Image: the power of deterrence and coercion

Imagem: poder de dissuasão e coerção

Jack Brandão
Centro de Estudos Logo-imagéticos CONDES-FOTÓS

Abstract
This article underscores the crucial need to comprehend the etymological issue of the term **image**, particularly in comparison with the Greek terms *eikón*, eídolon, and Latin imago. It also delves into the image's intimidating and coercive power, which has been harnessed for centuries. With this understanding, we aim to shed light on how these terms were employed by Homer and Virgil, capturing their unique characteristics to unravel not just the concept itself but also its linguistic implications. This will enable us to view the image not merely as a deliberate copy of the external world but as a purposeful display of strength and power that has been utilized since Antiquity by numerous cultures and continues to be effective today, as we will demonstrate.
Keywords: Image; coercive power; etymology; photography; iconophotology.

Resumo
Este artigo sublinha a necessidade crucial de compreender a questão etimológica do termo **imagem**, nomeadamente em comparação com os termos gregos *eikón* e *eídolon* e o latim imago. Aprofunda-se também no poder intimidatório e coercivo da imagem, que tem sido aproveitado ao longo dos séculos. Com este entendimento, pretendemos esclarecer a forma como estes termos foram empregados por Homero e Virgílio, captando suas caraterísticas únicas para desvendar não só o conceito em si, mas também suas implicações linguísticas. Isto nos permitirá ver a imagem não apenas como uma cópia deliberada do mundo exterior, mas como uma demonstração intencional de força e poder que tem sido utilizada desde a Antiguidade por numerosas culturas e que continua a ser eficaz nos dias de hoje, como demonstraremos.
Palavras-chave: Imagem; Poder coercitivo; Etimologia; Fotografia; Iconofotologia.

Etymological question

> μῆτερ ἐμή, τί νύ μ' οὐ μίμνεις ἐλέειν μεμαῶτα,
> ὄφρα καὶ εἰν Ἀίδαο φίλας περὶ χεῖρε βαλόντε
> ἀμφοτέρω κρυεροῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο;
> ἦ τί μοι **εἴδωλον** τόδ' ἀγαυὴ Περσεφόνεια
> ὤτρυν', ὄφρ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω[1]
> (HOMER XI, 211-215, 2012)

[1] Ph.D., a retired university professor in São Paulo, Brazil; imagery researcher, theoretical of the iconophotological question, director and researcher at the CONDES-FOTÓS Imago Imaging Studies Center.
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2616-0040 . E-mail: jackbran@gmail.com

Homer, by making us accompany Odysseus to Hades in search of Tiresias, ends up, in a certain way, providing us with more than the mere fruition of his words since he refers us to an almost ontological object: the question of the **being** of the concept **image**. This is because the hero, in his unexpected encounter with Anticleia, his mother – who kills herself because she can no longer wait for the return of her beloved son and in the face of the advances of the suitors for her daughter-in-law – suffers for not looking at her clearly, nor for being able to touch her. However, what was before his eyes was no longer his mother, but only her εἴδωλον (*eídolon*), a mere shadow, a *simulacrum* of what she once was:

> […] I wanted to embrace the psyche of my lifeless mother.
> Three times I launched myself [...],
> three times, like a **shadow** or a dream, she faded
> from my hands. (HOMER, XI, 205-208, 2012, free translation, our emphasis).

It could not be different: it was no longer Anticleia who saw, but a mere σκιά (*skiá* – shadow) of what she once was, and which, in a certain way, was submerged in her son's unconscious. It was as if that time, in which he had stood before the walls of Troy, made the hero's images remain frozen and latent, waiting to be awakened, even though they had been missing for a decade. However, a mere start was enough for them to come to the surface in that spectral sea of images in which the hero was immersed amidst those shadows.

It is not without reason, and in line with the prevailing view of him, that Plato, often regarded as the philosopher who rejected images as mere shadows, saw them in this light. However, it is usually overlooked that in the Republic, he repeatedly uses images in their dialectical and maieutic model, thereby employing them – sun, line, cave – to arrive at the truth through λόγος (*lógos*), itself an image. This use of images in his philosophical discourse sheds light on the complex relationship between images and truth in Plato's thought.

One fact, however, that still draws our attention in work in question is that, when referring to what we today call an image, the philosopher rarely uses, as would be expected in someone who **rejects** images as mere **shadows**, the terms σκιά or εἴδωλον – as synonyms for shadow, outline, a silhouette of a dead person –, but εἰκὼν (*eikón*)

– an image that resembles an object, painting, thought, mental images, comparison, similarity[2] (Pape, 2005), as can be seen in the dialogue between Socrates and Adeimantus[3]: "You raise a question to which I can only answer by an **image**."[4] "But it is not your custom to express yourself by **images** !" [5] (PLATÃO, 1997, free translation, our emphasis)[6]

If for the Greeks εἰκὼν and εἴδωλον corresponded to the two imagistic domains of representation – a) one, that of the world that we have before us, through drawings, engravings, sculptures, paintings, photographs; b) the other, that of our immaterial world, formed in our mind, such as our fantasies, visions, dreams, thoughts –; the Romans, on the other hand, employed a concept that would encompass both domains: *imago*.

This can be verified from the excerpt from Virgil's **Aeneid**: "Night after night, Anchises, my father, when the wet shadows descend to the earth or when the stars rise brightly,/ yes, your pale **image** in my dreams warns me, terrifies me.**[7]** (VIRGIL IV, 351, 2014, free translation, our emphasis)

In the verses above, the poet uses the concept of "reminiscence," demonstrating the immaterial dominance of the image (εἴδωλον) in our mind. Something similar happens when father and son meet in the Champs-Élysées near the valley of the River Lethe. The latter tells the former how he could not get him out of his head: "[...] Your **image**, my father, in pain,/ that at every moment came to my memory, brought me to destiny." [8] (Virgil VI, 695-696, 2014, free translation, our emphasis)

Such an immaterial image, however, also εἴδωλον is no different from what Aeneas now has before him, even though he can **see** and **hear** her. Thus, in a similar way to Odysseus, when he stood before his mother in Hades, or even Achilles, who

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[2] It is not up to us to pass judgment on the reason for such use, nor the reasons that led the philosopher to use it, since our concern is only with the use of the term εἰκὼν for our purposes. Interestingly, however, is how Pinheiro (2009, p. 25) approached the issue when he stated that "Socrates needs to make use of the imagery resource given that his interlocutors are not prepared *for dialectics, for the method that dispenses with the senses, therefore with images (511c). Therefore, an episteme dialectics*, the noetic level of the passage of the Line, is presented in the **Republic**, through images, that is, on the dianoetic level".

[3] What interests us is only the lexical figure εἰκὼν, an illustrative title.

[4] "ἐρωτᾷς, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐρώτημα δεόμενον ἀποκρίσεως δι' **εἰκόνος** λεγομένης."

[5] "σὺ δέ γε, ἔφη, οἶμαι οὐκ εἴωθας δι' **εἰκόνων** λέγειν."

[6] Note that Shorey's (1969) translation into English is: "Your question," I said, "requires a response expressed in a comparison or parable." "And you," he said, "are not used to speaking in comparisons!"

[7] *Me patris Anchisae, quotiens umentibus umbris/ nox operit terras, quotiens astra ignea surgunt,/ admonet in somnis et turbida terret **imago**.*

[8] [...] *Tua me, genitor, tua tristis **imago**,/ saepius occurrens, haec limina tendere adegit [...].*

glimpsed Patroclus before his funeral (HOMER, 2011, XXIII, 60-107), Virgil's hero also tries to touch, feel, have his father between his arms and hands:

> […] Allow us to hold hands;
> do not deny your son this simple embrace.
> Thus speaking, his face was bathed in tender tears.
> He tries to hold him in his arms; the shadow
> inanely squeezes his hands thrice if it escapes like
> a light aura passing by or brushing against a dream. [9] (VIRGIL, VI, 697b-702, 2014, free translation)

Later, after arriving in Italy, Aeneas sent emissaries to King Latinus, who received them willingly and invited them to the table in the same temple where they sacrificed themselves to the gods. There, the Teucrians saw images (εἰκὼν – *imago*) of their ancestors:

> Moreover, in the vestibule, there were statues of old cedar,
> of the descendants: that of Italo, of the winegrower Sabino,
> a venerable father, and at his feet, bent over, the pruning hook,
> old Saturn and, further away, the figure of Janus with two faces.
> Others followed the noble **images** of the first leaders,
> who shed their blood to defend their beloved homeland.[10] (Virgil, VII, 177-182, free translation, our emphasis)

It can, therefore, be seen that Virgil uses ***imago*** as a correspondent both as reminiscence, apparition, and shadow and for εἰκὼν, as a representation of the visible world: statues, figures, and ornaments. He does not fail to use, evidently, in a literary text such as his, the metaphorical and the synonymous: *effigies, textum* (as figures woven into the shield of Aeneas VIII, 626), *simulacrum*.

Despite the interpenetration of meaning around *imago*, we do not entirely abandon the meanings or the Greek differentiation for the domains of imagetic representation:

> From εἰκὼν, the result is the word **icon**, which will be used for all types of images. These images can be either natural – like reflections of nature – or artificial – like paintings and photography.
> On the other hand, from the word εἴδωλον, we have:
> a) **idol** – with the meanings of *simulacrum*[11], ghost, or object of desire, fetish, similar to the idols created in Antiquity to serve as gods; and

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[9] [...] *Da iungere dextram,/ da, genitor, teque amplexu ne subtrahe nostro!/ Sic memorans largo fletu simul ora rigabat./ Ter conatus ibi collo dare brachia circum,/ ter frustra comprensa manus effugit **imago**/ par levibus ventis volucrique simillima somno.*
[12] *Quin etiam ueterum **effigies** ex ordine auorum/ antiqua e cedro, Italusque paterque Sabinus/ uitisator curuam seruans sub imagine falcem,/Saturnusque senex Ianique bifrontis **imago**/uestibulo astabant, aliique ab origine reges,/ Martiaque ob patriam pugnando uulnera passi.*
[11] "The idea of simulacrum refers to Plato and his concept of μίμησις. According to the philosopher, there is an insurmountable opposition between the *sensible world* and the *world of Ideas* and, to illustrate the theme, he used the concept of the cave: the real, when projected onto the wall, translates into unreality that people, inside, believe to be reality, after all, their senses only contain conditions to reach simulacra. The *real* becomes ideal, whose Ideas – universal, immutable, eternal – inhabit the exterior

b) **idolatry**[12] ($\varepsilon\check{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda o\nu$ + $\lambda\alpha\tau\rho\varepsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$), that is, image worship. (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 178-179)

Digressions about the image

Just as it is not an easy task to find the etymology of the word image, it is even more complicated to try to define it since "talking about image would be the same as talking about *homo sapiens*, as it is so inserted in humanity and with it that it would be unlikely to imagine it being excluded from it" (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 178).

"The world and humanity could exist without images, but it would be an essentially distinct world and humanity" (DOMÈNICH, 2011, p. 11). In other words, there would be neither man nor civilization because the "image has been an expression of human culture since before cave paintings appeared in caves, millennia before the appearance of the phonetic record of $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o\varsigma$ in writing" (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 179); it is from them that we apprehend the world, through a central image: our own body (BERGSON, 1999), not for nothing

> the most universal visual graphic feature seems to be self-adornment: body painting, ritual scarring of the face and torso, elaborate hair arrangements, and refinements of costume. Costume, in particular, took a vital symbolic function in ritual and religion, probably drawing on the visually creative resources of society more than any other medium. (DONALD, 1993, p. 277)

Thus, given the importance of the imagery process, several theories have emerged and sought to explain it mythically, linguistically, anthropologically, or culturally. Therefore, in such a short space as this, it is not intended to make extensive considerations on this topic, at least from a theoretical point of view, but to raise some considerations so that we can include some examples in the third part of this text.

We can restrict our exposure to two aspects:

I.   To the double **domain of images**:

a) as **a material representation** of the world around us, based on $\varepsilon\check{\iota}\kappa\grave{\omega}\nu$: drawings, engravings, paintings, sculptures, photos, television and cinematographic images;

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and are unattainable by mere bodily senses; the sensible world, the *unreal*, is nothing more than a theater of shadows and reflections. Therefore, for Plato, the fact that $\mu\acute{\iota}\mu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ is a mere imitation of unreality – of the projected shadow – all art constitutes a deviation about the essence, a falsehood, which points to the mere *simulacrum*, of which the world is also a part, involved as it is in the world of appearances, which is why the human being cannot reach his essence." (Brandão, 2014, p. 179)

[12] From the 16th century onwards, with the Reformation, debates arose between Catholics and Protestants about images. For the latter, Catholics *worshipped* images, seeing them as $\varepsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda o\nu,$ while the former, by rejecting images, sought iconoclasm.

b) as **an immaterial representation**, present in our mind, based on dreams, visions, fantasies, imaginations, mental representations, and thoughts.

II.   To the double **reality of images**:

a) its **two-dimensionality** as a visible and tangible object;

b) its **three-dimensionality**, whose perception is constructed within a specific boundary in a given time and space, is subject to its codifications; not surprisingly, it is a psychological phenomenon. (AUMONT, 2002)

When we encounter post-Renaissance figuration, in which the *perspectiva artificialis* is used, we see that the image inserted on a flat surface – whether on an extensive support, such as a wall (fig. 1) or a smaller one, such as a canvas, delimited by the frame – gives the impression of seeing in-depth, of being able to enter the image space.

The assumptions for this new way of seeing the world were established by Alberti, in his work **_De pictura_**, published in 1436, when he saw an "open window" in front of a white painting. (ALBERTI, 2014, p. 88) But for this to be feasible, he first had to see it as the flat section of a **visual pyramid**, whose apex was inside the eyeball. Then, he connected this point using straight lines – the **visual rays** – to the contours of all the objects in the visual field. The lines must determine the relative position of the objects in the frame.

The image obtained through this system showed a situation of proportions, representing the distance at which a given object was from another, thus obtaining an **impression of three-dimensionality**. The visual rays, extending invisibly in space, converged towards the **vanishing point**. Therefore, according to the Italian theorist, the painting would be the "intersection of the visual pyramid represented with art by lines and colors on a given surface, according to a certain distance and position of the center and the establishment of lights." (ALBERTI, 2014, p. 83)

In this way, through mathematics and using an abstract geometric space, the painter was allowed to create, on a flat surface (2D), a representation that emulates not only the depth (3D) of the environment and the beings within it but also the perception, also abstractly, of **reality**.

Figure 1 – Holy Trinity, Massaccio
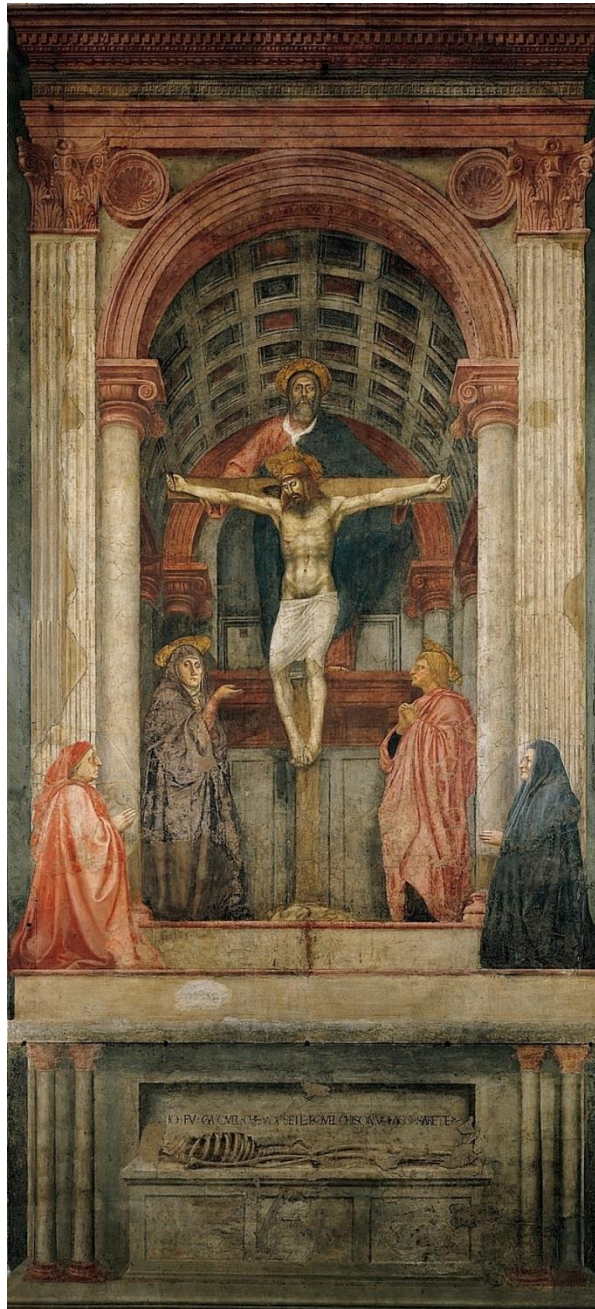
Source: Church of Santa Maria Novella, Italy, 1426-1428

We must not forget, however, that we see with two eyes through bilocular vision, while the artificial perspective offers us a unilocular vision of reality by using only one eye; therefore, the totality of what can be contemplated is restricted. In this way, such representation reveals itself as a message of a symbolic order modulated and mediated precisely by the rules of geometry. (EL-BIZRI, 2014)

When we discern this flat surface (2D), we can consider the **support** (canvas, paper, wall, for example) used by the image, the surface on which it is fixed, and the **distortions** it has suffered about the reality it is essential to emulate. Despite this prior knowledge, we nevertheless have the perception of seeing it in depth (3D), as if we were able to enter the scene, as in Massaccio's fresco (fig. 1). It is no coincidence that Vasari (2011), in his **Life of the Artists** (published initially in 1550), says about the painter: "[...] everything done before him was painted and painting, whereas his works, compared to those of his competitors and those who want to imitate him, seem alive and accurate, not imitations of nature". (VASARI, 2011, p. 218)

Such a three-dimensional illusion, however, is not real but phenomenal, a mere perception of reality, not its qualities in itself (DOMÈNECH, 2011), for which the inclusion of the subject-reader who decodes/reconstructs the perspectivism created by the artist is paramount.

As for the dual domain of images, one aspect that deserves attention is that both – material and immaterial representation – do not exist in isolation, since "they are inextricably linked already in their genesis". (SANTAELLA; NÖTH, 2005, p. 15) This means that there are no images, as visual and material representations of the world, "that have not arisen in the minds of those who produced them" (SANTAELLA; NÖTH, 2005, p. 15); or, as the Greeks said, the τεχνίτης (*technítes* – artist) must envision his work, his είδος (*eîdos*), previously, in his mind (BRANDÃO, 2015); after all, the body, as a privileged image, regulates all others (BERGSON, 1999), even those in which technical means are used. Similarly, "there are no mental images that do not have some origin in the concrete world of visual objects". (SANTAELLA; NÖTH, 2005, p. 15)

From a semiotic perspective, what unites the two domains are the concepts of **sign** and **representation**. The former is "everything that can be reinforced as a significant substitute for something else" (ECO, 2003, p. 4) that does not necessarily need to "subsist in fact" (ECO, 2003, p. 4) but exists "every time a human group decides to use something as a vehicle for something else" (ECO, 2003, p. 14); the latter refers, if we limit ourselves to Peirce, to something that is in place of something else in such a way that it is considered by someone as if it really were that other: a spokesperson represents a governor, a president, that is, a government or a company;

an agent represents the police force that represents the State; a symptom represents an illness (PEIRCE, 2005, p. 61):

> A **word** represents something to the conception in the mind of the listener; a **portrait** represents the person to whom it directs the conception of recognition; a weather vane represents the direction of the wind to the conception of the one who understands it; a **lawyer** represents his client to the judge! (PEIRCE *apud* SANTAELLA; NÖTH, 2005, p. 17, our emphasis)

Thus, while for Saussure (2006), the sign is a "two-faced psychic entity" (p. 80) – **significant** and **signified** – "intimately united and one claims the other" (SAUSSURE, 2006, p. 80); for Peirce (2005), the sign[13]– **representamen** – if "it occurs in a genuine triadic relationship [...] with its **object**, which is capable of determining [...] and its **interpretant**" (PEIRCE, 2005, p. 63), representing "something for someone. It is addressed to someone, that is, it creates, in that person's mind, an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign" (PEIRCE, 2005, p. 46).

The **object**, in turn, is divided into **icon**, **index,** and **symbol**[14]:

> The **icon** has no dynamic connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble the object and excite analogous sensations in the mind so that it is a likeness. But in fact, it has no connection with them. The **index** is physically connected with its object; it forms an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection except registering it once it has been established. The **symbol** is connected with its object by force of the idea of the mind-using-the-symbol, without this connection not existing. (PEIRCE, 2005, p. 73, our emphasis)

Images can be icons, indexes, or symbols, although these signs manifest themselves in different ways in their various genres: the indexical image, for example, manifests itself in photography and realistic painting; the iconic image in non-figurative and abstract painting; and the symbolic image, which is codified iconologically and iconographically. (SANTAELLA; NÖTH, 2005)

Despite the criticism that Peirce's classification may have raised, it helps us to try to understand the issue of the image as a sign, facilitating our understanding, a fact addressed by Joly (2012, p. 36, free traduction):

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[13]Peirce also says that when one wants to distinguish between "that which represents" and the "act of representation," "one can call the first **representamen** and the second of **representation**." (PEIRCE, 2005, p. 61)

[14]Criticized, in a certain way, by Eco (2003), as "'passe-partout' categories or 'umbrella notions,' which function precisely because of their vagueness, as occurs with the category 'sign' or even with that of 'thing.'" (p. 157)

If we return to it here, it is because it seems worthwhile to understand images and different types of images and how they work. It requires specific gradations, and Peirce was the first to dedicate himself to this task, stating that there is no pure sign, only dominant characteristics.

As for mental images – as *simulacra* of those in the world – it is worth noting that not all of them are decoded in the same way by all people. This is because each person can create their system of representation that depends, among other factors, on how their memory establishes infinite relationships and associations in a **free** and **random** way, as long as there is no model (often imposed!) to follow, as is the case with engravings or images in literary texts, for example.

I remember, once, a student who told me that Capitu had betrayed Bentinho in ***Dom Casmurro***[15] because her son looked **just like** Escobar. When I asked her how she came to this conclusion, she told me the book's cover showed it. When I looked at it, I realized that this was the case: the boy portrayed was a photocopy of Escobar[16], whose image was reflected in a mirror, indicating, in an imposing way (I can't tell if this was intentional or not), adultery.

Mitchell (1987) classifies the different types of images and how they are expressed in the following way, showing us that for every kind of **image,** there are specific supports, as well as exact means of perception:

Thus, due to this particularization, the different types of images will be the object of study of one or more disciplines based on the delimitation of their field of study:

Mental images belong to psychology and epistemology; optical images to physics; graphic, sculptural, and architectural images to the art historian; verbal images to the literary critic; perceptual images occupy a kind of borderland where physiologists, neurologists, psychologists, art historians, and students of optics find themselves collaborating with philosophers and literary critics. (MITCHELL, 1987, p. 11)

In possession of their particularities, each one of these disciplines will describe that object put through "a vast literature on the function of images in their own domain, a situation that tends to intimidate anyone trying to get an overview of the problem." (MITCHELL, 1987, p. 10) In this way, a necessary separation is maintained since the

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[15] A novel by the Brazilian writer Machado de Assis.
[16] it is unclear whether the image in the mirror is that of Escobar or the couple's adult son; such is the similarity.

boundaries between these different ways of seeing them are not as rigidly conditional as they appear.

Figure 2 – The Family of Images
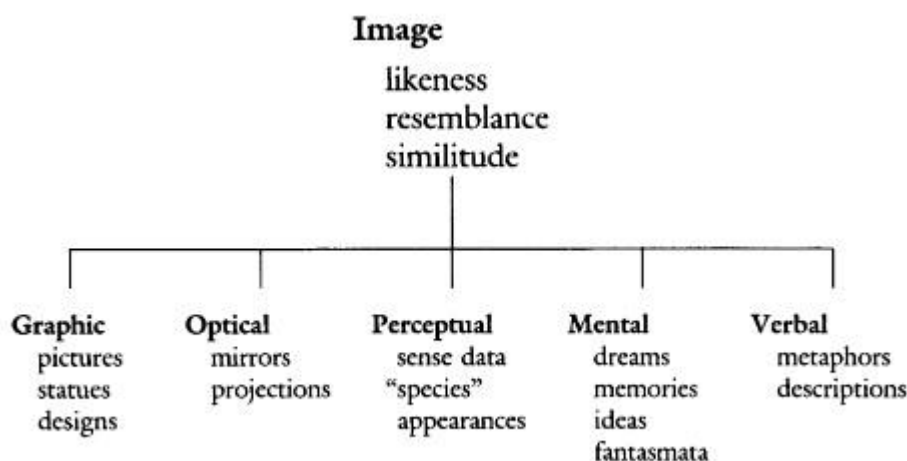
Source: MITCHELL, 1987, p. 10

We would even say that in addition to possible intimidation of those who are dedicated to studying the issue of the image, to seek coherence between such particularities or even a "coherent iconology" (MITCHELL, 1987, p. 12) – not familiar to all, but communicating with each other – would be the fact that one can come across those who, more than aggregating, uniting interdisciplinary efforts, end up moving even further away from this field, when conceiving that the **image** can hover only at this or that time.

Image: dissuasive employment

When we are surrounded by a variety of images today, we do not realize their power over us; on the contrary, we believe that we are their masters and that we impose our will and desires on them. Of course, in thinking this way, we act childishly because we cannot deny the obvious: we are as vulnerable to them as were the so-called primitive peoples, even before the apogee of the ancient great human civilizations.

Perhaps a significant difference between us and our predecessors is not only the limitless propagation of images that we see today – amidst the countless media we

have at our disposal – but also the fact that we constantly fight against them, neither admitting our subjection nor believing in it. However, we forget their particular capacity for mediation, which controls our perception of the world, leading its reader to pay attention to this or that object.

By acting this way, the image often employs a tyrannical and implacable expedient, similar even to the Bible's, in its coercion and claim to be and create a "single true world" (AUERBACH, 2004, p. 11). Without needing to state this, we allow ourselves to be possessed and are induced to do so.

Not accepting the yoke of images and their power over us makes us simply prey to their excesses, leading humanity to accept and compromise with aberrations and atrocities against their fellow human beings, generally under the auspices of doing **good**. The Nazis, for example, through images, reconfigured the concept that Germans had of the Jews by constantly associating them, through various means, with horrendous, cartoonish and demonic figures.

This simply happens because the logic of the yoke's not acceptance is just one:

> the masses will never question what they receive, even if it is untrue, factoids, or invented data based on history. However, for propaganda to have the desired effect and be efficient, it must contain little information, but it must be used exhaustively, persistently, continuously, constantly, unchangingly; only then will it be successful [...]. (BRANDÃO; SOUSA, 2015, p. 356)

However, despite the persistence with which such images must be used **to bribe** the masses, images presented on the same theme must contain variations to not cause boredom and annoy the recipient (HITLER, 1943; DOMENACH, 1968), losing their effectiveness. Thus, to deconstruct someone's image, it is only necessary to show facets of the truth intermittently and continuously, pausing momentarily not to bore the reader.

It would not be necessary to go back that far in time to demonstrate how the power of image deconstruction works and the masses' indifference to deal with it. To do so, it is enough to analyze the images used exhaustively by social media and some mass media outlets in the 2014 Brazilian presidential elections to see how, depending on how they are used, they can become an oppressive way of inducing latent class hatred and spreading it throughout society, awakening that which was asleep under

the auspices of **political correctness**. In this way, an entire society that is unaware of it is reconfigured.

Figure 3 – Detail of the **Standard of Ur**

Source: British Museum, London, photo by Steven Zucker, ca. 2600/2400 BC

In the early days of humanity, for example, everything had a reason for being and a **plausible explanation**, even if not comprehensible to our *ratio*. There was an almost universal belief in the power of images (GOMBRICH, 2013), regardless of their support or format since, when using any objects taken from nature or manufactured by him, man transformed them into symbols, which gave them an enormous psychological charge (JAFFÉ, 2008), leading them not only to adoration, contemplation, and ecstasy but to their substitute, their incarnation.

By using an animal mask, for example, the man who would do the work was not just disguised as that object, nor was he merely using an image; he became that being himself (GOMBRICH, 2013). He acquired his strength, power, and attributes because his *ego* and expression as an individual disappeared during its use.

The same happened with the animals painted in the caves: they were neither a mere reproduction nor sought delight or enjoyment. They had a defined, practical, magical function because, more than bringing them from the outside to the inside, a mere attraction, a simile, those men sought to know them, respect them, and

symbolically succumb to them, anticipating their death, as is possible in the puncture marks left in many of these figures. (JAFFÉ, 2008)

Thus, the idea that the image was always used as a mere copy of reality or as a representation of the external world only became effective after a long process (VERNANT, 1990) because its primary function was magical, mythical, and metaphysical, even if man still did not understand it clearly.

Figure 4 – **Standard of Ur** (detail)

Source: British Museum, London, photo by Steven Zucker, ca. 2600/2400 BC

Another important point that deserves to be addressed concerning the image is its inseparable relationship with pictograms (CAÑIZAL, 1986), letters (GOMBRICH, 2013), and $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o\varsigma$ (*lógos*) (BRANDÃO, 2009a), that is, it was the first step for man, through its means, to be able to create parallel worlds and not only "dominate himself, his fellow men, the physical world, but also go beyond what nature itself showed him, entering the metaphysical." (BRANDÃO, 2009a, p. 282)

It is no coincidence that the great civilizations of Antiquity also discovered another facet of the power of images: that of propaganda. This becomes clearer when we read the **Standard of Ur** (fig. 3-4), which could have been a model or copy of other larger configurations despite its small size (21.59 cm x 49.53 cm).

Figure 5 – Hittite chariot

Source: Ankara Archaeological Site Museum, photo by Michel Royon, ca. from 1000 BC

The object – which does not resemble a pattern since it is, in reality, a trapezoidal box – forms the images using the musive technique (shells, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and bitumen). Thus, it is possible to read, similar to a comic strip composed of three horizontal narrative strips, the actions of the Sumerian army in times of war.

In the first strip (the top one), we see that under the leadership of the king – encoded with the most prominent physical build of all the figures present – the infantry marches with their lances and axes on one side while on the other, we see the soldiers carrying the naked and tied prisoners as part of the booty (fig. 4). In the sequence (central strip), the soldiers brutally head towards the enemies, subjugating and humiliating them – precisely in the middle of the scene, under the king, one of the soldiers tramples a captive, while the next soldier has a club in his right hand and in the other, clothes that could belong to the prisoners who are naked and covered in damage all over their bodies –; in the lower strip, we see the ferocity of the cavalry that, in its march, passes over the vanquished (fig. 3).

Figure 6 – Siege of Dapur by Ramesses II

Source: Theban Temple, c. from 1269 BC

It is possible to verify that the idea of **passing over enemies** in a war chariot will be an ordinary image representation in the period by various peoples used, including through λόγος poetic. Homer shows us this when he speaks of the vengeful hatred of Achilles, who "like a demon, with his spear/ takes Death to his enemies" (HOMER, XX, 493-494, 2011, free translation), staining the ground with blood:

> When the peasant puts a yoke of oxen on the yoke,
> the wheat may be threshed on a spacious threshing floor.
> the ears of corn are immediately trampled by the bellowing oxen, who then separate them:
> In this way, **Pelida [Achilles] guides the horses, which the chariot [dragged over the corpses and weapons**. At the top, the axle soon becomes completely covered in blood, and so around the seat,
> the parapet, from the drops that the brutes' hooves and the wheels
> and the moving wheels. (HOMER XX, 495-502, 2011, free translation, our emphasis)

Like the **Standard of Ur**, the same theme can be seen in a Hittite mural (fig. 5), where a naked enemy can be seen under a horse. This empire, which stretched from northern Syria to Anatolia, rivaled the events and almost led to Ramesses II being erased from history in the Battle of Kadesh. This is because, when they were attacked by surprise, many Egyptian soldiers from the P'Ra division fled, forcing the pharaoh to fight for his life and seek help from another division of his army, the Ptah.

Figure 7 – Ramesses II in battle with his sons

Source: British Museum, London, Beit el-Wali Temple, ca. 1550 BC

Despite the near setback, Ramesses knew how to take advantage of this event in terms of imagery, as he ordered the demolition of several monuments and temples throughout the empire of his incredible feat: a single man had faced an army of twenty thousand enemies. This, *ipso facto*, is the power of constructing a new hero, myth, or god. It is no coincidence that he appears alone and prominently in several battle scenes, sometimes commanding the subjugation of his enemies (fig. 6-7), sometimes executing them with his own hands (fig. 8).

In this way, it matters little that, according to history, the pharaoh – having no chance of defeating the Hittites but of being beaten by them – preferred to celebrate a shameful peace treaty with his enemies. What mattered to him, his people, and his probable opponents was how the imagery of the episode was constructed, printed, and disseminated throughout his empire, which became the **whole truth** of the event.

Thus, through their use, both the pharaoh and the event constructed by their gimmicks and employed systematically became, in effect, Ramesses II and his great battle. Even though the historical man, whose fragile mummy can still be seen today in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, was very different from his representation, his extraordinary battle is nothing more than a hoax.

When we read Figure 7, we see a different submission relationship from that seen in Figures 3 and 5. The pharaoh, in his chariot, is no longer just over one person

but over an entire people, the Nubians. They are represented schematically by blacks and reds, whose forms are tiny compared to the size of the king. This seeks to demonstrate his submission and inferiority before a superior and divine power, represented by the pharaoh.

Figure 8 – Ramesses II kills his opponents

Source: Temple of Abu Simbel

There is, of course, no concern with mimetic representation since the Egyptian theory of proportions exempted itself from these obligations. (PANOFSKY, 2004) Even the sons of Ramesses II, represented in the back in their chariots, appear tiny, corroborating the issue of stereotyping in this construction: only the prominent figure in the scene stands out through the increase in his height in the representation. This conception is also used in the **Standard of Ur**. It would even be used in the Middle Ages, when mimesis was not yet predominant, as seen in the Bayeux Tapestry (fig. 9), in which we see the prominence given to King Edward the Confessor.

It is interesting to note that in the same tapestry, a large piece of linen measuring 70 m long by 0.50 m wide, there is a representation of a battle that changed the destiny of England, the Battle of Hastings (1066). After the death of King Edward, who left no heirs, William, Duke of Normandy, was sure that he would be acclaimed king since he

was related to the dead king. However, Harold – the same one represented in Figure 9 – was acclaimed, apparently destroying his aspirations. The Norman, feeling overlooked, raises a large army and invades the island, defeating his opponent and becoming king of the English, an event known as the Norman Conquest.

Figure 9 – King Edward sends Harold to Normandy

Source: Bayeux Tapestry Museum, Bayeux Tapestry, 1070 AD

It could be said that the Tapestry is nothing more than an **image poem** in praise of William's victory, ordered to be executed by Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and half-brother of the Conqueror. Something that would even recall the heroic deeds of Ramesses II on the wall of the Temples explicitly erected for this purpose but which would use utterly different support.

In Figure 10, it is possible to observe how the Norman cavalry advances on the English, eradicating them, as seen when one sees the mangled bodies of the infantrymen under the horses. Once again, it is clear that there is no mimetic concern in the representation of the medieval scene; after all, "when they finally discarded any pretensions of representing things as they saw them" (GOMBRICH, 2013, p. 135), immense possibilities opened up for the artists of the period.

The same cannot be said of the Greco-Roman models. When portraying the same theme, such as the Battle between Alexander the Great and Darius II (fig. 11), they do not make *a priori* distinction between the ordinary soldiers and their leaders, as can be seen in the representation of the great leaders represented here. There was great concern about the issue of foreshortening because the ancients did not master the perspective technique – *artificialis*, developed in the Renaissance, despite demonstrating a great illusionistic reality.

Figure 10 – The Battle of Hastings

Source: Bayeux Tapestry Museum, Bayeux Tapestry, 1070 AD

There is, however, a difference between this and the other works seen: they were not intended to intimidate – they were not public – but to be enjoyed; after all, they were private. They probably aimed not only to delight their owners but also to demonstrate their power and wealth due to the technique used and the model from which they came, probably Greek from the 2nd century BC.

Something similar could be said about the richly decorated sarcophagi that became fashionable in Rome at the beginning of our era. Among them were those depicting great battles (fig. 12), which were unsuitable for public observation. Despite

limited space constraints, the artist's meticulous representation of the figures is evident, showcasing a remarkable level of mimetic rigor.

Figure 11 – Alexander Mosaic, probable Battle of Issus

Source: Museum of Naples, ca. 150 BC

Despite the apparent prominence of only one figure[17], which is placed in the spotlight, demonstrating his *status* concerning the others, there is here, unlike the previous examples, a **parity** between all; after all, what we are trying to do is exalt the Roman military power, whose soldiers – short hair, shaved, wearing armor, and carrying shields – show themselves to be proud, energetic and committed, inflicting a harsh defeat on the Germans – long, messy hair, long beards, each one wearing different clothing, some with their torsos uncovered, others wearing pants –, whose faces you can see anguish, suffering, and despair with the probability of defeat that is approaching.

This mimetic representation, in stark contrast to the one in Figure 8, emphasizes the pharaoh's divine aspect. Faced with his power and divinity, the image-built pharaoh could do without external help; it would be enough to use his own body. This becomes clear when he (fig. 8), not the horses (fig. 6-7), steps on the enemy's head and foot, completely subduing him.

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[17] One of the characteristics of Roman art was that the reader of the image confirmed the figure represented. Thus, the figure highlighted in the Ludovisi Sarcophagus is probably Hostilianus (230? -251), son of Emperor Decius (201-251 AD), or his brother Herennius Etruscanus (227-251).

Figure 12 – Ludovisi sarcophagus

Source: National Museum of Rome, Italy, 3rd century BC

Taking advantage of the uprising in gold-rich Nubia, whose population had rebelled against their Egyptian allies in the region, Ramesses II continued his military incursions, now heading south. Unlike the Hittites and their mighty army, the Nubians were much weaker militarily and were thus massacred by Egyptian forces. (fig. 7)

Thus, he ordered the erection of colossal statues of himself in a temple, today's Abu Simbel, also dedicated to him, on the southern limits of his empire. More than ostentation or mere boasting, such images would represent an intimidating landmark to all who dared to cross its borders.

Much like the prisoners depicted on the **Standard of Ur**, Ramesses II showed the fate of those who would go against their will and dare to confront him. The image of intimidation is clear: captured prisoners are depicted with their arms tied, kneeling and awaiting their fate: either enslavement or summary execution. (fig. 13)

Many of these executions, for example, could transmit to convey a sacrificial character for those who were part of the dominated people, along the lines of the myth of Busiris, despite the absence of data to corroborate such an assertion or even represent a certain sadism of this or that general towards the prisoners. Homer, for example, when speaking of the hatred that took hold of Achilles in the face of the death

of his friend Patroclus, not only captured twelve young men but sacrificed them as a sign of revenge:

> Those who are weak and astonished, I quickly drag from the river;
> and, after having tied their hands behind their backs in strong
> and well-woven straps that everyone wore on their tunics
> He trusted them so that he could take them to the ships and partners.
> (HOMER XXI, 29-32, free translation)

Figure 13 – Captured Nubians

Source: Abu- Simbel Temple, 13th century BC

It is important to note that it was not enough for the Egyptians to simply insert images to serve as warnings and propaganda against their possible enemies, both internal and external. They also made a point of exalting and recording their heroic deeds, also through λόγος, such as the famous poem by Pentaur. Therefore, they combined words formed by hieroglyphics, which were also images.

A measure used in Behistun (fig. 14), in the Achaemenid Empire (First Persian Empire), almost seven centuries later, by Darius I, who, it should not be forgotten, also held the title of Pharaoh of Egypt, inherited from his father-in-law, Cyrus II, whose son, Cambyses II, had conquered Egypt in 525 BC.

For people in the 21st century, especially those who live in urban areas, such **intimidating** and **dissuasive images** belong only to a distant past and territories,

where they are confined, after all, very distant from our reality. However absurd as it may seem, the opposite is true: they are still present today, clearly and vividly.

Figure 14 – King Darius of Persia and captured prisoners

Source: Behistun Inscription, 6th century BC

So, when we read the image of the Sumerian king's prisoners on the **Standard of Ur**, the image of Ramses II's Nubians, or even the image of Darius I's prisoners, all of them on different supports – from wood to rock – we don't let ourselves be touched or frightened, after all, such representations were not conceived for our time and, because they are anachronistic, they end up being distinguished as mere **archaeology**, when they are seen: contemporary eyes do not care to see what does not belong to the present day, this is because

> The man of the 21st century is no longer interested in decoding the undecodable. Today's image message must be on its surface to be understood at a glance; there is no longer any time to waste with *manuals* [...]. Today, images must be practically decoded so that the eyes of 21st-century man do not waste any more time [...]. (BRANDÃO, 2009a, s/p)

When the proportions, models, and iconology of that particular space-time period are used, they – however obvious they may seem – do not affect contemporary people. Therefore, as is to be expected, the effect intended by those emitters does not

reach us, as it must have reached those who lived in that period and who knew and used its sign keys in their daily lives.

Figure 15 – Islamic State prisoners are tied up before being drowned

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Source: https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/iraq/2015/08/04

This becomes clear when we observe the relationship that the ancients demonstrated towards these images, such as those in which Alexander the Great (fig. 16) – not to mention the religious ones, whose reverence was evident – "to make himself present throughout his vast Empire, he had statues of himself spread throughout his domain: the **embodiment** of his absence, but they were no less respected for that" (BRANDÃO, 2009b, p. 125): therefore, the *simulacrum* was respected as if it were the real thing, and for that reason it was feared.

However, despite the *millennia* that separate us, it is no longer necessary to suppose how the atrocities of the past occurred or to try to decode those extemporaneous images. We only need to establish a relationship between them and those we constantly encounter in today's media. We simply need to watch TV or access the internet to do this.

In these media, we will find several scenes broadcast by the self-proclaimed **Islamic State** (ISIS) that reproduce, in a clear, direct, and incisive way, the past: men

on their knees, hands tied, rope around their necks (fig. 15), heads rolling, disfigured and vilified bodies scattered throughout towns and villages.

Figure 16 – Alexander the Great
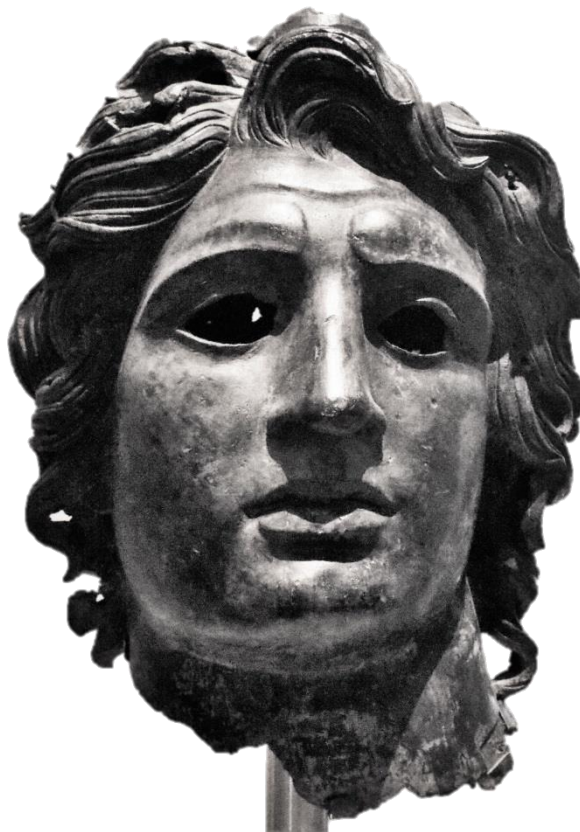
Source**:** American Museum of Natural History, New York*,* photo by Jack Brandão

However, are they the only ones who still perpetrate such **extemporaneous atrocities** today? What can we say about how the Australian Aborigines (fig. 17), at the beginning of the 20th century, were treated by the white colonizer who saw the former owners of the Australian land, many of whom were imprisoned, killed, or enslaved in the Frontier Wars, as a threat? What can we say about the thousands of Algerians imprisoned and executed during their country's war of independence (fig. 18) by the far-right French who took over Algeria? How can we forget how Brazil treats and has always treated black people since slavery, and today, in particular, those who went from the slave quarters to live in the slums (fig. 19) scattered throughout the country?

As bad as it is to prove that specific images from the past are not as distant from us as they may seem, is the fact that today, when they are broadcast as massively as they are, they lose their effect twice over:

Figure 17 – Aboriginal people were trapped and chained; the only information about the photo is "captured for execution"

Source: https://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/prisoners-frontier-wars-blackbirding-chain-gangs, Australia, early 20th century

a) first, because it no longer affects us due to its banality, "making the strange seem vulgar, familiar, irremediable, remote ('it's just a photograph')." (SONTAG, 1986, p. 29) Thus, just as anachronism makes us insensitive to the scenes of brutality enclosed in the walls of history, the excess of photographs and their massification also do the same to our consciousness, making it indifferent to the misfortune of others. This is because, faced with the accumulation and intensity of images – unlike the peoples of Antiquity who lived them intensely, respecting them and knowing how to be dominated by them – we don't even have time to retain and swallow them. We cannot feed them back into the wellspring of our iconophotological collection; after all, it would be these, the photographic images, that we use to build our collection:

> When the same events happen again, such as new significant *tsunamis* or endless religious conflicts – whether in Indonesia or the Middle East – they will probably not have the same visual appeal as they did the first time we saw them in photographs. Thus, these *new* and striking events will remain in our iconophotological collection or be replaced by more recent ones. (BRANDÃO, 2010, p. 97)

Figure 18 – Algerians being arrested during the country's war for independence

Source: https://voiceofsalam.com/2016/08/11/lies-expansionism-and-fascism-life-in-colonial-algeria, undated

b) secondly, specific images that could become paradigmatic – leading us to reflection and compassion – due to their dimension, novelty, and impact because they no longer reach us, become indifferent, unstable, and go unnoticed. Therefore, all the excitement that the new tends to bring is lost:

> It can be seen, therefore, that the change in (the) iconophotological collection can occur as a) an addition: acquisition of a truly new image/concept, such as the *tsunami*[18]. After all, the fact was known, but there was no collective image consciousness of it, much less of its magnitude, a fact that became clear even

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[18] On December 26, 2004, an earthquake measuring 9.1 on the Richter scale struck the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra in the Indian Ocean, followed by a tsunami so devastating that it is considered the deadliest in history.

> in the vocabulary use of the word by children and adolescents – during a short period after the incident – as synonymy of a whirlwind (in a swimming pool, for example) or of chaos; b) a substitution: when the images are becoming replaced for more recent ones; one can, for example, include here the standard of beauty established by a society in a given period.
> Usually, such substitution occurs when past images are put aside by more impactful ones that insist on remaining in the place of the older ones, which are gradually being eliminated. (BRANDÃO, 2010, p. 97)

Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, such photographic images, however banal and macabre they may be, end up demonstrating *in hoc tempore* what could only be supposed from the past: it **must have been like this**! And, because they were conveyed through photography, we are **aware** that they are reflections of reality, even more so when linked to the λόγος, as is the case in our media, even if we remain indifferent to them. This is because, even though we continually deny it, we cannot dismiss their symbolic power over all of us. We have been persuaded, since childhood, to believe that photographs are made in our "image and likeness," that they are the image of our time. After all, many still see them as the **most mimetic** of human representations.

During the Great War, in 1915, what is known as the **Armenian Genocide** (unfortunately not recognized by all the nations of the world!) began, the first of its kind in the 20th century, when more than 1.5 million Armenians were brutally deported, murdered or starved to death by the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Although it does not accept the term, the Turkish government still claims that there was no genocide, but there is no way to deny the many photographs of that moment, even some images, which were believed to be authentic but were not.

Nevertheless, we can not erase the marks left by those who survived that chaos, such as Arshalswys (Aurora) Mardiganian, whose memoir **Ravished Armenia** was used to write a screenplay for a 1919 movie, **Auction of Souls**. Some images from it, however, were seen as accurate photographic shots and disseminated on the internet as incontrovertible proof of the genocide, like the scene in which we see crucified Armenian Christian women. (fig. 20)

According to the author, this scene was nothing more than an imagery construction:

> The Turks didn't make their crosses like that. The Turks made little pointed crosses. They took the clothes off the girls. They made them bend down. And

after raping them, they made them sit on the pointed wood through the vagina. That's the way they killed – the Turks. Americans have made it [in the film] a more civilized way. They can't show such terrible things. (ERISH, 2012, p. 212)

Figure 19 – Blitz in a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro

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Source: https://www.conjur.com.br/2023-dez-05/a-cada-10-assassinados-no-brasil-8-sao-negros-diz-atlas-da-violencia/, photo by Luiz Morier, 1983

It is interesting to note that the methods used by the Turks in their ethnic cleansing at the beginning of the 20th century are very similar to those used by the Islamic State itself: summary executions, beheadings, crucifixions, displacement of refugees, death by starvation, in short, all kinds of brutality.

However, the difference between their methods lies in the dissemination of images. The most important thing for ISIS is its dissemination for dissuasive and propaganda purposes. The terror resulting from the methods portrayed has advanced in the face of their hordes, causing panic in entire societies that are forced to abandon their homes to escape a fate similar to that of the images broadcast.

As for the Turkish Empire, it took advantage of the fact that the war was raging in Europe and took advantage of it to attack the Armenian Christians. Unlike ISIS, it has always tried to keep it under wraps.

However, the photographs were taken! But who took them? Why? For what purpose? It is not possible to know with complete certainty because many of them are devoid of captions, and when they exist, they are absurd, like the fact that the probably people crucified in Figure 20 were priests!

There is also a curious detail in these photos of the genocide, especially when we see soldiers next to several corpses: the Turks appear serious, showing no signs of emotion, whether positive or negative. Could they be posing? Could it be because many soldiers were military and following orders? It is also impossible to say for sure.

However, it is worth noting that such atrocities are not limited to the Middle East or the Islamic world, as the images we see today might lead us to believe, nor to the Caucasus at the beginning of the 20th century on the contrary.

When we look at photographs of the war waged in favor of Algeria's independence that began in 1954, for example, it is the Europeans (as well as the Algerians themselves) who used the same methods as the ISIS – rapes, humiliations, beheadings, dismembered and vilified corpses, in short, the same brutalities seen today. The difference, however, is in the faces of the executioners, those who commit atrocities: they have a smile on their lips, showing pure sarcasm and an air of superiority, especially the French colonizers towards the Algerians.

Thus, while the Turks were impaling (crucifying?) naked women, leaving them on the cross to serve as an **example** (why, if what they wanted was the mere extermination of these people?), as Rome did with the followers of Spartacus on the Appian Way, the French displayed Algerian women as war trophies and made a point of taking pictures of themselves showing them off. There are several photos of women, such as the one in Figure 21, who, it seems, is trying to free herself from the soldiers who are insisting on displaying her as an object, holding her hands so that she does not **rebel** in front of the camera, for which the soldiers are posing; however, they want her to do the same. She is, however, naked. Here, the woman is being doubly violated: by tearing off her clothes, they tear apart all the moral precepts established by her religion and her society, which determine that a woman (like a man) should be naked

only when involved and protect her modesty in front of strangers or even relatives; in addition, of course, she was probably physically violated.

Figure 20 – Crucified Armenian women for being Christians

Source: scene from the movie **Auction of Souls**,1919

Figure 21 – Woman captured by French soldiers in Algeria during the War of Independence

Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Algerian_woman_sexually_abused_by_the_French_army-2.jpg, late 1950s

What can be said of someone who poses for posterity after having physically and morally violated someone? A fetish for having been able to hold in their hands **an animal** who won't let himself be dominated? Wouldn't that be the reason for the sarcastic laughter – to hide in their cowardice – simply being unable to tame that beast whose customs, morals, and faith have been violated? What, then, can we say of the Armenian Christians who were possibly crucified naked, abandoned, and also raped[19] in their dignity as women?

How many of these women were not dishonored after seeing their fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands being killed? For the executioners, the straightforward certainty that what they are doing is correct and that they are orders is enough to inhibit any ethical, moral, and human image that one might have in front of the other: everything becomes possible and justifiable.

How far can human wickedness and the power granted by a false image created to deceive one's peers go, as well as to decimate entire ethnic groups' movements solely for personal whim and excessive profit, such as the cruel and despicable way in which Leopold II, King of Belgium, administered the Congo, his private property in Africa? And behold, it is that, at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century, the lackeys of the **worthy** and **philanthropic** king instituted a state of terror in the region.

According to the monarch, the place would be destined to bring humanitarian aid to those forgotten peoples, in addition to protecting the inhabitants and preventing the reappearance of black slavery. What we saw, however, was yet another genocide, whose purpose was not ethnic persecution but pure exploitation of the native labor force (fig. 22), forced to fulfill unrealizable goals; otherwise, they would be killed or mutilated (fig. 23).

Just as for the Ottomans, there was no genocide in Armenia; trying to hide its evidence and images from history, Leopold II verified in every way to hide (and succeeded for a long time) what was happening in his African property: slavery, brutal murders, rapes, entire tribes burned, decapitations, as well as mutilations of children, men, women and older people, so that relatives would fulfill the conditional quotas set by their overseers.

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[19] Since they were impaled, according to Arshalswys (Aurora) Mardiganian? (ERISH, 2012)

Figure 22 – Enslaved Congolese people chained on a Belgian rubber plantation

Source:
https://www.academia.edu/2464487/In_the_early_1900s_the_missionaries_Alice_Seeley_Harris,
ca. 1905

As for the atrocious mutilations, the situation was almost out of control because when the established quotas were not reached, the soldiers of the Public Force had to take the right hand of someone who would be murdered to serve both as an example to the other enslaved people and as an excuse for the administrators for not fulfilling the imposed obligations. (fig. 24) Thus, since the quotas were always more significant than they could reach and they did not want to waste time in fulfilling the quotas, the soldiers went to the tribes, chose anyone, and amputated their hands. Baskets full of hands end up becoming a bargaining chip! Thus, when the soldiers took these macabre baskets, they were indices of lives extirpated or of others who became undead when they managed to survive.

Missionaries took photographs of the barbarity and brought them to Europe and the United States, ending the king's pretensions, who was forced to hand over his **backyard** to Belgium. According to estimates, ten million lives were lost; what remained, however, were the vivid, human, deformed images, whose function was to dissuade the lazy from committing to limitless production. Others joined these images, the photographs without which the number of victims would have been much higher.

Figure 23 – Children display their amputated arms

Unlike those people who used intimidation in a restricted space, such as the Turks in Armenia or the Belgians in the Congo, when they sought total submission of the conquered peoples through coercion, ISIS makes extensive use of current technology, which allows all its atrocities to spread throughout the world in a matter of seconds. If it does not do so **live**, it is simply because the technology would enable it to be found seconds after it is broadcast.

In this way, we can see how the power of images is taken to its ultimate consequences since such images are not restricted to the space in which they were generated, as in the previous examples, but are launched into the virtual world so that intimidation can spread across the globe. We must not forget that we live in a society of spectacle, in which more than a set of images, we live a relationship mediated by them. (DEBORD, 2003)

Figure 24 – Congolese people posing with severed hands of those they cannot extract your daily quota of rubber

Source:
https://www.academia.edu/2464487/In_the_early_1900s_the_missionaries_Alice_Seeley_Harris, ca. 1905

It's no coincidence that the barbarities committed today are only for macabre **entertainment**, the pretext for which is religion and the actors-victims of which are not chosen in *absentia* but predetermined because what matters is the show, it's the spectacle: foreign journalists, tribal leaders, imprisoned soldiers, religious people from opposing factions, children, women.

It is sad to note that all the **humanitarian achievements** concerning war atrocities arising from the Geneva Conventions are wholly ignored; not surprisingly, France never claimed that what happened in Algeria was a war because if that were the case, they would be war crimes, and the same could be said of Turkey and Belgium, if the Convention, as we have seen, had already been in force at that time. What, then, can we say about ISIS and its imagery trivialization?

This is used so effectively that we end up not fully believing what they convey: reality and fantasy mix to the point of making the subject-reader not be led to any reflection. (AUMONT, 2002)

Worse than the reflexive inertia observed when faced with misfortunes images, or as we call them here, dissuasive, is the fact that if at one moment they are paralyzing, at another they are catalysts. This means that when we come across strong

images, they can undoubtedly anesthetize us and make us inert in the face of them, but after the initial shock, we don't mind seeing more and more; on the contrary, we want it to the point that they no longer affect us.

In this compulsion and devouring action (as in the German *fressen*) of the imagery light, we do not realize that we have lost control and want more and more. From then on, we almost completely lose an inert and compassionate emotion that occurred in that first moment of shock. We are iconotropic beings (BRANDÃO, 2014). We are compulsively attracted to images, like plants to light, and, faced with their abundance, we become their ravenous devourers.

On the other hand, if they are singular and non-recurring, such images are absorbed and inserted into our iconophotological collection; otherwise, if read continuously and massively, they fade since the impact caused by the continuous visualization of atrocities decreases as there are successive observations. (SONTAG, 1986)

Thus, the more atrocities the media shows, the less they affect us. This is the catalytic power of this continuity: such images hasten their oblivion. On the other hand, this forces their tormentors to increase the sophistication of their exhibition, as is the case with the *spectacularization* provided by ISIS: if the beheading no longer moves, they drown the victims; they hang the victims to be slowly burned; they blow them up; they commit the same atrocities against children, employing a tetric vicious cycle.

To try to satisfy our iconotropy in the face of this trivialization and seek the maximum possible realism, we can even do without moving images: we want the details, the minutiae. It is no longer possible to believe in what we see; it is necessary to prove that it is real:

> […] the moving image gives us a more remarkable impression of movement, immediacy, and temporal continuity [of reality]. There is no single shot or a time-space cutout as in photography, but there is a succession of cutouts. However, the static imagery has a greater power of seduction due, precisely, to the cutout of particularity: many want to see the exact moment. It is not enough to see the planes crashing into the towers and being *swallowed* by them, nor even the explosions that followed. We want to freeze the moment and see, step by step, every detail of the dismal hecatomb provided: now what we see is authentic and genuine! There is no need for detail in fiction; it is entertainment. But what happened on September 11th is true: behold the difference. (BRANDÃO, 2010, p. 98)

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