

GENERAL ANTHROPOGENY

FIRST PART – BASIS

Chapter 9 – MASSIVE IMAGES

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Chapter 9 – Massive images

The *hand axes* of *Homo erectus* (also known today as *Homo ergaster*), and perhaps already the *choppers* and *chopping tools* of *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* <13C> that we can find in the display cabinets of our palaeoanthropology museums are not only technical objects, or means oriented to ends: to split, to cut, to kill. They are to some extent sculptures, without detail and therefore massive, but sculptures nevertheless, and therefore images, that we shall call massive images. They mark a key moment of the anthropogeny.

9A. Similitude and analogy (proportion)

Let us agree on the notion of image, and in a first while not confuse similitude and analogy. Etymologies are meaningful. *Similitude*, like *resemblance*, comes from *semel*, from the root **sem*, which marks the unity (gr. *hen*, *un*) and even spatial and temporal identity (*simul*). Old German "*sama*" goes in the same sense. There is a similitude of A and B if, in some respects, A and B make one.

The *Analogia* (*logos*, *ana*), of which the *proportio* (*partiri*, *pro*) is the Latin equivalent, is more subtle, since the matching is established not by a same level operation, like the identity of similitude-resemblance, but by the ascent (*ana*) to some common traits (*logos*), sometimes very distant. Analogy concerns A and B in the case where for example the height/width/depth relation in A are the same as in B, but it extends to homologies and homotheties, anamorphosis, and even to the truly strange figures of symplectic geometry <La Recherche, Dec. 94, 1246>.

After all, we can consider similitude-resemblance as a specific case of analogy-proportion. We shall adopt this convention. Therefore, we shall say by generalizing that B is the image of A if it is analogous to it. Mathematically, this imaged relation is reversible and the fact that B is the image of A implies and means that A is the image of B. Physically too, a crater on the Moon is the image (negative, inverted) of the aerolite that dug it, like the aerolite is the (negative, inverted) image of the crater.

But what interests the anthropogeny is neither the mathematical image nor the natural image, but the artificial image, that which a specimen of Homo aims to trigger semiotically by producing a B that is analogue to A, this A then being (a) a thing, a performance, or an event as a thing-performance, (b) a situation, (c) a circumstance, (d) a state of space or space-time forming the horizon. In this case, B is a thematization of A that depletes in this thematization and is therefore a sign $\langle 4A \rangle$. And this time the relation is not biunivocal. A portrait can be the image (semiotic) of the portrayed, but the latter is not the (semiotic) image of the portrait. The hand axe can be the (semiotic) image of the craftsman cutting it, but the craftsman could not be the (semiotic) image of the hand axe, except in a very derived sense (for example, after producing it several times, the producer ends up resembling his product).

In this chapter, we shall discuss massive artificial images, and even massive semiotic images. Assuredly, all the definitions above are also applicable to sound, tactile, kinaesthetic (gestural), olfactory, gustatory and visual images. But since only the latter are attested by Palaeoanthropology and since they are the only ones where we perceive the anthropogenic passage from the technical object and from indexed indicia to the image object, it is those that we shall target when we shall use the word images.

9B. From utensils to image

Let us now consider one of the hammers or cutters obtained by one or several grouped shards of a stone, that Homo habilis and Homo erectus have known (chopper and chopping tool); and particularly one of these hand axes developed by Homo erectus (Homo ergaster). And let us see how the technical act had to be enriched there with semiotic analogies.

(a) The shapes of such an object, transversalized $\langle 1A1 \rangle$ and possibilized $\langle 6A \rangle$, since it is produced by Homo, are commanded by a sufficient coaptation between its external variables and the internal variables of the hole or the slit that it is meant to open either in a prey or an enemy to wound, kill, open, slice, or that it is meant to open in a territory, a habitat, utensils, or tools to shape. This is what we could call a **strong coaptative analogy** that bears in this case something of the charge (of affects) of the universal, even sexual, partition-conjunction $\langle 7H2-3 \rangle$.

(b) On the other hand, these forms are referred to the organs (hands, arms, and feet) of the present or future user in another **strong coaptative analogy**. With the same charge.

(c) Simultaneously, the fabrication of each new tool depends on the shape of previous tools, available as physical models in the present panoply, or as models in the panoply imagined in memory, constantly reorganising just like everything that belongs to the memoration and the rememoration that characterise the brain, as bio-electro-chemical computer. Here is, mobilizing a certain protocol acting on a panoply, a **strong direct analogy**.

(d) Still, during the cutting, the forms of this sort of tool only emerge progressively and imperfectly from the close preliminary material, or even from the environment as a distant preliminary material, from which they are extracted by transversalized segmentarization <1A>. Thence, even when it is complete, the tool continues to participate, by indiciality of belonging <4B2>, to multiple and potential attractors <7>. This is a **vague but intense direct analogy**.

(e) To cut his utensil, Homo habilis and Homo erectus (ergaster) stands upright or is sitting, but in all cases is in a position that we can call in-sisting, which is maintained by its eruption and transversality over its environment. In one hand he holds the stone he cuts, in the other hand the cutting stone. The first hand is grasped as focal, the second moves around it, or at least in relation with it. This protocol tends on one side to detach, to remove, to segmentarize the potential or virtual hand axe, and on the other side to establish this hand axe in **analogies at a distance (technical) and in distanciation (semiotic)**, with other things (causes), either produced or to be produced, producible or simply possible, that he will join in the technical or semiotic panoply of the moment. These virtual comparisons are indicial <4A> or indexing <5A>. In this scenario, we shall not lose sight of the capacity of meditation, contemplation, and consideration of possibilizing Homo <6A>.

(f) Furthermore, between the chopper, the chopping tool or the hand axe and the upright or sitting manufacturing body, intervenes a common and even conclusive referential, that of the two flat hands in a **bilateral symmetry**, confining the tool under Homo's punctual and globalizing eye. And that referential makes that the faces of the object (a) mirror each other, (b) also mirror themselves with the model hand axe, present or remembered, (c) mirror with other objects, (d) even with the environment from which "possible" or at least "possibilized" objects emerge, (e) and finally with the present manufacturing body and (f) with the body of the future user. And this happens in a manner even more stimulating that this "mirror" of symmetric hands, being mobile, somewhat "mirrors" spatially and temporarily, possibilizing Homo's angles of grasping and of vision <1C1b>.

(g) The result of this situation is that the technical instrument, tool, panoply and protocol are not for the artisan an *alius*, another without relation, alienating, but are an **alter**, another with whom (homo in general) enjoys a relation, a connivance. A relation of image, similitude and analogy, sometimes of homology. That doubles the craftsman, which doubles it in turn.

(h) At one moment, the artisan will have finished his work. Then, as an animal inhabited with the suspense characterising its stature and endotropizing brain, he will hold, perhaps for an instant in one hand or in both, the cut stone that has become a **work** (opus, fruit of a concerted operati) <11I1>, which will then start to deploy for him a there/here, or a present/future/past.

(i) The hand axe is a tool much more elaborated than the chopper and chopping tool. As its name indicates, it has two faces, bifrons, **Janus**. This was an obvious technical demand. But it was also the opportunity to cross imagetically two of Homo's most specific characteristics: transversality and symmetry. Indicializing a dignity, and one day indexing the dignitary. The famous *leaf-shaped solutrean points* (small hand axes cut as subtly as leaves) mark a decisive leap for hominization.

(j) To see the emergence of the image as the analogy of an imaging and an imaged, we must not forget the ambiguity between *indicia* <4A> and indexes <5A> in a technicized environment. Thus see the extent to which the *indicium* is indexating, and the index is indicial, the image and the imaged thus being ***indicium-index, index-indicium***. One and the other, one for the other, absolutely. This will be the obligatory departure for architecture if it is true that every hominid tecture is initially a massive image <13N>.

9C. The semiotic status of the image

Without having internal details, only a contour, massive images are elementary, but they already have several of the fundamental characteristics of detailed images <14>, of which we can therefore make the basic semiotic on their occasion.

9C1. Image versus *indicium* and index

As the duration of their reign since 1 MY or 2 MY at least demonstrates, massive images had for a long time to be prepared by visual *indicia* and indexes, which also engage analogies. However, non-imagetic *indicia* are not intentional, nor artificial, while massive images are. And non-imagetic indexes are empty or neutral, while massive images are full, i.e. they have a thematized in distanciation that is intrinsically determined by them. After all, the massive image combines the intention of the index and the analogy of the *indicium*. It is, we could say, an *indicium* by analogy, and even by similitude, which is produced artificially, or at least sampled voluntarily. Then, after the area of *indicia* and that of the indexes, the visual massive image opens the door to a third order of signs.

9C2. Image and representation

We have noted the extent to which the concept of representation was adequate to describe the nervous system, where each relay, since the initial nervous transduction offers every time a new differed presentation (praesentare, re-) from an initial given that is either exterior or interior to the organism <2A2>. Massive images do as much. But, we have to see that they are artificial and intentional representation, something that nervous representations are not. And that they are analogical representations, something that nervous representation are only partly, in some isotopies that are almost always partial.

Anyway, the term representation correctly understood has the advantage of marking that massive images fit into the line of nervous images, of which they replaced the natural thematization by thematization in distanciation. And seeing the representational work shared by the nervous system and images, one can understand why Homo is ordinarily so good at producing and reading images. Particularly since Homo easily grasps a kinematic in static traces, and a dynamic in a cinematic; in other words, a motion (*mouvance*, in French) in a movement, and a movement in a trace <2B1>.

9C3. A sampling with field effects

However, the production of massive images is not a simple operation. Like the production of technical objects, it requires the capacity of Homo's body and brain to cut on a horizon and within a circumstance a thing-performance-in-situation, itself reduced to a few substitutable characters allowing to work on it. Considering possibilization, these elements - horizon, circumstance, situation, thing-performance <1B3> - are interrelated whilst maintaining between them some flexibility. And the image is made even more interesting (*esse*, *inter*, being between, putting in between), interplaying (*entremetteuse* in French, *mittere*, *inter*), that the crossing between resonance and the play of aspects creates even more numerous and improbable static, kinetic, dynamic or even excited perceptive-motor field effects. To which logico-semiotic field effects are added insofar as the imagetic product hesitates between a status of tool-utensil, of *indicium*, of index.

The massive image, in the same way as the technical object from which it sometimes differs imperfectly, is not an isolated, complete, closed whole. It is a local and transitory sample on an environment, from which it emerges through segmentarization and transversalization, only graspable and interpretable as a specification of a *world, like a form in a background and more specifically from a background. This background is a reserve of potential or virtual forms, it remains attached to the massive image, sticks to it, always ready to invade or widen it again, or to displace its current form and use (Simondon). It is its latency. In other words, in the circumstance, the object-image remains like the possibilized object of an available situation, filled with different performances.

To understand what is at stake in hominid performances, we shall constantly have to bear in mind this situational and inter-stable status of the tool, the tool-sign, and the sign that runs from the roughest massive images to the most detailed images, and to the most subtle tones and turns of music and detailed language. And that sets them apart from stimulus-signal <4H>, which is an element of the circumstance that is so delimited and imperative that it erases it, at the same time as it excludes the situation, i.e. the mixture of possible closeness and expansion of a situs <1B2>. The massive image is an experience of possibilization that is much more decisive than the *indicium* and the index and that opens, thanks to them but after them, a new anthropogenic area.

9D. Utensil >> << sculpture >> << magic

By its latent imagetic dimension, the hand axe (and already something of the chopper) proposes a first sliding from tool-utensil to sculpture and magic. Or more exactly a potential circulation between magic, sculpture and utensility.

From **sculpture**, indeed, we find the operation of conferring to a volume - a certain tri-dimensional occupation of the space (volvere, turn), - a structure and texture that bear analogies of objects, an environment, bodies of fellow men and thus indirectly of one's own body. All these analogues are grasped here according to their technical segmentarization, i.e. their sampling of a form over a background, with the field effects inherent to this operation. But they are also grasped according to the destiny-choice of existence of a singular sculptor, i.e. his topological, cybernetic, logico-semiotic, presentive idiosyncrasy <8H>. Sculptural operations will reinforce each other gradually as the hand axe will result from increasingly multiple and sequentially regulated splits, and as it will therefore remain longer between the two plane and symmetric hands where the faces of the object, the limbs of the artisan, the limbs of the user, and the environment "mirror" one another.

The chopper and the hand axe also offered the occasion of **magic**, i.e. the semiotic >> technical and technical >> semiotic sliding, insofar as the intentional image aimed at by the craftsman retains a relation with the natural image of the stone that has been chosen and picked up from the bed of torrent for its prior powers, thus with the indiciality and the paranoia attached to it <4F>.

Homo's ulterior evolution tended to progressively distend the triad utensility/sculpture/magic. But at the start, the three terms comforted one another in reciprocal engendering. This enriched them with logico-semiotic field effects between magic and sculpturality, between magic and utensility, between sculpturality and utensility. Even if it will take a long time before modes of existence (bluff/submission, seriousness/play, etc.) <6B> and categories of the possible (probable, necessary, contingent, etc.) <6C> would activate-passivate on this occasion <6C>.

Moreover, a new logico-semiotic - therefore anthropogenic - tension was offered from the fact that the two sides of the hand axe outlined a new binary distribution and opposition: "and...and", "or else... or else", "yes-no", "if A... then B". First stable incarnation of a macrodigitality to which the lightning fast decisions of indexes and power had already introduced us <5F>.

9E. The two standing-in-place of the image: reference and significance

It is false that all signs stand in place of something, as "stare pro aliquo" (standing in the place of something) would indicate and that the Middle Ages often attached to them. So, an index does not stand in place of anything apart from its indexation, and its fascination is linked to the fact that it is empty in consideration of every thematized that would be intrinsically determined by it. An *indicium* also does not stand in place of its indiciated, and is content with indicating it. However, there is some sense in saying that any massive, semiotic or natural, image stands in the place of something.

But this standing-in-place itself has two polarities. (a) Sometimes, the imagetic thematizing, the imaging, fades away so well in front of its thematized, the imaged, that it is almost transparent and disappears in its designation to the advantage of the designated. We could speak of a **reference standing-in-place**, the extreme examples of which are the trompe-l'oeil or technical schemas. (b) Sometimes, the imagetic thematizing, the imaging, substitutes itself so well or at least so intensely to the thematized, the imaged, that the imaged withdraws, disappears or becomes almost facultative. We could easily speak of a **significance standing-in-place** (or autarchic), the extreme example of which is a still life by Braque, where it doesn't matter that the represented should be a lemon or a water jug.

The hand axe announces these two standing-in-place. (a) The coaptations that, as a tool, it comprises with the object to work, with the body of its maker, with the body of its user, with the close and distant environment where it is drawn from can, as vague as they are, and even insofar as they are vague, refer to them, fade somewhat in front of them, in a reference standing-in-place. (b) But these coaptations can also subsist in themselves, the product being self-sufficient as it still is today, rightly or wrongly, in the showcases of our museums, and as it could perhaps have been self-sufficient for a moment in the hands of Homo erectus, or Homo habilis, who was then the one contemplating it, meditating, desiring, sitting or standing, after having completed it or during pauses in its creation, in a significance standing-in-place.

9F. The rhythm of the image

We were introduced to the rhythm by the step, the walk, the gait of the upright primate, where we saw the way in which Homo was everywhere going to practise the possibilized reiteration that is the rhythm as means of compatibilizing the heterogeneous and even sometimes disparate series which constitute him.

This is confirmed in the hand-crafted and imaging gesture. Indeed, we would have incompletely grasped the activity that the technical and image creation of hand axes represented if we did not specify that while it was painful in its efforts, it created in the craftsman's organism the rhythmical, stimulating and consoling pleasure of an on-going compatibilization between the series engaged, with precisely the eight characteristics of the rhythm: alternation, interstability, accentuation, tempo, the self-engendering in Baldwin's reactions, convection, strophism, distribution by nodes, envelopes, resonances, and interfaces <1A5>. The conveniences, difficulties and heterogeneities of the task stimulating the rhythm in a homoeostatic and allostatic manner.

The *pleasure*, sometimes the rhythmical *enjoyment* of technician and imaging Homo, through the smoothed affects linked to the rhythm, must have comforted the significance standing-in-place of massive images, along their reference standing-in-place. And this while tools-images-talismans were between Homo's symmetrising hands. But also when they rested on the floor, in actual panoplies and virtual protocols, offering themselves technically and semiotically as works of art.

9G. Archetypality of massive sculpture

We could be surprised that an anthropogeny has so defined the characteristics of the image in general in some tools of the Middle and Lower Palaeolithic, where they are barely identifiable, whereas they will become obvious in the detailed images of the Upper Palaeolithic with their abundance of internal articulations. But one of the remarkable phenomena of anthropogeny is the contrast between the 30 kY to which detailed imaged date back and the 1 MY or 2 MY during which massive images reigned. Even if we were to add a few millennia to the first number, the contrast would still be equally impressive. Massive images are the matrix of the detailed image, and nothing can be founded regarding detailed images without understanding massive images. Moreover, the many approaches that we have just raised demonstrate how the ambiguities between technique and massive imagery must have comforted Homo in his

transversalizing, symmetrizing, lateralizing, orthogonalizing perception-motivity <1A> of his environment as *world <1B>.

On the other hand, detailed images, as subtle and diverted as they have become, have kept everywhere and for a long time, even always, something of the primitive massive image. When Michelangelo said that the ideal statue had to be sufficiently compact to roll down a mountain without breaking, that is what he meant. And what the Chinese headstones, Indian Lingam, Greek Xoanon - rough pieces of wood – had confirmed long before him. And what the wooden marbles and metallic slabs of minimalist sculptor Carl André still declare today.

SITUATION 9

It would be ideal for an anthropogeny to have envisaged, before visual massive images, sound and tactile massive images, perhaps olfactory and gustatory images, which came before, to measure better the role of the image in general, independently from any Roman-Christian narcissism. Unfortunately, we do not have any document on this point. It is already enlightening to keep in mind that it is lacking.

Translated by Paula COOK, 2017

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