



WHY MICKEY ?

"the optical image of human body is independent of the tactile image"

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An unequalled celebrity

The hero we propose to talk about, has nothing in common with those whom one might meet in the novels or the comic strips. He is neither [Astérix](#), [Robinhood](#), nor [Superman](#). Nevertheless a storyline would give direction to its acts and would come to support its notoriety.

Has he precursors? Undoubtedly, but those which crossed over Story, like the [Homeric heroes](#), the [Knights of the Round Table](#), are all linked with some memorable saga. Other names are related to exemplary acts, like [Robinson](#), [Prometheus](#), "[Peau d'Âne](#)" or... the [Little Red Riding Hood](#). Nothing like it with [Mickey](#) who may be aviator, tailor, sorcerer's apprentice, camper or conductor, but he is neither a prince nor chimney sweep...

In our culture, the only comparison which comes us to mind is that of **another animal based** character: the goupil of the **Novel of Fox**. Both in the collective memory, are known by the personality that one allots to them rather than intrigues in which they evolve. Undoubtedly they are both clever but the small inoffensive mouse has above all an honest naivety, while the fox, at the very least its opposite, is a crafty and dishonest person. However this opposition does not summarize the difference: the **Fox of the Novel does not exist without narration**.

Hero in spite of himself, but having never had the making of a hero, glorious in spite of himself, having fallen into the trap of her naivety, our **Mickey** acquired an unequalled celebrity: there is no existing place in our Western culture without an effigy of our hero.

Why Mickey?

Are representations of the famous character only a humorous but childish ornament? Are they effigies? But which and what? **Mickey** isn't **Astérix**, with the inexhaustible inventive resources facing the ups and down of the Story, nor **Tintin** with the generous and intrepid intelligence. It is true that the apprehensive, naive, but attentive innocence of **Mickey** is also one of the resources of childhood.

So one may be allowed to think that **Mickey** is nothing else than **an allegory of the childish heart** (As opposed to the famous perverse polymorphic child of **Freud**).

Let us look at the places where one uses to lay out these representations. They generally decorate objects or spaces in connection with **closer intimacy** of childhood: clothing, toys, watch, goblets, plates, **towels**. But the most singular point appears to be a **universal receptivity**.

Materially one can think that at the time, the innovation of the support which gave him birth, the cinema, explains this contagious success. But let us recognize that the mouse of America quickly came off the screens and entered dwellings in more traditional forms: albums, effigies, figurines, post cards...



This was undoubtedly related to the fact that cinematographic projection does not allow capture the image. It remains, in this way, distant, without duration and very metaphorical. Quite to the contrary, the famous mouse, indefinitely repeated, duplicated, was to enter, **to invade the infantile universe, to last, by a "metonymic**

way". It primarily puts it on the register of psychologic contiguity: **by Mickey, something, which is not in language, belongs indeed to the childish heart.**

A great 'communicateur'

Why **Mickey**, and why was he adopted by people everywhere? **Edwige Antier** asks these questions, being interested in this "hero", companion of our childhood for several generations. She describes him with "a typified character, mixing intelligence with frankness and generosity". Even by a very small child, this temperament is experienced without it being necessary to read the story. For the author, this temperament accounts for the welcome reserved to the hero the world over.

Edwige Antier puts aside, in fact, any reference to the written story of "**Aventures de Mickey**". She notices coincidences between the image of the character and the drawings produced by young children. She thus tackles this problem in a very simple way by discussing the image of **Mickey** as just practised in a psychological investigation; all things considered, as if a young child produced this drawing by himself and so revealed the way he is.

What the protocol of reading says?

Such a protocol retains two orders of facts:

- the first relates the personality to the proportions of the different parts of the body and those of expressive organs,
- the seconds relates the significant accidents located in tests and the supposed problems of the artist.

First observation, the head of **Mickey** is disproportionate compared to his body. This fact is common to the drawings made by children less than six years. This report puts forward the following observation: "the head is the center of communication and comprehension of surrounding". **Mickey's** ears take part in this amplification; they devour the major part of the "head" unit.

After the proportions, the drawing of the face and its "most expressive elements, such as the eyes or the mouth" indicate, a courageous serenity. **Mickey**, with the immense eyes open on the world, is not afraid to face up to difficult situations. He is "extrovert" therefore very present. Perspicacity is reflected in this immense glance and, for the toddler who observes it, this glance takes part on a magic capacity, whereas in dilated pupils "just a small white point gives the expression of a fear".

Mickey is an inquisitive mouse, "but he does not fear what he can discover" with

his "large and broad ears". These ears are "ready to collect any information coming from outside".

The mouth of **Mickey** is immense and that puts aside "the shadow of an oral guilt complex" which would come "to throw a doubt on the truth of its communication". His fleshy mouth, avid and sensual, reveals the presence of a mother such as all the children would like to have: generous and giving out love and food.

As for the disproportionate nose - in connection with sexuality - it indicates to children that their hero does not escape the castration complex.

The neck of **Mickey** is a variable part of his body:

- being absent, it places the model in emotional resonance with children from five to six years;

- when visible (which occurs in the drawings of children between six and seven years) it then indicates "a stronger desire to control its impulses".

Edwige Antier naturally notices disproportions in the upper limbs: puny arms, immense hands. She retains only the amplification of the hands and sees there "the desire of exploration, action and sociability... the availability and confidence". She concludes that **Mickey**, showing largely open hands, "is not a mystery-maker"!

The disproportion observed with the upper limbs is found with the lower limbs: puny legs and large feet. She concludes that:

- largely spread out feet indicate stability;

- and also, which is most desirable for a child: "good balance between attraction for the two parents".

Thus the author concludes: "**each detail of the physical appearance of Mickey is like a mirror of the still immature child**. It is certainly unconsciously, with a completely intuitive genius, that the artist harmonizes his character with the childish thoughts".

One could not deny the originality of the approach suggested by **Edwige Antier**. However, one never sees a drawing made by a child like **Mickey**. In fact, this analysis is halfway projective test and morpho-psychology.

Even if the adventures of **Mickey** are sometimes interlaced with, marvellous or heroic or fairy-like beings; the character is initially characterized by a temperament. But, for children, this temperament is quite readable in the aspect and in the gestural. This makes **Mickey** a loved companion, even for a child not knowing how to read and who would not understand any tale. **Mickey** was dumb when he was born. He remained verbally very discrete. He is a character of tale only by

borrowing from somebody else or by antiphrasis (like the small tailor). **All this does not prevent him from being "a great *communicateur*".**

The contribution of an architect

If there is an identification, it is not in the heroïcity of the character. However the universality of **Mickey** reveals a very strong tie with the childish heart. This problem encourages us to risk another interpretation, or rather a complementary interpretation. It is suggested by an architect, **Hébert-Stévens**, author of work on the old art of pre-colombian America.

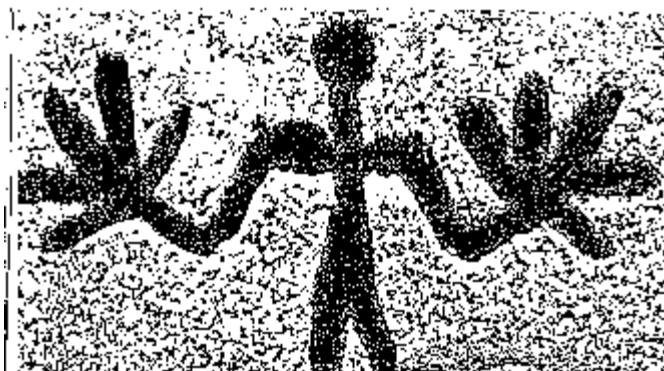


Fig. 1: petroglyph of the Valley Camonica

If "the head is the place of communication and of comprehension of surrounding", the pre-Columbian iconography, showed by this author, testifies indeed to this reality. Peculiarly the mouth, eyes, but also ears and all its openings take, by reduplication, an almost exclusive place in all the decorative pattern and topics. By all appearances we are far from **Mickey**. But the intuition of this author concretizes itself when bringing together a rupestral engraving with the diagram of **Fulton** (or the famous homunculus of **Penfield**) which is the cartography on the man's brain of the points of "arrival" of conscious sensitivity and points of "departure" of voluntary motricity.

"We brought closer, in a rather free manner, it is true, on one hand, a petroglyph of the Valley Camonica (fig.1) which is a character with disproportionate hands - probable attribute of a supra-natural being - and, on the other hand, a medical board indicating the importance of the nervous ramifications to periphery of the body and on which dimensions of the openings are proportional to the cerebral zones which they interest. There coincidence of these two graphics is perhaps not entirely fortuitous".

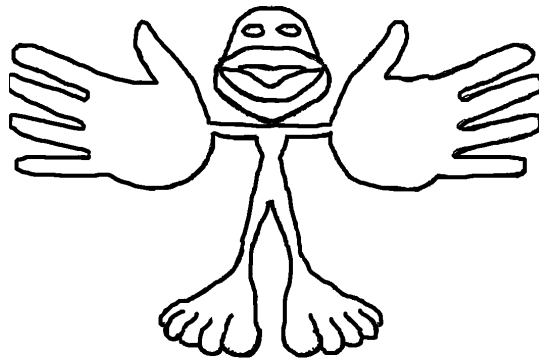


Fig. 2: the traditional diagram of Fulton opposed to its symmetrical

The author makes a clear correlation **between the artistic expression and the conformation of the organ of the thought, reflection, in truth, of its communicating function**. To consider this correspondence, one can wonder whether, for the artist as for the child, the relation in the world could not be **mentally structured through the relational instrument**, i.e. the sensorimotor apparatus reserved for the praxies and cognitive conscience. The author of this bringing together tells us clearly: "better than anyone, the artist feels the mechanisms of structuring of interior images and of those drawn from the external world and goes up easily with the biological sources of their correspondence".

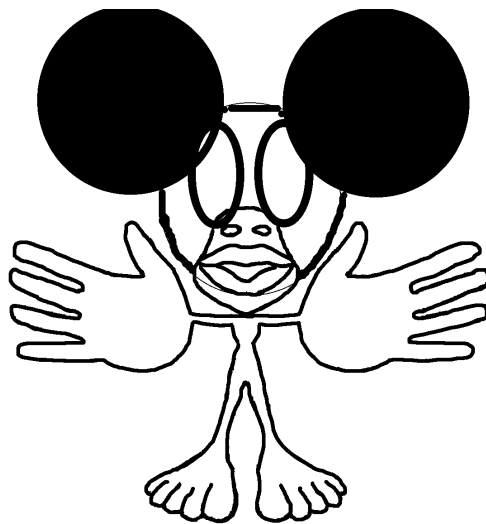


Fig. 3: the same supplemented diagram of the visual and auditive surfaces

Indeed, where is our small figurine? It is, in truth, very easy to find: it is enough to readjust **Fulton's** diagram. It appears when setting in their true orbit two zones of communicating functionality: visual and acoustics surfaces. Each one can then see reappearing the small character drawn by **Walt Disney**.

It is right that, to the first glance, the silhouettes in pre columbian art do not include

Mickey. They **tend to approach the optical image** of the human or the animal which is represented. But the characteristic of "pre columbian arts" is to overload these silhouettes of elements evocative (significants) of these functional zones: a lot of mouths, eyes, ears. This amplifies the effective representation of these attributes in proportions which one finds in **Mickey** and confers to them the same relative importance (fig. 6).

To summarize, we will say that **the anatomical surface of the human brain is representative of functional reality of body segments, and, it is known, this representation does not correspond to external surface of the human body**. Importance of exchanges between the world and human being and human acting, does not have same density on our entire surface in its apparent reality. It is necessary thus to think that ego and world are joined according to this reflected shape in human brain, and perhaps, fantasmatic representations of oneself will respect this "psychic image".

Is it surprising, consequently, that pre-columbian civilizations have, by a skilful synthesis, associated an optical image with functionality of a psychic image? So, **the visible body does not coincide with the sensory body**: children live in this body; in this body their perceive **Mickey**, which is not at all a "Chimera".

Claude Kohler and the diagram of Fulton

A psychologist **Cl. Kohler**, in an already old article, published in "Annales médico-psychologiques": *The image of the outside world and of its own person in the child* follows the same idea that **Hébert-Stévens** while accompanying its study of drawings by the representation of cortical projections. [It] notes that the contiguity with the beings and the objects (and more generally with cosmos) in its effective exercise, does not correspond to the optical image coming from our body. It come off, as it is known, by zones of the cerebral surface where a much more important role is given to the sensory openings, eyes, ears, mouth, lips, face, upper limbs and hands. A circular figure, with features inside, gives the idea of the general form: head and trunk, or only head (fig. 5). For **Claude Kohler**, "this unit head / trunk is keeping with the general development of the conscience of physical ego".



Fig. 4: Drawings of child of 3 - 4 years

Later, around four years, with the circle and the two legs come defined details inside the circle; eyes initially, then the mouth and nose. The trunk tends to separate from the head. The following phase sees the figuration of the hands and the feet. For hands, but not for feet, the prevalent details are fingers. "We already saw how the hands are represented above all by the fingers. The tactile sensitivity most differentiated is located in their extremities"....

It then returns the reader to the anatomical drawing already showed, suggesting that the child only reproduce or project the print, the copy of its nervous system: "the psychic image" rather than the optical image. Or, according to Schilder: "the optical image of body is independent of the tactile image".

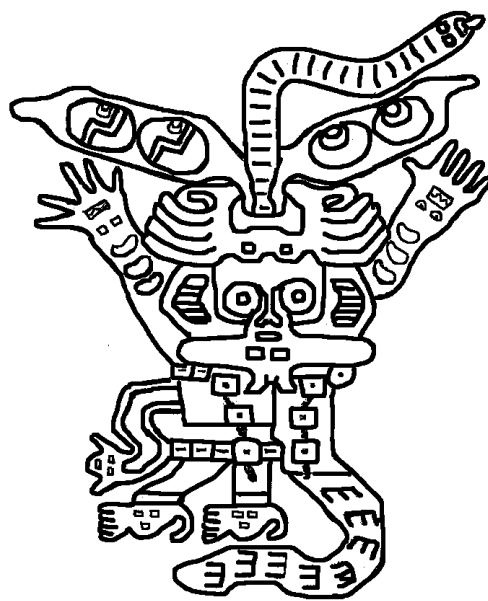


Fig. 5: Art of Chavin

Two cultures, two solutions but one childhood

From this report, it seems that we may be in presence of two possibilities according to society:

1°/ In the pre-columbian universe, the psychic image remains prevailing but, the optical image **does exist for the artist**: We advance this hypothesis that a compromise could be found in "furnishing" the visible image with representative attributes of the psychic image. This contributes to restoring its functional gravity in its right proportions.

2°/ In the Western world, the optical image, inherited of Hellenic rationality, puts aside psychic image; its representation, therefore is not omitted. It will appear, separate and distinct, in the set of themes of arts and literature. This indicates obviously an evolution **from real-life toward the concept**.

3°/ At the beginning of life, the psychic image is most important (but every body knows that human beings "never recover from childhood")...

We draw the conclusions that the psychologist, the neurophysiologist and better still the artist seem to confirm that mechanisms of structuring of the internal forms of the mind and that of the forms drawn from the external world, are "in correspondence with their biological sources".

But this hypothesis towards which converges works of these various authors, may ask questions. Indeed the sexual apparatus not exist in the **Fulton's** diagram, as with **Mickey**, and in pre-columbian art. This corresponds to the fact that it is not repeated on the surface of brain.

What can we conclude from this absence? That the genital function is withdrawn from the relational system controlled by the voluntary action. Each one knows that and must remember that a **lack of symbolization** characterizes sexuality in act.

Visual and linguistic modesties find their explanation there. The parts of the human body which call for a sex-mask are the missing parts of the **Fulton's** diagram.



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<http://jean.morenon.fr/eng/PDF/mouse.pdf>

