

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL IN PHILOSOPHY

TIME AND CONSCIENCE IN CINEMA
A survey on cinematographic realism
(SUMMARY DOCTORAL DISSERTATION)

PhD Coordonator: Prof. Univ. Dr. Ion Copoeru

PhD Student: Maier Silviu-Lucian

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Contents:

INTRODUCTION

I. TECHNIQUE OF THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC REALISTIC DISCOURSE

1. From general to particular – *suspension of disbelief*, S.T. Coleridge
2. Cinematographic realism, a hollywoodian brand (Deleuze)
3. Cinematographic realism, a matter of synthesis (Kant, Husserl, Stiegler)
4. Cinematographic realism, a matter of adoption (Deleuze, Stiegler)
5. Cinematographic illusion: the issue of the image truth, from photography to film (Barthes, Benjamin, Metz, Stiegler)
6. Photography – motion picture – discourse

II. IMAGES OF THE REALISTIC FILM

1. The realistic motion picture, a community matter
2. The Code produces the image (Dramatic Realism)
3. Citizen Kane (Esthetic Realism)
4. 2001: A Space Odyssey (Esthetic Realism)
5. European realism and realities
 - a) Formalism (dramatization of the means)
 - b) *Ladri di biciclette* (The Bicycle Thief) (European dramatic realism)
 - c) *A bout de souffle* (Breathless) (Intellectual Cinema)
 - d) *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom) (Marginalization of the intellectual cinema).
 - e) *La politique des auteurs* in the world's community (on the concept of author and his authority)
 - f) Film socialisme (Marginalization of the individual author)
6. The Occidental community and the social/virtual super-hero

III. IMAGES OF THE ROMANIAN REALISM

1. Esthetic and dramatic
2. The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (on cinematographic objectiveness)
3. Aurora (types of cinematographic realism: Gorzo, Ferencz-Flatz)

4. From reality to esthetics in cinema: a matter of the history of philosophy
5. Discourse against esthetics in cinema
6. De/familiarization with the real
7. The Cinema-Community in communication
8. The economic totalitarianism: hollywoodization of the cinematographic map

CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FILMOGRAPHY

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This work comprises a philosophic (phenomenological and interactionist) analysis of the cinema, with a polemic opening towards the cinema linguistic analysis line, the Bazin-Deleuze theoretical line, a line of thinking mostly adopted in the national academic medium of the domain (where it offers the analysis terms of the New Romanian Cinema) and, generally, a line of thinking of the cinema which is present as a reference at the level of the entire world. A significant starting point in the thinking of this work is taken by the remark by which Gilles Deleuze closes the second volume of work on the cinema¹; Deleuze finds in cinema the most fertile field of the images and signs practice, so that, in his opinion, it is mostly to philosophy that comes the task to discuss the cinema concepts, exactly because they grow on a philosophical debate (on reality and on mind or conscience) which, in Western countries, has a significant history.

Time and Conscience in Cinema sums up several lines of debate: the manner in which the cinematographic image is built up in relation with the mental image, everything in relation with the field encompassed under the name of *reality* thus as it is accepted by the human conscience in relation with or under the influence of political, social theories and economic actions carried out in the society; also, we have analyzed the manner in which philosophers (Plato, Descartes, Kant) have thought the relationship between *image*, *mind* and *reality*, to understand the resources of thinking cinema on the Bazin-Deleuze line; we have also done an assessment of André Bazin's thinking of cinema and of the manner in which the said thinking influenced how Andrei Gorzo retrospected to the New Romanian Cinema; we have done an assessment of Gilles Deleuze's thinking the cinema and an assessment of the New Romanian Cinema, highlighting the discourse novelties it brings onto the scenery of the world's cinematography.

These analysis lines are included in a debate related to the concepts of author, authority and authorization, esthetics and cinematographic language, a debate based on ideas of Walter Benjamin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jean-Luc Nancy and Bernard Stiegler, placed face

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: imaginea-timp*, Editura Tact, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 364

to face with theories on *cinematographic realism* and on *cinematographic language/practice*, just as they appear by André Bazin, Gilles Deleuze (but also by Christian Metz or Peter Wollen), Andrei Gorzo or Christian Ferencz-Flatz; in such a context it is dialectically seen the history of the cinema in the dynamic production system-author, in order to understand the capacity of the cinema to set up communities (to be a community), to be a political practice. Where cinema = authority system by discourse which functions (orders) politically (= sets up communities) and, because it works with the pattern of the human thinking (movement as image-discourse) it has the capacity of writing and rewriting the functioning program of the human conscience and of the consciences in the community.

The objective of this work is to bring a more adequate image to cinema, an image from which we may understand the way it assumes the possibility to record and introduce discourses; at the same time, an objective just as important is to understand the manner in which human mind works with the *image* in building and understanding reality, everything through cinema, which, as a technical model, in relation with the *images* and the *discourses*, shows similarities with the human mind manner of functioning.

Our contribution in this sense is visible, on one hand, in the criticism of the classic ideas of understanding cinema – as image of the reality (Bazin), as self-standing language (Metz) or as sound and optical meaningful universe (Deleuze) – where we integrated a criticism of the esthetics corresponding to those ideas. On the other hand, this work places at the foundation of understanding cinema the idea of discourse (cinema is not a language but it is wholly included in the language, it is a discourse carrier), with an accent on Wittgenstein's idea of the language games and on the image-text translation (just as shown by Stiegler, prefigured by Wittgenstein) as image-object of a thinking and on the possibility of finding here (spoken or to be spoken) the common/*community* good of life itself – the being-of-discourse; a community-cinema in communication, where it knows its *time*, *epoch* and becomes history (where we will debate on ideas appearing at Walter Benjamin, Maurice Blanchot or Jean Luc Nancy).

The work is divided into three sections, each with several chapters. The ideas counted above are not disposed chronologically but according to a structure inspired by Deleuze's idea of the crystal-image, which, in the translation corresponding to this work, offers rather an image of the discourse itself, of the manner in which the discourse operates. Thus, the ideas of

a section disclose another side of their nature in the ideas existing in the other sections, the three sections being conceived under the shape of a triangle of mirrors where, in accordance with the angle from where you look, each mirror reflects another face of the image existing in the other mirrors.

The first section of the work (titled *Technique of the realistic cinematographic discourse*) starts from the role played in cinema by a notion which comes from a literate, Samuel T. Coleridge: *suspension of disbelief*. In this notion narrative and technical data are conjugated (data related to placing a text in image or to the transformation of certain mental images, of the movie author, in cinematographic images) in order to create to the looker the impression that he is looking at a reality to be accepted as such (just as it is *truly* happening). In the reality of the cinematographic construction, this step concerns the shaping of a *mise en scene* which, in what concerns the looker, the adoption of the discourse appearing on screen be possible as *reality* (be it *cinema* reality). In this sense, any narrative movie is a realistic one (a movie which wants to see its discourse adopted by the looker).

The following chapters look at the idea of realism as it appears with Deleuze in relation with Hollywood, as well as the idea of modernism identified by the French philosopher in the post-war European cinema. Deleuze's ideas are opposed to those of Bernard Stiegler on the relation image-text within an epifilogenetic context. What Stiegler shows (by relating to Husserl's matter of retentions and of the triple synthesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) is that mind always leaves its print on the existence by exterior objects (any object resulted subsequent to man's intervention – from work tools to books and official documents, objects which accumulate in history as data of the human civilization), objects which serve first of all to self-knowledge (they are the support in which your own mind is mirrored subsequent to an act of creation; an object which confesses my passage and by which I make myself known – to me, by the intercession of the others who observe it, in their turn, and help me correct with a passage through the respective object). The movie is such an object where thoughts are spatialized, placed into a noticeable shape: in image. Where image is at the same time also the carrier of the text matching its visual contents, just as texts themselves are images of thoughts in a written formula (which may be lectured by the literates).

In this context, to the manner in which Deleuze looks on the history of the cinema – as a passage from the movement-image (from seeing) to the time-time (to thinking), from a sensorial experience to cognition, it is opposed an idea which appears on the Wittgenstein-

Stiegler line: just as the words have an image (at the same time, they are an image and send to a mental image, other than their phonetic image), time always has an inseparable spatial referent. Time perception (as the image habitant) it is still (mediated by/caught into) a spatial representation, so that the signs that Deleuze discerns in cinema may have at most an esthetic importance, with their support being possible the transversal collection of certain cinematographic sequences. But the sense of those sequences is not related to the nature of Deleuze's signs, not to the possible relations of those signs, ones with the others.

In the last part of the first section, our observation is directed towards the resources of the cinematographic realism (the possibility that the movie discourse be adopted). It has at its basis the truth of the image – a truth which (in cinema, for Stiegler, who is subjected to criticism in this chapter) grows on two instances: the confession inherited from the analogue image (photography, cinematographic film) and the expression of movement seen in images and heard in sound. The photography and, except for the theatre [which offers images, but the images themselves are real and, as such, theatre loses in front of the cinema the field of projectivity *in absence*: in theatre, the stimulus is real (the actors are on stage), in cinema the stimulus is real as *image* of an image which is just as in reality], all the representational arts until the cinema cannot represent a *discourse* as they cannot represent movement (*thinking*) in all its articulations (esthetics is the one which brings into the representation, from the exterior, the discourse). The cinematography image – either what happens in the scene, or the stream of scenes, the sequence – is a materialization (space) of a concept (time) which is specified in the flux, in the passage, in the total of the sequences and in all those layers which fix a content.

Because it is a flux, the virtuality which Deleuze sees in the elevated form of the image-time, the image-crystal, is the virtuality of the discourse reveals itself in a stratified form, with parallel layers (existing both in realization and in view/reception): narration/ideology-technique and politics (passage into and through community). Realism is to be understood in relation with the discourse: cinema presents and supports a discourse of a mind in primary form, by image, it is just the presence of the discourse which absorbs the human conscience in the cinematographic unrolling, where nothing else happens but a *personal*, a defining element of it – a discourse passage.

The second section of the work (titled *Images of the realistic motion picture*) follows the way in which the community is becoming a theme in the history of the cinema. We start from a didactic separation of realism: even if any narrative movie is realistic, the follow up of

the discourse evolution in cinema is facilitated by an acceptance of a dramatic realism (which comprises the social inspiration drama, where the connection looker – narration is done by an appeal to the looker’s affectivity, re/modeled in dramatization), of a fantastic realism (where cinema operates still dramatically but here the drama is made up within a social context passed through the norms of the fairy tale or through the norms of the anticipation narration) and of an esthetic realism (where dramatization comprises first of all a change of the cinema itself, so that here we have a description of the program in which the dramatic or the fantastic realism operates).

Those realisms, each one of them, combine inside the narrative and the technic into a linguistic circuit (langue game where, just as in any game, there is a stake) which define their program, their agenda. The aspects of the narrative construction existing in each case support the sense of the author’s discourse. A discourse set up in the community (of those who make movies) and proposed to the community (to those who look at movies), defining the cinematographic *agora*, a public area (although, in fact, it is an area dedicated to the audience) in which there are point of view, communication. A totalizing discourse which – as narration, technique, an ideology of them – is involved in and explains the scene to the community, to its epoch. Where ideology regards cinematographic tendencies (of technical connection with time) and social-economic-political tendencies (which testify the lived time) by which the movie itself is an economic and social agent.

The theme which the narrative movie institutes in each episode of its history, in an explicit manner (as subject present in the narration) or, at least in an implicit one – as address to an audience (on the basis of a discursive filiation), is that of the community. In all its enunciations, the narrative movie certifies its existence in and through the community; it requires to be seen, adopted. Globalization, before being an economic reality, is a cinematographic project, because it allows the persons to live in their history and to recognize it as a joint possession good, a community good. In the movie and through the movie, as a conscience carrier object (= of discourse) which travels around the world and is seen by people, history reveals itself as discourse, according to the mechanism which Deleuze attributed to the image-crystal. History, as actual and virtual existing in the discourse (which, in the cinematographic representation is an interpretation of the world by a conscience, be it production system conscience, or a conscience corresponding to an individual author), it requires to be recognized by adoption and identification (in view). Actual = *directly*, during the view, for the looker; virtual = *indirectly*, subsequent to the interpretation of the author

who placed his discourse on film. Actual, in direct relation with the flux on the screen, at sight, by the virtual, the discourse already phrased which is represented; time accessed in time, the movie opens up as a mirror in which the looker views the images of a conscience as images of the world. Reflections, history, everything possible as projection of the person and of the community in the cinematographic communion.

These themes are covered in the the chapters of this section through movies or concepts which express significant stages of the community theme presence in the cinematographic discourse amnd which thus introduce significant moments of the writing of the community image through cinema. We have examined the *Production Code* assumed by the American producers in 1930 from the perspective of a true *social contract*. We have looked upon the way in which **Citizen Kane** (d. Orson Welles, 1941) intervenes in the thinking of the relation with the said code. Then, the manner in which **Space Odyssey 2001** (d. Stanley Kubrick, 1968) offers the most optimistic image of the community fulfillment. We have studied then the European realisms and realities. Where we analyzed the community image in the Russian formalism and in the representation of the leader in the nazi Germany; then, in the Italian neorealism, we have analyzed the manner in which it represented the deepening of the differences between the social classes and the commercial orientation of the European cinema towards the profile of the middle class, whose taste and passions will be represented in the European movies which will enter in the sphere of the dramatic realism (in itself modified so that it matches the data of the mentioned social area). With Jean Luc Godard cinema becomes intellectual and authorizes itself as practice and discourse level in the academic sphere, setting up an important cinematographic community which immediately became marginal in itself, with **Salò** (d. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975). The concept *la politique des auteurs* will be analyzed to observe the dynamics of the relation author – system (production system)/system (discursive/of authority) in relation with the possibilities of instrumenting the discourse by cinema. We have concluded this section with an examination of the community image in the contemporary hollywoodian movie with super heroes.

The second section sums up critical interventions directed to certain tupes of image-time proposed by Deleuze, against some important cinematographic figures (such as the profundity in the field), thus as they are interpreted by Deleuze or by André Bazin, sums the aspects of the community theme as they appear at Stiegler and discuss the concept of *author* and the image of the cinematographic system from the perspective of Michel Foucault and in

relation with the classic images of this relation as they appear in *Cahiers du cinéma* or at Andrew Sarris.

The third section of the works (titled *Images of the Romanian realism*) will include an analysis of the contemporary Romanian movie: as esthetic realism – in what concerns its contribution to the community theme (by the movies signed by Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu and Radu Jude; and as dramatic realism (Cristian Mungiu, Călin Peter Netzer, Radu Muntean), with a stress on the reciprocal support system – author in the set up of the global cinematographic discourse, by which the whole world is hollywoodized. At the same time, this section comprises a debate of the ideas of cinematographic realism just as they appear at Romanian theoreticians like Andrei Gorzo and Christian Ferencz-Flatz.

The discussion start point is given by the movie **Moartea domnului Lăzărescu (Mr. Lazarescu's Death)** (d. Cristi Puiu, 2005), placed in relation with **Citizen Kane** à propos of the idea of (cinematographic) discourse addressed to an absent community, forgotten or marginalized by the authority in specific social actions, although the official (political) discourse is addressed to it. In this context it is also analyzed the issue of the *morality* of the point of view in cinema.

In relation with the movie **Aurora** (d. Cristi Puiu, 2010) we have discussed the realism forms analysed by Christian Ferencz-Flatz: „<<realistic>> meaning <<like life>>”, „<<realist>> meaning just like in a documentary movie” and Bazin’s realism – the matter of the *total illusion of reality* – an idea taken over also by Andrei Gorzo (at the same time, a second idea of realism is part of the manner in which Gorzo relates himself to **Aurora**) in studying the contemporary Romanian cinema. Our argumentation works against any idea of realism proposed here and to the support of the realism-as-discourse-fact specific to the interests of each author.

The next step in this section takes a look at the philosophical origins of those ideas of *realism* (at Plato, Descartes, Kant) which in cinematography contours a specific esthetic vision. Our discourse will be directed against the (theoretical) approach of the cinema on esthetic lines, following a series of ideas which appear at Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Blue Handbook*, in *Lessons and talks about esthetics, psychology and religious belief* and in *Philosophical Researches*. We have tried to show that esthetics, in the manner in which it is academically constituted, as understanding of the camera moves, positionings of the characters, lights which create an atmosphere, sounds, do not offer a response to the issue of the cinema images significance but, rather, sets up another discourse regime (of the movie

criticism and theory), by the transfer of the significances from the screen into another interpretative register than that of the direct communication. Through esthetics we have an indirect communication: the text on the screen is recomposed through a subtext (the esthetic) artificially proposed by the theoreticians who aim to authorize themselves in the cinematographic system. Esthetics is not the result of the cinematographic discourse (although in the discourses in which movies are interpreted, the discussion is taken to the esthetic), not does it truly lead to the (cinematographic type) discourse, it is just a way, a possibility, a technical option, part of the interpretative apparatus.

On the other hand, it was still here that we underlined the importance of the approach on the cinema as a means of communication in the formulation of the community common (at Puiu, Porumboiu, Jude, where the discourse is presented as a *discourse*) – unlike the cinematographic approach which is specific to the production system (to the idea of cinematographic trade), where the movie is an instrument of reality representation (where the author's discourse is hidden in and as a reality to adopt).

In relation with Cristi Puiu's cinema we have also discussed Ferencz-Flatz's intervention (which is based on Walter Benjamin) with reference to the way in which cinema defamiliarizes with the real by the fact that once it records the real as detailed as possible, a tilting in misunderstanding is produced for the looker (the movie will produce a knowledge without comprehension), so that the movie mission would be exactly that of *stimulating the misunderstanding* (Ferencz-Flatz's phrasing²). We have shown that the only context in which we can speak about a „stimulation of misunderstanding” is the one which is specific to the dramatic realism, where we live an endless *effect of reality*, in which life is an image thought by others for us, an image which we consume as such (as the image of an image which should have been ours = our discourse in reality, already *stolen* by the cinema and given back as *new* = *another* image of our wishes = of our convenience, in all the consumption movies, without understanding its work mechanism. At Puiu (especially in **Aurora**) the discourse directs itself against this *discourse effect* (the mimetic adoption of the image on the screen as *reality*), in order to make it understood, which opens the possibility of an *authentic* community.

In relation with Corneliu Porumboiu's cinema, we have discussed the difficulties existing in the attempt to understand (through cinema) the discourse *as discourse*, even when the movie explicitly requires this. What is important in this debate is the understanding of the intervention of the other in the matter of the self knowledge where certain ideas of Stiegler

² *Incursiuni fenomenologice în noul film românesc*, Editura Tact, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 61

and Nancy are important for our approach. In order to see the perspective of the conscience you have to get out again and again from your discourse. Stiegler proposes two instances: either by the observation of your own discourse recording (movie, book, sound recording of your own thoughts), to which you relate a posteriori, or through the relation had with Another who relates (directly, in conversation, or indirectly – in relation with our recorded saying) to what we are saying (so that, for you, as receiver of the other's discourse related to his own saying is still an a posteriori placement). Nancy proposes another instance: in relation with a discourse which *ex-pose* itself, which is intended to be understood as a *discourse*, so that it puts forward the idea of life-as-a-discourse which passes, where the passage (to death) is the common (community) elements of all the people.

From Nancy – the matter of exposing the “the being-in-common” – Blanchot – the traditional community and the elective community – and Benjamin – the concept of history – we have examined the idea of *cinema- community* – as a perspective on the possibility of self understanding and overcoming the boundaries marked by ideas as *kin, people, authority, leader, state, progress*. We have examined the possibility to understand by cinema the matter of *our time* and the possibility to access and understand history, the *past time*, time and history being themselves *discourse facts*.

To conclude this survey we have examined the manner in which the world's cinema comes under the sign of Hollywood – on one hand through the direct action of the American production system, which includes in its area of interest the independent cinematographic zone (providing funding through subsidiaries of the big studios – the hollywoodian conservatism infusing this creation space); on the other hand, throughout the world (besides the production systems with an industrial structure), by the pressure of the gain – and to obtain such gain certain discursive strategies need to be elaborated, strategies by which the dominant opinions of the society be integrated on screen in narrations which satisfy the needs of self confirmation of the social classes which are in the (financial) situation to attend (art) movie theatres and film festivals.

This perspective on the cinema offers the possibility to understand the evolution of this phenomenon (both in terms of represented ideas and as representation ways, as well as authority interests, political and economic interests) and the social realities contemporary to its evolution; at the same time, in understanding the cinematographic message, attention is moved from specialized tools – those of the cinematographic esthetics – to general ones, the

ones of the discourse (of the discourse uniqueness), technically instrumentalized in this case; with an accent on the image prevalence, as a natural discourse fact of the human conscience and on the relation existing between the discourse and the ordering instance of it , be it production system or author – proper name. With an opening towards the community as communion of the discourse assumed as discourse. Also, with the underlining of the possibility to close humanity in a (commercial) image replicated endlessly, an image lived as reality where the sense of the term reality was lost in the sensations of being alive (where the link life – discourse was already fractured).

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