

*A World to Win. But in Whose Image?*

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We live an age in which images are recorded and presented in abundance. In many cases, these are images of masses of people, groups of protesters or multitudes who move from one point to another. There are more and more technological means to offer representations of communities and one would think that, in all this abundance, there must be some authentic images of community. It's no doubt that sometimes the media (and even more so the social networks) pretends to offer such representations. Nevertheless the worrying element is to be found in the fact that most images on offer work as a delineation of a fissure in the condition of citizenship (in other words a form of discrimination), by aggressively excluding groups of people regarded with contempt or indifference and by functioning as a looping confirmation of itself by the same group of people. In most cases images and representations are produced through the coding of a single message whose intelligibility is then symptomatically well protected. These are attempts to control the meaning of images and thus their emancipatory political dimension is often reduced, even eliminated. An emancipatory image of community can never be entirely under the control of a certain group. The key element - one would think - that makes an image emancipatory is its ability to subvert the act of making it fit a single desired narrative. The meaning of such an image should be subject to a continuous open process of negotiation, dissension and inclusion *among* the people.

Do we have such images? Are they no longer possible in our era? This issue of *Caietele Echinox* meditates on such questions. In front of an image we are in front of time, considers Georges Didi-Huberman. But maybe it is much more than that. The way an image is framed, the subtle and complex relationship between what is visible in it and what is *hors-cadre*, the symptoms and gestures pervading its territory and the perspectives granted to the eye of the beholder are just a few supplementary elements that turn images into possible case-studies for how they and we think. Images do *think* - Gilles Deleuze has proven that beyond any (academic) doubt. But they also act, as Jean-Luc Godard has kept telling us for decades now. And therein lies a fertile and ever-expanding territory for study. How does an image re-arrange the world? What is the hierarchy and what are the laws that an image produces? What is the ethics of an image? How to think one without or with the other?

We can no longer analyse images inside the rigid limits of a discipline. An interdisciplinary study is always called to deal with their rich language. We also extend the understanding of images from what can be perceived visually to what can be imagined, for example, starting from a text or even a musical fragment (as Swann does in Proust's novel in reaction to the famous phrase from the sonate of Vinteuil).

There is at work a politics of the image and that means that images have a role to play in how a community is defined and structured, in how it functions and how it relates individuals or groups

of people. In Georges Didi-Huberman's view, in the Western tradition, people have rarely been exposed ethically. They have been either *over-exposed* (as hysterical crowds at sport events for example or during military parades) or *under-exposed* (mainly by not showing inequalities and reserving the visual frontspace for those who in a way or another are privileged). For Jacques Rancière, the importance of the modern novel (starting with Gustave Flaubert) lies mainly in its ability to break from the traditional regime of privileges, and in its emancipatory function which is to treat an individual as equal with any other or even an object with an individual. Along the same lines, but decades earlier, for Walter Benjamin, the new forms of arts made possible by the new technologies (mainly the street photography and the Soviet cinema of Eisenstein and Dziga-Vertov) managed to bring about an authentic democracy of the visible by the decline of the aura and the concentration on the axiom of equality.

What is the situation today? Where is the community in the images that are available to us? Are we closer to an ethical representation of the people or has the neoliberal form of capitalism made this impossible?

Perhaps an authentic democratic revolution cannot be captured in a *beautiful* image that protects and reaffirms all the acceptable codes of common sense and the established political (and academic) criteria. It could be that we need - as it has often been the case - an *ugly* revolution, one that has the courage to affirm what Jacques Rancière names *l'égalité des intelligences*. Very few images (if any) seem to be the witness or announcer of such an axiom. The world of the excluded remains - for the time being - in the invisibility of its agony. As Karl Marx would say: Bastille has not been stormed yet. Nor are we - we might add - any closer to the taking of the Tuileries and the Commune that followed.