Sunil Manghani

Image Degree Zero

From the Empirical Image to Image as Capacity

It is a fact that over recent decades particular focus has been placed (and is being placed) upon our conception of the image. Yet, arguably, not a great deal of change has occurred in our thinking. The use of the definite article is typical of how we refer to images. We worry about the power of *the* image, and invest in getting *the right* image, while news reports will warn that we may find some of *the* images disturbing. These are all instances of what, for the purposes of this essay, can be considered the empirical image—that is, images that we can point to, distribute, and analyze. They are all too plain to see. Putting aside the usual problems of such images (that there are too many or too few, or of a general crisis of representation, and so on), the main problem of the empirical image considered here is that, in the end, it leaves us with very little more to say. Pushing this logic a little further, we may contend that there is no such *thing* as the image. It has been suggested, for example, that while we can cut a picture in half, we cannot reasonably cut an image in half. Semantics aside, this essay puts forward a skepticism of 'the' image, and instead seeks to understand Image with a capital 'I', as a virtual site/sight. If it were not for the restrictive vocabulary and grammar that relates to our use of the word 'image' (certainly in the English language, but in others too), we might prefer imaging to image, or perhaps *image-ment*, to capture the plurality, the move*ment*, the handling of Image.

In her study *Image, Icon, Economy*, Marie-José Mondzain uses the word 'imaginal' to refer to a domain of images that straddles the conscious and the unconscious, the perceived and the imagined.[1] It is the 'imaginal'—as a dimension, as a capacity—that underlies the argument to be made here, suggesting that we turn our attention away from the empirical image toward a theory of Image. Mondzain traces the force of the image in contemporary culture to the Byzantine iconoclastic controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries. Her case is that "the image is still a sacred cause today only because the fate of thought and liberty are at stake in it."[2] As she explains, "[i]n order to be able to envisage a world radically founded on visibility, and starting from the conviction that whatever constitutes its essence and meaning is itself invisible, it proved essential to establish a system of thought that set the visible and the invisible in relation to each other."[3] It is this same relationship that lies at the heart of this

1 Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy, The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, trans. Rico Franses, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

2 Ibid., p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 3.

essay. In the Byzantine period, the need for a system of thought stemmed from a need to qualify the Holy Trinity, which Mondzain re-writes as "*the Father, the Image, and the Voice*".[4] "The incarnation", she writes, "is not an in-corporation but an in-im-agination [...] The image is everywhere a figure of immanence, absolute in the one case, relative in the other. In one it concerns presence, in the other an absence." The lines are drawn between the Image as invisible and the icon as visible; these must be brought to an accord in some way to allow for the mediations of the Trinity. The crucial third term in her account is 'economy': "The image is mystery. The icon is an enigma. The economy was the concept of their *relation* and their *intimacy*. The image is eternal similitude, the icon is temporal resemblance. The economy was the theory of the *transfiguration of history*."[5]

It is important to note that, for Mondzain, the Greek system of thought underlines the new doctrine of the icon, a 'philosophy of the image' that manages to overcome certain theological prohibitions. She summarizes the Greek (Aristotelian) position as follows: "*an economic conception of the natural image founds the artificial image, and an economic conception of the artificial image, in turn, founds temporal power*"[6] (here 'natural' image equates to Image, just as 'artificial' image equates to the empirical image). With reference particularly to Aristotle, this essay was originally prompted by a consideration of the Greek term *dynamis*, which, as outlined further below, can be understood as 'ability' or 'potential' (as opposed to the 'actuality' of *energeia*). Thus, it is the idea of a potential, capacity, and/or ability (or operation) of Image that works across everything considered here. The reader will need to forgive the fact that the frames of reference range widely, incorporating philosophy, image studies, aesthetics, neurobiology, and theoretical physics. Rather than trying to contain what we mean by 'image', the point is to destabilize our account of it. It is to be attuned to the various 'economies' of the image, of that relationship between the invisible and the visible, the virtual and the real (a problematic, as will be seen, that ranges across all fields of knowledge). In the first two parts of the essay, the problem of absence/presence is highlighted, destabilizing what we think the image is, which is followed through with reference to competing epistemological accounts. This begins to set up the notion of the image as medium; indeed, we are continually led back to the body as the 'site' or 'living medium' of the image. Yet, as suggested by Mondzain's reference to 'economy', there remains a more structural question of 'where' the image resides, which must present as a continual operation or capacity. The image is then examined in terms of infinitude, here drawing specifically on Aristotle's term *dynamis*. There is a need to understand a more 'theoretical' physics of the image, rather than simply leaving it to the suggestion of a 'living medium'—this relates to an understanding of

4 Ibid., p. 77.
5 Ibid., p. 3.
6 Ibid., p. 2.

Image as not just temporal but also spatial (though not necessarily existing within the simple four-dimensional model of the universe). In turn, the possibility is opened up of Image as something external to ourselves, more akin to the poststructuralist account of the Text. Questions of authorship are challenged, despite our penchant for maintaining the force of the empirical image. Finally, in a brief coda, the varying accounts are brought to an accord of sorts that reminds us that to understand the Image we must equally *make* (or be *in the making* of) the Image. Again, we are never far from the fact that the Image is of an economy and capacity, rather than a thing in itself.

The theory of the Text is an important point of reference. Specifically, this essay inhabits another essay: Roland Barthes's "From Work to Text",[7] which was one of a series of canonical essays from the late 1960s and early 1970s that epitomize the intellectual shift to poststructuralist thought. In Barthes's essay we are left with the idea of the 'practice' of theory, or at least a practice of writing. The position that the practice of writing is itself the Text is a somewhat enigmatic one to hold. However, his argument for a shift from a static text (the work) to the dynamic and networked notion of the Text is akin to the shift presented here, by which we understand images in terms of an overarching notion of Image (with a capital 'I'). Barthes explicitly characterizes the Text in relation to 'network', his metaphor particularly extending to "current biological conceptions of the living body". As such, "no vital 'respect' is due to the Text: it can be broken (which is just what the Middle Ages did with two nevertheless authoritative texts—Holy Scripture and Aristotle)"[8]. There is here a certain textual approach being taken, both by inhabiting Barthes's essay and by working through the texts of others, not least those of Aristotle. However, the 'play' of the Text is not trivial. On the one hand, it allows for the bringing together of different ideas, different threads, but it is also a means to open up a somewhat imaginary account of the Image, which is otherwise hard to put into words. Barthes's shift to the Text has been aptly described with reference to Einstein's theory of relativity; it allows for the "relativization of the relations of writer, reader and observer"—a contrast with the "traditional notion of the *work*, for long—and still—conceived of in a, so to speak, Newtonian way".[9] Today the detection of gravitational waves only further weighs upon our understanding of Einstein's theory, and crucially his notion of spacetime. (Of course, as we know, the scale on which spacetime is curved is large, thus accounting for substantial, observable bodies in the universe. Yet, still, the theory breaks down when we turn to the smallest elements, that is, when we try to relate to the uncertainty of quantum mechanics). If we are to understand Image properly, it is like concerning ourselves with a

7 Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977.

8 Ibid., p. 161.

9 Barthes, "From Work to Text," p. 156.

relativization of relations. But, more than that, we need to consider Image (as we did with Text) in such a way that is perhaps analogous with the still unresolved tension between gravity and quantum matter. It is often forgotten that Einstein's Nobel Prize was awarded for his work in relation to quantum physics, not relativity. It is perhaps no coincidence that this work involved demonstrating the photoelectric effect (which forms the basis of modern light detectors and television cameras). If we are to understand Image at its 'quantum' level, we need to go beyond the fixed, resolved image or picture, and instead approach it more as an epistemological condition, or, as it were, *image degree zero*.[10]

If, in places, this essay is impressionistic (and heterogeneous in its sources), that is because it is seeking to speculate upon an alternative account of the image. Equally, it does not purport to be definitive, but rather heuristic. In setting out various problematics (and letting them impinge upon one another) the aim is to propose possible avenues for future research. It is all too commonplace to remind ourselves of the fact that we can hold to an image *of something* (the empirical image), but that we cannot hold the image itself. It is still worth enumerating just what that might mean. As Roland Barthes wrote: "I should like to remind myself of the principle propositions at the intersection of which I see the Text [or in our case, Image] [...] 'proposition' is to be understood more in a grammatical than a logical sense: the following are not argumentations but enunciations, 'touches', approaches that consent to remain metaphorical."[11] Here then equally is a set of imagined propositions; they concern diagrams, genres, pictures, infinitude, technics, efficacy, and event horizons.

10 Roland Barthes makes references to 'degree zero' in his early text on literature, *Writing Degree Zero*. In trying to secure *writing* as a defining feature of literature, as something that can outplay the strictures of language and style, he turns our attention to neutral, colorless writing, exemplified at the time by novelists such as Camus and Robbe-Grillet. According to Barthes's own thesis, 'zero degree' soon becomes its own genre, subsumed within the 'culture industry' of art, literature, and other such forms of entertainment. It is not until his penultimate lecture course, published posthumously as *The Neutral*, that he returns critically to this phrase of the 'zero degree'. It is not that specific examples of the Neutral can hold, but akin to the edge of a black hole (which is otherwise undetectable), their presence clusters around a point in spacetime, a point of significance, that can lead us to renewed questions about how we make meaning in the first place. Image degree zero, as evoked here, means suggesting a structural concern for the Image. The structural property of the 'zero' in 'zero degree' marks both a presence and an absence in our counting system. Zero is both within the domain of numbers (e.g. 1 – 1 = 0), yet simultaneously stands apart as a meta-sign, signaling that which stands outside of, or *prior to*, number and ordering. Image can similarly be viewed in structural terms, though arguably its structuration is more complex than Text (going beyond our intuition). The latter we might think is something we can learn to divide (unlike the image). Yet the moment that writing becomes re-writeable—as the words lift from the page to swarm with our own gathering thoughts, history, and sensations—the Text is then in fact arguably Image. Either way, we refer to that which is both there and not there as the very condition of Image.

11 Barthes, "From Work to Text," p. 156.

The Image is Not Some*thing*

The image is not to be thought of as some*thing* that can be computed, nor can the image be *schematized*. Building on the ubiquitous diagram of second-order signification in semiotics, Cultural Studies had its 'diagram moment' with the publication (in various books) of a diagram known as the 'Circuit of Culture'. The efficacy of such a diagram fits with an account of our contemporary 'semiotic landscape',[12] in which images now frequently carry the argument. Nonetheless, Cultural Studies, as a field, largely stayed within the bounds of structural analysis and the linguistic turn more broadly. However, we might ask why the more visually aware field of Visual Culture failed to produce its own equivalent diagram. Gillian Rose offers one attempt in her book *Visual Methodologies*, but with copious labels (many of which are written upside down), the circular diagram is not a sufficiently workable 'tool'. Perhaps it is useful in slowing us down, helping us to think more critically, but it does not really take us any further in understanding what (and where) the 'image' *is*, specifically. Inevitably, with the *specter* of the image never being anything in the singular, but always involved in movement, process, and *imaging*, it is hard to comprehend how (and to what end) we might 'fix' image analysis. My own diagram of an 'ecology of images',[13] for example, is really only offered as a means to *comment* upon how difficult it is to think in purely imagistic terms: it is a form of meta-diagram, as it were.

Alternatively, we might suggest that there already exists a suitable diagram, but that it is just that we hardly know what to do with it: Magritte's enigmatic portrayal of a simple pipe, the one we know is equally nothing of the sort, as its convenient label suggests. It is little wonder that, of all W.J.T. Mitchell's examples of the metapicture, *La trahison des images* is *the* metapicture—the one that most eloquently marks out the challenge of the Image as plural. With ironic didacticism the painting reveals where the image is, where it is not, and other possibilities besides, all in a single instance. As Mitchell puts it, "[m]etapictures are all like pipes: they are instruments of reverie, provocations to idle conversations, pipe-dreams, and abstruse speculations."[14] The metapicture is not one thing or another. It is more like an event. It reminds me of a photograph I have before me: a picture of a wall in front of a house in the city of Kochi, India. Stenciled across the whitewashed wall, in large black letters, two simple words, 'Absence/Presence', are brought into each other's orbit. Like a logic gate, these words bear the history of India's first art biennale. They are a marker of an art *event*, and a wry comment or 'image' on the biennale as a globalized 'platform' for contem-

12 Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, "The Semiotic Landscape," *Images: A Reader*, eds. Sunil Manghani, Arthur Piper, and Jon Simons, London: Sage, 2006, pp. 119–123.

13 Sunil Manghani, *Image Studies: Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 29–42.

14 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 72.

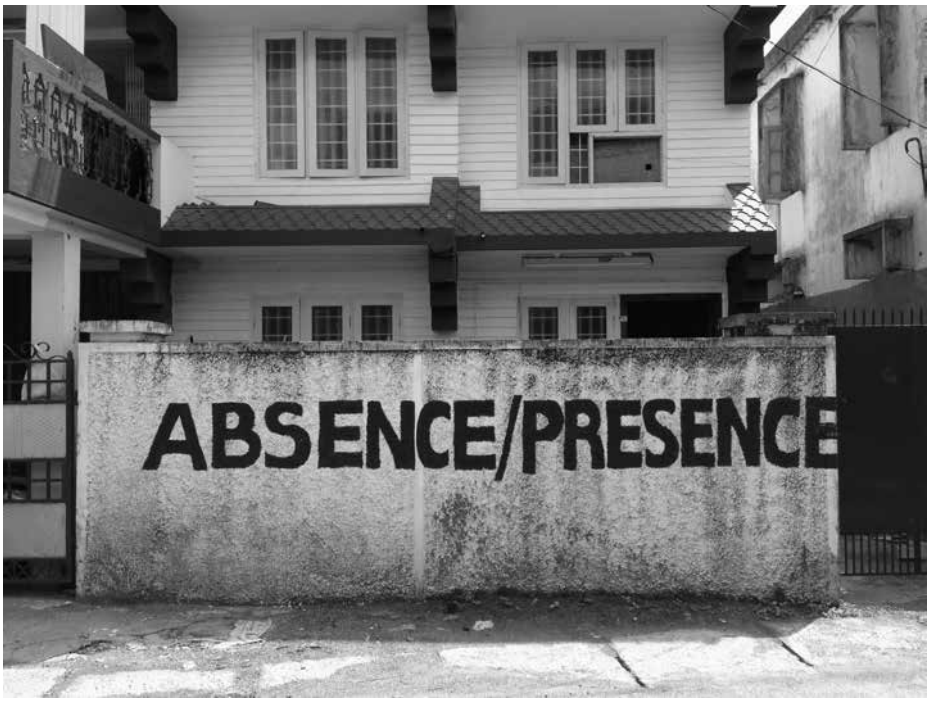

Fig. 1: 'Absence / Presence' graffiti. Fort Kochi, India, July 2014.

porary art. As I hold the picture between my fingers, it is an image *from* a city, but it is also a picture of an image *in* that city. And, like Magritte's pipe, it is none of these things; indeed, the writing is on the wall for this image. The cunning text both is and is not what it says. We might liken it to 'data', a set of coordinates (distinguishable by the *barre oblique*, as if a form of coding). As set of relational properties ever-ready to unfold, we are reminded of the need to break from the 'empirical' image as presence: to shift to Image as mode, condition, or capacity.

The Image is In/Visible

Image does not mean simply the visible; it cannot be contained in a hierarchy or maintained by any one definition or disciplinary setting. An initial (and arguably interminable) problem with the empirical image is the sheer diversity we encounter. Or to re-state the problem: what we mean by image is not held in any systematic sense, nor do all the things we refer to as images necessarily have anything in common. Mitchell tells us to consider images as a 'far-flung family', to eschew a single, universal

definition. He presents a 'family tree', which we can be forgiven for thinking delineates filiations, when in fact it is designed to mark differences. Each branch of the family tree identifies different types of imagery as defined by specific intellectual disciplines: "mental imagery belongs to psychology and epistemology; optical imagery to physics; graphic, sculptural, and architectural imagery to the art historian; verbal imagery to the literary critic; perceptual images occupy a kind of border region where physiologists, neurologists, psychologists, art historians, and students of optics find themselves collaborating with philosophers and literary critics."[15]

In each case, a discipline will define and problematize the image in its own terms, rarely looking across to other disciplines and domains. Furthermore, the tendency is to divide up commonplace definitions of the image between 'proper' images and their more 'suspect' counterparts. The 'proper' image is most frequently thought of as being the empirical image, which we can hold up, capture, or pass around. And yet it matters little if we understand the image to be a picture upon the wall or the trace of a dream; either way we are no closer to grasping Image *in itself*. We come to the same conclusion: "an image cannot be seen as such without a paradoxical trick of consciousness, an ability to see something as 'there' and 'not there' at the same time."[16] Unlike the birds pecking at the grapes painted by Zeuxis, what we see (even if astonished) are only their uncanny image. And, like money, Image has only *virtual* value—it is a form of mediation or currency. Likewise, we tend not to look at the currency itself, but rather what comes of the exchange. Either we want what we think images can provide (their fantasy) or we take pleasure in the fact that they never arrive (speculation). We focus, then, on the effects of the image (how they seemingly impinge upon us) rather than considering Image as our *own* means of mediating. It is worth noting, in Mondzain's account of divine 'economy', characterized in the introduction as the negotiation between the real and virtual, between the icon and the image, that there was a need to quell suspicions around idolatry, yet equally to circulate imperial iconography. The circulation of coins (showing the portrait of the emperor) was of course a significant technique, one literally combining a real image with a virtual, exchange-based value. Here, the 'image' (of the emperor) is not ordinarily given any great scrutiny, yet is crucial in validating the value of an exchange.

All images, whether material or immaterial, are seemingly born of their own virtuality. This is true of Mitchell's 'family of images' diagram itself (which purposefully is *not* shown here). (It is difficult to say whether or not we mentally see the diagram before it is on the page; whether or not a mental picture enables the diagram to be drawn in the first place). We might suggest that it is only through discussion and consideration of terms such as 'boundary' that we help to fashion the image. Arguably, then, we "cannot regard the diagram as something mental in the sense of 'private' or

15 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 10.
16 Ibid., p. 17.

'subjective'; it is rather something that surfaced in language [...] a way of speaking that we inherit from a long tradition of talking about minds and pictures. Our diagram might just as well be called a 'verbal image' as a mental one."[17] There is a problem surrounding the rhetoric of the image, that is, the language and grammar we can use. But, like Text, Image is that which we can never exactly grasp, but is nonetheless revealed to us by its changing states. To use Mondzain's term, it is through its 'economy' (its negotiation of what is there and what is not) that we know the image. The significance of Mitchell's family of images is that it shows only one line of descent. It is a genealogy of one, for the diagram draws out only a single root meaning of the image, identified as 'likeness', 'resemblance', and 'similitude'. Yet it makes little sense to read this as the origin of the image, rather it returns us to Image, not as occurrence, but as capacity. As with breathing, we do not enquire after its origin. Instead we accept it as a perpetual originary force. Again, we reach toward a sense of economy or circulation, which is not so much a defined (and divine) plan as something that comes to fruition because of its execution. Just as a central bank can print money in order to balance the economy, there is no absolute root, only constant exchange and economy (which, of course, only holds true when all parties trust the flow and 'promise' of a redeeming value).

Picturing the Image

The Image can be approached, or experienced, in 'relation' to the picture. While a picture is "a material object, a thing you can burn or break. An image is what appears in the picture, and what survives its destruction."[18] Victor Burgin, for example, refers to the sequence-image to describe the image that is neither still nor moving, but instead is of a 'psychical reality'.[19] And Hans Belting describes how "[i]mages are neither on the wall (or on the screen) nor in the head alone. They do not *exist* by themselves, but they *happen*; they *take place* whether they are moving images [...] or not. They happen via transmission and perception."[20] The suggestion that the image comes to attention when captured upon a material support (when pictured), which might include simply as pictured through the body, leaves open the quandary of where images go when we are not looking at them. As the neuroscientist Semir Zeki argues, Plato was not necessarily wrong to postulate a realm of archetypes where

17 Ibid., p. 19.

18 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Visual Literacy or Literary Visualcy," *Visual Literacy*, ed. James Elkins, New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 11–29, here p. 16.

19 Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion Books, 2004, pp. 7–28.

20 Hans Belting, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005), pp. 302–319, here pp. 302–303.

forms and ideas can manifest. His mistake—at least according to Zeki's reading of Plato—was to consider this an Ideal realm anterior to the realm of physical human experience.[21] In the *Republic*, Plato spoke of ideal, universal forms and their existing, empirical manifestation. He writes: "Does a couch differ from itself according as you view it from the side or the front or any other way? Or does it differ not at all in fact though it appears different, and so of other things?"[22] Plato asks the question in relation to mimetic art, such as painting. He holds the view that a single image, in this case the depiction of a couch, is not representative of all couches; it could not be a *universal* representation. From Zeki's point of view, "Plato was really comparing the 'phantasm' of painting to the reality of perception, a function of the brain, where there is no problem with a particular facet or view." This is because the brain has typically been exposed to many different views of an object and is able to combine them in such a way that "a subsequent single view of one facet is sufficient to allow it to obtain a knowledge of it and to categorize it".[23] Plato's theory of the Ideal form is an abstraction, apparently beyond our empirical engagement with things in the world. From a neurological perspective, the Platonic Ideal is the brain's stored representations of essential features, which is to suggest that "there are no ideal forms that have an existence in the outside world without reference to the brain."[24] Zeki's account equates more readily to Plato's student and colleague Aristotle, who explored the idea that 'universals' depend upon repetitive exposure. As Barthes writes: "the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*; if the Text extends itself, it is as a result of a combinatory systematic."[25] Similarly, the many points of view (real and imagined) that make up our ability to see is a 'combinatory systematic'. Here again, we come back to image as potential, as a sense of economy.

Without explicitly acknowledging a transcendental argument, neuroscience raises important (and largely unanswered) questions about how and *where* images form and/or how and *where* image concepts are stored in the brain. The workings of the 'brain' (that is, neurobiological mechanisms located both inside and outside of the area we call the brain) provides a means and power of calculation that goes beyond our conscious comprehension (the latter being only the 10% of our non-autopoietic brain activity, dependent upon the other 90% of our autopoietic brain[26]). The billions of neurons in the brain "resemble trees of many species and come in

21 Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
22 Plato cited in Zeki, *Inner Vision*, p. 37.
23 Ibid., pp. 38–39.
24 Ibid., p. 40.
25 Barthes, "From Work to Text," p. 161.
26 Barbara Maria Stafford, "The Remaining 10 Percent: The Role of Sensory Knowledge in the Age of the Self-Organizing Brain," *Visual Literacy*, ed. James Elkins, New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 31–57; see also Barbara Maria Stafford, "Thoughts Not Our Own: Whatever Happened to Selective Attention," *Theory, Culture and Society* 26, no. 2–3 (2009), pp. 275–293.

many fantastic shapes", and crucially it is the *totality* of their connections, or *connectome*, that makes us who we are. The first thing any connectome reveals is that it is unique.[27] To date, we are still only able to observe a very limited subset of our neurons; we are unable, then, to see how we relate from one moment to the next *and* how we retain distant memories. When William James wrote of the 'stream of consciousness' he referred to the flow of thoughts in our minds. For the neuroscientist, "every stream has a bed. Without this groove in the earth, the water would not know in which direction to flow. Since the connectome defines the pathways along which neural activity can flow, we might regard it as the streambed of consciousness."[28] Our ability *to image* relates both to a fast-moving stream of thought (neural activity) and the stable 'grooves' we hone over time to ensure that we look the 'right way'.[29] As Zeki remarks: "a picture cannot represent an object, only the brain can do that, having viewed an object from many different angles and having categorized it as belonging to a particular class."[30] In effect, our ability *to image* is not so different from the mathematical coding that allows the 360-degree 'frames' of 3D CGI imaging, in which we can model any conceivable angle without actually *having been there*. Of course, unlike computer modeling in which the variables are pre-set within a closed system, we maintain an input and feedback system that presents a fluid sense of reality yet is equally prone to error (as with optical illusions and effects born of cognitive impairments). Nonetheless, this is 'zero degree' seeing: a world in which the 'camera' can inhabit all points of view at once and provide impossible perspectives—out of which we gain a semblance of a shared 'reality'—a navigable *space* of the Image (as referring to an interconnected and pieced together 'experience' of Image, not so dissimilar from the post-structural Text).

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27 Sebastian Seung, *Connectome: How the Brain's Wiring Makes Us Who We Are*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. xi, xiii.

28 Ibid., p. xix.

29 It is striking how contemporary neurological theory, in referring to a so-called streambed of the connectome, echoes Freud's analogy of the stratified mystic writing pad. In this earlier example, inscription was 'distributed' through the mechanism and thus its 'violence' dissipated between the layers. The consequence is that "perception is never present to itself. The structure of the Mystic Pad excludes this, since inscription upon the surface of the celluloid will disappear [...] it retains no permanent trace" (Christopher Johnson, *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 97). Freud, of course, was interested in the final, wax resin layer, which he viewed as *retaining* the (unconscious) trace. Yet, were we to look long and hard at this piece of biology we would see no such 'thing' (we must beware of the metaphysics of presence). The connectome does not exist in isolation. Derrida's re-writing of Freud focuses on the Mystic Pad as machine, as that which transmits a force, *dynamis*. In doing so, he postulates "a 'writing' more fundamental to signifying practices in general, a writing that is the condition of all forms of expression" (Johnson, *System and Writing*, p. 66).

30 Zeki, *Inner Vision*, pp. 37–49.

Neurological accounts are often criticized for an inherent solipsism, but the underlying materialism enables our rethinking of Image as both internal *and* external (as both material and procedural). If we shift from the brain per se, to the body more generally, we find that Belting, for example, adopts the terms 'medium' and 'body' to refer explicitly to the movement and plurality of the image. He reminds us that images "have always relied on a given technique for their visualization. When we distinguish a canvas from the image it represents, we pay attention to either the one or the other"[31]—this again takes us back to the problematic encapsulated in the story of Zeuxis's painting of grapes. Crucially, for Belting, "[i]t is our own bodily experience that allows us to identify the dualism inherent in visual media. We know that we all *have* or that we all *own* images, that they live *in* our bodies or in our dreams and wait to be summoned *by* our bodies to show up."[32] Thus, our bodies are 'living mediums', whereby we "*perceive*, *project*, or *remember* images, and that also enables our imagination to censor or to transform them".[33] Perhaps we can more readily relate to the idea of the body being a medium for spoken language, since the voice is a bodily, acoustic phenomenon.

Yet the mediality of images goes beyond the visual realm. Language itself, for example, can serve as a medium for images, though equally this is a bodily experience. Nonetheless, the description of our bodies as 'living mediums' is, if left without deeper explanation, really only reductive of something like cinema (as if we are forever 'at the pictures'). And there is still no clarification of how the bodily medium works, or 'where' images reside. A broader account of the sensorium is no doubt beneficial (if, ultimately, we find that there is no such things as *the* image, only a capacity across regions, domains, and planes). There is growing evidence, for example, of how our bodies 'sense' beyond the standard five senses. Interoception, for example, the awareness of the internal body, whereby we detect regulation responses, such as respiration, hunger, and heart rate, is a form of sensing that triggers prior to brain activity and is linked to empathy. Also, our *combined* senses are key. Smell, sound, and sight alter how we taste. The fluid in our ear canals affects how we see (for instance, when we sit in a plane our field of vision does not change, yet during take-off we 'see' the front of the cabin lifting due to the changing state of equilibrium sensed by our ears). As Whitney Davis has argued, a 'general theory' of visual culture must allow for the *succession* of vision to visuality. We can accept that in order for an observer to use and interpret pictures they must be able to see them, yet "it is more difficult to demonstrate that these depictions [...] organize the seeing itself."[34] In fact, the various

31 Belting, "Image, Medium, Body," pp. 304.
32 Ibid., pp. 305–306.
33 Ibid.
34 Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 6.

recursions of vision succeeding to visuality "are not well understood analytically, let alone neurologically, as actual or functional operations of the visual cortex and of higher (cognitive) processing".[35] Arguably, however, the 'body as medium' has to date only led us to define image as something tangible (that needs mediating or is archived by the body) rather than a *capacity* to mediate more generally. The latter need not preclude the former, but importantly leads us to both a structural and biological account. It is just such a *condition* of Image that we need to clarify.

The Image is Infinite

The Image is infinite—which is not to say that image extends indefinitely, but that as capacity it is inexhaustibly infinite. Like Text, it "is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation [...] but to an explosion, a dissemination".[36] We need to consider not so much the 'media' image (namely, as *something* that is mediated), but more a medial image—the notion that it occurs through many points at one time—such as we might say of the connectome, or as we know of wave—particle duality. As Einstein once expressed it: "We are faced with a new kind of difficulty. We have two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do." Of course, this difficulty is not so new. We can draw back to Plato and Aristotle's accounts of *dynamis* and *energeia*. The former is typically rendered as 'ability', 'potential', and 'potency', and also 'power', while the latter, *energeia*, refers to 'activity' or 'actuality'. It is easy to see how these terms can be read as temporalities, as if a future and a present tense; but equally, if we think in terms of wave and particle, we might just as well consider a spatial reading. Nonetheless, understanding *dynamis* as dimension seemingly requires us to think beyond our ordinary dimensions. Just as imaginary numbers are a serious pursuit, which we imagine as "a new kind of number at right angles to ordinary real numbers",[37] perhaps we need a new conceptualization of Image as perpendicular to the 'reality' that brings empirical images to our attention, to the surface of our 'membrane' or existence. In the early 20th century we identified quarks, with lengths of a millionth of a millimeter. Today, with the Planck length, we have reached a smaller scale by a factor of a billion. The smaller we go, the more structures we uncover and can imagine. One way of unifying current observations is to suggest that we live in a four-dimensional 'brane', which in turn sits within 'higher-dimensional spacetime'.[38] "From the viewpoint of the positivist philosopher,"

35 Ibid., p. 8.
36 Barthes, "From Work to Text," p. 159.
37 Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, London: Bantam Press, 2001, p. 59.
38 Ibid., p. 180.

as Stephen Hawking reminds us, "one cannot determine what is real. All one can do is find which mathematical model describes the universe we live in."[39] Similarly, we cannot determine Image, so much as model its potentiality, which, like the Text, is seemingly infinite.

We have long been troubled by the notion of infinity, and if only because it denies any purpose to ourselves as finite (as the unsung heroes of our universe). Aristotle famously sought to settle the matter by describing two types of infinity: the potential infinite, which he acknowledged; and the actual infinite, which he denied. A potential infinity is one that occurs over time. An actual infinity is one that must be present all at once. We can *potentially* count up numbers infinitely, but this must take place over time, since it is not possible to encounter all such numbers at once. The difference is between process and object. For Aristotle space cannot be infinite because it is there all at once. Yet, we ask, what limits it? Beyond space is more space (and space that need not be of only four dimensions). It is just that we would need infinite time to traverse infinite space. Here, then, space becomes time; it becomes horizon.

Historically, the development of the perspectival system of representation has been an important technique of imaging, since it provides a 'rational' point of origin. It has a point of view. Yet, of course, this always stops short (at its singular point of origin) of a complete account of the image as a medial physics—of a 'zero degree' image, or of a spatializing of the image through all matter that surrounds us when actualizing the image. We can think of Dürer's drawing of Albertian perspectivalism as showing that 'the image' can be cut at any point in our line of vision. This account changes our reading of static media images. It is not about the 'power' of the image (as forms of representational magnitude and potency), but rather about the capacities and resistances of imaging: how seeing is formed of a continuous medium and continuous calculations. Even our whole universe might be thought of an illusion, as one 'cut' in the lines of incident rays. Holographic theories of the universe have been around since the 1990s, but a recent study claims to present the first proof that what we perceive as three dimensional emanates from a two-dimensional field. Looking back as far as 13 billion years, the new holographic modeling (derived from quantum, rather than classic theories of gravity) shows how the developmental structures of gravity and the universe draw upon thin, vibrating strings of an initially flat, two-dimensional universe. The holographic universe is a very different model of the Big Bang (unseating its ultimate metaphysics of presence).[40] It is as if imaging in fact goes the other way around. The flat plane that we see in Dürer's drawing (which we take to be derived from the 3D world around it) is in fact the plane upon which the structuring

39 Ibid., p. 59.

40 Niayesh Afshordi, Claudio Corianò, Luigi Delle Rose, Elizabeth Gould, and Kostas Skenderis, "From Planck Data to Planck Era: Observational Tests of Holographic Cosmology," *Physical Review Letters* 118 (27 January 2017), pp. 041301-1–043101-6.

of our universe takes place. While we fixate on *the* image, upon the single plane (the one that Zeuxis's birds peck at, and the one that Dürer 'frames'), Image encapsulates (and makes possible) all images.

As a counter-thought to the 'gravity' of perspectivalism (as a means to re-frame our 'way of seeing'), we might ponder Eastern painting traditions, such as *liubai*, the Chinese landscape inks, which are typically viewed as a form of escapism, in a similar way to Japanese *ukiyo-e*, the 'pictures of the floating world'. Yet these washed inks give rise to a 'radical' blankness (or *Xu* to adopt a Daoist notion), intermingling trees with mountains, mountains with mists, to give a 'unidirectional fluidity of relations',[41] or, we might suggest, the gaze in an 'expanded field'.[42] Norman Bryson recounts Sartre's and Lacan's accounts of the gaze, which both critique the Cartesian self-enclosure of the subject and break the rigidity of subject/object. Yet these accounts still lack the more radical field of vision of *Xu* (or the alternative account of the holographic universe). For Sartre, the subject–object relation remains in "a kind of tunnel vision in which all of the surrounding field is screened out". Lacan's account of the gaze is perhaps closer. His reference to the anamorphic imagery of Holbein's *The Ambassadors* is emblematic of an expanded field of vision—as if looking (calculating even) across 'branes'. Yet why the 'downcast eyes'? Why, as Bryson asks, do we remain with just one model of vision, "that of a regime or terrorizing gaze"? Here again lies the 'trap' of the empirical image, not the Image as capacity. He turns instead to the writings of Kitarō Nishitani, and in particular his use of the concept of śūnyatū (translated as 'emptiness', 'radical impermanence', 'blankness', and 'nihility'). Like *Xu*, which 'regulates' *luibai* painting, Bryson refers to the Japanese ink painting technique of 'flung ink' as a way to describe an omnidirectional field of vision. He equates this to an undoing of the divisions between subject and object, a taking away of any sense of 'frame'—a visual rendering equivalent to the 'imaginary numbers' of the Image and its field of 'vision'. It is referred to as 'radical impermanence': "It cannot be said to occupy a single location, since its locus is always the universal field of transformations: it cannot achieve separation from that field or acquire any kind of bounded outline."[43] This is—if only by analogy—the infinity of Image, its boundless field of transformation. At stake is a politics of vision away from the 'terrorizing gaze'—away from the empirical image, and instead toward the plane(s) of the Image, as its *capacity*. Within this 'space', when Davis argues that "vision must *succeed* to visuality through a historical process" (so taking account of processes of recursion and feedback),[44]

41 Peng Yu, "Zones of Indeterminacy: Art, Body and Politics in Daoist Thought," *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no.1 (2016), pp. 93–114.

42 Norman Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster, Seattle: Bay Press, 1988, pp. 86–113.

43 Ibid., pp. 97–98.

44 Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture,* p. 8.

we need pay heed to the fact that we still know little about the visual process as a means of amplification. Unlike the infinitude of Image, light consists of a finite and *small* amount of energy, of photons or quanta. Indeed, the 'ingenious amplifier' that enables us to see, to image, remains an unsolved puzzle: "The energy of a photon is sufficient to disturb only a single atom or molecule. With this energy alone, the information that a photon [is mediating cannot] be transmitted beyond the point of absorption, let alone to some central nervous system."[45] Furthermore, nature does not work in an orderly fashion. The quantum mechanics of photons mean their excitation places them at random times and places, giving "rise to a fundamental graininess of any image".[46] Given the stochastic process and the inherent need to amplify photonic energy, it is a wonder that we see at all. The signal-to-noise ratio is such that we hardly see what is before us, but rather somehow, someplace, we fashion the finite world around us through potentially infinite means (the Byzantine quandary of the mediation of the Trinity does not seem so distant a problem from that of describing our physical realm).

Avisuality

Images are all too readily caught up in our own sense of authorship. In order to accede to Image, we need to envisage a different kind of 'authorship' or site of production. When Maurice Merleau-Ponty evokes Sartre's account in *Nausea* of how the smile of a long-dead king remains and continues to reproduce itself on the surface of a canvas, he wants to claim a total or absolute vision: an image degree zero. Yet this anthropomorphic form is seemingly no accident. As the phenomenological account has it: "We see only what we look at."[47] However, the prevalence of imaging technologies allows us to think, and of course 'see', outside of ourselves. As an unintended consequence, the way in which these technologies intersect with (and alter) our lives tends to add to our rhetoric of an image culture (namely, that somehow ours is a *visual* culture). But increasingly, these technologies offer 'ways of seeing' that go beyond our own intuition. Like the alternative dimensions that can be used to model our universe more effectively, we can comprehend all manner of imaging technics, but we cannot intuitively see as they 'see'. Whether it is X-rays, computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, positron emission tomography, or ultrasound, we have been able to reconstruct the insides of our bodies without even touching them. In astronomy the

45 Albert Rose, *Vision: Human and Electronic*, New York: Plenum Press, 1973, p. 2.
46 Ibid., p. 6.
47 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, trans. James M. Edie, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 162.

radio telescope has long superseded the use of optical technology, with 'Deep Field' imaging bringing back pictures of the further reaches of the universe, full of galaxies fainter than have ever previously been seen. And looking the other way, the electron microscope enables us to resolve single atoms. The scanning probe microscope is not simply an imaging device; it is a tool for the manipulation of matter at the level of the atom. By moving to the actual surface of the atom, these devices have been able to 'observe' the so-called Corral Wave—as if a stone has been dropped into a pond.[48] This signature of electrons is our witness to quantum mechanics. But, of course, the 'image' we see from the microscope, like any other digital image, is a series of ones and zeros. It is mathematical data converted into an empirical image.

What these images *show* is a physics we cannot begin to see. The X-ray, established over a hundred years ago (but now commonplace), alongside cinema and psychoanalysis, gave us a new way of imagining interiority, a secret visibility, which in turn altered our ways of thinking about ourselves. Akira Mizuta Lippit describes these technologies as offering "not an access or opening as such, but a mode of avisuality".[49] We are introduced to our alien self, "secret and distant in its proximity" to ourselves. Such a vision is what Derrida refers to as 'in-visibility', "an invisible order of the visible that I can keep secret by keeping out of sight".[50] Weapons in an underground silo, a part of the body under a veil, or even just our internal organs, are all "naturally said to be invisible, but they are still of the order of visibility: an operation or an accident can expose them or bring them to the surface."[51] Derrida also refers to 'absolute invisibility', that which falls outside of the "register of sight, namely the sonorous, the musical, the vocal or phonic [...] but also tactile and odoriferous"[52] (which echoes the earlier remark of a more broadly understood sensorium). Lippit suggests that this is a "visibility that takes place elsewhere [...] it is seen in the other senses, as another sense. To see in another register, to hear or smell an image, to touch it."[53]

For all the visibility of the empirical image, we need to respond to Image in terms of a more far-reaching avisuality. Take, for example, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), the computational photographic method that reveals surface information that is otherwise undisclosed through direct empirical examination. RTI generates information from a series of photographs using a stationary camera, with the

48 Philip Moriarty, "Ripples in an Electron Pond," *Image Studies: Theory and Practice*, ed. Sunil Manghani, London: Routledge, 2012, pp. 210–213.

49 Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p. 30.

50 Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 90.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Lippit, *Atomic Light*, p. 32.

Fig. 2: Ian Dawson, MJ Unstable RTI [single frame], 2016.

light source projected from multiple but known directions (typically using a small black reflective ball as a fixed control measure). Lighting information is mathematically synthesized to create a model of an object's surface. Each picture in a sequence is a form of *data*, encoding the image-data per pixel; thus, when synthesized, the RTI 'image' provides information about how light reflects off its subject matter. In dedicated viewing software, each constituent pixel is able to control aspects of interactive 'virtual' light. Through RTI, then, we control the *light* from an object, not the object itself, and in doing so we disclose fine detail unseen by the naked eye—*as if an absolute invisibility turns to in-visibility*. However, when we look at these images, we are hardly equipped to see them for what they are. We think of them as empirical images, not as light reflectance information. Sculptor Ian Dawson disorients us even further. By inverting the process, using a static light, but affixing the light control to the camera and moving it around the object, he has recorded a dynamic form of RTI. No single 'image' does justice to what Dawson reveals, but as we watch a succession of pictures, to see the movement of imaging, we begin to discern the ethereal world of imaging itself, as if we can indeed not just see the image but touch its cloudy effervescence (as if the air that surrounded Dürer while he worked is brought to our attention, imaged).

Image Efficacies

Inevitably, despite our ability to *imagine* the Image as a further dimension or capacity, we still readily think of images as succeeding or failing. In this respect, Dawson's RTI imaging is emblematic. We cannot help but see the single image, when in fact it shows the shifting planes of Image. Just as we can *write* the Text, but never witness it in full, Dawson's modified use of RTI is a tantalizing glimpse of *imaging* the Image. All too commonly we refer to 'the image' as a static concept, as if our very concept of the image is akin to a photographic snapshot, rather than a capacity *to image*. A seemingly unwavering fascination with so-called iconic images (for instance, the fall of the Berlin Wall, 9/11, Abu Ghraib) is testament to this problem and of course none of these so-called iconic images are singular. Take, for example, one failed image: an X-ray showing a fetus with a bullet lodged in its head. This image was released to news media via the aid agency Syria Relief. British vascular surgeon, Dr. David Nott, who regularly volunteers in war zones around the world, spoke of the release of the X-ray image as a deliberate attempt to raise consciousness.[54] Yet he expressed his frank disappointment with the lack of any effect. He had thought carefully about releasing the X-ray image and possessed a deeper understanding of its provenance, making him well placed to provide its fuller context. The mistake, however, was to think the X-ray image was *the* image. In fact, it was never anything so static, but instead came through a richer ecology, of which Dr. Nott himself was a part. Later the 'image' reappears with a painting at the Royal Academy in which the artist Bob and Roberta Smith painstakingly painted the complete transcript of Dr. Nott's radio interview onto a series of large-format canvases. These transcriptions and transpositions are a further reminder of the fact that the image is never singular and is never simply what we 'see'.

This is not to say that *the* image of the bullet in the baby's brain in itself fails to shock. It is shocking (it *is* the index of a deep trauma, after all). Yet what has failed in this case is its *imaging* (and our imaginations)—our ability to take up the picture as part of our wider accessing of the Image. The error we make is to think there might be a 'right' image and a 'right' way to view this. The problem is that *we cannot help but make images* (for the image 'is' constantly in flux). As per Belting's account, we are image beings. Or rather, images occur only because of their recursion, without which the image has no presence, no potentiality. This brings to mind an 'image', as mentioned in Julian Bell's *What is Painting?* in reference to iconoclasm: "In 1996, the Taliban in Afghanistan, taking control of Herat, stripped the city of its televisions—its image-machines—and skewered them in great scarecrow towers, festooned with

54 Reference to Dr David Nott's account of the Syrian X-ray image relates to a radio interview given for the BBC Radio 4 'PM' current affairs program, transmitted on December 31, 2013.

Fig. 3: Bob and Roberta Smith, Interview with David Nott by Eddie Mair, 2015.

fluttering videotape, at the city gates."[55] I recall this 'image' vividly. I remember the BBC's world affairs correspondent reporting in front of one of these 'totems'. Ironically, I could not help but read it as an artwork (an idol) fluttering defiantly behind an establishment journalist. Significantly, this image cannot be found on the Internet, and indeed no physical evidence remains. Yet in being denied this singular empirical image, we are of course reminded of our capacity to *form* images. As with most iconoclastic gestures, one image is replaced with another (but, as is also typical, the two cannot help but evoke each other; as with the Golden Calf, iconoclasm means admitting and even rendering an iconophilia). When we look at Bob and Roberta Smith's painting, we confront the futility (if only from the sheer effort required to

55 Julian Bell, *What Is Painting? Representation and Modern Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, p. 16.

paint the transcript) of putting Image into empirical form. And simultaneously we must acknowledge that the image is always elsewhere; its true *matter* is further afield. This is the critical 'power' of such a huge painted text: as viewers stand before it, we can only suppose that they are looking the wrong way, if pensively.

A shift can be noted from ontological lines of enquiry to operative ones, to consider the image in terms of *efficacy* and *activity*. By efficacy we can mean the 'capacity to produce an effect'. But we might turn that around to consider the effect of Image as capacity. For Aristotle, the term 'capacity' stands in relation to potentiality, and crucially between active and passive potentialities. An agent of change has an active potentiality, while the object of change is passive. When we try to ask what an image is, depending on how we cut it, the question can point to us as active subjects (in that we form the image, for example, neurologically), or as passive subjects in relation to the 'power' of the image. Even the failing image, as in the case of the Syrian X-ray image, has a way of acting over us, to show us as unable to attend to the image.

But, analogically, let us ponder for a moment the case of the capacitor in an electrical circuit. Its basic property is that it stores energy electrostatically; this is achieved through an insulating component (dielectric) held between two plates with opposing (and thus attracting) forces. It oscillates. Unlike a resistor, the capacitor does not dissipate energy, and crucially, it blocks direct current, while allowing alternating current. Capacitors are used to smooth the output of power supplies and to tune radios to particular frequencies. In this regard, we might consider Image a form of 'tuning'. The neuroscientist makes this analogy: "Engineers know that a radio is constructed by wiring together electronic components like resistors, capacitors, and transistors. A nervous system is likewise an assembly of neurons, 'wired' together by their slender branches."[56] In fact, the connectome was previously described as a 'wiring diagram'. Metaphorically, we might be inclined to think of the empirical image as a resistor, a point in the circuit that slows everything down, being an instance of framing. The capacitor, however, is closer to Image in the general sense. It is the movement, or oscillation of image, it is *of* imaging: image *as* capacity. In *Potential Images*, Dario Gamboni examines how artworks often foreground this process.[57] We might say that these potential images have their corollary in the *writerly* Text. It is to *this* 'space' that Dr Nott's X-ray image needed (but failed) to attend. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle considers the question of unity, and of being greater than a sum of parts, asking why we refer to a unity and not a plurality (as we do with the *writerly* Text). It is intriguing how this ancient argumentation echoes the structuralist's account of language, with *langue* (as potential) and *parole* (as actuality). We need to be mindful of Image as potentiality, as having *a capacity of/toward empirical images*. We tend to get stuck on the latter, yet

56 Seung, *Connectome*, p. xii.

57 Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art*, London: Reaktion Books, 2002.

the former is more critical, more capacitive—suggestive, for example, of pensiveness, as in Barthes's enigmatic line that "photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is *pensive*, when it thinks."[58]

Coda: New Dimensions of the Image

This leads us to pose (to propose) a final approach to the Image that is akin to an event horizon or boundary around which images emerge and escape. We can take a cue from Jean-François Lyotard's account of figuration (as against language or discourse). He describes the figural as carrying within it "an exteriority it cannot interiorize as *signification*"[59] (thus being of 'something' that cannot be reduced to code). He reminds us of the writing of Paul Claudel, who, with a description of traveling through a landscape, recounts watching as two trees at some distance come into accord in a single line of vision: "here we move, searching for composition, constituting the space of the picture, relying on that plastic space where the eye, the head, the body move or swim, buoyed as if in a bath of mercury. It is the juxtaposition by the eye that guarantees the agreement of the pine and the maple, agreement fulfilled because total, a harmony of silhouette, tone, value, and position: desire momentarily satiated."[60] Once the visual is 'read' or placed within a rational order (recognized, comprehended), we lose its 'truth', by which Lyotard means its 'event', which "presents itself like a fall, like a slippage and an error, exactly the meaning of *lapsus* in Latin. The event clears a vertiginous space and time; untethered from its context or perceptual environment."[61] The figural—as event—discloses a dimension of visibility that comes *before* we see, before we make sense of things. This can be taken as a 'thick' description of the Image (the moment/movement of imaging). "The goal of attention", Lyotard argues, "is to recognize; and recognizing does not go without comparing. The eye darts here and there, weaving its familiar web."[62] Even the basic Gestaltist distinction between figure and ground, he argues, is "itself the outcome of secondary rationalization".[63]

Paul Klee, whose dictum is that "art does not render the visible but renders visible", gives further insight (again the definite article is significant). It is not a question of *reproducing* what is already empirically visible, but of rendering things visible.

58 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 38.
59 Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, p. 7.
60 Ibid., p. 3.
61 Ibid., pp. 129–130.
62 Ibid., p. 152.
63 Ibid., p. 153.

Werk ist weg: the pursuit of the visible for Klee is through *making*; it is a form of genesis in itself (which is the only way to break with the codes and conventions of significations). Klee's wish to create a *Zwischenwelt* or in-between world (might we say to cross branes?), between an objective, external world, and a subjective, internal realm allows for deformations of the familiar, thus forcing us into the "field of sensibility, indeed of sensuality".[64] The argument, then, is for two ontologically distinct spaces: a coded textual space; and figural space "unmarked by the coordinates of a regular dimensionality, of a fixed up and down, left and right, foreground and background; its objects defy 'good form', ready categorization, or denomination; and its time is that of the event".[65] However, while the figural can be disclosed (such as in deformations), it remains itself unrepresentable. It is Image degree zero. The black hole of signification: "Only the trace of its action appears, and the function of the artwork is to reveal its effects and thereby open up an interworld between an objective, codified world and a subjective fantasy world."[66]

These discrete propositions obviously cannot be said to constitute the full articulation of an Image theory. Indeed, hopefully, it becomes apparent that any such theory can hardly be the proffering of one individual, or one perspective (and, of course, much of what is suggested here is simply to pick up on the existing, on-going debates). As we know from the theory of the Text, it cannot be resolved through a metalinguistic exposition. To recall: "the discourse on the Text should itself be nothing other than text, research, textual activity, since the Text is that social space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in the position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder. The theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing."[67] Similarly, in keeping with Klee's rendering of the visible, we can say that the theory of Image coincides only with a practice of imaging. It is through our making of images, indeed our very capacity as image beings, that we explore the nature of them. However, where Text is described as a 'social space', suggestive of language as a network or intertext of significations that generate meaning beyond any original utterance, we might be more inclined to refer back to the analogy of spacetime when considering Image. Rather than 'space' as a conceptual descriptor for the formation of a 'text' as greater than the sum of its parts, image can be thought of as another order of capacity or structuring (even subsuming the operations of the Text). Beyond the deconstructive account of 'writing' as a condition of all forms of expression, 'imaging' is the figuring of that condition, which, to put it in Claudel's words, is a kind of traveling through the landscape (or 'space') of significations. There is a physical, sensual dimension to Image (being of pictures, of the gesture of

64 Ibid., p. 232.
65 Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 115.
66 Ibid., p. 115.
67 Barthes, "From Work to Text," p. 164.

mark-making and biological vision), but also a virtuality, which arguably places an understanding of image beyond the structures of our own minds, or at least presents a complexity and malleability far beyond that of text. As with advances made with imaginary numbers and multiple dimensions in theoretical physics, alongside our understanding of the neurobiological accounts of vision, we need to attend to Image through an extended imaginary—perhaps even to start to imagine Image as forming (from) a whole new imaginal (to borrow Mondzain's phrase). That is to say, we need to look beyond the empirical image to which we are all too closely tethered, and rather ask questions about Image as capacity. Of course, like time, as a dimension we experience but cannot possess, we may find, despite our capacity for imaging, that we lack—at least based on current modeling—a means to comprehend properly the full dimensions of the Image.