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Cinema as a Foucauldian dispositif: An Anachronistic and Materialistic Approach

Cinema as a Foucauldian dispositif: An Anachronistic and Materialistic Approach

Juan David Cárdenas[1]

Abstract

In general terms it is possible to describe this research as a materialistic approach to cinema. Our grasp of film is focused on the perspective of films as a product of work, as a product of organized, distributed and selected manners of labor. Most of the films exist because they respect a set of implicit processes, rules of production and distribution that are finally embodied in the images according to the so-called "cinematic language". In addition, theory and history of cinema have usually been blind to that. In this problematic context, Michel Foucault's idea of a *Dispositif* as a mixture of discourses, practices, institutions, etc., is useful to uncover the cinematic system of production and self-legitimation. The cinematic *Dispositf* is finally expressed but simultaneously hidden on the screen. In other words, the cinematic *Dispositif* controls the form of films and also their social life as commodities but it is usually hidden behind its artistic performance.

Keywords

Cinema; commodity; materialism; history of cinema; *Dispositif*; cinematic production (Source: Unesco Thesaurus).

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El cine como dispositivo foucaultiano: un enfoque anacrónico y materialista

Resumen

En términos generales, se puede describir esta investigación como un enfoque materialista del cine. Nuestro entendimiento del cine se enfoca en la perspectiva de las películas como un producto del trabajo, como un producto de las formas de trabajo organizadas, distribuidas y seleccionadas. La mayoría de las películas existen porque respetan un conjunto de procesos implícitos, normas de producción y distribución que finalmente se encarnan en imágenes de acuerdo con el susodicho "lenguaje cinematográfico". Adicionalmente, la teoría y la historia del cine se han mantenido al margen de este. En este contexto problemático, la idea de Michel Foucault de un *Dispositif* como una mezcla de discursos, prácticas, instituciones, etc. sirve para revelar el sistema cinemático de la producción y la auto-legitimación. El *Dispositif* cinematográfico finalmente se expresa, pero al mismo tiempo se oculta en la pantalla. En otras palabras, el *Dispositif* cinematográfico controla la forma de las películas y su vida social como producto de consumo, pero usualmente se esconde detrás de su presentación artística.

Palabras clave

Cine; artículo de consumo; materialismo; historia del cine; *Dispositif*; producción cinematográfica (Fuente: Tesauro de la Unesco).

O cinema como dispositivo foucaultiano: um enfoque anacrônico e materialista

Resumo

Em termos gerais, é possível descrever esta pesquisa como um enfoque materialista do cinema. Nosso entendimento do cinema se enfoca na perspectiva dos filmes como um produto do trabalho, como um produto das formas de trabalho organizadas, distribuídas e selecionadas. A maioria dos filmes existem porque respeitam um conjunto de processos implícitos, normas de produção e distribuição que finalmente se encarnam em imagens de acordo com chamada "linguagem cinematográfico". Adicionalmente, a teoria e a história do cinema têm se mantido à margem do mesmo. Neste contexto problemático, a ideia de Michel Foucault de um *Dispositif* como uma mistura de discursos, práticas, instituições, etc. serve para descobrir o sistema cinemático da produção e a autolegitimação. O *Dispositif* cinematográfico finalmente se expressa, mas ao mesmo tempo se oculta na tela. Em outras palavras, o *Dispositif* cinematográfico controla a forma dos filmes e sua vida social como produto de consumo, mas usualmente se esconde atrás de sua apresentação artística.

Palavras-chave

Cinema; artigo de consumo; materialismo; história do cinema; *Dispositif*; produção cinematográfica (Fonte: Tesauro da Unesco).

Cinema as a foucauldian *dispositif*: An anachronistic and materialistic approach

From an idealistic perspective, cinema is ingrained with neither a historical nor a material condition. It falls, like rain, from heaven. The mode of construction for idealistic theory is usually dependent on concepts such as origin or mythical roots. These theoretical resources have a practical efficiency in cinema. They work as a standardizing principle to warrant unification on different levels. The metaphysic of origin, applied to cinema, supports the idea of pioneers and "first time inventors" which sustain a hegemonic idea of cinema as a unified aesthetic object through a natural language, an exclusionary system of production, a united historical entity and a natural form of social relationship via artistic-commercial circulation. Thus, unification of film implies a naturalization of cinema as an industrial art. Contrary to what is thought; the idea of autonomous creation of authors does not make opposition to cinematic commodity. The illusion of autonomous cinema's authors strengthens industry by separating films from their social and material conditions of production. Mythology of author and autonomy, instead of tackling it against industry, make it stronger, thereby make it more diverse and increase its coverage. In consequence, to approach cinema from the isolated point of view of autonomous art has been uncovered as politically reactive. This article will approach the aesthetical and political problem in order to provide a theoretical materialistic alternative.

Autonomy of art and separation from production

When production, distribution and consumption are separated in the context of art, it becomes possible to postulate the idealism of autonomy of art. This idea comes to us from the Kantian division of practical reason, pure reason and aesthetic judgment. This separation was the basis for the idealization of imagination as isolated from the worldly life. It has no practical goals and it is not interested. Imagination, separated from the world, is the basis for a double idealization: on the one hand, the idea of an autonomous work of art, and on the other hand the idea of the genius. Seen from a Marxist perspective, that idea is the result of a separation. That is, the break between the process of production of the work of art and its process of dis-

tribution and consumption generates the idea of an isolated artist creating an idealized product. It is very common to find sociological explanations about this historical phenomenon - When science became the new model of society in early modernity art became autonomous or when god is dead art is separated from the other spiritual areas of human production. However, now it is important to put a new emphasis on our materialistic approach to cinema. If to consider cinema as separated from the social life of films is very common, that is because films are wrapped on an artistic container.

The idea that films hide their provenance as an industrial product because they are commodities and so their destiny is to conceal their productive conditions is widespread. In other words, film hides its industrial origin because it is ultimately a commodity. However, it is possible and necessary to complement that argument. Film conceals its nature because it appears mainly as an autonomous work of art. Filmic commodities conceal their industrial nature while they are presented as autonomous and so, separated from their production background. Films hide their roots because an author has created them. The idea of an author does not contradict the industry instead it strengthens it. What is convenient for the industry, the separation between the moments of production, is perfectly granted by the author figure and its autonomous products. Fritz Lang insisted on this issue. For him, cinema, seen as an industrial art, is the scenario for a struggle between industry and authors. Lang addresses that authors and industry are natural enemies. Nonetheless, the most radical responses to the cinematic industry seem to reproduce the romantic idea of art for art's sake, encouraged by the idealization of an autonomy and genius; maybe the most *bourgeois* conception of art. Art for art's sake embodies the ultimate expression of isolation of products from social work. Such isolation becomes the base from which to create alternative and cultural markets through the cult of geniality (Durán, 2012, p. 110).

In current cultural industry art and author figures are the best strategy film industry has to separate production from distribution and consumption and so to idealize its products (Cárdenas, 2014). Double idealization: the work of art and the author. For this reason Walter Benjamin considered

a danger the modern use of classical aesthetic categories. In the beginning of *the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* the German thinker warns: there is a modern use of "outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery –concepts whose uncontrolled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application would lead to a processing of data in the fascist sense" (Benjamin, 2009, p. 666). That is why he insists that it is necessary to actualize the kit of concepts to approach the modern production of art. Modern theory of art needs to renew its concepts to actualize their political significance in the context of mechanical reproducibility. Geniuses are not saints or even god's translators any more. Instead, they are ideal resources of government or the market. In the context of mechanical reproduction of products of social labor, the isolation of the work of art becomes the model of the fetish of commodity or propaganda. In this context, what is supposed to be revolutionary becomes the perfect element of counter-revolutionary attitude. Again, Benjamin's words are illuminating: "I want to show that however revolutionary this political tendency may appear, it actually functions in a counterrevolutionary manner as long as the writer experiences his solidarity with the proletariat ideologically and not as a producer" (Benjamin, 1970, p. 3). The isolated author, as a genius, thinks he is added to a political revolutionary commitment, but he is really working for the opposite side. His ideological subscription to politics remains still superficial because it depends just on a personal position and not on a productive strategic action. Personal positions are separated from the actual set of material and social conditions of reality. If film is not seen from the perspective of production, from the perspective of the unification of its forms of production and circulation, there is a danger to feed what is supposed to be attacked.

Some attempts for a non-idealistic approach to cinema

As Francesco Casetti (1999) exposes, Peter Bachlin's Histoire Économique du Cinéma (1947) provides a new theoretical approach to cinematographic phenomena just after the Second World War. He begins from a new point. In the introduction of his research he asserts: "In capitalism, a film, as an intellectual production, has the qualities needed to be considered as

a work of art and also it is necessarily a commodity produced by diverse industrial and commercial operations" (Bachlin, 1947, p. 9). Bachlin's main insight consists of considering films as commodities from the beginning and not by accident. Films as a commodity are produced in order to be exchanged. Therefore his analysis fits with the Marxist analysis of commodities. Bachlin introduced the industrial production perspective into the core of film theory. Nevertheless, he immerses so much in this perspective and does not take into account some other aspects of cinema. In other words, Bachlin reduces cinema to an economic phenomena and ultimately isolates production from a diverse set of components of cinematographic social life. Production is not just an economic variable but it is also a social one.

Around a decade later a Umberto Barbaro's famous posthumous essay was published : il film e il risarcimento marxista dell'arte (1977). Barbaro is known as one of the most important theoretical mentors of Italian neorealism. He goes beyond Bachlin and accepts a double nature of film. Film is a modern mixture between work of art and commodity. Which is not new; since it had been considered by some thinkers previously. Barbaro's insight is - as a commodity and as a work of art, film has a special social life. From its production to its circulation a movie is neither reducible to a mere commodity as a pair of shoes or a leather bag nor a pure work of art such as a painting by Rubens at the museum. For him, the internal struggle between art and industry reproduces the class struggle. Filmic industry works as a mechanism of control from bourgeoisies and art as a manner of intellectual revolution form proletarians. Thus, for Barbaro, film social life is more complex than for Bachlin who reduces it to its simple economic aspects. Nonetheless, Barbaro conserves the Marxist distinction between base and superstructure. For him, the industrial and technical support of cinema is located in the material base of society while the films are intellectual expressions and so they belong to the superstructure. "Art is conditioned by the structure, by the base, which is by the productive relations" (Barbaro, 1977, 263). Due to that separation from base and superstructure it is not only possible but also a necessity, for him, to keep separated in a theoretical level, technique and economy from cinematic artistic language. Even if cinematic expressions depend on technique and economy, they are originally separated

as an object and its image in the mirror. They belong to different worlds because they have quite different natures. In short, according to Barbaro, technique and economy are on a different level from art forms. Their relation is not horizontal even if they are linked.

The supposition of a base that determines the superstructure has led some cinema theorists to develop separate economic or technological histories of cinema. It is not unusual to find specific technological or economical histories of cinema. As Allen and Gomery (1995) have asserted, there is a tradition of this kind of approach to film history. We can find authors like Gordon Hendricks, Raymond Fielding, Benjamin Hampton or Lewis Jacobs who have focused their research on the technological component of cinema. The isolation of technology or economy tends to idealize those areas because it shows them as the separate base of society. The fundamental supposition behind that idea is this: technology and economy are not determined but they determine social fluxes. There is a danger in this perspective. It can suggest that technology and economy have their own internal historical life unconditioned from social and historical life. Maybe that is one of the strongest modern biases: the idealization of capitalism and its scientific and technological support. Specifically in the context of cinema, this assertion works perfectly for the idealistic conception of media, because it supposes a millennial need that modern technology finally fulfills in modernity, a millennial idea that supports an internal history of cinematic devices. For instance, the ideas that color and sound were naturally presupposed even before silent film or the idea that cinematographic businesses were a necessary destination of Lumières brothers' invention. The idealization of cinema is strengthened by the idealization of technique and economy. The isolation of the technical and economical basis presupposes and naturalizes superstructure cultural manifestations. There in not a mythical origin anymore but a techno-economic base: that is still a caricature of history.

Robert Stam (2000) and Casetti coincide. They find a significant transformation in the core of cinema theory during the 1960s. Simultaneously to the growth of the third cinema in Latin America focused on pro-

duction problems as the root of aesthetic issues, it initiated a new approach to cinema orientated by Marxist materialism. This new perspective implied a multidimensional approach to cinema. Authors such as Gian Piero Brunetta, Noël Burch, Robert Sklar or Jean-Louis Comolli renewed theory of cinema. In general terms, they considered cinema as a mixture of different aspects such as art, economy, technology, science, industry, cultural fluxes, spectacle and even governmental management. For them, from different positions and with different emphasis, cinema needs to be thought as a mixture rooted in historical social life of modern culture. It is not a coincidence that cinema, a technically massive art, has been considered as the twentieth century art *par excellence*. Cinema is the perfect expression of art in the context of a modern commodity and spectacle. From this perspective, cinema not only linked to the other arts like painting, theater, architecture or music, but also to different social expressions such as commodity, technology and in general modern life style. A film is a crystallization of heterogeneities in the context of capitalism. Comolli and Narboni perfectly understood it: "What is a film? On the one hand it is a particular product, manufactured within a given system of economic relations, and involving labor (which appears to the capitalist as money) to produce –a condition which even "independent" filmmakers and the "new cinema" are subject- assembling a certain number of workers for this purpose (even the director, whether be it Moullet or Oury, is in the last analysis only a film worker). It transforms into a commodity, possessing exchange value, which is realized by the sale of tickets and contracts, and governed by the laws of the market. On the other hand, as a result of being a material product of the system, it is also an ideological product of the system, which in France means capitalism" (Comolli & Narboni, 688). Cinema is an impure art from its base.

Art, commodity, industry and ideology: everything is involved in a film. For instance, Wim Wenders' film *Der Stand der Dinge* is perfectly inspired by this insight. A movie that is being filmed, in Wender's movie, is shown as crystallizing different levels of production such as artistic creation and factory functions, different social dimensions like the work of art and commodity, different conditions such as time of creation and time of factory production and finally, when the filmmaker in the movie films his

own death, it becomes clear how impure cinema is as art. A film is rooted in material life so much so even life itself is in danger. The basic and dangerous condition of cinema is its own impurity. Alain Badiou has insisted on this where he claims that cinema is an impure art and it has to struggle to reach it pureness. Cinema, as a technical and massive art, has to clash against its social and historical conditions. These conditions are embodied in a material environment, capitalism and modernity, and each film crystallizes it in a singular manner. At this level cinema is exceptional. Badiou exposes it this way:

> Production conditions of image-movement or image-time have a particular material composition. They need technical resources and they also need to mobilize complex and, specially, heterogeneous materials. For instance, you will need different places, natural or artificial places; you will need a text, an scenario, some dialogues, abstract ideas; you will need bodies, actors and would need even chemistry and editing devices. Thus, you will need to implement an entire collective equipment […] Cinema is an absolute impure art and it is so from its base because of the system of its conditions of possibility is a material impure system (Badiou, 2010, 362).

This impurity of cinema is expressed by the need of money, of great amounts of money to enable a movie. Badiou reminds us that money is pure exchangeability and that is why it is the last expression of cinematic necessities. A film is a crystallization of heterogeneities and money makes possible such articulation. Thus, cinema is doubly impure: first, it is impure because of its modern and capitalist conditions and second because it combines and surpasses the other arts. Cinema is something because deep down it is everything. So, cinema becomes an artistic expression due to an act of subtraction. Every film is the result of a struggle against the pure heterogeneity that modernity is. The condition of the possibility of films is an infinite disorder. We could think that this diagnostic of cinema brings a negative conclusion. We could think that impureness signifies that cinema vanishes in the market. On the contrary, Badiou finds this impurity a positive element for cinema. It is not a defect but a possible virtue. His words again can help us: "Cinema is an impure art, it is the one-art, parasitic and inconstant. But its strength of contemporary art is to achieve an idea" (Baidou, 2010, p. 154). The constitutive mixture conditioning film is, in the end, the base

of its power as art and as an object of thought and politics. In the context of modernity, the depurated experience of heterogeneities provides an intense experience of what is out of control for imagination and thought. Namely, the basic heterogeneity of cinema is a material condition to free our modern controlled experience. In the end, this diagnosis is a political assessment. Zepke describes it that "when Badiou places cinema as a mechanism of subtraction from its contemporary capitalist capture, and sees these operations as intervening at the level of popular culture, he offers an exciting role to cinema as mass-art. Here cinema is less art than politics" (Zepke, 2009, p. 335). Cinema, as an impure art, offers tension between pure chaos and order and so provides a special political scenario in the context of mass-media controlled experience. This idea resonates with the Benjaminian formulation: "The instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice-politics" (Benjamin, 2009, p. 671). In both cases, film has a particular nature that implies a reorganization of art in front of politics in the context of modernity.

The acknowledgment of cinematic impurity opens a new perspective. This impurity does not presuppose any technological or economic base. There is neither a base nor a superstructure. Film as a social phenomenon is wider than a mere economic expression or a simple commodity; its reality is not explainable only by approaching any economic base. Instead, cinema impurity brings together the most different kinds of elements without any structural principle. In other words, even if economy and technology are relevant components of cinema, there is always an open world of social uses that are not predetermined. During early and preindustrial age of cinema it was not easy predict the future of cinema neither in the anti-alcoholic campaign in the United Kingdom nor as a proletarian amusement fairground in France (Burch, 1990). Nothing determined the exploitation of the new media in terms of audiovisual tourism as the Lumière brothers did. It was not predictable that color was going to be extremely important for German film during the Second World War (Virilio, 1989, p. 12). Cinematic uses are not the determined expression of technical or economic conditions. Social life is more complex than that.

From this perspective, the idea of cinema as an institution appears as a theoretical way to link film to its material conditions respecting the complex articulation of its constitutive elements. Understanding cinema as an institution is to consider it as a social organization more than a simple enterprise. "Speaking of cinema as an institution is viewing it not merely as an enterprise, but as a social organization, as a device that, on the one hand, incorporates and gives a feeling of belonging and, on the other hand, dictates the rules of behavior" (Casetti, 1999, p. 115). Thus, cinematic institution articulates economic fluxes, technological devices, social uses, theoretical speeches, audiovisual expressive forms and even subjective forms of experience. Related to American cinema as an institution, John Belton asserts:

> The cinema is an institution in a number of senses of the term. It is an economic institution, designed to make money. In order to do this, it established itself as an industry. It is a complex organization of producers, distributors and exhibitors whose job it is to make and market motion pictures. To accomplish its goals, the industry developed a basic technology that facilitates the production and distribution of movies. It also established various systems –such as the star system and the genre system- which are designed to ensure that individual films return the profit to the industry that produces distributes and exhibits them. Stars and genres serve as known commodities that guarantee, up front, a certain minimal amount of pleasure that can be expected by viewers. Thus, in addition to the basic technological machinery required for making and showing films, the industry developed a secondary, "mental" machinery that makes audiences want to go to the movies (Belton, 2005, 4).

Consequently, from this new view, cinema has become a new object, and theory and history a new manner of speech. Now cinema is not isolated anymore, technology and economy are not separated as the base of society and constitutive elements of cinema are spread throughout different levels. In a certain way, this new emphasis conduces film theory to a theory of modernity. "The cinema, in other words, was itself part of the enormous transformations that reshaped, in the name of modernity and modernization, our idea of work and pleasure, the private and the public sphere, leading to the progressive industrialization and commercial exploitation of entertainment, tourism and leisure" (Elseasser, 1995, 38). Talking about this new view of film, Belton describes this shift focused on history of cinema:

> Film texts have changed over the years as well. In the past, histories consisted of simple, chronological account of who-did-what and what-happened-when, and of histories of great men (sic) and their achievements, and straightforward accounts of the influence of technology and economics on the course of a history that unfolds in a linear fashion up to the present. More recently, film scholars have begun to rewrite these traditional histories, creating what Thomas Elsaesser refers to as "The New Film History" (Belton, 2005, p. xix).

Idealization of forms, mystification of economy and technology, fetichization of pioneers and authors, exaltation of the origin and myth and so on: all of these are the objective of a materialistic theory of cinema, which rejects any abstraction of its object and any hidden submission strategy. The idea of cinema as an institution helps us to prevent those theoretical dangers.

Even though the concept of institution is convenient, it is possible to provide a more precise contribution. The notion of institution has allowed us to articulate cinema with the wide-open social world. As an institution, cinema is shown as belonging to the material world. So, as an institution, cinema exposes how idealization is the result of a misunderstanding. In addition, this perspective is helpful to recognize that there is not a structural aspect as economy or technology to approach cinema. As we said before this perspective does not trust the distinction between base and superstructure. However, most of the theorists who have recently implemented this concept have not explored as deep as it is possible to its reach. By following the path traced by this theoretical approach, we would like to go further. To do so we are going to bring a very recognized concept from Michel Foucault's thought (1976). It is now convenient to introduce Foucault's term: *Dispositif*.

Cinema as a *Dispositif*

It is important to remember how reticent Foucault was about connecting disciplinary societies and spectacle. For him, societies of surveillance are extremely different from spectacle societies as described by Guy Debord. Foucault was skeptical about the idea of continuity between being observed by control and being submitted by spectacle. In *Discipline and punish* he asserted: "Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance […]

we are neither in the amphitheater, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine" (Foucault, 1979, p. 217). As Crary realized, Foucault seemed not to have taken seriously Debord's theory of spectacle or at least its simplifications (1992): "One can well imagine Foucault's disdain, as he wrote one of the greatest meditations on modernity and power, for any facile or superficial use of 'spectacle' as an explanation of how masses are 'controlled' or 'duped' by media images" (Crary, 1992, p. 18). Seen from the carefully written theory of power, the supposition of spectacle shows an abstract generalization far away from the precise institutional analysis and discursive study made by Foucault. Thus, spectacle theory appears as a generalization that dissolves power in abstract mechanisms of alienation and can be seen to be superficial. In consequence Foucault did not have many reasons to focus on cinema as a manifestation of spectacle. Apparently panoptic gaze and the screen are not connected at any point. It seems that discipline and entertainment are different from their bases.

Nevertheless, Crary gives us some tools to find continuity where Foucault could just see rupture. His words are again clarifying: "Foucault's opposition of surveillance and spectacle seems to overlook how the effects of these two regimes of power can coincide. Using Bentham's panopticon as a primary theoretical object, Foucault relentlessly emphasizes the ways in which human subjects become object of observation, in the form of institutional control or scientific and behavioral study; but he neglects the new forms by which vision itself became a kind of discipline or mode of work" (Crary, 1992, p. 18). Crary's amazing insight consists of finding a secret continuity between techniques of observation by which subjects became object of control and mechanisms of normalization of the subjects as spectators. In both cases, in the case of the subject watched to be controlled and in the case of the spectator who is dominated by some strategies to attract his attention, there are different tactics, scientific discourses, institutions and technical practices to reduce subjects according to a certain will to submission. Control is active not only when we are objects of an external gaze but also when we are taught about how to see, how to perceive and how to be attentive. For Crary, modern strategies of measuring and theorizing perception and of regulating attention imply a mechanism of control of bodies and souls according to what Michel Foucault denominated disciplinary so-

cieties. Thus, "the organization of mass culture did not proceed on some other inessential or superstructural area of social practice; it was fully embedded within the same transformations Foucault outlines" (Crary, 1992, p. 18). Spectacle, as Debord described it, just blossomed around one century after disciplinary mechanisms exposed by Foucault. Nevertheless, prehistory of those regulation procedures of bodies through calculation and normalization of perception and attention can be associated to analogous scientific speeches and social practices described by the author of *History of sexuality*. The same as bodies are submitted in prison, at the factory or by the psychiatrist, perception and attention have been normalized in order to increase the worker's productivity, concentration of the student and the interest of spectator. Those speeches, practices and institutions parallely appear and they are articulated to disciplinary societies examined by Foucault. In his next work, Suspensions of perception (2001) Crary asserts this about attention: "It is inseparable from the operation of what Foucault has described as 'disciplinary' institutions, but as an inversion of his panoptic model in which the subject is an object of attention and surveillance. Hence the modern notion of attention is a sign of reconfigurations of those disciplinary mechanisms" (Crary, 2001, p. 73). Spectacle is not that distant from modern discipline and even worse, in fact, spectacle inherited its determinant techniques on body and soul. Surveillance produces normalized bodies and docile souls; analogous attention is the result of internalization of these technologies of power. The subject in the context of spectacle embodies the panoptic model. In both cases, the panoptic and the normalization of gaze, a set of practices is necessary, discourses, technical devices and institutions. On the one hand, prison, for instance, is not only an architectural structure to enclose the prisoners, but also a clinical and legal discourse, accompanied by a set of practices on body, time and space. On the other hand, in filmic spectacle it became mandatory to produce a regulated experience of time and space on the film supported by technical discourses on narration and attention. To enable that experience is also needed an industrial articulation of production, distribution and exhibition in particular theaters and a practice that is carried by experts denominated film critics. In sum both spectacle and surveillance are the result of the articulation of different mechanisms and strategies to normalize experience at different levels.

Now it is possible to find a clear connection between the institutional approach to film and Foucault's analysis of modern disciplinary societies. His theoretical work on disciplinary societies is tremendously useful to cinema studies because it allows us to think of cinema as a wide articulation of institutions, theoretical and vernacular discourses, production, distribution and exhibition practices; technical devices which use have been standardized and finally the so-called filmic language. As a product of these articulations, films are neither simple commodities nor simple works of art. They are not mere isolated objects but the crystallization of heterogeneous phenomena in the context of modernity. As such crystallization, films require a new theoretical sensitivity. In short, while we have established a parallel behavior between disciplinary societies and spectacle societies in so far as the articulation of different level phenomena, we can legitimately describe cinema as a *dispositif*. Thus, we neither consider cinema as the result of the abstract action of society or culture, nor as the singular appropriation of concrete filmmakers in their subjective sensitiveness. This perspective allows us to recognize the political effectiveness of actual institutions, the generalized practices and the usual speeches. At this level, it is possible to see the actual agents of cinema's social life.

The cinematic system of production divides the work in precise sets of labors by following the model of the factory. Film schools and festivals reproduce that system by dividing their awards categories according to that distribution of labors. In addition, the process of distribution and exhibition depends on a certain commercial circuit that decides which movies are to be seen and which are not. All that depends on previous technical decisions which presuppose a certain set of as aesthetic rules. In fact, copyright legislation, expert evaluators and even as far strategic linkages between the touristic industries and governmental laws to stimulate filming national landscapes are all embraced by the cinematic *dispositif*. It wraps a set of heterogenic phenomena. Thus, most films exist because they respect a set of implicit processes, rules of production and distribution that are finally embodied in the images according to the official "cinematic language". The apparatus is finally expressed but simultaneously hidden on the screen. In short, the *dispositif* controls the form of films and also their social life as artistic commodities.

In his text on Foucault, Gilles Deleuze characterizes a *dispositif* in the first instance as "a tangle, a multilinear ensemble. It is composed of different lines each having a different nature" (Deleuze, 1992, p. 159). This mixture combines power, knowledge and subjectivity, the main concepts in Foucault's thought. Nonetheless, that is still a general way to approach cinematic *dispositif*. A *dispositif* is concrete and never a mere abstraction. It works concretely on bodies and minds through concrete strategies. In an interview quoted by Giorgio Agamben, Foucault himself says:

> What I'm trying to single out with this term is, first and foremost, a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions; in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus it-self is the network that can be established between these elements... (Agamben, 2009, p. 2).

The net of heterogeneous elements is invisibly interconnected. It is invisible, because at a first sight it is impossible to see the articulations among discourses, architectural distribution of space, social practices and other elements. Those who are involved in the dispositif are not aware of its constitutive elements and articulations. They simply behave inside of it even if they are agents or patients of its functions. A dispositif is not precisely a result of a conscious complot. Even if Bentham designed the architectural model of the panopticon he could not anticipate its articulation with a certain kind of correlative discourse and knowledge, legal practices or corporal forms of submission. In spite of that unpredictability a dispositif tends to embody calculated relations of power. A dispositif is diagramed in a hierarchical form to enable different manners of hegemony. Agamben describes it in a brief sentence: "The apparatus always has a concrete strategic function and is always located in a power relation" (Agamben, 2009, p. 3). Thus, it is possible to establish the analogy between the relations of power in the prison, the factory and the school and inside of the cinematic *dispositif*. However, it is also necessary to distinguish between two different models of power. Prison, school and factory follow the model of surveillance: someone observes and submits through their controlling gaze. Cinematic dispositif is dissimilar because, even if it inherited the disciplinary

tradition as it was shown lines above, it implemented others kinds of strategies. Cinematic dispositif does not depend on surveillance but depends on strategies to concentrate attention and stimulate perception of that new kind of subjectivity: the spectator. From the election of every single frame to the design of dark, silent and comfortable theaters the issue is to attract and keep spectator attention. From distribution mechanisms in different levels of the market to the implementation of cinematographic criticism in newspapers and specialized magazines, it is important to seduce mass spectator perception. To do it cinematic dispositif has taken advantage of different resources that are hidden behind the mask of an isolated expression of art. That is why, in general terms, cinematic industry implemented a narrative mold, a modeling use of time and space and a strictly defined social life for films. That one is not the model of panopticon but the model of spectacle. Thomas Elsaesser's words perfectly fit with this argument: "The mode of perception and attention appropriate to modernity would thus be present in an exemplary form in the cinema, where technology and conditions of production permeate the content and penetrate the representational material even prior to an ideological construction of narrative and the image" (Elsaesser, 1987, p. 82).

It is important to be more precise: we cannot talk about dispositif strictly in terms of a closed system. What is called here dispositif is a model that appeared during the first two decades of twentieth century and strengthened with the invention of sound. That model is Hollywood: a model that tends to unify filmic phenomena through theoretical and practical mechanisms as it was said above. Therefore, as a model it cannot be strictly projected to every single case. Cinematic dispositif is an abstract category that will allow us to consider what is hidden in the singularity of each case. It is like a constellation of elements depending on each specific case. Hence, the cinematic dispositif works as a functional category in order to group different correlated aspects depending on each case. The cinematic system of production works depending upon the particular situation but most of those cases seem to have some kind of family resemblance. They tend to follow a model that makes them consanguineous. That is why it is possible to talk about the dispositif and simultaneously to singularly approach diffe-

rent cases. Cinematic dispositif acts particularly in every case and that does not mean that it is impossible to link conceptually those differences because of the action of a historical model: Hollywood. Paolo Bertetto wrote this about the cinematic model: "There are clearly diverse aspects in the modes of producing a film however that neither risks the articulation of cinematic commodity inside the productive cycle nor its direct function of valorization" (Bertetto, 1977, p. 12). Cinematic dispositif is a variable mold, nevertheless, its core is quite descriptive of cinema as an institution in spite of variations. Cinema is not an identity nonetheless dispositif theory allows recognizing some resonances vibrating under differences. Resonances are neither generalities nor identities. For instance, Foucault described a form of prison precisely located in time and space. That form was completely different from other contemporary prison forms. However the panopticon dispositif provided incredible tools to think of different crystallizations of power. Dispositif is not an idealistic category but a functional concept and as a concept it is a political tool.

We have shown how idealism is a widespread alternative to approach cinema and how it presupposes a separation of film from it social reality. That separation tends to naturalize a hegemonic model for cinematography. That model has a tendency to unify cinematic production and to show it as cinema itself. To face that trend some cinema theorists and historians have tried to provide a non-idealistic approach to cinema, but most of them have failed because they idealized not forms but economy or technology. To overcome that failure we have proposed using the Foucauldian concept of dispositif to offer a new theoretical perspective. We exposed how this term allows us to think of cinema as an impure heterogeneity. That impurity implies an accompanying impure form of theory with a new idea of what an object of thought is and what its history means; that is to say, an anachronistic theory.

Dispositif and anachronism

Cinema has become impure to our gaze and it is needed an impure conception of time to approach this new phenomena. That is, a non-linear idea of time, an anachronistic image of history. As Walter Benjamin and Aby War-

burg realized time is not a line. Rather, historical time is full of jumps, interlinks and fractures. In fact, positivist history underrates the real flesh of time. A historical object usually inherits improbable traditions and breaks out with its closest and contemporary phenomena. Historical time is more a mystery than a line. Talking about Fra Angelico's painting George Didi-Huberman asserts that he was closer to modern painting by following certain theological traditions than to his contemporary painters. In this case, time was clearly not a line: "Sometimes there is an impression that contemporaries do not understand what they do better than individuals separated by time" (Didi-huberman, 2000, p. 15). For instance, Martin Arnold experimental cinema and Jules Marey are closer than Arnold and his contemporary commercial filmmakers or Jacques Tati's Playtime, released in 1967, was closer to pre-industrial cinema's time and space aesthetics than to his contemporary colleagues' films. Another example: digital cinema is conceived as the perfect technology to reach the highest level of realism by using digital effects in postproduction. Instead its contemporary uses made it the perfect tool to seduce audience by the simple pleasure of movement and explosions as it happened in the beginning of cinema when it was a simple amusement fairground. Contemporary digital cinema is closer to the birth of film than we would like to accept. Time survives in the image as heterogeneity and through these juxtapositions time is able to show its unaccepted continuities and breaks. Where continuity is assumed, you can find breaks. Between two different times, disciplines and devices which are hypothetically disconnected, it is often possible to find more links than if two phenomena were followed one after another in time. In other words, the effort to establish continuities and breaks where they are hardly found, allows brings to light the unconscious set of presuppositions of cinema. Why does a causal explanation exhaust historical objects? What kind of presupposition is behind this will to know? Linear history is the result of a decision and not a self-evident issue. Siegfried Zielinski puts it this way: "if we deliberately alter the emphasis, turn it around, and experiment, the result is worthwhile: do not seek the old in the new, but find something new in the old" (Zielinski, 2009, p. 5). Newness is not privative from present the same, as the already known is not restrictive from past. Time is not a line and the efforts to show it that way are relative.

It is well known the requirement to not project any contemporary values to past events. That is not scientific. The correct way to move toward the past is by respecting the truth of events, what really happened. Nonetheless, how is that possible? Is it not biased to decide which aspect of the past is important? Is it not a decision to prefer silent cinema history to color cinema history? It is usually said that history as a science has to approach its object in a neutral mode. However, why does history need the quality of science? Its object is not the pure past but memory and memory is a construction. Jacques Rancière reminds us how a poetical skill is needed to bring historical data to the land of sense. History is a narration full of meaning and not just a list of events. Thus, history needs to be constructed to make any sense beyond simple information data: "by refusing to be reduced to the mere language of numbers and graphs, history agreed to tie the fate of its demonstrations to that of the procedures by which common language produces meaning and causes it to circulate" (Rancière, 1994, p. 101). The object of history is to be constructed and that means to be politically constructed. History does not tell the actual past, but a memory of that past; history does not tell what truly happened but what is asked from the present in certain circumstances. That is its condition of possibility, its impurity; its mixture of times.

In addition, the purity of a lineal causal explanation supposes the isolation of events from their real social life. A pure line of causes is an idealization as it is the ideal conception of cinema as tracked by a historical goal or triggered by its historical origin. The lineal image of time supposes an internal historical life of objects abstracted from reality. A simple line of direct causality allows every kind of idealization of historical objects because it supposes their abstraction, that is, their isolation from world's influence. This abstraction in implying clarity of historical objects from their beginning, supposes a clear delimitation of time and disciplinary objects. Instead, historical time proceeds by mixing past, future and present in a tangle. Also disciplines and objects are fuzzy and contaminated. Again, Zielinski's words perfectly fit: "Media are spaces of action for constructed attempts to connect what is separated" (Zielinki, 2009, p. 7). Media are not isolated; rather they are points of intersection. For us, to talk about cinema is also to

talk about modern science, technique, commerce, art expressions, modern government subvention policies, contemporary philosophy and theory of perception but also narrative classic tradition and even ancient mimetic theories of art. As a dispositif cinema is fed by heterogeneous factors. Being aware of that, Jean-Louis Comolli (2009) insists: to make decisions on cinema as a historical object brings with it theoretical decisions on cinema as an object of study. To decide how to approach history of cinema entails a presupposition about what cinema is. Thus re-signifying cinema implies re-signifying its history and theory. Therefore, a patchwork structure of thinking is the most important alternative against the official history of cinema, its hegemonic production system and its unified language.

In his fifth theses on philosophy of history Walter Benjamin formulates: "The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again" (Benjamin, 1969, p. 255). For the German philosopher the most correct way to expose the past is not through a line of events but through a constellation of flashing images. In fact, each image is itself a constellation insofar as it brings together heterogeneities. This kind of image shines when different times and disciplines collide. A flashing image is the result of a collision. That is why its light does not last too long, because it brings light to an improbable association. It is improbable but full of hereafter. Hence, history, for us, is not a story told as a whole but a constellation. History proceeds by exposing images that flash as the effect of improbable associations. History and theory are the practices of bringing light to what was dark behind the line of time. They are practices of illumination: as the power of epiphany that enlightens what was obscure. By linking heterogeneous times and disciplines history and theory become critical practices. In his text on Benjamin theory of history Michael Löwy writes this: "His objective is to discover the critical constellation formed by a particular fragment of the past with a particular moment of the present" (Löwy, 2005, p. 40). The perception of a similarity between the past and present or among different disciplinary objects transforms them into revolutionary components. They become revolutionary because they break from official history and its institutionalized phenomena. Both, past and present are renewed by the sim-

ple fact of being put together. While time is still active past is alive as well. "So long as history does not come to a stop, the last word on the past cannot be pronounced" (Löwy, 2005, p. 41). To take history from authorities implies to give political power to the past. This activation of time brings history to a theoretical fertility. To open the method by using an anachronistic approach to cinema history enables us to recognize a variety of different aspects of cinema. That is, current cinema exposes its naturalized presuppositions and also its undiscovered alternatives. Thus, present time manifests how much richer it is compared to its naturalized version. That is to say, current cinema is full of virtualities that are hidden behind the hegemony of what is called "Cinema". So, theoretical fecundity of anachronism implies practical and political potency as well.

The political value of the past is perfectly described by Benjamin in his sixth theses on history. These are his words: "Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger" (Benjamin, 1969, p. 257). Seen this way, history becomes more a political tool than a scientific resource. The supposition of neutrality in history is another mechanism of affiliation to power. Instead of neutralism Benjamin considers the past as a revolutionary tool to face crucial moments. That is, past provides material to create historical constellations to bring a political light to present, to unmask idealizations of history and its objects and finally to express the impurity of time and objects. Consequently, it is a task for historians and theorists to be sensitive to the movements of present to link it with past in the precise occasion. For cinema, to give an example, it is possible to find a light connection between the uses of cinema in the second decade of the former century as a tool to increase workers productivity by checking their movements through the camera and the current implementation of formulas to calculate spectators' attention on cinematographic narration. In both cases, despite the time, cinema provides a mechanism for calculating subjects' behavior even if they are working in a factory or watching a movie in the theater. In the context of mainstream cinema's hegemony, the past gives light to adopt an alternative posture to face current times. To empathize past and present in the precise moment of danger provides critical tools.

Accordingly, the past contains use value rather than scientific value. It is a political resource rather than an objective material. Its value depends on its political uses according to the current situation. The present provides a crucial moment because of the rise of new digital technologies. They have altered industrial production of cinema but also they have been the objective of unexpected regulations. In that context this research exposes its political relevance.

Now a new question is raised. What is this materialistic and anachronistic approach for? Again, Walter Benjamin provides a perfect reply. Politics of image do not only depend on the contents or forms of the films but also on the way the author as producer rethinks the production itself. Benjamin's question is this:

> Instead of asking: what is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time? Does it accept them? Is it reactionary - or does it aim at overthrowing them? Is it revolutionary? - Instead of this question, or at any rate before this question, I should like to propose another. Rather than asking: what is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time? I should like to ask: what is its position in them? This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary technique of works (Benjamin, 1970, p. 2).

To be aware of production conditions of cinema opens us up to a new political perspective. In the context of the emerging new digital technologies this seems to be the key question. This technological change is going to affect cinema even more than the most important author or cinematic school. Our sub-textual concern is how the analogical model of production is in danger because of this change.

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