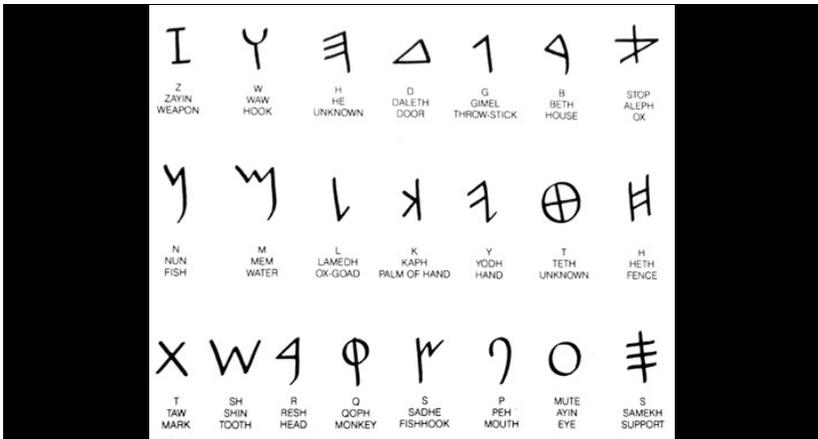


Book of Kells (8th/9th century c.e.)

If we are determined to move from *signs* from the speaker- to the agent-intellect, we may—provided we do some digging—that the job has already been done. That underlying the [lateral drift from the pictogramme](#), which is found in all forms of writing, we find a *tension* in the sign: it is *part* image.

As writing drifts from [image to abstraction](#), the image—as a consequence—turns to a pictorial function free of representation. Whether figurative, or abstract, the image is a world unto itself, and contains its own reality. What will happen if we stick to a basic *unity* between writing and image.

If we call *content* the substance of image and writing combined, then our notion of content is *vectorial* (since writing and image differ they must then be coordinates). Opens a *life-world*: if we call container a form designed to tease out the content, then our material *environment* is turned into a dig.



Phoenician [Abjad System](#) (names indicating pictogrammes)

In this series on the topic of 'excavation' an objective is to explore the receptivity to text and art in art and text, in that way that a real exchange can and does take place. The experimental position is a refusal to accept that communication is essentially different among artists and writers.

Of course, many will insist that this kind of contrast between art and writing – as an oppositional difference – does not exist: that a text has aspects to it which is made, and art work is readable. And they are right. But there are enough people who do think of writing and art as mutual repellents.

Or, they feel it and sense an incompatibility verging unto logic. And they are also right. If we consider that logic determines how sequences of words and images are formed, it is clear that they more often than not bring us to different places. So, writing and art do operate according to different logics.

If we dig into the past – as archaeologists do – we will also realize that most written languages started as pictograms, and then evolved to become more abstract: whether they evolved into ideograms, as in the Far East, or they evolved into arbitrary code, making tracery back to the image difficult.

So, there is a relationship to pictograms in most writing, but it is somehow *buried*. And the first question, in regard of excavation, is how we can reveal the imagery in writing. Since one effect of the encrypting of the pictorial origin is that the relation to image becomes freer, as in Mediaeval *illumination*.

Here we are talking about a culturally connected area ranging from Africa, specially Ethiopia, to the South: Ireland/Iceland to the West; Iran/Afghanistan to the East and Norway at the North. That is, areas where locals, at some point, stopped praying and sacrificing to statues/sculptures/idols.

That is, areas where images acquired a different standing than as objects of veneration. Of course, the boundaries are blurry: the icons of Eastern Christianity, the Saints of the Western Church, and the florescence of votive art – folk art as sacrificial gifts after survival – are examples from Europe.

However, what interests us here is *not* the presence/absence of idolatry, but the emergence of an autonomous realm of images. Images that are testimonials of the *real*. Ones that prompt our memory, or prime us to things unknown. Fantastic beasts from far off, but also of metaphysical realms.

This ability of the image to contain its own reality – we may separate between images that contain their own reality and images that do not – makes it take off from writing, because the test of writing usually is not whether it is real/unreal but whether it lies, or alternatively tells the truth.

Hence the question of how we manage the part of a whole which is real and true. And the usages of image and writing that spring from a substantial unity, then identified as the actual content. Seen from a semiotic standpoint, we are then somewhere *else* than in theory of signs centred on language.