

gical, symbol that is endowed with the power, energy, and holiness of the represented sacred personage or event. The gracious power of the icon rests on the very likeness, or similitude of the image with its prototype (hence, once again, the tendency toward illusionism in icon painting), as well as on the naming, or name, of the icon (hence follows, on the contrary, the conventionality and symbolism of the image). The icon is antinomical in its essence, just as its original divine Prototype: it is the expression of something beyond expression, and the representation of the non-representable. The ancient antithetical archetypes of the mirror, as really presenting its prototype (the Hellenic tradition), and the name, as the carrier of the essence of the named (the Middle Eastern tradition), find in the icon their antinomical unity.

Because the icon manifests its prototype, it must be worshiped and has the ability to work miracles. Believers love and worship the icon as they would what it depicts—"the honor paid to the image extends to the prototype," according to the church fathers)—and receive spiritual aid from the icon, just as they would from its archetype. The icon is for this reason an object of prayer. Believers pray before it, and open up their souls in trusting confession, supplication, or thanksgiving.

The icon is also a beautiful image that serves, with its bright colors, as an ornament for the church and brings spiritual joy to the beholder. "The color of painting," John of Damascus writes about church art, "draws me toward contemplation and, delighting my sight as a meadow, pours the glory of God into my soul."

In the icon, church tradition lives on in its artistic form. The main carrier of tradition, the iconic canon, preserves, as if in a specific inner norm of artistic process, the principles, methods, and peculiarities of the artistic language of icon painting that have accumulated over centuries of Orthodox spiritual and artistic practice. The canon does not impede the creative will of the icon painter but instead disciplines it, and facilitates, for artistic thought, the breakthrough into the realm of absolute spirituality, as well as the expression of the acquired spiritual experience in the language of icon painting. The icon is therefore an outstanding work of representational art that conveys its deepest spiritual content by exclusively artistic means: color, composition, line, and shape. According to Bulgakov, the icon embodies, to the ultimate degree of manifestedness, the "spiritual, sacred corporeity" (*dukhotelesnost*). The corporeal entelechy, which is the object of intuitive striving for every true art, is realized in the icon most fully and, for the Orthodox mentality, in the best way possible. In the icon, the eternal antinomy of culture between the spiritual and corporeal is eliminated, for it is in the icon (we have in mind the classical examples of the icon from its "golden age" in Russia around 1400) that spirituality receives its ultimate realization in the created world, and reveals its visually per-

ceptible beauty. Finally, all this bears witness to the wisdom (*sophijnost*) of the icon. The icon possesses *sophijnost* for it contains in itself, in a certain incomprehensible unity, all the things described here, together with many other ineffable essences, a fact that makes clear the involvement of Sophia, the Wisdom of God herself, in its creation.

[See also Byzantine Aesthetics; Iconoclasm and Iconophobia; Iconography and Iconology; Religion and Aesthetics; and Russian Aesthetics, *article on Religious Aesthetics*.]

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ICONOCLASM AND ICONOPHOBIA. The Renaissance humanists believed that the arts had their origins in the praise and invocation of the gods. But the beauty of the poems and songs, they admitted, sometimes led people to worship the works of art rather than the gods; or worse, to worship the wrong gods altogether. The problems are only more acute when the work represents the visible form of the gods. Hostility to carved and painted images, then, had its origins in religious disputes.

Theory. The most serious iconophobic accusation is that the supposedly sacred image in fact represents a false god. But this charge does not necessarily call into question the accuracy of the representation. Accuser and accused may even share the same theory of representation. For example, everyone might agree that images make supernatural spirits present through sympathetic magic. In that case, the image of the true god could be distinguished from the idol by practical testing: the true image should be powerful and beneficial. Or everyone might agree that the image is only a conventional sign for divinity. In that case, the idol can be converted into a true image simply by changing the convention, as medieval

Christians did when they converted Roman statues of Venus into Virgin Marys by relabeling them. The charge of *inauthenticity* seldom involves a true iconophobia.

True iconophobia does surface in the accusation that the image incompletely or falsely represents the gods, even the true gods. The fear is that some *inadequacy* of the representation will result in a misleading account of the divine nature. The accusation of inadequacy can fix on either the production of the image or its reception. Thus, it is connected to issues in epistemology, semiotics, psychology, poetics, and aesthetics.

A mimetic image, apparently, represents its object less conventionally than language does. Because an image lacks grammar and a conventionally established vocabulary, it cannot formulate statements. Instead, the image represents objects by resemblance. Resemblance is a psychological fact. The image offers surrogate stimuli for perceptions of real things. Even without being literally mistaken for the real things, mimetic images nevertheless work powerful effects on beholders. They are often used to alter behavior in the realms of religion, politics, and consumerism.

Because the image appears to bypass convention, its effectiveness seems to transcend particular cultures and communities. This is a great practical advantage.

But the psychological fact of resemblance is not so easy to account for logically. Resemblance, or an “iconic” relationship of sign to object, is based on shared physical properties. But an icon may share many properties with any number of things in the world, and it is not necessarily obvious which ones a beholder is meant to focus on. The match between image and world cannot be shown to be either intrinsic or universally manifest.

Iconophobia, then, is the fear of the uncontrolled nature of iconic representation. A theologian, for example, will naturally mistrust an image because there is no guarantee that it will capture and convey the appropriate aspects of divine reality. On the contrary, the materiality of the image might dangerously mislead worshipers into thinking, for instance, that their gods have material substance and are limited by space-time. The image delivers at best an incomplete list of properties, and at worst a list of false properties. The theologian will prefer words because they can articulate more complicated relationships among things and ideas, and because the materiality of words is in principle a merely contingent attribute.

Theologians also prefer words because of their “inscriptional” quality, that is, their status as tokens irrevocably severed from an original, authentic performance or moment of utterance. This means that they can more easily be assigned a divine provenance and so invested with scriptural or oracular authority. Images, too, can be “revealed,” but this involves more awkward deceptions.

Semiotics has attempted to circumvent such critiques by arguing for the full conventionality of iconic representation.

According to this argument, communities agree to read images in certain ways, and to judge some images as more realistic than others. But the conventions of iconic representation are never as finely articulated as the conventions of linguistic exchange. The image has no truth-value worthy of the name.

In the face of skepticism about iconicity, iconophiles can also take the opposite tack. They can push the image even further in the direction of nonconventionality. For example, they point out that iconic representation often involves imprints, traces, or other signs that claim physical contiguity with their objects (what are known as indexical signs). Cultic traditions will offer homomaterial samples, or parts meant to stand for an absent whole (in other words, relics). Finally, portraits can be said to operate not only by resemblance but also simply by naming their objects. That is, they manage to designate individuals successfully even with minimal effort to establish commonality of properties. Effigies, for instance, can be very effective referential pointers, inciting violent or reverential behavior, without even bothering to reproduce unique features of the individual subject. But such extreme efforts to universalize the power of iconic representation only invite still more pointed charges of inaccuracy or inadequacy.

An important set of iconophobic critiques focuses on what can be called the rhetoric of the image rather than its logic. Such accusations do not necessarily call into doubt the adequacy of the representation. Instead, they worry about the psychological effects the material sign might work after it has successfully stood in for its absent object. Apparently contingent attributes of its material form might suddenly get seen as constitutive attributes, that is, as expressions in their own right capable of conveying new contents. These new, unforeseen sign-content relationships will not be governed by the old code that the recipient was using to read the original sign.

The conversion of contingent materiality into a constitutive property tends to introduce the issue of beauty, or the formal properties of a sign that provoke pleasure and yet are logically unrelated to the possible pleasurable features of the signified real object. Beauty is a highly effective rhetorical device, because it can draw attention to or prejudice the beholder in favor of the signified. Beauty even plays a role in traditional defenses of the religious image, in that the sensual appeal of the image is said to stimulate holy thoughts and emotions. Materiality and even beauty might also be read as metaphors for some immaterial idea, again greatly augmenting the power of the image. This apology has been pushed still further in the paradoxical argument that the uncoded and uncontrolled aspects of aesthetic textuality actually make for the most adequate representation of a transcendental and unknowable divinity.

All these advantages can of course be considered disadvantages. Beauty is no reliable guide to the facts of the mat-

ter. Metaphoricity grants the recipient of the image too much responsibility for hypothesizing a code.

The extreme case of iconophobia on the grounds of inadequacy is a general breakdown in confidence in all forms of representation, and not only iconic representation. This representational pessimism, or Puritanism, dismisses virtually any claims that an object might make to stand for anything else. Such a demystifying critique is apt to see an idol in any object or idea whose function and range have been metaphorically extended. Attacks on monarchy and other political institutions; on the cultic aspects of erotic love; on the arts in general; and even on metaphysics and on ideology, can all be understood as varieties of iconoclasm.

Because the materiality of the image seems to initiate semiotic processes posterior to some primary communicative function, these processes have been called "excessive" or "supplementary." The most recent semiotic theory tends to mistrust this distinction between primary and supplementary semiosis. Materiality and metaphoricity are seen as inevitable conditions of textuality. This removes the sting of the iconophobic critique.

History. Any of the iconophobic accusations just discussed can lead to the literal destruction of the offending images, or iconoclasm in the strict sense. But such destructions are political acts, with meanings and repercussions in the realm of things and events. They do not necessarily register people's beliefs about representation with much precision. Iconoclasm may not even reflect a conflict of beliefs about representation. For example, when an army burns the flag of the defeated enemy, it is not contesting the flag's claim to represent the enemy's nation and its ideals; on the contrary. Likewise, it is difficult in moments of political crisis to distinguish iconophobic iconoclasm from mere vandalism. The history of iconoclasm is not equivalent to the history of iconophobic theory.

Many in ancient Greece and Rome objected to the worship of false gods. The educated elite mocked the follies of popular piety and doubted the representational claims of visual mimesis. But a thoroughgoing doctrine of iconophobia emerged only with monotheistic religion. The Jewish tribes encoded their hostility to "strange gods" or idols in the Decalogue, which prohibits the fashioning of any similitude of the deity, or indeed of any living thing. The Jews have stood by this teaching throughout their history. Medieval rabbis like Maimonides extended the skepticism to language and refused to authorize even linguistic representations of the deity. (This resembled the attitude of some medieval Christian mystics.)

The earliest Christians inherited both the Judaic prohibition and the Platonic mistrust of fictions. But many of the first Christians were converted from paganism, and it proved difficult and inexpedient to abandon the habit of image worship altogether. The texts of the church fathers generally disapproved of images. Sculpture was especially

suspect; the Second Commandment had mentioned "graven" images, and the experience of pagan worship showed that supernatural power was more readily attributed to statues than to flat images. But archaeological data show that already by the sixth century many Christians were using pictures as the focus of worship. Theologians like John of Damascus and ecclesiastics like Pope Gregory the Great mounted theoretical justifications of the image. At the very least, images were defended as the bibles of the illiterate. At the most, they might serve as channels or vessels for divine grace. The Incarnation provided a model for such a penetration of the transcendental into the material. The Incarnation—the doctrine that the deity took the form of a human being—also circumvented the traditional Jewish argument that the deity was unrepresentable.

The painting of sacred figures flourished especially under the auspices of the Eastern or Byzantine Church. Between 726 and 842 the icons fell victim to a series of violent iconoclasm. The war on the holy portraits was motivated partly by doctrinal objections, partly by local imperial politics. In the end, the images won the right to existence, but they remained subject to strict formal and antimimetic aesthetic conventions designed to ward off any animistic identification of the image with its sacred model and to conceal the traces of human fabrication.

There is some evidence that medieval Christian iconophobes were aware of the Islamic ban on images, which was well established by the eighth century. Muslims shunned mimetic images in part to avoid competition with the already complex system of Christian sacred imagery. Islam never produced a real theory of representation. In the absence of figuration, however, decorative art thrived.

The Western Church, meanwhile, was continually relaxing its restrictions on imagery. By the eleventh century even sculpture was widespread. The cult of images was popular and profitable. The Scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas, following John of Damascus, legitimated images by drawing fine distinctions between the "worship" due to the cross, the "extreme reverence" due to the figure of Christ, and the "reverence" due to the saints. Some images were justified through connections to legendary "natural" images of Christ, such as the Veil of Veronica, or to the authoritative portrait of the Virgin painted by Saint Luke. Other images were physically linked to corporeal relics, in other words, material samples of the holy personages and not mere signs.

Medieval Christians were quick to accuse heathens and even Muslims of idolatry. But a few reform-minded theologians turned this critique back on Christianity. Bernard of Clairvaux, the twelfth-century leader of the Cistercians, railed against the sensuality and gratuitous artifice of church sculpture. His diatribe stands out as an early acknowledgment of aesthetic effects at odds with the safer, pedagogical function of Christian images. The Lollards and the Hussites, the radical reforming sects that flourished in

England and in Bohemia around 1400, also objected to any reliance on the senses as an avenue to the divine. Tradition-
 alists had a ready response, however: by stimulating the
 emotions, the beautiful image actually encouraged and en-
 hanced proper devotion.

The Protestant Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther
 in 1517, brought iconophobia to the forefront of contempo-
 rary politics. Following the lead of classically educated hu-
 manists, the reformers subjected popular superstitions
 about the power of images to rational critique. They dis-
 missed the paintings and statues in churches as seductive
 but false foci for religious devotion. They argued that the
 ubiquitous images of the saints encouraged unsound doc-
 trine, for example, by distracting from the centrality of
 Christ's sacrifice.

Beginning in the 1520s, and throughout the century in
 many lands, reformers incited or persuaded people to de-
 stroy the paintings and statues. Some Protestant iconoclasm
 were spontaneous and violent, others official and orderly.
 Some involved mere confiscation of the images—perhaps to
 resurface in a private home—rather than literal destruction.
 Iconoclasm made good political theater. The whitewashed
 church wall became a public symbol of the doctrinal triumph
 of the Reformation.

The iconoclasm was often inspired by popular resent-
 ment against the clergy or the wealthy citizens who had paid
 for the images, rather than by a theory of representation.
 Often the iconoclasts made no better argument than an ap-
 peal to the authority of the Old Testament. Luther realized
 this and distanced himself from the issue. He conceded that
 metaphors of the divine were necessary, precisely because
 the divine was radically unknowable. But if pictures were
 mere conventional signs, then they were theologically unin-
 teresting. Luther's rival, the Swiss reformer Huldrych
 Zwingli, was more fearful that these signs were being
 abused by worshipers and so supported outright destruc-
 tion.

Iconophobia was pushed to its extreme in the teachings
 of John Calvin. Calvin relentlessly correlated idolatry with
 other, more insidious forms of false consciousness. Radical
 iconophobia in the sixteenth century was often exploited as
 a political weapon, for example, by Henry VIII of England
 when he wanted to assert his power over the clergy, or by
 the Netherlanders when they rebelled against their Spanish
 overlords. The result was that Calvin and his followers ef-
 fectively eradicated the cult of images in much of northern
 Europe.

Protestant iconophobia had a huge and not exclusively
 negative impact on aesthetics and the history of art. It per-
 manently affected the ways images were made, exhibited,
 and judged.

The need to ward off the charge of idolatry inspired
 artists to devise various insulating strategies. German
 painters and printmakers, in some cases under direct super-

vision from theologians, illustrated Protestant teachings
 through schematic diagrams. There was no danger of illegit-
 imately worshiping such images. Other painters masked sac-
 red subject matter with allegory. In Netherlandish art espe-
 cially, landscape, still life, and scenes of everyday life were
 conventionally encoded with doctrinal and moralizing con-
 tent. Such works made no attempt to represent transcen-
 dental objects through the technology of pictorial mimesis.
 No beholder would confuse the picture with the proper ob-
 ject of devotion. Even Catholic Europe responded to the ac-
 cusation of idolatry. Reform-minded theologians, ultimately
 supported by the decrees of the Council of Trent (1563),
 urged suppression of profane and worldly elements in sac-
 red painting, curtailing the cult of the saints, and a purifi-
 cation of the illustration of doctrine.

The risk of substitution was further diminished by adjust-
 ments in format, medium, and style. Sculpture of the human
 figure was virtually abandoned in the Protestant countries,
 except on very small scale. Painters were less likely to seduce
 the eye with brilliant colors and imitations of costly materials
 (exceptions were made when the represented object was de-
 serving of worship after all, for instance, in the iconic por-
 traits of Elizabeth I of England). Mistrust of the eloquence of
 color was brought to a pitch in seventeenth- and eighteenth-
 century Idealist art criticism, and indeed has remained a
 constant in Western aesthetics. Reformers and humanists of-
 ten preferred black-and-white prints to paintings. Artists
 strove for plain, straightforward styles, stripped of conspicu-
 ous artifice and deceptive pictorial rhetoric.

The Reformation changed the way paintings were dis-
 played. The institution of the altarpiece, an assemblage of
 paintings or sculptures mounted on an altar, collapsed in
 the Protestant north. Painters switched to small, horizontal
 formats suitable for hanging on the walls of private
 dwellings. In Holland the oil painting became a standard el-
 ement of interior decoration. Indeed, the styles, subject
 matters, and functions of Dutch painting had a lasting im-
 pact, especially on French and English art and taste.

In some ways, paradoxically, Protestant iconophobia en-
 hanced the prestige of art. Once the image relinquished its
 claims to represent the divine object, beholders were licensed
 to enjoy it frankly as a work of art. The image was now physi-
 cally disengaged from the church and from ritual. Allegorical
 strategies discouraged beholders from reading images liter-
 ally and instead taught them to take them, like literary texts,
 as fictions. Long before aesthetics was given a philosophical
 basis, beholders began valuing images not for the expensive
 materials they were made from, nor for the practical pur-
 poses they served, nor even for their content, but for their
 quality, ingenuity, and beauty. To be sure, this development
 was in the long run independent of the Reformation. Nowhere
 was the culture of art appreciation more advanced
 than in Catholic Italy. Here the persistence of traditional
 iconography only testifies to its irrelevance to connoisseurs

of art. Consistency of subject matter may even have made it easier to compare artists on the basis of quality and style.

The suspicion that beholders were admiring the image for its formal qualities, rather than looking through it to the object it signified, lay at the heart of Protestant iconophobia. Zwingli, for example, chided believers for preferring a finely crafted crucifix to a poorly made one.

It is sometimes argued that the modern work of art never abandoned the old representational ambitions of the sacred image. The modern masterpiece gives access not to an elusive deity, but allegedly to the ineffable genius of an artist. According to this so-called secularization theory, the supernatural aura of the sacred image was transferred to the profane work of art. The modern idea of a masterpiece was freely projected backward onto premodern artifacts. Inevitably, the work of art's new aura was subjected to a fresh iconophobic critique. Modernist aesthetics either denied the sign-status of the image altogether, or insisted on the pure-conventionality of its signification. Pictorial mimesis, the cult of genius, and the idea of "art" itself were successively challenged by the practices of Abstraction, Dada, Pop, and any number of movements and trends of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

But because the modern work of art has been released from its burden of representing remote sources of religious and political power, its success or failure no longer seems so important. Modern works of art have seldom been the objects of literal iconoclasm—unless the relegation of art to the sanctuary of the museum is itself understood as a disabling tactic. Some art has been destroyed because it symbolizes the wealth, power, or effete values of an enemy, as, for example, in the French and Russian revolutions and under German National Socialism. A uniquely modern phenomenon is the lone vandal who publicly inflicts damage on famous works in museums. Such acts appear to signal only the vandal's overall nonparticipation in the ideals of the society. The true echo of the old debates over the power of sacred images is perhaps heard only in modern disagreements over the adequacy of advertising images, especially images of political candidates.

[See also *Icon; Iconography and Iconology; and Religion and Aesthetics.*]

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ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY. In the recent attempts to rethink the history of art history, the question of iconography and iconology has been raised with repeated insistence. This insistence stems from the ways in which the coupling of iconographic and iconological readings of works of art have worked both to justify the object domain for art history and to secure that domain methodologically. This double achievement is above all the work of Erwin Panofsky, the art historian whose writings not only reworked various traditions of iconography and iconology into a systematic and synthetic method but seem to have single-handedly wrested art history out of its dependent position in the early decades of the century, establishing art history on its own disciplinary ground.

The claims Panofsky made for art history are clearly evident in the clinically demarcated levels of description and interpretation through which the work of art is rendered the meaningful object of a humanistic discipline. In "Iconography and Iconology," his seminal introductory essay to *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, an introduction in which Panofsky is attempting to distinguish between a traditional definition of iconography as a pictorial representation of a subject through a figure and iconology as a larger understanding of iconic representations, he outlines three specific levels: (1) the *preiconological* level of description of the primary and natural subject matter, the "motifs" or "pure forms" that are "carriers of primary and natural meanings," motifs that define for Panofsky a "history of style"; (2) the *iconographic* level that recognizes the conventionality of images and their themes, demanding knowledge of their literary and textual sources and defining a "history of types"; (3) the *iconological* level that discloses the "intrinsic meaning" or symbolical values of a work, demanding a "synthetic intuition" of the work, familiarity with "the essential tendencies of the human mind," and conditioned by "personal psychology" and "Weltanschauung." This third level discovers "the unifying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a