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MESSAGE FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Participants,

On behalf of the Steering Committee I would like to warmly welcome you all to the 7th Samos International Conference on Education (Samos ICE 2011). Despite their short history the Samos ICE International Conferences, co-organized this year by INEAG and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, have already gained a worldwide reputation and have been established as a forum in which academics, researchers and professional experts in various fields of Education from all over the world come together, interact, exchange ideas, and present their research. A direct reflection of this success story is the number of submitted papers, which increases substantially year by year, as well as their high quality. Indeed, scientifically, as well as in terms of participation, this year's conference is expected to be very successful, as the Scientific Committee has received more than 140 research papers (by far the largest number thus far), most of which are indeed very interesting, while presenters come from over twenty countries. It should be noticed that the submissions have been reviewed using a double blind review process.

I would like to express our special thanks to all who have contributed to the organization and in making 7th ICE Samos a success. First of all we would like to thank the authors of the articles. Their contribution was crucial and established a venue for a number of discussions. In addition, i would like to thank the reviewers and the members of the scientific committee. Finally, i would like to thank the staff of the Research and Training institute of the East Aegean for their very hard work to make this event possible.

On behalf of the Samos ICE 2011 Steering Committee, I would like to encourage you to contribute to the future of Samos ICE conferences as authors, speakers, panellists, and volunteer conference organisers.

Wishing you all a very pleasant and fruitful stay on the beautiful island of Samos.

Emeritus Professor Kyriakos Kioulafas

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr. Uwe Krebs	Professor, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany
Dr. George Belliveau	Associate Professor, University of British Columbia, Canada

A PHILOSOPHY OF ART INSPIRED TO AN IMAGINAL HERMENEUTICS. A CONTRIBUTION TO CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL CULTURE

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Nowadays art condition is marked by loss of clear ontological definition and by dissolution of its features of social evidence. Art seems to be a function of the complex deal among artists, art critique system, and public (Heinich). From this point of view, the role of the market is much more important than any attempt to define any "Truth in painting" (Derrida). In spite of the loss of value of "auratic dimension" (however "deconstructed" by historians of art such as Georges Didi-Huberman), of the irretrievable philosophisation of its meaning (Danto and Kosuth), of the unavoidable "iconic turn" (Boehm e Mitchell) in the contemporary artistic landscape, we need to recognise the "proprium" of artistic operativity in the power, shown by some artistic works, to create symbolic images able to stimulate a poetic, contradictory, amphibole, analogical and global knowledge that no other sort of operativity (except mystical visionariness) can disclose.

From this point of view the notion of "imaginal" (Corbin, Durand, Hillman, Mottana), offers a configuration of conceptual references to identify a typically "artistic" image specificity (i.e. coming from a creative, sensible and symbolising imagination) that is still alive even in the ragged scenario of contemporary art. This notion allows us to recognise the permanence of artistic act, beyond worn historicising and hasty "destitution" operations, and perceive its irreducible, anachronistic and revealing nature.

Moving from such a re-viewed and restorative idea of "art work" we can imagine a sensible pedagogy perceiving the magnetism of its ambiguous, inquiring, oblique "truth", of its "nocturnal" language (Durand) closer to the complex, fleeting life of educative events.

In my opinion, to accomplish its task, a philosophy of art has first of all to define the image status which can satisfy the notion of "art". This is much more important nowadays when, for many reasons I cannot develop now, that status is put under discussion by a general dispersion of artistic practices, by their progressive contamination in different contests, and by a prevailing philosophy of art eager to decree the dead of the idea of art itself.

I think that a good reference in trying to distinguish the artistic expression from something else can be the notion of symbolic image or, as I like to define it, image belonging to the "imaginal world". A philosophy of art based on the notion of imaginal can promote a deeply counter-current educational culture really able to stimulate a new way of knowing and dwelling the world. Let's see how.

The "imaginal" is an important region of what we usually call "imaginary". A particular zone in the great field of all imaginative forms made of visions, dreams, mental and artistic images whose main character is given by its specific collocation between rational intellect and sensible perception. It is an intermediate world in which we meet imaginative forms coming from the passive cognition of a subject who does not create them but "finds" and fixes them without recognising completely their origin and destination. That is, in other words, what we can call a "vision", or a visionary apparition, a vision of objects, figures, landscapes endowed with a mythical and symbolic echo. Images in which we can see and perceive a sensible content of the common experience but charged by a symbolic "aura". In other words those "objects" release a constellation of analogical correspondences that appears as a deeper rooting.

They are shapes and figures standing on the edge, on the border or better at the threshold, situated between visibility and invisibility, between a given phenomenal appearance that, for the particular way of their apparition (i.e. a mountain in which we can observe, and perceive, the dissolution and the fluctuation of its matter such as in Cezanne's Saint Victoire) seem to lay in an order of reality different from the usual one. As a matter of facts it refers to a series of different meanings belonging to the relative invariant repertoire of the collective imagination (myths, archetypes, symbols and so on, Durand, 1972).

When artistic works preserve, in their presentation, such an openness on the symbolic order they are certainly forms of imaginal world.

It is certainly true that the word "imaginal" comes from Henry Corbin's philosophy (1986, 2005) and from his exploration of the visionary experiences of neo-platonic Iranian mystic, but something like that often appears even in different and more "Western" contexts such as in Christian theology and in its angelology, in the theosophy of the middle age and, in a different way, in romantic and surrealist philosophies, in the psychoanalysis of Carl Gustav

Jung, in Warburg's iconological researches and in the anthropology of Gilbert Durand. In my opinion something similar can also be found even in the aesthetics of Nietzsche, Artaud, Benjamin, in contemporary philosophies of Jean-Jacques Wunenburger (1999, 2007) and Georges Didi-Huberman (1990, 1992).

Choosing these kind of images to define the status of an artistic work obviously means to acknowledge the persistence of a culture connected to the symbolic power of image (Grassi 1989, 1990), and also to support the transformative value of artistic experience. In particular, it means to restore the unquestionable value of art as a medium of authentic transformation of ideas and behaviours of who enjoys it.

Now, such a position needs to be considered not just as a nostalgic attitude for a romantic idea of art and poetry, even if this tradition represents an unavoidable reference. Even nowadays, even if according to different perspectives, philosophers such as Jean-Luc Nancy (2007), Rainer Rochlitz (1994) or Georges Didi-Huberman (1990, 1992, 2007), sociologists such as Jean Baudrillard (1999) and some art critics, still try to distinguish in the field of artistic works, images able to generate a revelation, images endowed with a subversive potential from dead images or from images deprived of that power. Besides we know very well the polemic arguments that a particular *coté* of contemporary art, and of its theoreticians, have aroused against the symbolic power of images from the very beginning of '900, revolting - sometimes with good reasons - against an academic, aristocratic and often spiritualistic and idealistic idea of the artistic creation. Nevertheless these positions, that with no doubt have animated and deepened the contemporary debate on art, did not succeed in revoking (cancelling) the differences of meaning and value between unexpected, meaningful, transformative artworks and works that consume themselves in their apparition without leaving traces or just very weak ones.

For instance Georges Didi-Huberman calls into question the disappearance, in contemporary art, of the so called "aura". He claims the persistence of the "aura" through a careful reading of Benjamin where he also contests the idea of art evolution. On the other hand Benjamin himself spoke about a "decline" and not a "disappearance" of "aura". The aura of a work of art is not connected with its hieratic dimension, it does not indicate that we can find in it a manifestation of something sacred. Instead, it indicates the work aptitude to connect what is faraway and close, the contemporary fragment with the scent of past, and to wise us up to this remoteness. The work of art reveals its "aura" crossing different times: the time of its apparition with the time of memory (involuntary), but also in its power to "look at us" to "cast its eyes on us". In other words in its ability to manifest itself as an unstable "presence", as "imminence of a revelation", to say it with Jean-Luc Nancy's words. (2007, 28), something that always seems to be ready to give itself and, and the same time, to escape, continually involved in a "coming and going" movement as Didi-Huberman says, between appearing and disappearing, between affirmation and denial?.

The "imaginal" image, or symbolic image is something like that. Its deep roots, its theme coming from somewhere else, coming from the past, from the myth realm, re-presents through the forms of the present, manifests itself in an unexpected and surprising intertwining that introduces us to the deep meaning of experience. In it each visible trace situates on an invisible background that offers itself in an allusive, slanting and enigmatic way. From this point of view the imaginal is not static, is not aesthetic, is not imprisoned in an ideal concept of beauty and forms as some critics assert. The imaginal is dynamic, its visionary receptiveness is open on all the artistic scenario, without any prejudice, but only according to an orientation. It asks the art works the ability to symbolise, to resonate a network of correspondence, it stimulates in artistic creation a moving and preferably transgressive energy to produce images that can be vehicles of revelation, of knowledge and gratitude of the inwardness of the world. That *Weltinnerraum* that Rainer Maria Rilke invited us to safeguard and that, in some way, also did Marcel Proust, Martin Heidegger and Carl Gustav Jung. And at this point of our discourse, the term "sym-bolising", a beloved word by Henry Corbin, indicates that the task of an imaginal art, as well as the imaginal operativity of who wants to enjoy it in a transformative (ad educative) way, is to retune our deaf and rootless sensibility to the sym-bolising activity of the whole world. Because in the hermetic vision, which the imaginal refers to, everything symbolises with everything else even if not necessarily drained or pacified, rather very often shattered, wounded and discordant, but anyway in an living and interconnected organism.

The imaginal work allows each particular thing of the world to be acknowledged in its symbolising virtue, by others, thus permitting us to interiorize our symbolic living in the world. Through the "vision" offered by the imaginal art our dwelling the world can re-discover itself as participative and inextricably connected with any other, even infinitesimal, element of a universe that, from the very origin, share the same fate. And it is just against this universal symbolisation that the separating and dominant rationality of Western culture fights and has been fighting

for the last centuries, preventing us from perceiving the deep resonance interconnecting all the elements and our specific role of receivers and transmitters of such an intimate psycho-material irreducible sympathy.

As an expression of a symbolic knowledge not involved in Western rationality, the imaginal remind us, and at the same time prescribes, the way of our dwelling, our role of participants with some privileges (and some responsibilities) of the integrity of a huge living organism. To cultivate the imaginal sensibility researching and finding imaginal art works, through the exercise of a contemplative attitude towards them, through an attitude able to remind us our place in life and world, appears a pressing and unavoidable educative task.

In a certain way what is imaginal is always “untimely” in the sense of Friederich Nietzsche’s assertion, but always topic, always current in our time just because of its paradoxical extraneousness. It is a spring that emerges from many sinking points, it is the synthesis of silent underground torments, it is the confluence of floats and undertows.

Otherwise how could we define, from a similar point of view, Joseph Beuys’, Anselm Kiefer’s, Hermann Nitsch’s art works, without a reference frame that witnesses the persistence of such a transformative, effective “untimeliness”. To say nothing of music, drama, dance in which entire geological ages of creation seem sometimes to gather in unpredictable and glowing works like Arthur Schnitke, Meredith Monk, Pina Bausch or Giacinto Scelsi ones.

A philosophy and an educative action matched to lend hear and attend the imaginal (cfr. Mottana 2002, 2004, 2010), is an office to the world, a way to repay the world with the feminine, cyclic, obscure, ambiguous living forms that the calculating rationality has repudiated. Elements of a rejected imaginary but fertile, fruitful and indispensable for the comprehension of vulnerability and inextricability of a miraculously united living body.

From this point of view to educate through imaginal means most of all to create occasions to explore symbolic works in which the very voice of the works can be heard, in which the works can speak, in their own language and according to their particular attitude, without any prejudice, any classification, any subjective and anthropocentric projection. It means to stop, to stay in the vision and in the interpretation of the symbolic recalls that their outlines radiate.

The interpretation of such images is very difficult and thorny. As it lays before any categorisation the image is a troublesome subject to any effort of conceptual grasp, and even to any hermeneutic attempt engaged in testing the genealogy of the sign or of the symbol. But, to tell the truth, since when the image has become an “aesthetic object”, as Hegel told us in a definite way in his *Estetica*, since when it has lost its integrity of vital experience, since when it has become the object of a separate discipline, the image seems to have been buried under a charming, but also oppressing, flood of words.

The most conscious history of art (from Aby Warburg to Carl Steiner, from Walter Benjamin to Georges Didi-Huberman) warned us from any hasty historicism, most of all from any dangerous emphasis of the formal features, or worst, from the obstinate presence in the historical analysis of the progressive paradigm whose strict principles were established by Vasari’s work and survived at least until Erwin Panofski.

The “anachronism” of many shapes in the art work, the dizzy movement of persistence and breaks, the secret of presences, emergences and re-emergences in the physical body of images disturb any attempt to establish an ideal approach, Kantian or not, to the artistic interpretation.

The imaginal approach, in that sense, proposes to come close to the art work, at least at the beginning, without any screen, filter or particular aesthetic category in order to allow the observer (or the listener) to explore the texture of the image the most directly as possible, in its radical nakedness.

The naked image, the image as much as possible cleaned out by the deposit of supposing expert knowledge is what we, first of all, need to experience. In these conditions the imaginal world manifests as a living one. A world provided by an inner animation of its own, a face, a feature able to invest the observer of all its material meanings. When we approach the work imprisoning immediately it in a cage made of biographical, formal, contextual, critical information we have to know that what we are going to see will inevitably be compromised, muffled, reduced,

shaped into the coordinates of a modest preliminary process. To restore the meaning power of image means, first of all, that the experience of the image is at the beginning without any presence of a specific knowledge. It has to be a silent and total experience. Something like a real contemplation.

At the same time it is better to reset the contribute of the specific artistic knowledge too. Just to make an example, to know technique and technology of cinema or the language of a music score in the imaginal experience surely leads to a sclerotization of the access into the visual or sounding matter. Of course it is possible that a certain musical shape has had, during a certain period, a particular meaning (“madness” or particular “ilts”), but for the imaginal exploration of the sounding universe of a composition, are we so sure we need to recognise this form or shape? At least at the beginning we can consider that it is unnecessary or even harmful and damaging because it prevents us from a direct and intense vision.

What I am trying to say is that we need to dwell, to live and experience directly the image, to recognise it as it offers in its material aspects perceivable by our senses and then to describe it in a plain or even metaphoric language. Renouncing any pre-constituted formula, the description is obliged to find exacter, more adequate words, words phonologically more stickier to its matter, instead of taking refuge in quotations. Of course in front of some contemporary “works” who ask the intervention of the observer, this participative immersion can be difficult and complex, but not impossible. We could say that there is first an exploration of the work in itinere and then another exploration après coup.

In this sense, imaginal hermeneutics invites us to restore a primigenial relationship with the art work, a contact before any introduction and any specific cultural technical projection. Then we need to stay, we need to have a long and “extroverted” dwelling into the work in order to perceive and reflect, receive its feature its geography and its specific geology. To dwell the work listening and listening to its voice, looking and looking at it in order to allow it to show itself. We need to walk in it with the interest and passion we could have for an unknown, mysterious and charming place, looking for what is less visible, for what is fleeting, for the connections of its parts, for the details, for shapes and figures. This is the imaginal hermeneutic experience at its first step. But it is the most important one: we have to allow the image to communicate directly without any obstacle its figurative and sensitive richness.

We need to “return to images” , just to resound the slogan of Phenomenology, we need to learn to see again using a patient and persistent sight as much as possible similar to the contemplative sight of the artist who made the work restoring the surprising symbolic texture of all the objects he devoted to. Nevertheless the imaginal interpretation is not only an appreciation and description activity or a participation to a particular world. We have to pick and comprehend the symbolic and analogical allusions that a particular matter expresses. Not to come to a definitive explanation but just to try to identify some possible meanings, to name those resonances, the reticular correspondences between the explored matter and the world of shapes, symbols, archetypes or “survival” (as Warburg says) the work refers to.

When the work is really symbolic this job inevitably leads to feel the constitutive ambivalence and contradiction of meanings, the multiplication and dissemination of any meaning “trace”. Such a loss in the work, that slowly will lead to a certain number of possible way of interpretation, will produce an inevitably moving, plural, ambiguous knowledge. Each element in the image will certainly reconnected with all the others but according to iridescent perspectives always unsettled in a definitive way.

So this route allows us to draw an open knowledge, matched to the multiplicity and the ambiguity, that contradictory, amphibole, analogical knowledge about which, symptomatically with one voice, some inspirers of imaginal thought talk about: from Gilbert Durand (1972) to James Hillman (1979, 1985) to Jean-Jacques Wunenburger (1999, 2007). A kind of acknowledge that, I think, can be a good medicine against the raging of a calculating and objectifying rationality so widespread, and with so dramatic effects, in our contemporary civilisation. From this point we can start to promote an education through images, an education to acknowledge the world as a united organism, animated and provided of its own, undeniable, subjectivity.

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