

Rationality: Beyond aesthetics and communication

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Highlights

Analysis of how socio-political factors are determined by rationality through art and media.

Understanding the range of concepts relating to technological developments and the role of human beings.

Discussing the ability humans have to achieve positive results in relation to their sociocultural circumstances.

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The presentation is organized as follows:

1. Technical Control in Politics and Arts
2. Aesthetics: Between Fact and Fiction
3. Communication and Technical Interest

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Recent representations and reproductions in global visual culture seem to present characteristics that appropriate the essential values of the human condition consecrated by classic art. In this sense, one should not necessarily consider that the socio-political meanings of images or actions are politically exercised. They are, instead, contained in politics.

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However, one must be very careful not to misinterpret these issues.

There are works and themes that allude
the freedom of expression, ethics, and censorship.

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They appear in respective cultural events and general ways
in the media, embodying the rhythm of the metropolises.

Therefore, they present new elements that
need to be researched and discussed more systematically.

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In this sense, my research question concentrates on the absolute reference values of human existence in visual culture, eliminating any illusion, given the knowledge of novelty, in the face of mercantile injunctions and technical progress concerning the impact that it exerts on international politics.

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Insomuch as ethics and aesthetics can be questioned,
would it be the search for “innovation in the production of images”
(in the sense of positive and determinate power) or simply the practical
consequence of vicissitudes in the formal diversity of creations?

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To provide insight on this preliminary problem, this research on the symbolic aspects of images focuses on the following three questions:
What would designate and condition the exploitation of tragedy as a common reason for everyday visual experiences?

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What are the “true” symbolic values that would prove facts through images in the impact of international politics?

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If, on the one hand, the impact is from the image of violence, tragedy, horror, and destruction, are these “true values” visible as absolute references of human existence?

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For this analysis to proceed, it is necessary to first ground this research in an iconology of representative images, for example, in the relationship between photojournalism and classic works of art.

Samples of the images are available:



Figure 1: Michelangelo's Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican

Figure 2: Candido Portinari, *Dead child* (1944)

Col. Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand São Paulo (MASP),

<http://www.portinari.org.br/#/pagina/candido-portinari/apresentacao?idioma=en>

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These questions are the main problem's objective,
especially concerning the awareness of freedom and citizenship,
and respecting international norms and ethics of human rights.

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For this, visual analysis based on the symbolic aspects of the elements that constitute democratic society's imagery is essential, along with the reviews of conventional values for the quality of life and the politicization of the individuals who represent it.

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Moreover, it is important to highlight visual culture as an experience of aesthetics and an evolution of their capacity for reasoning and cognition through the influence of signs and symbols in their social performance and autonomy.

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Art, photographs, films, videos, design, architecture, fashion,
and so on all form a part of societies' complex system of visual culture.

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The use and understanding of visual images are governed
by socially established symbolic codes.

Visual images are constructed, and they can be deconstructed
and read as texts in various ways.



Figure 2: Francisco Goya, *The Third of May, 1808*



Figure 3: Photo by Sebastião Salgado,
image of the gold mines of Serra Pelada, Minas Gerais, Brazil
In the *Salt of the Earth*, a documentary film co-directed by Wim Wenders, 2015
<https://yourfoto.de/sebastiao-salgado/>

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Therefore, classifications are important to analyze the impact and configuration of the social imaginary in which these images are produced and consumed. In this sense, the objective of this research is to analyze visual products of the global society—its production, consumption, and meaning.

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Images from different contexts and localities, with formal diversity and distinct contents, have, in general, exerted significant influence by the media in global and everyday social interactions, whether in economics, politics, science, or culture and its diversity.

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Consequently, images also arise which stimulate ephemeral desires of pleasure by the eternal appearances and desires for goodness and freedom.

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The relationship between artistic works and visual culture offers sensitive aspects of the representation of man's experience in his environment. They concern aesthetic values, not only in art's formal elements but also as content, human achievement, and subjects for visual research. The meaning would not only be at the moment of performance but also in the result of the visual narratives in relation to the social environment. In its history, art has transformed the way we understand it. It does not matter where, to be sure, the technical evolution and the importance of the scientific statute have contributed to elevating artistic production to a decisive stage.



Figure 4: *Venus von Willendorf*, Naturhistorischen Museums, Wien 2008.
Photo by Christiane Wagner



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Habermas's reflections on and clarifications of Weber's (1924) rationality concern the choice of strategy for the use of technologies and the organization of systems according to the objectives of institutions that aim at world organization. We must especially consider who has mastery of this capitalist system, whether it is nature or society, who it is that has control over technology and science.

Politics are intrinsic to the existence of the individual in society in the public space at the level of the citizen; as stated by Aristotle, man is a political animal.

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All creatures display a drive toward self-preservation. Hence, for Rousseau, genuinely moral qualities can only be found in the application of reason to human affairs and conduct. This reasoning “requires the mental faculty that is the source of genuinely moral motivation, namely conscience. Conscience impels us to the love of justice and morality in a quasi-aesthetic manner” (Bertram, 2017). It may be for these reasons that certain artworks are consecrated by the passage of time, which has transformed them into masterpieces.

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Although the criteria for the aesthetic evaluation of artworks and the communication of their purpose are globally acknowledged, Western art has become essentially regarded as having an eternal presence expressed through its history, due to its instantiation of the fundamental values of what is right for a human being. Thus, an audience that does not have a specialization in a certain art takes account of the vital presence of masterpiece, which receives the benefit of intrinsic human nature (Wagner, 2016) with an understanding (*Verstand*) of the human condition in a Kantian sense. Along these lines, the recent publication of Steven Pinker's *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (2018) reminds us of the human condition, which is fundamentally not rational.

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