

Eidetic Grammar

Imagery, Order and History

Working draft

Introduction

This is a book about how *imagery* and *order* are related to the history of ideas. It defends the theory that historical meaning depends on ‘what we see’ and how ‘what we see is ordered’. With imagery I refer to “*presentations, statues, optical illusions, maps, diagrams, dreams, hallucinations, spectacles, projections, poems, patterns, memories, and even ideas*”¹.

In the book *The Order of Things* by Michel Foucault, he writes about a general study of order and ideas in history. However, the difference between Foucault’s book and mine is that I see imagery as a *presentation* and not as a *re-presentation*, as I believe he sees it. Without openly applying a semiotic method, Foucault offers a general study of order by ‘signs’ outlined into categories as *episteme, archive* and *archaeology*². He connects the historical study of imagery to the deep-rooted ideal of a general theory of a universal language. However, we think that when contemporary history confronts the artefacts of the past, it does this with a disappeared Life-world in which signs are only one of its disappeared variables. In this book we will instead try to avoid studying the order of codes and go ‘back to the things themselves’.

We think that the meaningfulness of imagery is revealed through a specific ontic knowledge dealing with the praxis of *ordo* in imagery. We think that imagery is the point of departure of praxis because ‘what we see’ and ‘not see’ is an incursion in phenomenology. As Heidegger noted in *Being and Time* the term ‘phenomenon’ is related to that which is shown:

The Greek expression *phainomenon*, from which the term ‘phenomenon’ derives, comes from the verb *phainesthai*, meaning ‘to show itself.’ Thus *phainomenon* means what shows itself, the self-

¹ Mitchell, W.J.T. *Iconology. Image, Text, Ideology*. The University of Chicago Press, 1986; p. 9-10.

² “Let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to make the signs speak and to discover their meaning, hermeneutics; let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to distinguish the location of the signs, to define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology: the sixteenth century superimposed hermeneutics and semiology in the form of similitude.” Foucault, Michel, *The order of Things*; p. 29.

showing, the manifest.³

To study what ‘is shown’ present the problems of ‘circularity of thought’ that is characteristic for any study of being and is easy to get into difficulties. Maurice Merleau-Ponty confronted this problem which he described as a ‘labyrinth of difficulties’:

We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher—the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep—seated set of mute ‘opinions’ implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this *we*, what *seeing* is, and what *thing* or *world* is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions.⁴

At this point we should be confronted with the problem of the delimitation of the object of study; the problem of finding a suitable definition or universal or essence that can univocally delimit what imagery is.⁵ But from our point of view, this is not a real problem. We can be sure that finding a suitable definition of imagery is not relevant from the point of view of phenomenology, because the answer about ‘what is shown’ in imagery is the same for any of its variants.

But which are the answers that imagery gives to the question of being? Whatever we consider as imagery, their ontological meaning depends of the answers it gives to the foundational variants of questions about being: What, Which, Where, When, Who, Why and How.⁶ The first step, then to getting into praxis, is to understand imagery’s ontological structure: what we have named ‘Eidetic Grammar.’⁷

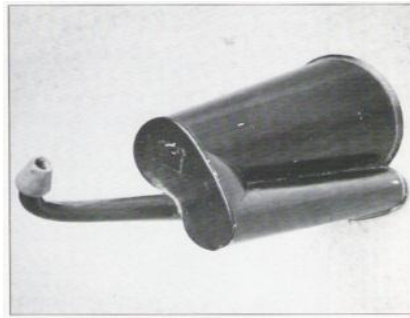
³Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*; 1996, p. 25.

⁴ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Northwestern University studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy, 1968, p. 3.

⁵ W.J.T Mitchell confronts this problem when he tried to define the field of ‘imagery’; he chooses to avoid the question about the essence of imagery choosing the Wittgensteinian family-resemblance theory: “Two things must immediately strike the notice of anyone who tries to take a general view of the phenomena called by the name of imagery. The first is simply the wide variety of things that go by this name. We speak of presentations, statues, optical illusions, maps, diagrams, dreams, hallucinations, spectacles, projections, poems, patterns, memories, and even ideas as images, and the sheer diversity of this list would seem to make any systematic, unified understanding impossible. The second thing that may strike us is that the calling of all these things by the name of ‘image’ does not necessarily mean that they all have something in common, it might be better to begin by thinking of images as a far-flung family which has migrated in time and space and undergone profound mutations in the process.” Mitchell, W.J.T. *Iconology. Image, Text, Ideology*, 1986; p. 9-10.

⁶ See *topoi* in classical Aristotelian rhetoric.

⁷ We are using the name “eidetic grammar” to refer to Husserl’s “universal grammar” as he presented it in the second book of Logical Investigations. Husserl’s name was “universal grammar” but we think that it is no longer possible to use it because of the work of Noam Chomsky. Husserl, Edmund, 1859-1938. *Logical investigations*. Vol. 2, Investigation IV, 522-529. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.



Presentation 1: Enigmatic artefact

Presentation 1 presents an enigmatic artefact. What can be said about it? We can answer the question of What saying that it is an artefact of some kind. We have no information about its size and therefore we cannot intuitively refer it to the human body and decide if it is or not a kind of tool. This example is a case of imagery that answers the What question of being. (It is reasonable to assume that imagery in general always answers the ontological question of What.)



Presentation 2: The enigmatic artefact is presented as a hearing aid.

From *Prylen. Fjärde samlingen. 50 gissseföremål i tävlingen Prylen i Sydsvenskan*. Mats Henning (red). Björklund & Tönneheim Förlag AB, Sweden, 1992.

Presentation 2 gives us a complete answer about What the artefact is, because only by seeing the presentation we understand that this artefact is a hearing aid. The presentation includes a vague answer to the question of Who but it is difficult to decide the age and gender of the depicted person. We do not know Where and When this situation occurred either. We can ask if this is a truthful description of the depicted artefact but nothing in the presentation can answer to this question. To answer this question we may need answers to the question of Why. Therefore it is impossible to decide if this presentation is representing real facts and the artefact really is a hearing aid. That 'we know' does not allow deciding the *epistemic* value of the illustrated situation.

However, the presentation answers the question of How. Showing How to do with the artefact this presentation leads the viewer to an ontic interpretation valid within the horizon of existential praxis. Therefore, we say that this presentation in spite of being epistemological incomplete,

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makes ontological sense.

The epistemic and the ontic

In the everyday world, imagery offers complex combinations of answers to the foundational variants of questions about being. These combinations constitutes *orders* that can be deduced in a table following the powers of the foundational questions What, Which, Where, When, Why, Who, and How. We see this table as the expression of an eidetic grammar or that which is the same for us: an ontological grammar. The word ‘grammar’ is understood here as the ‘ontological structure of imagery’. Searching for the ontological thatness and whatness then, is also a question about gestalt, pattern, form, structure; speaking in general, it is a question about *order*. Our phenomenological research must then also consider the relationship between imagery and order.

Because imagery presents ontological items, that are expressions of being, their grammar consists of *ontical* answers to the foundational variants of questions about being. It is important here to clarify that the answers we are searching for to the foundational questions about being are not *epistemological*. That means that we are not wondering about the truthfulness of imagery in respect to being. We are not working out a ‘science’ or a ‘discipline’. That was the project of Michel Foucault whose work is a good illustration of how imagery and order converge into epistemology. As an example of his work it is enough to refer to the importance of theories of *resemblance*—as Michel Foucault stressed in *The Order of Things*—in the history of the Renaissance.⁸ In Foucault’s studies, imagery defines order as well as order defines imagery and then both define knowledge.

To reach a deeper understanding of the differences between *epistemic* and *ontic* knowledge, we will use the example of a person who tries to quit smoking. Quitting smoking is a very difficult thing to do and in spite the large number of products on the market that try to make it easier, it is easy to relapse. The person in our ideal experiment has been target with a large amount of information about the connection between smoking and cancer and other diseases; therefore, we expected that this knowledge would be enough to motivate the smoker to quit. However, in spite of many attempts, the smoker has not been capable to quit smoking. If we study the cases in which people gave up smoking successfully, we notice that these persons not only introspectively *knew*

⁸ “Up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. The universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man. Painting imitated space. And representation -whether in the service of pleasure or of knowledge was posited as a form of repetition: the theatre of life or the mirror of nature that was the claim made by all language, its manner of declaring its existence and of formulating its right of speech.” Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*, p. 17.

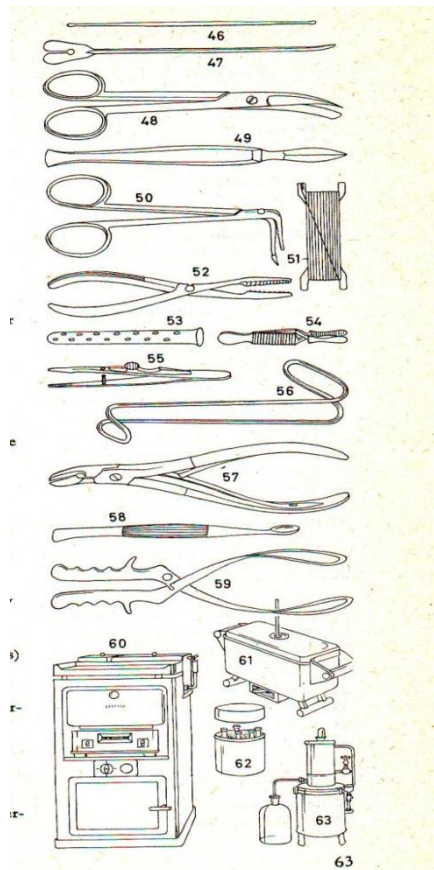
about the connection between smoking and sickness -but also that they projectively *believed* in that connection. Our conclusion is then that knowing that smoking can produce cancer is the results of connecting the sickness and the action of smoking from *outside* the act of smoking as an *episteme*, while to believe in that connection is to integrate the sickness to the act of smoking in an *ordo* or ‘matrix’, *embodying the connection*. In some sense to *believe* in the risks of smoking implies *beginning to be ill*; which means that sickness is not something that merely *happens* to us.⁹

The question of the delimitation between the epistemic and ontic is important for our research and to avoid misleading associations to any existing terminology we will introduce our own terms to describe imagery from the point of view of onticity. We will name *imagognomy* (from L. *imaginem* ‘copy, statue, presentation, idea, appearance,’ and *gnomy* from the Greek *gnomon*, ‘means of judging or interpreting’) the ontical aspect of imagery of any kind. We will associate the term ‘imagognomy’ to the term *ordognomy* (from Latin *ordo* for ‘order’) referring to the question of *ordo* in the study of being. In both ‘imagognomy’ and ‘ordognomy’, the suffix ‘gnomy’ refers to the ontical investigation about beings and doesn’t refer to an epistemological inquiry as other suffixes do (e.g. ‘logy’ in ‘archaeology’).

⁹ “Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned about its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being. And this in turn means that Da-sein understands itself in its being in some way and with some explicitness. It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its being. Understanding of being is itself a determination of being of Da-sein. The ontic distinction of Da-sein lies in the fact that it is ontological. To be ontological does not yet mean to develop ontology. Thus if we reserve the term ontology for the explicit, theoretical question of the meaning of beings, the intended ontological character of Da-sein is to be designated as pre-ontological. That does not signify being simply ontical, but rather being in the manner of an understanding of being.” Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, 1996, p. 10.

Eidetic Grammar

Let us now study the internal relationship existing between the foundational questions What, Which, Where, When, Why, Who, and How. Per definition, each of these questions must be eidetically answered and some kind of order must be associated to each of these questions.



Presentation 3: 'Surgical instruments'.

This presentation shows a What-Which-imagogy.

That which defines it, is that it depicts at least two different ordogonies related to each other.

From Duden's *Bildwörterbuch* from 1958; p. 63.

We notice that the primary and initial optical question is derived from the answer to What. The What (used as pronoun, conjunction, adjective, adverb and interjection) is used in the definitions of all the others: for example, if we are asking about Where, then we are asking about 'at or in what place, 'in what situation or position', 'from what place or source', 'to what place'. Asking about Why is asking about 'with what purpose, reason, or cause'; 'with what intention, justification, or motive'. In the same way, the question of Which is a question about: 'what particular one or ones'. Asking about Who implies asking: 'what or which person or persons'. The question about How implies questioning: 'in what manner or way'; by 'what means';

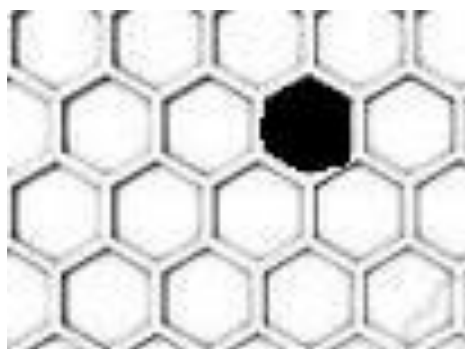
‘to what extent, amount, or degree’; ‘for what reason or purpose’; ‘with what meaning’; ‘by what measure’; ‘in what units.’

A What-ordo is one in which only one kind of unit can be grasped. That is the case of Presentation 4. The number of depicted artefacts is not important but that every depicted artefact is of the same kind so that the whole constitute a homogenic ordognomy.



Presentation 4: A What-ordo

Being the answer about What the simplest informative level of an imagognomy, we find that the second in complexity is the imagognomy that answers to both a What-ordognomy and a Which-ordognomy. In this case, at least two ordognomies must be identified in the imagognomy so that the one is subordinated to the other. This is the case of Presentation 5 in which at least two different ordognomies are depicted.



Presentation 5: A What-Which-ordo

Further, to answer to a When-question the imagognomy has to be built at least on two ordognomies and at least one must be an ordo of time-units. We could say that a When-imagognomy is a Which-imagognomy in which at least one of the involved ordines consists of time-units. For example, in Presentation 6, we can distinguish persons

of different ages.



Presentation 6: A When-imagogonomy. *Seven Ages of Man* (detail). *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*. p.76. Facsimile of 1672 English edition.

The same is valid for Where-imagogonomies (Presentation 7) and Who-imagogonomies (Presentation 8) for which at least two ordogonomies has to be differentiated and one must be an ordo of space-units respectively an ordo that show persons or other living beings.

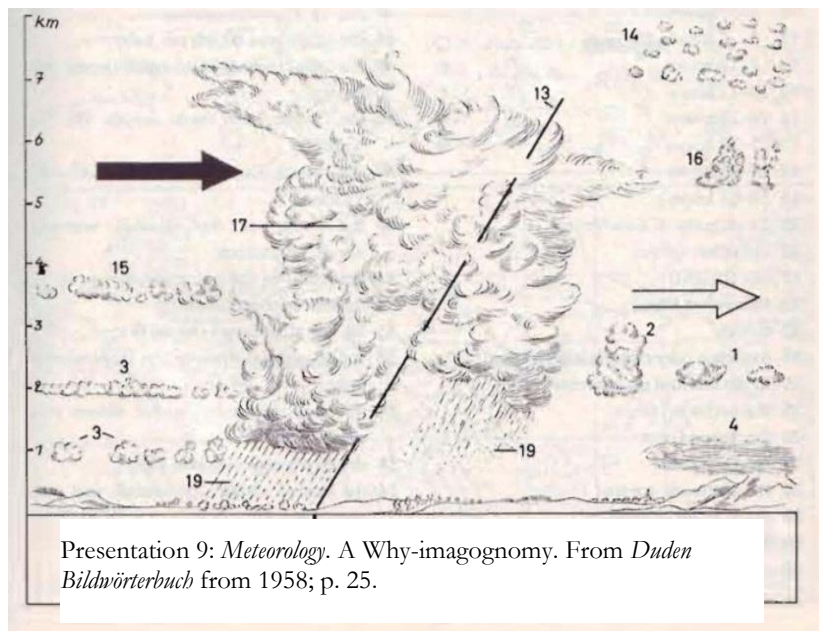


Presentation 7: A Where-imagogonomy . *Europe*. *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* p.220. Facsimile of 1672 English edition.



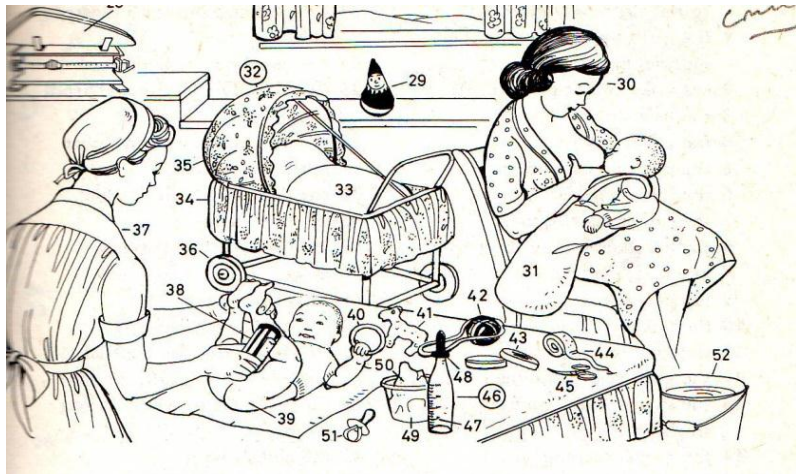
Presentation 8: A Who-imagognomy . *The Head and Hand*. *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* p.80. Facsimile of 1672 English edition.

Why-imagognomies constitute a separate case because this kind of answers demands always to be constructed on a What-Which-imagognomy. Some Why-imagognomies need to be founded in a How-imagognomy as is the case of pictographs and diagrams that can depict the dynamic complexity of scientific explanation as Presentation 9 shows.



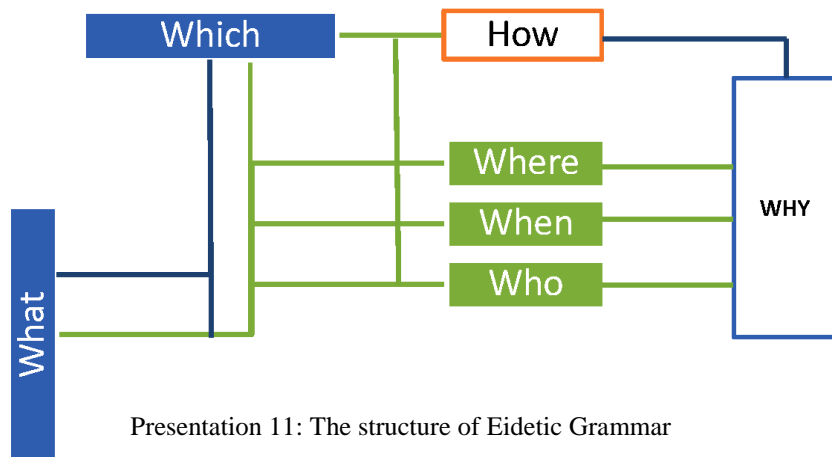
Presentation 9: *Meteorology*. A Why-imagognomy. From *Duden Bildwörterbuch* from 1958; p. 25.

Finally, How-imagognomies are the imagognomies that illustrates 'how to do' typically the case of technical ordognomies. How-imagognomies are those that define the question of being because they are opening for praxis. Any imagognomy that can answer the question of How, is –in our sense—ontologically meaningful. Presentation 10 is also a good example of a How-imagognomy.



Presentation 10: *Nursery*. This presentation shows a very complex imagonomy answering the foundational questions: Where (nursery); When (infancy); Who (the baby, the mother and the wet-nurse) and How (showing how to take care). From Duden's *Bildwörterbuch* from 1958; p. 67.

Let us now introduce a diagram of Eidetic Grammar.



Presentation 11: The structure of Eidetic Grammar

Studies in Iconology

In 1955 Panofsky presented three levels of eidetic meaning in his work *Meaning in the Visual Arts* which he later used for the study of Renaissance art. The first level called *pre-iconographical* level constitutes the most basic understanding of how what-we-see coincides with what we understand; a What-imagognomy. For example, the image of Mona Lisa acquires *factual* meaning as soon as the presentation ceases to be a surface with colours and lines and becomes the presentation of a woman. This primary or natural meaning, subdivided into *factual* and *expressional* consists then according to Panofsky of the primary identification of imagery and the ‘world of artistic motifs’.¹⁰

The second level consists of cultural and iconographic knowledge. In this level the presentation of a woman becomes *Mona Lisa*, the well-known painting of Leonardo. This is the iconographical level in which When-Where and Who-ordognomies comes in; at this level, the artistic motifs transform into images and the images in turn transform to allegories.¹¹

The third level is the *iconological interpretation*, which places the work in an anthropological context. This level of meaning which Panofsky describes as ‘intrinsic’ includes—for the analysis of *Mona Lisa*—the knowledge of the life of Leonardo to the technical and other important aspects of the work’s cultural history. The intrinsic level implies that the art historian asks the Why-question of the historical meaning searching from answers *outside the presentation*.¹² As we can see, the analysis of Panofsky is directed to a delimitation of an epistemological field, understood as the object of study of a discipline named *Art history*.

However, our task is different; we try to develop a phenomenology of imagery getting answers *only from the presentation*. Why-imagognomies arise from *cosmological* ordognomies; they are ordines in which something is explained *because* something else. Presentation 12 shows a cosmological imagognomy that demands knowledge about the history of USA to understand it, while Presentation 13 presents a imagognomy in which no specific historic knowledge is necessary to understand it (in spite of being a presentation ‘with history’).

¹⁰ Panofsky, E. ; p. 28-31.

¹¹ Panofsky, E.; Ibid.

¹² Panofsky, E.; Ibid.



Presentation12: *Cause and Effect*. Painting by Chris Moses Tolliver.



Presentation 13: Olaus Magnus. *Historia om de nordiska folken*. "Om den våldsamma vinden Circius." Gidlunds förlag 2001, p. 28.

Visualism: the imagery of science

The ontic value of imagery is especially important for a study of Why-imagognomies. These imagognomies can be found in pictographs and diagrams that can depict the dynamic complexity of scientific explanations.

Don Ihde introduced the term ‘visualism’ in his book *Expanding Hermeneutics*, from 1998. The introduction of the term aimed to the development of a hermeneutics of science (an ontic study of Why-imagognomies) focusing in ‘visualization’ of mental contents as the typical bearer of ‘scientific truth’. Ihde proposes the expansion of hermeneutical studies to the field of technoscience making a phenomenological interpretation of eidetic contents in the technoscientific discourse. In this project Ihde concluded that from the earlier times of modernity, hermeneutics grew apart from science, making rationalism, empiricism and later positivism the standard interpretations of science.¹³

Ihde structures his project in a ‘weak’ respectively a ‘strong’ research program. Within the frame of a ‘weak’ program for the implicit hermeneutics within science, Ihde distinguished between pure Gestalt features—as the appearance of a figure against a ground—and “a related, but different set of visualizations, which bear much stronger relations to what can be taken as ‘textlike’ features”.¹⁴

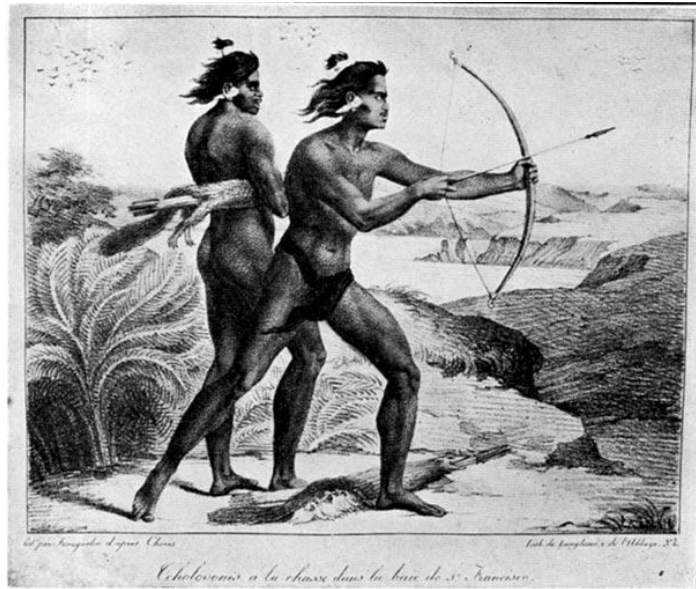
The ‘weak’ group consists of descriptive What-Which-imagognomies. The ‘strong’ group of depictions with ‘text-like’ qualities is not the group of ‘journals, electronic publications and books’ generated within the scientific activity which ‘always remain secondary or tertiary with respect to science’ but a kind of hybrid between pure visualizations and texts.¹⁵ These text-like depictions such as ‘charts, graphs, models, and the whole range of ‘readable’ inscriptions’ can in our terminology be described as Why-imagognomies. We will try to show that

¹³ “The overarching aim here is to argue that we have often misconstrued what science is and how it operates because, in part, we have for so long ceded the interpretation of science to forms of positivism. In what I call the ‘H-P Binary’—the contestation between hermeneutics and positivism—hermeneutics first finds itself divorced from the sciences, and then by its own historical proponents made semiautonomous with respect to its interpretive activities in such a way that positivism simply became the standard for framing the understanding of the sciences. What I call the ‘P-H tradition’—the phenomenological version of hermeneutics—often itself simply accepted this binary, and until recently tended to ignore attempts to enter the domains of science praxis and the understanding of same.” Ihde, Don. *Expanding Hermeneutics. Visualism in Science*, 1998; p. 3.

¹⁴ Don Ihde, *Op.cit.* p.166.

¹⁵ “So this is not the textlike phenomenon I have in soul; instead, I am pointing to those analogues of texts which permeate science: charts, graphs, models, and the whole range of ‘readable’ inscriptions which remain visual, but which are no longer isomorphic with the referent objects or ‘things themselves’.” Ihde, Don. *Op.cit.* p.167.

historically speaking, the most of these text-like presentations are anthropologically derived from archaic cosmogomic presentations in which hunting scenarios are depicted. We think that there is a phenomenological connection between scenes as that of Presentation 14 and that of Presentation 9 shown before.



Presentation 14: Indians of the Tcholovoni Tribe Hunting on the Shores of the Bay of San Francisco (1816)

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