

ON IMAGE AGENCY

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Агенція образу

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Горст Бредекамп – історик мистецтва та представник науки про образи (Bildwissenschaft), відомий своїми дослідженнями агенції (агентності) образу. У двох аналізованих працях Бредекампа образ постає самостійним агентом, що не лише діє у політичному просторі, але також створює цей простір. У дослідженні «Акт образу. Систематичний підхід до візуальної агенції» (2018) Бредекамп здійснює спробу систематизувати способи дії образу. Виокремлені дослідником типи актів (агенції) існують поза лінійною хронологією і мають на меті окреслити способи про-явлення образу. Один образ може поєднувати декілька різних типів актів. Бредекамп розглядає образ як детермінанту людини, прояв когнітивної революції, здатності людини до актів диференціації, уміння людини перетворювати природу. Дослідник переходить до значення вчення Чарльза Дарвіна «Вираження емоцій тварин і рослин» (1872) для розроблення концепції «Pathosformel» (патосформель) Абі Варбурга. Зрештою, висновує Бредекамп, образи природи продовжують образи людини, а не протистоять їм. Друга з аналізованих праць «Політика тіла як візуальна стратегія у творчості Томаса Гоббса» (2020) побудована довкола аналізу фронтиспису до трактату Гоббса «Левіафан, або Суть, будова і повноваження держави церковної та цивільної» (1651). Бредекамп будує дослідження, залучаючи багатий джерельний комплекс. Таким чином він демонструє, що твір мистецтва є і актором, залученим у суспільно-політичні процеси, і результатом як цих процесів, так і наукових досягнень часу чи мистецьких тенденцій. Аналізу цих двох праць дає змогу побачити, як розроблена Бредекампом теорія може бути застосована на конкретному джерельному матеріалі.

Ключові слова: *образ, агенція образу, ранній новий час, політика, мистецтво, влада.*

During the 1960s and 1990s, the role of visual sources was critically reevaluated. Prior to that, they mostly illustrated political processes and more or less accurately reflected the surrounding reality. «Accuracy» depended on the artist's technical skills, his involvement in this reality in general or a specific event in particular. Now researchers have identified visual sources as a distinct type possessing an informational potential that cannot be conveyed by any other type of source. In this regard, researchers have proposed many new paradigms, including the «visual turn» (Bryson, Moxey, Holly 1994), the «affective turn» (Clough 2008; Schmölders 2014), the «pictorial turn» (Boehm, Mitchell 2009), and the «iconic turn» (Boehm, Mitchell 2009). Disciplines investigating the image (cultural studies, visual studies, art history and so on) sought to rid themselves of logocentrism and declared anachronism as one of their methods. Methodological

anarchism (Брюховецька 2018, с. 132) and transdisciplinarity are some of the consequences that arose from these processes.

One crucial concept that summarizes the previous decades theoretical shifts is the concept of image agency (Gell 1998; Dekoninck 2012; Bredekamp 2018; Bredekamp 2020). It was developed by the German art historian Horst Bredekamp (born in 1947) and British social anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945–1997). Gell's research, which can be described as ethnographic, focuses on the study of how images are perceived in various cultural contexts. In contrast, Bredekamp continues the Warburgian tradition, and as a result, objects from different worlds often (un)justifiably end up in the same paradigm (Rampley 2019, p. 5). His research concerns visual studies and the image-science, *bildwissenschaft* (Bredekamp 2003) but gives the image a role that only his predecessors could give. We will analyze the content and potential of the concept of image agency based on two works by Bredekamp, namely: *Image Act. A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency* (Bredekamp 2018), and *Leviathan: Body politic as visual strategy in the work of Thomas Hobbes* (Bredekamp 2020). In the first of them, the author develops the theory of image agency, while in the second, he performs a comprehensive analysis of the frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

Bredekamp argues that the discussions about the image in the 1960s were as intense as those during the periods of Byzantine iconoclasm or the Reformation (Bredekamp 2018, p. 1). Bredekamp's *image* and *art* are fundamentally different. Art establishes its value through factors such as the market, disciplinary connections, and networks in which particular works are situated. The image, on the other hand, is a defining characteristic of humanity as a species (*animal symbolicum* or *homo faber*), arising from our ability to differentiate and transform natural phenomena through cognitive and technical means (Bredekamp 2018, p. 5–6, 16). Agency or the image act means changing the role traditionally assigned to the image. Now it is not an object and tool but an actor, the primary engine, the main character (Bredekamp 2018, p. 5-6, 16).

It can be joked that all goods are well-forgotten old things, but in the case of a historian, remembrance can be the most successful way of research. Looking at the sources, we suddenly see something unnoticed before with our complicated vision. Previously, Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) also emphasized that an image can be alive or dead. It becomes dead when the image is utterly similar to what it depicts (Bredekamp 2018, p. 202). In 1977 archeologist James Sackett reviewed the concept of style critically and formed a model that would be adequate and suitable in archaeology (Sackett 1977, p. 369). Sackett singles out two fundamental characteristics of artifacts, which, although opposite, are complementary. First, the artifact exists as an object operating in a specific cultural environment. Second, these image and/or artifact characteristics belong to cultural anthropology and visual studies. In short, a style is a very characteristic and specific pattern of choosing a form from possible forms by society (Sackett 1977, p. 370–371). Perhaps Sackett was the first to clearly distinguish the agency of the image, although his interest lay elsewhere.

The agency of the image or the Aristotelian idea about the energy of the image has been part of the theory of the image since the emergence of art until the Enlightenment. When the image began to be associated exclusively with inorganic matter, the image was turned into an object of anthropology and ethnology (Bredekamp 2018, p. 7–8). Bredekamp tries to show that this power of the image did not go anywhere but only transformed over time. However, such agency does not imply mystical experience. The image acts through someone. It can be the intentions of the author, the artist, the audience itself, or whatever. However, in the same way, an image can betray conventions and show self-awareness. Therefore, it includes many artworks not only of older art but also of modern and contemporary art. For example, Bredekamp considers the

struggle with the image and composition in modernist works as a powerful iconoclasm, which only recognizes the power of the image and the impossibility of resisting this power.

A deviation is a conditional act that engages the viewer in effort and movement. The quintessence of the act image is the experience and actions associated with the perception of the image by the beholder (Bredekamp 2018, p. 288). In *Leviathan*, Bredekamp begins with the theory of vision of the seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). In the latter, vision is a human response to the pressure created by objects emitting light (Bredekamp 2018, p. 157). In this case, it already becomes obvious that the thing acts, and the image is the result of the action. Cognitive style is created by the circumstances of individual and joint experience, a set of patterns, categories, and analogies, through which eye data are systematized (Baxandall 1988, p. 29-30). Thus, the image can speak and demand a reaction (Bredekamp 2018, p. 4).

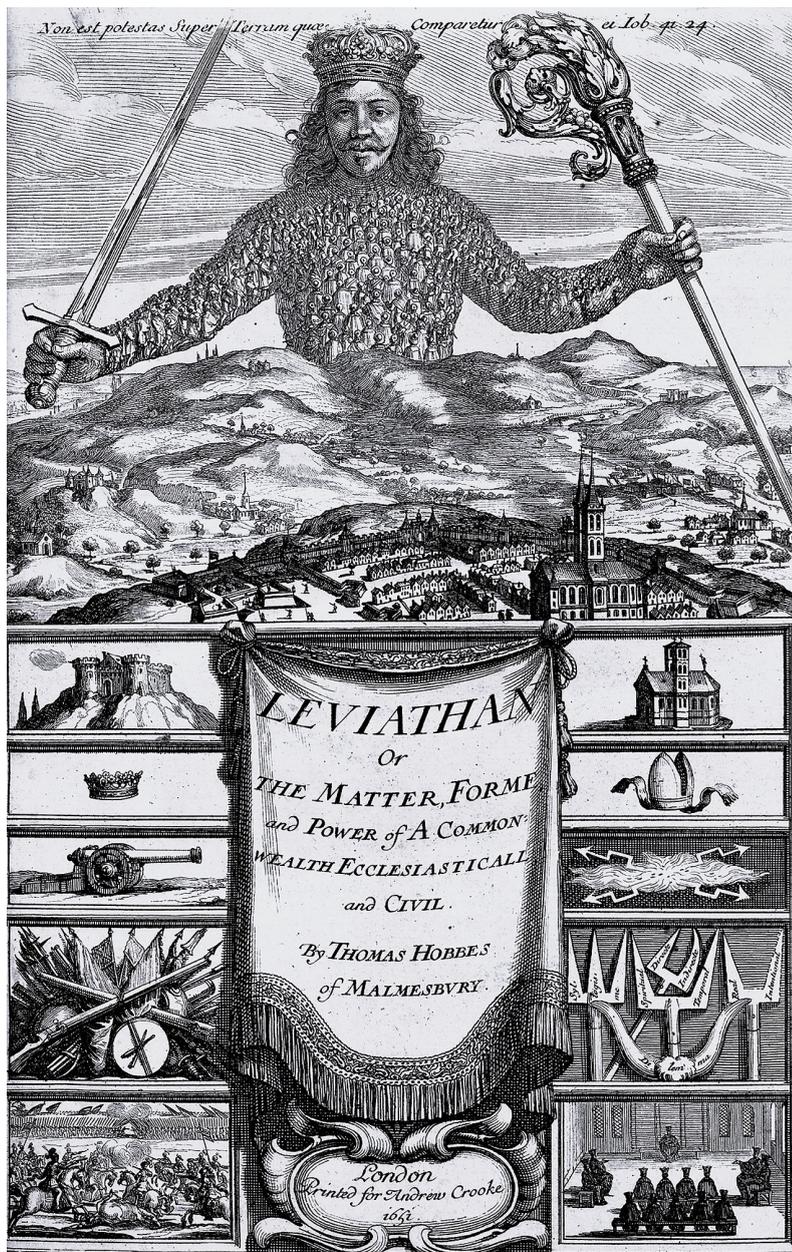


Fig. 1. The frontispiece of the book *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes. 1651.

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Moreover, the cognitive style of the era has a different attitude to the energy of the image. Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) noted: «The effectiveness of an image is the result, not the reason, of our belief in its power.» There are two approaches here: naturalistic and cultural. The naturalistic one consists of the belief that an image is fixed in human nature and the brain's structure; that is, we can talk about a universal psychological or anthropological characteristic. The image, in this case, gains strength from the viewer's projection. The cultural approach, on the contrary, unfolds around the contextual (cultural) circumstances that cause the activation of the image (a specific image is activated in specific circumstances). The power of its influence can only measure the effectiveness of an image, that is, the emphasis is placed on the operators of the image (those who make the image act) and those who are affected by it (DeKoninck 2016, p. 176–177). At one time, Plato considered the image a phantom which threatened society because of its deceptive persuasiveness.

As Horst Bredekamp and Ralph DeKoninck write about, in the Middle Ages the image was filled

with holiness (*vis, virtus, facultas* or *dynamis*). That is why the icons exuded myrrh, breathed, sweated, and cried (see for example: Dekoninck 2016). In the end, it grew into the baroque hyperreality (*trompe-l'œil*) and nowadays VR and AR.

Bredenkamp defines the following ways of image agency: I. Living Images, II. Substitutive Image Acts, III. The Image as Beholder. It is valuable that the researcher really, according to the title, implements a systematic approach to visuality. Each of the named kinds of image agency has its variations and subtypes, the immanence of which is shown by Bredenkamp. Thus, the researcher analyzes cases from prehistoric and Ancient Greece art to modern and contemporary art in each type of agency.

In the conclusions to the *Image Act*, Bredenkamp writes about the evolution of forms (images): not dynamics, but rather an evolution. This brings us back to Aby Warburg and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. It may seem strange that Darwin can be called one of Warburg's teachers. Kharkiv professor Fedir Schmitt, for example, also directly names him as one of the teachers in the book *Art. Its psychology, its stylistics, its evolution* (ШМИТЬ 1919, с. 8–9). The evolutionary theory made it possible to systematize the material, and to turn research into science. After all, for Darwin himself, evolution was a great theater of images (Bredenkamp 2018, p. 267). It was the same, dreamy history of arts without names and even great styles. Unlike natural (non-human), cognitive images can exist outside of artifacts and are freed from direct connection with the depicted (Bredenkamp 2018, p. 268). According to Bredenkamp, there is continuity, not contradiction, between images of nature and cognitive images.

Bredenkamp classifies the sovereign and sovereignty images as communal images, in which substitution is the primary mode of agency. In various ways, they can replace authentic images in the way that a seal, for example, serves as proof of the presence of an institution or a ruler as an institution here and now in this document. Alternatively, on coins, powerful images validate and ensure the value and status of money (Bredenkamp 2018, p. 156).

In *Leviathan*, Bredenkamp shows how the image works and how the state can become an image. The key here is the concept of «artificial man», described by Hobbes himself (Гоббс 2000). Endowed with the capacity for autonomous movement, Hobbes's artificial man has an advantage over the sum of natural components. For this, there is a union, a social agreement of individuals who, creating a state, give up a part of their sovereignty (Fig. 1). Bredenkamp paradoxically explains the genesis of this understanding of the state. First, the artificial person became possible thanks to the trends in the science of the 17th century. Bruno Latour (1947–2022) did something similar, analyzing how the myth of «modernity» was formed (Latour 2012). During the bloody English Revolution, the search for peace spawned two projects, one belonging to Hobbes and the other to the physicist Robert Boyle (1627–1691). Latour needs to show the self-deception of the division into nature and culture because Hobbes became the apotheosis of this deception. Bredenkamp writes about Leviathan as an aspiration to overcome «nothingness» to compensate for the power vacuum and disembodied time with the image of an artificial body of the state and ruler.

Thomas Hobbes creates a ruler, an earthly god, and the individual represents the plurality of citizens. Closing the path to transcendence, the unification of the political and the epistemic, Hobbes believed, could protect the people from civil wars (Latour 2012). Like Latour, Bredenkamp also analyzes the appearance of the image of Leviathan as a manifestation of visual culture, political trends and mental fractures of the mid-17th century. The appearance and widespread use of watches (including portable ones) changed the model of space. The ticking of the clock resembles a human heartbeat. In «Meditations» (1641), René Descartes notes that there is no significant difference between mechanical and organic bodies (Bredenkamp 2020, p. 49, 50, 51).

The body metaphor of Leviathan on the frontispiece is compositionally derived from a Christian icon, a polyptych, and combines the image of a Mortal God towering over paired

metaphors (Fig. 2). In the text, Hobbes uses bodily metaphors: the joints of an Artificial Man are judges; rewards and punishments – nerve endings; wealth – strength and power; justice and laws – reason and will; health – consent; civil war – death; counselors – memory (Bredekamp 2020, p. 52). The political iconography of the Leviathan accumulated Tudor iconography (virgin Astraeus or Elizabeth I Tudor, covering an armillary sphere) and iconography of the Intercession (the Madonna of Mercy type). From the study of Serhii Plokyh we know the use of the Madonna della Misericordia type, where secular leaders are under the Cloak of the Virgin (Плохий 2018). Bredekamp cites another case when the Ruler himself becomes the Virgin (A prince offering the protection of his cloak. Illumination to an «Avis au roys». Paris, c. 1350. New York, The Morgan Library and museum (MS M.456 fol. 6r)) (Bredekamp 2020, p. 68).

Thus, Bredekamp offers a coherent theory of image agency, although this coherence is sometimes achieved by grossly neglecting essential contexts. On the one hand, such a systematic approach fulfills the function of overcoming previous ideas about the discipline. On the other hand, the essence itself is often weakened by methodological ungroundedness and the need for explanations for selecting works of art. The question repeatedly arises to what extent the given sample can be adequate for deriving such categories, conclusions, and ideas. So it is the same with studying the frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Focusing on one work of art allows the researcher to see many circumstances at the intersection of which a work is created. Bredekamp places it in broad networks where the viewer, the artist, or the work itself could be involved to a greater or lesser extent. At the same time, focusing on one work gives us an idea of visual culture and the art period in general.

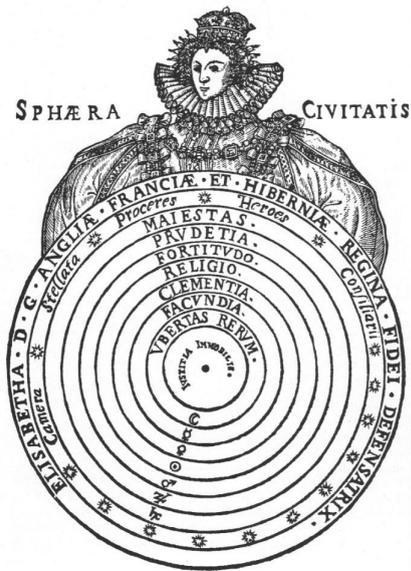
Fig. 2.



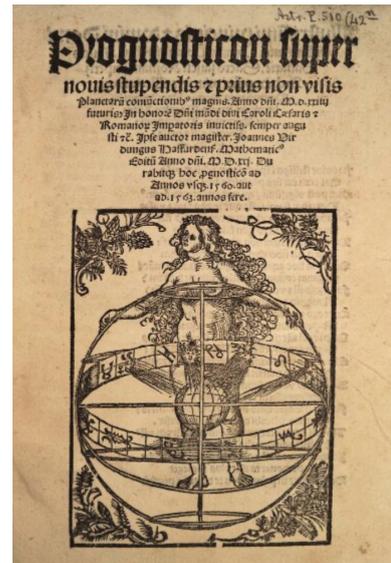
a) A prince offering the protection of his cloak. Illumination to an "Avis au roys". Paris, c. 1350. New York, The Morgan Library and museum (MS M.456 fol. 6r). © The Morgan Library & Museum.



b) Valentino Pica il Vecchio, *Virgin of Mercy*, tempera on panel, XV c. Tuscania, Cattedrale di San Giacomo Maggiore. © Illia Levchenko



c) John Cade, *Sphere civitatis...*, 1588. STC (2nd ed.), 461. Madan, *Oxford Books*, I., p. 25-26 © Newberry Library, Chicago



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On image agency

Horst Bredekamp is an art historian and representative of the science of images (Bildwissenschaft), known for his research on the image agency. In the two reviewed works, the image appears as an independent agent that operates in the political space and essentially creates this political space. In the study "Image Act. A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency" (2018), Bredekamp attempts to systematize the methods of image action. The types of acts singled out by the researcher exist outside of linear chronology and are ways of manifesting an image. The image can combine several different types of acts. First, Bredekamp considers the image as a determinant of man as a species, a manifestation of the cognitive revolution, man's ability to act of differentiation, and his ability to transform nature. Despite this, the researcher goes to the meaning of Charles Darwin's teaching "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals" (1872) to develop the concept of "pathosformel" (pathosformel) of Aby Warburg. After all, Bredekamp concludes images of nature continue human images, not oppose them. The second of the analyzed works, "Leviathan: Body politic as visual strategy in the work of Thomas Hobbes" (2020), is built around the analysis of the frontispiece to Hobbes's treatise "Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil" (1651). Bredekamp constructs research by involving an impressive source complex, thus demonstrating that a work of art is both an actor involved in society. Combining the analysis of these two works in one text makes it possible to see how Bredekamp's theory can be applied to the specific source material.

Keywords: *image, image agency, early modern period, politic, art, power.*

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Received: 28-04-2022

Advance Access Published: May, 2023