



BREAKING IMAGES

PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES
ON ICONOCLASM

Call for Abstracts

January 20-21, 2022 (online)

The phenomenon of iconoclasm is most famously known for the crisis of the 8th and 9th centuries faced by the Byzantine Empire, but is well known since ancient times and extends up to the whole modern age, from the protestant Reformation to the French Revolution. Iconoclasm can be regarded through a variety of different categories. This depends not only on the epistemic perspective that is being adopted, but also on the diversity of approaches that one can have towards images: images are not always approached as idols that have to be destroyed, as they can also undergo mere deterioration, damage or delegitimization, they can be replaced or even creatively reinterpreted. Iconoclasm actually involves a broad range of practices and gestures, including phenomena that cannot always be the object of a consistent classification. In this sense, Latour suggested speaking of “iconoclash” in order to account for those cases in which it cannot be decided whether the act at stake is destructive or rather creative, where such undecidability concerns both the experts investigating the phenomenon and the very subjects who perform the iconoclastic gesture.

It seems that image theory developed side by side with the phenomenon of iconoclasm, as a theoretical consideration of images became urgent precisely when their threatening power and agency were experienced the most. In this sense, important contributions to the reflections on the ontological status of images, on representation and mimesis, and on Christian theology were given both by their detractors and their proposers. Both sides of the debate shed light on images agency and on the many magical and ritual practices that are performed by their means.

Moreover, many iconoclastic acts have the merit to highlight the relationship existing between the violence of power and its representation, between revolution and restoration; between preserving and directing personal and collective memory, on the one hand, and administering the public space on the other. Since ancient times, images have not been considered as mere referential objects: in fact, they carry on memory and constitute it for future generations. Images solicit a certain outlook on history: destroying an image means rejecting a world and what is tied to that world; it means reinterpreting the past in order to provide new narratives on what a community is or aspires to be. Such destruction leads also to the activation of mechanisms of psychological repression and re-evocation – the relationship with the non-visible, with places and ghosts.

Iconoclasm should not be understood as exclusively pertaining to a distant past – suffice it to mention communist or fascist “stone monuments”, the September 11 attacks, ISIS brutal operations, or the recent debate on the so-called “cancel culture” that has come back to public attention after the world-scale interventions of Black Lives Matter. It might also be worth noticing that 20th century philosophy has often reflected on the proliferation of images and on the topic of derealization: from Benjamin to Anders, from Debord to Baudrillard, it is possible to retrace an “iconophobia” that plays a massive role in critical theory, thus revealing the ambiguities that dwell in our relationship with media and that represent some of the problematic issues belonging to our epoch.

Finally, the digital world presents us with brand-new concerns on the role of images and their destruction. How can one conceive the iconoclastic gesture in a context in which images are massively digitally stored? Is it possible, now that we face the creation of post mortem identities, to think of something like a *damnatio memoriae*? And how can we account for the practices of legitimation and delegitimation of power and authority that occur by means of screens? What role do censorship and strategies of control of the past in social media have? Are social media places in which images are subject to violence and perform violence?

We look for abstract submissions on the following topics:

- Historical movements and conflicts related to images, from ancient to contemporary times
- Epistemic paradigms and categories of the iconoclastic gesture
- Image, violence and the representation of power
- Topology, image and ghosts: urbanism as iconoclastic act
- Iconoclasm and art history
- Image and memory: from damnatio memoriae to the museal apparatus
- Iconoclasm and terrorism
- Iconoclasm and “cancel culture”: what is going on with Black Lives Matter?
- Image theory: from Church Fathers’ reflections to agency theories
- The 20th century debate on derealization, images and media
- Iconoclasm and the digital world

Keynote Speakers:

Stacy Boldrick (University of Leicester)

Mauro Carbone (Université Lyon III Jean Moulin)

Giovanni Gurisatti (Università di Padova)

Federico Rahola (Università di Genova)

Emanuela Valeriani (Université de Lausanne)

Elisabetta Villari (Università di Genova)



We welcome abstract submissions for **25 minutes presentations** followed by a short Q&A session. Abstracts must be written in Italian, English or French, should not exceed **400 words** and include an essential bibliography. Please attach abstracts and author’s details (the author’s name, affiliation, phone number and email address) as a single document to the email address: iconoclastia2022@gmail.com

Important dates:

Abstracts submission deadline: **September 30, 2021**

Notice of acceptance: **October 15, 2021** (via email)

Conference: **January 20-21, 2022** (online)

Scientific committee:

Mauro Carbone (Université Lyon III Jean Moulin)

Graziano Lingua (Università di Torino)

Anca Vasiliu (CNRS/Sorbonne Université/ENS Ulm)

Organizing committee:

Alice Iacobone (Università di Genova)

Cinzia Orlando (Università del Piemonte Orientale)

Andrea Osti (Università di Genova)

Vittorio Secco (Facoltà valdese di Teologia di Roma).

For further queries: iconoclastia2022@gmail.com

The conference is organized by **CeSPeC**, the Center for Studies on Contemporary Thought (Cuneo), in collaboration with the University of Turin, Philosophy and Educational Sciences Department (**DFE**). The conference will be held online and will be streamed live on CeSPeC Facebook profile (bit.ly/3riHIff). **Attendance is free of charge.**

