

## **Imagens patógenas: subsídios para estudos de transtornos de imagens a partir do caso clínico e do método Warburg**

### **Pathogenic images: support for studies of image disorders based on the clinical case and the Warburg method**

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**RESUMO:** *Partindo do caso clínico de Aby Warburg, a proposta do artigo é apresentar subsídios para uma leitura da imagem como pharmakon. Para tanto, mobilizamos conceitos fundantes da Ciência da Cultura proposta por Warburg, como a sua teoria da imagem e seu método, que rejeitam toda tentativa “exclusivamente estetizante” de compreensão da visualidade e da imagem. O método warburguiano pressupõe a capacidade das imagens de impactar, capturar e transformar olhares gerando ambientes. Como esse ambiente possui a potência de um pharmakon, analisamos um exemplo que corrobora com o diagnóstico de Warburg sobre a potencialidade das imagens: a estratégia da indústria do tabaco, através da atuação do esportista brasileiro Ayrton Senna, ancorada em uma indústria das imagens.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Imagem como pharmakon; método Warburg; Transtornos de imagens; indústria tabagista.*

**ABSTRACT:** *Based on the clinical case of Aby Warburg, the proposal of this article is to present support for a reading of the image as a pharmakon. As such, we have utilized fundamental concepts from the Science of Culture proposed by*

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*Warburg, such as his image theory and his method, which reject any “exclusively aestheticizing” attempt to understand visuality and images. The Warburg method presupposes the capacity of images to impact, capture and transform views by generating environments. As this environment bears the potency of a pharmakon, we have analyzed a current example that corroborate Warburg’s diagnosis of the potentiality of images: the strategy of the tobacco industries, through the performance of Brazilian sportsman Ayrton Senna, anchored in an image industry.*

**Keywords:** *Image as pharmakon; Warburg method; image disorders; tobacco industries.*

## Introduction: Haunted Minds<sup>3</sup>

All humanity is – all the time and  
forever – schizophrenic.

Aby Warburg (2015)

In his career as a doctor and a writer, one of Oliver Sack's concerns were hallucinations and delirium. He approached these symptoms in different books, such as "The man who mistook his wife for a hat", "Seeing Voices", "Musical Hallucinations" and "The Haunted Mind". In the latter, Sacks (2013, p. 12) would argue that hallucinations "always had an important role in our mental life and our culture". We must question ourselves, said Sacks (2013, p. 12), "to what extent hallucinatory experiences motivated our art, folklore and even religion". Wouldn't 'science' a topic to be missing in this small and comprising triple list of Sacks?

Sacks saw "The Haunted Mind" as a type of anthology of hallucinations, describing experiences and their impact on the individuals who experienced them, because he believed that the power of hallucinations could only be understood through first person stories. The causes of delirium and hallucinations are many, and, in certain cases, stimulated by emotional states such as, for example, fear, horror, angst and apprehension of traumatic life-threatening events (Sacks, 2013).

The history of humanity is prodigal in traumatic events that comprised hundreds of thousands of people, leaving unmeasurable physical and emotional consequences. Two of them are, certainly, the First and the Second World War. In relation to the First War, Sacks notes that

Some doctors would suppose that there should be an organic disturbance in the brain responsible for what, at the time, would be called shell shock: they seemed to differ in many aspects from the "normal" neurosis. The term "shell shock" [trauma caused by the sound of grenades exploding]

3 This study counted with the collaboration of the psychiatric doctor and professor Maristela Schaufelberger Spanghero, PhD at the Department of Psychiatry of the Medicine School of University of São Paulo (FMUSP).

was coined based on the idea that the brain of these soldiers had been mechanically disarranged by the repeated shocks of highly explosive grenades introduced in this war. Until then, it didn't exist a proper recognition of the retarded effects of the severe trauma for the soldiers, submitted by days of grenade and mustard gas explosions, in muddy trenches filled with rotten cadavers of their peers (SACKS, 2013, p. 217-218).

Still in relation to wars and conflicts, there is also the hallucination of “phantom limbs”, when soldiers would lose part of their body but would continue to feel pain, tickling and other sensations in the lost or amputated part due to battle wounds. Wars, therefore, are events capable of generating extreme emotional states, causing hallucinations that can, according to Sacks (2013), attack entire communities.

But if war is traumatic to those who are directly involved in the front, and also for those who live in areas of conflict or are directly affected by confrontation, would the images of these same wars would have the ability of making someone ill? Would war images be (or, expanding their universe a little, images of big catastrophes) pathogenic?

### **Aby Warburg's Mind**

Creator of the impressive Warburg Library of Culture Sciences (*Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg - KBW*), Aby Warburg (1866 - 1929) left a noticeable inheritance in books, currently allocated in the *Warburg Institute*, in the London University. After his graduation in History, Art History, Archeology and History of Religions of Antiquity, the young Aby Warburg started, in 1889 to gather the collection that would later become his famous Library, in Hamburg (Germany). It is undeniable to see the importance of the Library in Warburg's life story, his conception, his organization, his main projects, and his vocation. All of this is transformed in an unique place of research on many themes of human culture and even in an unique object as culture conception, since he abstained from naming the science he was inaugurating along with the Library. Robert Klein calls it “nameless science”, denomination adhered by Giorgio Agamben (KLEIN, 1970).

Truth is that the innovative thinking of Warburg, who created KWB, was eclipsed by it for almost 100 years. And only in the 2000's it began to be revealed and taken seriously by scientific research<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, it is still an object of controversy and questionable appropriations. It wasn't about, however, a library and a collection on art history or images, but what he called "a collection of registers for the psychology of the study of human expression" (WARBURG, 2015, p. 71). According to him, "thanks to the use of categories of general and unsatisfactory development, art history has been until now impeded from putting their material out to the "historic psychology of the human expression", which is still, this is true, waiting to be written" (WARBURG, 2015, p. 127). His reflections had approached objects separated by the fences and borders of time, with studies on Venus de Botticelli, rituals of the Indigenous villages Hopi, in New Mexico (United States) and about the drawings of your kids. "Expanding the boundaries of image manifestations far beyond the artistic universe, Aby Warburg understand it as the most important resource of bond, as media" (BAITELLO, 2010, p. 61).

In his last years of life, Warburg worked in the project of a great atlas of images, Mnemosine, mapping families of images and their root words, illustrating their presence in different times or different environments, in addition to showing their potential of meaning and their expressive strength in different times and contexts.

Aby Warburg suffered an emotional breakdown in November 1918. After his first admissions in Hamburg (with the Dr. Heinrich Georg Emden, from 11/2/1918 to 07/17/1919) and Jena (10/9/1920 to 04/15/1921 under the care of Prof. Dr. Hans Berger), was finally transferred, in 1921, for the Bellevue Clinic, in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, directed by Ludwig Binswanger, creator of the existential therapy, disciple and friend of Sigmund Freud<sup>5</sup>. It was almost six years of having breaks and visions,

4 Only in 2010 a collection of Warburg's work was published in a careful and reliable edition. We can also highlight here the critical work of Claudia Wedepohl, current director of the Warburg Archive, participant of the edition of *Gesammelte Schriften (Gathered writings)* (WARBURG, 2015).

5 On November 8th, 1921, Binswanger answers Freud who asked about the clinical state of the "famous professor", saying he was hopeless about a positive outcome (FICHTNER, 1992, p. 176).

behaving with rebelliousness, being loud, ranting, having fury episodes and persecutory visions to himself and his family, accusing the doctors and nurses of trying to poison him.

Warburg was discharged in 1924 after showing his sanity when he taught a conference to doctors and patients at the clinic about a photographic exploratory expedition he did in 1895 to the Hopi indigenous group from New Mexico, United States. The conference, emblematic in many aspects, was only published in 1949<sup>6</sup>, 20 years after Warburg's death, by the Warburg Institute of London, with a lackluster repercussion; the times were of hard reconstruction. Now, it is known that the version published by Saxl was widely copydesked, giving fluidity to the scattered notes of Warburg on the images of Pueblo indigenous people. Even so, the writing *Schlangenritual Ein Reisebericht (The serpent's ritual: A travel story)* had only had a German edition in 1988 and translations for other languages in the following years. The original non-copydesked annotations were published only in 2010 in *Werke (Work)* (Warburg, 2010<sup>7</sup>)

The clinical case has been receiving growing attention not only for his indisputable controversial nature from the medical and psychological point of view, with changes of diagnosis and prognosis, but also for being an illness of images, with images, by images, of dark scenarios that would become a harsh reality over a decade later (according to BAITELLO, 2017).

### **Images can cause illness? The horror of/by images (Warburg's war photo collection)**

Warburg's illness is, without a doubt, a complex case – now it is not possible to make a case history, over a century away from the facts. There is,

- 6 After he finished the conference presentation at the Bellevue Clinic, in April 23rd, 1923, Warburg gathers his notes and materials of devices and sends them to Fritz Saxl, towards his library in Hamburg, with the explicit order of not publishing whatsoever, without allowing anyone to access the notes, with the exception of his friend Prof. Ernst Cassirer.
- 7 The translation of a few texts in Portuguese in *Ghost Stories for the Very Adult comes from this German edition*.

however, still different positions about it, throughout the 20th century. While Sir Ernst Gombrich, author of the Warburg's first biography and famed director of the *Warburg Institute* in London for centuries, completely shuts out the clinical episode, the young disciple Carl Georg Heise expresses outrage about the blatant misdiagnose of Binswanger (according to Berger) and complains that the issue was covered by silence. It is important to point out this took place in early 20th century, and there still wasn't available anti-psychotic drugs of first and second generation; as well as obviously we didn't have studies or research on structural and functional neuroimage, which in the last 40 to 50 years "identified significant brain alterations in psychosis, especially in schizophrenia" (GALGALARRONDO, 2010, p. 384).

Warburg's recuperation begins with the change of diagnosis made by Kraepelin on February 6th, 1923, hired by the Warburg family to make an assessment of the case. Emil Kraepelin<sup>8</sup> (1856-1926), considered the most important shrink at that moment, was invited by the family to analyze the case and the patient, with the agreement of Binswanger.

The diagnosis then formulated by him would diverge from the previous, as described in the book "*La guérison, infinie: Histoire clinique d'Aby Warburg*":

*Provoquée par la famille, l'apparition de Kraepelin équivaut sans le moindre doute à une déclaration de méfiance, au moins temporaire, à l'égard des méthodes adoptées par Binswanger. Le diagnostic avait été jusque-là, de manière irrévocable, celui de schizophrénie. C'est ainsi que Warburg avait été étiqueté dans son dossier médical à son arrivée à Kreuzlinge. Le diagnostic de Kraepelin est en revanche: "état mixte maníaco-dépressif"; le pronostic, que inverse les termes de celui de Berger de manière si littérale*

8 In "*Madness: a Brief History*", Roy Porter (2002) outlines Kraepelin's importance of the study of mental breakdowns: "Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926) was essential to shed the unscientific dross which had gathered around psychiatry. Following an early appointment at Dorpat University (in Estonia, then in Prussia), Kraepelin became professor at the university clinic at Heidelberg, the main center of German medicine. His career marks the culmination of a century of descriptive clinical psychiatry and psychiatry nosology. (...) The course of psychiatric illness, he insisted, offered the best clue to its nature, rather than, as in common practice, the raft of symptoms the patient showed at a particular moment. On this basis, Kraepelin wrought a great innovation in disease concepts and classification" (PORTER, 2002, p. 184)

*qu'il en semble la parodie intentionnelle, laisse finalement entrer un rayon de lumière dans la chambre noire du futur de Warburg: avec un pronostic absolument favorable, même si Kraepelin ne préconise pas que Warburg puisse quitter la clinique précisément parce qu'il s'agit d'un cas difficile et qu'une sortie précoce ne ferait que ralentir le processus de sa guérison* (WARBURG; BINSWANGER, 2007, p. 14-15).

Let's go back to the question: images of tragedies like wars would have the ability of making someone ill? Would the images be pathogenic? What is the relationship between Warburg's illness, his admission, and war images? In 2004, it was found in the Archive of the Warburg Institute, in London, a collection of pictures of the First World War compiled by its founder. About the three boxes containing 1547 images<sup>9</sup> related to the First World War, in which the immense majority are journalistic pictures, Leão Serva (2017) analyses that they would be in consonance with Warburg's concerns in his reflections, especially in two fronts. The first one

It is the concern with the Judaic issue. During the First War, Warburg seem to foresee the antisemitic winds that would mark German life under Nazi dominion. At that moment, oddly enough, there were a role inversion: Jews were formally and informally persecuted in the neighboring regions of the German empire, under Russian dominion: Poland, Ukraine, Galizia, Belarus. In these areas, German soldiers were frequently greeted as liberating people and the occupation would authorize Jews to form big lines waiting visas to migrate to Germany, where communities were integrated and respected (SERVA, 2017, p. 4).

The second component present in the war images collected by Warburg is

The recurrence, in the photo collection, of images of military submarines, balloons and airplanes, technological news of the turn of the 19th century which in this world conflict was introduced in the field of wars. Before the war, in 1913, Warburg had produced a small essay called

9 The collection found is the remainder of a total of 5000 photos. In the intempestive clandestine transference of the Hamburg Library to London in 1933, many materials were lost that had to remain in Hamburg.



“Airplane and Submersible in the Medieval Imagination” (WARBURG, 2013, 313 and segs.), which shows that, before these real equipment came to be produced by the late 19th century technology, these machines were imagined, and, possibly desired by men; or could we say, on the contrary, they were created to fill an old demand of the human culture (SERVA, 2017, p. 5).

The turbulent years of the First World War and the following decade already incubated the dark times of 1930’s and 1940’s. Without a doubt, the historic, political, and cultural scenario had contributed for Aby Warburg’s deep and dramatic mental illness – a disorder of images that would threaten him and his family (BAITELLO, 2017). The images, to Warburg, were not only artistic or aesthetic, but they had an intrinsic force, a power generating meanings, internal and external actions a creating force of environments and environmentality<sup>10</sup>. Thinking about the image not only in its aesthetic aspect, but mainly taking into account their relational power, ‘the image is not only product, it is also producing, it has an ambivalent existence, it is a creator and a creature of a surrounding’ (BAITELLO, 2017, p. 35).

In this sense, the war images collected by Warburg would potentialize the horror of that period. The horror presented in these images (mainly journalistic) was happening in a very close surrounding to him and his family. Surely there will be in the history of mankind other environments created by catastrophic images. The history of fear, developed by Jean Delumeau, would not be anything but the history of the power of terrifying images? Warburg’s clinical case would be an analog example to the image-generating illnesses and disorders of contemporary somatic pathologies?

The journalist and former war reporter Leão Serva (2017) points out that there is a set of indications of the passional and visceral relationship of Warburg with war photographs; the images were ordered and

10 The concept of “environmentality” is used here according to Watsuji, Tetsuro (Anthropology of the landscape. Salamanca: Sigueme, 2006).

requested by the German intellectual throughout the four years of duration of the First World War. Serva says:

In a first approach it is very striking this alignment between the author and the collection the recurrence, among the photos, of images of military balloons and airplanes, technological news in late 19th century which, in that world conflict, was introduced in the war world. Similar images would come to mark “Atlas Mnemosine” and, in an indirect manner, are also present in the conference about the rite of the serpent of the Hopi indigenous (SERVA, 2017, p. 55).

The images collected by Warburg contained every time of monstrosity and savagery coming from a battle. Balloons exploding mid-air, dead bodies, wounded soldiers or with amputated limbs, burials, bombings in cities, buildings and churches, and not less shocking, numberless scenes of dead horses. If Warburg dedicated his own life to the life and post-life of images as constructing of environments, such as the formula of pathos (*Pathosformel*, term coined by Warburg), without a doubt the historic political and cultural scenario of 1910's and 1920's would contribute for his deep and dramatic mental illness. Over 1500 war images collected by him would constitute a brutal and disturbing story of something not as distant, from another period or region, but close, in time and space. The scenario lived by Warburg and present in the war images would compose what Oliver Sacks calls profoundly delusional atmosphere, able to “favor hallucinations generated by extreme emotional states” (SACKS, 2013, p. 220).

### **Warburg's (hard) thinking, his image theory, his “nameless science”, his method**

The conception of KBW, his library so zealously fed with new acquisitions and tireless searches (proven in the voluminous correspondence with booksellers and antiques) presents itself as inverse of a coin, whose hidden part reveals a completely transgressor thinking of the reigning disciplinary canon on the 19th and 20th century. There were not words

to describe the themes that Warburg elected as central for his “Culture Science”. That is why he created it, in neologisms that until today require effort from intellectuals. One of them was “Pathosformel” (formula of Pathos), to define images. Such concept intends to explode any “aesthetizing” attempt of understanding visuality (and image, in general). It presupposes that the object-image generates an impact on those who interact with it. Thus, an image, being a formula of pathos, is not defined by its formal characteristics, but by its potentialities of being impactful. And such potentiality exists as much as the historic path it has, storing energies from a route or historic path.

For that, Warburg coined the word “*Nachleben*”, “afterlife”. Therefore, every image materializes an afterlife, evoking previous layers of experiences. Another important concept is born with the neologism “*Denkraum*”, “space-thought”. Between one image and the other emerges a “space-thinking”, as well as it also happens between a person and an image, an alive and pulsing force. With so many other concepts like those, it is implied the position for a non-formalizing form of science. That way, he escapes the canon of a art history as history of forms as well as he escapes a pure and simple iconography or a history of styles. Warburg would be filled with rage facing the “exclusively aesthetizing” readings of images (including the artistic), following his disciple Carl Georg Heise, stating that such mentality must be locked within a “poison cabinet” (*Giftschrank*) in his library<sup>11</sup>. “The great thematic spectrum of the methodology proposed by Warburg would only be the “Culture Sciences”, the same conceptual methodology that built the brilliant library<sup>12</sup>.

One of the main concepts of Warburg’s methodology was the migration of images, something that is summarized in the expression created by him, *Bilderfahrzeug* (image vehicle). Such migration does not follow

11 The “poison cabinet” was a research object of Norval Baitello Jr., financed by Fapesp, in the Warburg archive, from November, 2018 to January, 2019.

12 Warburg’s contributions for a “science of image”, and, by extension, a “science of communication”, are briefly described by Norval Baitello Jr. in the entry “Warburg, Aby” (1866-1929), present in the *Communication Dictionary organized by Ciro Marcondes Filho* (2009).

lines of causality nor previsibility. An image can be present in the Greek imaginary and in the imaginary of Hopi indigenous people or in an African tribe, as well as in the Jewish-Christian myths, which demonstrates its power as carrier of symbols.

Warburg's methodology, which is being intensively studied in research linked with Warburg Institute, must consider the concept of symbol as a solid foundation from which image must be studied. It isn't about, in any hypothesis, a semiotic conceptualization of symbol, if not anchored in Friedrich Theodor Vischer's work. This is how the concept of Vischer is presented by Lescouret:

*L'image et la signification ne font qu'un: le boeuf est l'image de la force parce que le boeuf est fort. Le serpent est l'image de la pluie parce qu'il est comme l'éclair. Puis Vischer (toujours selon l'exposé de Wind) distingue le symbole <magiquement assoiatif> de l'allégorie <logiquement dissociative>. Dans l'ecas, l'association entre l'image et la signification requiert l'assistance d'un prêtre qui accomplit la transsubstantiation au cours d'un rituel. Em revanche, dans le second cas, l'association entre l'image et son sens est superficielle: l'image n'est pas douée des pouvoirs de l'invisible qu'elle represente (LESCOURRET, 2014, p. 128-129).*

The Warburgian method used both in his conference, in his text, in his atlas and in the construction of his library presupposes a complex relation among objects, its previous history and its future potentiality. "Impact" would be, therefore, something potentially present in an image, its capacity of capturing and transforming gazes generating environments. Warburg was concerned with *the Denkraum* (mental space) generated by an image or a family of images, being this *Denkraum* a type of atmosphere of symbols or a symbolic environment in which everyone who appropriates that image actively participates on. The environment never excludes the observer. This environment has, therefore, the power of a "*pharmakon*".

## **Image as a “*pharmakon*”**

The word “*pharmakon*”, in Greek, means, in its origin, both substance that heals and substance that kills, both poison and medicine. If the handling of painful war images had contributed for a state of deep depression with hallucinatory episodes, the search for primal images of the Hopi culture had the restoring role of sobriety? These are questions we are authorized to do facing the theoretical framework proposed by Warburg. If such questioning has any pertinence, we should, then, question ourselves about the flood of images in the media environments we live immersed day and night. Warburg’s reflection never stuck to image objects of the art world, on the contrary, his objects of analysis and study used to go from the demonizing pamphlets to sarcophagus, from illustrations in books, magazines and almanacs to drawings in “*cassone*” (chests that would keep trousseaux). There is something specific in these images and in the environments they create that approaches the highly contaminated environments of persuasion of images that increasingly invade our homes and our bodies. The poisoning by images is manifested in what way nowadays?

## **From war images to the war of images (the strategy of the tobacco industry – the Ayrton Senna’s case)**

From war images, as the ones who belonged in Warburg’s collection, now we experience another type of war: the media war. It is a “war of images”, that shock us, challenge us, moves with their seduction and their ability to impact. In its vast majority, it has as goal the decision-making process, whatever it is, the purchase of a product, a service or an idea. In the war of images, the goal is to sell. In this context, modern advertising is one of the main (if not the only one) of the communicative systems generating images, creating an atmosphere, environments and environmentalities. Not only in mainstream media, but advertisement also produces and shares images and reverberates meanings in different screens and platforms, competing with other sources of production and

circulation of utterances, such as social media (where advertisement is increasingly present).

But how the poisoning by images is manifested today? Let's work here with an example in which is possible to visualize "*Pathosformel*", in other words, the impact that the images can generate on the ones who interact with it: the images produced by the tobacco industry. Disorders associated to the tobacco are present in current versions of the current classificatory systems of mental illnesses, both in the International Classification of Illnesses (CID-10) of the World Health Organization<sup>27</sup> and in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5)<sup>4</sup>. In the DSM 5, the Disorder by tobacco use is included in the section "Disorders Related to Substances and Adiction", where are included the following classes of substances with addictive potential: alcohol, caffeine, cannabis, hallucinogens, inhalant drugs, opioids, sedatives/hypnotics/anxiolytics, stimulants (cocaine, amphetamines, and others), tobacco and others (or unknown drugs).

Smoking is considered a pandemic and a serious public health issue. Because of the global expansion of tobacco use in the 20th century, in 2016, 20% of the world population had used tobacco. In that same year, there were 1.1 billion adult smokers in the whole planet, number that was practically unaltered since 2000<sup>13</sup>. But how the cigarette industry had reached so many users? What are their strategies? How they engendered themselves in the heart of populations so different culturally and geographically, even bringing numberless harm to its users? The tobacco industry had consolidated itself in late 19th century and early 20th century, when cigarettes begin to be produced in an industrial scale and became the first globalized commercial product, mainly with massive presence in the battlefields of World War I.

13 Available at <<https://nacoesunidas.org/oms-1-em-cada-5-pessoas-no-mundo-fuma/>>.

Image 1 – A nurse from the Red Cross lights up a cigarette for a wounded soldier at the military hospital of Souilly, France, during the First World War, around 1917<sup>14</sup>



It wouldn't be possible to list, in one single article, all the tricks of the tobacco industry to sell their products in a world scale. In the present text, we are going to stick to one of the strategies – the ostensive use of images linked to sport, more specifically the Brazilian pilot Ayrton Senna. Even in relation to the advertisement campaigns of the tobacco industry, wouldn't be possible, in one only moment, list and analyze all of the released ad campaigns, since it was directed to many audiences and comprised different themes, since sports, health benefits, reduction of appetite, thinning, success, and charm, among others.

The tobacco industry has always aggressively invested in advertisement campaign, decisive fact, so that the behavior of smoking would gain a positive social representation, from the association of the tobacco

14 Available at <<https://br.historyplay.tv/noticias/fotos-mostram-momentos-dramaticos-enfrentados-por-medicos-de-combate>>.

use with the self-image ideal as: beauty freedom, success. One of the most emblematic episodes was a strategy of use of images to promote the “right to smoke as women”. In 1929, Edward Bernays, pioneer in the use of Psychology and Social Sciences for the persuasion of the consumer audience, architected one of the big episodes of marketing known as *Torches of Freedom*, when a group of women holding cigarettes participated the *Easter Sunday Parade*, parade taking place in Easter Sunday in New York (United States). Smoking, which until then was a part of the male universe, was passing on to feminine hands as a symbolic act that gathered rebelliousness, freedom, and feminism. What was behind this act: an advertisement plan to expand tobacco consumption having as target audience women.

Propagating through cinema, television, and as cultural and sport event sponsor of world reach (such as Formula 1, for example), and with the use of increasingly aggressive marketing strategies, tobacco kept growing, even among women, and the tobacco industry began to have stratospheric profit.

Considered one of the idols of the Brazilian and international sport, during almost all of their career Ayrton Senna, who would be 60 years-old in 2020, was sponsored by tobacco companies. According to the specialist in racing Marcos Júnior Micheletti (2019), Senna worked as the poster boy for companies of different fields and business, from bank corporations, toys, cars, fuel, and watches, but the biggest part of the pilot’s income came from the tobacco industry. From the four teams in which he competed, three of them were sponsored by cigarette manufacturers. When he began in Formula 1, at the Lotus team, the cigarette manufacturer John Player Special released a commercial in 1985 whose final message would say: “Speed up, Ayrton! John Player Special will keep up! John Player Special, flavor and emotion!” (MICHELETTI, 2019, s/p). Still at Lotus, Senna would be sponsored by another tobacco company, Camel, in 1987. Later, Senna ran with McLaren, wearing, for six seasons, the colors red and white of the tobacco company Marlboro. Marlboro was a brand present in big moments of the pilot’s career.



In 1994, Senna switched Marlboro (one of the brands of Philip Morris International, multinational corporation producing tobacco and related products, with products sold in over 180 countries) to the British Rothman's, brand extinct in 1999.

Image 2 – The cars driven by Ayrton Senna during his career, showing tobacco companies<sup>15</sup>,



In the sport universe, athletes who stand out in their categories are lifted to media fame. It is unthinkable, nowadays, an outstanding athlete that doesn't enjoy the financial benefits generated by the use of its image. Ayrton Senna was the face of tobacco advertisement in running courses, but also in sports media and in the news in general. With the transmission of races and news from the media events of Formula 1, the images of the sportsman would gain a discursive power in the different strands of media environments. The strand of communication is a concept in which communicative phenomena would spread, occupying different spaces, which would only be possible with the enhancement of electrical apparatuses that would never turn of and their increasingly

15 Available at <<https://terceirotempo.uol.com.br/noticias/ayrton-senna-que-completaria-59-anos-foi-garoto-propaganda-antes-mesmo-de-estrear-na-f1>>.

thin languages; just like the wind, images would spread through all the cracks in an ephemeral and volatile manner (BAITELLO, 2010).

The choice of having Ayrton Senna as one of the poster boys of the cigarette industry is not random. Senna was considered an idol, with success and fame. As defined by the dictionary, idol is a figure or an image that represents a god, an object of adoration; a hero, worthy of love, respect and admiration. Thinking about the image of media hero of today, the idol sells. Being an “image” in the advertisement universe corresponds to “selling”, and sales mean profit for the advertisers. Even after his death, the image “Ayrton Senna” is linked to many different products. In 2019, 25 years after his death, the brand Senna had already yielded about US\$ 2 billion.

Research performed in 2019<sup>16</sup>, 25 years after his death, reveals that Ayrton Senna is among five celebrities with the biggest rankings in some behavioral and influential attributes, such as humble, reliable, admiration, calm, multicultural, specialist in his area, engaged in social causes and religious. To this list, we could add victorious athlete, with great financial and professional success. In practically all the period in which he was a pilot in Formula 1, he mobilized important values linked to his image to promote smoking. When he was sponsored by the tobacco industry, Ayrton Senna worked as an image. Brands would fuse into his body, which would operate as a “media holder” (SANCHES, 2009). In a scenario of high exposure such as Formula 1, Senna would lend his body (and profited from it) so that the companies he would sponsor would gain visibility and also profit with the pilot’s accomplishments.

### **Pathogenic images – Warburg’s contributions to the study of image as *pharmakon***

Returning to the question: would images be pathogenic? The images of Aby Warburg war archive weren’t unscathed to the eye of the German research. They had, as he himself knew, an undeniable strength, a

16 Available at <[https://gazetaweb.globo.com/portal/noticia/2019/04/senna-ainda-e-um-dos-mais-influentes-entre-as-personalidades-nacionais\\_75750.php](https://gazetaweb.globo.com/portal/noticia/2019/04/senna-ainda-e-um-dos-mais-influentes-entre-as-personalidades-nacionais_75750.php)>.

*Pathosformel*, showing the horror of battles and the suffering that beings of the own species could provoke to their peers or to other peers, like the animals. Images of the idol Ayrton Senna promoting cigarette consumption are not naive nor harmful: they are pathogenic and have the ability to impact.

The tobacco industry (here, associated with sport) is anchored in an industry of images. Their strength comes from a power of images technically thought out and built, which comprise historic and imagetic paths and insert us in a culturally built environment.

Images, as shown by Warburg, are connected to a previous history and a future potential. In order to think about image nowadays, it is important to reflect about the archeology of the same image, the historic environments and scenarios in which they are inserted, in addition to their impact now and in the future. Images coming from the contemporary sport universe have a history – since prehistoric times, coming through medieval competitions, Greece Olympic games, Jewish-Christian myths – sports lead humans to their limit, a continuous resistance of humankind for overcoming obstacles and transcendence.

Being a “mosaic of symbolic elements” (LESSA, 2008, p. 6), sport as a pre-historic activity, is associated to a series of other elements – one of them is the myth of the hero – in a phenomenon described by Warburg as *Bilderfahrzeug* (image vehicle). The myth of the hero is present both in the Greek or Jewish imaginary and in the sport environment (and in many other spheres) of the 21st century (the businessman that makes a company reach stratospheric profits is also a hero). In the concept of *Bilderfahrzeug*, the power of images through centuries do not happen diligently or in a calculated manner, but it lies in its ability of carrying symbols. It is through that that emerges the divine potential and the impact caused by images of athletes like Ayrton Senna. Worshiped inside and outside of Brazil, Senna is the personification of the hero, the idol (from the Greek *eídōlon*, which means statue, figure or image of a god, object of worshipping). It is still the archetype of the Olympic motto “*al-tius, citius, fortius*” or “the tallest, the fastest, the strongest” – motto that

could be updated and replaced by “more visibility, more sponsorship, more money” (RUBIO, 2016, s/p). It is not fortuitous that, 25 years after their death, Senna keeps being one of the most worshiped Brazilian celebrities and commercially lucrative.

The same Warburgian reasoning is present in the images that circulate in different strands and communicational environments and try, at all costs, impact the contemporary subject. In other words, it works as *pharmakon*, and can be pathogenic as it incites and promote harmful behaviors to the physical and mental health. It is not random that Ayrton Senna would appear in cigarette advertisement not only in the competition car, but also in his body. The history of the body is the history of civilization; therefore, images of the body tell stories of civilizations, of imaginaries. The aesthetic beauty of the body is present in practically all history of mankind, from the cult of nudity of paganism to the Renaissance, even in the perfect and muscular bodies of athletes in ancient Greece and nowadays. The remnants of the imaginary of bodies reverberate through the centuries and are present today, either in the athlete or in the common person.

Warburg’s collection of war images and the war of images promoted by the tobacco industry are faces of the same coin. The war images shock due to the horror and the closeness to death and destruction, and the wars of advertisement images work for seduction, and can lead to dangerous behaviors and disorders, such as the different malignant illnesses coming from the use of tobacco. In the example of the tobacco industry, it is clear the pathogeny of images. But the images as *pharmakon* are present in other media ambiances.

In the specific case of Senna, we are not questioning his ability or nature as an athlete or as a human being, but stating a fact: as an idol, therefore, as an image, he employed his body to share and spread the consumption of tobacco. His image would easily transit through different social statuses, ethnical groups and different ages. The strength of Ayrton Senna’s image (*Pathosformel*), his ability to impact and act as propeller of values and behaviors is undeniable. Here the image is

pathogenic when it induces to cigarette consumption, associated to an idol and everything he represented. Keeping in mind that the act of smoking is not harmless: 50% of smokers will die from tobacco-related diseases.

The Warburg case can offer subsidy for us to understand other situations of the use of image as *pharmakon*. In addition to the aforementioned tobacco industry, we can mobilize Warburg concepts to (re) think the efficacy and the strength of images in the stimulus to behaviors that are harmful to the physical and mental health (or both). In this study, we pointed towards the possibility of expanding Warburg's theories and concepts for the study of images. His contributions (his theory of image, his science and his method) can emerge as powerful expedients so that all of those who intend to think about the image not by its aesthetizing root, but as *pharmakon*. The contributions of such studies can go beyond the sciences of communication and comprise mainly the sciences whose subject is directly affected by the impact of pathogenic images, such as medicine (especially psychiatry) and psychology.

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