

The interdisciplinarity between analytical psychology and the fine arts of Frida Kahlo and Pablo Picasso



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ABSTRACT

The present paper analyses the painting “The Henry Ford Hospital or Flying Bed” (1932) by Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderon (1907-1954) and the painting “Guernica” by Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973), with the theoretical support in the based on the concept of archetype from the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. Considering as background the reading of signs, from a perspective of the Peircean theory, we consider that the archetypes of life and death are portrayed in the two artworks and, furthermore, there is a subjectivity bias in which each artist manifests something that is common to all human beings (archetypes), passing over, tacitly, the collective and individual pain through depicted images. It is also our intent to work with the interdisciplinarity between the profound psychology (Analytic) and pictorial arts.

Keywords: Archetypes, Symbols, Plastic arts, Interdisciplinarity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our desire in this article is to work with the confluences in the areas called sciences of knowledge, represented by semiotics, the visual arts and depth psychology, especially the theory of archetypes. We will analyze a set of primordial images, among them, the archetypes: Death, Life, War and Mother. The Jungian theoretical basis will allow us to dialogue with these images and their symbologies. It is intended to analyze the painting "The Henry Ford Hospital", or "Flying Bed" (1932) by Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderon (1907-1954) and the canvas "Guernica" by Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973) in order to discuss the field of the general theory of Semiotics, grounding the reading of the non-verbal language present in the canvases in the three subjects of Peirce's semiosis: sign, object and interpretation to establish an interdisciplinarity between Analytical Psychology and the Fine Arts. To this end, we will make a reading of the archetypal concepts and their manifestations through the canvases of Frida Kahlo and Pablo Picasso with the contribution of Peirce's theory regarding the analysis of signs and symbols.



2 PEIRCE'S GENESIS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF PHENOMENA

At the age of 12, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) began his study of logic. Years later, he studied Schiller's letters and then went on to study Kant. He knew the Greeks, the English empiricists, scholastic logic, and all the idealists. At the age of 28 he had already published important works, but what marked his future work was *On a new list of categories*. In addition, during his lifetime he was a mathematician, physicist, astronomer and made important contributions in the field of Geodesy, Metrology and Spectroscopy. He was also considered a scholar of both Biology and Geology. However, he did not pursue himself only in the exact and natural sciences, as he became interested in Linguistics, Philology and History. He also made enormous contributions to the field of psychology, becoming the first experimental psychologist in the United States.

Peirce was a scientist and, above all, a logician. However, Peirce's path to semiotics began early. He stated:

... From the day when, at the age of 12 or 13, I picked up, in my elder brother's room, a copy of Whateley's Logic and asked my brother what Logic was, on receiving a simple answer, I threw myself on the floor and buried myself in the book. Since then, it has never been within my power to study anything—mathematics, ethics, metaphysics, anatomy, thermodynamics, optics, gravitation, astronomy, psychology, phonetics, economics, the history of science, card games, men and women, wine, metrology, except as a study of semiotics.
(Santaella, pag. 4, 1998)

It is emphasized that it was dialoguing with 25 centuries of Western philosophical tradition, that is, a dialogism with a gigantic theoretical body that gradually emerged his logical, philosophical and scientific theory of language, that is, Semiotics. His studies led to what he called *the Categories of Thought and Nature*, or Universal Categories of the Sign; he arrived at these categories through analysis and close examination of the way things appear to consciousness.

It is important to emphasize that there are several currents of modern semiotics, but the theoretical basis for this article is present in the semiotic concepts of Peirce (1839-1914).

For Santaella (2002), Semiotics provides the foundations for the three normative sciences: aesthetics, ethics and logic, and these in turn provide the foundations for metaphysics. Also, according to the same author:

Peircian semiotics is a symbolic theory of knowledge, which draws, in a logical diagram, a plan of a new foundation for rethinking the eternal and immemorial questions about reality and truth.
(Santaella, pag.90, 2000)

When analyzing the relations between a thing and its meaning, Semiotics is used as a theoretical foundation, which is of Greek *origin semeion*, whose meaning is sign. Its objective is to study the various phenomena, a word derived from the Greek *Phaneron*, everything, anything that appears to



the perception and to the mind, generating distinct meanings, according to each historical and social moment, linked to all forms of expression, as language.

Presenting the formal and universal categories in the way phenomena are apprehended by the mind is the function of phenomenology, which is divided, according to Santaella (1983), into three categories:

- Primeirity – it is an immediate consciousness whose quality is the impression (feeling) *in totum*, indivisible, unanalyzable, innocent and fragile.

Secondness – is the awareness of existing and feeling the action of external factors against our will, with an interpretative mediation between us and the phenomena, so the marked, concrete and material ways of saying the world are action, reaction and dialogical interaction of man with his historicity.

- Thirdness – is the triadic relationship that exists between the sign, its object and the interpreting thought, thus corresponding to the layer of intelligibility, or thought in signs, through which we represent and interpret the world (Santaella 1983).

For Santaella (1983), it is in man, and by man, that the process of alteration of signs (any stimulus obtained by objects in the world) into signs or languages that are products of consciousness takes place. A sign represents, in a certain way, its object, but the object of the sign is not always what we know as a palpable "thing", but can be an event, an occurrence, an abstraction.

It is a mistake to think simplistically that the sign necessarily represents something for someone, because for Peirce, according to Santaella:

Anything of any kind, imagined, dreamed, felt, experienced, thought, desired... It can be a sign as long as this "thing" is interpreted in terms of a foundation of its own, as being in the place of something else.
(Santaella, pag.90, 2000)

It is worth mentioning that there are signs that are universal and acultural, because anywhere in the world you can make the same reading. By painting the canvases, the artists are at the service of the personal and collective unconscious that through the signs express universal feelings. In analytical psychology, the choice of an archetypal sign/image is made through emotions that each artist has at the moment of creation.

3 CARL GUSTAV JUNG AND THE PRINCIPLE THAT UNITES US

Psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was born in Kesswil, Switzerland, and was interested in biology, zoology, paleontology and archaeology, but deepened his knowledge of psychic phenomena at the Medical University of Basel, where he enrolled in 1895. The psychiatry course was completed in 1900. In the course of his academic development, he began his work as an assistant to



psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler at the Bugholzli Clinic in Zurich. At the beginning of his career, he set up an experimental laboratory where he created the unusual word association/free association test for psychiatric diagnosis. He later met with Freud, Adler, Jones and Stekel at the first International Congress of Psychoanalysis. In 1910, he founded the International Psychoanalytic Association, of which Jung was president. As the first president of the International Association of Psychoanalysts, he challenged Freud's ideas, firstly, on the concept of libido, which according to Freud has a sexual character, being irreducible to other forms of mental energy. However, Jung reads it in a broader way than the sexual conceptualization, later diverging with respect to the theories of the unconscious. The rupture of both occurred due to the publication of JUNG's book (1924/1986) "*Symbols of Transformation*" in which he explains his theoretical differences with his master.

In the Jungian view, the concept of libido becomes a general psychic energy and not only of a sexual nature, as Freud conceptualizes it. The vision of the psyche and the unconscious changes, because the unconscious is no longer "a blank page" at birth, but includes a layer made up of structures and images common to all humanity (the archetypes) that manifest themselves through dreams, myths, religions and also fairy tales. It would be naïve thinking if we were to interpret dreams, images, fantasies, and myths within the field of analytic and linear logic, because we would use different criteria of truths to define them. If we wanted to read symbols in a rational logical way, it would cause a devaluation of them and we would lose their main function: to be a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious.

Jung had the Platonic and Plotinian influence in the construction of the concept of archetypes. According to this conception, there is a universe in which everything is permanent and unchanging, populated by original ideas. Thus, in the world of sensible perceptions, everything is a mere reproduction of what exists on the higher plane. In this way, in our thoughts, feelings, emotions, intuitions, sensations and attitudes, the archetype that is expressed through the symbolic world is implicit, since it constitutes its structural composition hidden from human vision. Some archetypes have acquired independence and stand out in the realm of individual consciousness.

Archetypal symbols are visualized in the original myths, in the various religions, in legends that belong to the collective cultural baggage, which irrefutably inscribe the consciousness and particularly the plane of the human unconscious. For Jungian psychology, some of these archetypes: the mother figure, the image of the father, the child, the hero, the divine, among others, make up immaterial manifestations that shape psychic events. In the understanding of the young analyst, Jung, the unconscious has a much wider range than consciousness, and the ego is only a small part of the psyche. In this way, the psyche is made up of unconscious elements originating from various sources, starting with the individual and going to more collective and impersonal spheres, because the individual is part of a family which is part of a culture or ethnicity that, in turn, belongs to the human



species. Thus, the elements of the individual's unconscious experiences form the personal unconscious, those shared with family or ethnicity, the family or ethnic unconscious, and, ultimately, the unconscious elements common to all individuals of the human species, the collective unconscious. Jung's expanded conception of the psyche includes a collective and transcendent sphere in which transformations in the concept of consciousness occur. According to Whitmont,

It is postulated the existence of ego or egoic consciousness, which is equivalent to consciousness in the sense of common sense and traditional terminology, and an expanded consciousness, relative to the totality of unconscious and archetypal processes. This is because the unconscious has an autonomy in relation to the ego, it operates with many perceptions that do not even reach the egoic consciousness, and it has certain structures of images and behaviors, the archetypes, related to certain typical situations and that function as a kind of instinctive and automatic wisdom (Jung, 1924/1986; Whitmont, 1991).

Consciousness is bestowed as inferior to the unconscious, and is inscribed within the psyche. Human beings have a tenuous division between conscious and unconscious, they have an external and objective reality and an internal and subjective reality, and there is a dichotomy between analytical thinking that corresponds to a direction to the external reality and analogical thinking to the internal reality.

Every dream is symbolic material, like a fable of the dreamer's existence that operates by means of analogies. The unconscious manifests itself symbolically and the ego has only the symbolic resource to dialogue with the unconscious material and thus be able to decode it. For Jung, the devaluation of symbolic language implies the devaluation of the unconscious and the subjective reality of the psyche (Jung, 1927/1985a).

There are countless possibilities of archetypes in the psyche related mainly to everyday situations of human existence such as: birth, death, marriage, diseases, wars, among many others. They probably happened through repetition from generation to generation, according to Jung. The archetype is not accessible directly, but only through its manifestations: through biological means, in patterns of behavior; and psychic, in images, representations and human productions forming a common substrate for humanity.

There is a common substratum that is called the collective unconscious, since its existence is independent of the ego, which is individual to each one. It was built from repetitions of behaviors similar to each other over the various generations and during the formation of *homo sapiens*, constituting a psychological structure common to humanity. The collective unconscious and the archetypes would be the carriers of this accumulated behavioral repertoire, however, they are not the behaviors, but structures or patterns of behavior. They are part of universal human nature, independent of time and cultures.



4 PICASSO AND FRIDA ACCORDING TO PEIRCE'S THEORY

Semiotics is the science that has as its object of investigation all possible languages, examining the modes of constitution of any and all phenomena of production of meaning as a phenomenon of production of meaning and meaning. Thus, the sign of each form of language attempts to represent an object that is the cause or determinant of the sign. Based on this premise, it can be seen that the signs present in Picasso's work represent the chaos of a population that has undergone a bombardment, while in Frida's painting the pain of losing a child.

It is important to emphasize that this reading takes place through the category defined by Peirce of thirdness, because, when investigating the meaning of the signs in each canvas, there was a relationship between the sign (canvases), the object (war and the loss of the child) and an interpretation of the language present in the works, making each sign a symbol that manifests itself through its representations. for Peirce

A symbol is defined as a sign which is constituted as such simply or principally by the fact that it is used and understood as such, whether the habit is natural or conventional, and without regard to the motives which originally governed its selection.
(1958. CP, 2.307)

The author's conception of symbol is similar to the conception of *thema* proposed by Burgersdicus in 1635 in his study of logic. The *thema*, like the symbol, would be a sign that, like the word, is associated with its object by a convention, by a natural instinct that conceives it by an intellectual act that conceives it as representative of its object.

Jung identifies symbols in the psyche of man, in this way, it considers itself a symbolic word or image the instant it implies something beyond its manifest and immediate meaning, something that cannot be minutely defined or explained. Because there are many things that we cannot understand, according to Jung (1977, p. 21), we often use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot fully define. As an example, we can mention the use of symbolic language and images by religious institutions.

It can be seen that for Jung the symbolic world is linked to the psyche of each individual, giving a special color to the individuality of each one, because the symbols for him cannot be printed in a manual that categorizes them, if this occurs it will no longer be a symbol but a sign. In the case of the symbol from Peirce's point of view, it is verified that it is represented by the sign that can be interpreted under three categories: firstness, secondness and thirdness. For the analysis of the works, we will use the interpretation of the symbols in Peirce's category of thirdness and also their use in the light of the Jungian theory that reads them as expressions of the psyche in a collective and singular way of each individual. Thus, we will have two looks at the artists' canvases: one in which the sign manages to



express the emotion contained in each canvas and another in which the canvases represent the immeasurable symbolism that we will never be able to express them in their entirety.

4.1 PICASSO AND HUMAN SLAUGHTER

The painter, sculptor and draughtsman Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973), whose real name was Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Martyr Patricio Clito Ruíz y Picasso, who later became Picasso because he preferred to use only his mother's surname during his career, was one of the leading visual artists of the twentieth century. He painted scenes of bullfights. At the age of eight, he painted the work "The Bullfighter" in oil on wood. Years later, he depicted his difficult relationship with his wife by painting the woman's death as detached and futile. Picasso used drawing to express his feelings from an early age. When the family moved to Barcelona in the spring of 1895, the entrance exam to the La Lonja art school was successfully taken. At the age of fourteen, Picasso exceeded the requirements of a prestigious art academy, since the works proposed to present at the end of the month, he had presented in a few days and the works he made placed him in the series of renowned painters of Barcelona, such as Santiago Rusiñol and Isidro Nonell.

His works are divided into phases which represent his state of soul, in the blue phase (1901 to 1905), Picasso painted loneliness, death and abandonment. As she fell in love with Fernande Olivier, her paintings changed from blue to pink. Inaugurating the pink phase (1905-1906), the predominant colors are pink and red and his works gain a lyrical connotation, there is the presence of acrobats, dancers, harlequins, circus artists, the circus world. In 1907, with the painting "Lesdemoiselles d'Avignon", he began the Cubist movement that valued geometric shapes (cones, spheres, cylinders, etc.) by revealing his object in its multiple angles, significantly changing modern art and, together with the French poet Apollinaire, formed a group of artists who cultivated cubist techniques until the end of the First World War in 1918. It is also worth mentioning that in 1968, at the age of 87, he produced in seven months a series of 347 engravings, returning to themes such as the circus, theater, bullfighting and eroticism. His 90th birthday was celebrated with a special exhibition at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Pablo Picasso died in Notre-Dame-de-Vie, in Mougins, France, on April 8, 1973 at the age of 91, the legacy left by the painter was about 1,880 paintings, 1,335 sculptures, 880 ceramics and 7,089 drawings. He was buried in the castle of Vauvenargues.

In 1937, Guernica, a town of approximately 10,000 inhabitants, was bombed on a Monday (April 26) by planes of the Condor Legion (German Air Force) during the Spanish Civil War. That afternoon, the streets were crowded with children, women, and in the main square there was a market, where the farmers of the surrounding area sold the fruits of their labor. The fleet of planes fired bombs of 500 kilograms down on the locality, in a number of aluminum incendiary projectiles of one kilogram



in weight, which was calculated at more than 3000. To intensify the massacre, the "fighters" returned low into the middle of the population to machine gun those elements who took refuge in the camps. The result of this act was the total devastation of the city, except for the historic Casa de Juntas, with its rich archives of the Basque race and where the Basque parliament and the famous tree of Guernica, a dry trunk of about 600 years, met.

The archetype of the collective pain of this deadly incident was portrayed by Pablo Picasso in his canvas entitled "Guernica" which, through nine figures, the painter groups the main symbols left by the war.

In order to enter into the reading of signs according to Peirce's theory and interpret them based on Jungian analytical psychology, we will first present Pablo Picasso's canvas of Guernica built in 1937 and, later, the work Henry Ford Hospital (La cama volando) (The Flying Bed) painted in 1932.

Fig. 1. Guernica (mede 349,3cm x 776,6cm)



As Peirce considered each and every human production to be a matter of Semiotics, it can be said that the canvas is full of signs that symbolize the horror of the bombing. Thus, the canvas is the sign whose object is war, and the representation of the object generates interpretative effects in its readers. Such effects are the interpretant, so the readers only have access to the object of the sign, what the canvas represents, through the mediation of the sign (Santaella 2002). To begin reading the screen, it is necessary to verify how the phenomena appear to consciousness, that is, the modes of operation of the thought-sign that are processed in the mind according to the Peircian categories. It is observed that, in the first place, there are figures such as the heads of people and animals, points of light and darkness; secondly, an analogy of the figures with the external fact (bombardment in Guernica) can be made as a way of interpreting the phenomenon, creating a dialogical interaction of the artist's unconscious with that historical moment. In the category of thirdness, we have the interpretative perception between consciousness and what is perceived (bombardment) that, through a symbolic mediation (figures), the artist represented his interpretation of reality through his pictorial work so that



the readers of the canvas, especially those who promoted the bombardment, can understand its devastating effects.

The figures are geometrically decomposed with surrealist elements, since they seem to expose the author's psychic impressions about the bombing, the images refer to the valorization of the unconscious, as it demonstrates the conflict between what was lived and what was thought about the consequences of the massacre, making the images without logical order. Surrealist painting seeks to overcome the domain of reason, resorting to fantastic images, illogical, bizarre and irrational juxtapositions (Leme, p. 439, 2004). As for the technique, it is associated with cubism, which, according to Cereja, has the following characteristics:

There is a structure of multiple images, as well as a decomposition of the objects represented in different geometric planes and right angles, with multiple and discontinuous spaces, which intersect and succeed each other, in such a way that the spectator, with his gaze, can reassemble them and have a vision of the whole, face and profile as if he had taken a turn around them. (Cereja, pag 371, 2003)

Although it does not depict the sufferings of the inhabitants individually – it should be noted that the mural does not present a crowd – there are nine figures that briefly represent the collective pain and that go through the result of the attack, each image on a different and clearly distinct role from the others that is exposed as follows: four women, a child, a statue of a soldier, a bull, a horse, and a bird.

For the reading and analysis of the empirical process of the signs on the canvas under Peirce's category of thirdness, it is considered that the colors intensify the dramatic feeling of the bombardment: the black represents death and the color gray, depression, apathy, the not to come, fear, loneliness, that is, the human emptiness. The horse and the bull, two of the most prominent elements of the painting, represent the culture of the Spanish city and the power of the city that was defeated by the war. The bird elucidates the idea of peace or religious totem of the Roman Catholic of the Holy Spirit which, in the period of war, were demolished. The figure of the soldier represents the fragmentation of the human with all its weaknesses and vicissitudes of the soul. In general, the number four represents life, since, when constructing its meanings, this digit connects to earth, water, air and fire, the four vital elements for our planet that were destroyed in that region due to the bombing. It is interesting to note that in the word God there are four letters, so it can be said that the four women represent the life of the human being that can only exist through her, because she is the mother. It can be seen that the future of the city of Guernica begins to be questioned by the painter, since, in order to rebuild a new city that, at that time, was covered by rubble, these elements are primordial, it can be said that the apex of this questioning takes place in the birth of a single child who is dead in the arms of his mother. Thus, the archetype of pain is present in every canvas and this sympathy seems to be



represented holistically, as the artist expresses it in a universal and timeless way, linking the war of the present with the lack of perspective of the future.

As Bakhtin mentioned, when the author writes a work, it is no longer his, but the one who reads it. Picasso's work had this same property, he was one of the greatest painters and was an instrument of his collective unconscious, expressing through his canvases the archetypes that belong to all humanity, moments in which we find ourselves in the blue and pink phases of our lives, moments in which we are outraged by wars that take place without logical justification, moments when we are sad with the loss of friends, phases when we have love in the plural and we long for love in the singular. Situations where we just wanted to be ourselves and we find out that this is no longer possible, because the myth of the artist has consumed us. Pablo is simply a living myth. Simply Pablo, because he was open to the world in his extroverted structure.

4.1.1 Frida Kahlo: The urboros of pain

The Mexican painter Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo Calderón, whose stage name is Frida Kahlo, was one of the most respectable artists of the twentieth century. Subsequently, she was involved in a serious accident between a tram and a bus, suffering several injuries and fractures that weakened her for a long period, awakening her skills as a painter. With a mirror fixed on a canopy that covered the bed, he portrayed, in a series of self-portraits, his own pain.

Unlike Pablo Picasso, Frida held her subjective history and represented it in her canvases, her mother complex, her frustration with motherhood, her disconcerting relationship with Diego Rivera, so the connections between art and suffering in Frida Kahlo are inextricable. The triad that surrounded the painter's life was love, pain and suffering. It can be seen that Frida, in many moments, was constellated with the archetypes of pain and illness and death.

Fig. 2. Henry Ford Hospital (The Flying Bed) - 1932. Oil on metal 30.5 x 38 cm. Collection of Dolores Olmedo Patiño, Mexico City, Mexico.





Reading Frida's work from the perspective of the category of Peircia's third, it is observed that, through the signs, the author expresses the grief of the second abortion that is the object, through images full of phenomena that we can interpret as symbols of the archetypes of pain and death, imbued with suffering, anguish and loneliness. Kahlo manifests the magnitude of her inner ghosts through her screens, which are the windows to the soul of many women, who, when reading her screens, can identify with the same scenario. Even presenting, at times, an introspective personality and portraying pictures that speak of her subjectivity, at some point, without her realizing it, she was at the service of the collective unconscious, her pain left the uroboric perspective and walked in the service of a greater good. Art is a healing tool for those who make it and for those who appreciate it. In art, we express all the archetypes and in them we grope our healings, leaving an eternal mark for the healing of our descendants, both those who appreciate the works of artists and those who admire the history of humanity. Frida was an artist who was not bound by any process of academic vanity, she simply left her psyche free so that her pain, both physical and emotional, could be an instrument to portray what was beyond her self-portraits.

Wrapped up in his theory, Jung realizes that the image equals the psyche. With this worldview, he recognizes the power of imagination and creative representations when discussing the process of artistic creation, as a psychological activity and as such an object of psychology. For him, "what art itself is cannot be the object of psychological considerations, but only aesthetic-artistic ones" (JUNG, 2012p. 65). According to this same author, the work of art in its nascent state is an autonomous complex, something that transcends the ego.

We could even speak of a being who uses man and his personal dispositions only as nourishing soil, whose forces he orders according to his own laws, configuring himself according to what he intends to be.
(JUNG, 2012, p. 72).

Thus, the moment of creation is a creative realization of the objective psyche and the questions must seek the meaning of the work of art

5 FINAL THOUGHTS

In view of the above, it can be affirmed that Semiotics can provide a theoretical basis to interpret the signs, observe the phenomena to establish a reflection on the symbols present in the works, which are the archetypes of life, death, war and the mother. In addition, it is worth considering that artists are always at the service of the collective unconscious, as much as they wish to express only their own subjectivity or expose a feeling about their emotions, or even talk about their pain or other feelings, they are instruments for the archetypes to come to life and speak of something greater than the artist's own intentionality. thus expressing an Art of the Senses and the Art of Signification.



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