden Kunst*, E. KAEMMERLING: *Ikonographie und Ikonologie. Theorien – Entwicklung – Probleme. Bildende Kunst als Zeichensystem*, Bd. 1, Köln ⁶1994, 185–206, and IDEM: *Ikonographie und Ikonologie*, *IBID.*, 207–225.

⁴ Presented on May 20, 1931 in Kiel.

⁵ A footnote in the text highlights this point, cf. KAEMMERLING: *Ikonographie*, 204.

⁶ Cf. on this point: J.K. EBERLEIN: *Inhalt und Gehalt: Die ikonographisch-ikonologische Methode*, H. BELTING et al. (eds.): *Kunstgeschichte. Eine Einführung*, Berlin ³1988, 169–190, 176.

As for the results of Panofsky's efforts, the following diagram seeks to give a primary overview of his approach, as it was developed in *Ikonographie und Ikonologie*:

<i>Object of Interpretation</i> ⁷	<i>Act of Interpretation</i>	<i>Interpretive Tools</i>	<i>Corrective Principle of Interpretation (History of Tradition)</i>
Primary or natural Subject – (A) factual, (B) expressional-, which forms the world of artistic motifs	Pre-iconographic description (and pseudo-formal analysis)	Practical experience (Familiarity with objects and events)	Style-History (Insight into the manner in which, in changing historical conditions, objects and events are expressed through forms)
Secondary or conventional subject, which forms the world from images, anecdotes and allegories	Iconographic analysis	Knowledge of literary sources (Familiarity with certain themes and concepts)	Type-History (Insight into the manner in which, in changing historical conditions, particular themes or concepts are expressed through objects and events)
Actual meaning or content, which forms the world of »symbolic« values	Iconological interpretation	Synthetic intuition (Familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human spirit), formed through personal psychology and one's view of the world	History of cultural symptoms or »Symbols« generally (Insight into the manner in which, in changing historical conditions, essential tendencies of the human spirit are expressed through particular themes and concepts)

⁷ Panofsky's own representation of his method varies through his publications. This in itself was ample cause for considering whether one should use this as grounds for inferring a development in Panofsky's work (a summary of the significant differences is provided by: E. KAEMMERLING: *Drei Supplemente zur Einleitung*, IDEM: *Ikonographie*, 487–501). From the fact that Panofsky himself never makes an issue of these differences, it may well be more probable that his intention in these various publications was simply to highlight particular aspects,

The primary starting point in any interpretation of an image is formed, for Panofsky, by that which one directly sees: »This purely phenomenal description truly assumes nothing more than our having had a good look at the image and relating it to concepts which come to us from our experience.«⁸ The object of the observation in this *pre-iconographic phase* is simply everything which is transferred across the senses and which can be inferred with the help of that »vital experience of being.«⁹ This is meant, first of all, in a very elementary way, namely the manner in which lines and colours are set in relation with each other and how the materials used in concrete objects have been shaped.¹⁰ The relationships between these objects are understood as events on the level of pre-iconographic interpretation. Expressional characteristics, which contribute to the atmosphere of a representation – that is, not simply a person's perceptions, but also those of its phenomenological characteristics (beautiful, ugly, etc.) – already belong to this description. In the pre-iconographic phase of interpretation, one is dealing with the attempt to name as precisely as possible those motifs which are visible in the image. Such a precise identification is, according to Panofsky, not unproblematic since it always already presupposes that the observer comprehends which principles of representation are being used. Thus in images with a perspectival mode of presentation, an object within the image may at first seem to »float.«¹¹

The second viewpoint to find expression in Panofsky's method deals with the question of how these motifs, which were first drawn out of the image, may be connected with themes or concepts.¹² In this respect, it is necessary to order the motifs and their attributes into the context of their ordinary usage, and in this way to understand their meaning. For this reason, Panofsky can also describe this process as a drawing out, or elevation, of the »sense of meaning.«¹³ What is concretely meant in this question regarding the »sense of meaning« is simply: Who is represented? (Identification), and: What is it about? (Classification). According to Panofsky, this task of ordering a source into its context is to be accomplished above all with »literary knowledge,«¹⁴ and by using knowledge both of the themes and objects of images. This process, as with the first step of phe-

thus allowing by comparison others aspects to recede into the background. Such a process would occur in line with the direction of his respective arguments in those papers. That said, our presentation here draws upon PANOFSKY: *Ikonographie*, 223.

⁸ PANOFSKY: *Problem*, 190. »Diese rein phänomenale Beschreibung setzt nur wirklich nichts weiter voraus, als daß wir uns das Bild gut ansehen und es auf Vorstellungen beziehen, die uns aus der Erfahrung geläufig sind.«

⁹ PANOFSKY: *Problem*, 199.

¹⁰ Cf. PANOFSKY: *Ikonographie*, 210.

¹¹ Cf. PANOFSKY: *Problem*, 189, 193.

¹² PANOFSKY: *Ikonographie*, 210.

¹³ Cf. PANOFSKY: *Problem*, 188.

¹⁴ PANOFSKY: *Problem*, 199.

nomenological analysis, assumes a certain ›pre-knowledge.« In this case, it is that knowledge regarding the changes in the manner in which particular themes are portrayed over time: the same theme may be portrayed in completely differing ways depending on the differing particularities of the times and places in which the discussion finds itself. Knowledge of this variability is presupposed when an observer iconographically describes an image.¹⁵

When an image is observed in this sense according to its topic and theme, this then leads, in Panofsky's model, to ›iconological interpretation.« With this key-word ›iconology,«¹⁶ Panofsky addresses the questions why, and to what end, an image is represented as it is, and thus the question as to the content, sense and *geistesgeschichtlichen* status of the portrayal. According to Panofsky, that the term *iconography* is no longer used highlights the shift that has occurred from merely describing a portrayal to a concentration solely on its interpretation. The aim of this observation is the elevation of its ›sense as a document« or its ›sense of being.«¹⁷ This becomes possible for the interpreter when she falls back upon her ›own original behaviour concerning her weltanschauung.«¹⁸ This viewpoint seeks nothing less than to illuminate the foundational principles behind one's own understanding of the world, i.e. how an artist or an epoche, or indeed as Panofsky says, how a *Volk* or cultural entity has conceived it.¹⁹ The possibility then for evaluating a piece of art stems from this aspect, since ›the greatness of an artistic achievement is finally dependent upon the amount of ›Weltan-

¹⁵ »[S]o zeigt uns die Überlieferungsgeschichte, was auch nicht hätte gesagt werden können, weil es im Hinblick auf Zeit und Ort entweder nicht darstellungsmöglich oder nicht vorstellungsmöglich gewesen wäre«, PANOFSKY: Problem, 199.

¹⁶ »Iconology« has, since Panofsky, become a keyword which has taken up its place within the terminology of the art-sciences. It is used in this field with many differing meanings (cf. T. HÖLSCHER: Bildwerke: Darstellungen, Funktionen, Botschaften, A.H. BORBEIN et al.: Klassische Archäologie. Eine Einführung, Berlin 2000, 147–165, 148), which cannot be further pursued here. For further points to this discussion, cf. M. LIBMAN: Ikonologie, Kunst und Literatur 14 (1966), 1288–1243.

The term comes from Cesare Ripa von Perugia, who first published an »Iconology« in 1593. He describes therein how abstract concepts can be portrayed. Cf. J. BIALOSTOCKI: Art. Iconography, Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas 2 (1973), 524–541, 530. In the 20th century, the term was reintroduced into the discussion through one of Warburg's lectures, held in Rome in 1912, cf. EBERLEIN: Inhalt, 178.

¹⁷ PANOFSKY: Problem, 200. With this term, Panofsky explicitly picks up a concept from the sociologist Karl Mannheim. Mannheim introduces »Dokumentation« in the context of asking how one achieves knowledge of things which are only accessible to us through mediation. He distinguishes between two types of mediation, namely mediation through expression and mediation through documentation. For the broader context of the discussion, cf. K. MANNHEIM: Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk, ed. and with Introd. by K.H. Wolff, Berlin/Neuwied 1964 (Soziologische Texte 28), 103–129.

¹⁸ PANOFSKY: Problem, 201.

¹⁹ PANOFSKY: Problem, 200.

schauungs energy« channeled into the formed material and how much of it radiates back out to the observer.²⁰ Yet is a space created here for limitless or capricious interpretation through the great importance Panofsky attributes to the intuition of the observer in this interpretive step? Panofsky is aware of this problem. Just as he had introduced correctives for the two previous observational methods, he does the same here: the limits to interpretive possibilities lie in knowing what a possible ›view of the world« was at that particular place and time. These limits are established by the general *Geistesgeschichte*.²¹

With this step, Panofsky presents us with a three-staged model for describing and interpreting pictorial representations. For Panofsky himself, it was important that his outlined perspectives should not be taken as being three separate approaches toward the one source, but rather differing aspects which should finally function within a single process.

Panofsky's model gains further depth when one reads it in connection with its philosophical background. The question which Panofsky finally seeks to answer is: Which aspects of the respective world-views come to expression in these representations? He explicitly picks up a question here posed by the sociologist K. Mannheim in his *Wissenssoziologie*: »[W]hat kind of task is involved when the *historical researcher* of the cultural sciences (the art historian, the historian of religions, the sociologist, etc.) seeks to determine the world-view of a particular epoch or to explain out of this totality the partial appearances relevant to his field? Is this totality [...] even given to us, and if it is: *how* is it given [...]?»²² Panofsky offers a model which brings out this »totality« in visual sources. This is achieved by a categorization into a history of »cultural symptoms« or »symbols,«²³ i.e. that a portrayal contributes to the discovery of the way in which an

²⁰ »Die Größe einer künstlerischen Leistung [ist] letzten Endes davon abhängig [...], welches Quantum von ›Weltanschauungs-Energie‹ in die gestaltete Materie hineingeleitet worden ist und aus ihr auf den Betrachter hinüberstrahlt,« PANOFSKY: Problem, 200.

²¹ PANOFSKY: Problem, 202.

²² MANNHEIM: Wissenssoziologie, 91 [Emphasis in text]: »[W]as für eine Aufgabe steckt dahinter, wenn der kulturwissenschaftliche *Geschichtsforscher* (Kunstgeschichtlicher, Religionsgeschichtler oder auch Soziologe usw.) sich das Problem stellt, die Weltanschauung eines Zeitalters zu bestimmen oder partielle Erscheinungen seines Gebietes aus dieser Totalität zu erklären? Ist uns diese Totalität [...] überhaupt gegeben, und, wenn sie es ist: *wie* ist sie uns gegeben [...]?»

²³ Cassirer's philosophy operates as a basis here. He does not understand a symbol as a referential sign (such an idea would belong on the level of iconographic description, cf. EBERLEIN: Inhalt, 175), but rather as the symbolic form which reconstructs reality. Cf. M. MEYER-BLANCK: Ernst Cassirers Symbolbegriff – zeichentheoretisch gegengelesen, D. KORSCH et al. (eds.): Die Prägnanz der Religion in der Kultur. Ernst Cassirer und die Theologie, Tübingen 2000 (Religion und Aufklärung 7), 91–99, 92. While Panofsky's allusions to Cassirer extend beyond this point of contact, they are beyond our scope of interest here. It is however quite plausible that during Cassirer's time in Hamburg (from 1920), and his intensive use of Warburg's library, that a lively intellectual exchange could have taken place; cf. L. HAJEN/T.

artist or epoch views the world, behind the particular themes and concepts which are visually manifested in such images.

With the above model, Panofsky presented a method of unpacking and interpreting images which has resonated with many in the art sciences and which has prompted a continuing discourse.

Of all the methods to be presented in this chapter, Panofsky's is the most well known; yet this fame comes at the price of being the method most often critiqued. Therefore, in the following we will highlight those places where the particular strengths of the Panofsky model lie, yet also where it runs up against its limits.

The first point of note is the separation between »naturally« and »culturally determined« perceptions, and their sequential occurrence in pre-iconographic and iconographic descriptions respectively. If one understands this separation in a strict sense, then it cannot help but appear questionable: apparently immediate, natural perceptions are always influenced by cultural factors, and conversely, culturally determined perceptions can only ever extend as far as natural perceptions allow. Certainly, if one follows this model further, the transition between pre-iconographic and iconographic description becomes ever more fluid. If this is the case, then its value becomes questionable? However, the differentiation of these two steps offers positive gains in methodological knowledge when they are understood rather as a heuristic instrument than as an ontological statement about the relationship between nature and culture. Thus, the usefulness of a separation of the two described steps lies in their ability to separate an attempt at pure phenomenological investigation (with the awareness that this too is culturally determined) from a categorisation into cultural themes and motifs. This is undertaken in order to be able to describe the event in a more differentiated way.

A similar point could be made against the objection that one cannot factually differentiate between the described elements (in the first two stages) and the interpretive steps (primarily in the iconological phase). A phenomenological »description« is already in the process of creating meaning. Yet what is meant in this phase is not the *programmatic* elevation of meaning, but rather that one is providing a description in the awareness that one is always already interpreting reality.

A further point of criticism takes issue with the very iconographic description of a visual medium itself. Is it not being claimed here that the understanding of a work of art is only possible for those who are able to obtain access to cultural knowledge? If this were so, then iconographic description would be a matter for the educational bourgeoisie. Panofsky moves directly against such an

objection. He draws our attention to this aspect of the problem by pointing out that the observer's current state of knowledge (or ignorance) may bear no influence upon the description of the visual medium. Panofsky contrasts this with the – in practice naïve – process, where the culturally and art-historically uninitiated should be open to the advice of experts in this field.²⁴ However, in our view, the decisive point of critique lies not on the level of *accessibility* to the necessary education, but rather at the level of Panofsky's very *understanding of education itself*. Panofsky's concept of education is primarily aimed at literary and intellectual facts, as was the tradition of his age. In accordance with current knowledge, one would have to expand such a horizon to include, for example, aspects of social history, ideological history, and historical psychology. One should not narrow too greatly the fields of knowledge which, according to Panofsky, one must »know« in order iconographically to categorise an image.

In the following, we will present four objections which, in our view, should be considered more thoroughly in a discussion of Panofsky's model.²⁵ These objections will be related to the role of the observer, the manner in which the model functions, the role of *Geistesgeschichte* within the model, and art's own view of itself (which comes to expression in this model).

The first of these four points of critique deals with the role of the observer. If we follow it through, we see that Panofsky's model presupposes an ideal observer, i.e. someone who can see, recognise and contextualise everything. This observer is also ideal in regards his ability to make the entire cultural knowledge of his age accessible and to include this in his iconographic description. The iconographic description presented in this model is to this degree so intended, that it functions independently from the observer himself – he simply accepts the role of setting these cultural phenomena in relation as ideally as possible.

A far-reaching issue deals with the way this model functions: Panofsky argues that the model is to be understood organically, in the sense that all three analytical steps contribute to the interpretation of respectively different facettes of the one source. While this directive amplifies the impression that the model Panofsky is advocating deals simply with a heuristic instrument, one must ask whether such an »organic multiplication« of single analytical steps is at all possible, or whether Panofsky is creating here the mere appearance of objectivity. Is phenomenological observation not the precondition for thematic cate-

²⁴ What Panofsky fails to see here is the problem associated with the power of interpretation (which is already accessing the level of iconographic description), and those purely external factors which must be presupposed: such as time, methods of communication and mobility.

²⁵ Our critique of Panofsky will be rather thorough in comparison with the other methods presented here. The reason behind this is that the adoption of Panofsky's work in art history has sparked its own discourse which has led to an independent development of the theory, if not indeed a »school education.«

gorisation; and is this not on the other hand presupposed in order to categorise a medium into the context of its *Geistesgeschichte*?

This *geistesgeschichtliche* context is also the object of a further aspect which needs to be questioned. Panofsky assumes that at the level of iconological interpretation, the object of observation must be placed as precisely as possible into the context of the general development of *Geistesgeschichte*. In our view, if one is going to speak sensibly of the »development« of *Geistesgeschichte*, then one needs to examine more closely how such a development is at all first *constituted* if not through thematic expressions. One can, however, take away from Panofsky's presentation the impression that by »*geistesgeschichtliche Entwicklung*« he means something which is constituted beyond cultural forms of expression.

When one observes this interaction from the outside, the role allowed by Panofsky to visual media in a general theory of culture becomes clear: Art is understood here simply as a reflection of reality; yet not also as its producer. Images illustrate knowledge which is obtained from non-visual sources, they function as markers for precisely that *geistesgeschichtliche Entwicklung* without however the possibility for influencing, changing or criticising this development. A view of art as that which places in question the basic assumptions of *Geistesgeschichte* has no place in this model.

In our view, these issues do not diminish the achievements of the model as a whole. If one views Panofsky's model together with these concerns – and with possible, creative answers – then one gains an efficient instrument for interpreting visual media. The key to understanding visual media, according to Panofsky, lies in the interpreter's experience, in her culturally-gained knowledge and intuition. Panofsky recognised the culturally conditioned aspect of interpretations and in so doing laid the groundwork for a separation between iconography and an iconology which is as »objective« as possible. This may well be the reason why Panofsky's concept belongs to the most foundational and reflected upon theories of the 20th century.

Vignette: Panofsky

At the beginning of an interpretation one stands the immediate sensory impression which is brought into connection with the ideas of our everyday world. Subsequently, literary subjects, themes and ideas, i.e. typically recurring characteristics, are identified on the basis of our knowledge. The »actual meaning« is finally ascertained through the categorisation of these themes and ideas into the development of a general *Geistesgeschichte*.

Selected Study Questions:

1. What is visible? What is it about? Do one recognise these from everyday experience? What is the relationship between that which one sees and everyday experience?
2. Can one recognise connections which arise in the image as a theme with charac-

teristics familiar from other forms of communication (from literature etc.)? In which manner is this displayed? Which aspects are therefore conventional and which are individual?

3. Can one categorise that theme, as it appears in the image, within (or differentiate it from) a »tendency« or development of *Geistesgeschichte*? In what way is this tendency influenced by one's view of the world?

1. Form Analysis

The following section will present examples of the recognised »principles of form« on the basis of Panofsky's methodological approach. The search for recognised »principles of form« experienced its heyday at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the idealisation of form over content proved problematic. In recent times, the search for form is growing once again in importance, and contains its own, novel focus: the concept of form is being subordinated to method. In addition, researchers such as the archaeologist Borbein are attempting to help form analysis regain lost ground. Accordingly, form analysis has become an independent method in iconography. While it is devoted to differing aspects, it is still bound to the respective methodological premises.²⁶ In essence, the individual aspects such as form, style, type and structure obscure the fact that (to date) there have been no clear boundary lines between each concept, which have been strongly dependent upon the respective definitions of the independent researchers involved.

a. Form

The apparatus of form analysis has changed greatly over the last decades. Whereas in the 19th century one assumed a set pattern in the developmental process of forms – which increasingly levelled off the historical context – at the beginning of the 20th century one predominantly witnessed a concept of form which attempted to extract »the pure form.« The search for genres, techniques, for the objects of representation, and for materials was pushed into the background in the course of this process. Against the background of this development there was actually a strong mistrust of form analysis. This mistrust was grounded upon the almost exact dating of idealistic form analysis, upon the recent calling into question of the concept of art itself and upon the question regarding the subjectivity of the judgements about form analysis. Despite these reservations, it is constantly noted that the creation of iconographic judgements is not possible without form analysis.²⁷ A very broad concept of form is com-

²⁶ Accordingly, form analysis is being discussed here independently of the methods named above.

²⁷ Cf. e.g. BORBEIN: Formanalyse, 114ff.

monly used, namely that »Culture is form, consciously moulded shape.«²⁸ The basic idea underlying this point is that reality is composed of images which are transferred into artefacts. Hölscher uses here the concept: »Forms of Life.«²⁹ In addition, form-analytical questions remain important for the issue of »form«: in regards dating and the function of the visual source and its position within the genre, etc.

First of all, form analysis always works in a comparative and descriptive way: formulations such as »similar to« or »different from« are characteristic here. Related to this is the categorisation into a historical context. Form analysis then proceeds to ask about the specifics of form. Even this point is only possible by comparison, since differing artefacts, which share a similar form, are examined together.³⁰

In principle, each individual piece of work has its specific form. In reference to a single figure, one may speak of construction; with a more complex scene, then of composition formed through group structures, and often particularly qualified through a spatial structure. Thus, for example, the emperor tends to be represented a little larger than the surrounding environment. This has little to do with actual body size – Augustus, for example, was known to be short – rather his represented size is intended to emphasise his importance. The relation between social order and conceptions of space has received a great deal of attention in recent times, particularly in the field of military strategy. For example: whereas in the ancient and classical periods it was the individual soldier who stood in the foreground, under Alexander the Great a battle tactic was developed which subordinated individual units to an overarching plan. This change is represented in the art works of the period, where one finds the entire structure of the piece now influenced by the whole army.³¹

²⁸ HÖLSCHER: *Formen der Kunst und Formen des Lebens*.

²⁹ HÖLSCHER: *Formen der Kunst und Formen des Lebens*. Hölscher alludes here to an understanding of form which can be categorised within the tradition represented by Panofsky.

³⁰ One could introduce the developmental concept at this point. However, this concept is heavily disputed within form analysis since it appears to be influenced by an evolutionary epistemology. Yet this developmental concept was already applied by Plato (*Leg.* II 656d–657b): The apparently timeless art of the Egyptians was contrasted to the art of the Greeks, which strove for change. In any case, the developmental concept can in our view be applied to the further development of the organised practical arts and crafts in the ancient period, as is displayed e.g. in the representation of male musculature. Cf. in this respect BORBEIN: *Formanalyse*, 117f. and HÖLSCHER: *Bilderwelt, Formensystem, Lebenskultur*, *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 10 (1992), 460–483.

Although differing artefacts may be grouped together, precisely their practical purposes, materials, representational conventions, the state of their technical possibilities and the individualities of particular workshops fail to be considered. This stands as a main point of criticism against form analysis.

³¹ That visual sources, as a part of a network of communication, can also keep in view the

Selected Study Questions:

1. Which materials have been used? Can they be attributed to particular workshops?
2. Are we dealing with objects intended for practical use or objects of art?
3. If we are dealing here with a form, do we have a development from a still unclear »formative tendency« to a fully matured »form« (»similar to«; »different from«)?
4. Can we infer something about the historical context from this correlation?
5. Is a single person or a group represented? How is the composition structured? How is the group placed within space (what is the spatial structure)?

b. Representations

In iconography one uses the concept of representation for the actualisation of the political and social status of an individual or the state. Forms of representation are fundamentally different between Roman and Greek culture. The definition of the word »representation« commonly indicates a tension between two fields of meaning: *représentation* as a public presentation of a reality, and *représentation* as an indicator of something not obviously visible.³²

Forms of representation can be:

1. Symbols and rituals defined by status. For example, the toga indicated a member of the land-owning classes.
2. The relation of the individual to the state. Bearers of government offices were publicly honoured. Thus we find numerous monuments honouring outstanding persons.
3. The special role of the *princeps*, expressed in a monumental image.
4. Conflicts of value systems, displayed against the background of an ideal of commitment to the state and a life of luxury. Thus one finds simple living conditions in Rome yet the portrayal of grander lifestyles at rural properties.
5. The increasing influence of a culture of education. In the second century BC, this affected the way men wore their hair and beards.
6. Holy relics and votive offerings. To a large degree, votive offerings also served for the self-representation of the offerer.
7. The existence of special organisations which offered individuals in particular the ability to express their economic and social status.
8. Leisurely and extravagant lifestyles, displayed in manner in which one furnished houses or dinners (*Symposien*).

recipient and his horizon of expectation, is demanded as an important aspect of form analysis in recent times. The form, in this sense, is not autonomous. It is influenced by genre, epoch, and cultural patterns. Cf. in this regard BORBEIN: Formanalyse, 117f. Due to its adoption by Michel Foucault, the concept of representation has regained an amount of relevance in iconography.

³² Cf. R. CHARTIER: Kulturgeschichte zwischen Repräsentation und Praktiken, IDEM: Die unvollendete Vergangenheit. Geschichte und die Macht der Weltauslegung, Berlin 1989, 13.

9. The ideal of the male body, oriented toward physical capabilities and corporal discipline.

Selected Study Questions:

1. Which function is appropriate to the portraits?
2. For which occasion was an artefact created?
3. What was the context in which it was displayed?
4. Is the body itself expressive, e.g. expressing the intellectual abilities of the portrayed person through a particular age group?
5. How is clothing represented (does the clothing relate to a particular status held by the bearer or to his or her social function)?

c. Style

»Style« is used in an inflationary way in order to categorise visual media: one can speak of the style of an individual artist, of a school, a particular time, an epoch, or from a local style or national style etc.³³

This observation becomes clearer when one bears in mind that »style« can both describe something individual and provide the basis for a general categorisation.³⁴ The art-historian H. Wölfflin uses the term principally in this double sense, adopting a dual concept of style: »There is an individual style, which arises from the individual personality of the artist and his talent, and there is a style of the age, a style of a school, of a country, etc.«³⁵ In this way, the use of the concept of style has a double function: On the one hand it allows for the differentiation of a visual medium from similar instances, on the other hand it allows for the categorisation of a medium within a series of similar instances.³⁶

The art-historian Ernst Gombrich has advocated a concept of style decidedly influenced by the individualistic sense of the term. Gombrich is author of the

³³ For a comprehensive treatment of the methodology behind describing style cf. F. LANG: *Klassische Archäologie. Eine Einführung in Methode, Theorie und Praxis*, Tübingen/Basel 2002, 178–214. Lang differentiates in this text between time, space, artist and genre.

³⁴ This broad determination of the concept has also allowed for many differing sciences to speak of »style,« cf. for example the reconstruction of *Geistesgeschichte* as a »style typology«; fundamental in this regard: O. WALZEL: *Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung kunstgeschichtlicher Begriffe*, Berlin 1917.

Categorisation in accordance with the history of style – i.e., to adopt Panofsky's terminology, »pre-iconographic« categorisation – is vital for the description of a visual medium, cf. PANOFSKY: *Problem*, 191.

³⁵ H. BAUER: *Form, Struktur, Stil: Die formalanalytischen und formgeschichtlichen Methoden*, BELTING et al. (eds.): *Kunstgeschichte*, 151–168, 163: »Es gibt einen individuellen Stil, entsprungen der einzelnen Künstlerpersönlichkeit und seiner Begabung, und es gibt einen Zeitstil, den Stil einer Schule, eines Landes etc.«

³⁶ Cf. also in this respect the contribution by: H. LAUSBERG: *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, München 1960, 948; support for its usage in the ancient period at 817f.

famous dictum, that ›there is no art – only artists.‹ This view is fairly representative of his programme. He understands the individuality of respective artists precisely as the motor behind the development of style; the aspects which are most influential here are socio-psychological factors and the artist's permanent clash with conventions and competition. Gombrich's approach has an interdisciplinary orientation and brings together three important aspects: (1) the importance of insights from the psychology of perception for the interpretation of visual media, (2) analytically precise vision itself – that is, its practical transfer, and (3) the need to place these impressions in relation to an ever-changing reality.³⁷

At this point we should note again that our purposes here are directed at investigating those sources which can be drawn in to help us in our task of illuminating the horizon of understanding of the New Testament. That said, one problem we encounter using the concept of style is that we are dealing with a second order category. The consciousness of style in the narrow sense has only slowly developed from the period of the 14th and 15th centuries. Thus on phenomena pre-dating this period it should only be used in a solely heuristic sense.³⁸

However, if we take etymology as our guide in determining this concept, then we can reach back behind this date and even achieve a description of this category which would allow for sensible application to media from the ancient period. »Style« stems etymologically from the Latin *stilus*, i.e. a stylus.³⁹ As a concept, this first came to be used in ancient rhetoric for naming manners of

³⁷ Gombrich's most important publications in relation to our topic here are: *The Story of Art* (1950); *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (1960); *Die Kunst, Bilder zum Sprechen zu bringen. Ein Gespräch mit Didier Eribon* (1991); *Das forschende Auge. Kunstbetrachtung und Naturwahrnehmung* (1985). For an introductory overview of Gombrich's approach cf.: R. GREGORY: Editorial: »Master Scholar – Sir Ernst Gombrich – at ninety«, *Perception* 28 (1999); D. CARRIER: *The Big Picture: David Carrier talks with Ernst Gombrich*, *Artforum* 34 (1996), 66–69, 106, 109.

³⁸ This development began in Italy. In the German-speaking world, the treatment by J. W. v. GOETHE: »Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil«, *Teutscher Merkur* 1789, was ground-breaking. Here Goethe argues that as soon as one recognises the style of the work, one also recognises its individual and essential aspects. Doctrines of style have revealed themselves among many independent sciences, yet particularly in architectural theory fundamentally due to: G. SEMPER: *Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder Praktische Ästhetik. Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde*, Bd. 1: *Die textile Kunst für sich betrachtet in Beziehung zur Baukunst*, Frankfurt am Main 1860, and newly discussed in the 20th century in the so-called »style debate,« cf. in this regard: K. DÖHMER: »In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?« *Architekturtheorie zwischen Klassizismus und Jugendstil*, München 1976; R. HEINZ: *Stil als geisteswissenschaftliche Kategorie. Problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Stilbegriff im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Würzburg 1986; W.G. MÜLLER: *Zur Topik des Stilbegriffs. Zur Geschichte des Stilverständnisses von der Antike zur Gegenwart*, Darmstadt 1981.

³⁹ Cf. in this respect: W. SAUERLÄNDER: *From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion*, *Art History* 6 (1983), 253–270.

speech and vocal pitch. In this transferred sense, it came to signify that which was respectively »appropriate.«⁴⁰ Thus it signified a *qualitas*, »being a particular way« (or indeed even being some other way). The category of »style« thus tended to appear particularly as a consequence of changes in form.⁴¹ This makes it possible to describe artistic developments and streams, which in turn also assists us in dating⁴² a visual medium.

Selected Study Questions:

1. Which characteristics does a visual medium share with other sources? Which characteristics distinguish it from this group of sources?
2. How might one explain these differences?

d. Type

Just as with »style,« »type« is also a second order category. In contrast to style, one speaks of a type when in a particular medium one finds phenomena which are comparatively resistant to change or which only change in superficial ways – until such a time as a new type replaces the previous one.⁴³ In contrast to style, we are not dealing here with a development but rather with a process of type replacement. However, since the constancy of a motif, theme or idea is always relative in view of the object under investigation, it is possible to have different typologies for the same object of observation. Moreover, we tend to have a shifting boundary line between style and type.

We can then speak of a type when an element of a portrayal, or the whole portrayal itself, is so strongly connected with a meaning or structure (*Gestalt*) that this connection is perceived as traditional.⁴⁴

While »type« also shares that ambivalence which simultaneously describes individual and general aspects, it tends to push general aspects more into the foreground. Its original, literal meaning – »character,« »impression« – already points in this direction. Thus »typical« meant something exemplary, a model or example: in a broad sense that which best represents a group of things.⁴⁵ Once

⁴⁰ The increasingly descriptive use of the concept consequently relegated the normative connotations (through the transfer of vocal pitch in the evaluative categories of rhetoric) to the background, though not eliminating these altogether (cf.: »Hochstil,« »Trivialstil« etc.).

⁴¹ Cf. BAUER: Form, 164.

⁴² Cf. BORBEIN: Formanalyse, 109–128.

⁴³ This corresponds to the conditions of development for visual media, cf. BORBEIN: Formanalyse, 121: »Repetition einmal gefundener Lösungen und deren Verbesserung nur noch im Detail entspricht handwerklicher Praxis.«

⁴⁴ Cf. PANOFSKY: Problem, 194.

⁴⁵ This idea was already present in Plato's *Timaeus*. In addition to understanding »types« in the sense of ideal units of thought, Plato judges them as having semi-divine qualities, insofar as they are logically pre-ordered to individual things.

highlighted, a series of types thus allows us to find what is essential among individual aspects, that which connects it with all the other elements of a series. To this degree, we can see that typologies possess an organisational function.

Selected Study Questions:

1. Are there motifs, themes or conceptions in the visual medium, which prove to be more or less constant?
2. What does the adoption of this type mean (temporally, spatially, in view of the artist or genre) in this concrete case?
3. If we are dealing with a type, what role does this then play for the interpretation of the medium?

e. Structure

In addition to type, structure has been introduced as a constant which influences a work in a more long-term way. In iconography, »structure« is a heavily burdened concept. Influenced by structural research, primarily from the 1920s and 1930s,⁴⁶ structure was interpreted as a generative principle which stood behind single phenomena as an atemporal »form constant.« Yet such an idealistic constant is of no use for understanding cultural and social phenomena.⁴⁷ As Hölscher concluded: »If then the concept of structure is to open up historical reality, it will only be by surrendering an ontologically grounded uniformity and harmony.«⁴⁸ This does not render the general concept of structure obsolete, as has often been assumed, but affects only its static use as an idealistic constant.

While structures shape external appearances, such as style and type, they also ask about the *syntax* of visual sources, i.e. how the individual parts are organised.

Thus structures also seek the *basic forms of cultural phenomena* and can be recognised through particular principles of form and classes of cultural objects (such as classical images of athletes), or the structures of cultural organisation (such as the ancient *polis*). The basic category of structure also asks about the foundational phenomenon behind the entire *system of forms*: are there structural differences between epochs, peoples and cultures?⁴⁹

⁴⁶ On this cf. LURZ: Heinrich Wölfflin. Biographie einer Kunsttheorie.

⁴⁷ BORBEIN: Formanalyse, 122f., has convincingly demonstrated that this approach does not lead back to the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, as many have falsely assumed.

⁴⁸ HÖLSCHER: Bilderwelt, Formensystem, Lebenskultur, 476: »Wenn also der Begriff Struktur historische Wirklichkeit erschließen soll, so nur unter der Preisgabe einer ontologisch begründeten Einheitlichkeit und Harmonie.«

⁴⁹ HÖLSCHER: Klassische Archäologie, 89 gives examples of the differences between ancient and classical art in their representations of body parts, of the mobile functionality of body parts, or in their representations of the head.

In addition, one can also use the concept of structure with related forms of objects and principles which share a common or basic theme.⁵⁰ Connected with this is an analysis of the developmental conditions of the object, of the recipient's horizon of expectation (e.g. with objects intended for practical use), of the historical expectations as well as the social function of the artefacts.⁵¹

Finally, the concept of structure is connected with the concept of cultural systems.⁵²

Selected Study Questions:

1. How are the individual parts of the source image organised? Can we discern basic forms of this type of organisation?
2. With reference to these basic forms, can we say anything about developmental conditions? In accordance with this, how might the recipients' 'horizon of expectation' have looked?
3. Does the artefact reflect the structural system of the time?

II. Images as the Expression of Constellations: The »Freiburg School«

Within the context of biblical exegesis, it has been primarily the so-called »Freiburg School«⁵³ which has made a name for itself in iconography. Of particular note here is the work of the theologian Othmar Keel and his students.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ HÖLSCHER: *Bilderwelt, Formensystem, Lebenskultur*, 481: »Die herausragenden Meister stellen theoretische Reflexionen über die Kunst an, sie werden sich ihrer innovativen Rolle bewusst, entwickeln starkes Selbstbewusstsein und finden auch hohe soziale Anerkennung. Die Formen der Kunst verändern sich von Generation zu Generation mit neuer Dynamik; die Geschichtlichkeit von Kunst wird erkannt, es kommt zu einer neuen Erfahrung von Zeit.«

⁵¹ BORBEIN: *Formanalyse*, 123.

⁵² HÖLSCHER: *Bildwerke: Darstellungen, Funktionen, Botschaften*, 160ff. interprets the concept of structure in a strongly semiotic way when he writes: »Zum einen lenkt er den Blick darauf, dass die Formen der Bildwerke nicht nur modale Arten der Darstellungen sind, sondern im Zusammenhang von Formsystemen stehen, die als solche Zeugnisse für allgemeinere Strukturen der Wahrnehmung, des Denkens und der »Welt-Anschauung« sind.« In his standard text, *Klassische Archäologie*, HÖLSCHER suggests adopting Luhmann's concept of system.

⁵³ As a self-description cf. S. SCHROER: *Art. Ikonographie*, *Biblische*, NBL 2 (1995), 219–226, 226. For an understanding of the »school« and a self-portrait cf. CH. UEHLINGER: *Die »Freiburger Schule«: Ikonographische Forschung am Biblischen Institut der Universität Freiburg*, Internetpublikation der Universität Freiburg, Departement für Biblische Studien.

⁵⁴ There has, however, been a long-standing interest in the relationship between images and Bible texts within the exegetical sciences. This crystallised in particular around the interpretation of a Babylonian cylinder which Smith (G. SMITH: *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, London 1876) understood as representing a Babylonian story similar to the Genesis ac-

It would be sensible at this point to divide the research in ancient oriental iconography into two phases. In the first phase, we witness an interest in illuminating the thought-world of the Old Testament texts through extrabiblical artefacts, and particularly through images. However, more contemporary research tends to investigate the meaning of images independently of texts.⁵⁵

An example here would be Keel's investigation *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*, which explicitly sets itself the task of »recognising and representing the intention of Old Testament texts, among others, with the assistance of pictorial art contemporary with the Old Testament.«⁵⁶ This task may have arisen in the 1970s due to the then popular opinion among researchers that the Old Testament ban on images was related to Israel's principle hostility against all pictorial representations. This had led to the assumption that images have nothing to contribute to the interpretation of Old Testament texts. Keel argues against such a position. He comes to the conclusion that the differing motifs discernible in the visions can be attributed to differing epochs in the history of Israel.⁵⁷ Thus a comparison with the pictorial material allows for a chronological ordering of the texts. Here Keel believes that in contrast to texts, images produce a stronger effect of estrangement in the observer: concepts are more open to anachronistic misunderstandings.⁵⁸ Furthermore, in an image stereotypes and distinctive characteristics can both be represented simultaneously. This occurs in such a way that in each element of the image at any one time the most

count of the fall; yet Delitzsch brought this in as background to Pauline soteriology (in his 1902 lecture »Babel und Bibel«, [published under the same title: Leipzig 1903]), on this cf. SCHROER: *Ikonographie*, 224. This interest was suppressed under the influence of dialectical theology, only reclaiming lost ground after World War II.

⁵⁵ Cf. F. HARTENSTEIN: *Der Beitrag der Ikonographie zu einer Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels*, VuF 40 (1995), 74–85, 75.

⁵⁶ O. KEEL: *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4*, mit einem Beitrag von A. Gutbub über die vier Winde in Ägypten, Stuttgart 1977 (SBS 84/85), 11.

⁵⁷ »Das Kompositions- und Motivmaterial der einzelnen Visionen entstammt also jeweils dem Symbolarsenal, das den Propheten einer bestimmten Zeit und dessen Zeitgenossen faszinierte, wobei diese Faszination mindestens einen Teil ihrer Kraft dem Umstand verdankt zu haben scheint, dem Kulturraum der jeweiligen Supermacht – oder was man dafür hielt – angehört zu haben«, KEEL: *Visionen*, 323.

⁵⁸ Keel's student, Schroer, highlights in particular the knowledge which has been gained from this effect of estrangement for feministically oriented exegesis: archaeological finds and images »bear witness more immediately to the way of life, everyday routine and piety of people,« more so than texts which have been written and repeatedly re-edited from a patriarchal perspective. Cf. S. SCHROER: *Die Bedeutung der altorientalischen Bildkunst für die Bibelforschung. Mit Bildern die Bibel erschliessen [sic!]*, UNIPRESS 97, Internetpublikation der Universität Bern, chap. 1 and chap. 4. In our view, for this assessment one should distinguish between intended propaganda and everyday visual media. Representations which were used for political and religious propaganda can be shaped from a patriarchal perspective just as easily as texts.

important aspect is turned towards the observer; thus one can speak (as was typical of pre-Hellenistic thought) more of a »compilation of aspects«⁵⁹ than of a perspectival overall view.

Under the weight of change in the state of research, and under the slogan »There were Images in Israel,«⁶⁰ the relationship between visual media and texts was increasingly questioned by the Freiburg School. Accordingly, images and texts were to be interpreted separately. Yet this was done in order that they may be related to each other in a later step – once this connection had been proved.⁶¹ Keel and Uehlinger take a »preferential option for [...] images,« which is accompanied by a »certain historical relativisation of biblical texts.«⁶² Leading questions are asked about the effectiveness and use of images. The goal here is to achieve an overall picture of the history and culture of Israel which is as multi-dimensional as possible.⁶³ Yet this is based upon several presuppositions: that images are to be understood as representations of reality, and that their rules are based upon conventions and thus achieve more as texts. This »greater effectiveness« of images lies, according to Uehlinger, in the strengths of visual media simultaneously to represent complex temporal, local and social relationships.⁶⁴ If one presupposes this understanding of images, then it logically follows that one would interpret them preferentially.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ For this entire compilation cf. O. KEEL: *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament. Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, Zürich/Neukirchen 1972, 8–9, here 9, appealing to H. Schäfer und H. Frankfort's theory of a »multiplicity of approaches.«

⁶⁰ So read the title to S. Schroer's dissertation. Her work systematically compared all the Old Testament texts referring to pictorial representations with archaeological finds from Israel and its ancient-oriental environment (SCHROER: *Bilder*). The slogan aims at showing that the changed state of research only first became possible through the early work done by Keel and his students.

⁶¹ Cf. CH. UEHLINGER: *Bildquellen und »Geschichte Israels«*. Grundsätzliche Überlegungen und Fallbeispiele, C. HARDMEIER (ed.): *Steine – Bilder – Texte. Historische Evidenz außerbiblischer und biblischer Quellen*, Leipzig 2001 (*Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte* 5), 25–77, 42.

⁶² Both quotes: UEHLINGER: *Bildquellen*, 27.

⁶³ UEHLINGER: *Bildquellen*, 31.

⁶⁴ UEHLINGER: *Bildquellen*, 31.

⁶⁵ Uehlinger recognises that in the biblical sciences to date visual media have played a relatively marginal role. The reason for this he sees in the fact that this aspect hardly arises in the education of philologists and theologians. However, another reason may also be that other researchers view the relation between images and reality as problematic; cf. e.g. H. WEIPPERT: *Zu einer neuen Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels*, BZ.NF 1 (1994), 1–28, 5.

In the academic discourse, it has primarily been the distinction introduced by E. A. Knauf between primary and secondary sources – which is occasionally, and mistakenly, taken as meaning that with archaeological finds we are dealing with primary sources, whereas with the Old Testament texts we have secondary sources – which has led to a defensive position by Old Testament researchers against the utilisation of archaeological finds (including images, of course). However, Knauf's distinction (into primary, secondary, tertiary und quaternary

The knowledge that can be gained from images is now no longer related to texts, as it was in the early stages of the Freiburg iconological studies. Rather these are now related to historical connections, and in particular to insights regarding Israel's history.⁶⁶ From visual media, motifs can be observed which, within changing religious symbol systems, can at any one time be partly constant and partly variable.⁶⁷ According to Keel and Uehlinger, images do not represent reality directly, but rather through the mediation of motifs. In this connection, the concept of »constellations« becomes important for them, a concept shaped by the Egyptologist J. Assmann.⁶⁸ Accordingly, by »constellations« is understood a few foundational »patterns of relationship« and situations out of which a theme is first able to develop. The »constellations« are basal and carry their meaning within themselves. According to Keel and Uehlinger, they are given expression in visual media through motifs, which are either constant or changing, depending on the medium of the image. It is through research into motifs that one achieves access to reality.

The fundamental importance of motif analysis is therefore typical to the Freiburg School. These were at first motifs which clearly stemmed from the field of Old Testament literature,⁶⁹ and in the later phase motifs which were commonly met in the mass media of ancient Israel or the world of the ancient orient.

This approach can be described as a method for comparing historical motifs. In the development of Keel and Uehlinger's book, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole*, one clearly sees the shift from a method oriented more toward the reconstruction of a world of signs, to one which is decidedly more historical: the investigation is organised in a strongly diachronic manner⁷⁰ and draws to a rela-

sources) simply makes a statement to the closeness or distance of a source to the historical event it is thematising and not to the type of the source or its worth. Cf. E. A. KNAUF: From History to Interpretation, D. V. EDELMAN (ed.): *The Fabric of History. Text, Artefact and Israel's Past*, Sheffield 1991 (JSOTS 127), 26–64. For broader discussion cf.: UEHLINGER: *Bildquellen*, 31–34.

⁶⁶ To this degree, Keel and Uehlinger understand their research as a part of archaeology since it was only images – via their own methodological approach – which allowed for historical categorisation at all. Furthermore, archaeological research enabled one to judge whether a text was based on fictional or factual events. Cf. UEHLINGER: *Bildquellen*, 26, 28.

⁶⁷ Keel and Uehlinger assume that the differing areas of human existence are lent expression through sign-systems specific to the particular culture. Cf. O. KEEL/C. UEHLINGER: *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole. Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen*, Freiburg et al. 1992 (QD 134), 7. They refer here to a theory laid out by: C. GEERTZ: *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*, New York 1973.

⁶⁸ Cf. J. ASSMANN: *Die Zeugung des Sohnes. Bild, Spiel, Erzählung und das Problem des ägyptischen Mythos. Drei altorientalische Beispiele*, Freiburg (Schweiz)/Göttingen 1982 (OBO 48), 13–61.

⁶⁹ See for example the Yahweh visions.

⁷⁰ KEEL/UEHLINGER: *Göttinnen*, 11.

tively large degree the *Sitz im Leben* into their considerations.⁷¹ Moreover, the representation changes from a geographic arrangement (in accordance with the place of their archaeological discovery) to a framework oriented toward those occurring motifs and their respective genres.⁷²

Keel developed motif analysis in discussion with, and in distinction from, Panofsky.⁷³ For Keel, the fundamental difference between his theory and Panofsky's was that while he does not dispute the revelatory character of pictorial art, he would not want to claim it.⁷⁴ To understand the interpretation of images with the help of grammatical concepts,⁷⁵ then according to Keel: Panofsky quickly jumps to words from literary texts without taking note of syntax.

Thus Keel criticises the level of comparison at which Panofsky is operating: whereas Panofsky connects single aspects of a medium with themes and motifs of cultural contexts, in Keel's approach this comparison first occurs at the level of the motifs. Keel justifies this position here by understanding a motif as that element which helps a constellation achieve concretion. This is ordered into the horizon of understanding and the history of a constellation via another three-step procedure, critically connected to Panofsky's model.⁷⁶ It becomes clear here that Keel lays particular accent upon this process of ordering into context, something which occurs methodologically earlier in his model than in Panofsky's.⁷⁷ The following diagram attempts to give an overview of Keel's method:

⁷¹ *IBID.* 471, 474.

⁷² Beginning at p. 149. For a possible, material reason for this change cf. WEIPPERT: *Religionsgeschichte*, 11.

⁷³ In: O. KEEL: *Das Recht der Bilder, gesehen zu werden. Drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder*, Freiburg (Schweiz)/Göttingen 1992 (OBO 122), 267–273.

⁷⁴ KEEL: *Recht*, 269: »[Er möchte einen] Offenbarungscharakter der Bildkunst, ohne ihn zu bestreiten, nicht in Anspruch nehmen.«

⁷⁵ While a determination of iconographic method through (the terminology of) textual interpretation is common, it fails to recognise the fundamentally different characters of visual media and texts, cf. on this: C. UEHLINGER: *Art. Ikonographie*, 42.

⁷⁶ In view of visual media in religious contexts this may mean: »Uns interessiert altorientalische Kunst als Teil der altorientalischen Kulturen und besonders ihrer Religionen«, KEEL: *Recht*, 271.

⁷⁷ Cf. KEEL: *Recht*, 271.

<i>Object of Interpretation</i> ⁷⁸	<i>Main Question</i>	<i>Methodological steps</i>	<i>Controls and Evaluation</i>
Motif	Which phenomenon is represented?	Motif-critique and motif-history; Representational conventions	Technical quality: what condition is it in?, the crafter's »know-how« etc.
Scene/Theme	How are motif and statement connected?	»The history of themes,« stereotypical combination of motifs; Composition	Image quality: Originality, instances of editing
Decorations	What is the intention of the decorations? How do they relate to the ideological history?	History of decoration; <i>Sitz im Leben</i>	Quality of the Decoration: The appropriateness of decoration for a particular site

At the beginning of an analysis we have the highlighting, or elevation, of *motifs*, and the question regarding their own meaning. Probably due to his critique of Panofsky's model, already at this stage Keel takes note of the cultural context as a basis for understanding motifs. Each motif is analysed in accordance with its own particularities and then ordered into a »motif history.« In this process representational conventions are also analysed, i.e. one asks how something is being represented. Panofsky's corrective – the general history of style – is integrated into this model's method. By doing so, Keel creates space for a different type of control, namely »technical quality.« With all probability, he is aiming with this aspect at the question whether the categorisation of a visual medium could realistically have been possible. Under this aspect, the medium comes into view as an archaeological find. By asking about »technical quality,« one is addressing the issue of the historical plausibility of an interpretation.

One should of course object that this control is far from compelling. Some reasons can be noted here: a first perspective would note that highlighting the current condition of the piece provides no index for the »technical« quality that an image must have had in the long history of a motif. Instead of a continuous development, there could equally have been a sudden (either spontaneous or intended) deterioration in quality.⁷⁹ The situation is similar for the second control, where conclusions are drawn about the crafter's »know-how« or tech-

⁷⁸ This overview is oriented essentially around KEEL: Recht, 273.

⁷⁹ Of course, this would still presuppose our current value system regarding the quality of an artwork – an assumption which, at least within classical archaeology, has proven false.

niques. It is only possible to use this as a control when one reckons with a high continuity of style and with typical technical procedures.

A second perspective would be directed toward the *scenes* of a pictorial representation. Contrary to all the critique that has been directed at the second level of Panofsky's model, Keel follows Panofsky's contextual analysis here. Yet he stresses less the conventionality of a theme than its typical particularity, namely »to perceive each artefact first within its own matter of concern (expressed, with images, above all in composition and the combination of motifs), and then to situate this matter of concern synchronically and diachronically within its own tradition.«⁸⁰

On the basis of the above points of critique regarding »motif history,« it only seems logical that Keel can *in principle* follow conventionality, since it presupposes high continuity. Yet as a consequence, Keel rejects Panofsky's conventionality precisely in those places where it is a product of the over-valuation of speech above images.⁸¹

If one takes note of Keel's main question regarding scenes, and his methodological steps for dealing with this question, then it becomes clear that it will more likely be conventional aspects which are highlighted through working out the history of each theme, whereas it is more likely that individual aspects will be highlighted through control and evaluation via the analysis of »image quality.« Accordingly, Keel also understands »image quality« to mean the individual originality of a work, its uniformity and its coherence in view of its »crafter.«⁸² The highlighted conventions are therefore valid insofar as they can be unified with the individual peculiarities of an image.

Finally, Keel takes note of »icon text,« i.e. the decoration of an image. By this is meant all those elements which, against the background of the »theme history,« produce a surpluss of meaning in the image. Keel asks here about their meaning and function within the framework of their ideological history. The individual aspects of a visual medium are placed here in a broader context than in that of a »world of symbolic values,« insofar as mentality, while including a

⁸⁰ KEEL: Recht, 270: »[J]edes Zeugnis [ist] zuerst in seinem eigenen (beim Bild vor allem durch die Motivkombination und die Komposition ausgedrückten) Anliegen wahrzunehmen und dieses Anliegen dann synchron und diachron innerhalb seiner eigenen Tradition zu situieren.«

⁸¹ KEEL: Recht, 270.

⁸² One must ask at this point whether Keel's control does justice to the self-understanding of each »crafter,« or whether he is importing a – legitimate? – foreign category. That which was said to »motif history« is also valid here: Keel's model presupposes that image quality and »theme history,« or composition and co-text (i.e. the regular connections with other scenes) correspond with each other: the higher the image quality, all the more unified the »theme history,« the composition. Yet is it not equally conceivable that it may have first been later hands which tried conservatively to categorise a critical work into a (until then) stringent »theme history«?

world of values, also extends beyond it to relate to conventional views and attitudes. The corrective for this analytical step is the assumed *Sitz im Leben* of a medium. Keel asks here whether a particular decoration is suitable for a particular location.⁸³ Yet what the criteria should be for establishing this »suitability« remains unclear here: should it be analogous to other media, is it in view of its highlighted function, or is it something else altogether? Once again, it is decisive that one decide here what degree of conventionality one should reckon with in the ideological history.

An overview of Keel's method displays the potential which this model has, particularly for biblical iconography, in the sense of illuminating the preconditions for understanding texts: by understanding motifs as an expression of »constellations,« it becomes possible to interpret images within a complete historical context, which in addition is always in part a literary background. The boundaries of a concept certainly lie there where media criticise conventions or break them apart: individual aspects may well be corrective of each highlighted connection of motifs, themes or typical decorations, yet in the end, these are caught up in the question of their »suitability« for a particular, presupposed historical situation.

Vignette: »Freiburg School«

Visual media are used as sources for reconstructing historical contexts, in which motifs point to basal constellations through which one gains access to reality.

At the beginning of an interpretation one has the elevation of a motif found in a visual medium, and its categorisation into contemporary conventions of representation and »motif history.« What the image intends to say is subsequently determined and one can then ask how motif and statement are placed in relation to each other. This question deals with the composition of the image. Finally, we have the question regarding »surplus« individual characteristics (decorations), which allow one not only to highlight the *Sitz im Leben* but also to categorise the medium into an ideological history.

Selected Study Questions:

1. Which phenomenon is represented? Is this representation possible in its developmental context (from both a technical and theoretical perspective)? Is it to be expected; is it conventional?
2. How is the motif connected with the statement arising from its content? Which typical motif connections can one observe? On this basis can we make any conclusions about »tradition« and »editing«?
3. Are there »surplus« characteristics? Does this give us any clues as to a possible *Sitz im Leben*? How »correct« is the relation between the interpretation of the image and the historical setting?

⁸³ Cf. KEEL: Recht, 273.

III. Images as Signs: Semiotic Theory and Iconography

Is it possible to pick up the reasonable concerns expressed by archaeological-iconographic form analysis, and the other interpretive methods, and reformulate them as a question? After all, within the context of ancient cultures such a question might lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the visual material we have received from the ancient world. It is precisely such a question which has been picked up by the semiotic analysis of images. Today, this semiotic approach is frequently used for the interpretation of images within art-history and archaeology; this is so even when it is not normally understood as an independent step, either argumentatively or methodologically, within the interpretive process.

Although a few researchers, such as the archaeologist Tonio Hölscher, have approached semiotics as a method for interpreting images, this system of categorisation has yet to find a central place within iconography. It is possible to recognise a transfer into the three-tiered system of categorisation developed by Hölscher. At the first level, one asks about the meaning of a single visual image: »In the transformation of pictorial themes and the connotations of meaning, a characteristic change of mentality [...] becomes clear.«⁸⁴ Human behaviours, rituals and symbolic forms of action are interpreted as signs of a specific outlook, or »mentality.« At the second level, one focusses upon the repertoire of pictorial themes. These themes are created by a society or social group: »Each society develops a [...] horizon of images which bear meaning, and with which they interpret life. Collective mentalities unfold in these images.«⁸⁵ Finally, at a third level one investigates the unconscious structures of perception, thought, behaviour and action; these can be inferred from the images and their functions.⁸⁶

At the centre of the semiotic theory for the interpretation of images stands the idea that all human beings communicatively acquire reality: cultural and natural signifying processes are the foundation of all communication. The starting point for this theory is the thesis that images present »broad expanses« which are capable of carrying meaning, upon which mimetic messages are segmented in a cultural form of created signs. Thus, the question we bring to these images is transformed into a semiotic question: one which concentrates on unveiling the deep communicative structures lying beneath the surface structures of im-

⁸⁴ HÖLSCHER: *Bilderwelt, Formensystem, Lebenskultur*, 472: »In dem Wandel der Bildthemen und der konnotierten Bedeutungen wird eine charakteristische Veränderung der Mentalität [...] deutlich.«

⁸⁵ HÖLSCHER: *Bilderwelt, Formensystem, Lebenskultur*, 475: »Jede Gesellschaft entwickelt einen [...] Horizont von Sinnbildern, mit denen sie sich das Leben deutet. In diesen Bildern entfalten sich kollektive Mentalitäten.«

⁸⁶ Cf. HÖLSCHER: *Bilderwelt, Formensystem, Lebenskultur*, 471.

ages within a given community of communication. The semiotics of the philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce, upon whose work Hölscher essentially builds, offers here a stable foundation for differentiating the abstract concepts of images.⁸⁷

In order to describe the methodological process, we must determine which »sign concepts,« and which related categories, are being used.⁸⁸

Peirce first introduced his approach to a theory of signs in 1867 before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in a presentation entitled *A New List Of Categories*. This approach was consistently improved in the course of his work on the method. His starting point was a critique of Kant's work on categories: »This presentation is based on the already introduced theory, according to which the function of concepts exists in their unification of the multiplicity of sensory impressions, and according to which the validity of a concept exists in the impossibility of achieving the unification of the contents of consciousness without its introduction.«⁸⁹ By extending the diadic interpretation of

⁸⁷ The semiotic question was developed in linguistics. Foundational for the semiotics discourse are above all the concepts developed by F. DE SAUSSURE: *Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* and C. S. PEIRCE: *Semiotische Schriften*, 3 Vol., C. Kloesel/H. Pape (eds.), Frankfurt a.M. 1986–1993. According to J. J. LISZKA: *A General Introduction to the Semiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Indiana/Bloomington 1996, 16f. the difference between the two systems lies in the placement of the theory of signs within the system of sciences: »As noted, Peirce sees semeiotic as supplying leading principles to sciences such as general and social psychology and linguistics; it also serves to establish criteria by which such investigations can derive good results from the employment of signs and shows, in general, the formal character of signs as such.« The situation facing Peirce's semiotic writings is still far from satisfactory: first, Peirce's semiotic texts remained unpublished during his own lifetime. It is only since the 1970s that his philosophical texts have been made accessible to the broader public, yet even here there have been considerable shortcomings: e.g. one often has only manuscripts in abridged form. On the other hand, while translations of Peirce's work have made detailed study possible within the German-speaking world, one tends only to find volumes containing selected passages relating to a particular topic. In addition, one must note that the translation of Peirce's texts is difficult due to a changing, conceptually particular English vocabulary. Cf. in this respect M. VETTER: *Zeichen deuten auf Gott. Der zeichentheoretische Beitrag von Charles S. Peirce zur Theologie der Sakramente*, Marburg 1999 (MTS 52), 33ff., who offers an excellent introduction into Peirce's semiotics.

In addition, there has recently been a range of further semiotic definitions. Note here for example U. ECO: *Semiotik. Entwurf einer Theorie der Zeichen*, München 1987 (Supplemente 5), 21–35; A. J. GREIMAS/J. COURTÉS: *Art. Sémiologie; Semiotique, Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Paris 1993 and LISZKA: *General Introduction to the Semiotic*, 14ff.

⁸⁸ Interesting in this respect is the differentiation between »cultural household« and »social psychology« established by HÖLSCHER: *Bildwerke: Darstellungen, Funktionen, Botschaften*, 159.

⁸⁹ C. S. PEIRCE: *Eine neue Liste der Kategorien, Schriften I. zur Entstehung des Pragmatismus*, C. BALLY et al., 2. Aufl. mit neuem Register und Nachwort von P. V. Polenz, Berlin 1967, 147.