

FOOTPRINTS LITERACY: THE ORIGINS OF ART AND PRELUDE TO SCIENCE.

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Abstract: Art is a far too complex cultural phenomenon to have been invented ex-nihilo. However, no adequate explanation has so far been given regarding the graphic and cognitive skills, which preceded prehistoric art, and made its actual emergence possible. This essay proposes that prehistoric art was preceded by a more primitive kind of pictorial literacy, namely footprints literacy. The obvious attribute common to many early prehistoric paintings and footprints is that both represent their subjects by contour and negative. A deeper analysis of these two kinds of visual literacy reveals many other common attributes: connectivity-differentiation, classification, abstraction, generalization, signification, visual class-names, symmetry-asymmetry, schematization, complementarity, induction, deduction, hypothetical thinking and others. Thus, it is probable that footprints are the proto-symbols from which figurative art evolved. It is striking that the same attributes which appear in footprints literacy about 4 millions of years ago and in figurative art since its beginning about 40.000 years ago, appear much later as basic attributes of modern science, but at a much higher level of sophistication. Possibly, these three domains represent successive stages of noetic evolution. Probably, this finding points to fundamental cognitive attributes or "mindprints" that are basic not only to these areas, but also to human intelligence itself and probably to all other phases of Being. Pointing out the origins of art might be a substantial contribution to the lifting of the veil from the most fundamental attributes of art since its very beginnings. This may provide a new key to the delineation of the demarcation lines between art and non-art, which seems to be the most haunting problem of modern art. It can be shown that works of nonrepresentational art do not share those unique fundamental attributes or mind prints shared by footprints literacy, figurative art, science and other branches of culture. Hence, there is room for doubts if works of nonrepresentational art are culturally relevant and if they are works of art at all.

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The talk served as "opening act" to mark the aimed level of abstraction, scope, interconnectedness and directness. It gave the participants a feeling they were allowed to really speak their mind, and to the best of their ability.

Avital worked all his life to develop new ideas, rather than repeating *old stuff*. He was really involved in his own research, intellectually and emotionally. *Therefore, he states, simple-minded conformists get angry because they have never read about it before and they think it is outrageous that one dares to speak his mind. The truly intelligent and open-minded people get excited because they are exposed to new ideas. For sure, one way or the other his audience is never indifferent: those who hate his ideas and those who love them, feel that he talks about something that many feel but do not dare to express or do not have the words and understanding to express.*