CONTEMPORARY PHANTASMAGORIAS

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ABSTRACT

The following essay intends an approach that comprises a combination of aesthetics, history and philosophy to reproduce the perception of certain elements of image contradictions in contemporary times. It discusses the concepts of phantasmagoria and apparition regarding technical and memory images and will be presented contemporary examples that contribute to the understanding of those types of images as irrefutable components in the fields of current ontology and epistemology.

Keywords: Panthasmagoria; Apparition; Walter Benjamin; Images.

INTRODUCTION

The following essay intends an approach that comprises a combination of aesthetics, history, and philosophy to reproduce the perception of certain elements of image contradictions in contemporary times. In the first chapter, the concepts of phantasmagoria and apparition will be discussed, regarding technical and memory images, and then will be presented contemporary examples that contribute to the understanding of those types of images as irrefutable components on the fields of current ontology and epistemology. The second chapter aims to reread "The work of art in the era of mechanized reproduction", by Walter Benjamin in 1935–36, bringing to light ideas not only extremely important to the understanding of main changes in the 20th century, but also a text that anachronically speaks directly to the contemporaneity. This consideration is important for the perception that here it is not intended to reject any idea indiscriminately or to superimpose a value judgment, but to update and add valid concepts that add to the set of relevant notions for understanding the main changes following the turn of the millennium. The proposition of this second chapter is to discuss the idea of cinematographic authenticity, adding the collaboration of the installation concept in Boris Groy' critique, and to question whether the loss of aura proposed by Benjamin can actually be intrinsic to the cinema as a definitive tool for massive consumption, and how we are seeing an even more traumatic experience in this regard with the massive distribution of content through the new media webs.

Let us make a summary prelude of concepts, to a better understanding of the following arguments to be proposed. The aura idea, offered by Benjamin – directly linked to the question of the authenticity of the original of a work of art – is well known. This authenticity emanates, according to the author, a set (or a series of sets) of information directly associated with the work in its context (*hic et nunc*, here and now) that reveal its "origin", its "material duration" and its "historical testimony" – which works as a combination of the first two, added to the critical consideration of the place where the appreciation of the work was taken. All these questions, so we will see, are directly linked to the context of the artwork itself. Still, in the first chapter, we will see how the relationship that the connoisseur has with the encounter with this auratic artwork puts it in the position of an apparition.

We will also see that the concept of phantasmagoria approaches that of the apparition because both are producers of haunting, but the phantasmagoria works more as an opposite to the apparition: it is an illusory technical image that fixes itself on the spectator under a blurring between what is real and what is imagined, even if it has at its core the feeling of artificiality, and that it lives only as its contemporary (Pinto, 2011). This will be deepened later, in the first chapter, but let us see the origin of the word: the use of the term became common in the 19th century under the idea of "the art of making spectra or ghosts appear by means of optical illusions" (Milner, 1982, p. 9). In other words, "the image

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that the subject keeps after the perception takes place" (Pinto, 2011). On a certain level, this approximates, but differs from the Greek tradition: for Aristotle, "(…) images (*phantasmata*) take the place of sensations" (Aristotle, 1995, 431a14), and the Latins associate it with imagination, but *Phantasia*, faculty of perception, "is different from perception (*aisthesis*) as from thought (*dianoia*); imagination always implies perception, but perception is implied by judgment (prolepsis)" (Aristotle, 1995, 427b15). That is: imagination differs from phantasmagoria so that "imagination must be a movement produced by sensation actively operating. And because vision is the most important sense, the name fantasy is derived from *phaos* (light), because without light, it is impossible to see" (Aristotle, 1995, 429a32). In other words, modern phantasmagory moves away from the Greek *phantasmata* insofar as the latter is a product of the imagination, while phantasmagorias are productions of a technique (Pinto, 2011). The contemporary examples found in both chapters will serve this insight.

1. POLARITIES OF CONTEMPORARY IMAGES:

APPARITION AND PHANTASMAGORIA, ART AND HISTORY

According to Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, it can be said that it is not possible to make a satisfactory reading of art, art history, or even of historical knowledge, while settled with a hierarchy of importance between the production of images and concrete facts (Didi-Huberman, 2017). This can also be seen in Warburg's notions. Both authors find motivations for locating the image at the crucial heart of "historical life", and the conception that images, whether they are works of art or not, survive by producing a "double-faced temporality":

> (...) the image is not in history as a dot on a line. It is not a simple event in historical becoming, nor a block of eternity insensitive to the conditions of this becoming. Rather, it has – or rather produces – a *double-faced temporality*: what Warburg had apprehended in terms of "polarities" (*Polarität*) observable at all scales of analysis, Benjamin, in turn, would eventually apprehend in terms of " dialectic" and of "dialectical image" (*Dialektik, dialektische Bild*) (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 115).

This means that the image cannot be reduced to a historical document, which would make a positivist reading; just as it would be unreasonable to perceive it as eternity, as an essentialist reading. To deeply understand a work of art, it is necessary to recognize the history of the work itself, its specific historicity, which unfolds multiple times. Accepting the timeless connection with other works and with one's own reading: "The image is, above all, a *crystal of time*, the form, constructed and at the same time flaming, of a blazing shock where the «Once» writes Benjamin, «meets the Now in a flash to form a constellation»" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, pp.

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306). Thus, rediscovering the appearance of an origin in the Reminiscent Now: understanding this anachronism is fundamental because only by doing so one will free its interpretation out of the present bubble, which provokes a relationship as petty as common in modernist criticism, between cause and content (Didi-Huberman, 2017, pp. 312).This does not mean that there is no possibility of coherent historical reading, on the contrary, it offers a possibility to recognize, in the encounter with this apparition, the mysteries that appropriate local interpretation (recognized in Now) and, based on this recognition, collect them. To this opening, the images also unfold – not in a spectacular way[1], but effectively dialectical. Same as the way the here-and-now is pronounced in a particular experience, the work itself also looks at us, projecting on us its reflection and all that's underlying in its matter, that which we choose to see or not – be it the apparition of a far away, or of a proximity.

1 Spectacular as the market proposes, that is, disconnected from any material reading, if not for the fetish itself. Post-auratic consumption of the culture of the spectacle, which proposes only the ephemeral sensation of entertaining, that is, of removing the experience of the subject-matter in order to despise the importance of any "brand", of any "aura". "The spectacle, as a social organization present in the paralysis of history and memory, in the abandonment of history that is built on the basis of historical time, is the false awareness of time". (Debord, 2003, p. 127).

> But it is exactly the modern that always quotes from primeval history. This occurs through the ambiguity inherent in the relationships and social events of the time. Ambiguity is the visible and apparent image of dialectics, the law of dialectics in a state of paralysis. This paralysis is utopian and, therefore, the dialectical image is a chimera, the image of a dream. This image is made present by the merchandise as a pure and simple fetish. This image is made present by the passages and galleries, which are both home and street. This image is made present by the prostitute, who, in hypostatic union, is both a seller and a merchandise. (Benjamin, 1991, pp. 39-40).

Aquino argues that Benjamin's notion of phantasmagoria is very proximate to the concept of fetish in Marx. However, his interpretation only sees the leaf of a branch: the fetish[2] within the phantasmagoria, which encompasses it but is always more embracing. The fetish is, in this case, a quality of an action of interpretation, just the transfiguration common to every merchandise, which hides its origin: it is reserved to the notion of values. The phantasmagoric, however, is as in a mist that surrounds the moment and produces its own light, committed to the mystery, which is primordial. It is no longer just a phenomenon of perception, but, for the haunted subject, it has a life of its own, it exists. That is why the *flâneur* surrenders to the phantasmagoria of space; while the player, to the phantasmagoria of time (Benjamin, 1991, p. 41). What has been done, even before 19th century Paris, and which is economically identified in the fetishism of merchandise, whether it is a work of art or a fashion item, that is, the mysterious character that hides its production, maintains itself, but it is not limited to the dissolution of the cost of production in the exchange value. It is an entire symbolic procedure that presents itself as a symptom.

2 In the Marxist sense: "This is what happens with the products of the human hand, in the world of commodities (...)" (1985, pp. 81), the product's ability to cover up social relations under its exchange value.

Rogelio dos Santos summarizes: "phantasmagoria would be for Benjamin an image created by man, which acquires its own reality, becoming illusory and independent of the one who created it. With this, in practice, man no longer know it, and the worst, not having it as his

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creation, but as an autonomous and true image of the world." (2017, p. 78). We'll see how this insight has contemporary applications.

NON-EXISTING IMAGES

Let us bear in mind that today, more than ever, the masses – hardly making any class distinction, but specifically considering the Western way of life, with certain exceptions – are constantly bombarded by images characterized by their own ephemeral relevance nature, mostly associated to a personal moment, often conditioned to the same device, and directly constrained by digital metanoia, so to speak, this new figure of subjectivity. We are talking about the digital media that today conditions a good part of social relations, be it work, affection, proximity or dispute related. In fact, one perceives an era in which, if Paris was the capital of the 19th century, then, in the case of the 21st century, the capital must be on the clouds. This is the metaphor of the immaterial feeling of most passages, where Internet users can make themselves *flâneurs* in their own way[3], but also of where take place most bureaucratic processes, capital transfers, transfiguration of art into merchandise (including, for example, *Non Fungible Tokens*[4]), culture and communication, *etc*. of the present time. Maybe one would prefer a materialistic approach that the capital is in the depths of the Atlantic, where thousands of kilometres of fibre optic cables connect Western servers, to image and likeness of the colonial routes (Rocha, 2019). This question is important to know that this same cloud metaphor is also a contemporary phantasmagoria that, despite serving the market, is not exclusively determined by it. It is noticed that the phantasmagoric question goes beyond the matter of economics:

> (...) if, before, the flâneur anonymously roamed the streets, and the crowd was the source of his reverie, where he saw and felt the world, today, this character is the anonymous internet user, but also identified as a consumer, that navigates through the universal network of computers, through them communicating and "educating" itself under the logic of private production of goods, becoming itself a coveted commodity of the current century. (Aquino, 2018, p.10).

Aquino identifies here an important transfiguration for our reflection: the users of the networks themselves, their attention, and their marks/reactions, become merchandise – the images that come across them become consumers of their attention and the quantification of attention that an image receives will be reclassified as influence, which is the final product. The contemporary *flânerie* flows through the context of these same images as they seldom grant any dialectic. The definitive dissociation of image and art stands out, which was already announced in the *specialité's* réclame. We have the culmination of the exponential growth of production and reproducibility: the massification of images. Not so much because of the possibility of infinity of exact copies, but because of the context of everyday devotion. What Benjamin foresaw as the

3 To deepen the idea: McGarrigle, C. (2013); Dursun Cebi, P. & Iavarone, A.H. (2019); and Matuck, A. & Maria da Silva, E. (2015).

4 See Ante, L. (2021).

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aestheticization of politics[5] intensifies in this context, even appropriating the *interieur*[6] with the voracity of what identifies in "leaving traces"[7] the exchange value of advertising or the usage-value of digital influence.

Anyway, despite considerations to be made to the eternal terror of the angel of history[8], who is the dialectical historian himself[9], certain characteristics of the use of the image as a political object in the digital medium today are decisive for an appreciation of history that is aware of "the fact that there is only history from the present moment" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 127), that is, the notion "of the past as an act of memory" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 127) and the awareness of the importance of a material and psychic archaeology that renounces the hierarchy of objective versus subjective facts (Benjamin, 1987). We will already see an example of this importance: A person always has at hand the ability to make and spread images in a fraction of seconds, through a device connected to the network. Many times, these images are timed to disappear, but when they are not, it means that the amount of images in the world now exceeds the example and any accumulated unimaginable level of quantification. It can be said, therefore, that these images, created all the time, are infinite, because the pace at which they are produced exceeds the human capacity of apprehension (algorithms and *robots* deal with this) and, like everything that exceeds the human, for him, is infinite. And, like everything that is infinite, these images do not exist. "This false appearance of novelty is reflected, like a mirror in another, in the false appearance of the always-equal, of the eternal return of the same. The product of this process of "reflection" is the phantasmagoria of the "history of culture", in which the bourgeoisie savors its false conscience." (Benjamin, 1991, p. 40).

Let us try to evoke here the dialectical historicity: when it is said that for man, everything that exceeds him is infinite, we must renounce the hierarchy of objective facts against subjective facts, try to trace a historicity that includes the "unconscious of time" (Benjamin, 2017). Let's make a brief appendix to clarify the question of infinity before rescuing the image question: Science knows of the finitude of natural resources, but Humanity continues to explore them while being infinite; before the Great Navigations, common sense was of the infinity of the sea (if the water falls eternally in a great abyss without end, and therefore it was also infinite); Natural time, in many cultures, is recognized as cyclical, without end; it is believed, and still taught today, that the Universe is infinite. One could argue that the universe is, in fact, infinite, and therefore everything would fit in it, but contemporary physics recognize that time is relative, it does not exist in the same way all around space and depends essentially on the acceleration and velocity of matter, its energy. The Universe expands exponentially, and this implies that there are limits, not only the limits imposed on anthropic testimony, but encounters of limits (Siegel, 2021). That is, there is an endpoint whose time human experience does not recognize, for it is not the same. This means: the universe is infinite, but neither is it. The same can be said of these infinite-images: the limits of the set of these images expand exponentially under temporal conditions

5 See Benjamin, 2010, pp. 44-45.

6 Benjamin, 1991, pp. 37-38.

7 Benjamin, 1991, p. 38.

8 Reference to the association of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, an image that Benjamin rescues to exemplify the historian's position in his Theses on the concept of history in 1940.

9 "In short, the dialectical model – in the non-Hegelian sense that Benjamin attributes to it here – must make us renounce all oriented history: there is no «line of progress», but omnidirectional sequences, rhizomes of bifurcations where, for each object From the past, what Benjamin calls his "previous history" and his "ulterior history" come into collision. thought of its bifurcation of «catastrophe»" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p.126).

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that human experience does not recognize, because they do not live under the same conditions of matter, and consequently, of time.

CONTEMPORARY PHANTASMAGORIA

What is the importance, the meaning of this? From a historical point of view – and art history is considered inseparable – The infinity and non-existence of these images and their context, exacerbatedly artificial, make up a blurring between reality and the imagination of those who consume them. The human spectator of this type of image is numbed by its phantasmagoria and, meanwhile, at the rate that the images disappear in the accumulation, they evaporate leaving him only as a consumer-commodity, as a sign of influence.

Finally, the importance given by spectators to the infinite images is almost nil, it hardly moves them (a touch is enough to outline a feeling of reaction that resides on the threshold between the imaginary and the real, the like, in itself, another phantasmagoria). This makes these images non-existent: the real importance is in the production itself. From a semiotic starting point, under which the medium would be the message[10] - and in this case, the same medium that produces the image is the one in which it is appreciated, the artifact portable computer, smartphone, which today is almost the extension of the hand and the human brain – the message that is obtained is one of methanoia, of the obsession with consuming an attractive daily life and of the consumer's transfiguration into merchandise.

10 See McLuhan M. &Fiore Q. (2018).

However, these images, even if they do not exist, even if they can be characterized as a whole (infinite images of the contemporary interieur); these images make up their own historicity, their own dubious temporality: while they are non-existent from a distant point of view, and ghostly (as opposed to true apparitions), there is a device of the algorithm, elaborated by the developers of digital influence platforms, which follows the same purpose, but which determines another kind of approach to those infinite images. This device, which is often called "Memory", produces the appearance of one or a set of images to which, under certain determined conditions, robotic numerals attach a preliminary importance. These conditions often consider big data, that is, how long the image was seen by the user (and/or others), how many interactions it produced, etc; but they can also be random. This appearance of a memory-image, usually in a prominent context, produces a certain anachronistic issue that goes against the non-existence of those images, their disappearance, the pure phantasmagoria that surrounds them. This, in turn, implies a dialectical existence, which configures awe. This astonishment, of the resurrection of the infinite-image into a memory-image, as opposed to the state of non-relationship with materiality that produces infinity, decentralizes the consumption experience, almost like a fright, to an experience of memory. The Once comes to the Now unexpectedly. It actually produces a context.

Despite this, the production of this context does not configure any eternity value, nor does it create an experience of the Here-and-Now, there is no aura, there are no marks. Memory-images, too, will constantly

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suffer algorithmic appeals for filtering and disappear forever among those that do not exist, being in turn replaced by new memory-images that will eventually also become infinite and devoid of existence. However, what characterizes its appearance is the very context of resurrection promoted by the algorithm, and this, in turn, is a phantasmagoria as well. Perhaps it is the material case, that is, of our common reality, that best illustrates the terrain in between the frontiers of apparition and phantasmagoria, of living memory and technical substitution. The detachment that the aestheticization of politics promotes between the image and its materiality also entails the detachment of human experience from its matter. This is a contemporary ontological question, and also an epistemological one if we consider that every production of an image is the production of knowledge.

2. THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORK IN THE ERA OF DECONTEXTUALIZED REPRODUCTION

I'm the oldest god carving the raw
from the banal fate
i want the perfect plan
the narrow gesture
the real cinema
(Campos & Dinucci, 2015)

> (...) it's normal that tap dance from the 30s, 40s and 50s, absorbed in high doses in pirated copies, still works today. The viewer's overexposure to these images full of thoughts and ulterior motives remains one of the most effective remedies against darkness. (Virilio, 2018, p. 29).

AURA AND CONTEXT

In the 1935 text, Benjamin announces that art becomes more and more accessible throughout history, to the point where its reproduction (copy) becomes mechanized (or its reproducibility, technique[11]), which is the ultimate of the distribution that implies several structural changes in the use of art by the masses – and by the structures of power. The "loss of the aura", that is, the anonymous circulation in the networks of reproduction and distribution of mass communications, would involve a problematic regarding the political use of art (in a confrontation between alienation and politicization); and, for Benjamin, it is in the cinema that this symptom found the peak of its expression.

However, it is also necessary to consider that, from a contemporary perspective, this implies an appreciation of the expository determination. Copying has neither place nor time, it is defined by the possibility of reproduction. It is thus indeterminately circulable. If this indeterminacy is the fundamental difference between the original and the copy, it will suffice to locate and temporalize it under a certain context to grant it authenticity. This is determining the here and now (Groys, 2008).

11 Depending on the version of the original.

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> Installation art, which is currently the definitive form in the context of contemporary art, operates as a reverse of reproduction. The installation extracts a copy of presumed open and unmarked space from anonymous circulation and locates it – albeit only temporally – in the fixed, stable and closed context of a topologically well-defined "here and now" (Groys, 2008, p. 4).

Given the fact that the installation has the power to grant originality to the copy, we will see that every moment of projection/transmission of a film, regardless of the device[12], becomes original in itself, because the very context of this exhibition gives the viewer a fixed time and place for the appreciation of the cinematographic work. The origin, the historical testimony and the material duration are all present at the moment the film takes place, respectively: on the screen and in the spectator himself who, when seeing a premiere, must know that it is a premiere (but when watching a vintage film, would notice that it is not new[13], and should consider this in its appreciation), and that one knows where he is and where he went to look for the work, be it the movie theater, the museum, gallery, or his own personal screen. Thus, the aura of a cinematographic work exists only in the critical awareness that the spectator has in the context of its reception, no wonder that film clubs and festivals, for example, usually provide essential information for the appreciation of a film (year and country of production, debates, critical workshops), while television will hardly even pass the full credits on its broadcast. This does not mean that the auric condition is reserved to the collective context, not necessarily, it happens through experience. It is, by definition, an individual experience. And this is no different from the aura of a painting (for example): Everything depends on the viewer's disposition and the dialectical density of the image that appears to him. Even if a work was reserved for the ruling class (at any historical juncture), ignorance or unwillingness to read (or in relation to) information contained in an original cannot be reserved as a quality of the masses.

Nevertheless, the tendency towards distraction (or misinformation) is even a mark of the "sense of similarity in the world" (Benjamin, 2010, p. 18); this feature, in the mass mentality, can provoke a class illusion as opposed to class consciousness. Benjamin calls it "corrupted mentality" (Benjamin, 2010, p. 31) and directly associates it with the cult of the film star. In fact, such obsession creates a distraction from political life, but this proved to be circumvented with history, because the political-historical importance of certain works, whether they have the collaboration of one or more stars, often overcame the phantasmagoria of the gossip, this technical image of the magazine. Finally, here it is also proposed that, for all intents and purposes, even worse than the aestheticization of politics is, nowadays, the decontextualized political reproduction – a paradigmatic behaviour of the new social media. We'll have it there, but first, it's important to clarify some points about the way the social functions of art mix today.

12 To better understand the notion of cinematographic devices, see Bellours (2012).

13 Whether due to stylistic characteristics, or the perception of technological evolution, sometimes glaring and even decisive in the plot, the understanding of a "past" or rerun film will evidently arise in a way that the film itself (if installed and authenticated by this installation) will provide a certain historical testimony. A premiere, on the other hand, offers the historical testimony of the present.

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THE RITUAL FUNCTION OF CINEMA

Benjamin enriches his argument with a socio-historical analysis of the social function of art, from cave paintings to photography and cinema. According to him, for those who worship beauty, the social function of art is ritualistic. But without the criterion of authenticity (aura), the social function of art must be political.

> Mechanized reproduction, for the first time in universal history, emancipates the work of art from its parasitic existence in ritual. (...) But from the moment when the criterion of authenticity is no longer applicable to artistic production, the whole of the social function of art is destroyed. Its ritual background must be replaced by another, constituted by another practice: politics (Benjamin, 2010, p. 19).

To this postulation, the author will apply examples of the modern technical method that best put the application of the transition of social function into perspective. To photography, for example, he attributes the exhibitional value in detriment of the ritual, except for the portrait (Benjamin, 2010, p. 22). However, he does not consider the following questions, which are latent today: Can't the use of a photograph with evidential material value be ritualistic? Isn't authenticity an intrinsic quality of proof? Today, the symbolic content of this issue is even denser, given the unlimited capabilities of photo editing[14]. Can't a photograph, be it evidence, displayed before a court have an aura? Or in a newspaper? According to Benjamin, the answer to all these questions either doesn't matter[15], or it would be a pure and simple "no". It is discussed here that the photographic technique is primarily the reproduction of an original captured image and, for Benjamin, its use is essentially political whenever, as evidence, it exercises the communication of an existence (in the face of a given struggle for hegemony) and therefore, it's politics. This discussion is here above all a means, in the 1935 text, to raise the discussion to cinema.

Benjamin already states that "With the different methods of reproduction of the work of art, its exhibition character has grown, gaining such proportions that the quantitative displacement between the two poles [ritual value against exhibition value] is inverted (...) and it becomes a qualitative transformation (...)". Today, curiously, the ritual function of the film has become possible: of gathering under a transmission of very high exhibitionality of the filmic work, through streaming. This symptom of contemporaneity is highly contradictory to notions prior to the millennium: for Benjamin, "Ritual value almost demands that the work be kept hidden" (Benjamin, 2010, p. 20) and hence the fact that a painting is exposed to a multitude is a symptom of the fundamental shift in the function of art from ritualistic to political. Ironically, accessibility, which characterizes streaming services, works for masses segregated on individual screens. The personal use of cinema as a homely tool for leisure (and limited to privacy, to

14 A conceptual discussion on this topic should cross Cindy Sherman's work and the concept of deep fake.

15 It would only matter that the evidential material value confers a political significance (Benjamin, 2010, p. 23).

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recollection[16]) may also be a ritualistic symptom of the function of that work. It is a feature of contemporaneity, contradictory by the essence of the ritual object (hidden and limited). However, this also implies that in the creation of these media, the commercial objective of this broadcast prevails, and this can be associated with the political use of the artistic tool (alienation or awareness), another typical contradiction of contemporaneity. In other words: in contemporary times, ritualistic and political uses and functions are inextricably mixed.

16 What is curious about this type of recollection common to the contemporary is its contradictory duality between appreciation and distraction. It reads: "The withdrawal which, in the decline of the bourgeoisie, became an exercise in asocial behaviour, is opposed to distraction as an initiation into new modes of social attitude." (Benjamin, 2010, p. 40). Now one sees a ritualistic asocial distraction with political consequences.

The notions of ritualistic and political become obtuse when the notion of the sacred is discussed – if ritual can be directly linked to the service of magic (Benjamin, 2010, p. 19), this can be considered as both an individual act towards one's own metaphysics, as a collective exercise (and therefore political). What is sacred, in contemporary times, can be the *Urbi et Orbi* or a peaceful meditation, a moment of rest, depending on the conception of whoever is giving the act (or the object) such symbolic functioning. It is not because it is ritualistic that a mass ceases to be political; the reverse, therefore, also applies. Thus, watching a movie can be, for a movie buff, a sacred moment of re-encounter with the divine or with oneself.

ETERNITY VALUE

Another argument used by Benjamin is that film, in contrast to other arts – for example, sculpture – would be more able to improvement: "The film is, therefore, the most perfectible work of art, and this perfectibility comes directly from his radical renunciation of any "eternity value"" (Benjamin, 2010, p. 24). Only the imperfect would be perfectible, and the Greeks, for being "constrained, by the very situation of their technique, to create an art of "eternal values" (Benjamin, 2010, p. 23), better appreciated perfection. In other words, the "eternity value" would be given by the work's condition of perfection[17].

17 It is not worth entering here into the discussion of how essentialist the use of the notion of perfection is because it is a cultural issue of Greek antiquity. In Greek epic, notably noted in Hesiod and Homer, "perfection" is a quality reserved for the gods; representing them, therefore, could only require the same spirit (Werner, 2004). Consider perfection, in contemporaneity, a subjective reference to the appreciation.

However, film is subject to the same limitations as photography. What is not seen, or which cannot happen, cannot be filmed (Icarus could not be filmed meeting the Sun, only metaphorically, or computerized). Benjamin argues: "To assemble (...) [a] 3,000-meter film, Chaplin filmed 125,000." However, if it is possible and limiting the use of 3km of film, out of 125km, these factors are determined by the usual acceptable length, not only of a film, but of a shooting (that is, as long as there is money and willingness on the part of the team). Wouldn't oil painting have characteristics as retouchable as a roll of film, if not more? Also, it can't be said that the ambition of a filmmaker cannot be for an ideal of perfection. As in the song quoted above, by Campos & Dinucci, "The Cinema is better", filmmakers are often trying to achieve a certain type of perfection. The point is that a film, even if conceivable under decoupage and editing, can only be changed until the completion of its post-production, usually under deadline. Therefore, it is taken into account that the first exhibition in a movie theater or gallery (premiere) qualifies the existence of a film, and for that, a definitive version must be considered. This expository

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determination, managed or not by market phenomena, is what announces the point at which the film has to be considered "perfect". From then on, it's worth eternity.

Despite this, nowadays, either by legal means (Creative Commons and Copyleft licensing) and/or piracy, film copies are subject to changes similar to the way of the first manuscripts. "Benjamin suggested, as we have seen, that the new technology was in a position to make a copy more and more identical to the original. But the case has been the other way around.[18]" (Groys, 2008, p. 5). In addition to the current mechanical conditions of reproducibility, the reception of a filmic original in art installation conditions is provided by the moment (time of contemplation) of the spectator, given the conditions of his arrival and the resolution of his departure, and this, in itself, already converts the film into a distinct original (Groys, 2008, p. 7). This culminates in two things: a total departure from the idea of perfection and a completely different perception of aura and eternity. Recirculation (which also implies decirculation) is what will lead to, or reduce to zero, the eternity value of the work.

18 Despite the current mechanical conditions of reproducibility, the reception of a filmic original, in conditions of artistic installation, is determined by the momentum (time of contemplation) of the spectator, given the conditions of its arrival and the resolution of its departure – and this, by itself, it already converts the film into a distinct original (Groys, 2008, p. 7).

CONTEMPORARY PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

In short: The cinematographic derivation of the aura, in contemporary times, makes use of the present in which the informed spectator develops critical sensitivity for the film. This perception is not reserved for a certain context, but because there is a context for the exhibition, and there always is or the film would not exist for that spectator. There is aura as long as there is information intrinsic to cinematographic content, due to its context. This is not affected by the social function of that film, because the meanings of ritualistic and political functions are intertwined in contemporaneity.

The notion of eternity value today also constitutes a peculiar contradiction, because while the premiere of a film perpetuates its definitive version (original and official), its reproducibility, increasingly accessible, generates new originals, which circulate freely through the contemporary web and new social media. It might even be said that efforts to restrict reproduction are anachronistic; but, at the same time, typical of our time.

Henceforth no eternal authenticity will be recognizable, but this configuration is not necessarily problematic, as the reproductions, as long as they are contextualized, authenticate themselves, even if for a limited time. What is shown here as truly problematic for the issue of alienation is the decontextualization of reproductions. This is the accessibility point at which we find ourselves today, and the political use of this technique is, for example, inscribed in the historical records of the US presidential elections of 2016 and the Brazilian elections of 2018 – even under the condition of a formula – and in theorizing about the ethics of information, against the pretentious disinformation of fake news.

Just look at the case of filmmaker Karim Aïnouz, who had his speech decontextualized by the clipping of a video recording in 2017[19].

19 *Encontrão de Cinema* (2017).

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The unauthorized reproduction of an argument in defence of the political use of cinema was cybernetically altered and reproduced, under a false premise[20]. This example serves the perception that, if reproducibility does not affect the credibility of cinema and contemporary arts under the protection of the present, in the context of installation or exhibition space, the same cannot be said of constantly (de)originalized film material in network circulation. And yet: the level of reduction imposed on the frivolity, on the compression, on the agility of the massive consumption of (mis) information, is a symptom of a new level of politicization of reproduction. A level that can make use of the phantasmagoria of the digital artifact to serve totalitarian ideologies.

20 See the example of fake news: Eneas (2021). This is just one among several reproductions decontextualized, and even altered through editing, which circulated on the networks in the days following the event.

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, we elaborated on the historical importance of the phantasmagoric question, from the philosophy of Walter Benjamin, for a perception of the present past that understands that art, philosophy, ontology and epistemology – as essential matters of a historian, who seeks to account for the present knowledge of memory – are inseparable and intertwined. We have also seen that the concept of phantasmagoria – as opposed to apparition – goes beyond the technical question: it involves the human perception of the indefiniteness between reality and imagination, of the fixation between the imagined and memory, above all it implies an exacerbation of the feeling of artificiality. Finally, we prove the thesis of this importance mentioned above through a concrete example of phantasmagoria – non-existent images – that directly affect people in their daily lives today, causing contemporary ontological and epistemological changes.

We also demonstrate how cinema, even as a technique of illusion, can often go beyond the principle of phantasmagoria and configure true apparitions. Despite not abdicating its illusory principle, everything will depend on the viewer's predisposition and information. The other conditions elaborated by Benjamin on the authenticity of a work are not limiting on the condition of cinematographic appreciation today and, above all, the radical changes in the use of technology in the second millennium reveal different symptoms and threats far beyond those that the historian could have foreseen.

Currently, there is still no aesthetic education that addresses the issue of digital phantasmagoria at the ontological and epistemological level. The images, whether non-existent, decontextualized or of art, have a greater presence on a daily basis, the greater the reach to them, at a distance of a few touches. The consumption of non-existent images sets up an unprecedented relationship where even the spectator user is transfigured into merchandise (fetish), while he engages himself in the phantasmagoria of digital social media. Decontextualized images, in turn, censor any eternity value that might have an authentic image, because the decontextualization process also configures a phantasmagoria that strips the image of the only articulation it could make with the past. At the

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level of knowledge, we can never make ourselves ignorant of the historical importance of the survival of the images and the impact that this will have in the following epochs, whether due to the materiality of time (of remains and waste) or the spectrality of time (of the psychic and symptomatic) that the images carry.

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