Claudia Schmölders

Eye Level.

The Linear Perspective in Face Perception[1]

Nothing determines our perception of somebody or something as fundamentally as our position in space vis-à-vis what is perceived. Be it distant or near, from above or below, from the side or backwards – every change in vantage point has manyfold consequences for the impressions we receive and the descriptions we invent.

Probably the most important spatial relation of all is the eye level vantage point, because communication with other creatures, whether human beings or animals, depends widely on our reading facial gestures and lip movements as precisely as possible while listening. Both face and lips can only be perceived accurately if looked upon from eye level. Moreover, looking at somebody from eye level is a precondition of meeting his or her gaze reciprocally. Nevertheless, this notion has hardly ever been reflected upon, with the notable exception of Walter Benjamin's early esthetic fragment on «painting and graphic».[2] This may seem surprising, especially in the field of art, since it is the observer's frontal view of the face in portraiture that serves as a precondition for the assumption of a reciprocal ‹gaze› of the person who is portrayed. But can we really say that eyes looking out of a portrait are actually gazing at us?

1. Eye level in the field of religion

Initial answers to this highly complex question can be found in the ancient dispute about the role of images in religion, specifically in the field of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Iconoclasm has become topical over the last few decades as an example of image psychology in religion: Visual culture theorist W.J.T. Mitchell makes emphatic reference to it in his recent publication *What Do Pictures Want?*[3] It is to him and his theories that I will return to in my conclusion.

In his book, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Europa*, Peter Brown firmly embeds Byzantine Iconoclasm in the spatial policy of the time. In 726, pope Leo III (680–741) had the image of Christ above the Chalke Gate in Constantinople removed, thereby triggering Iconoclasm. He managed to convince his Christian soldiers that it was possible «to win battles without the help of icons.»[4] The Patriarch of Constantinople followed the iconoclastic approach in 763, when he had images of Christ and the saints in the mosaics adjacent to the Hagia Sophia replaced by crucifixes. Yet despite this initial success, as Brown describes it, holy portraits were once again placed in the churches of Constantinople during the reign of the empress-regent Irene and after the Second Council of Nicaea (in 787), albeit far removed from the congregation and «hung deliberately high up on the walls of Constantinopolitan churches. They were allowed to speak only from a safe distance, ‹as though they were written texts.›»After a second iconoclastic wave under Leo V (813–820), Greco-Christian influence lead to a decisive victory for the

iconodules, with the result that from 843 onward the veneration of religious images was successfully restored. Yet instead of being venerated from a great height, images were now displayed separately from one another and in close proximity to the viewer. Candles were lit before them and incense burnt. In keeping entirely with the treatises of Saint John of Damascus (published in 730), they called for obeisance and the kiss of faith from worshipers, and it is for this reason that they had to be placed at eye level. The Council in Trullo in 692 had already discussed the way pictures ought to be positioned within a particular space so as to be properly perceived and venerated. This also affected the sign of the Cross, which was henceforth to be recognized as a ‹true image.›

> The sign of the cross was not to be placed on the threshold of houses as it had often been placed as a talisman [...] the cross must be placed at eye level so that the believer should offer to it conscious veneration, ‹in mind, in word, in feelings.›[5]

As outlined by Brown and described here, the ups and downs in the fate of religious icons ended at eye level. No wonder then that the question of image position had a direct bearing on faith itself. Just as Saint John of Damascus called for in his famous treatise, the face of Jesus, the Saints and the cross were supposed to become the object of intimate contemplation, with faith to be experienced first and foremost visually, as a matter of the heart rather than as an institutional act. Since then, one might say, all image policy has been closely related to eye level questions, and this has especially been the case with the invention of printed bibles and holy books, which allowed, through their illuminated portraits, that people gaze upon faces eye to eye and thus with the utmost intimacy.

2. Eye level in the interface

For a long time, the view of a perpendicular image at eye level has dominated and outstripped all other alternative viewing perspectives to such an extent that its own position in art history's subconscious appears to have become completely obscured. It is only thanks to broad reflection on the media in the past century that those questions from early Christendom have re-emerged once again. Interestingly enough, the renewed interest in continuous eye level perception was largely inspired by moving and not static images. The driving impulses did not come from cinema screens but rather from those monitors that have now come to dominate our visual life: television and computer screens.

Both have been converging for a long time and have now merged in the lowest common denominator – the cell phone or iphone. In an interview in February 2007, Bill Gates described the objectives of this avalanche in technical progress as part of a vision of growing intelligence for the future: «For example having the computer have a camera where it can recognize who's there. A mirror won't just be a mirror, it will be a digital mirror where you can try different outfits, get advice.»[6] The computer will be designed to recognize us, and the bathroom mirror will greet us with the voice of a concerned mother, intoning: «Hey, you don't look so good today,» telling us what to wear. If possible, it should at some point also give us tips for our appearance in Second Life and so on.[7]

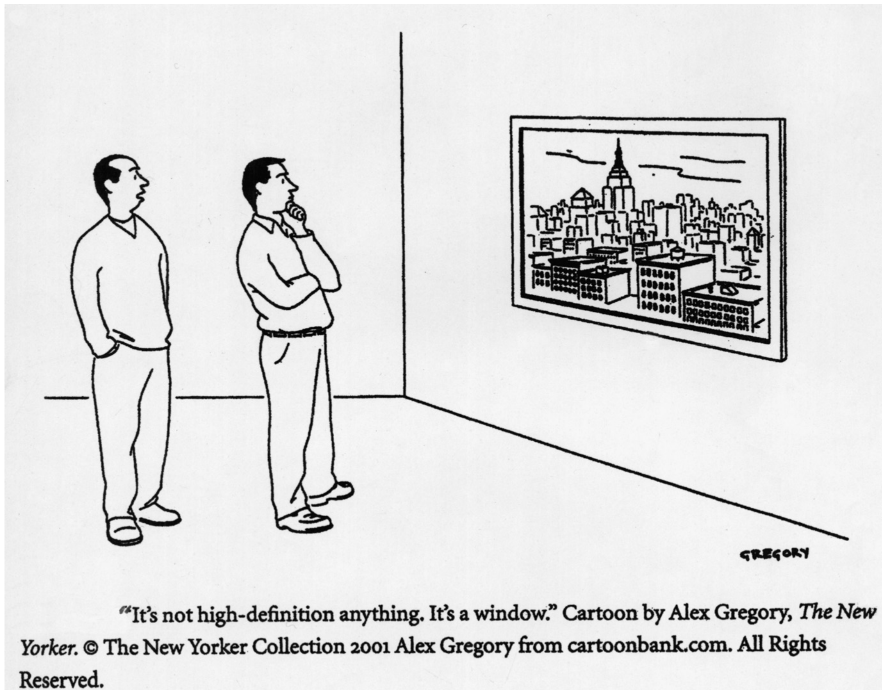
Gates envisages the computer as an *‹ersatz mother›* and thus strikingly confirms what Peter Sloterdijk first established in the anthropological observations in his work *Spheres* (1998). There, Sloterdijk envisions the pairing of mother and child as the basis of all human development and conceives of their faces as an in-

verted double herma, with the mother as an informative, entertaining and communicative screen and the child as her mimic echo or mirror. Sloterdijk highlights this primary sociosphere between mother and child and stresses its absolutely crucial importance: It is only from this dual sociosphere that the human face, in its incredibly expedient form as a communicative surface, was able to evolve. Sloterdijk speaks of an «interfacial greenhouse effect,» which drives the process of «protraction» (the anthropological term for the growing frontality of the skull). In his argument, he then proceeds via modern art to the post-modern interface, which in his opinion ultimately aims at «detraction,» that is distortion:

> It is not by chance that the most characteristic new place in the innovated media world is the interface, which no longer describes the meeting space between faces, but rather the point of contact between face and non-face, or between two non-faces.[8]

By contrast, Bill Gates, the proper inventor of this new eye level space named interface, pins his hopes on a smart technical version of the mother-child scenario, in which the digital mother, although inhuman, through its programmed mirror function could even compensate for the fallibility of the biological mother. A computer, for Gates, could be the better mom. Interactivity is guaranteed; only the motif of reciprocal intimacy and interpersonal warmth may go missing. Evolution tends towards a maximum of visualizing frontality.

Indeed, to keep in facial touch today means something different than it used to in the past. Today, portraits are only seldom used to aid memory, to venerate someone or something, or merely to raise our spirits. Instead, they are objects of a sense of curiosity that shows an unceasing hunger for information of all kinds. Nearly all facial images today have been formatted with the utmost uniformity by the com-



1 «It's not high-definition anything. It's a window.» Cartoon by Alex Gregory, *The New Yorker*

puter screen. It is the screen that simultaneously includes and delivers everything: computer work and television, cinematic film and games, entertainment, information, communication, work and research. The visually curious global public now only moves between rectangular picture screens. All screens display moving images, all have a rectangular form. Only two of them, the large cinema screen and the small cell phone, allow viewers to make slight up or down adjustments to the position of their heads. Otherwise, they all fundamentally assume an upright frontal position, such as we are accustomed to in museums and galleries.

Last but not least, and with the sole exception of the cell phone, all picture screens have been designed for the use of a seated viewer. This also means that none of the formats allows for information, entertainment and communication from behind; our eyes are, after all, positioned at the front of our heads. Not so the ears. This anthropological shortcoming is more and more compensated for by a growing audio culture, for we are able to hear things in any position we want, and we develop a far superior feeling of space by listening than by seeing. But what are the backgrounds of this development and what consequences arise from it (fig. 1)?

3. Eye level in language

The German word for eye level – *Augenhöhe* – has only recently been introduced into the vernacular. It derives from the specialized language of navigation and describes the calculable distance between the surface of the sea and the eye when measuring the visibility of lighthouses. Perhaps it then comes as no great surprise that the word's first use in literature stems from Franz Kafka, the insurance company employee, in his novel *Das Schloss* (The Castle). On one occasion, almost in passing, the land surveyor K., views a slit in the castle's wall «at eye level,» allowing him a glimpse inside, which requires him neither to strain upwards nor to bend down.[9] The phrase «at eye level» here in principle excludes a shifting view. However, both directions, up and down, are known to have special social connotations. What we have little respect for we tend to view as beneath us, what we feel we ought to respect, we like to see as above us. «Eye level» thus has not only a spatial but a social significance, be it positive or negative. The slit in the wall in Kafka's castle also evokes the idea of balistraria, a threatening, slit-like architectural incision with connotations of violent death.

Today, in German as in English, the expression «talking eye to eye» with someone *(Auge in Auge mit jemandem sprechen)* can describe both an emotional as well as a ‹neutral› encounter. The phrase entails the fact of having a conversation with feelings of status and self-esteem, with notions of being equally important as or on a par with someone else (fig. 2 and 3).

The social history of eye level perspective is in fact much older than the technological one, and for at least two centuries it differed considerably, according to language. In German, the phrase *«Von Angesicht zu Angesicht»* (usually translated with ‹face to face›, yet literally meaning ‹from countenance to countenance›) comes from the Lutheran Bible. Consequently the formula is laden with religious overtones and existential connotations. It is not surprising then that the phrase lent itself to parody (fig. 4). The biblical phrase, to be sure, does not describe the equality of the partners, man and God, but the fundamental nature of their exchange. Whoever is privileged to «see God face to face» (Gen 31:32) belongs to the chosen few, while he who desires to force the Almighty to descend to his own level is blasphemous. The phrase acquired

COPY

OF THE

Transparency

EXHIBITED AT

ACKERMANN'S REPOSITORY OF ARTS,

During the Illuminations of the 5th and 6th of November, 1813,

IN HONOUR OF THE SPLENDID VICTORIES OBTAINED BY

The ALLIES over the ARMIES of FRANCE,

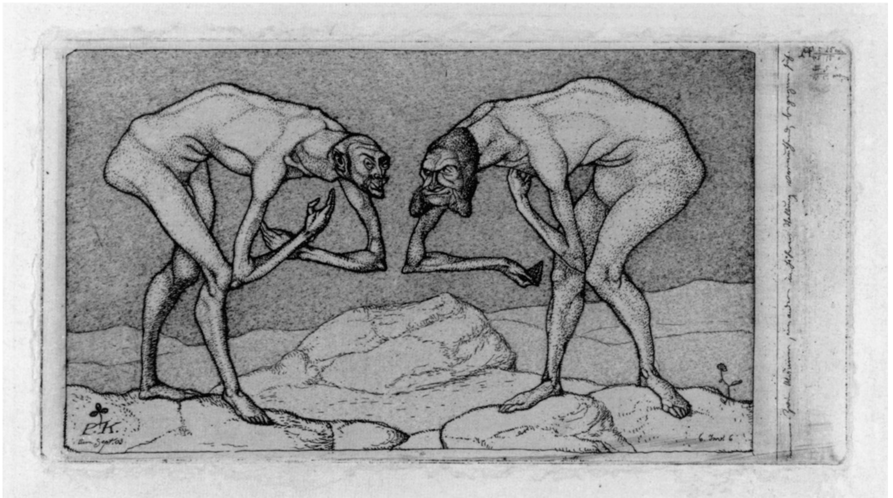
AT LEIPSIC AND ITS ENVIRONS.

THE TWO KINGS OF TERROR.

This Subject, representing the two Tyrants, viz. the Tyrant Bonaparte and the Tyrant Death, sitting together on the Field of Battle, in a manner which promises a more perfect intimacy immediately to ensue, is very entertaining. It is also very instructing to observe, that the former is now placed in a situation in which all Europe *may see through him.* The emblem, too, of the Circle of dazzling light from mere *vapour*, which is so *soon extinguished*, has a good moral effect; and as the Gas represents the dying flame, so does the Drum, on which he is seated, typify the *hollow* and *noisy* nature of the falling Usurper.

The above description of the subject appeared in the *Sun* of Saturday, the 6th of November. These pointed comments arose from the picture being *transparent*, and from a Circle, indicative of the strength and brotherly union of the Allies, which surmounted the same, composed of *gas* of brilliant brightness.

2 Thomas Rowlandson, *The Two Kings of Terror*, November 6, 1813, colored etching and aquatint, 22 × 18,2 cm, London, British Museum, BM Satires 12093, caricature as leaflet, first published in *Sun*, later as transparent picture with Rudolph Ackermann, London 1813, in honor of the victory of the allies over Napoleon.



3 Paul Klee, *Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to Be of Higher Rank*, from the series *Inventions*, 1903, etching, sheet 11,7 × 22,6 cm, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 137.1946.

its political sense in German revolutionary prose. For example, in his 1817 pamphlet *«Keine Adelskammer!»* (or «No House of Lords!»), the Swabian poet Ludwig Uhland writes: «No one position in human intercourse should be ousted by that of another, everyone should stand opposite one another, eye to eye, as befits all mankind.»[10]

The situation differs in Anglo-Saxon countries and in English language and literature. The expression «face to face» implies some emotional meaning, but overall

4 Wilhelm Trübner, *Caesar at the Rubicon*, 1878, oil on canvas, cm 30,2 × 41, private collection.

conveys a more democratic idea of bodily proximity. To greet somebody «face to face» merely means to be present in a purely physical sense, to greet them personally. As a consequence, one finds the expression far more often in English literature, in Dickens for instance, than in German texts from the same period, the 19th century.

American sociology around 1900 adopted the practical implicitness of this expression on a theoretical level, too. One of the founding fathers of the discipline, Charles Horton Cooley, developed the theory of a «primary culture,» in which subjects lived «face to face» with one another, in a way similar to the social community *(Gemeinschaft)* as conceived by Ferdinand Tönnies, in which individuals naturally not only saw but also spoke and listened to one other.[11]

In all these cases one never speaks of an exchange that occurs from ‹mouth to ear› or ‹ear to mouth,› but always of interaction occuring «face to face.» Facial perception generally entails virtual listening and speaking. One may say that we always experience things in our lifeworld as bodily facial images, of which the communicant's eye level status is part, since without it he or she would have no access to visual exchange.

4. Eye level in art history

Here, we turn to the art historical aspect of our topic. The eye level perspective is, of course, a central feature of the way art came to dominate space and it is an integral part of the concept of central perspective. Dürer, building upon Alberti, dedicated several works to the subject, the most famous of which was published posthumously (fig. 5). The artist places a framed screen of threads between himself and his model, the so-called *«velum,»* no matter how sensual (and seductive) the model may appear. Through this, he observes his object at eye level. He then transfers what he sees, square by square, onto the sheet before him, which is equally divided by squares. The screen serves roughly the same function as the artist shutting one eye – flattening out the image – yet with the ultimate aim of transcending flatness and creating a sense of spatial depth and perception of horizon. This pictorial invention not only came to dominate European art for nearly 500 years; it is also no exaggeration to say that Dürer's «velum» is the precursor to all those screens we use today to rearrange and frame our shifting perceptual world, which is in constant flux. One could say that we are frozen in the draftsman's pose, even when our screens do not present us with a transparent

5 Albrecht Dürer, *Draftsman Drawing a Nude*, ca. 1525, woodcut, 7,6 × 21 cm, *Manual of Measurement*, Kunsthalle Bremen.

6 *Lavater's Silhouette Chair*, illustration from Johann Caspar Lavater, *L'Art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie*, Paris 1806.

view of the outside world, but rather with moving images, as in Platonic hell.[12]

The history of this scenario is well known. Around 1800, the silhouette chair appeared in the field of physiognomy. It elevated a light source to the ‹level of the human eye› on the artist's side of the screen (fig. 6). Shortly thereafter came the light-sensitive glass plate, slotted vertically inside the photographer's camera, ‹eye to eye› with its subject. This device heralded the exclusive position of the one-eyed, flat mode of perception that would predominate until we reached what has been termed the end of the photographic age. Optical toys from the same period such as the panorama or the diorama played with this change from one-eyed to two-eyed stereoscopic perception and fixed the gaze in the context of each apparatus *at eye level*.

Technological and political progress in the name of a modern, democratic society acted as the catalyst for further innovations. In the first decades of the 19th century, eye level perspective became a subject that preoccupied museum and gallery curators. Whereas previously pictures had been hung like patterned wall-

paper in palaces, galleries and studios, with artworks tightly placed in multiple rows above one another, the individual picture was now given more space. Charlotte Klonk makes reference to this debate in regards to the National Gallery in London.[13] In 1836, two years before its opening, William Wilkins, the architectural mind behind Trafalgar Square, called for a system of linear hanging, and in 1847, John Ruskin weighed in on the argument as well. The idea was soon taken up in France, where from 1867 onward the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831–1922) displayed works by the Impressionists exclusively at eye level and with considerable space between them.

No matter how exclusively aesthetic the debate about hanging art may sound to us now, it of course also had strong social implications, just as was the case in Byzantine Iconoclasm. Suddenly everything was hung on one and the same level – the portrait of a monarch alongside a genre painting, a marine painting alongside an erotic sketch. The fact that the portrait played a decisive role in this development can hardly be disputed. Nothing has a more drastic influence on how we perceive pictures than the face in a portrait whose ‹gaze› meets our own face at eye level, even though in historical reality that gaze may have been focused on the artist as a fixed point on which the sitter had to concentrate. But what if the artist had just copied from another portrait? In fact, between Ruskin's appeal for and Durand-Ruel's implementation of the idea, London saw the opening of the *National Portrait Gallery* (in 1856), an event which also ignited a discussion in Germany. Several decades later, the director of the *Königliche Nationalgalerie* in Berlin, Ludwig Justi, pleaded to Emperor Wilhelm II for the formation of a German *National Portrait Gallery* and tried to convince him of the important role such an institution would play. In 1913, the gallery finally opened in the *Kronprinzenpalais*. It contained around 150 paintings – and the portraits were hung at eye level. In his exposé of 1912, Justi claimed that previous monuments to great Germans – emperors, kings and generals – had placed their faces too far above the viewer. As a result, the beholder did not get a proper impression of the subjects' countenance and thus could not become truly acquainted with them face to face. The question raised by Justi is not far from the one mentioned before in relation to Iconoclasm – and was motivated by perhaps equally ‹pious› considerations.[14]

On the other hand, Justi's opinion was clearly in line with the spirit of the photographic age. In the fifty years between the first plea for a display on eye level in museums, and the change in aesthetics that came with it, to Justi's statement of 1912, developments in the arts of photography and film had reshaped the history of portraiture. Those arts, above all, already anticipated what Theodor W. Adorno would later claim for the television image.[15] Not the technique of reproduction but the miniaturization and domestication of the image, its inclusion into the living room and the family album, brings about this (all too) familiar way in which we deal with public portraits, even though such portraits are not expressly conceived as photographs but as paintings.

5. Eye level in cultural animism

In a flash of inspiration, the new awareness of such intimacy was expressed in the first analytical description of a «face to face» gaze: Georg Simmel's famous «Excursus on the Sociology of the Senses,» from his key work *Sociology. Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms* (1908):

> Among the individual sense organs, the eye is applied to a fully unique socio-logical accomplishment: to the bonds and patterns of interaction of individuals who are looking at each other. Perhaps this is the most immediate and purest interactive relationship. Where otherwise sociological threads are spun, they tend to possess an objective content, to produce an objective form. Even the word spoken and heard still has an objective interpretation that would yet be transmissible perhaps in another manner. The most vital interactivity, however, in which the eye-to-eye look intertwines human beings, does not crystallize in any kind of objective formation; the unity that it establishes between them remains dissolved directly in the event, in the function. And so strong and sensitive is this bond that it is borne only by the shortest, the straight line between the eyes, and that the least diversion from this, the slightest glance to the side, fully destroys the singularity of this bond. There remains for sure no objective trace, as indeed, directly or indirectly, from all other types of relationships between people, even from exchanges words; the interactivity dies in the moment in which the immediacy of the function is abandoned; but the entire interaction of human beings, their mutual understanding and mutual rejection, their intimacy and their coolness, would in some way be incalculably changed if the eye-to-eye view did not exist – which, in contrast with the simple seeing or observing of the other, means a completely new and unparalleled relationship between them.[16]

Simmel's analysis appeared in 1908, just a few years after American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley's publication «A Primary Culture for Democracy.»[17] Yet Simmel's thoughts differ considerably from Cooley's ‹democratic› notion of «face to face,» not only in his explicitly sensualist perspective, but also in his focus on the pure subjectivity and intimacy of a dual relationship created by the gaze between four eyes, and be it those of strangers or even animals.

Simmel's figuration of visual intimacy is a seminal text for the German intellectual history of this idea. Walter Benjamin certainly knew it, as did Martin Buber, the philosopher of existential dialogue between ‹I and Thou;› the same applies for Peter Sloterdijk. With his ideas published about ten years after the invention of the cinema, Simmel not only brings to light the aspect of intimacy between image and viewer. He also discusses, based on the moving image, the idea of climax and, related to this, the ancient animistic fallacy of the vivacity of the person being viewed. What seems to be an intrinsic part of everyday life could also apply to the images in art history. The movie picture's ‹dead› outward gaze seemed part of an immediate interaction within not only the religious but also the secular pictorial tradition. In 1928, the photographer Paul Eipper published a book of animal photographs entitled *Tiere sehen dich an* (Animals Look at You).[18] That ‹totem phrase› remains appealing to this very day. The book, with its striking photographs, had a sweeping impact and it coincided with the burgeoning of silent movies and all their close-ups in the Weimar Republic. It also dovetailed with the many cultural and educational programs centering on photography that were established and pursued enthusiastically. For example, photographs of the faces of ancient sculptures were arranged into the relatively new format of the photographic catalogue, which readers held in their hands and viewed from an especially intimate face-to-face position. This not only helped to consolidate the deceit of an exchange of glances, but also increased the readability of pictures. In 1922, a book published by Richard Hamann's art history seminar, *Deutsche Köpfe des Mittelalters* (German Heads from the Middle Ages), contained photographic close-ups of church sculptures transposed into an unusually intimate, Simmelian short-

distance.[19] In 1926, a bestselling volume by Ernst Benkard containing photographs of death masks turned its subjects from the horizontal into an upright position, similar to what was done for mummy portraits from previous millennia.[20]

The extent to which the propaganda of the Third Reich made efficient use of this gray area between intimacy and animism, with the aim of instilling the Führer's image into the population's consciousness, is well known. George Orwell was the first to analyze this fatal visual practice in his novel *1984*, where Stalin, not Hitler, gains visual omnipresence in the role of the seemingly caring but in fact brutally domineering ‹Big Brother.›[21]

To be sure, no one studying the history of the portrait can ignore the completely different, traditional way of displaying images in collections. The differences are massive, partly because the hanging of pictures at eye level did not achieve full preeminence until well into the 18th century. Before that, portraits and statues were placed both well above and below eye level. From Ancient Greece with its life-size and sometimes over-dimensional statues to the pompous tombs and busts in the republic of Rome, from early monuments such as the Pantheon to the tight rows of ancestral portraits on the walls of high palaces and castles such as the German Valhalla, in all these places the viewer was surrounded by heads and figures, which he either had to look up to or down upon. Both directions of view were equally important in the precursors of our modern-day museums, the ‹*Wunderkammern*,› cabinets of art, natural wonders and marvels to be found throughout Europe.

6. And again the religious field

One could of course expand on the idea of a particular «tyranny of intimacy» (Richard Sennett) that entrenched itself in the art of portraiture as a consequence of the preeminence of the eye level perspective.[22] Yet perhaps the issue here is no longer really one of intimacy since, to return to our starting point, every screen we now look upon in our day to day lives presents us with faces, sometimes large, sometimes small, at eye level. The more faces appear on our screens, the more frequently a face to face situation is simulated and the more emphatically does this half-‹democratic,› half-intimate form of encounter shape our social perception. But the influence does not stop there. The frontal view on the screen effectively places everything visible – people as well as products, animals as well as landscapes, images as well as texts, figures as well as tables – at eye level. Given that an image placed at eye level fosters the deceptive assumption that it can somehow look at us – then all these images view us as ‹equals.› Everything can be scaled down or blown up to fit the same screen format and consequently, every object is accorded the power to see. Indeed, in turning to Ernst Cassirer we can once again step back from the mathematical space of the central perspective into the mythical one where all things simultaneously attain physiognomic value and begin speaking to us. A few years ago, Lorraine Daston organized a conference entitled *Things That Talk*; it focused on exactly this animistic aspect of our topic.[23] Her focus was very persuasive. There are no longer any pictures, just picture screens, and we increasingly feel observed in precisely the sense that the great innovator of computer images, Bill Gates, strove for in conceiving of the ‹smart screen.›

This fact alone should mobilize thinkers in the realm of visual culture, if indeed it has not already done so. But will they be able to disentangle themselves from this trend? The most recent book by one of the founders of the discipline already

7 *Byzantine Icon: Christ*, miniature from an illuminated manuscript, Psalter and New Testament, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, Byzantine Collection, D.O. Ms 3., fol. 39r.

features a frankly animistic title: *What Do Pictures Want?* – as if pictures actually possessed an anthropomorphic life of their own. The author, W.J.T. Mitchell, is probably the best-known theoretician of visual culture in the English-speaking world. He started this line of thought with an essay of the same title in 1997.[24] The book summarizes his efforts in the field and certainly is an almost exhaustive examination of pictures, including mental ones. Perhaps it is due to the immensity of the task that, after nearly twenty years of research, Mitchell returns to Byzantine Iconoclasm. Pictures, Mitchell states, with his eye set firmly on Saint John of Damascus, are living beings. They want to be loved with our eyes, lips and hearts, but above all with the lips. Even when Mitchell references Lacan, his eye remains focused on the Byzantine field of argument. He uses a Byzantine miniature icon from the 11th century to show that believers not only thought but acted in such a way as to satisfy the picture's wishes (fig. 7). After taking in the miniature with their eyes, they kissed the face of Christ with such fervor that the picture ultimately faded from the paper.[24] Who knows? Perhaps the fate of such miniatures provides a sort of model for today's studies in visual culture, conducted with no lesser fervor. Of all the tools that have developed in human expression, images have emerged as the most uncanny – and the most ‹insecure.› It is as if they were driven by an unfettered evolution of their own. And it is certainly worth every effort to reflect – quite literally, in eye to eye fashion – on this notion.

Annotations

1 Translated with the help of Jefferson Chase, L. Anderson and Jeanette Kohl.
2 «A picture must be held vertically before the observer. A mosaic lies horizontally at his feet.» Walter Benjamin, «Painting and the Graphic Arts,» in: *Selected Writings*, ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock, Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, 4 vol., Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1996–2003, vol. 1, 1996, p. 82.
3 W.J. Thomas Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago 2005.
4 Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom. Triumph and Diversity*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1996, p. 240.
5 Brown 1996 (as in note 4), p. 244.
6 Richard Stengel, «10 Questions for Bill Gates,» in: *Time Magazine*, February 1, 2007, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1584815,00.html (February 2, 2012).
7 Ibid.
8 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I. Blasen*, Frankfurt am Main 1998, p. 172–174 and p. 193–194. Translation Claudia Schmölders.
9 Franz Kafka, *Das Schloß*, ed. by Max Brod, Frankfurt am Main 1983, p. 99. Translation Claudia Schmölders.
10 Ludwig Uhland, *Keine Adelskammer! Eine Flugschrift*, 1817, http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/germanica/Chronologie/19Jh/Uhland/uhl_adel.html (February 2, 2012).
11 Hans-Joachim Schubert, *Demokratische Identität. Der soziologische Pragmatismus von Charles Horton Cooley*, Frankfurt am Main 1995; see also Charles Horton Cooley, «A Primary Culture for Democracy,» in: *Publications of the American Sociological Society*, 1918, vol. 13, p. 1–10.
12 Stefan Rasche gives a lucid account of this historical monumental statis in Stefan Rasche, *Das Bild an der Schwelle. Motivische Studien zum Fenster in der Kunst nach 1945*, Münster 2003, p. 13–15. One early philosophical discussion of Dürer's «velum» is to be found in Uwe Poerksen, *Weltmarkt der Bilder. Eine Philosophie der Visiotype*, Stuttgart 1997, p. 148–150. Poerksen defines this instrument as *«Besteck der Wirklichkeitsherstellung»* that brings about a social deficit, because of its technical, i.e. nonhuman way of percieving real life.
13 Charlotte Klonk, «Mounting Vision. Charles Eastlake and the National Gallery of London,» in: *Art Bulletin*, 2007, vol, 82, issue 2, p. 331–347, following extract from p. 335: «He called for the abandonment of the crowded hang in favor of the display of all pictures at eye level. ‹Every gallery could be long enough,› he asserted, ‹to admit of its whole collection being hung in one line, side by side, and wide enough to allow for the spectators retiring to the distance at which the largest picture was intended to be seen.»
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