

The *Status quaestionis* of Whiteheadian Research in Brazil

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This paper is a survey of papers, which constitutes a chronological mapping of Brazilian research in theses and dissertations about Whitehead or in dialogue with Process Thought, with an emphasis on works written in the Portuguese language since the 1980s. It is divided into three groups: (1) theses and dissertations restricted to Whitehead and Process Thought and (2) those studies done in dialogue with Alfred North Whitehead and Process Thought. (3) The third section introduces a non-exhaustive list regarding ongoing studies, which were begun prior to the 12th International Whitehead Conference that took place in Brazil in August of 2019. The digital databases consulted were: 1) Lattes Platform—CNPQ¹; 2) Sucupira Platform—CAPES/MEC²; 3) Contemporary Ontology (research group on ANPOF³; 4) Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations from IBICT⁴; 5) Theses and Dissertations catalogue CAPES/MEC; 6) Digital databases from specific universities. The researches listed are restricted to scholarly research done by Brazilian researchers inside the country or in foreign universities. The descriptive paragraphs were compiled from the abstracts written by their own authors. We did not use ellipses or quotation marks in these cases.

Keywords: Alfred North Whitehead, Brazilian research, process studies, Latin American studies, process philosophy

Introduction

Brazil is not known in academic circles as a country with relevant Whiteheadian research. This is a fact. All those interested in doing research concerning Whitehead's thought have to do research in English full time, because just four books of Whitehead have been published in Brazilian Portuguese⁵. Another three have been published in Portugal⁶, but these last three are not well known in Brazil and they have been translated into a type of Portuguese that is sometimes different for Brazilian readers. Since Whitehead's English is not easy to understand, most of the researchers have difficulty understanding the meaning of the neologisms he uses all the time in his rich semantics and semiotics.

When Dr. Maria Teresa Teixeira, from the University of Coimbra, in partnership with University of Lisbon, did her academically awarded translation of Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (2010/2011), it was

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¹ CNPQ—Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico.

² CAPES/MEC—Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior/ Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Governo Federal Brasileiro.

³ ANPOF—Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia.

⁴ IBICT/BDTD—Instituto Brasileiro de Informação em Ciência e Tecnologia/ Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações.

⁵ The Aims of Education (1969); The Function of Reason (1985), The Concept of Nature (1993), Science and the Modern World (2006).

⁶ Introduction to Mathematic (1948), The Symbolism, its Meaning and Effect (1955), Process and Reality (2010).

possible to argue with Whitehead with much more consistence, despite the fact that some of the Portuguese terms employed by the Portuguese translator have significantly different meanings in Brazilian Portuguese. We observed that none of the Whiteheadian research produced in Brazil before 2018 ever included the Portuguese translation of *Process and Reality* in the referred bibliographies. So, the intention of this article is to bring to light the Brazilian research about Alfred North Whitehead, done up to 2019 and including ongoing researches.

Putting researches in chronological order and before reporting results, we compared and contrasted Alfred North Whitehead with other homonyms, including on mathematic and algebraic fields such as “John Whitehead,” with necessary caution so as not to misunderstand the authors.

Also it is important to mention that, the access to the full texts of theses and dissertations was not always possible when the research happened before 2000, because many of the university libraries had not completely digitalized the information that we needed to access. So, we are aware of the non-exhaustive condition of this paper.

Researches Strictly About Alfred North Whitehead and Process Thought

In 1985 Tadeu Cristovam Mikoswki defended his doctoral thesis entitled “Religion according to Alfred North Whitehead”. His doctoral research was defended in Contemporary Philosophy at The Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy. A printed copy of this work is available at the institutional library of that university.

In 2004 Juceney Batista defended her master’s dissertation entitled “The flow of the experience”. Her research was defended in the Psychology Postgraduate Degree Program of Fluminense Federal University, in Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro. A printed copy of her study is available at the institutional library.

In 2011 Ednaldo Isidoro da Silva defended his master’s dissertation entitled “The speculative cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead: talking about principles, causes, hierarchy and the order of the universal organism”. His research was defended in the Philosophy Postgraduate Degree Program of Federal University of Pernambuco, in Recife, Pernambuco. A printed copy is available at the institutional library.

2013 was an year with more researches than usual. Fernando Maia Freire Ribeiro defended his doctoral thesis in the Philosophy Postgraduate Degree Program at Rio de Janeiro State University. The title is: “Individuation and innocence: compositions with Simondon and Whitehead”. His description in the abstract tells us:

The research investigates the individuation problem which points out to a different individual conception: non-substantial and not quality supportive, not grounded in matter and form, in the potential and the actual. Simondon was the first philosopher to, specifically, take into account the individual as it is created in composition and then renewed the question of individuation, transforming the relation status. “The being is relation”. The main question on research is: “was it then the speculative thought, an antidote to possible rebuttal of the new individuation philosophy in a for long acknowledged world?” (RIBEIRO, 2013)

Also in 2013 Marcus Vinício Guimarães Giusti, a physics researcher, defended his doctoral thesis in epistemology in the Postgraduate Program of the History of Science, Technology and Epistemology of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. His thesis is entitled: “From substance to process: the changing of metaphysical basis on the sciences of 20th century”. In his abstract he describes the research as follows:

In this work, it is addressed the need for a change in the metaphysical basis of contemporary science. It is stated that the classical metaphysics, based on the idea of substance, provided the foundations of the mechanical conception of nature.

It is argued that the scientific image prepared by mechanical conception began to come into crisis with the advent of electromagnetism, reaching its apex with the revolutions in twentieth-century physics. It is analyzed the attempts of demarcation between science and metaphysics, or the pure exclusion of metaphysics as a source for the foundation of science. It is examined the ontology of quantum mechanics by means of heisenbergian idea of potentia. It is argued that the process philosophy offers the best metaphysical concepts to develop the ontology of quantum mechanics and developed the hypothesis that the metaphysical basis of quantum mechanics can be reached through the relationship between the philosophical ideas of Heisenberg and Whitehead, mediated by Platonism. (GIUSTI, 2013)

Finishing this flourishing whiteheadian year of 2013, Sergio Danilas defended his master's dissertation in theology in the Postgraduate Degree Program in Theology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná in Curitiba. His research suggests that Process Philosophy should be useful in discussing the whole range of relations between Christian Theology and Nature Sciences.

The relationship between religion and science in the West and, more specifically, between Christian theology and the natural sciences, historically assumes perspectives ranging from open conflict, independence, dialogue and integration. The position must be clear, to defend the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences. The dialogue is proposed between these two areas of knowledge from some points as valuing diversity, openness to complementarities, respectful dialogue, without arrogance and without the pretense that an area undermines another. The most important thing about this dialogue is that it is oriented to the good of society. (...) The use of process philosophy in this context, in addition to providing a clarification on the relational issues between knowledge, also allows reflection on the magnitude of the relationship between God and the world. This relationship makes sense in the concept of kenosis. The initial track and enlightening appears in the biblical text that presents the theanthropical kenosis, in which God the Son empties so that, on the cross, Jesus manifests his humanity. This revelation leads to the question of emptying of God in a divine original kenosis, as a necessary condition for the being and existence of all creation. The understanding of a divine original kenosis points to a self-determination of created beings, which implies the recognition of autonomy and to their own knowledge. The two aforementioned kenotic situations only have to confirm the nature of the Triune God, because God is relational already in essence, is considered an intra-Trinitarian kenosis that each divine person empties, making room for each other to manifest divinity. This is the principle and the model for all human relationship.

There was a pause in Whiteheadian research until 2018 when Karine Francisconi Chaerki defended her doctoral thesis in Administration at Federal University of Paraná, in Curitiba. The title was: "The organizations as events: the apprehension of organizational changing dynamics in its temporal dimension". She says:

Process studies are central to the field of organizational studies. However, among the difficulties identified for conducting research with a focus on processes in the organizational context, issues related to the apprehension of time or temporality have drawn attention to limitations of theoretical assumptions and methodological strategies prevalent in the area. This calls for understanding organizations as events considering that what an organization 'is' represents only one of the many possibilities for results, since events connect and reach each other, and in reaching out, they recreate each other in the present. In the field of Process Philosophy applied to organizational studies, specifically, we have identified a viable alternative for discussion of the temporal issue that demonstrates how to connect pragmatic questions with philosophical aspirations through a strong process view. (CHAERKI, 2018)

Researches in Dialogue With Alfred North Whitehead

The two books of Whitehead published in Brazil which are still available are: *The Concept of Nature* (1919), published in 1993, and *Science and the Modern World* (1925), published in 2006. *The Aims of Education* (1929) was published in 1969 but is now out of print. So, based in these three books, transdisciplinary researches were done with very curious and creative approaches. We dare to say, with very original approaches. But as well as possible, the Brazilian researchers did manage to dialogue with Whitehead concerning his ideas of Organism Philosophy. *Process and Reality* was too complicated even for English

speakers in academic institutions of Brazil. We think that this difficulty with the language was the major reason why Whitehead was not present in more researches than presented here, especially in the years before the advent of Archive.org and Amazon books. In the following list we have the transdisciplinary approach to Whitehead, taking him as a secondary topic, but carrying out a very good dialogue with his ideas.

In 1992, at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (Brazilian School of Public Administration), Maurício Fucks wrote his master's dissertation in economics entitled "Preliminary considerations about the introduction entropy concept on economic sciences". His research presented the notion of entropy putting Robert M. Sollow, Kenneth E. Boulding, and Herman Daly in dialogue with Whiteheadian ideas about the concrete, the laws of thermodynamics, abstraction and the space-time relation.

In 1993 Pedro Antônio de Lima Neto wrote his master's dissertation in education entitled "The idea of university in a university in its initial stage". His research was defended at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, in Florianópolis. He investigated the basic concept of the university comparing four models of modern universities in the western world: the Germanic model of Humboldt, the English model of Newman, the French model of Napoleon and the American university described by Whitehead.

In 2001 Tatiana Marins Roque defended her doctoral thesis on Industrial Engineering at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro entitled "Essay about the genesis of mathematical ideas". This thesis also considered relevant aspects of Whitehead's thought.

2005 was the year when another study in psychology used Process Thought. Fania Goltsman Izhaki defended her doctoral thesis at State University of Rio de Janeiro, entitled "Transformations of the self: a reading of Winnicott scripts prioritizing processes and relations". Her thesis compares Winnicott scripts to Whitehead's Process Philosophy, pointing out affinities between the views of the two authors, systematizing concepts and the relational-processual approach to the conception of self.

In 2007 Whitehead's thought emerged as a significant factor in the transdisciplinary and epistemological fields of research. Nelson Job Vasconcelos de Carvalho, psychologist and researcher in the Postgraduate Degree Program of History of Science Technology and Epistemology of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (HCTE-UFRJ) defended a master's dissertation entitled "The tangled difference: crossing between philosophy of difference and physics of conscience". Carvalho articulated Deleuze, Heraclitus, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Tarde and Bergson in dialogue with Whitehead, proposing new methodologies for clinical psychology, for the philosophy of sciences and for a unifying theory for physics.

In 2012 the same researcher continued his investigations in a doctoral thesis, in the same postgraduate degree program (HCTE-UFRJ). This thesis was entitled "Toward an oneiric ontology: confluences between magic, philosophy and the sciences". In his thesis, Carvalho challenges dualism and dichotomy between different scientific fields, on the human being and in his human manifestations. Also, he presents a new theory of dreams.

Again, in 2013, Mohana Ribeiro Barbosa presented a master's dissertation in History at the Federal University of Goiás, in Goiânia, entitled "Scientific revolution and the beginning of experimental science in Alexandre Koyré". Her research talks about experimental sciences in the seventeenth century according with Alexandre Koyré, exploring this conception inside the historiography of sciences and touching on Whitehead's writings.

In 2014 the University of Brasília began its ascent in research in dialogue with Whitehead with the master's dissertation in philosophy of Jadson Alves de Freitas entitled: "Substance and relations in Leibniz: metaphysics for the philosophical thought of centuries XX and XXI". About his research Freitas said:

The issue concerning what makes a philosophical system a monadology is both enlightening and important, for it sheds new light into some ideas and paves the way for alternative ways to think of substantiality, different from the Western thought guiding ways of Aristotle and Descartes. That is the aim of this work: to analyze the foundations of Leibniz's monadology as intuition for the development of a general idea about systems composed of monads. In that respect, the Leibnizian conception of monads shows a specific way in which relations are prior to substances and everything is connected together in a world where the fundamental modality is that of compossibility. Leibniz thinks of his monads as concerted, in a way that each one somehow prefigures all the others. In contrast to Leibniz, the ideas of thinkers such as Tarde, Whitehead, Latour, Schaffer, and Quine prove to retain important elements of a monadology while rejecting some of these assumptions specific to Leibniz. ... (FREITAS, 2014)

In 2015 Rodrigo Petrônio Ribeiro defended his doctoral thesis entitled: "Mesons: onthology" in Theory of Literature and Compared Literature at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. The theory Petrônio developed is called Mesology, "an ontology and cosmology of media [mesons] ... conceives of the medium not only as the positive reality of a given manifestation, ... but also as the formal unity of the being" (PETRÔNIO, 2015).

With 2015 still in mind, Fernando Padrão de Figueiredo wrote his doctoral thesis in philosophy at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro entitled: "The surface and the fold: the condition for the event in Gilles Deleuze." His investigation about the concept of event starts with the thoughts of Bréier about ancient stoicism. Going further on into whiteheadian thought he developed the notion of the non-corporeal in the deuleuzian book "What is philosophy".

2016 was a year with more researches touching on or dialoguing with Whitehead. The first research on the Science Technology and Society studies was the master's dissertation written by Walter Eler do Couto in the Contemporary Culture Program of the Federal University of Mato Grosso, in Cuiabá, entitled "Prehension of the stars: amateur astronomy, connected sciences and actor-network theory". He says:

Amateur astronomers and Networked Science call into question a series of binary distinctions traditionally found in books of epistemology and science studies (e.g., centre of calculation or periphery of calculation? exoteric or esoteric circles? literature or digital networks of promulgation? Is there science without the construction of new knowledge? How to make a boundary?). Networked Science is remodelling, for instance, the work of scientific researchers, subverting the "science of academic journals". Such a subversion compels us to make a thorough reconsideration of the nature of scientific communication. (...) Through theoretical debates involving the so-called contemporaneous epistemes (Latour, Stengers, Fleck, Mol, Nielsen, Whitehead, Sloterdijk), we draw a series of considerations regarding the political-epistemological relationships between professionals and amateurs. (COUTO, 2016)

In the same year, Maria Lucia Lanza wrote her master's dissertation in education, at the Federal University of São Paulo, entitled: "About the good professor: a case study of public, state schools in São Paulo with high school students". She wrote:

The focus of this work is on the two vital subjects of schooling: teachers and students. The object of this study is how high school students perceive their good teachers, and therefore, the aim is to investigate, based on the perspective of these students, elements that compose a competent teacher. Furthermore, it seeks to identify possible points of convergence and divergence on what characterizes a good teacher according to students, taking into account the results of other investigations on this topic, as well as classic literature about Education and studies on the nature of teaching. (...) As for theoretical basis, the work of authors considered classic in the Education literature were used. These are Bruner, Comenius, Dewey, Freinet, Freire, Jacotot, Korczak, Makarenko, Mondolfo, Montaigne, Pistrak, Rousseau and Whitehead. (...) the students have showed that the humanistic character of the Education is the most important aspect, not failing to include technical aspects. (LANZA, 2017)

Keeping 2017 as our point of reference, Felipe Vargas defended a doctoral thesis in sociology writing

about biodiversity in north-Amazonian and environmental practices. He defended his thesis at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, in Porto Alegre. The title of the thesis is: “You must be in the jungle: between knowledges and modes of engagement on conservation practices of biodiversity on Brazilian Amazonian territory”. His research promotes the encounter between biologists, environmental engineers, environmentalists, the riparian population, indigenous tribes and the forest within the Brazilian Amazonian geographic borders. The research was the result of six different expeditions in two specific sites: Viruá National Park and Maracá Ecological Station in Roraima. He uses the thought of Alfred North Whitehead in his discussion of the reduction in biodiversity and the environmental crisis. He concludes that human beings need to relate differently to the environment.

In 2017 Bernardo de Carvalho Tavares dos Santos defended his master’s dissertation in the Postgraduate Program of Philosophy at the University of Brasília entitled: “Metaphysics of exteriority. Jean Wahl and the empiricist favoritism of Deleuze.” This work... assumes, as a way of accessing Deleuze’s thought, the hypothesis that the very moves of such philosophy carry the characteristic marks of a metaphysical empiricism directly influenced by Jean Wahl’s thought, and, linked through him—in his particular position within French Academy—not only to Bergson (indicating an authentic lineage of French thought), but also to William James and Whitehead (SANTOS, 2017).

In 2019 Karina Oliveira Bezerra defended her Doctoral Thesis in Sciences of Religion entitled: “Contemporary Paganism in Brazil: the magic of reality.” Her research was done at the Catholic University of Pernambuco—UNICAP. With these words she describes the research:

Our work sought to understand how the reality in Paganism is. So we come to the thesis that Pagan reality is magical. Unlike the magic-religion-science triad, we created the concept of triple magic to represent pagan reality. It is divided into ritual magic, symbolic magic and participatory magic. And such a system of thought can be called magism. ... Having understood this world context that includes the myth and the contemporary Pagan rite, we went to Brazil. We investigated eight Pagan religions: Wicca, Druidism and recon, Heathenism, Hellenism, Shamanism, Goddess Spirituality, Witchcraft and Paganism. ... All the data made it possible to see magic as Whitehead’s “process”. (BEZERRA, 2019)

Ongoing Researches

During the days of 12th International Whitehead Conference, promoted by the International Process Network and the Center for Process Studies, we joined more than one hundred researchers that presented about ninety papers and oral communications revealing an updated though partial view of Whiteheadian research around the globe. Also, several Brazilian researchers were present at the event. Most of those who have already concluded their research were not represented at the Conference, but most of the Brazilian researchers who are currently conducting Whiteheadian research were there, especially because the University of Brasília has become the new center for scholarly production in this area.

Ongoing research projects about Whitehead or Process Philosophy include the following:

Francesco Maria Ferrari: “Towards a Metaphysics of Processes.” Post-Doctorate in History of Sciences, Logic and Epistemology at the University of Campinas.

Jadson Alves de Freitas Freitas: “Whitehead e Simondon.” Doctorate in Philosophy at the University of Brasília.

Lília Dias Marianno: “The relational ethics of Alfred North Whitehead on conflicts management.” Doctorate in Epistemology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Rodrigo PetrônioRibeiro: “Alfred North Whitehead and contemporary ontologies and cosmologies.” Post-Doctorate in Technologies of Intelligence and Digital Design at the Catholic University of São Paulo.

Fernando Silva e Silva: “The end of nature: Alfred North Whitehead and IsabelleStengers.” Doctorate in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Rio Grande doSul.

Five other doctoral dissertations are being developed in dialogue with Whitehead and Process thought by the following researchers: André Roberto Tonussi Arnaut (Plane Ontology), Barbara de Barros (Whitehead, Stengers and Bataille), Otávio S. R. D. Maciel (Meta-metaphysics), Alice de Barros Gabriel (Material Feminisms) and Zahra Osman (Post-colonial thought). All of these doctoral students are in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Brasília and have Professor Hilan Nissior Bensusan as advisor.

Conclusion

All of the above research projects related to Alfred North Whitehead in Brazil can now be summarized in the following tables.

Table 1

Whiteheadian Research Done in Brazil and by Brazilian Researchers in Foreign Universities

About Whitehead		%
Theses	4	57.1
Dissertations	3	42.9
TOTAL	7	100
In dialogue with Whitehead		%
Theses	7	43.75
Dissertations	9	56.25
TOTAL	16	100
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS	23	
Ongoing researches*		%
About Whitehead	5	50%
In dialogue with Whitehead	5	50%
TOTAL	10	

Table 2

Universities Represented

	Universities	Abbreviation	State	Amount
1	Universidade São Tomás de Aquino (Italy)	PUCSTA	xxx	1
2	Universidade Federal Fluminense	UFF	RJ	1
3	Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro	UERJ	RJ	3
4	Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro	UFRJ	RJ	5
5	Fundação Getúlio Vargas – RJ	FGV	RJ	1
6	Universidade Federal de São Paulo	UNIFESP	SP	1
7	Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina	UFSC	SC	1
8	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul	UFRS	RS	1
9	Pontificia Universidade Católica Paraná	PUC-PR	PR	1
10	Universidade Federal do Paraná	UFPR	PR	1
11	Universidade Federal de Goiás	UFG	GO	1

Table 2 to be continued

12	Universidade de Brasília	UNB	DF	2
13	Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso	UFMT	MT	1
14	Universidade Católica de Pernambuco	UNICAP	PE	1
15	Universidade Federal de Pernambuco	UFP	PE	1
16	Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main (Germany)	GUFM	xxx	1
TOTAL OF RESEARCHES				23

Table 3

Interdisciplinarity of Whiteheadian Researches

	Disciplines	AMOUNT
1	Administration	1
2	Astronomy (STS Studies)	1
3	Sciences of Religion	1
4	Law	1
5	Economics	1
6	Education	2
7	Epistemology	3
8	Philosophy	6
9	History	1
10	Literature	1
11	Mathematics	1
12	Psychology	2
13	Sociology	1
14	Theology	1
	TOTAL	23

At this point, some general observations are in order. First of all, this survey has no intention of being exhaustive. We have simply taken into account dissertations and theses available for consultation in the Federal Ministry of Education databases. Articles and books are not included.

Whitehead is an author who is still little known in Brazilian academic circles. Just three of his books have been translated into Portuguese in Brazil, and another three have been published just in Portugal. Brazilian researchers commonly come across Whitehead during their Deleuzian and Latourian researches. Despite these difficulties, Whiteheadian research in Brazil is surprisingly original, creative, dialectical, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, although it remains largely unknown.

When we started this survey in 2011 it was practically impossible to discover these references because most of the researchers did not mention Whitehead in their abstracts or in their list of key-words. Nowadays the number of ongoing studies related to Whitehead exceeds by 50% the number of such studies concluded from 1985 to 2019.

The Center of Philosophy at the University of Lisbon made an important contribution to Brazilian research in this area by donating copies of Whitehead's *Magnum Opus, Process and Reality*, to several university libraries in different parts of Brazil.

Since the 12th IWC the Brazilian researchers have been organized in a network that also includes scholars in Argentina. The intention is to create an efficient network for all of Latin America. Also, formal initiatives have been taken to attach this network to the National Department of Scientific and Technological Development.

There is a lack of scholarly production using Whitehead's philosophy as a basis for critical reflection concerning. And, more specifically, there is an urgent need to involve environmental researchers in the above mentioned Latin American network.

Worthy of note is the hard work done by Professor Hilan Bensusan to consolidate Whiteheadian studies in the field of Philosophy.

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