The Forms of Perception in the Communicative Dimension of Digital

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The communicative revolution altered the very architecture of the informative process from the advent of Web 2.0 and the Internet of Things (IoT). Therefore, there is the replacement of a frontal form of information transfer (book, press, TV) by an interactive, collaborative, and “reticular” which involves the continuous participation of the user. At this juncture, there is the emergence of a new form of interaction that is the result of technological innovation that changes the way we communicate and their meanings, while stimulating unprecedented interactive practices between us and information technologies. Such context comes to be approached by several authors as an era of “post humanism”, in which the network and its information flows would not be linear nor the frontal interactive dynamics. This paper aims to discuss the issue of the notion of “perception” in the current conjuncture of digital, which would be characterized by peculiar ways of being and inhabiting. The communicative dimension of dwelling opened the possibility of thinking about the role of the media as an intervening element in housing practices, capable of altering the perception of the place and at the same time influencing relations with the environment. The digitalization of territories and the set of technological and communicative innovations, therefore, alter our daily lives and senses, to incite us to re-examine the limits of historical perception itself.

Keywords: digital, perception, Bergson

Introduction

Over the last few decades, a communicative revolution has changed all very architecture of the informational process. At this juncture, there is the emergence of a new form of interaction that is the result of technological innovation that changes the way we communicate and their meanings, while stimulating unprecedented interactive practices between us and information technologies. Among these new forms of interaction resulting from technological innovations would be the configuration of what many authors would call “Web 2.0” and the “Internet of Things (IoT)”.

The term Web 2.0 was first used in 2004 to describe the new way software developers and end users would use the World Wide Web. In this sense, Web 2.0 would be understood as a platform on which content and applications would be continually modified by all users, in a participatory and collaborative way, and no longer unilaterally (not just exclusively by programmers and specialized companies) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

This is because Web 2.0 reflects an ideological and technological shift from Web 1.0. While Web 1.0 is...
based on the practice of publishing content such as web pages (news sites, corporate sites, etc.) and Encyclopedia Britannica Online (both represent services characterized by ready-made content, developed by companies, and accessed unilaterally by web surfers), Web 2.0 is based on collaborative projects such as blogs (“digital dailies” or pages for publishing personal content) and wikis (consisting of a set of linked pages that can be visited and edited by any internet user, such as the Wikipedia encyclopedia) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to O’Reilly (2005), some of the key features of Web 2.0 are the participation of users as co-developers of services, as well as the configuration of software that is not limited to a single device (can be run and accessed on smartphone, computer, tablet, among others). In this sense, Web 2.0 would be considered the platform for the evolution of “Social Media”.

A Social Media also refers to a paradigmatic shift, in which there is a shift in emphasis from a platform in which subjects create, expose, and consume individually published content, to another in which all content would be continuously modified by all users in a participatory manner, shared and collaborative. In it, physical and virtual objects would make these limits increasingly tenuous (Lacerda & Lima-Marques, 2015).

The Internet of Things (IoT) was a term initially used by Kevin Ashton as the title of a presentation made at Procter & Gamble (P&G) in 1999. The IoT provides everyday objects connected to the internet, computational and communication capacity. This connection will make it possible to remotely control objects, and access them as service providers. These smart objects present capabilities of communication and processing combined with sensors. This allows a heterogeneity of equipment, such as, TVs, laptops, refrigerators, cookers, appliances, cars, smartphones, among others, to connect and interact with each other (Ashton, 2009).

The IoT provides everyday objects connected to the internet, computational and communication capacity. This connection will make it possible to remotely control objects, and access them as service providers. The basic idea of this concept is the presence of a variety of objects, which can interact with each other. These smart objects present capabilities of communication and processing combined with sensors. This allows a heterogeneity of equipment, such as, TVs, laptops, refrigerators, cookers, appliances, cars, smartphones, among others, to connect and interact with each other (Ashton, 2009).

In 1999, Weiser (1991) wrote article in journal Scientific American, entitled “The Computer for the 21st Century”, which addresses the future of the IoT. For Weiser (1991) there is the imminence of a “ubiquitous computation”, in which devices will be connected everywhere so transparently to the human being, that it will become invisible, enabling, in a natural way, the accomplishment of the activities.

As of 2015, the IoT is already a reality and about 4.9 billion things are connected and in use, a 30% increase over 2014, and will reach 25 billion by 2020. The Internet of Things currently receives attention and support from the European Commission (EC) through the “Horizon 2020” program, a Europe Union (EU) investment finance program. In this new scenario, plurality is increasing, and forecasts indicate that more than 50 billion devices will be connected by 2020. In parallel, a range of new application possibilities emerges, such as smart cities; smart healthcare; smart home and challenges emerge (regulations, security, standards). IoT may not be understood as an end, but rather as a means of achieving something greater like ubiquitous computing (Evan, 2011).

Such conjuncture refers to a context to be approached by countless authors as an era of post humanism, in which the network and its information flows would not be linear nor the frontal interactive dynamics. In post humanism, attributes currently imputed to humans, such as memory and perception, would also be attributed
and referred to machines (Di Felice, 2010).

This trend inaugurates a new anthropomorphism, which highlights the need and relevance of creating or adapting conceptualizations that help in the constitution and problematization of an ontology and epistemology of communication appropriate to the current contexts of technological transformations of digital.

This research intends to contribute to the problem of perception, a notion recurrently approached by psychology and philosophy, for the analysis of the new conjuncture of digital. In this sense, it is intended to address the following question: What theoretical-methodological matrix presents us conceptual tools for the analysis of the notion of perception in a post-humanist and anthropomorphic conjuncture of the new advent of digital (of new forms of sociability in which machines interact with each other)?

In view of the problems exposed throughout this text, the objective this study is to address the notion of perception, according to the complex ontology of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, in order to establish a theoretical and conceptual tool capable of translating and/or analyze new forms of sociability between emerging communicating beings and entities from the new advent of digital.

Methodology

This is a bibliographic review study, which aims to problematize the notion of perception according to Bergson’s ontology, and the new advent of digital. To this end, it was conducted a study of bibliographic revision of texts in which Bergson addresses the issue of perception. Shortly thereafter, such discussions about perception were referred to the digital context.

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Discussions of Results

To address Bergson’s notion of perception, its method will be discussed initially, as in its complex ontology. The term “intuition” in Bergson has nothing to do with a feeling, inspiration, or something mystical, such as “female intuition”. The Bergsonian intuition is a method and perhaps one of “the most elaborate methods of philosophy” (Deleuze, 2008, p. 7).

The intuition method involves the exercise of thinking in terms of the Bergsonian duration. From the method of intuition, Bergson would start with a critique of the negative, of all forms of negation, and, consequently, of general ideas that would be present in both philosophical thought, science, and metaphysics. In his critique of the negative, Bergson would oppose both Plato’s dialectic of otherness and Hegel’s dialectic of contradiction, which would have implied the presence of a negative of limitation and opposition articulated with general ideas. According to Bergson, both in science and in various philosophical currents there would be poorly analyzed mixtures resulting from the confusion between differences of degree and differences of nature, which added to the question of denial, would be sources of false problems (Deleuze, 2008).

While the first type of false problem would concern “nonexistent problems” (defined as problems whose very terms contain a confusion of the “more” and “less”), where their terms would imply confusion between more/less (how can a more intense sensation contain one of less intensity?) and misconception as missing, the second type, “badly stated” questions (arbitrarily group things that differ in kind, such as the conflation of sensation and intensity), would have their terms defined by “badly analyzed composites” (Deleuze, 2008).
According to Bergson (2010), several domains and fields of science, philosophy, and psychology have confused throughout their history the differences in degree where in fact there would be difference in kind. For example, between perception (what I perceive) and the perceived object, is there a difference in degree or kind?

For Bergson (2010), the “connecting” element that would allow us a certain “assimilation” of the dimensions of differences (degree and kind) between things, despite their constant and distinct successive state rhythms, would be “memory”. For Bergson (2010), when invoking a recollection, we would put ourselves at once in the past being, then in a certain region in which memory would update in remembrance and progressively gain psychological existence. However, Bergson (2010) would make yet another distinction between what would be of the order of recollection and perception. Recollection and perception would form a composite (representation) in which the two pure presences of memory and matter would not be distinguished respectively, and would normally be conceived only in differences of degree as perceptions-memories and memories-perceptions.

For Bergson (2010), the formation of recollection would never be later than perception, but would be contemporary. The false movement that from perception would then come to us the recollection of something would neglect the idea of coexistence between past and present, since we would believe that from a present perception we would rescue a past that no longer exists. Thinking of the past as something gone, as a succession of the present, would lead us to the belief that gradually our perception would become recollection, or that our recollection from degree to degree would be remitted to perception. However, recollection and perception would concern elements that differ in kind rather than degrees.

If the past virtually survives itself, recollection and perception would be affected in one movement from the useful function of the present. The past was not, it is, and the present is action, it is useful, being, so one does not seek a memory in a past that no longer exists as if the present has already been realized (Deleuze, 2008).

Perception is related to similarity because, unlike memory, it has no difference in kind between it and the perceived object, but only difference in degree. Perception would thus differ in degree from object, precisely because it at once places in matter. If there is only degree difference between the perception of matter and matter itself, we could say that there are degrees of what we retain from the object of perception in ourselves, that is, there are degrees of similarities between object and subject of perception (there is something that coincides “at once”). We would perceive things where they are, but that does not mean that the object would be known in its entirety. The object always contains more than what is perceived. Perception is not, therefore, the object plus something, but the object minus something (minus everything that does not interest us) (Deleuze, 2008).

For these reasons Bergson (2010) understands that between the perception of matter and the matter itself there would only be difference of degree and not of kind. For these reasons Bergson (2010) understands that between the perception of matter and the matter itself there would only be difference of degree and not of kind. However, perception is also related to similarity. If there is only degree difference between the perception of matter and matter itself, we could say that there are degrees of what we retain from the object of perception in ourselves, in other words, there are degrees of similarities between object and subject of perception (there is something that coincides “at once”). There would be in the act of perception a to coincide (a likeness) of certain degrees of these elements that would coexist in me. In the act of perception, the object itself is confused with virtual perception, while real perception is confused with the object, apprehending only what is of interest.
In this difference in degree, it is only possible to distinguish the perception of its object because it retains from it only what is useful to us (what interests us). In this sense, perception would suddenly (at once) retain something of the object, but there is more to the object than to perception. For example, in interrelationships mediated by digital artifacts, such as in Social Media such as WhatsApp, peculiar perception effects can be observed when compared to face-to-face encounters.

By inhabiting the digital space in an artifact, such as the smartphone, the experience and contrasts between face-to-face encounters, and the experience of interacting via the application, it would present “special effects” of perception, since, at once (immediately) we are placed into contact with territorial and spatial dimensions in successive overlaps and extensions. Such would be the impersonal character of perception by coinciding (at once) with the object that contacts with multiple presentailities (online and offline) tend to have an adverse effect of transposition and scrambling of interlocutors voices in the contrasts between physical-biological body and digital-physical body. In addition, the ubiquity of online profile data tracks, as well as their availability for access, gives us the ability to access (at once) aspects of someone else’s tracking at any time of the day, resizing conditions and assimilating them of social presence.

Conclusion

The communicative dimension of dwelling has opened the possibility of thinking about the role of the media as an intervening element in dwelling practices, capable of altering the perception of the place and, at the same time, influencing relations with the environment. From the advent of ubiquitous (pervasive) computing, the need for problematizing an ontology and epistemology of communication appropriate to the current contexts of technological transformations of digital is evident. In this sense, Henri Bergson’s philosophical proposal and his discussions about memory and perception according to its complex ontology, have relevance to the constitution of a language and conceptual tools that help in the analysis and understanding of these events and recent changes, as well as the very idea of sociability.

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