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The idea that the advent of image making is attributable to the hominid capacity of perceiving the likeness of an object in a random marking is not new (e.g., Eppel 1958:51), but Davis has added a new facet to it by focusing on the precise circumstances generating the conceptualization of image. His hypothesis derives much plausibility from its potential to provide a logical answer to an old question: why has figurative image making apparently commenced with complex subjects, usually mammals? Why not with simple, still objects, such as crystals, shells, or artifacts? One is tempted to reason that the abstracting from three-dimensional objects would be easier with the latter.

I argue that the available artistic record tends to support Davis's view when one considers the neural processes involved in vision. Humans perceive objects by scanning their memory stores for analogous forms. In practice, this process is usually cut short because in a given context a few characteristics of the observed object suffice for a reasonably reliable identification. This cutting short occasionally causes visual perception to be deceived—paradoxically an ambiguity of perception that would have had survival value during the Pleistocene. In the neuropsychological sense it is the opposite of being deceived by camouflage: whereas the disguise of a predator or quarry, to be effective, requires that the deceived subject perceive an insignificant object in place of a significant one, in the effect considered by Davis a significant (e.g. threatening) object is seen where in fact an insignificant one exists.

What kind of images can be assumed to have been so dominant in the Aurignacian mind that they were likely to be substituted for reality when such misinterpretation of visual information occurred? The dominant subjects of the subsequent Upper Paleolithic art periods were large animals, and although they were probably determined by cultural factors we can assume that Aurignacian man was also preoccupied with large animals. They epitomized for him survival: violent death or a full stomach. Thus his very first figurative images depict simple animal contours not merely because he was preoccupied

with these subjects but because, when he misidentified natural features as objects, it would have been as the mental images that dominated his visual system: objects that evoked in him profound fears or desires.

Besides lending tangible support to Davis's hypothesis my argument suggests that man's preoccupations have not greatly changed in over 30,000 years: fear, food, success, and women. In the absence of empirical proof the acceptance of Davis's views will depend on the strength of counterarguments. Nevertheless, it is thought-provoking that, once again (cf. Bednarik 1984*a, b*), a flaw, a "malfunction" of our visual system is utilized in explaining a threshold discovery, a quantum jump in the process that led to our construct of the cosmos.

Davis's theory deals with the discovery of the iconicity of noniconic features, but it also relates to the origin of the preceding human capacity to produce consciously modulated marks. His categories *self-sufficient marks* and *nonrepresentational semantic marks* appear to correspond to Anati's (1981:206) *psychograms* and *ideograms*. The comprehensive record of the archaic rock art in Australia is most instructive on this topic, because the circumstances surrounding the emergence of image making are more intelligible there than they are in the Franco-Cantabrian region. In Australia, a long tradition of nonfigurative markings seems to have been succeeded by one adding to these motifs "realistic" ones—but initially only of two-dimensional objects (see Clegg 1984:116 and Bednarik 1985:82 for discussions). The appearance of "realistic" figurative depiction was a crucial event in establishing the model of reality that humanity has adopted. Perhaps the ultimate significance of Davis's contribution is its potential role in reviewing the validity of that model—a construct that, after all, does not define reality satisfactorily; it can at best illuminate those aspects of reality that humans have applied to the task of comprehending it, using that haphazard medley of sensory faculties evolution has equipped them with.