

## Culture industry and experience: novelty, proximity and Erlebnis<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

### *Indústria cultural e experiência: novidade, proximidade e vivência*

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#### Abstract

This paper questions the (im)possibility of building experiences from the relationship established with commodities. From the concept of excursion tourism, we specifically analyze the relationship between subjects and objects/attractions through interviews and observations. The results indicate that the tourist manifests a disposition to the novelty, assumed as habitual within the trip, besides prioritizing a relation of proximity with objects. Such proximity is expressed, among other aspects, in their impulse to appropriate objects through images and informational data. For the tourist, the tour as a whole and its activities are a shock experience, implying the weakening of mnemonic (and therefore the essential use of the photographic resource, even ephemeral) and mimetic forces (the reason for valuing the direct apprehension of the object by the information).

**Keywords:** experience, culture industry, education, subjectiveness, tourism

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## Resumo

Neste trabalho questionamos as (im)possibilidades de constituição de experiências, a partir das relações estabelecidas com os produtos culturais mercantilizados. Tomando como objeto o turismo de excursão, analisamos especificamente a relação dos sujeitos com os objetos/ atrações. A partir dos dados obtidos com entrevistas e observações, evidenciamos que o turista assume uma disposição para a novidade, tornada habitual no interior da viagem, assim como dá preferência a uma relação de proximidade com os objetos, o que se expressa, entre outros aspectos, no impulso de apropriar-se deles por meio de suas imagens e dados informativos. A excursão como um todo e as atividades que a compõem se sucedem para o turista como vivência de choque, implicando no enfraquecimento das forças mnemônicas (e por isso o caráter imprescindível do uso do recurso fotográfico, mesmo efêmero) e miméticas (e por isso a valorização da apreensão direta do objeto pela informação).

**Palavras-chave:** experiência, indústria cultural, formação, subjetividade, turismo

## Introduction

The emergence of complex and specialized social organization, new paces of life in the big cities, and the predominance of the technical-instrumental dimension that characterizes modernity, altered the subjective structure of individuals to the point of establishing new ways to relate with the word and with others. Therefore, to establish our experiences. Such subjectivity transformation would be characterized, among other elements, by the perception of a faster time, the distancing from quality on human relations, and the supremacy of types of knowledge connected to information and scientific knowledge. Following Walter Benjamin (2012d), *Erfahrung* (outer sensory experience) declines, making space to *Erlebnis* (inner lived experience).

As a non-fixed concept, experience can be characterized as a notion that gains density by the articulation of other concepts (memory, shock, aura, etc.), as well as its unfoldings (mimesis, boredom, etc.), taking the shape of a theoretical mosaic that guided a thought movement. The act of traveling, in fact, is meaningful in the formulation of this notion. In traditional societies, walking through distant lands as a traveler or living for a long time as a

sedentary peasant granted authority to the narrative of these characters, who integrated their *experience* to the memory of the community and were updated by it through a movement of appropriation, exchange, and collective resignification of different types of knowledge (Benjamin, 2012d); it is no accident that the word *Erfahrung* carries the radical *fabr*, which, even in old German, meant travel, wander (Gagnebin, 2004).

Though Benjamin's diagnosis point out the weakening of *Erfahrung*, his studies maintain a certain ambivalence towards the possibility of its reconstruction, more than this, them seem to sign possible ways to construct a new *experience*, including new aesthetic practices (Agamben, 2005; Benjamin, 2012b, 2012c).

The technological acceleration and the production of goods in digital means is a process that intensifies the power of the categories developed by Benjamin many decades ago, authorizing its use in the analysis of contemporary transformations in human subjectivity.

In this article, our analyses focus on the experience established by a commodified cultural good, in this case, travel converted into tourism. If it was awarded to travelers an experienced based on the knowledge accumulated during the ways, what formation can engender a tourist who travels for entertainment? After all, tourism is, at the same time, an object of desire available to consumers, as entertaining as few other leisure activities- by the endless amount of "objects to gaze" (Urry, 1996) –, it also encompasses, in the social imaginary, noble ideas connected to formation and cultural development.

However, as it is, above all, a good, we echo Botton's (2003) observation that "we are flooded by advices on the place *where* we should go, but we hear very little on *why* and *how* we should go". Instead of asking how and why one "should" travel, we ask about the way people are travelling and the reason to travel, focusing on the subject of the practice: the tourists and their experiences, questioning to what measure the practice reinforces or establishes their subjectivities and the meanings and perceptions it favors or awakens (p. 17).

To do so, we conducted an empirical research following four tours and interviewed 13 tourists, between December 2014 and April 2015. These tours were trips organized by agencies, with pre-established itineraries and programs. This is considered to be a cheaper and easier way to travel, as there is no need for the individual effort to make reservations, research, and choose itineraries and transport. The four tours we followed had approximately 30 tourists, lasting between 2 to 4 days to the three states of Brazilian South region.

## Novelty made regular

Tourism, as a modern leisure practice, was made possible by very specific historic and material conditions, becoming something different from the old travels guided by pragmatic objectives and precarious or inexistent structures. More than that, current tourism would be defined, according to Enzensberger (1985), by its revolutionary character as it is experienced as an attempt to reach freedom, which can be suffocated by work, but also would be a scape from “the prison of cities and the misery of a rented room” (p. 217). However, the imaginative force that allowed the belief on the access or the experience of freedom through tourism,

has long betrayed and preserved the revolution. It transfigured freedom and made it retreat the limits of imagination, until it crystalized spatially in the image of nature far from civilization, temporally in the image of a past history, becoming folklore and monument. These, the untouched landscape and the untouched history, are the guiding images of tourism until now. It is the attempt to materialize the romantic dream projected from afar. The more the bourgeois society closed itself, the more the citizen strived to escape from it, as a tourist. (p. 214)

Besides being crystalized in nature, far from civilization (zoos and different landforms) and the images of past history (museums, monuments, folkloric presentations), the “romantic dream [of freedom] projected from afar” is also materialized today in the experiences of shopping and shows, as we identified in the tours researched. The trip itself is a good, the shopping spaces are an attraction, as tourist spots in the itinerary, naturalized and desired by tourists. The souvenir shops in each attraction are well-known, so as the local fairs, shopping centers, or stores specialized in products that either represent the visited places (such as the store of *Cooperativa Agrícola Sanjo*, in São Joaquim-SC), or a factory store in the city (as is the case of *Porcelanas Schimdt* in Pomerode-SC). Similar to the images of nature, of history, and the purchase of objects, shows seem to secure a supposed space of freedom, perceived simply by the feeling of accessing the newest technical and technological artifacts: shows, fireworks, parties, and festivals with great presentations of light and sound, such as the *Desfile de Natal* (Christmas Parade), in Blumenau, and the *Apresentação Natalina* (Christmas Presentation) in Curitiba.

Despite the particular ways each tourist relates with these objects, there is a common discourse on the potential of being always “different”, of establishing themselves as something new, an argument that makes trips forever justifiable, as there is always something new to see. For example, many tourists commented that they had already visited Gramado-RS, but had

never done the *Passeio Rural*, a new activity included in the itinerary, or they had been to Lages-SC many times but, according to Robson “ *this time [ in this tour], there was one more attraction, the Apple Picking. We were curious to know how the harvest was*”. Similarly, Vilson thought that the square in Pomerode- SC was different with Christmas decoration, though he had already visited the space in other tours, “but there was no nativity scene in the square...So, we can see that each time we visit the same place, you see different things”<sup>5</sup>. Another tourist, who substituted the sightseeing tour to Pomerode to go to a mall justified this choice because he already knew the city and “travels to see different things”<sup>6</sup>. Thus, each possibility of shopping or changes in natural and urban elements, or festivals in the cities, is seen as something different.

Apparently, the touristic attraction in the itinerary indicates the possibility of tourists to find something different, after all, each trip was established by an element that differentiate it from previous others. However, the different destinations and attractions were created based on elements that existed or were created in the territories – be them natural, cultural, historical, and others – that can be explored by tourism. The creation of another show, another tour, i.e., another touristic attraction can be seen as an attempt to capture a new content to apply the processes of mechanized differentiation, as well in other cultural products exemplified by Horkheimer and Adorno (2015).

Such “mechanical” differentiation grants everything an air of similarity, exhibiting products as different, but that are, at the same thing, equalized by small differences and attribution of value. The alleged specialty, singularity, originality, or authenticity in the destinations and attractions are produced to allow the emergence of the city in the touristic circuit (Costa, 2010), or to keep it, as seen by the tourists who have visited Blumenau many times, but had not seen the Christmas show, or had been to Lages, but not picked apples.

Besides having the same structure, some attractions have the same content. For example, the Christmas events, present in three of the tours, with the same characters, colors, and shapes: lights in decorative shapes, Christmas symbols and figures built with different materials, traditional Christmas carols, artificial snow, miniature of houses covered with fabric or green, red, and white paint, animals in pens as in a village.

<sup>5</sup> Vilson – Retired nurse and radiology technician, 64 years old, married. Interview December 22, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Field notes 1 – Tour “*Magia de Natal em Blumenau*”.

Especially in these cases, the different craved in the trip is always the same, the common, the same disguised as different, the known placed in a far place, so that it seems unknown. Not only the decorations and the artistic shows on celebratory dates are similar and repetitive. In the tourist trip, even what is common has the prestige of becoming “different”: handcraft, decorations, meals, stores, and even shopping malls. Transport, accommodation, and food have similar standards of aesthetic, cleanliness, comfort, and climate control, wherever it is. The similarity of places, the repetition of objects, and the clichés of the tour guides should cause surprise if we did not know that tourism production follows the patterns of cultural industry (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2015).

Besides the similarity on the material structure and the objects, the network of meaning around them follow the same logic of distraction and consumerism. Though they can dialogue with each other, the particularities of historic and social importance, city gates, squares, churches, museums, and local commerce are presented and experienced in the same way: an endless sequence of objects acquired to the “collection of touristic spots”.

Though the objects and dynamic of tours were in fact different, tourists would need to be willing to have a distinct relation with these objects, something that, maybe, dismisses physical distance, as in Xavier De Maistre (1998). Locked for around 40 days in his bedroom due to legal problems, the Frenchman wrote the well-known book *Voyage around my room*, transforming familiar objects, everyday activities, people around him, and even his dog in objects of new gazes, reflections, and digressions. De Maistre shows a new way of travelling that depends exactly on how to approach things and places allowing oneself to be constantly surprised.

In a way, the tourist does exactly the opposite of de Maistre: while the writer transforms the usual into novelty, the tourist transforms the novelty into usual. To Benjamin (1994b), new and novelty have different dimensions, the latter is connected to the notion of a continuous return, a hellish cycle that characterizes the continuous similarity of goods, produced under the fast process of production and reproduction. The idea of novelty is materialized by fashion (Benjamin, 1994b), expressed by the endless presentation of products that are instantly substituted the moment after it appears.

Objects and touristic attractions present themselves (and are perceived) as novelties, emerging already obsolete, as they are not discarded in the same moment it is reached (or seen)



only because of the need of photographic registry. The fast pace between touristic attraction, the quick return to the buses to continue the tour, the anticipated questions on the next place to be visited, that is, the constant search for something that would be new, is not an exception, but the common behavior of tourists. They live submitted to a regime of expectations, it is more important to be in constant movement than the destination and the attractions. Thus, they are always waiting to leave home, to know somewhere, see some monument, have the next meal, rest in the hotel, come back home and do the next trip, completing the repetition cycle.

The disposition to novelty is common in modernity<sup>7</sup>, that is, habit is no longer characterized by the repetition of the known with the potential to make something new emerge, but by the “always- the- same” repetition of novelty. On the other hand, “the new appear within the ever-always-the-same” (Benjamin, 1994b, p. 172), to the commonness of novelty, something that, in Benjamin’s analysis, Baudelaire could do in his poetic works, as he “yanked” something from its common context and made “emerge the new from the always-the-same” (p. 165). As he experienced the sensation of modern, when the social experience assumes the physiognomy of the eternal return of goods, rocked by the automatic responses of everyday shocks, Baudelaire confronted himself with this sensation. Transforming his own shock into the principal of his poetic work (Benjamin, 1994b), he could resist it and emancipate himself through his specific perception, making appear the beauty and the new in the everyday phenomena, which became common. An example is when the poet describes the ecstasy of the subject with the appearance of a beautiful woman who, then, disappears in the crowd, which Benjamin (1994b) describes as love “at last sight”<sup>8</sup>.

When explaining the mechanisms of cultural industry, Horkheimer and Adorno (2015) stated that the rhythms, the spaces, and the senses are previously attributed to the goods, so as to prescribe a formula for consumers’ reactions to be taken rationally and effortlessly. Thus, when the tourist says he wants to “see different things”, he believes he can find the new, a space

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<sup>7</sup> Novelty is characteristic of modernity, in which “what has just happened as a promise of something new is automatically corrupted by another new... This way, Benjamin can reveal modernity as a myth and progress as an eternal return to the same (again as a repetition of the same, as death), denouncing its regressive potential and repressive power” (Santi, 2012, p. 209).

<sup>8</sup> It is the sonnet “To a Passer-by”, from *The Flowers of Evil* (Baudelaire, 2006), which Benjamin analysis with other works in an attempt to understand the understanding of new perceptive experiences by the subject faced by the phenomenon of the crowd, including shock experiences. On the sonnet, the author observes that it “presents an image of shock, almost a catastrophe. However, capturing the subject, she also reached the core of his feeling” (Benjamin, 1994c, p. 118).

for adventure, but is faced by a novelty, and feels comfortable with this, as actual new is rejected as it represents a risk of non-adaptation to the already automatized mechanics of common experiences (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2015). This happens when, overburden with previous information on the visited place, there is little to discover or to surprise us, all has been (and is) exhaustively seen, shown, an explained. An example are the guidelines before entering a theme park in Gramado:

With a group of tourists in front of him, the local guide explains the attractions in the park, he says that in the entrance there is a staircase that leads to Santa Claus factory, through which we will pass and see Santa's helpers. He talks about the belvedere to a beautiful landscape and Santa Claus's house where we will go after, this would be the center of the Park. He emphasizes that all is signaled and the Park is self-explanatory, but we should follow the Park trajectory as in a triangle and, drawing this trajectory on air, reinforces what will be found in each point. He also recommends us to take our cameras and walk slowly because of the roots on the ground, specially the trekking areas. In the end of the explanation, he reminds us to make a wish to Santa Claus and sets a time to return, one hour later<sup>9</sup>.

Contrary to the above experience, what De Maistre does is to reverse an already established habit, he bypasses boredom, tracking the true new, what tourists could actually call "different". Opposing itself to the always-the-same of novelty, the new is expressed through a (re)discovery and the spontaneous creation, as suggested by Benjamin (Santi, 2012). Our recluse traveler seem to have exercised what children do per excellence, as they "discover 'the new again' and through this *experience* [our emphasis], teaches all how to do the same" (p. 208-209). If we consider this disposition to discover and create, we can say that the pre-defined destinations, as well as the most "interesting" ones, can be tedious, and the places we live (neighborhoods, streets, cities) can be surprising.

## **Proximity and auratic distance**

Though tourists crave the "different" – as a novelty – projected in anything and everything that is physically distant, their relation with the objects in history, in nature, in commerce, in shows is characterized by the attempt to make them as *close* as possible. This relation of *proximity* with objects manifests itself by the questioning of its measures, dates that place them chronologically in history (valid and official information), names of cities,

<sup>9</sup> Field notes 3 – Tour "*Gramado e Canela*".



demographic data, geographic location, names of personalities (politicians, founders, artists), and even more names (of squares, churches, monuments, streets, avenues, museums). It is striking how the tour guide leads the panoramic sightseeing in Gramado:

Using the microphone of the bus, the guide indicates some touristic points. After some meters, he points out the *Praça das Etnias*, the *Casa do Colono* among others which we can only glimpse. He warns us that, in some meters, we will see *Praça das Bandeiras*, and explains that the flags of all Brazilian states can be found there. He demands our attention to the right and left side, depending on what he wants to show, he indicates that we will see the statue of Kikito, the Brazilian Oscar, and, after, shows the space where the well-known Christmas Show takes place....

Similarly, when reflecting on trip in Madrid, De Botton (2003) perceives the excess of information and how everything had already been measured, weighted, and probed: “The north side of *Plaza Mayor* extended for 101 meters and 52 centimeters. It was built by Juan Gomes de Mora in 1619. The temperature was 18.5 °C, the wind coming from the west. The equestrian statue of Filipe III, in the center of *Plaza Mayor* had a height of ...” (p. 120).

The approximation attempt with the objects also happens through the purchase of miniature reproductions, capturing the image in endless products such as postcards and, obviously, through photos. Vilson says: “*I take my camera everywhere I go and take photos here and there, I take photos even of birds that we don't have*”<sup>10</sup>. Suzana always highlights her love for photos and the storage in the computer, explaining that “*in the city of Torres I took about two hundred photos. In the computer I have separate folders for each place and when I traveled there*”<sup>11</sup>.

According to Benjamin (2012b), this way of perceiving, connected to the need of *proximity* and possession of objects, emerges with the possibility of technical reproduction in series and the increasing value of exhibiting the object reproduced at the expense of the cult value given to art works/unique and authentic objects, with which there is mostly a relation of *distance*:

To make things close is such a passionate concern of modern masses with their tendency to overcome the unique character of all facts through reproducibility. Each day it becomes more irresistible the need to have, as close as possible, in image, or even, in its copy, in its reproduction. It is unmistakable how reproduction differentiates itself, how it is offered to us through magazines and cinematographic news, and the image. In it, the unit and the durability are so closely associated as transience and repeatability in reproduction. (p. 184)

<sup>10</sup> Vilson – Retired nurse and radiology technician, 64 years old, married. Interview December 22, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Suzana – Secretary, retired librarian, 51 years old, single. Interview, March 26, 2015

Considering that, in a way, tourism is also established as a technical way to massively reproduce history, landscape, history, cities, spaces that privilege the value of exhibition, it favors a perception guided towards valuing what is identical (known) instead of the unique and a relation of *proximity* with things at a distance, that we can call auratic. Though in Benjamin's essays, aura appears mainly to define an aesthetic quality of works of art, the author elucidates the possibility of attributing an auratic quality to other cultural forms even, we suppose, objects that are currently considered touristic, mainly when considering that "observing, resting, in a summer afternoon, a mountain chain in the horizon, or a branch, that casts its shadow over us, means breathing the aura of these mountains, of this branch" (Benjamin, 2012b, p. 184).

The auratic quality is related to the unique and authentic character of artistic objects, with the *experience* of the "here and now", and a type of aesthetic reception that demands a *distancing* to contemplate, that is, the possibility of having as an object "some time of retreat or evaluation" (Benjamin, 2012b, p. 206). The attempt to materially apprehend the landscape, or any other touristic objects, is the confirmation of our difficulty to establish an auratic relation with the object.

Aura "invokes in its definition the notion of insurmountable distance" (Avelar, 2008, p. 4): regardless of how close the object is, it is impossible to apprehend it. Modern techniques of reproduction compromise the aura when attempt to transpose the barrier of *distance* through copy and reproduction, when transform the object in a marketable good, giving it a transitional character, typical of consumer goods (Avelar, 2008).

However, we observed that the touristic object is already close and familiar to the tourist even before going on the trip, considering the profusion of images that forces the incessant gaze over it and under the same frame. In this sense, Arthur confidently answers the question on why he chose to visit Gramado: "*Ah, I was curious to know it. Because we see it on TV all our lives that Gramado is the city of tourists and the famous Brazilian artists*"<sup>12</sup>, probably referring to the *Festival de Cinema*<sup>13</sup>. When mentioning Gramado, the group of images and symbols of the city in Arthur's mind come up, remind us of Marcel Proust's account that the simple mention of the word

<sup>12</sup> Arthur - 69 years old, retired, married. Interview March 3, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> *Festival de Cinema de Gramado* takes place since 1973 and it is the main uninterrupted event of the type in the country. Since 1992, it also includes cinematic productions from other Latin American countries. Though the festival is not broadcasted by the main open channels, news on the awardees and other information are broadly disseminated by the media.

Venice invoked a bland multitude of images. Proust's observation on the poverty and lack of deepness on these images relate to, according to Benjamin (1994c), the lack of an aura that would be typical of the images registered in our memories or our voluntary memory (*mémoire volontaire*). According to the author, this "status" of memory would be composed by isolated facts and information that "runs out on itself", do not incorporate new *experiences*, as we can hardly establish correspondences with them.

Therefore, besides the mnemonic aspect, there is a relational dimension in the notion of aura that is not only related to the specificity of the object, but a relation of correspondence, because "who is seen, or believes to be seen, retaliates the gaze. Perceiving the aura of something means giving it the power to retaliate the gaze" (Benjamin, 1994c, p. 139). From this, we can understand that the "auratic" quality refers to the *experiences* with the object, with something or someone, with what/who we can establish relations, be in consonance or in confrontation, to which we give meaning and let ourselves be instigated by the answers in our gaze.

Therefore, we can notice that the perception towards a feeling of possession is altered. If we are more open, as do tourists, to only take something from the object (information, image, "prestige", "sense of freedom"), the auratic relation implies a disposition to let something of yourself be removed, i.e., the object captures something in us as much as we capture something in it. In this sense, tourism seems to offer more vestiges than aura: "Vestige is the emergence of a proximity, no matter how far is what was left. Aura is the emergence of a distance, no matter how near is what evokes it. In the vestige we take possession of the thing; in aura, it takes possession of us" (Benjamin, 1994a, p. 223).

The decline of aura is established, therefore, as a broader problem on human perception than it is on the work of art (Avelar, 2008), and the dialectic between *proximity* and *distance* it evokes helps to understand contemporary tourist, as he/she looks for in the (physically) distant a *proximity*, but finds it difficult to find a *distance* (auratic distance), even in what is very (physically) close.

## Shock experience and mimetic weakening

Simultaneously imposed by the touristic dynamic and demanded by the individual, the perception in the shape of shock is added to the disposition for *novelty* and the preference for a relation of *proximity* with touristic objects, as we intend to show using a trip to Morretes-PR as an example. The city is known by its historic buildings, typical cuisine of Paraná coast, and the small mountains which give the city its name. After lunch, the guide informs us we have half an hour to walk freely around the city center and suggests visiting the fair and the local commerce. Leaving the restaurant, we walk a block towards the square, from where we could hear some noise and people's movement, then, we are faced by the following image:

[Morretes city center] There are many blue stalls on the square and the open windows of the old houses are used as displays for all types of goods: key chains, magnets, pens, tea cloths, Christmas decoration, plants, decorative stones, house utensils, t-shirts, jewelry, different sweets, almost everything with some mark of the city, if not the product itself, their packaging. No sound can be clearly perceived, all mixed in a buzz, children running, laughter, shouts announcing sales, cutlery touching plates, pans whistling, cash registers opening and closing. I can't smell anything, despite the smoke coming out of some chimneys. Nothing is touched except the objects of the fair that, despite all the similarities between them, are reviewed, exchanged, touched, turned hundreds of times up when the tourist decides on what key chain can best describe what he supposedly has seen in his visit, or even what he thinks might impress the receiver of the gift, only then the purchase is made. The mountain which named the city of Morretes is almost imperceptible and is, at most, the background for this scenario<sup>14</sup>.

Faced by this scenario, we question: what are the possible relations with the natural landscape? What correspondences can be established with the old historic houses? How and what to see faced by so many visual and sound stimuli?

This situation is not foreign to anyone who had already been in a touristic attraction in a day-tour or in the peak season. The fast change of attention due to the profusion of stimuli and information that need to be assimilated and automatically answered is incompatible with the auratic *experience*, demanding another type of perception, characterized by the experience of shocks (Benjamin, 1994c). This discontinuous and fragmented perception, in which the events emerge as fast as they disappear, is also imposed by the dynamic of panoramic sightseeing tours, when, in a short time, a great number of information must be assimilated while a sequence of images appear through the windows of the bus. With its specificities, tourism answers and

<sup>14</sup> Field Note 2 – Tour “*Natal Encantado em Curitiba*”.

produces changes on the ways of perception, similar to what Benjamin (2012b, p. 207) identified in the cinema, in which:

As soon as the viewer perceives an image, it is not the same any longer. It cannot be fixated, neither as a painting nor as something real. The association of viewers' ideas is immediately interrupted, with the change of image. On this is based the shock effect provoked by the cinema, that, as any other shock, needs to be intercepted by an intense attention.

As in the cinema, tourism is also, in a way, established by images in constant movement, be it on panoramic sightseeing tours or the great amount of objects and touristic points that must be seen or photographed in short minutes. The possibilities of contemplation or free interpretation are interrupted by new guidelines and information given by the guide or even until a new scenario presents itself, in a selection and/or sequence of fragments of images that remind the cinema. Thus, the tourist, as a movie viewer, also needs to be attentive and answer to the multiple sensorial shocks during the trip.

Despite the need to use this type of perception in some moments of life, so as to carry out a task even when not focused, when it becomes a rule, it automatizes reactions and behaviors, even at times when we are supposedly free to express ourselves autonomously, as in the so-called "free-time" activities.

The logic of dispersion, an acute attention and, at the same time, discontinuous, is not only sought and produced within the trip, but the integrality of the "free-time" organization of the investigated subjects, when the trip assumes a privileged role. Paulo tells his travel "list" for the next months: *"This Saturday we will go to Porto Belo, after the New Year's eve at SESC in Pousada Rural. After, Easter in Pousada Rural, carnival at Pousada Rural and the Apple Picking, also in Pousada Rural. All this until March"*<sup>15</sup>. In another moments he recalls his past trips: *"I've gone about six times to Natal Luz [Christmas Lights] in Gramado. I've been four times to Termas de Jurema, I've gone twice Natal Luz in Blumenau, I went to the Christmas in Curitiba, the Christmas in Itá"*<sup>16</sup>.

The tourists interviewed were frequent travelers and often to the same places, where they can find some novelty especially built to be seen as new and reason to return. As the different envisioned in the trip is not really different, and a different relation (auratic) is hardly materialized, the tourist is not satisfied, only fulfills a need, so the wish for the same trip or

<sup>15</sup> Paulo – Retired teacher, 69 years old, married. Interview, December 10, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Idem.

another remains. One needs to always seek other and new situation, that is neither another nor new, but which appears to be so. The pleasure the tourist feels in the trip seem to disperse as soon as he/she returns home (or as soon as getting into contact with the touristic object) and is related to the endless restart – typical of novelty- , such as in gambling, whose pleasure works to “numb”, with which the player aims to “dull consciousness” (Benjamin, 1994c, p. 130).

This sensitivity with little concentration and contemplation presented by tourists formed itself during a long time, especially due to the fixation demanded by the machines of image production in modern time, based on the ideas of TÜRCKE (2010). The power of image and the omnipresence of TV, computer, and mobile screens in work and leisure establish, according to him, a global regime of attention that dulls the perception through the continuous excitation provided by the shock of images. If, on one hand, the intermittent changes of images soften the shock effect, accustoming the individual to a disperse attention, on the other hand, the products need to behave in a way that stimulates the continuous awakening, as tourism does so well, with strategies to maintain this distraction.

Differently from the immediateness through which pleasure is experienced in the perception through *shocks*, the full satisfaction has a character of permanence and is an intrinsic quality of auratic *experiences*. These, as seen, depend on a *distancing*, on the ability to establish correspondences with the objects, allowing it to answer our gaze, what Benjamin calls “exercise”: “If we call aura the images that, grounded on *mémoire involontaire*, tend to group around an object of perception, then this aura around the object corresponds to the *experience* itself that is crystalized in an object through a type of exercise” (Benjamin, 1994c, p. 137). To this exercise of correspondence, human beings have a mimetic ability, presented by the author as the capacity to perceive and produce similarities, learned mainly during childhood, when children play the roles of people or objects, and is perpetuated in adults’ behavior that, even unconsciously, make themselves similar and attributes similarities, giving meaning to everyday episodes (Benjamin, 2012a).

Benjamin (2012a) recognizes that men’s ability to perceive and produce similarities has been reduced due to structural changes in modernity and the new temporal ways, in which prevail the experiences of shock cushioned by consciousness. Though weakened in adults, the mimetic capacity is still strong in children’s play, as they establish other relations with time and the order of things. As stated by Schlesener (2009), children’s fantasy is produced in “the living



world of men, in which contemplation is translated into a creation feeling...It is the way children find to dialogue and interact with the world: identify themselves, at first, to, alter, decipher and distinguish themselves” (pp. 152-153).

Interact with the world through similarities means imagine a new organization to a predetermined and millimetrically controlled order, it means a kindle of freedom and autonomy in a society that tells us and imposes to us what to do, even in our time of leisure. It is a moment of imagination and creation, of being open to apprehend through the sensitivity and the establishment of a *distance*.

Based on Benjamin’s studies, we could interpret that the mimetic behavior consists on a type of perception that incorporates the events to memory, through which desire is satisfied, but is renovated, as in the fruition of the scent of a flower, the contemplation of a work of art, or a landscape. As shown in Proust’s accounts, in which images of Venice came to mind, as soon as the name of a city was mentioned, the trip reproduced in series, together with all the predetermined services and standardized objects, make all so *close* to the tourist that the *distance* needed for imagination is not favored, nor, however, is full satisfaction<sup>17</sup>, demanding a new (or the same) trip to be always in the horizon. Suzana exemplifies this when saying that “*I go back thinking on where I will go next, because [the trip] gives you this energy, this desire*”<sup>18</sup>. Olinda goes beyond saying that: “*I think I won’t be used to stay a year without travelling. We travel and the next month we are already thinking if there isn’t any other trip we can do*”<sup>19</sup>.

## Final Remarks

The tourism experienced by the direct contact with objects, by the *proximity*, and possession (purchase, photos, souvenirs, information, etc.), the shock experience, and, therefore, lacking mnemonic registers and creation of similarities, results in a type of fleeting pleasure, as it is satisfying a need (such as food for hunger or a drink to quench thirst) which is always renovated, and not a proper wish. According to Agamben (2005), “need is nothing more

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<sup>17</sup> The harmful effect of violating the *distance*, shown in a verse by Baudelaire, is the same that takes place “when the spectator gets too close to a scenario”: “Vaporous pleasure flees towards the horizon/Like a sylphide slipping away backstage” (Benjamin, 1994c, p. 143).

<sup>18</sup> Suzana – Secretary, retired librarian, 51 years old, single. Interview, March 26, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Olinda - Housewife, 66 years old, married. Interview, December 22, 2014.

than the inverted shape of desire itself” and is connected to corporeal reality, whose pleasure depends on the physical presence of the object, differently from that obtained through the mediation of fantasy/imagination. In the experiences characterized by the satisfaction of needs, men face the same as the desiring-self of Sade: “only a body, an *objectum* that can only consume and destruct, never to satisfy, because the phantom eludes and hides in the infinite” (p. 36)<sup>20</sup>. Costa (2005) reinforces the role of mimetic ability for the satisfaction experiences, whose prolonged pleasure lasts even in the physical absence of the desired thing or person, as the effect of the presence is reproduced by the imagination, as a remembrance or anticipation.

A subjectivity formed by the perception in the shape of shocks avidly needs the presence and the diversification of objects and experiences to maintain the pleasure and, because of this, a trip is never enough, to the point that they become “effectively consumable” and “gain the countenance of nutrients which they had never been”, as explained by Costa (2005, p. 168), corroborating how Agamben (2005) qualifies contemporary experiences.

Perhaps, more than the search for “different” objects and spatially distant in trips, we could establish different relations with these objects, with some *distance*, or with what we try to understand as an auratic relation, a way to surrender ourselves in a more “sensitive” and available way, so that the object can return its gaze and can shake our stiffened senses. De Maistre indirectly suggests us an exercise to change our relation with close objects and places before going away.

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<sup>20</sup> Agamben (2005) understands experience from the link between desire (complete, connect to fantasy) and need (connected to the corporeal reality). With modern science, this link is broken: fantasy is understood as belonging solely to the “subjective” “hallucinatory” universe (p.34) and its mediating role is understood as *ego cogito*. Therefore, desire changes its status, becoming unsatisfiable, and the object of desire is unattainable.

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