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The Image and the Humanities: visual poetics as the possibility of construction of knowledge

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ABSTRACT – The Image and the Humanities: visual poetics as the possibility of construction of knowledge. The article proposes a new perspective on the role of image in the production of knowledge, particularly with respect to the humanities. In the scientific modernity, image was regarded as an entity of imperfect ontology. Nowadays images have acquired a new importance: they have become our chief means of expression and communication, apart from their important role in research strategies. On the other hand, the production of knowledge through experimental and poetic images is still taboo in academia. Against such notion, many artists and thinkers have created a new way of conceiving the relations between images and science: the image is real and immanent to our world, since both are nothing more than action. The poetic image produces a large variety of transformations in our ways of seeing the world, resulting in an interesting research strategy.

Keywords: Image. Epistemology. Poetics. Methodology. Whitehead.

RESUMO – A Imagem e as Ciências Humanas: a poética visual como possibilidade de construção do saber. Este artigo propõe uma nova perspectiva sobre o papel da imagem na produção do conhecimento, especialmente no que se refere às ciências humanas. Na modernidade científica a imagem foi considerada um ente de ontologia falha. Na contemporaneidade a imagem ganhou uma nova importância: ela se tornou nosso principal meio de expressão e comunicação além de servir importante estratégia de pesquisa. Por outro lado, a produção de saber/conhecimento através de imagens poéticas e experimentais é ainda hoje um tabu na academia. Contra esta concepção, muitos artistas e pensadores criaram outro modo de pensar as relações entre imagem e ciência: a imagem é real e imanente ao nosso mundo, posto que ambos nada mais são do que ação. A imagem poética produz uma grande variedade de transformações nos nossos modos de ver ao mundo, resultando em uma interessante estratégia para a pesquisa.

Palavras-chave: Imagem. Epistemologia. Poética. Metodologia. Whitehead.

Many people are suspicious of images because of their immediate beauty and superficiality. They are afraid of being deceived by them, when in fact what they do is to require from them what they cannot be: they seek in the image confirmation (verification, evidence, proof etc.) of things beyond the image itself, just as the men who seek fruitlessly celibacy and fasting in order to be more similar to God. We can criticize them by paraphrasing Nietzsche (1999): poor are the men who fear being deceived, for they do not know that life is made of deceit and falsity, for it is through artifice that we create the possibility of being. The image, the appearance, the simulacrum, is commonly associated to lie, to idolatry. An irony, because even science, which has in St Thomas and his “scopophilia” (seeing is believing) its Patron Saints is somewhat “scopophobic” (appearances can be deceiving), especially when it deals with subtleties such as people and cities. Indeed, there have been – and there are – so many promises imposed upon images by the sciences that many men resent them. However, it was not images that lied, but men who sought in them something other than image.

Science and Image: a long and tortuous relationship

Sight is presented in the long construction of sciences as a privileged sense. It is the sense proper to observation, because it allows proximity at a distance: seeing without touching. An intangible luminous link that does not interfere with the seen, despite being understood as a direct (immediate) vision of what there is: a window onto the world or a pursuer of evidences. With our gaze, we could see how things are by themselves without interfering with our presence. Besides, we have learned to transform our look, allowing the view of phenomena never seen by the naked eye, unveiling invisible worlds that fascinated and still fascinate scientists in general. Because of that, changing our look creating other possibilities of seeing was always one of the most recurrent agencies between science and the seeing: lunettes, telescopes, microscopes, x-rays, infrared, positrons and after that the wide and infinite range of rays sent off and read that generate visibilities that have little or nothing to do with the sensibility of our retina.

However, more than varying the perspective of the looking, sight in science has always been valued for its ability to attest the existence without touching or cutting the body under study. The hole of the lunette, the circumference of the magnifying glass, the keyhole, the unidirectional rectangular transparency of the false reflectibility of mirrors in the psychological service room: all techno-scientific devices of the looking offering to the *voyeur* scientist the possibility of seeing without being implicated. A spectacular *scopophilia* that brings to light the knowledge already boxed according to its simplifying classification. However, despite all the contemporary prominence of visuality, our sciences do not see it as visual-image; they only see it through the formalization of the visual in numbers or words (formal-image).

For science, one has to go beyond mere appearance to allow vision to somehow reach knowledge: "Images are seen as belonging eminently to the sensible field and, for social scientists, this field is a field where only artists have legitimacy" (Novaes, 2009, p. 43). Indeed, in science, image is reduced to two total functions: vestige and intelligible representation of the real. Image has to be subjected to the relation of analogy with the things and to the relation of formalization at the same time. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, for example, captured images in their anthropological expeditions with the purpose of describing and classifying the native types or to describe their typical behavior: to formalize categorical representations. Similarly, Robert Gardner, one of the pioneers of ethnographic film, exalted the audiovisual inscription as a possibility of an outlook without perspective, a maximal representational objectification: "[...] evidence of a direct and unambiguous type, with reality captured and suffering no distortion due to faults of sight, memory or semantic interpretation" (Gardner, 1963 *apud* Burke, 2004, p. 194).

Another example of this long relation between plastic image and research is the study of these images to better put into perspective a historic period or a culture based on the visual imagery produced in them: the study of 13th century paintings as if they were windows onto landscapes of the past, for example. This is the custom of taking an image as representation (window), reducing the image to an evidence of something other than itself (custom, garment, event etc.): mimetic representation of what existed at a given time and place, crystallization of a landscape and of an instant upon a surface. Another option often found in studies of the imagery of past times is the digression about secret symbolisms hidden under mythical and sacred figures. In this case, we read the images based on a grammar that tries to unveil which hidden messages our forebears sent us through paintings, frescoes, stelaes etc. However, we are not interested in seeing them here as texts ciphered in symbols, ready to be interpreted to reveal the spirit that animated a long gone time. Rather than seeing them as windows onto other landscapes or symbols of the soul of ancient times, we can take the images as simple imagetic relational actions of a specific context. Such relations turned into images were (and are) coordinated with all the other variety of remnants of actions that have reached us from these other times and, because of that, they allow us to think about the relations that constituted them and the relations that they constituted (at their specific time and place). That is to say, the images are a set of relations that acquired body through ink, through light, through computers and, in so doing, play for us the role of a node where we can investigate the network of relations in which they were inserted.

It is not the case of labelling the image as misleading, but of noticing that it would be a mistake to take an image as present evidence of what is represented there beyond it, just as it would also be a mistake to

simply disregard it in studies of civilizations and cultures far removed from our own in space and/or time for its being too fleeting and deceitful in its relation with the real. Beyond the truth or lie of the referents (of designation and meaning), there is the sense that it constitutes by affirming itself in the world, by individualizing itself imagetically in the encounters that took place then.

An example of these mistakes due to a naive reduction of the image to the verisimilitude analogy (representation) or precarious falsity (simulation), is the hypothesis by Ariès that children dressed as little adults in the 17th and 18th century, without consideration for the expressive specificities and context in which the creation of images took place (Burke, 2004). Undoubtedly, the image is immersed in the daily life constituting society; however, it immerses itself by acting and not by producing. Thus, for example, the way in which children are dressed in a painting is just “the way these children are dressed to be portrayed by this artist in this painting”, and may tell more about the pomp of the circumstance (of being portrayed) at that specific time and place than about the ordinary garments of that period and location: “In other words, as in the case of the portraits of individuals, representations of society tell us something about a relation, a relation between the maker of the representation and the people portrayed” (Burke, 2004, p. 149). Images, just as men and teapots, are relations: Different encounters giving body to bodies.

In the same manner, the effect of the “apparent realism” (Burke, 2004, p. 142) is not a mere artifice for the purposes of religious or political propaganda, nor can it be reduced to a respect for the motif portrayed. It is rather a stylistics, which has no necessary relation to a referent with respect to which it keeps a relation of verisimilitude. The realism in the painting, in the audiovisual or in the photograph is not the evidence of a referent, but a way of affirming, a stylistics of expressing itself that ends up generating the effect of persuading of the presence of the referent, albeit many times such referent is known to be inexistent. Therefore, beyond the conflict between idealization and demonization of the reality of the image, we observe the need to pay attention to the complex plot that modulates a stylistics and individuates a piece of work. In this context, when producing *images that think* we should not naively seek the representation of the world (referent) or of the ideas (symbol) such as they are. Instead, we can just traverse the world with an outlook and give body to images and sounds that are produced in this encounter: give free rein to the forces beyond the experience, with experimentation. That is, by giving birth to an image we create also a world that accompanies it: nuances that highlight elements, a perspective that affirms modes of seeing, colors that establish patterns, lines that limit concepts, gestures that set up relations. As with the world itself, the image is also an action.

The Image beyond Representation: the powers of experimental poetics

In this way, we can argue that the image constructs or not analogical relations based on their modulation in a stylistics in the relations that constitute it and that it produces. They are divergent chains of variation that put in perspective stylistically distinct universes. This is the difference between taking a picture, making a video, film or animation as an evidence, elaborating and exploring its mimetic relations, seeing the world represented using the image just as a bizarre crude lens that does not create, but only captures what is seen on a surface; and, on the other hand, taking a picture, making a video, film or animation, in their relations as singular expression, fluid expressive matter to be composed-decomposed, seen in its pictorial-conceptual relational action.

One thinks then of documental photography (and other media) as that which accentuates the importance of the referent and of the optical device in the formation of the image, and of experimental photography as that which tends to give priority to the interference of the subjectivity of the photographer, including the way in which the visual effects that result from the creative use of the photographic equipment are referred to his/her sensibility (Fatorelli, 2003, p. 31).

It is, therefore, a question of relational inflection, of imagetic accent: the stylistics is realist by itself and not because of a relation of verisimilitude with a real object. It is in this modulation between the experimental and the documental that we see, therefore, the appearance of a paradox between the intelligible and the sensible. Between the documental and the artistic, between the scientific and poetic, we see the operation of a paradoxical mist that turns one into the other and returns the other into the one¹. Jean Rouch, for example, deterritorialized the anthropological-camera from its stable basis: from the tripod (giving it spatial mobility) and from the centrality of the anthropologist's look (sharing with his *objects* the processes of filming and editing). However, such experimentations did not find echo immediately within the territory of science: "his 'trance-cine' ended up having more influence upon filmmakers such as Truffaut and Godard than upon anthropologists that were shooting ethnographic movies" (Novaes, 2009, p. 48).

From the moment in which one no longer takes the image just for its relation as documental evidence, that is, from the moment we go beyond the symmetric relation referent-image that we usually build with the images, from this moment on we can also go beyond the conception that images are the stratagem of the Demon (or of the capital), and we will be able to use them to enrich our reality, subvert it, recreate it. And intelligible and sensible image: image as essay. The construction of a

poetic imagetics by de(re)constructing the landscapes with which we relate: that is the *imagessay* (Dubois, 2004).

Cinema and photography developed alongside our experience of modern and contemporary cities; they therefore developed a major part of their experimentations on the urban territory itself and on its daily flows, helping to create our senses of them and, consequently, some of the best examples of image as representation and of the poetic image deal with the space of the cities: representing or turning the urban delirious. We can then walk about the city guided by the persecutory flows ordained by the seal of crime, or war or catastrophe, following the camera of the television news or that of the war, action or suspense movies, amongst others. Or, alternatively, we can look for a *flâneur*-image, in an urban dawdling, falling in love with the small gestures and elements of the cities' daily lives, giving body to poetic atmospheres and not to clear and objective referents. Thus, without clearly delimited objective we allow ourselves to flow, dawdling along the lines of the landscapes, caressing them with movements of the eye and capturing their rhythms with the camera: "Opposite of the reporter – and of the war photographer – is that who wanders, camera in hand, without direction or schedule, through the streets. Or that one who, like a landscape architect, contemplates the panorama of the world" (Peixoto, 1992, p. 429). We can allow ourselves to be carried by the speed of the city without being necessarily taken by haste: to follow the vertigo of a rollercoaster or of a psychedelic trip without the gravity of the urgency of the steps that exist only because of their end – home, bank, hospital, shopping center, car, work. To have the time to see, to make see by transgressing the sight, just as the act of thinking: to give another sight to the "visible always seen" (too much seen, so much seen that one can neither see it nor stop seeing it), to look sidelong to untie the swift and motionless knot that guarantees the cliché: "[...] to bring forward the force and the atmosphere that emanate from them (faces and landscapes)" (Peixoto, 1992, p. 430). Eventualize (Foucault, 1990) our relationship with the landscape, operating with the image-producing device a visibilization of small imperceptible perceptions: the atmosphere (Gil, 1996), the climate, or the *air* (Barthes, 1989). To make visible this intelligible-sensible that makes us interact with the image beyond a relation of descriptive and enumerative representation of the things of the world. Instead of using urban images just to know the cities, we can use them to learn new ways of seeing our own abode. The images of the cities were never just descriptive: they shift our look towards other possibilities of seeing that were unknown to us. In this way we have created a multitude of movies that affirm delirious ways of seeing several different cities: *Man with a Movie Camera* by Dziga Vertov (1929) about Moscow, *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* by Walter Ruttmann (1927), *São Paulo, a Metropolitan Symphony* (1929) by Rodolfo Lustig and Adalberto Kemeny, Fellini's *Roma* (1972), *Two or Three Things I Know About Her...* by Godard (1967). In these audiovisu-

al essays, the main character is the city and its daily lives, from which emanates a poetic atmosphere singular to each of the urban centers. There is in these films (and in others, of course) an anthropological, urbanistic and artistic discourse that blends art and science into hybrids through long sequences where visual poetry is made with the raw materials of daily life: without limiting themselves to simply describe it, the authors give body and light to elements not strictly visual of their object, juxtaposing realities distant but connected through means other than space-time, revealing perspectives of the city unsuspected by its usual passers-by, altering times and measures of the daily walks, making use of various experimentations to obtain haphazard and poetic effects, allowing a new look over the city.

Such poetic experimentations were not given immediately. When recording technologies were created, such as audio recordings and the motion picture, their inventors, probably more linked to science than to art, saw them above all as magnificent techniques for capturing the things of the world by recording them better than any memory, and describing them better than any word or painting. However, by fusing the raw documental, proper to the technology of the Lumière brothers, with the long tradition of producing sensible deliriums, of the illusionists, cinema turned into poetry. With the confluence of the new science of sensitizing films with the old art of producing illusions, cinema was taken by the operations that until today allow it to think essayistically: trucking, incrustation, superposition, and a variety of visual devices that have allowed image to go well beyond the documental. It was Georges Méliès (1861-1938) who experienced the illusionist power of cinema and opened it to poetry: power of the false to create other realities. The look could now see the impossible, it could experiment new perspectives that tore it away from the commonsense and from good sense, making possible images that think by transgressing the already known, that see with other eyes.

Better than an automobile, better than an airplane, the cinematographer affords different personal trajectories, and it is our whole physics that trembles, it is the deepest intimacy that is modified. Even when inhabiting a city, one does not know it if one has not looked at it through the eyepiece of a radiator, brought closer, penetrated, unfolded in space and in time. [...] One has not seen the Earth if one has not seen it without abandoning its movement. One has to turn faster than it, and also slower (Epstein, 1974, p. 224-225 apud Dubois, 2004, p. 187).

This passage from Jean Epstein (1897-1953), one of the main experimenters of the beginning of cinema, speaks of any possibility of movement that makes us traverse our perspective through experimentation: at a first moment we can go into other's movements, look through other eyes, from other standpoints (automobile radiator), fol-

low intimately flows to perspectivate other sight (see with the car); at a different moment we can, through fast or slow motion, turn away from the movement in which we are so integrated that we can barely see it, we can then break the rhythm, create a fugue in variations of modes of seeing (accelerate and decelerate to disengage from our usual perspective). Therefore, we can seek in the video a form of getting out of ourselves, of seeking a different outlook beyond our own, a look that does not even exist. To invent new forms of seeing, not to test which mode of understanding is true, but to produce other possibilities of understanding that enrich our perspective of the world and its ways. To sensitize ourselves with different sensibilities: not to make them quickly intelligible by judging them right or wrong, but to imbue ourselves of their affective atmospheres, their stylistics, their way of being.

Thus, in cinema, the haphazard experimentation with scene, juxtaposition and delirious superposition is also the main operation that produces imagetic discourses and, in this context, Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) was one of the main pioneers and enthusiasts of audiovisual experimentation as a possibility to liberate our view beyond the human when thinking a city: an eye-camera that sees in ways (angles, velocities etc.) that the eye could not do by itself. It was he who better fulfilled the plans of Eisenstein (1898-1948), who had formalized the possibility of a language proper to cinema, not descendant from literature or theatre in its verbal narrative, an imagetic language based on the constitution of Eastern ideograms and in their operation of creating images with languages similar to the verbal language figures so common to poetry and to daily life. With that, he created the visual operators of metaphor and metonymy that, just as the primary processes of the Freudian unconscious (condensation and displacement), allow us to conjugate images through superposition or juxtaposition (as successive or simultaneous frames), swerving them in a variety of senses other than those given immediately by each one of them in isolation. This experimental cinema, full of poetic strategies that disclose the artificialities of the medium, was attacked soon after its inception by the naturalistic impulses of a realist cinema (Machado, 2006).

The Ontology of the Image and its Poetics: the concreteness of image and its action

We observe, therefore, that the meaning of the poetic image in the production of knowledge is the multiplication of possible perspectives, and not the reduction of possible images. Without operating with judgment and with the need for an excluded third, a whole range of singular perspectives can coexist giving the concrete experience (affective, intuitive, through the look) a rich and complex alterity. However, based on that, how can we understand the reality of the image? If we position ourselves beyond a division between false and true, image and referent,

how can we understand the ontology of image itself? How can I, typing here at a laptop, inside an apartment with the television on, living a thousand imaged connections with the whole world, talk about the reality of the image? What is this, then? Image? How can we talk about photos, paintings, my computer screen and the television screen in my living room? These are concrete parts of the world; that is for sure. They are not abstractions or representations, they are actions or, better saying, they are relations that have tendencies of agency with us. They are not referents of other objects, because the images themselves are relational realities complexifying our world-plot. What good would it be to separate image and world as we did to body and soul, body and mind, in the history of Western philosophy? We have to overcome such binarism in a complex and hybrid perspective. For that, we can make use of the complex ontology developed by philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1956), which presents us with a possible manner of univocity of image and world.

With his analytical (but not reductionist) methodology, this author draws from the complexity of the world a few pure concepts that work for him as operators in his ontology. He then guides us through a series of concepts which, when taken in isolation, are not of great use for us for being simple but which, when taken in relation to each other, impure and hybrid with the other concepts of these author, lead us to a complex relation with the world. Thus, for example, if Whitehead talks about a mode of the *sentire*² (Whitehead, 1956) that is purely physical and about another mode that is purely conceptual, what really matters to us here is the marriage of both in the subjective mode: for Whitehead, this marriage is what will generate the feeling we call consciousness. A feeling that will be the integration of physical and spiritual (conceptual) *sentire*.

Under this perspective of impurities, we can observe that the investigation of our prehensions³ in search of their physical and/or spiritual purity becomes meaningless, since we ourselves are a production of their impure integration. So, Whitehead does not deny the diversity between them (they have singular stylistics), but makes the distinction in two opposed natures a false problem: what remains to us is not to elaborate the classical bifurcation of nature between mind and body, inside and outside, image and thing, thereby thinking that (as Whitehead says citing Hume) the difference between the red that takes our mind in darkness and the red that inundates our eyes on a sunny day are two reds of distinct natures (essence and appearance, substance and mode, real and mental, illusory and true etc.), but reds separated-united by a difference in nuances: "This means that a consistent sensationalism cannot distinguish between a percept and a concept" (Whitehead, 1956, p. 330). There is not, therefore, in the author a dualist world split into soul and body and, even if in its place, he constructs a modal differentiation between physical and conceptual *sentire*, he cares strongly

for the relations between both in hybrid and transmuted *sentire*, where physical *sentire* become conceptual and conceptual *sentire* become physical. Such transmutation of *sentire* among themselves is the operation that produces Nexus, that is, the community (coherence) of *sentire*: it is in this way that a multiplicity of *sentire* can unite in a single complex and heterogeneous feeling resulting from the apprehension of this multitude (playing with their intensities, valuations and eliminations so as to make them jointly favorable and to guarantee their meta-stability).

We see, therefore, the possibility of integrating the images into the universe of bodily things without considering the former as a form of degradation, illusion, representation of the latter. They are part of this complex unit, of this metastable and heterogeneous union that constitutes our modes. Thus, the formation of the image to Whitehead is an encounter of various series in composition (just as every subject, object, thing, flow), as for example the time series of the human body (that takes us to the eye and to the sight as we know it), of the photographed/painted/simulated “object”, of the image-producing device etc. The image is, therefore, a “nexus”, a prehension of prehensions that relate these series among themselves: “The members of each nexus will be mutually contemporaries. Also the historical route will lead up to the nexus which is the chair-image” (Whitehead, 1956, p. 98).

By seeing the series that constitutes a contemporary chair to us, and the image we make of it, and by finally asking us “where is the real chair?”, Whitehead gives us the deft answer that the real chair is the set of all these things in question, the prehensive nexus of these various nexus: “This society is the ‘real chair’” (Whitehead, 1956, p. 98). That is, our onto-epistemic criterion of validity relies not on a supposed essence of substance beyond the appearances of an entity, but on the density of the relational plot that constitutes it. The density or coherence of its ontology relies on the multiplication of relational perspectives (modes of relation), but always without the possibility of reaching a final everything (there is always a becoming beyond, a line of sight that leads to another possibility, to another being, another ontology).

Nevertheless, even if such perspective seems by itself sufficient, Whitehead has some reservations that in the end complicate for us the conception of image and of its relation to reality and illusion. To Whitehead (1956), the real chair is, in fact, the corpuscular (physical) society of the chair convergent series and its history (variations of time series in changing compositions and formation of divergent series), excluding the derivations of it into things such as, for example, reflections in the mirror. These would already be other histories, new nexus, and the concept of illusion would be exactly the act where we infer one nexus where there is a different one. In this way, if the image of the chair that we look at is in the *chair itself*, we apprehend (we relate to) the same series; however, if we look at the reflection of the chair in the mirror, then we are

dealing with a different series, a different composition without a nexus relation with the former.

This assertion presents us with two interesting elements for our reflection about the image: firstly, illusion would not be in the fact that we do not perceive directly the nexus, that we see it only through our mind and not through nature⁴. The second element (which was not mentioned by Whitehead) is the immanence (conceived here as the absence of ontological hierarchy, absence of transcendents) between the illusory image (mirror, painting, photograph etc.) and the usually denominated *thing in itself* (the physical, the bodily), given that both are nothing more than nexus, prehensions, current occasions, albeit distinct, without any ontological deficit of any of the parts, in other words, both are “being”, “objects” (given that every object is an event, a relation).

We could finally ask why, for this philosopher, we cannot link the histories of both nexus (chair and its reflection in the mirror), complexifying even more the ontology of the node of relations called *chair*? Would they not form, chair and its reflection, a series in their relation? Would they not constitute a new nexus? It would be better for philosophy and for the social and human sciences to consider (beyond organisms so well defined by their organs, within their limits) that the real chair is a never-exhaustible myriad going well beyond the so-called chair object, its reflection, or even beyond the people that sit on it, given that we can outline the relational limits that define a being, based on our question, on our prehensive question, which will have their own criteria of definition of the being in question. Thus, for example, the forest, the table, the office, the people and their backs, ergonomics, the bourgeois rise of the idea of daily comfort, the contemporary immaterial work, among many other elements, can be a part, in their own distinct ways, of the constitution of this specific chair-nexus: “Thus a sense-datum has ingression into experience by reason of its forming the *what* of a very complex multiple integration of prehensions within that occasion” (Whitehead, 1956, p. 99). We cannot forget that in this extensive immanence of relations it is also a relation (prehension) that outlines us as subjects and outlines our objects⁵. Clearly we are not dealing with an identity unification in a single being where anything can be everything; the becoming is limited by its own series and its potentialities are not indeterminate, but conditioned by the beings and their powers (even if the becoming is relatively indeterminate when opening new possibilities in the current occasions, new haphazard conditions).

Thinking thus about the world and about the images, I stare at my living room and see it full of intensities: around me hover hundreds of small sparks of the most varied places, actions transmitted electromagnetically, ready to contaminate me with their singularities binding us to one another. There is a density of actions in contemporary living rooms, worlds that actualize fragments of actions and relate to our daily lives.

They fill the atmosphere of our homes with their density of virtualities always ready to present themselves there and then. The living room is taken by virtual presences, by images of the world; it is a dense room that every now and then spreads itself towards other places. It is an extremely capillarized room, with a thousand imagetic microvilosities, which often escape the walls and vascularize the world and the room in a rich, complex form. My empty living room is a multitude of worlds, because in an ontology based on relation (prehension and *sentire*) and on a conception of image as relation (nexus, prehension), we can see that they (the images) have the same concreteness in their existence as the other bodies, and can, therefore, be used to enrich our possibilities of relations with the world.

The Senses of the Poetic Images in the Production of Knowledge

The vicious separation of the flux from the permanence leads to the concept of an entirely static God, with eminent reality, in relation to an entirely fluent world, with deficient reality. But if the opposites, static and fluent, have once been so explained as separately to characterize diverse actualities, the interplay between the thing which is static and the things which are fluent involves contradiction at every step in its explanation. Such philosophies must include the notion of “illusion” as a fundamental principle – the notion of “mere appearance”. This is the final platonic problem (Whitehead, 1956, p. 465).

We can then carry out the escape from the oppositions instituted by Western philosophy, which relegated appearances to the status of being unreliable and artful, given that knowledge is perennial, eternal, otherwise it would not be true. Truth should be sought in a strict empiricism (description of bodies and movements) free from subjectivity and poetry – one has to give leaden weights to imagination, said Bacon (1999) – or in the pure mathematical forms like a Descartes (1999); during the Enlightenment everyone saw image as a pariah, an illusion that clouded reason, mere fantasy: “[...] the object is one thing, the image or fancy is another” (Hobbes, 1999, p. 32). However, by uniting the ontological conception created by Whitehead (that puts an end to our prejudices against the possibility of being deceived by images) with the already presented transforming possibilities of experimental poetics (in its transformations of the modes of seeing in alterities of the sight), we perceive that the sense of images in the production of knowledge in the social and human sciences, investigated here, is not to be found in judgment, in Enlightenment verification or proof, but in the multiplication of the possibilities of seeing. Whilst modern science searched for the simplification of phenomena down to a minimum of factors necessary

for their prediction and control, the poetic image produces a knowledge of a qualitative character in which we seek to multiply the number of variables to a maximum, dealing with fleeting and subtle information to try and come closer not to generalization, but to singularity. In this way, with the different perspectives made possible by audiovisual poetic experimentation, we expand our network of relations (prehensions) with the world, giving ourselves means of encompassing a multiplicity that we could not otherwise deal with.

The suspension of judgment and consequent opening of the senses typical of the poetic operation can be formalized in the idea created by Charles S. Peirce of an abductive reasoning. The judgment, in order to operate its division between the existent and non-existent, between the false and the true, makes use of a production of hypotheses that will be tested (judged) in their predictive ability related to a given phenomenon: if the hypothesis predicts correctly the event, it is considered valid; if it is inefficacious, it is regarded as false. Similarly, if we have two hypotheses for the same event, that which better controls and predicts the events is considered valid to the detriment of the other explanation. If both hypotheses have the same capacity for action, we generally choose the simpler and more elegant, according to the principle of Occam's Razor (Gilson, 1998). The mode of thinking the world proposed by Peirce under the name of abductive reasoning would not work according to the mere elaboration of falsifiable hypotheses that would compete against each other in a process of increasing efficacy and simplicity until only one of them stands. Instead of supposing this race for scientific purification, abductive reasoning proposes a wild production of various and assorted hypotheses, which would not be considered as mutually exclusive, but rather as contemporary possibilities. One might indeed operate displacements of hypotheses originating from different fields of knowledge, creating new prehensions between hitherto isolated disciplines. The coexistence of this hypothetical field of possibilities then produces, with the tensions existing between the different hypotheses, a series of transductions that afford relations between the disparities without totalizing them into a new unit. With this complex and heterogeneous machine of hypothetical productions, we can relate to the events of the world without simplifying them, but rather promoting a multiplication of their possible readings, multiplying our possible prehensions with the events of the world.

The poetic images can give us a device for the creation of such hypothetical-rhizomatic machine, expanding our power of perspective of reality. Since these images do not propose to us a representation, a rigid, simple and analogical relation between the image and the events (objects, actions, subjects, happenings etc.), they promote the creation of new relations beyond the mere designation and definition, allowing the appearance of new prehensions, nexus, and perspectives in the world. Thus, such contamination by the singularity of the poetic

image enters our very ontological constitution, contributing with the swerve, with the fugue, with the emergence of the new. For, by suspending judgment and opening the senses, it incites us to go beyond the established good sense, beyond the ready meanings, promoting an exercise in disquiet and critique (Foucault, 1990) where we can reinvent the world and ourselves in others.

The use and creation of poetic images in the production of knowledge can serve, therefore, to complexify our discursive plot and to intensify the critical power of this discourse, leading necessarily to a relation of contamination and creation in which the imagetic-poetic narrative instigates in those who relate to it the disposition to create new possibilities of views about the same. In this way, the singularity of the poetic atmosphere is not lost as mere illusion or a too-specific fact, because it affords the sophistication of a series of *sentire* and other prehensions beyond these specific relation that was established. A poet's outlook that augments reality with its inventions, relates elements hitherto separated, creates new uncharted territories (Barros, 2010).

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Endnotes

- 1 For example, both Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge (precursors of cinema, each in his own way, but both with photography in its relation to time) explored the analytic decomposition-recomposition of human and animal motion for their study, but at the same time produced interesting plastic effects with those images and, beyond that, Marey, for instance, ventured even further into the poetics of the scientific image by working with the small perceptions, the luminous and aerial bodies: in *Mouvements de l'air* and *Corps Lumineux*, for example (Fatorelli, 2003).
- 2 *Sentire* are the minimal epistemic and ontological units in Whitehead's ontology. The world for this philosopher is an ocean of relations in which the *sentire* are the water drops: condensations of experiences. And experience here is as concrete as the body, given that ontology and epistemology are one and the same event. The *sentire* follow the composition or decomposition of our relations, and our relations are the bricks and mortar of the world. In this way, we have a modal ontology, where the modes of experiencing are the oscillations of the world itself in its becomings.
- 3 "Prehension" is not just a mode of composition of knowledge, but also the mode in which beings are composed. In this relation, one being affects the other with its own singularity, at the encounter, without, however, dissolving the singularity proper to these elements involved in the above-mentioned prehension (it is fundamental to note that each one of the elements is itself a complex, made coherent by a prehension). That is, simplifying the concept, we can consider "prehension" as a relation of ontological and epistemic composition between terms diverse and singular which, in their turn, are constituted by prehensions.

- 4 Even if we have to ask ourselves if the act of inferring a reflection-nexus as a chair-nexus would not make us bifurcate nature again, with such differentiation between perception and influence being flawed, given that in every perception there are one or various inference processes that make the perceiving possible.
- 5 *Nexus Social Order* → Form/mode of relation common among various entities (current occasions) that emerges from some of the prehensions between these same beings. In such nexus, or better saying, in the prehension of such nexus, there is a feeling of this element/common mode, which is instituted in a viral manner through multiple influences between the entities of these societal nexus. The constitution of this viral conjunction constitutes a logic (order, laws) that then self-regulates: they are similar for being in society and are in society for being similar. Thus the constitution of an identity is in Whitehead's ontology the construction of a societal nexus, and the constitution of a series in this nexus is the creation of a "personal order" (Whitehead, 1956, p. 131). *Nexus Personal Order* → Is the nexus that occurs based on a social nexus, and is nothing more than the series of series of variations of the current occasions ordered in their genetic relations, in their production relations. The personal order talks about the constitution and perseverance of a singular style of relation (person-occasion).

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