Sensorial thought

Cinema, perspective and Anthropology

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Abstract

The concept of 'sensorial thought' formulated by Eisenstein to explain the logic of film discourse prompted him to engage in a rich dialogue with the Anthropology of his time, in particular with Lévy-Bruhl's formulation of how 'primitive mentality' operates. Eisenstein attempted to draw a parallel between cinematic language and the way in which primitive thought is manifested, arguing that both based on the principle of non-contradiction, on the idea of a simultaneity between 'self' and 'other,' and on metonymization as a way of intensifying sensorial experience. This sensorial thought produces a particular 'perspective,' an engagement between spectator and screen character. By drawing together Cinema and Anthropology, Eisenstein produces a powerful reflection on the concepts of image, alterity, perspective and the senses.
Keywords: Eisenstein, image, alterity, perspective and sensorial thought

Resumo

O conceito de "pensamento sensorial" formulado por Eisenstein para dar conta da lógica do discurso cinematográfico o leva a propor diálogos fecundos com a Antropologia de sua época, especificamente com a formulação de Lévy-Bruhl sobre o modo de operar a "mentalidade primitiva". Eisenstein procura traçar um paralelo entre a linguagem cinematográfica e o modo como se manifesta o pensamento primitivo que se apóiam no princípio de não-contradição, na ideia de simultaneidade do 'eu' e do 'outro', nos processos de metonimização como modo de intensificar a experiência sensorial. Esta sensorialidade produz uma determinada 'perspectiva', um engajamento entre espectador/personagem. Ao aproximar Cinema e Antropologia, Eisenstein produz uma potente reflexão sobre os conceitos de imagem, alteridade, perspectiva e sensorialidade.
Palavras-chave: Eisenstein, imagem, alteridade, perspectiva, pensamento sensorial

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This article explores the relations between thought and image, problematizing the conceptions of perspective and sensorial thought formulated by Eisenstein.[2] In his exploration of the logic of cinematic discourse, Eisenstein engages in a rich dialogue with Anthropology, taking as his interlocutor Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, more specifically his formulation of how 'primitive mentality' operates. In exploring the relations between film language, understood as a mode of thought, and the way in which 'primitive mentality' is manifested, he reflects on the principle of non-contradiction, the idea of the simultaneity of 'self' and 'other' that engenders a complex perception of alterity and metonymization as a way of intensifying sensorial experience. By drawing together Cinema and Anthropology, Eisenstein produces a powerful reflection on the concepts of image, alterity, perspective and the senses. Hence the article sets out from Eisenstein's original contributions, looking to situate them within contemporary anthropology's debate on images.

Eisenstein emphasizes that cinema reinforces a logic of thought operating through a sensorial mode based on processes of metonymization. Sensorial thought[3], for its part, is responsible for the cinematic experience, that is, the adoption of a determined 'perspective' that enables the spectator to identify with what happens on the cinema screen. The relation between 'sensorial thought' and the production of a 'perspective' allows us to problematize the meaning that 'image' assumes for Cinema and Anthropology.

1 An earlier version of this article was presented at the Image and Anthropology seminar held at PPGSA-UFRJ, for which I thank my colleagues Clarice Peixoto, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, Rubem Caixeta de Queiroz and Rose Hikiji. A second version was presented at PPGAS-UFRGS as part of BIEV: my thanks to Cornélia Eckert and Ana Luiza Carvalho da Rocha for their comments.

2 I use a set of texts by Eisenstein written in the 1930s and collected in *Film Form*(1949) and *Selected Writings*: "Beyond the shot," "The dramaturgy of film form," "The filmic fourth dimension," "Methods of Montage," "Help yourself!" and "Film form: new problems."

3 Although the English translation of Eisenstein's work adopts the term 'sensual thought', here I prefer 'sensorial thought' which, I think, better expresses the conception of a kind of thought related to the senses and sensations.

Art and Sensoriality

We can begin with Eisenstein's formulation of the concept of 'art' as a starting point to understanding the way in which he believes cinematic thought operates. 'Art' is defined by its double aspect as both allegory (the presentation of a world) and the explanation of the world (Eisenstein 2002:123). In Eisenstein's aesthetic-conceptual perception there is no separation between the production of knowledge in the arts and sciences, especially the human sciences, since the artist produces allegories about the world at the same time as he or she explains it, revealing his or her double character as a producer of knowledge and a producer of allegories about the world.[4]

For Eisenstein, the 'form of the film' does not necessarily present its content.[5] This first question can be exemplified by demonstrating that the structure of the novels written by Cooper, an early nineteenth century author who lauded the exploits of the colonizers against the North American Indians, is the same structure, albeit inverted, of the police novel used by Hugo or Balzac, and that both structures deal unequivocally with stories of escapes and pursuits (Eisenstein 2002:124).

Here Eisenstein is looking to prove that so-called inner discourse, cinematographic discourse properly speaking, the discourse of the art worlds, has a different formal structure to spoken discourse. He emphasizes that both discourses have a syntax, a flow, and thus are informed by general laws that govern and structure them. Inner discourse (cinematographic, artistic) is based on thought processes constructed by a sensorial structure of the image, meaning that it is not governed by the same logical formulation of spoken language (Eisenstein 2002:125).

The central question involves demonstrating that the sensorial thought through which cinema is structured is closely connected to the so-called primitive thought that, for Eisenstein, was associated with forms of artistic thought. The idea of comparing cinematographic perception with sensorial

4 This question echoes the ideas of Lévi-Strauss(1964) concerning mythology's function as a potent form of aestheticizing the world and, at the same time, explaining it. Consequently cinema and mythology are closely connected in Eisenstein's thinking.

5 This conception of the 'form of cinema' reveals Eisenstein proximity to the structural linguistics produced by his compatriots. Responsible for founding the Prague Linguistic Circle, their emphasis was on form and the structural aspects of the production of a language that emits no intrinsic content: in other words, it is through the formal relation between pairs of phonemic opposites that language acquires structure.

thought leads to cinema being equated with primitive representations that operate via precisely the same mode of thought, thinking through the senses. To prove this point Eisenstein turns to Lévy-Bruhl's writings with the aim of explaining how this form of thinking through images is equivalent to the sensorial form based on metonymy, which designates a *pars pro toto*, a part for the whole. He thus defines metonymy as the figure of speech that works most intensely on the senses. To exemplify this idea, Eisenstein recalls a famous scene from one of his own films in which he used metonymy to intensify sensorial experience: "The pince-nez of the surgeon in Potemkin are firmly embedded in the memory of anyone who saw the film. The method consisted in substituting the whole (the surgeon) by a part (the pince-nez), which played his role, and, it so happened, played it much more sensorial-intensively than it could have been played even by the re-appearance of the surgeon. [...] The pince-nez, taking the place of the surgeon, not only completely fills his role and place, but does so with a huge sensorial-emotional increase in the intensity of the impression." (Eisenstein 1949:132).

Cinema and 'Primitive Thought'

Eisenstein compares 'primitive thought' and cinema in terms of the way both emphasize metonymy as the primary means of presenting how they think about the world, in opposition to metaphor, perceived as a way of thinking in which relations are established without any great sensorial-emotional intensity. This formulation of the process of thinking through metonymy takes us to the question of how cinema and artistic forms of expression in general are more inclined towards metonymy than metaphor. Eisenstein therefore attributes a special value to metonymy: the intensification of the sensorial apprehension produced by the effect of synecdoche.

Eisenstein looks to show how "primitive forms of thought" are evaluated in accordance with the dominant logic in western thought, based on the metaphorization of the world. Eisenstein turns to the classic example presented by Lévy-Bruhl in "Mental Functions in Inferior Societies" where he cites Karl von den Steinen's original observation concerning the Bororo and macaw parrots.[6] Eisenstein interprets the phenomenon as follows: "...a human

6 Karl Von den Steinen was a German anthropologist who made two expeditions to Central Brazil,

being, while being himself and conscious of himself as such, yet simultaneously considers himself to be also some other person or thing, and, further, to be so, just as definitely and just as concretely, materially. [...] Note that by this [the Bororo] do not in any way mean that they will become these birds after death, or that their ancestors were such in the remote past. [...] It is not here a matter of identity of names or relationship; they mean a complete simultaneous identity of both" (Eisenstein 1949:135). And he concludes as follows: "However strange and unusual this may sound to us, it is nevertheless possible to quote from artistic practice quantities of instances which would sound almost word for word like the Bororo idea concerning simultaneous double existence of two completely different and separate and, none the less, real images" (Eisenstein 1949:136).

Here we can turn to Lévy-Bruhl himself: "...who are humans and animals at one and the same time. [....] In human form, they are also animals, and in animal form, they are also humans. [...] the leopard-man [...] when he dons the skin of the leopard is not disguising himself as this animal. He truly is a leopard, without ceasing to be a man. [...] he is simultaneously one and double, like the leopard man of the Nagas, or the tiger man of the Malay peninsula. And as a natural consequence, the man cannot avoid responsibility for what the animal may have done" (Lévy-Bruhl 1927:204).

Reflecting on the same problem half a century later, Crocker (1977) suggests that something else is involved between the red macaws and the Bororo, and once again evokes the questions raised by Lévy-Bruhl. Rather than a metaphor, he argues that it was a synecdoche or metonymy. Goldman (1991) formulates the question in the following way:

"The problem, with respect to Lévy-Bruhl's thought, is that the notion of metaphor implies, whether we wish it or not, a fairly dangerous premise, namely that in asserting something the 'natives' are in fact saying something else. In other words it is as though the notion of metaphor were a new version of what Talal Asad (1986:149-51) claims to be an old claim of anthropology and the human sciences in general, to detect what remains implicit in other cultures and other peoples. Something that Crocker himself also inadvertently suggests by showing how Lévy-Bruhl could cease to appeal precisely to

encountering the Bororo on his first voyage in 1888. He was the author of the phrase "we [the Bororo] are red macaws..." which provoked innumerable commentaries and reflections and for this reason became one of the most famous phrases in anthropology, challenging the logical interpretations of thought.

the concept of metaphor, the fact that the relation could only be literal and self-evident for the Bororo. And this is indeed the crux of the problem, Lévy-Bruhl's originality in responding to it being precisely to have abandoned the desire to explain it…" (1991:409).

Seeking to understand this phenomenon of simultaneity, Eisenstein turns to other examples, citing the actor's 'self-feeling' when playing a scene, which produces a relation between 'myself' and 'him' along the same lines as the Bororo and which in the final analysis engenders a classic problem of the simultaneity of the 'self' and 'non-self.'

He cites the testimony of actress Serafima Birman, who he directed in *Ivan the Terrible*, to show how the mode of sensorial thinking of the Bororo is just like that of actors. The actress says that the moment when the child stops speaking about herself in the third person, shown in the transition from a phrase like 'Ana wants to walk' to 'I want to walk,' is analogous to the moment when the actor stops speaking of his character as 'he' and says 'I': "Where indeed this new 'I' is not the personal 'I' of the actor or actress but the 'I' of his or her image" (Eisenstein 2002:130).

We can perceive the ways in which many actors deal with this 'other becoming,' the possibility of transformation based on the simultaneity of distinct things, in the kinds of colloquial phrases used in theatre rehearsals: "I'm no longer me"; "now I'm so-and-so"; "look, I'm starting to become him."The examples cited here by Eisenstein emphasize a kind of sensorial fusion of 'self' and 'other' that becomes an 'image' of the 'self' that, based on this perception, no longer admits of contradiction. Eisenstein goes even further in claiming that this sensorial perception enables thought to contaminate even the spectator, who begins to adopt a perspective, meaning that the spectator is incapable of killing the villain (although he wishes to) precisely because he has the character's *united duality* in mind, yet, at the same time, he may laugh and cry since he partly 'forgets' that he is part of a representation. Hence this state of the spectator's emotion, which in turn is linked to the emotion of the actor-character, is, so to speak, one of the elements shared by artistic language and so-called primitive or sensorial thought, which allows another perspective to be 'assumed' or 'adopted'. Indeed perspectives and access to them depend precisely on establishing non-contradiction, in the sense of the person being able to live or feel this sensorial thought as non-contradiction, governed by a logic that allows us to penetrate other worlds and other beings.

Cinema therefore offers this possibility of 'adopting' a particular perspective, which, Eisenstein insists, coincides with primitive thought since it depends on and accentuates this sensorial potential of the world, affirming a way of thinking based on other connections and flows similar to the artistic mode of thought properly speaking.

Eisenstein uses other examples like that of the Bushmen, taken from a book by Wundt (1928), demonstrating how the way in which the Bushmen formulate their relations with the whites in their own discourse contrasts heavily with how Wundt interprets and translates Bushmen thought. Eisenstein argues that the Bushmen version is closer to a film script in the sense that it describes the actions as scenes guided by this sensorial form of thinking: "Bushman-there-go, here-run-to-white man, white man-give-tobacco, Bushman-go-smoke, go-fill-tobacco-pouch, white-man-give meat-Bushman, Bushman-go-eat-meat, stand-up-go-home, go happily, go-sit-down, herd-sheep-white man, white man-go-strike Bushman, Bushman-cry-loud-pain, Bushman-go-run-away-white man, white man-run-after-Bushman, Bushman-then-another, this one-herd-sheep, Bushman-all-gone". Here is Wundt's version of the Bushmen version: "The Bushman was at first received kindly by the white man in order that he might be brought to herd his sheep; then the white man maltreated the Bushman; the latter ran away, whereupon the white man took another Bushman, who suffered the same experience" (Eisenstein 1949:137).

Eisenstein argues that the Bushmen account contains the embryo of the film script, based on this very same formula of thinking the world in sensorial form, developing the action from a different point of view and thereby following a narrative anchored in the image. The narrative's imagery, which imbues the narration with this sensorial aspect, is precisely what allows other people (as spectators) to adopt the perspective of the action when they begin to 'live' this Bushmen formulation as their own. For Eisenstein, the Bushmen narrative is literally equivalent to montage of the classic "American 'chase sequence.'"

In another essay, "Beyond the shot" from 1929, Eisenstein focuses on a question close to his heart, Japanese writing, a language that he devoted himself to understanding and speaking fluently. He observes that Japanese writing also operates through what he calls 'image-based thought' in which the image has a much clearer influence on how thought is expressed in writing.

He shows how what he defines as the most important element of cinematic production, montage, dominates Japanese visual culture through writing, not only in its form but also in its content.

Eisenstein emphasizes the importance of the category of Japanese hieroglyphs known as *huei-i*, or copulatives, for understanding the essence of this thinking through images. In Japanese writing combining two elements produces not the sum of the 'images' but a new visual concept expressed in the ideogram. Examples include the combination of the images of water and an eye to generate a new ideogram meaning to weep; the image of a dog combined with that of a mouth, signifying to bark; the image of a mouth and that of a bird, meaning to sing. The process of creating the Japanese ideogram is therefore the same as film montage, which uses the 'copula' to create new meanings. Once again, therefore, Eisenstein's argument seeks to show that cinema is part of thought and operates like thought: the language of the cinema is the language of thought, governed by the same laws.

Eisenstein appraises the *haikai* in the same way: by generating image-based thought, it produces a visual sensorial effect that combines the contrasting symbols presented by the ideograms, resulting in the full expression of 'image-words,' which accentuate aspects that are sensorial but not for this reason any less conceptual. For this reason Eisenstein claims that: "[the *haikai*] are montage phrases" (Eisenstein 2002:38). He adds that the reception of the *haikai* is of crucial importance since this adds the sharing of a perspective, which in turn elicits an emotional quality. Consequently the same strategies involved in the construction of the Japanese ideogram govern a mode of thought that is also expressed in *haikai* poetry and the production of masks and prints whose defining feature is to transform isolated elements (images) into a new concept: the ideogram, mask or print. This coincides with the logic internal to film montage: taking isolated elements and placing them in a flow of signification that in turn generates this emotional quality, a form of exercising sensorial thought. When we take isolated elements and set them in order, we construct, in Eisenstein's words, a combination of "a monstrous disproportion (...) of [a] point of view" (Eisenstein 1949:34). A point of view, then, is this exact possibility of situating oneself within a perspective, based precisely on this 'copula,' a combination of isolated elements that generates and produces a new perception through the flow of sensorial thought. This is why Eisenstein insists that 'realism' in the arts, conceived as a way of harmonizing

these disproportions and reinforcing parallels between the mental image and the world, is far from being the "correct perception of the world", since it comprises "simply a function of a specific form of social structure" and there is no natural and congruent way for thought to operate. Consequently the cinema and sensorial thought amount to precisely this disproportionate form of thought because it is effected through a copulative mode, creating the 'monstrous disproportion' in all its potency. This is also why Eisenstein goes on to define montage as a collision, a conflict: the idea of the copula generates new concepts that lead the collisions to produce simultaneities in which the "self is the other," the basis of the possibility of adopting a perspective. For Eisenstein this form of thought operating is the mode of cinematic thought properly speaking. Montage captures perceptions by combining images that produce other images located not in the frame of the film image but in that of the thought image. This is the case described by Bazin (1985:66 cited in Menezes 2005:100, n.49) of the survey conducted after the showing of "Rosemary's Baby" (Roman Polanski) when spectators described the monstrous face of the baby, an image that never actually appeared on the cinema screen and was merely suggested by the editing of the sequence.

Eisenstein also compares this sensorial form to the way in which the poet writes: the association of the flow of words in the construction of the poem, supported by an image-based writing based on the same law of creation he called "primitive forms of the thought process". Poetry and cinema manifest the same quality of thought, both proposing an image of the world. Eisenstein provides an example: rather than saying "an old woman lived there and then..." we prefer to say "There was an old woman who lived in a shoe" (Eisenstein 2002:132). This form of proposing an image of the world makes all the difference in terms of enabling this world to be perceived by another, reinforcing the analogy between so-called primitive thought and cinematic thought.

In the same text Eisenstein criticizes Lévy-Bruhl by showing that he restricted this form of thought to the so-called primitive without realizing that this formulation of thought was related, in Eisenstein's own words, "for the human being of any given, socially determined type of thinking, according to whatever state he may be in" (Eisenstein 1949:143). He also argues that there is a 'continual shifting' between the 'highest intellectual' forms and "primitive forms of sensorial thought" such that: "The margin between the types

is mobile and it suffices a not even extraordinarily sharp affective impulse to cause an extremely, it may be, logically deliberative person suddenly to react in obedience to the never dormant inner armory of sensorial thinking and the norms of behavior deriving thence." (Eisenstein 1949:143). Hence so-called sensorial thought is not a primitive form but a form of thought. And to prove this relation Eisenstein provides us with a simple and striking example: "When a girl to whom you have been unfaithful tears your photo into fragments 'in anger', thus destroying the 'wicked betrayer', for a moment she re-enacts the magical operation of destroying a man by the destruction of his image (based on the early identification of image and object)" (Eisenstein 1949:143). Eisenstein raises the same question formulated by Latour (1994) in his book *We have never been modern* when he emphasizes the potentiality and possibility of sensorial thought emerging 'outside the frame.' In other words, Eisenstein's argument coincides with Latour's critique of the way in which modernity institutes itself through the belief in distinct ontological zones, creating the 'modern attitude': the division between humans and non-humans, subjects and objects, science and non-science. Hence when we define these practices as separate, we uphold the belief that we are modern. However it is at the moment when a simultaneity of these ontologies is affirmed that the definition of modernity introduces particular hybrids, to use Latour's terminology, which denounce its own belief. In this sense the sensorial mode produced by cinema in Eisenstein's line of argument coincides with the mode in which 'primitives' formulate their thinking about the world, constructing hybrids and simultaneities, which high lights a kind of thought that insists on constructing a network made from a heterogenic series of elements (actors) that may be animate, inanimate, human and non-human, connecting as a flow and establishing new significations.[7]

As Eisenstein stressed, this form of thought operating in sensorial form produces a 'monstrous disproportion' that, providing the foundations of cinematic thought, also forms the basis of many of Anthropology's contemporary reflections, such as Gell's ideas (1998) concerning photography's indexicality, which blurs the boundaries between the ontological zones separating subject and object, or the meaning of metonymy, which takes the part for the

7 Latour recognizes the importance of the concept of the rhizome, as conceived by Deleuze & Guattari (1995), where any 'actor' is connected to any other 'actor,' without any determined beginning or end.

whole in the sympathetic magic of Frazer(1978), revisited by Taussig (1993). What needs to be emphasized here is less the substantial forms of thought or perspectives themselves and more the possibilities of constructing 'frames' (Lagrou 2011) in which particular forms of thought acquire meaning through specific contexts. Eisenstein, seeking to move beyond the false antinomy between a logical-intellectual mode versus a sense-based mode of thought operating, adds that it is precisely in art, including cinema, that we can perceive this dissolution that leads to a constitutive tension that indeed comprises the very definition of art: the power of manifesting this 'dually united' dimension of thought, whether through the sensorial mode, or through intellection, given that the work of art is founded on this tension between form and content: "A drive towards the thematic-logical side renders the work dry, logical, didactic. But overstress on the side of the sensorial forms of thinking [...] is equally fatal for the work: the work becomes condemned to sensorial chaos [...] Only in the 'dually united' interpenetration of these tendencies resides the true tension-laden unity of form and content" (Eisenstein 1949:145).

Perspective, Decentering and Sensorial Knowledge

The convention of perspective is a way of enabling the coincidence between mental images of the world and the figurative forms used to represent this world (Flores 2007:20). This form of thinking fosters the perception that the outside world can be captured by a subject who does so in the form of a representation, producing a realist way of presenting the object, a neutral, objective and illusionist form. Here we can locate the bases of classical geometry and its efforts to impose *one* single perspective (Flores 2007:20). Applied to the cinema, this discussion generates a paradox: although cinema registers the 'real' in an indexical mode, it lacks painting's capacity to imprint this form of perspectivity on the world. This fact can be illustrated by the impressionist inspiration exerted in the cinema, including its founders, the Lumière brothers, who filmed the real on the basis of this figurative perception of the world, as shown by the comparisons made by Ramond (2005) in her reflection on impressionism and the birth of the cinematographer. This reflection focusing on images made by the cinematographer and by impressionist painters looks to show the aesthetic coincidences between both.

These images depicting intimacy, modernity (streets, crowds,

agglomerations), the open air, train stations and wagons, helped form the aesthetic perception through which cinema was born. Through its absorption of this impressionist world view, cinema was able to escape the 'cabinet of curiosities' and engage in the world, as the impressionists did in leaving their studios and painting the world in movement in front of their eyes, constructing "the art of poetic realism," the same notion that goes beyond cinema and reflects the overall aesthetic attitude of a period that, as Stendhal said in defining the modern novel, situated the gaze, the camera and the painting at the heart of reality (Ramond 2005:166).[8]The first images produced by Lumière mark a particular form of perspective already established by impressionism. Hence Lumière's model was not the 'real,' the world seen through his camera lens, but impressionism, painting, a movement that emphasized light, the moment, the event, the open air, scenes of everyday life. The scenes recorded by Lumière and those depicted by paintings of the era were organized by the same aesthetic conception, the same frame. Although new technologies undoubtedly produce important transformations in the way of apprehending the world, it is equally true that we invent and renew forms of thinking in the world through technology. Thus we come back to the same problem as Lumière: looking at the world with the same gaze as the impressionists, the same gaze as Monet, Manet, Degas and Renoir, with one notable difference: he achieved this gaze by means of a machine.

There is a recurring idea (Jakobson 1970; Berger 1972) that the camera, the 'camera eye' or 'machine eye', produces images that decentre any perspective since what we see depends on a time and a space fixed in the image. In contrast to the decentring proposed by the camera we have the classical renaissance perspective, which engenders "a central perspective that, as well as obtaining a homogeneous and infinite space, emphasizes the necessity of a single and fixed point of view" (Flores 2007:62). Hence both the painter and the spectator see the painting through a 'hole', a specific point of view. While in the perspective of the renaissance painting everything converges towards

8 Anthropology is also transformed by this same experience of situating itself at the heart of reality through the dislocation of the body and eye of the anthropologist, who in this condition assumes the form of the ethnographer. Here we can recall the expeditions undertaken by Boas from 1886 onwards and the voyage undertaken by Haddon and Rivers to the Torres Strait in 1888, the latter definitively associated with the production of moving images and related to the emerging cinema. See the analysis made by Grimshaw (2001) of the images produced by the latter expedition and the comparison between the production of anthropological knowledge at this time and cinematic styles.

an infinite point with the spectator at the centre, the film camera suggests precisely that there is no centre.

This question was formulated by Comolli (2008 cited in Queiroz & Guimarães 2008:47) in his analysis of the importance of the camera-eye for Vertov(1983). The relation between camera and eye (the *kino*-eye), which precisely by being a machine engenders a subjective capacity, not an 'objective' one as usually thought. For Comolli (2008) vision is crucial to perception in the cinema and the spectator perceives that in being blind he or she begins to see another's world, which means comprehending and feeling through this 'emotion' and this 'illusion' proposed by the cinema. He emphasizes the subjective character of a form of knowledge that "operates from the emotions", simultaneously connecting image and knowledge through the subjects of the cinema: the person who films, those filmed, and the spectator. Perspective, the way of looking in the cinema, therefore generates an image-based knowledge rooted in a particular form of knowing that, returning once more to Eisenstein, we could now call sensorial knowledge.[9]

Here it is interesting to note that impressionism is by itself a way of decentring vision, since it is the spectator who forms the image from colours. Colours are not mixed but applied pure, side by side, depending on the spectator to form them. This new perception locates the production of the perspective in the spectator rather than in the painting itself, the spectator now absorbs the sensations suggested in the work in the same way that the spectator gaze sat the image in the cinema.[10]

I think, though, that what is posed in photography, cinema and impressionism is a way of attributing a cultural form to the apprehension of the real that does not reside in the objectivity of the camera and the capture of images of the 'real,' but in figurative patterns, or in general aesthetic patterns,

9 Queiroz & Guimarães (2008) also stress the perspectival character of the cinema through the emphasis placed on the documentary, arguing that it is in this genre of film that the cinema enables a full alteration of perspective: in other words, the spectator, those filmed and the director him or herself emerged altered from this image-based sensorial experience. Queiroz & Guimarães explore this notion of alteration in terms of an 'Other-Becoming' or a 'Filmed-Becoming' (2008:36). In this sense the possibility of experiencing different perspectives or adopting them in front of the camera, living them as alterations, constitutes the very essence of documentary.

10 Menezes (1997:340) argues that the impressionists were still linked to the general rules involved in the representation of perspective derived from the Renaissance since they depicted a physical, objective and exterior space. It was only with Cézanne that the disorganization of traditional schemas of representation began (Menezes, 1997:341).

that in a certain way express forms of looking and appropriating the world aesthetically.

Flores argues that Egyptian painting involves a horizontal perspective that does not establish a single viewpoint but a multiplicity of viewpoints "requiring from the spectator the activity of looking, where the mobility of the eye becomes primordial" (2007:29).

A perception of the cinema as a form of decentring perspective and sensorial thought was made explicit by a Cashinahua man when shown film images, comparing them to the flow of images seen when he drank *ayahuasca*. In his words: "Film is like *ayahuasca* visions. The images are similar. But making a film is a lot of work! With our vine[11] it's very simple!"[12]

This evokes the idea that the languages of the cinema and *ayahuasca* are both sensorial, enabling a decentralization of the subject at an essential level, a simultaneity that produces the proliferation of viewpoints in the sense that Deleuze (2005:175) conceives as 'perspectivism.'

Deleuze (2005:185) formulates the question of this decentring through Rimbaud's celebrated formula, valid for the cinema insofar as it establishes simultaneity in a sensorial form, "I am an other: "Perspectives and projections – these are neither truth nor appearance. […]movements themselves have lost the centres of revolution around which they develop […]On the one hand the centre became *purely optical*; the point became point of view." (Deleuze 2005:175).

In a text by Jakobson ([1933]1971) we find the same questions as Eisenstein's concerning cinematic thought. Jakobson tells us that the cinema is simultaneity, sign and object all at once. An outcome of this fact is that the problem of reality and illusion is the very essence of filmic discourse. Jakobson uses an example to illustrate this aspect of the cinema: "A dog does not recognize a painted dog, since a painting is wholly a sign – the painter's perspective is a conventional device. […] A dog barks at dogs on film…" (1971:738). This capacity to situate itself, to assume a perspective, to take it as a 'reality,' is the duality instigated by cinema, the 'united duality' or 'double

11 *Ayahusca* is the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi*, used as the main ingredient in the preparation of the drink with the same name, consumed by the native populations of Northwestern Amazonia, including Brazil, Peru and Colombia.

12 From the film *Nawa Huni: regard indien sur l'autre monde* by Patrick Deshayes and Barbara Keifenhein, CNRS, France, 1986.

unity' described by Eisenstein13.

Benjamin's analysis (1996:170) also helps us to understand that cinema allows us to adopt other perspectives since its produce is no longer the 'thing-in-itself' but the images of things. For Benjamin (1996:189) the central question is how the world is represented by the camera: "the comprehension of each image is conditioned by the entire sequence of previous images" and no longer its dependence on the 'things of the world'. Insofar as the image has no intrinsic meanings, it is always referred to another image; in the cinema there is no possibility of objectifying the image since the signifying chain never stops: by deobjectifying the image, the cinema derealizes the real.

Xavier (2003:31-57) explores this conceptualization of perspective in cinema by showing the identification made between the cinema apparatus and the eye, which in turn provides an "identification of my gaze with that of the camera, resulting in a feeling of presence of the world framed on the screen". This concept of identification leads Xavier to propose the following formulation: "The gaze of the cinema is a disembodied gaze."This perception condenses the idea that cinema involves a '*participation*': the spectator *participates* in an imaginary world that allows him or her to become absorbed in images without bodily limits, without the need to be there, simulating being there in the images and thus immersing themselves in cinema (Xavier 2003:37). Xavier emphasizes this submission to the other's point of view as a condition for entering the world proposed by cinema. It is precisely because the spectator is not situated or anchored in the world that he or she can see the world from another perspective, *participating* in that world. The idea of *participating* also acquires a conceptual dimension here that takes us back to Lévy-Bruhl's formulation of the concept, where his theory of *participation* implies the idea of simultaneity, non-contradiction, metonymy, the I am an other, so well perceived by Eisenstein.

This 'disembodied eye,' this *participation*, is the entry point to a new expressive sensorial experience that makes this world plausible. We can see a direct collision between the idea of perspective proposed by the sensorial

13 As Deleuze pointed out: "Eisenstein's innovation (...) was to have produced compact and continuous intensive series, which go beyond all binary structures and exceed the duality of the collective and the individual. Rather, they attain a new reality which could be called Dividual, directly uniting an immense collective reflection with the particular emotions of each individual; in short expressing the unity of power and quality." (1986:94).

experience of the cinema with the concept of perspectivism proposed by Viveiros de Castro (2002) and by the notion of point of view proposed by Lima(1996). While for Amerindians the body engenders the point of view, perspective depends precisely on acquiring a bodily form, being another (having another body) and thus being able to see the world from this other body, cinema produces a disembodied eye, removing our ordinary embodiedness and enabling us to assume, just by looking, multiple perspectives via the screen on which our gaze embodies other bodies: humans, animals or objects. The corporal absence induced by the cinema when it concentrates all the attention on the gaze promotes a mimetic fusion between the eye and the camera, the very condition that guarantees this capacity to assume multiple perspectives.

Here, therefore, we can highlight the central place of the subject in the construction of cinema, whether documentary or fictional. The subject, the images of subjects (for which read their bodies), has implied truth and error ever since Plato (1999a, 1999b)[14] and, in this sense, the point of view can be said to merge with the subject position on the screen, produced in the encounter between those filming and those filmed, striking the spectator who desperately tries, also as a subject of reception, to accommodate this dimension of accompanying and adopting the possibilities of other perspectives definitively embodied in the cinema. This aspect demonstrates the importance of the dimension of the problem of perspective, the adoption of one viewpoint amid the multiple viewpoints presented. Cinema is materialized through bodies that announce discourses and this embodiment is the very infrastructure of the cinematic condition (thereby coinciding with the precept of perspectivism, Viveiros de Castro 2002): while bodies always exist, so too do subjectivities or perspectives: that is, particular ways of seeing the world embodied in images. The result of this condition is the dependence on the character, central within the 'revelation' of the cinema's images.

In the cinema, the character is born already decentred from what the human properly speaking, since the character (of the one whose perspective we adopt) may be a mountain, a penguin, a spirit, an object, a man, a woman.

What we need to retain here is the potency of the creation of the 'character' in cinema, a capacity for assuming a perspective and transferring it

14 Due to its dual essence, merged with what it represents, the image is very often associated with magic, enchantment and mythology (Caiuby Novaes, 2008; Joly, 2009).

to another who can, in this new position, experience this form of seeing the world. Cândido (2007:54) has drawn our attention to the important of the embodiment of the character in the narrative of the novel, its process of subjectification, since the appearance of being 'alive' is what enables the acceptance of the 'truth' of the novel's plot. The category of verisimilitude is essential here to comprehending the viewpoint of a character and the way in which we can acquire his, her or its perspective. Cândido emphasizes what he calls this 'mode-of-being,' which by definition comprises its perspectival quality, the capacity to engender a subjectivity which we can absorb.

We reach the question referred to as a 'reality effect' or 'real effect,' founded through an identification between what the spectator sees and what exists in the world. A belief that allows a 'judgment of existence' to be established, a dimension common to western representation since the Renaissance, which submits all representation to a realist intention (Aumont 2005:81). However we can see that the spectator's relation of empathy or identification with what is shown in the images projected n the screen is not simply a matter of belief that there exists something in the real that gives meaning to what is seen, or what may be real because it may exist in the world, as if the images seen on the screen were the concrete objects of the world and that by themselves they could evoke the idea and certainty that they are in some way 'real'. What seems to be fundamental to comprehending the identification between the spectator and what happens on the screen is more like the adoption of a perspective than a 'reality effect': taken from a viewpoint that coincides with the viewpoint of the characters and that allows the spectator to enter into the other's world, manifesting the simultaneity described by Eisenstein. The basis of 'sensorial thought' is this possibility of identifying with and adopting a viewpoint even if the images presented on the screen are very far from being a realist representation of that which exists in the world as a parameter of the spectator's own existence. Rouch's ethnofiction (Gonçalves 2008) provides is with good examples of this type of adoption of perspective, since we know from the outset that the auditory narrative is detached from the visual narrative and the former gains meaning from the visual at the same time as it gives meaning to the visual. In this case it is not the things of the world that inform the 'belief' in the image since the spectators of *Moi, un noir* or *Jaguar* absorb the viewpoint of the narrator even if this viewpoint is contradicted by the images displayed on the screen. This is the sense in which cinema

engenders the problem of perspective –plural perspectives given that in the cinema we adopt many simultaneously and here once again we encounter the 'sensorial perception' that takes us back to this form of relating to images in which the point of view is always related to the coincidence between the eye of the producer and the eye of the spectator, embodied in the body of the character who by emphasizing an intention enables the adoption of a point of view (Aumont 2005:112).

Bazin (1983) presents the idea of the image as a reduplication of the world, a necessary illusion, a 'concrete and essential' image. Bazin's thought concerning the image is based on a particular conception of mimesis that looks for a perfect analogy with the real. The crucial question is that mimesis itself, its act, forms the basis for the critique of the very idea of being able to represent the real (Taussig 2003; Benjamin 1979). Once again we can observe the belief in the way in which the cinema lens mimetically produces an objective image of the real. In fact what happens is more like an adoption of perspective than necessarily a perception of absolute analogy between what is seen on the screen and the real given that we know that it is through the perspectives of the characters that we have access to the reality of cinema, which can only be accessed from an emotional-sensorial viewpoint. Hence when we enter the image, we adopt a perspective and experience this perception of a bodily form, since we lend out eye to a body that sees the world in a determined way. It is from this point of view that the characters-subjects explore the multi-perspectivity of the world since each character is a 'kind' to which our spectator's eye attaches.

Film images do not produce an identification out of 'realism,' therefore, but out of their sensorial apprehension that we can produce a perspective and penetrate beings and worlds. This question of realism appears in inspiring form in the aesthetic studies by Lukács (2009) by emphasizing that Marxist realism is not a copy of reality nor a caricature, but above all a fabulation, a creation of the real with its contradictions, its 'irreconcilable' elements. From this point of view, what is at stake in the construction of the real is not simply a copy or something similar, but a form of locating in the very representation of the real a principle that does not allow it to be recreated in a schematic form since the perspectives are always 'irreconcilable', differentiated points of view (social classes, beings, individuals, objects) that 'reveal' distinct worlds. Lukács reflects on this question as follows: "the

Marxist aesthetic, which rejects the realist character of the world represented through naturalist details [...] considers it perfectly normal that the fantastic short stories of Hoffman and Balzac represent high points of realist literature since in them, precisely because of the fantastic representation, essential forces are thrown into sharp relief" (2009:107).

Likewise Lukács also criticizes the Flaubertian *impassibilité*, a kind of 'fly-on-the-wall' for documentary cinema, which by evoking its role of neutrality claims to be objective, i.e. without any perspectivity of the world. Lukács (2009:108) denounces the impossibility of art ever being neutral since it is the subjectivity in art that constructs its objectivity. Hence the conception of neutrality is illusory, the gaze and the artist always take up specific positions.

Bill Nichols compared ethnography with pornographic desire insofar as both look for a certain narrative coherence in their representation of the Other: "The viewer needs to be able to fantasize his or her participation into the spectacle as one of mastery..." (Russell 1999:33-34; Nichols 1991:218). Hence the perspective of someone watching a pornographic film or reading an ethnography assumes the viewpoint of the person in control, hence the possibility of sexual arousal or making the people and events described by the ethnographer come 'alive'. Bill Nichols adds that in pornographic films there is a complete over determination of the part governing the whole, which is precisely where the sensorial impact of the images resides. While ethnography, mediated by writing, does not produce the same sensorial capacity, it is not far from this desire of knowing the other, of 'penetrating' the other's world with 'mastery' and controlling through a narrative that produces a feeling of control, one which provides the reader of ethnographies with the sensation that he or she can enter this other world and comprehend it.

Macdougall (2006:13) defines a film as something constructed literally by bodies: the sensation of presence in a film is not an illusion but "a hallucination that is true" in terms of its effects. Macdougall also calls attention (2006:20-23) to the implications of the cinema's dimension, projection and the way in which we create intimacy with the bodies seen on the screen, adding that the close-up is the most intimate form of establishing a relation with the bodies of the cinema, a moment when we are close to their faces. He emphasizes, therefore, not only the question of the body, but the question of the face as the mode used by the cinema to create this identification, as well as how this body or part of it produces an agency in the sense of enabling

the spectator to feel closer and more intimate with the character. Hence, the close-up, the face, to use Eisenstein's language, is the sensorial perception par excellence, since the face is the metonymic condensation that affects us through the senses. Macdougall (2006:23-24) recalls the idea that when people see a football match or game of snooker, they may move their bodies in response to the movements of the bodies on the screen screened (something that occurs in many other such instances), demonstrating a real personal contact with the projected images. He argues, therefore, that the cinematic imagination enables a *conversion* when the body of the spectator assumes the body of the objects and beings presented on the screen (2006:26). The spectator's feeling derives from the surplus image created by the cinema compared to normal observation. This excess of imagery, this proximity, allows us to enter another perspective, to adopt the perspective of an object or a body in the film when we create this relation of proximity. And in this sense the objects and bodies becomes signs of themselves. This possibility of becoming a sign of itself is responsible for producing the 'truth' of cinema and it is through this 'truth' that we can '*embody*' a point of view, when precisely the cinema attributes an excess of agency to things and bodies (the detail, proximity, the camera surpassing our eye).

Conclusion

What seems crucial in Eisenstein's arguments is the fact that if cinema forms part of the world, it us not autonomous or independent from the world. Cinema exists because it forms part of a thinking that is in the world and, in this sense, cinema is not a film but a form in which thought presents itself. Hence the comparison with 'primitive' peoples helps to frame the way in which cinema expresses a thinking based on the recourse to metonymy as a privileged form of assembling the narrative flow, one which accepts simultaneity, which induces the non-contradiction of the flow of imagery and which follows laws specific to thought: the sensorial way in which this thought presents itself. Here we could extend even further Eisenstein's formulation of the sensorial way in which cinema presents its world, an idea directly related to Latour's conception of 'modernity' (1994). Cinema developed precisely through the advances of science and is the beloved child of industrialization, yet a child who develops an image that insists on producing 'hybrids'

or 'monstrosities'. The cinema experience therefore contains this power to enter a space of thought immersed in metonymies and simultaneity, offering spectators the possibility of situating themselves via another perspective in which ontological zones are inevitably blurred. Consequently cinema experience is a kind of proclamation that – in this space and time at least – "we shall never be modern."

Alexandre Astruc (2002), a French film critic and director, in an article published in 1948 called "On the plane of thought", presents the idea of a *plan* in its double sense, plane and shot, combining cinema and thought in a single concept. Astruc warns us that one day cinema "will free itself from this tyranny of the visual, the image for the image [...] from the concrete and will be able to become a medium of inscription as a dept and subtle as written language" (88). Astruc (2002:88) cites a phrase from Orson Welles that encapsulates his perception of cinema as a mode of thought. Orson Welles says: "What interests me in the cinema is abstraction." Astruc, like Eisenstein, dreams of the day when cinema no longer depends on films to exist because it is above all a way of thinking with repercussions on many other ways of thinking – and it is precisely in this sense that the relation between Cinema and Anthropology appears both interesting and productive.

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Received on April 30th, 2012. Approved on May 10th, 2012.