

THE SENSITIVE APPREHENSION OF NATURE IN GOETHE AND HUMBOLDT

A APREENSÃO SENSÍVEL DA NATUREZA EM GOETHE E HUMBOLDT

Esdras Arraes

ABSTRACT:

The paper seeks to interpret the concepts of nature and landscape in some of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt works. Of them, while nature would be considered all of the natural phenomena, landscape is a fragment of this totality, embodied by the experience of a constantly trained eye. Therefore, landscape, either for Goethe or for Humboldt, is formulated by the desire to present it according to the aesthetic dimension, to say, it would be necessary sensitivity and imagination in order to notice nature in its whole. At the beginning of the article, the goethean notion of nature and landscape is shown throwing light on some of his romances and scientific studies, such as *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Novel or story of a hunt* and *Metamorphosis of Plants*. Following, it is shown the humboldtian understanding about both categories assimilated by poetry and science. Finally, it is analyzed some affinities and differences between the poet and the Prussian naturalist.

Keywords: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Alexandre von Humboldt. Nature. Landscape. Painting. Poetry.

RESUMO:

O texto busca interpretar as noções de natureza e paisagem em certas obras de Johann Wolfgang von Goethe e Alexandre von Humboldt. Para ambos, enquanto que a natureza seria a totalidade dos fenômenos naturais, a paisagem seria um fragmento dessa totalidade enquadrada pela experiência do olhar constantemente treinado. Assim, a paisagem, tanto para Goethe como para Humboldt, é formulada pelo desejo de apresentá-la segundo a dimensão estética, isto é, seria necessário sensibilidade e imaginação para perceber a natureza em sua completude. No início do ensaio mostra-se a noção goetheana de natureza e paisagem lançando luz sobre alguns de seus romances e doutrinas científicas, tais como *Os sofrimentos do jovem Werther*, *Novela ou história de uma caçada* e *Metamorfose das Plantas*. Em seguida, apresenta-se o entendimento humboldtiano sobre ambas as categorias assimiladas segundo poesia e ciência. Finalmente, analisa-se algumas afinidades e diferenças conceituais que há entre o poeta e o naturalista prussiano.

Palavras-chaves: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Alexandre von Humboldt. Natureza. Paisagem. Pintura. Poesia

“It is been long since I cannot help, but to ascribe the modifications which let themselves perceivable in the atmosphere, mostly due to an effect within, silente and secret of these very same mountains”.

Goethe in Innsbruck, 1786.

INTRODUCTION: NATURE – THE GARDEN OF THE WORLD AND THE COSMOS

This rehearsal is part of an ongoing post-doctoral research from Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo (FFLCH-USP) which explores the nature and the landscape and their relations with the Aesthetic as a heuristic principle. It is sought, under the thoughts of Raffaele Milani (2008, p. 47), to understand the meaning of landscape as a thought category from the perspective of the fruition, the idealization and the manifestation of nature in some of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s writings and of the Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt. The following approach has no intention to account for the whole understanding of the categories in terms of philosophy and historiography. Thus, we wish not to worn out here the problematizing of the notion of nature and landscape, but to appeal to a limited number of works which shed light on the theme, comprehending its implications in the field of ideas, spiritual and sensitive.

The understanding of nature, either in Goethe or in Humboldt, appears as an aesthetic and scientific experience, that is, nature would not be simply an object of the natural sciences centered in systematizing it in rational specifications, as suggest the botanical classification models of Carl Lineu or the images of nature presented as a mechanical system in D’Alambert’s encyclopedia. Goethe considers the “natural system” naming as contradictory and insufficient to describe nature’s phenomena. Nature does not have a system, but it “has, simply, it is life and rhythm, born from an unknown core and goes towards a recognizable limit. Thus, the observation of nature is infinite”

(GOETHE, 2012, p. 2). Or, as Rousseau would said, “everything on Earth is in a continuous flow and this does not allow anything to assume a constant form” (ROUSSEAU, 2017, p. 116). Poetically, nature investigated by Goethe takes form of the secret effect of the mountains gazed out in the atmosphere, that is, nature is, within its meaning, essentially polarized. Opposite actions, as the concealed orthographic pulsate and the fast pacing of the clouds are what create nature’s eternity.

By its turn, Humboldt recalls, in the second volume of *Cosmos*, that studying nature and its frames (landscapes) would involve a sensitive component through which the liberty of treasuring landscapes gives empirical preciseness to its completion. He extracts, still, the “fears of losing the free fruition of nature under the influence of an intellectual treasuring or a scientific knowledge” (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 15). This is equivalent to thinking, according to Juan Antonio Ortega y Medina (2000, p. 2), that Humboldt’s scientificism, whose rots cannot help but be rational and illustrated, guides itself towards a febrile and multiform empirical activity, but that accommodates itself to the feeling, the poetry and even the deist faith as it can be observed in his works, above all, *Views of Nature* and *Cosmos*.

The works of Goethe and Humboldt celebrate “nature” and “landscape” as two living entities, but, in a certain manner, distinct. While nature involves the totality of the phenomena, or the cosmos in the humboldtian reflection, landscape would be a “picture of nature”, a unit of this totality encompassed by the experience of a constantly trained look. The picture of nature subsumes the *form*, an organic unit composed of different parts that relate among themselves though simultaneous processes. This form, or physiognomy under the naturalist’s perspective, is decorative, and it connects emotion, art and nature: “the knowledge of the mountains and of the rocks that extract themselves from them have resulted in a great progress regarding art” (GOETHE, 2017b, p. 97).

The nature as cosmos would connote order and decoration. Humboldt speaks of the “meaning of the word cosmos as

designating *order to the world and ornament* of the universal order” (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 31). The landscape, by its turn, would be a fraction of the cosmos which becomes aesthetically present under the eyes of a sensitive beholder, who, by his turn, transmits it in speakable and/or visible manners.

THE WORLD OF THE EYE: NATURE AND LANDSCAPE IN GOETHE

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) orbited in the universe of science, specially from 1780 on, when he starts his studies about mineralogy. Before that, when linked to the *Sturm und Drang*¹ (Storm and Impetus), the literature and the plastic arts are posed as the center of his concerns. At this moment, the poet writes, among other works, the essay named *On the German Architecture* (GOETHE, [1772] 2005) and the romance *The Sorrows of Young Werther* ([1774] 2009), which caused strong reactions in the coeval society due to the baleful passion of the protagonist. In *On the German Architecture*, Goethe makes an effort to demonstrate the effects roused by the Strasbourg Cathedral with a careful look on the forms conceived by the chief construction officer Erwin von Steinbach. The asymmetry characteristic of the temple's volumetry does not derogate the balance of the architectural project, but enhances the bonds among the cathedral (the whole) vivified by countless decorative motives (parts). Thus, the effect of the whole on the spectator would be partial if its parts were not duly treasured.

By its turn, the epistolary romance *Sorrows of the Young Werther* is divided in two parts. The first one introduces themes as love and the correspondence of the protagonist with nature. The

¹ Georg Lukács states that Sturm und Drang had been the uprising of the “feeling” and the “vital instinct” against the understanding tyranny, represented in the fight against the illuminism. It was about a dispute among young spirits (Hamann, Herder, Goethe and Lenz), whose basic themes were the incompatibility between the individual and society, and the emphasis in the creator genius that declares himself free from the artistic instructive, the sentimentalism and the violent language that seeks the exercise of the fierce critique. It is recommended reading the texts of Georg Lukács (1968) and of Marco Aurélio Werle (2000) for a deeper understanding of the philosophical and literary issues of the *Sturm und Drang*.

descriptions of the world that involves Werther are translated into landscapes that communicate his spirits' syntony with nature. It is interesting to notice, according to the reflections of Marco Aurélio Werle (2017), that the idea of subjectivity does not mean an inner retreat to the formality of the feelings; it would be, on the other hand, the expression of affinity of the ego immersed into the unit of nature.

The correspondence between Werther and nature announces itself in the letter that opens the work's narrative. In it there is the resolute decision of burying the constraints of the past in its due time, treasuring life and the manifestation of the events of the present. Even the city, with its vices and mundanity, performances and techniques, is abandoned by Werther, who seeks refuge in the countryside areas, innocent and simple, proper for pacifying the impetus of the young spirit. The warmth of this pastoral landscape takes communion with the docile image of children who observe him in the square of the small village of Wahlheim. The scene introduces him drawing an image, which the pictorial purpose strengthened his connection with the place:

The first time, in a beautiful afternoon, when chance brought me under those lindens, I found the place very lonely. They were all in the field; only a four-year-old boy was seated on the floor, hugging another child, around six months old, sitting between his legs as if he was on an armchair... It gave me pleasure seeing them there; I sit on a plow opposite to them and started to avidly draw that fraternal posture. I added to it the closest fence, the barn door and some broken wheels... Without inserting anything mine. That strengthened my purpose of maintaining myself henceforth solely connected to nature (GOETHE, [1774] 2009, p. 24).

Werther appeals to solitude, this divine, contemplative condition of adoring and thinking about nature *while* landscape, while aesthetic meditation of the harmony provided by the whole. It is

in solitude that the landscape transfigures itself in idyll, unifying the existence and the existing in a unit: "I am feeling very well here. In these paradisiac lands, solitude is a precious balsam to my heart, so strongly warmed by the youth fervor" (GOETHE, [1774] 2009, p.14). The only book that follows this act of reconciliation with landscape is a "Homer". The reading comes handy with its renewed state of vitality (*Stimmung*), for the calling of the classic takes the form of refreshment incorporated to the sensitive apprehension of nature.

Goethe's reading about silence and solitude, taken from the observation of landscape, which says about our life on Earth, gets closer to Rousseau's exposure narrated in *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (2017). Right on the first walk, Rousseau relates his astonishment before the world due to the harrowing objects that caused him revolt and affliction. For such, he calls out to, just as Werther, the distractions of the busy walking treasuring the landscape, inspecting the objects of nature and scrutinizing the modifications of the soul and its unchaining (ROSSEAU, 2017, p. 14).

Goethe kept some principles of the *Strum und Drang* phase in its ulterior reflections, such as the polarities of totality and unity or subjectivity and objectivity. The polarity, which becomes a unit, appears in his studies about nature, brought upon during his trip to Italy (1786-1788), but above all in *Metamorphosis of Plants* ([1790] 1933) and *Theory of Colours* ([1810] 2013).

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe reveals the treasuring as being the sense through which he best learned the meaning of the engaging world. If we go back in time, it is possible to notice that the beholding made itself present since his youth. At the moment of King Joseph II's coronation celebration, in 1763, the future poet spent part of his day beholding everything "that was publically offered" in clear sight, creating live impressions of that hectic and theatrical event (GOETHE, 2017a, p. 720). When explaining to Schiller the purpose of the essay *Theory of Colours*, Goethe emphasizes the primacy of beholding nature as an interactive experience between the objectivity of the forms seen and the subjectivity of the emotions. In fact, as *Fausto's* author

used to say, "the world of the eye" was unveiled, which consumes itself by shapes and colors (CORRESPONDANCE, 1845, p. 195). In the critique made to the manual of Sulzer, it is sustained the hypothesis that the idea formulated in the perceptual field of sight is converted in an authentic knowledge foundation (GOETHE, [1772] 2005, p. 54). Thus, Goethe has advised the young Eckermann, before giving start to the development of poems, to pay attention to the objects, to the forms of the landscape, understanding them in their individuality as an essential part of art and vital to the artist's education (ECKERMANN, 2016, p. 158).

Besides that, Goethe noticed the primacy when aiming at the elaboration of his "live heuristic", a methodology interconnected between the speakable and the visible, through which both categories unify when the theme would be, among some aspects, the reading of objects: "at the moment...in which there is a safe contact through sight, only then is it possible to read and listen, so, to this it is associated the vivid impression. Only then it is possible to think and judge" (GOETHE, 2017b, p. 181). This way, the movement of Goethe's thoughts is of "inspiration" and "expiration", that is, the reflections of the objects were made from the detailed understanding of its exterior qualities, that one which guides us outside ourselves (AUTHOR, 2018, p. 5). According to Maria Filomena Molder (1996, p. 65), the heuristic goethean project refers to the acceptance of the affinities and benevolences to the differences towards the totality, to the grouping of the diversity that equate themselves in a unit from the polarized procedures: systole/dialysis, analysis/synthesis, light/shadow, and so on.

The landscape reveals itself in the writings of *Werther's* author in the painting universe, as a "frame of nature", a composite form of objects (natural, anthropic) and concordant colors destined to the uninterested beholding under the sign of *frui* instead of *uti* (ARRAES, 2017, p. 43). The idea of "picture of nature" was already sedimented and spread in the beginning of the seven hundreds in trip narrations around Europe. Therefore, it will be with Alexander von Humboldt (1852), with the publication of his enormous work *Cosmos*, that the concept of frame of

nature will bold scientific basis, in other terms, landscape would circumscribe, among some aspects, the experimental study of nature.

The picture of nature involves the frame of the sight, an objective or virtual window that cuts the world, articulating it in narrated/painted scenes in colorful living. The appearing of the “window” would be the condition *sine qua non* of the landscape emergence and the landscape instrument, by excellence (CAUQUELIN, 2007, p. 137). Due to all of Goethe’s itinerary in German and Italian soil, it is frequent the composition of landscapes in these “windows”: “the small village known as Stadtamhof helps to compose a beautiful frame” (GOETHE, 2017b, p. 23). However, the poet knew his limits: “it is necessary, before that, to get my eyes used to the frames” (GOETHE, 20167b, p. 24). The little training would lead to the intention of staying in “Arcadia”: exploring the antique and modern objects, point his spirit towards the vapors and colors of Italy’s landscapes, exercise his sensitive sights to the exterior world, which, in fact, was already used to seeing the world such as the painters did: “wherever I would look, I would see a frame... everything that called my attention, everything that bewitched me, I wanted to capture” (GOETHE, 2017a, p. 270). In fact, the visible had helped him in the elaboration of the speakable, harmonizing with each other: “and in the same way that it was common to produce pictures in copper for a poem, I have started to write poems from pictures and drawings...thus, I ended up getting used to beholding the world as the arts related to one another” (GOETHE, 2017a, p. 378).

The drawings of the young poet clearly show his favoritism for the representation of nature and its correlated phenomena. It is possible to notice this appreciation for studies of trees and clouds, in the night sights taken in Turingia forest, in the foggy vale in Ilmenau (*figure 1*) and in the beautiful picture of his house’s garden in Weimar². Goethe, during the course of his trip to Italy, makes compliments to *veduta*, the sights of the land are drafted in paper, whose documental and affective value imply the aforementioned notion of landscape (BESSE, 2006, p. 72). In

² Goethe’s drawings can be found compiled in Jaivier Arnaldo et al (2008)



Figure 1 – GOETHE, J. W. Foggy Vale in Illmenau.
Source: Javier Arnaldo et al, 2008, p. 130.

the compiled texts of *Italy Journey*, art and nature are related and complement each other, giving basis to the classicist designation of Goethe centered in the study of the natural sciences and of the arts under the imperative of a sensitive beholding, which is dynamic and transformative (GALÉ, 2009, p. 29).

Still in Italy, Goethe enhanced his interest for observing the natural phenomena and, above all, to treasuring nature in the form of landscape painting. In Naples, he met Jacob Philipp Hackert, king Ferdinand IV’s painter, and one of the main landscapers of the time. Goethe recognized that the drawings made by Hackert, elaborated according to the figurative tradition of the French painter Claude Lorrin, were the models which represented the modernity. The landscape painting appears as the object of the epistolary exchange discourses between the poet and king Ferdinand IV. On them, Goethe expresses that the “real” landscape and its transmutation to the picture calls a nature seized by the constant training of the look. In this aspect, *Fausto’s* author promotes a certain culture of the look acquired

after his experiences, even better, his “rebirth” in Italian lands. In one of the letters, Hackert writes to his friend, suggesting that the artist ought to be, before anything else, a good beholder of the engaging world, dedicating time to draw and know the objects (HACKERT; GOETHE, 2002). Effectively, painting only a linden was not sufficient, but to deepen the relation between the artist and the tree for then conveying, in living colors and shapes, the essence of nature, the decoration of the world and the order of the cosmos.

In the botanical garden of the University of Padova, Goethe drafted the idea of *Urpflanze*, or “the original plant”, as the formal principal that would guide his botanical studies (GOETHE, 2017, p. 71). The *Urpflanze* - as well as the *Urphänomen* (original phenomenon) used to allude to the ideal cause of every manifestation of nature – belongs, in a certain way, to the foundations of the goethean reflections about visibility, for it stimulates seeing the general in the particular and obtaining the general in the treatment of the particular. The characteristic expression that implies that the original plant is always, for Goethe the coordinated result of the “internal law of nature, in which the plant was made” and “the law of the environment, through which the plant was modified” (MILLER, 2009, p. 21). This way, the development of organic forms goes on, either for the interior as for the exterior, and also from inside out. The paragraphs 24 and 25 of *Metamorphosis* ([1790] 1993, p. 19) mention how the structure of the leaf may be affected by the dampness of the dryness of the place and how nutrition in excess may retard the blossoming (§30). As we will see next, the Goethean methodology for botanical studies has positively influenced the Humboldtian thinking, especially in the book *Essay on the Geography of Plants* ([1807] 2009), whose German version was dedicated to his poet friend.

On a drawing made by Goethe of his eye involved by a rainbow (*figure 2*), the panegyric to visibility is perfectly illustrated. Besides that, the clouds and beams of light emanating from the eye, a prism and a magnifier, placed above the organ of sight, emphasize, allegorically the prevalence of the glance and the



Figure 2 – Vignette of the Eye.
Source: Javier Arnaldo et al, 2008, p. 24.

faculties of the human spirit over the empiricism of the scientific theories. The “world of the eye”, translated in the aesthetical look in harmony with that of the objective phenomena, is the immediate theme in *Theory of Colours* and in the landscape drawings made during the course to Italy. In *Theory of Colours*, Goethe explores polarities (light and shadow) with the intent of interpreting the genesis of the colors based in clear and dark, in opposition to Newton’s treaty which considers them fragments of white light easily calculable in mathematical formulas. Light, *Urphänomen*, unfolds in shadows and colors, an explosion that reverberates on the bodies and make them resonate as landscape to the eyes of the beholder. Thus, landscape becomes, under this chromatic aspect, the destination and vocation of the light and the revelation of the color (BESSE, 2006, p. 55).

The eye and the light are related in the formation of colors (GOETHE, [1810] 1993, p. 45). This suggests, according to the reflections of Pedro Fernandes Galé (2009), that there is “a

productive connection of the beholder in relation to the objects, in the subject there is an active creator act, which develops itself exactly with the treasuring, which fixes the strangest and the most opposite phenomena, combining their elements with the intention of understanding them" (GALÉ, 2009, p. 70). What in fact Goethe seeks to explain with his theory of colors is nature unveiled through the sensitive eye. A nature recognized as a unit that is in harmony with its parts in a living and infinite process, this is the idea of nature that will be intensified, or, at least, that will have its applicability in the studies of Alexander von Humboldt.

THE VIEWS OF NATURE OF ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT

Joaquim Ritter (2013), on a text already considered a classic by architects and philosophers, arguments the expressivity of Humboldt's writings in converting the sizeable nature following poetic and pictorial devices, in his relation with the sensitive eye that turns nature in landscape aesthetically. With an effect, when commenting about the steppes in *Views of Nature* ([1808] 1876) (*Ansichten der Natur* or *Tableaux de la Nature*), Humboldt prints emotion in his description of the plains, which rouses the picture of the infinite: "when the extremity of the plains illuminates with the swift birth of the shiny stars, or when reflecting their trembling light upon the lower layers of the waving vapors, it is believed that before his eyes there is an enormous ocean. Thus, the steppes also fill the soul with the feeling of infinity" (HUMBOLDT, [1808] 1876, p. 2).

The effort to understand nature sensitively appears, above all, in *Cosmos*, his most important work, which defines nature as "a unity in the diversity of the phenomena" (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 9). In this work, the explanation of a natural totality emerges in the form of two complementary aspects: observing the phenomena in their objective reality and reflecting on how humanity projects their feelings upon nature. If the sciences based on strict observation convey laws in order to know the phenomena of the

universe, the spectacle of nature would be incomplete if we did not consider the thinking and the imagination placed in poetic impressions (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 6). He recalls, still, that the destination of men would be "to capture the hidden spirit of nature behind the manifestations", in order to encompass nature as a whole, for then "submit simultaneously the brute matter of the empirical intuition through ideas" (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 15).

As Goethe, landscape for Humboldt emerges from the poetic and figurative appreciation of a frame of nature. In the second tome of *Cosmos*, the Prussian naturalist comments three ways to spread the study of nature through which the imagination and sensitiveness of men are manifested: the first would be poetry or the lively descriptions of nature scenes; the painting of a landscape comes to be the second way, for that matter, the landscape itself is a form of poetry; and, the last, the gardens, simultaneous *locus* of treasuring and investigation of the natural phenomena, particularly the botanic (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 9). When defining these three devices, Humboldt intended to expose the particular way that the exterior world interfered variously about the thinking and the imagination in three different times and peoples. Through literature it is possible to notice how the human spirit qualifies the landscape. Thus, from the Greeks to Goethe, poetry has explained in rhymes the laws that move nature. The compliment Goethe's bibliographic production is instant at the moment that Humboldt mentions *Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Italy Journey* and *Metamorphosis of Plants*, works whose poetic wording breathes deep feelings for nature and landscape (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 31).

Understanding the way Humboldt used landscape painting, as an instrument for scientific and artistic analysis, will bring consequences in the development of gender in the Americas as a whole (MATTOS, 2004, p. 154). Landscape painting devotes to nature a kind of discourse codified in drawn pictures, as the organic objects are seen *in natura*: "the efforts of the artists will be happier... if they painted *alfresco*, the crowns of the trees full of flowers and fruits, trees full of orchids, some rocks, a small slope, somewhere at the end of the jungle..." (HUMBOLDT, 1852,

p. 36). The vocation of painting, however, would be to present the rich variety of the exterior forms, including the union of the visible to the invisible. To elucidate this duality, Humboldt proceeds: “the landscape painting makes it possible to treasure the physiognomy of plants in the different spaces of dirt, inviting us to be in harmony with nature in an instructive and delightful manner” (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 36). In this aspect, each part of the globe, be it the forest, the Andean Mountains, the desert, the “Greek sky”, or the Swiss Alps, is characterized by an individual physiognomy, and diversified from the rest. Imagining the landscape in physiognomic terms means conferring ontological weight to it, that is, if the frame of nature has a physiognomy, it is necessary to understand it as an expressive unit vivified an exterior reality (visible) conjugated with an “internal spirit” (invisible) from which it is possible to extract the free sense of nature (BESSE, 2006, p. 72).

Nevertheless, there is a limit for landscape painting: observing nature is incomplete to the degree in which the screen affects the spirit less than the immediate treasuring of plants grouped in gardens (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 41). The garden of principles of the XIX Century is converted in the place where science and art get mixed with the aesthetical and pedagogical objectives. Purposes that does not circumscribe themselves exclusively in the spreading of scientific studies; on the contrary, gardening would include the art of creating landscapes. Create, because every garden is born from a project that gather empirical and sensitive aspects, such as the perspective trend, the symmetry, the modulation, the playing with light and shadow, the solitude, the rest, the variety of plants and colors.

Some commentators suggest that studying vegetables instead of the botanic specificities of plants, revealed to be another novelty in the humboldtian empiricism³. In 1802, during his expeditions to Spanish America, Humboldt, in the company of Aimé Bonpland, outlined his first reflections regarding the interference of the natural world and humanity in the formation of great herds of vegetables. The work – *Essay on the Geography*

³ For this matter, see Anne Buttimer’s paper (2001, p. 105-120).

of Plants – finished in 1807, is the key part of a work dedicated to understanding the vegetation, aesthetically and scientifically, as a totality of the union of the natural and human phenomena: “I shall call attention of the physicists to the phenomena exhibited by nature in the areas I have visited. It is its whole that I am considering in this rehearsal” (HUMBOLDT, ([1807] 2009, p. 61). The author of *Cosmos* pointed his heuristic purpose to the vegetation (totality), considering that understanding nature would be partial, if one thinks exclusively in the particular (plants), for nothing can be considered isolated. In another moment, it is noted the dialogue between the naturalist’s reflections and the goethean thinking, as it was verified in the rehearsal dedicated to the Cathedral of Strasbourg.

For Humboldt, the results of the scientific rehearsals should be aesthetically satisfactory. This way, vegetation would express, among some aspects, the material and spiritual conditions of a region. But it is the human sensitivity that prints the true character of vegetation: “The man who is sensitive to nature’s beauties... will delight himself examining the several sensations that the vegetation produces in the soul when treasuring it” (HUMBOLDT, ([1807] 2009, p. 73). Under this perspective, attention should be called to the *Tableaux physique des Andes et pays voisins* (HUMBOLDT, ([1807] 2009), p. 76-143). The *tableaux* is a representation of an Andes outline, at the height of Chimborazo with Coto-Paxi (*figures 3 and 4*). There, the places where certain species of plants grow are mapped, the favorable altitude for different kinds of vegetation, what species of animals are able to live in high latitudes and the methods to measure the orographic parameters. It is about the emblem of a landscape perceived pursuant to empiricism and imagination: “I think that my frame is capable of suggesting unexpected analogies to the ones who will study them (the Andes) at length, also, it would be capable of enhancing the imagination and providing delight to who come to treasure the benefic and majestic nature” (HUMBOLDT, [1807] 2009, p.79). Humboldt, in this landscape, makes explicit the syntony between reason and spirit, showing how imagination becomes an essential category to the science of his time.

The landscape narrated on the *Essay on the Geography of Plants* combines nature variables (vegetation, the color of the sky, the mountain and the weather) with the cultural aspects of a certain society. It is all about considering men and the impact of his work as indispensable mediations for the formation of landscapes. He asks himself: “why the farm peoples do not move to weather where nature produces everything spontaneously and work is more favorable? ... Habit and love to homeland, these are the only reasons that can be given” (HUMBOLDT, [1810] 1878, p.13). In his work *Sitios de las Cordilleras Y Monumentos de los pueblos indígenas de América* ([1810] 1878), Humboldt is concerned in assessing how nature made possible the emergence of new modalities of cultural expression, such as language, without, however, deviating from a core. The languages of the indigenous peoples of America, although different from the Germanic ones, present certain similarities in the whole of their organization

(HUMBOLDT, [1810] 1878, p. 11). However, the material elements of culture – architecture, painting, hieroglyph, bellicose equipment – would be the instruments to unveil ancient connections between the peoples of America with the societies of Asia and Europe. This approximation is notorious in the pyramid exhibition (teocali) of Cholula, which, following the exact direction of the meridian alignment and the parallel of the place, resembled the implantation of the Greek temples (HUMBOLDT, [1810], 1878, p. 89).

The *Sitio de las Cordilleras...*, in accordance to the reflections postulated in *Views of Nature*, describe the landscapes in the means of the travel narrations written by Goethe in his journey through Italy. The glance of the beholder unveils nature with all the scientific accuracy without abandoning the “benefic breeze of imagination” (HUMBOLDT, [1810], 1878, p. 55). This happens when Humboldt describes the Paso de Quindiu:

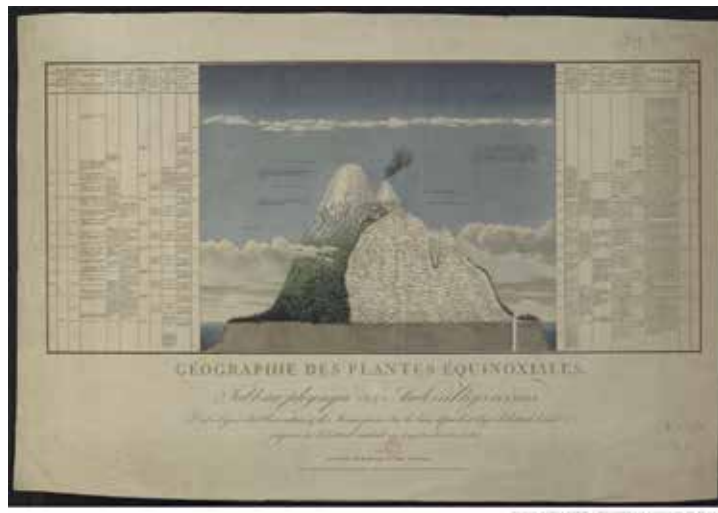


Figure 3 – HUMBOLDT, Alexander von; BONPLAND, Aimé. *Tableau physique des Andes et pays voisin dressé d'après des observations et des mesures prises sur les lieux depuis le 10e degré de latitude boréale* Source: www.gallica.bnf.fr. Accessed in: May 19th, 2018.



Figure 4 – Chimborazo today. “The summit of Chimborazo is the furthest of earth’s surface from the earth’s core”. Source: www.dw.com/de/auf-den-spu-ren-alexander-von-humboldts/a-47407280. Accessed in: February 15th, 2019

A picturesque sight is discovered at the entrance of Quindiu Mountain, in the environs of Ibagá and next to a place called Pie de la Cuesta. It rises above a great mass of granitic rocks, the fragmented cone of Tolima, covered in perpetual snow and resembling in its shape the Catopaxi and the Cayambo: the small arroyo of Combeina, which melds its waters with Cuello river's, meanders through a narrow valley, making way through a palm tree grove, and beyond, in its deep, divides itself with part of Ibagá city, the great valley of Magdalena and eastern Andean Mountains (HUMBOLDT, [1810] 1878, p. 55).

It is noted that Humboldt seeks to apply qualities of the landscape (picturesque) to exotic places known through maps or landscape paintings. It is important to remember that, in the second tome of *Cosmos* there is a chapter devoted to explaining how the discovering of America reformulated Europe's imagery. For such, the paintings of the Fleming painter Franz Post elucidate "individual forms of nature" (HUMBOLDT, 1852, p. 35) from regions difficult to access, such as Brazil, because until 1808 the Portuguese Crown had expressly prohibited the presence of foreign naturalist in their American domains⁴.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: AFFINITIES BETWEEN THE POET AND THE NATURALIST

According to Cláudia Valladão de Mattos (2004, p. 153), the meeting of Goethe and Humboldt brought to the propositions

4 The king of Portugal issued royal letters to all the colonial villages and cities, forbidding the entering of Humboldt in Brazil, deeming him as dangerous and carrying harmful ideas. In the council sessions of Icó village's Chamber (Ceará's captainship) we found the following order: "I register a royal order to all the provocations dated on October 20th of 1800, by means of the governor, with special effort to arrest a certain Baron of Humboldt, subject from Prussia, which is pretext of studying geography and topography in the center of America, and under the specious pretext of other scientific observations, seeks to impress and attempt, with new ideas and delusive principles, the souls of the peoples and their loyal subordinates. Your majesty states that these travels to Your Majesty's domains are totally dangerous and harmful to the political interests of __, and that the governor advancing the opinion of his Monarch, offers a premium of 200\$ to whoever brings arrested this dangerous man". See *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (Journal of the Brazilian History and Geography Institute), tome XXV, Rio de Janeiro, 1862, p.75.

of the naturalist complete accomplishment of the poet's thoughts about science; in fact, Humboldt appropriated himself of Goethe's ideas in his investigations. They shared the belief that the wonder of men for the beauty and life of nature could inspire art and science. Both recognized that the holistic aspect of the cosmos is not summarized solely to the empiric and mechanist models, as Lineu's botanic system that, according to his considerations, presented conceptual flaws, speculating nature according to abstract and stagnant categories instead of spreading the dynamics and the transformation of natural life (BELUZZO, 2000, p.21). On the other hand, Goethe took interest in unifying the beautiful and nature in an only source. For him, for example, it was necessary to study the appearance of the plants and from it, assume the law that controlled all the individual manifestations (*Urphänomen* or protophenomena). Humboldt agrees with the extent with which nature, in its harmonious nature, is beautiful and meaningful, inspiring the artist's sensibility and the scientist's rationality in searching the principles that elucidate the phenomena.

It is known that Goethe emphasized the features which all the plants kept in common, descendent of an archetypal of a plant and of a *Urphänomen*. In *Metamorphosis of Plants*, Goethe verified that the submerged leaves of certain semiaquatic plants (the *Ranunculus aquatilis*) differed morphologically from the aerial ones (GOETHE, 2009, p. 19). The morphology, as a successive living transformation, is the purpose of Goethe for studying the organic set through which the exteriority of the shape is complemented with the phenomena hidden from the sense of vision. In his words "our spirit is in harmony with the simplest power found deep in nature, and it is capable of representing itself as purely as the objects of the visible world are formed clearly in the eyes" (apud WALLS, 2009, p. 229). With effect, morphology is a vital process, as well as the formation of colors coming from the intimate contact between light (the protophenomenon) and the eye. However, Humboldt has an idea that is simultaneously contrary and kin to the goethean theory of colors. In *Frames of Nature*, he clarifies: "all the phenomena are born from a single source, as the colors decompose from the

luminous beam; all is resolved in an eternal and universally vital force". There is, thus, the recognition of *Urphänomen*. However, the scientist Humboldt does not entirely refuse Newton's theory of the birth of colors from the fragmentation of the white light. The point of confluence with Goethe, expressed in this passage, is exactly the vital force that rules all the phenomena, named by Humboldt as *Rhodium Genius*. Concisely, the Rhodium Genius would be the existence of a hidden force acting in the formation of nature, designating a unity and a progression in the world (SILVEIRA, 2015, p. 14).

Landscape for Goethe and for Humboldt appears as a vital part of the natural whole framed by the sensitivity of the trained look and transfigure in art (literature and painting). As Vitte (2010) and Silveira (2010) pondered, landscape in Goethe becomes the union point of forms taken by the unveiling intuition of the whole. This notion will be maximized in Humboldt, whose fundamentals of landscape representation did not restrict themselves to describing events; on the contrary, landscape has a physiognomy that is its own, derived from the harmonious conjunction of human factors (farmable lands, navigation, pasturing, architecture) and natural (clouds, the sky, vegetation, the mountain) in a framing, be it material (the painting) or visual. Goethe's drawings drafted during the trip to Italy, the pictures of the world "painted" in the epistolary narrative of the young Werther⁵ and the sights of the monuments of America's indigenous peoples illustrated by Humboldt corroborate this premise.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- ARRAES, Esdras. The aesthetic dimension of landscape. *Princípios*: Revista de Filosofia, Natal, v. 24, n. 45, set.-dez. 2017. ISSN1983-2109. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21680/1983-2109.2017v24n45ID12634>
- ARNALDO, Javier et al. *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*: paisajes. Madrid: Círculo de Bellas Artes; Weimar: KlassikStiftung Weimar, 2008.
- BELUZZO, Ana Maria de Moraes. *O Brasil dos viajantes*. 4 ed. Vol. II. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Odebrecht, 2000.
- 5 Cf. Letter from May, 26th of 1774, through which Young Werther narrates in living brush-strokes the landscape of Wahlheim village's surroundings.

- BESSE, Jean-Marc. *Ver a Terra*: seis ensaios sobre a paisagem e a geografia. Tradução Vladimir Bartalini. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2006.
- BUTTNER, Anne. Beyond humboldtian Science and Goethe's way of Science: challenges of Alexander von Humboldt's Geography. *Erdkund*. Kleve: v. 55, n. 2, June 2001, p. 105-120.
- CAUQUELIN, Anne. *A invenção da paisagem*. Tradução Marcos Marcionilo. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2007.
- CORRESPONDENCES between Schiller and Goethe from 1794 to 1805*. Vol. 1. Translated by George H. Calvert. New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845.
- ECKERMANN, Johann Peter. *Conversações com Goethe nos últimos anos de sua vida: 1823-1832*. Tradução Mario Luiz Frungillo. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2016.
- GALÉ, Pedro Fernandes. *Em torno do olhar: a formação do método morfológico de Goethe*. 2009. 106f. Dissertação (mestrado em Filosofia) – Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2009.
- GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang von. *A metamorfose das plantas* [1790]. Tradução de Maria Filomena Molder. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1993.
- GOETHE, J. W. Sobre a arquitetura alemã [1772]. In: *Escritos sobre a Arte*. Tradução de Marco Aurélio Werle. São Paulo: Humanitas; Imprensa Oficial, 2005.p. 39-49.
- GOETHE, J. W. Resenha sobre as belas artes de Sulzer [1772]. In: *Escritos sobre a Arte*. Tradução de Marco Aurélio Werle. São Paulo: Humanitas; Imprensa Oficial, 2005. p. 51-57.
- GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang von. *Os sofrimentos do jovem Werther* [1774]. Tradução Erlon José Paschoal. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 2009.
- GOETHE, J. W. *O jogo das nuvens*. Tradução João Barrento. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 2012.
- GOETHE, J. W. *Doutrina das cores*[1810]. 4 ed. São Paulo: Nova Alexandria, 2013.
- GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang von. *De minha vida: poesia e verdade*. Trad. Maurício de Mendonça Cardozo. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2017a.
- GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang von. *Viagem à Itália*. Tradução Wilma Patrícia Maas. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2017b.
- GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang. *Novela ou a história de uma caçada*. Sintra: Colares Editora, s.d.
- HACKERT, Jacob Philipp; GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang von. *Lettere sulla pittura di paesaggio*. A cura di Paolo Chiarini. Roma: Artemide, 2002.
- HUMBOLDT, Alexander von. *Cosmos, o ensayo de una descripción física del mundo*. Traducido por Francisco Dias Quintero. Tomo II. México: Vicente García Torres, 1852.
- HUMBOLDT, Alexander von. *Cuadros de la naturaleza* [1808]. Madrid: Imprenta y Librería de Gaspar, 1876.
- HUMBOLDT, Alexander von. *Sítios de las cordilleras y monumentos de los pueblos indígenas de América* [1810]. Traducción Bernardo Giner. Madrid: Imprenta y Librería de Gaspar Editores, 1878.
- HUMBOLDT, Alexander von. *Essay on the Geography of plants* [1807]. The Chicago University Press, 2009.
- LUKÁCS, Georg. *Goethe y su época*. Barcelona: Ediciones Grijalbo, 1968.
- MEDINA, Juan Antonio Ortega y. El ensayopolítico de Humboldt. In: ZEA, Leopoldo; MAGALLÓN, Mario (comp.). *La huella de Humboldt*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000. p. 99-141.
- MATTOS, Cláudia Valadão. A pintura de paisagem entre a arte e a ciência: Goethe, Hackert, Humboldt. *Terceira imagem*: Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Ciência da Literatura. Rio de Janeiro: v. 10, ano VIII, 2004, p. 141-155.

- MILANI, Raffaele. Estética y crítica del paisaje. In: NOGUÉ, Joan (ed.). *El paisaje em la cultura contemporánea*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008. p. 45-66.
- MILLER, Gordon L. Introduction. In: GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang. *The metamorphosis of plants*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009. p. 16-32.
- MOLDER, Maria Filomena. *O pensamento morfológico de Goethe*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1995.
- REVISTA do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: tomo XXV, 1862.
- RITTER, Joachim. Paisagem: sobre a função do estético na sociedade moderna. In: SERRÃO, Adriana Veríssimo (coord.). *Filosofia da paisagem*. Uma antologia. 2 ed. Lisboa: Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa, 2013.
- ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Os devaneios de um caminhante solitário*. Tradução Julia da Rosa Simões. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2017.
- SILVEIRA, Roberison Wittgenstein Dias da. O Gênio Ródio de Alexander von Humboldt. *Sociedade e Natureza*. Uberlândia: v. 27, n. 1, p. 14, jan./abr., 2015, p. 7-20.
- VITTE, Antonio Carlos; SILVEIRA, Roberison Wittgeistein Dias da Silveira. Natureza em Alexander von Humboldt: entre a ontologia e o empirismo. *Mercator*, v. 9, n. 20, set./dez., 2010.
- WALLS, Laura Dassaw. *The passage to cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the shaping of America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- WERLE, Marco Aurélio. Winckelmann, Lessing e Herder: estética do efeito? *Trans/Form/Ação*. São Paulo: vol. 23, p. 19-50, 2000.
- WERLE, Marco Aurélio. Natureza e sociedade no Werther de Goethe. *Artefilosofia*. Ouro Preto, n. 22, julho de 2017, p. 38-49.

Esdras Arraes
 Universidade de São Paulo, School of Philosophy Literature and Human Sciences
 Avenida Prof. Luciano Gualberto, 315. Sala 1007.
 Cidade Universitária. CEP: 05508-010. São Paulo – SP.
 CV: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/0462029779554770>
 Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0374-7401>
 Email: esdras_arraes@yahoo.com.br / esdrasarraes@gmail.com

Editor's Note
 Translation : Daniel de Almeida Leão
 Submission: 25/05/2018
 Acceptance: 29/10/2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my supervisor, Full Professor Aurélio Werle, for the promptness of pointing out the Goethe's bibliographic trajectory, as well as other philosophers' of his time. To Prof. Ph.D Euler Sandeville Jr. from FAU-USP for the careful reading and evaluation of the text. Also, I am thankful to the Foundation of Support to Research of São Paulo State (FAPESP) for granting the post-doctorate scholarship (file number 2017/12296-2) through which it is possible to spread philosophical ideas regarding the landscape painted in a living colorful in the works of Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt. Many thanks to the partners of this paper. Their comments were critical for concluding the text.