

INTRODUCTION

The Symposium published in the present issue is intended as an attempt to reflect on the current cultural condition, in which it seems to be difficult to distinguish between reality and various kinds of its images. While the whole modern culture has been based on (verbal) texts, the contemporary "culture industry" is so powerful in creating (visual) images that we might be exchanging "virtual" reality for "authentic" reality, as some might contend. But can the technology of images supplant the whole of textual culture? What is the future of texts with respect to their apparent rivals—images?

The issue of an image is not, however, a new one. In the past, the difference between texts and images were indeed not so sharp. Noted by one of our contributors, mankind's earliest texts were, in fact, images such as hieroglyphs, pictograms and the like. It seems as if our human nature is of an "imaginative" rather than of a "textual" nature that now, at the dawn of the 21st century, we seem to be returning to the visual image as a universal phenomenon; e. g. the language of electronic communication is filled with icons, and camera and video phones are replacing the spoken language. Thus, whereas the title of our Symposium might suggest a dichotomy in the sense "either text/or image", such a dichotomy would obviously be false.

Our topic has been rich in its invitation to write on a whole range of issues, such as hyperreality and simulacra, visual arts and media, photography, film, television and video culture, cyberspace and the internet but also the relations between the self-image and images of the other, image and power, conceptual and imaginative thought, etc. The papers published here cover some of these notions, albeit within a narrower scope. We start with two broad philosophical papers dealing with conceptual/textual images confronted with the philosophy of photography; these contributions are followed by a "subsection" on art history and theory covering contemporary media arts and the mutual transitions between texts and their visualization of various kinds (such as a signature transformed into a piece of art); and the Symposium concludes with a psychological contribution dealing with mental images as a part of special psychotherapeutic technique. Even the first paper included in the section "Articles" could be indirectly considered as a contribution to the interplay between writings and the images they create.

Sometimes the text seems to be unnecessary with respect to an image, and sometimes an image seems to be incongruent with respect to the text. But: is there any text that would exclude any image? Or is there any image that would exclude any text?

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