

INTRODUCTION. THINKING IMAGES: WITH AND AROUND GEORGES DIDI-HUBERMAN

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The special issue we are publishing here brings together a heterogeneous and valuable set of studies born from the interest that, in recent years and across diverse fields and geographies, has emerged from the epistemological opening promoted by the philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman. In addition to these works, the volume presents one more attraction, as it contains an unpublished text of Didi-Huberman's authorship and a long, conversational interview with professors Gabriel Cabello Padial and Irene Valle Corpas, in which the French philosopher comments on some of the important stages in his career, discusses his most recent interests and provides important references regarding his particular way of working with and from images.

Initiated during the 1980s and sustained over time, Didi-Huberman's writing quickly acquired the consistency of a far-reaching intellectual project, despite – or perhaps because of – the fact that his texts emphasize elements or details judged to be minor and scorned by philosophical tradition, to which one is blinded by a constrained vision of what art, past or present, is and implies. For this and other important reasons, his essays have had – and continue to have – an undeniable impact both on new models of the study of art and on the very ways that images are looked at and appreciated. They are also essential to an understanding of the recovery of an anthropologically centred aesthetic and prove useful for identifying the motivations behind the most audacious current curatorial practices.

Thus, it is not by chance that the contributions that make up this volume are written by young researchers from different disciplines, approaches and languages who have drawn close to his work, either to echo such openness and try to make it guide

their own itineraries, or to trace the main lines of a figure, his own, which has left an indelible mark on historiography and contemporary philosophy. And also (why not say so?) on our contemporary political thought, so interested in enriching its analytical coordinates with elements – such as emotions, affections, symbols or subjectivities – that were until now viewed as unimportant to political struggle, historically marginalized to the realm of mere psychology and of the inner life of individual subjects or, even worse, of identities. Didi-Huberman rises up against such oblivion, precisely by placing images at the centre of his thought. For, as he himself has demonstrated, images involve and appeal to sensitive, anthropological, corporal and emotional material, and carry the imprint of times, gestures, desires and memories. Considering that all this is not only constitutive of life, but is above all common, images bear a political charge that no one can deny.

In fact, the aim of the article of Didi-Huberman which opens the issue is to take a position in favour of images and the imagination as our common capacity to conceive other lives, other relationships and other spaces. Imagination would then be a desire for uprising or a “free” potency, which serves to open up the possible and reorganize the world in another way, in a more just way. Under the title *Imagination, our Commune*, this article presents a reflection on imagination as our first political faculty that is linked to another reflection on red as an anthropological and historically marked colour because of its relationship with the political always understood in such terms, that is to say, as the colour of that common sense that leads us to imagine desiring or desire imagining a different world.

This attitude towards images and their political potential has led Didi-Huberman to become increasingly concerned with the ways in which these images are exhibited, shown and laid out, encouraging him to undertake major curatorial projects, most notably *Soulèvements*. This curatorial side of the French thinker is analysed by Lucía Montes Sánchez in her contribution to the issue. In this article, the author examines the particular discursive and visual apparatus that is displayed in the itinerant exhibition. Always on the move, open to the local context, reinterpreted time and again as it passes through each of the six venues that have hosted it, it is a dispositif that favours criticism and dialectics or, what is the same, that welcomes an experience of the different and ambivalent. Conceived as a vast map of images of the expressions of pain, resistance and insurrection of peoples, it is a project in which Didi-Huberman breaks with the traditional moulds of art exhibition to bring the exhibition nearer to formats that should in no way be alien to it, such as those of the atlas, the film montage, the archive and even the fable.

For his part, Marius Bomholt tends towards another somewhat less well-known side of Didi-Huberman, namely the concomitance of certain of his ideas with those of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, and not only those of Freud, an aspect of his work that is more recognizable. In his intelligent article, Bomholt thus relates Didi-Huberman to Lacan and to another prominent name in the current theoretical panorama, Robert Pfaller, by virtue of the link that unites the three thinkers: the fact that each of them has challenged the sovereignty of the observer subject in order to defend the notion that things, works and images also return to us the gaze, given that the latter is not only a phenomenon of intersubjective recognition but, rather, an object and, above all, an act. In fact, Bomholt goes so far as to argue that Didi-Huberman could function as a bridge between the Lacanian formulation of the gaze that directs a work of art and Pfaller's considerations regarding the scope of self-observation in contemporary art from the 1960s and 1970s onwards.

In the following article, authored by Gabriel Cabello Padial, Didi-Huberman's thought is again contrasted with that of another unavoidable name in the contemporary philosophical panorama, this time that of Jacques Rancière. The article's intention is to note correspondences and concerns or sensibilities common to both, but also distances and discrepancies between their approaches to images and, ultimately, between their slightly different accounts of Romanticism. As Cabello Padial points out, the point of conflict would be the split between image, emotion and word that operates in the latter and which Didi-Huberman would be unwilling to accept. Instead, he would argue that the emancipatory power of images lies precisely in the fact that in them psychic, semiotic and phenomenological dimensions are intertwined and establish dialectical crossings. In any case, Cabello Padial outlines the stages of this debate and traces the philosophical traditions in which the two thinkers plunge the roots of their thought.

A similar theoretical concern for recognizing the complex and implied nature of these dimensions animates the next text, which carries the hallmark of Alejandro Arozamena, his being that of a work in progress, in fieri – an on-going writing, a not-free writing, which is to say something that comes out of that factory called the unconscious. In his original work, he relies on psychoanalysis to argue that thinking, in the end, is nothing more than involving and implicating oneself (in body, truth and language) because, as we know – or don't know – there are three unconsciouss (the phenomenological, the psychoanalytical and the dialectical). Having said this, Arozamena would go on to argue that what Didi-Huberman really defends is the sanctity of art in times – in the plural, with its remnants and its anticipated futures – of catastrophe, desacralized (as Pasolini called for), as well as in times of true absent life, in which it will be necessary

to organize pessimism so that we can recreate the world from the one we have. In other words, once again, we come back to imagination.

The idea of encounter, collision or interference of several levels also occupies a central place in the article that closes the issue written by Ana Samardžija Scrivener. The article, influenced by the author's visit to the exhibition *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back*, performs a parallel reading of Malraux's *The Human Condition* with Bataille's and Benjamin's interpretations of this novel, and sheds light on the great debate that occupied the thinkers of the twenties and thirties of the last century: the position and formulations of art, literature, images and creation in political struggle. Didi-Huberman has long worked on these questions, taking the authors of that inter-war period as sources of inspiration. In her text, Samardžija explains Bataille's motivations for assessing the convulsive and even violent events of history as a handful of encounters: between the individual and the collective, the affective and the rational, the somatic and the psychic, the historical and biographical and, above all, between the self and the other. Revolution, in short, would then be a way to extend the limits of the self. Meanwhile, according to Benjamin, who also carried out an attentive and historicized reading of Malraux's book, the convulsive events of history, and particularly those he had to experience, would be nothing more than the denial of the comfortable position of the bourgeois intellectual who now must proceed to act and cease to be.

Finally, in addition to this rich diversity of perspectives on Didi-Huberman's work, the review section includes a bibliographic commentary by Salvador Jiménez-Donaire Martínez of *La dama duende. El hombre que rompía los estilos* (Avarigani Editores, 2019), a title published very recently by the French philosopher himself and Lucía Montes, in which precisely the figure of Bataille is, once again, central.