

## TENTATIVES IN THE THEORY OF CINEMA COMMUNICATION – IDEAS, GROUNDS, CONTEXTUAL PARADIGMS

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**Abstract.** Art, as well as the theoretic approach to art, is doubtlessly undergoing changes or at least a rethinking in the context of the new ‘digital’ reality. With regard to cinema art, to reveal the mechanisms that mediate interactions in the system, already more complex and liberated from mediation, of relations between author (authors, creators), film (films) and viewer (public, mass audience) is essentially to uncover the paradigm of cinematic communication in the general cultural field, and particularly in the field of cinema, as well as to explore the degree in which they are able to influence the processes of establishing of certain aesthetical, cultural, social etc., ideas, attitudes, norms and models as dominating not solely in the context of film art.

*Keywords:* paradigms; communication; cinema; author; audience

Like every autonomous sign system constituting meanings, cinema has its ontological premises and grounds, fundamental principles and axiomatic specialized knowledge, as its very existence presupposes. These are only a part of the conditions that allow the uncovering of regularities, the singling out of tendencies, the possibility to surmise processes, to discover the logic of the changes that accompany its development in time.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century of information and communications, cinema, despite being a product of this same technology and of the intensification of the processes of information exchange, also has its transformations, even at the level of narrowly specialized knowledge in the context of history, theory and aesthetics of cinema art. These changes are crucial because they raise again *the question of the legitimation of cinema as an art now in the new postmodern situation, i.e. not just in the field of art but also in the field of communications*. There is a need of discovering the *paradigmatic communicative matrices* that make it possible, in the conditions of an interactive (hyperactive) communicative environment, to talk of art, separate art, cinema art, as well as of every separate film as a work of art.

At this stage of the development of technologies, for any system to be able to work, one must not interrupt or disrupt the process of exchange, the involvement in the flows of information, even if by the simple repetition of the same information. It is the information environment that becomes the medium that presupposes and makes it possible for the art experience to take place, for the work of art to exist, especially as regards cinema, and also every separate film. In today's world, the public space has long turned into a space of media, mediation and communication. The media environment starts functioning as an interdisciplinary, intertextual, multicultural space which, on the one hand, represents an objective reflection of real life in all of its diversity, and on the other it becomes a space of construction of alternative worlds parallel to reality, which, until recently, was a possibility offered first of all by the religion and by art.

### **Information as context**

In today's era, it seems that the informational and communicative situation itself begins to generate a particular internal tension when the cultural attitudes, now understood rather as actual models of the public space, transmit their functional imperatives into the virtual information field. In the same perspective, Bourdieu defines culture as a space structured in fields of cultural production that 'offer to those who participate in them a space of the possible [...]. That space of possibilities, transcendent in relation to the separate agents, functions as a *sui generis* system of coordinates, thanks to which, even if not consciously comparing themselves to others, the contemporary creators are objectively located ones with regard to others.' (Bourdieu, 1997: 53) The 'structuralist theory is more forceful, Foucault thinks that the work of art is a field of strategic possibilities'. (Bourdieu, 1997: 55)

Television and Internet (or World Wide Web, etc.) are already the basic *mass* media by which the exchange is done also of enormous quantities of *non*-informational cultural content – films, concerts, literature, visual art etc. It is television that sets the new paradigm of perceiving the world and everything in it as a specific organization of information units, and *in/through* the internet space it is modified to the qualitatively new digital reality of flows that is characterized by the extremely high intensity of interactive perception and interactive participation on the part of the viewer, the listener, the consumer. Technologies change not only the world but also man. They change the way in which human beings perceive the world, the very principles and bases of perception. But the new paradigm is set by television, while Internet just accelerates the process of mass *representation* of *non*-informational cultural content, mainly films, theatrical shows, concerts and musical video clips etc. 'But by their very broadcasting on the TV they begin to lose their characteristic narrative form and acquire an informational dimension. A film like *Lethal Weapon 4*, for instance, is more informational than a film by Kurosawa. It can be viewed not with a concentrated "gaze" but with a

‘glance’ in a distracting environment. [...] We consume them not in the mode of “contemplation” but of “distraction”.’ (Lash, 2004: 98 – 100)

Under the condition of reduction of aesthetic perception and experience of all kinds of *non*-informational cultural content to a ‘perception through entertainment’ (*Benjamin, 1986:487*), changing with every new stimulus in the regime of distraction, two main questions arise – of *truth* and of *participation*. In the contemporary situation one observes an interweaving of these two levels of the process of perceiving a work of art in the conditions of information exchange in a digital environment, which allows the verification of what *is* in the digital space to proceed by the interactive participation itself of the viewer, or, rather already, the consumer of certain information regardless of its nature.

### **On the approach and method**

The main reason for film art to be hard to research in the perspective of only one scientific approach and method comes precisely from the problem of its ontological indeterminacy – cinema is art, technology, and cultural communication at once. Cinema is an extraordinarily open system as regards the trends in culture and art, in social political and economic life. It literally ‘responds’ to every possible idea, to every topic, it ‘represents’ and ‘popularizes’ all and sundry facts of life; it ‘communicates’ actively with all arts in plunging without restrictions into the past, into the future and into imagined worlds; it ‘corresponds’ with science; with the ‘high’ and ‘low’, with the ‘different’, with ‘the other’, with the possible and the impossible. Cinema exists thanks to technologies and for that reason it is quickly and easily ‘inscribed’ in the change generated by the development of information society. In the very outset of its existence, cinema as an art had to justify and defend its own foundation, then to discover and develop its instruments and bring them to the level of the classical concept of means of expression, and today it has to rediscover it through the progress of technologies which coincides with the moment of development of mass communications, mass media and Internet – the environment that also necessitates the cinema theory to rediscover and rethink its own premises. But cinema is a phenomenon that can be studied and understood only in the context of an *integrated scientific approach* because only such an approach could approach its specific nature. Such an approach would expand the applicability of a single or restricted body of aesthetic criteria in the theoretical justification of cinema as an art. ***A constellation of possible perspectives on film art*** – aesthetical, philosophical, sociological, psychological, anthropological etc., assembled in the field of communication, is determining to the ***method*** of this study and to an ***approach*** that could be defined as heuristic. Such an approach is essentially innovative and is an attempt to achieve objectivity in the context of the contemporary situation, exhaustiveness and optimality, studying cinema as a phenomenon at the borderline of art, science, technologies and communications. For its own part, the ***determination of paradigms of communication in the field of cinema*** presupposes

the creation of bridges between cinema, art as a whole and the diverse sciences that enter into the body of the so-called human studies.

In the context of determining the paradigms that mediate communicational processes in the field of cinema as crucial both at the level of constitution of the meaningful whole of a film and for its artistic experience, as well as for the identification and legitimation as a whole of cinema in the postmodern situation, the *approach* and *method* of analysis will be operationalized on the basis of a ‘gaze’ structured from the perspective of a certain specialized knowledge, with the intent to construct a constellation of possible ‘gazes’ on the problematic.

### **Foundations of the pragmatic approach**

The changes in the environment where communication processes are presumed to take place in the context of cinema have their influence on all components, actions and functions that mediate the communication itself. In order to reach the moment in which the effect of communication can be studied, i.e. to understand the degree and range of influence of a film, or *how* and *to what degree* that film is perceived, experienced and understood by its audience, it is necessary to trace again the whole process of its creation, in order to *reconstruct* the logic of social and cultural interactions that presuppose and mediate the effect itself as an actual influence on the viewers. These processes essentially are not exhausted by tracing the linear development of certain interactions oriented by the film’s creators unidirectionally towards its audience. Studying the quality of feedback in the system too cannot be accepted as a sufficient condition of revealing the logic and interrelations in the processes of cinematic communication. As a whole, the processes of communications in the field of art are too complex, multi-aspect and difficult to study. These processes are not unidirectional, two-directional or circular, they rather unfold and realize themselves as a cyclically repeated but also changing (evolving) interaction between psychological, social and cultural spirals in which the interaction itself is functionally modeled by an implicitly existing body of models of perception, cognitive models, models of human behaviour, social models, or models generated by the layers of culture and cultural attitudes, etc. The dynamization of communicative practices as a form of active interaction with the others and the world presupposes also a tendency for unification of models of attitude and behaviour but, on the other hand, it also raises the question of the constitution and legitimation of these models as common. The free access to information and *non*-informational cultural content, and also active communication, ensure the possibility of coordinating and verifying a model as common i.e. that is a collective, coercion-free form of consensus regarding the meaning, sense, purpose and even the very existence of certain acts or artifacts.

The logic of these processes refers to the theory of communicative action of Habermas and its communicational paradigm. The thematic, structural and functional orientation of communicative interaction mediates the links between the different

level of the constitutive vision of the world as that which surrounds us, as a relation to the others, and that which is outside us and within us. Communicative rationality and the acquiring of communicative competence are conditions for the evolution of social interactions. The verification of the concrete meaning orientations of the content that is the object of the very act of interaction is done in the perspective of its immediate experiencing as mutual understanding and dialogue revealing the content itself as a truth. (Habermas, 1984)

In the systematic reconstruction of the communicational interactions at an interactive level of social consciousness and self-consciousness on the plane of art and in particular of cinema, the logic could also be revealed of the paradigms that mediate the specifics of the processes of communication in this perspective, as well as the immanence of certain interrelations and interdependencies between components, actions and functions in the relation ‘author (authors, creators) – film – viewer (audience, public)’, with a relative freedom of interpretation. The theoretic orientation of the analysis of communicative processes in the sphere of cinema, defined as cinematic communication in the direction of the conceptualization and determination of the principles, mechanisms, models and schemes on whose basis the functioning of the system itself takes place, presume the introduction of the concept of *paradigm* in a little more expanded sense.

The etymological background of the concept is related to the Greek word *παράδεικνυμι* (*paradeiknumi*), composed of *παρά* (‘close to’, ‘on the same side as’, ‘next to’) and *δείκνυμι* (‘show’, ‘expose’, ‘present’, ‘give as an example’, ‘compare’, ‘demonstrate’ etc.), whence the word *παράδειγμα* (*paradeigma*) whose meaning most often refers to ‘example’, ‘model’, ‘paragon’. (Liddell & Scott & Jones, 2014) ‘Paradigm’ is very often seen as a term of structural linguistics, related initially to the name of Ferdinand de Saussure and together with the syntagm, these are the two basic dimensions of speech acts. In this context, the paradigm is taken as a group, collection, or class of elements that are subject to a certain interpretation (together and in separation), presuppose a different structure and configuration in their interaction but within a common semantic orientation, and establish the vertical structure of the speech act. With regard to film art, it is accepted that ‘the ensemble of means of expression of the cinema’ forms one common expressive, significative and representational paradigm (Aumont & Marie, 2009: 166).

A paradigm in the perspective of scientific discourse is understood primarily as a way, method and means of theoretical analysis or scientific study which definitively is taken as a true and objective approach in the resolving of a body of problems of different degrees of importance and different conceptual, theoretical, methodological, instrumental etc. characteristics; or in the dissemination of knowledge. The paradigm defines the theoretical frame and the starting position of the particular analysis. In practice, it is perceived as a dominating model or approach to a specific body of problems (theoretical and empirical) as well as in a more general plane, as a common

orientation and context of theoretical research or experimental procedures, as a specific attitude to reality. This perspective in the understanding of the concept of paradigm is formulated by Thomas Kuhn in *The structure of scientific revolutions* (Kuhn, 1996).

From the contemporary point of view, some restrictions in Kuhn's theoretical system are caused by the understanding that paradigms are incommensurable and that every new paradigm replaces the old ones with no need to deny it because the new paradigm contains in itself its own axiological or epistemological foundations as well as its own criteria of evaluation. IN the contemporary world, such an evolution of thinking by imposing a change of the models of thinking is increasingly more difficult because of the specifics of the information environment.

But the dynamics and scale of the processes of access to and exchange of information in practice allow and ensure the simultaneous existence of everything, i.e. the dominating paradigm does not exclude (or replace) the previous ones or other possible paradigms but, rather, accumulates them in itself by articulating or actualizing them through its own context. In Kuhn's sense, we could accept the contemporary situation as one in which the informational environment is already the new paradigmatic reality while the message is the new paradigmatic means (as in Marshal McLuhan), but only on the plane of informational content. In cases of *non*-informational content, the message appears rather as a *representative* form that points to the in-depth essence of what is to be presented.

### **Paradigms of cinema communication – contextual paradigms**

Defining the paradigm as a specific way of thinking that dominates at a certain moment, as the constitution of a certain theoretical and methodological frame of attitude to a given idea, a given theoretical system or a given object of scientific research, a model or scheme of its application, presupposes different modes of experiencing and exploring the world outside us and within us, as well as the bridges between these two dimensions of existence. The literal understanding of the principle of displacement of one paradigm by another seems too restrictive from the contemporary point of view. The transformation that takes place with the fast development of digital technologies is characterized by the formation of a qualitatively new alternative to reality – the virtual reality. Up to this moment, such processes of creation of imaginary, alternative worlds were primarily possible in the field of art and on the plane of the diverse religions or other spiritual practices.

If we enlarge the scope of analysis, we could define our time as a period of transition between two paradigms which is almost completed – from the technological to the digital era, which follows the logic of Kuhn. This process, however, does not displace the familiar models (paradigms) but includes them in itself, in actualizing and transforming them in a new context, it appropriates their content, cultural meaning and sense/contribution, transforms them into digital code and absorbs them into the

endless volumes of databases. These changes affect not just the field of theoretical discourse as systematized reflection exploring the transformations of the familiar models and the generation of new ones but they also concern the way in which we perceive the world as structure and organization now on the plane of information.

The pragmatic approach to the differentiation of paradigms of communication in the field of cinema logically presupposes the functioning of two parallel dimensions. On the one hand, the purely processual treatment emphasizes primarily the means and way in which cinematic communication is done, with no need to maintain a detached position from the artistic process as such. On the other hand, the research of interactions on the plane of cinema in a more operative mode refers to the study of evolution of means of expression and the representative artistic instrumentary. Within such a logical constellation, the particular or specific in the context of cinema is that every new paradigm, understood in the perspective of Kuhn as a way or thinking, or as a structured attitude conceptualized in clear and definite notions, acquires the features of a mainstream trend (no matter if this is about an innovation in the direction of means, way, vehicle, or about the originality of artistic interpretation at the level of film expressivity) by dominating at a concrete moment, but it doesn't efface or displace the previous ones which, on their own part, become transformed and start to be interpreted primarily as means of expression, i.e. primarily at the level of creative interpretation or with regard to cinema art – in the creative construction of the artistic unity of a film.

The second possible approach to meaning orientation and interactions within the processes of creation, perception and experiencing of a film, i.e. to the functional definition of paradigms in cinematic communication as certain intentionality of relations within the system itself, can be defined as phenomenological, but in a little wider framework. It is phenomenological as far as it would allow a certain purification of the meaning and a clearer outlining of the correlation between the creative intention and its artistic interpretation, also between the film itself as a 'living tissue' different from reality but also a reality in itself, and the experiencing of the film as 'truth' on the part of the viewer.

The paradigms that are to be considered are functional constructs rather on the plane of the second approach and they reveal the logic of the dynamic and variative intentionality of interactions within the processes of communication in the field of cinema. Defining paradigms primarily as models of perception or of communication would restrict the possibility of exploring the different layers of interaction within the very system of 'author (authors, creators) – film (films) – viewer (audience, public)' and would create preconditions for some archetypal restrictions. The wider framework of introducing this theoretical system in practice offers the possibility to reveal an interactive meaning level of social and cultural interactions on the plane of cinema art. Due to the functional consistency of processes of communication in cinema, the paradigms themselves are not determined as a hierarchic system, according to the

degree of domination or a given succession, but in the context of the logic of certain interactions revealing the correlations between the psychological, the social, the cultural, the aesthetic etc. in the common conceptual framework.

### **Paradigm of the ontological foundation**

The premises of determining such a paradigm can be found in practice in every attempt at a reconstruction and analysis of a given historical period; of the circumstances having led to discoveries, achievements or innovations; of the conditions, causes and results of the processes of social, cultural etc. interactions and changes. At first glance, such a thesis refers to certain evolutionist models of thinking but it is more important that the *logic of the ontological foundation* could permit the revelation of more distant as well as the immediate premises of certain events, phenomena, trends and facts accompanying the development of a society, of science, or art, but in this case of cinema.

As regards film art, the paradigm of the ontological foundation enables an analytic interpretation of certain historically determined circumstances, facts and interactions that made possible not only the invention of the cinematograph but also the legitimation or the change of the status of cinema as an art – from the initial notion of films as a cheap attraction meant only to entertain to an art in the purest meaning of the term. Also of certain premises that allow cinema (films) to develop as a conventional art within the socially accepted generalizations and in the same time as a cultural avant-garde, legitimating the move out of its own conventionality. On the basis of this paradigm one can explore the abilities of film art to adapt to the requirements of the time (of the historical moment) as an adequate and actual form of artistic reflection (*re-creation*) of the world and/or man; or the possibilities of exchanging ideas, representations, attitudes, feelings and emotions or, most generally speaking, the possibilities for communication which cinema offers and mediates and which allow cinema to take use of achievement of technical and technological progress without it turning into a threat for its existence. Cinema as an art directed to a wide, heterogeneous and diverse audience is present in the respective historical context increasingly more as a form of socially oriented communication in a given environment but also as cultural communication in a given tradition or trend (or coming outside it in search of a new truth on man and on the world) and as technologically mediated communication, i.e. the use of possibilities of technology for the realization of the creative intentions of the makers of a film as well as the creation of possibilities for the dissemination of films.

From the history of art, we know about the attempts of man to understand and interpret the world, the others and himself in a way different from objective concreteness, by introducing a certain content into a certain artistic form. Most generally, this principle is valid also for the abstract ideas and notions that can too



be an object of artistic interpretation. With regard to cinema, one more tendency creates the historical premises for its existence – the development of experimental empirical science and of technology. Ever since the experiments of Roger Bacon in optics and perspective, through the inventions of Renaissance encyclopedic persons and mostly of Leonardo da Vinci, and the use of camera obscura as an auxiliary tool in drawing, through Gutenberg's civilizational discovery, to the inventions of Joseph Niepce and Louis Daguerre, William Talbot and George Eastman, of Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla, the development of technology, inventions and innovations enkindle also much more ambitious objectives, as does the undying desire of man to preserve an objective factual proof of the momentary state of the world as he has seen and known it, to grasp the time or history. The discovery of the cinematograph made that possible to a degree unknown theretofore, and the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumiere created a new existential situation for the new art – they managed to direct the public attention to this new and unusual discovery. It is a well-known fact that initially the photographing of moving objects was done primarily for scientific, medical or similar purposes by way of experiment, but once having begun to accumulate the attention and interest of people, cinema started gradually unveiling its attractive force, to turn into a way and means to express thoughts, feelings and ideas, gradually expanding to formidable degrees its repertory and the range of its possibilities as a technical phenomenon, as a social phenomenon and, in the final account, as an art, through the evolution of its means of expression. The study of the relations which in their essence are communicative interactions at least in these three parallel dimensions in which film art finds its environment in order to realize itself – as creative intentions, as a flight and drive of imagination, as a way of sharing thoughts, emotions and ideas and as a tool of their representation, as a moving power and motivation of the development of technologies – determines the frame and application of the ontological paradigm as a key model and method that allows, in the mode of a specific inspection of the historical context, to explain the genesis and existence of the seventh art. The paradigm of the ontological foundation provides the key epistemological context through which it becomes possible to reveal the logic of those processes within the overall course of time, of civilization, of culture, of progress, and permits the construction of the genealogy of the historical premises that make cinema what it is and give it an ontological advantage before other arts in the context of the present times.

The first challenge to cinema is related to the establishment of its status as a borderline phenomenon – as a technology and first of all as art, or as an art born of technology. After the attractiveness of the technical discovery of the brothers Lumiere began to saturate the natural curiosity to 'moving pictures', the next step that was necessary to legitimate the cinema as an art was to discover, to single out, deduce and develop its pictorial and expressive instrumentary to the saturation of the classical notion of means of expression of an art. This process went in diverse

directions, which in itself revealed cinema's potential since its very inception. On the one hand, the imagination of cinematographers stimulated the inventiveness and the original representational solutions, like e.g. in films like *A Trip to the Moon* of Georges Melies, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* of Robert Wiene, *Nosferatu* of Wilhelm Murnau, *Metropolis* of Fritz Lang, *An Andalusian Dog* of Louis Bunuel. On the other hand, the awareness of the serious task to legitimate the new art directs the creators also to the world of man where they discover not just their strong motivation to create their films but also possibilities to create their own unique style and handwiring, as did David Griffith (e.g. *Intolerance*), Charlie Chaplin (with films like *The Kid*, *The Gold Rush* or *City Lights*, etc.), or the documentarists like Robert Flaherty (with his maybe most popular film *Nanook of the North*, as well as possibility for a socially engaged public position expressed by the means of cinema, e.g. with films like *Strike*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *October* of Sergei Eisenstein, or *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg* of Vsevolod Pudovkin. Another tendency unfolds within the line of technical innovations related to the improvement itself of the means of cinema, like the film *Cabiria* of Giovanni Pastrone, or in the introduction of sound, the beginning being put by Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer*, or with patenting the Technicolor method and the first film made in this way, Lloyd Corrigan's *La Cucaracha*. A crucial perspective on cinema as art was also developed by cinematographers staking on conceptual creative solutions and strategies that have their influence even today. Examples here may be *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* of Walter Ruttmann, or *Man with a Movie Camera* of Dziga Vertov, even *Le Million* of Rene Clair, or *The Rules of the Game* of Jean Renoir, and especially *Citizen Kane* of Orson Welles, etc. All these seemingly disparate tendencies are gathered in the field of film art to create the premises for the birth of characteristic trends and cinematographic schools and to influence, inspire and motivate the growth of creators with a unique personal style. It is the dynamic and multi-level processes accompanying the development of cinema since its very inception create also the need of establishing the theoretical basis of film aesthetics in order to legitimate its status of an art, which turns into a parallel tendency to creation.

The new millennium also offers a new challenge. Today it is not only art that must rediscover itself in the progress of technologies, which also coincides with the moment of intensive development of mass communications, mass media and Internet – the environment in which everything must anew prove the axiological foundations of its own existence on the plane of information. From the perspective of the present times, cinema manages to impose itself in the public space, as a borderline phenomenon again but now with a dominating aesthetic function – as an active form of cultural communication in the context of social interactions, and not just as a technology in the digital era.

Throughout this whole course of time, a very important circumstance has supported

the adapting of cinema to the historical, civilizational, social, cultural etc. contexts – in practice, every film is born/created and perceived/experienced by its viewers in a situation of active communication between the separate agents’ participants in these processes. Through the links that are created within the interactions between the film creators, the films themselves and the audience, cinema has the ability not only to create alternative or imaginary worlds, to *reconstruct* the past or ‘see’ the future as a possibility of escaping from reality, but also the ability to look within, even as an ironical gaze into its own essence as art, into its own ontological foundations of legitimation and identification of its presence in the world as an art, as technology, or as a space open for exploration and communication to anyone who wishes to do it. This process may be tentatively defined as an intersubjective form of auto-reflection which, it seems, is inherent in the creators of a film as well as in the audience, and also, in some extraordinary way, in cinema itself as a phenomenon. In the context of the paradigm of the ontological foundation, it acquires the features of *interactive-communication-at-a-distance*, which gives cinema a very wide horizon for creative inspiration and great possibilities for depth and strength of impact. The nature itself of film art is so open, dynamic and ‘living’ that it permits to interpret creatively even such a complicated theoretical conceptions that we can discover, for instance, in the structure of the plot of the film *The Hours* of Sveven Daldry, in which the logic of action is based precisely on an *interactive-communication-at-a-distance*, which permits the establishment of a strong and emotional spiritual link not just between the heroines of the film across time and space but also with the spectators themselves as witnesses of their stories, and in their own experience of the film it acquires its completeness and meaning.

In the context of communication, Marshal McLuhan proposes an interesting conception on the peculiarities of this process. Considering cinema in the perspective of communications, McLuhan presupposes the correspondence between media and message in a double perspective – the medium of cinema as expressing of the spirit of the time and the film message as expressing the spirit of the medium (McLuhan, 1986: 543). Moreover, for MacLuhan (and not just for him), the cultural artifacts themselves, including films, are media. (Lash,2004: 212). In the perspective of the contemporary situation, such a theoretical interpretations seems to be perfectly logical. The spirit of discovery and the enthusiasm of ‘the fathers of cinema’, the technical and technological difficulties and the curiosity of the audience were naturally followed by a period of systematic establishing of cinematic expressivity – a *rethinking* and *rediscovery* of the possibilities of cinema as an art, of surpassing the limits of tradition, of a certain aesthetic conception, of thought and even of fantasy, of educating the taste of the viewer in the intimacy of the cinema hall where he can communicate with the film, but indirectly also with the other viewers, or even with the creators of the film itself.

### **Paradigm of cultural inscription**

This paradigm, which too mediates the processes of communication in the field of cinema, concerns the particularities and characteristics of the cultural context interpreted as an environment within which creative intentions are born as well as the possible conditions and mechanisms of experiencing and understanding the works of art, and in particular of film art.

Belonging in a definite historical context and a definite cultural situation influences to some degree not just the artistic intentions of creators and their realizations but also the possible interpretations on the part of admirers (or maybe already consumers) of art, both in the current moment and through the *gaze-from-a-distance* (the appreciation of cultural facts in time). The scientific discourse in the perspective of the human sciences has at its disposal a considerable body of definitions of the concept of *culture*. What seems to best approximate *the logic of the paradigm of cultural inscription* is disposed in the plane of studying the relation between tradition and interpretation of tradition; of value orientations in the specific historical context; of articulations of actual models and of what can be defined as a ‘look into the future’ as well as their material projections under the form of works of art, or as the social interactions that they mediate. This in some respect refers to the idea of the three worlds of Karl Popper (partly also of Habermas), of the understanding art and culture as a whole belonging to the third world and being ‘a more or less systematized and generalized world of the objects of thought, “evaluation” and expression. As such, it is created by humans and must be actualized by their landmarks’ (Schluchter, 1993: 603).

Through the paradigm of cultural inscription, one can reveal, explore and systematize the processes of interaction in the social and cultural environment that create the conditions or provoke the creative intentions and creative interpretations. This perspective naturally includes also a hermeneutical layer of understanding that supports the *reconstruction* of the context through the *gaze-from-a-distance* of researchers, creators and even the audience itself. We find a projection of the latter in cases e.g. of artistic *re-creation* of a concrete historical moment or epoch, also in the artistic interpretation or *reconstruction* of historic events, no matter whether artistic solutions are based on real historical sources or are the fruit of the conception of the authors of the concrete film. In this plane there are also the films that represent moments from the life of historical persons or even their whole biographies. Here one can also add different film renditions and interpretations based on myth and legend, on historical novels or classical literary works, etc.

Formally speaking, as regards film art, the paradigm of cultural inscription can be interpreted also more generally as an approach in the study of the conditions and circumstances that make it possible to create a film as a unique system of signifying and meaningful interpretations of the world external to man, of emotional experiences or of subjective reflections on whatever is offered to the intuition, sensitivity and

intellect of the creator as a form of material or spiritual life. "In the work, the feeling of everyone of belonging to a historical world is recognized an intensified" (Vattimo, 2004: 73). This can be taken as a first level of cultural inscription of a film work into the layers of the time, the culture, of history as a singular and unique concreteness – uniqueness in the combination of artistic interpretation, emotional impact and philosophical messages generated by the particularities of a concrete historical, cultural, social etc. context, as well as of experience of the creators themselves of a film, organically woven into its 'living tissue'. The deep, engaged and sensitive artistic interpretation of the concrete reality, of the 'here and now' of the creator in the emotional layers of a film usually engenders a strong response on the part of the spectators, the critique and the cinematographers. Good examples in these directions can be the films of David Griffith, Sergei Eisenstein, Abel Gance or Charlie Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock, as well as the films of the representatives of the New Wave and Neorealism. In this plane are also films whose revelation, depth and artistic treatment allow an emotional empathy in the viewer who is able to read easily the cultural code through the all-human, e.g. films like *Ikiru* of Akira Kurosawa or *Tokyo Story* of Yasujiro Ozu. In the following period one witnessed, on the one hand, an expansion of the frame of individual experiences as projections of time itself, artistically interpreted already in a general picture of reality, e.g. in such a film as *La Dolce Vita* of Federico Fellini. And on the other hand, of the experiences of the heroes as a projection of the emotional deficits conditioned by the way of life and by incomplete intimate and social interrelations, largely the result of external impact depending on the specifics of the time rather than on the hero's own choice, as reflected e.g. in films like *Contempt* of Jean-Luc Godard or *Theorem* of Pier Paolo Pasolini.<sup>1)</sup> These tendencies find its reflection also in documentary cinema, e.g. in a film like *Anna: 6-18* of Nikita Mikhalkov, or such a film from the recent years as *Rene* of Helena Trestikova.

This approach with regard to the logic of artistic interpretation as a form of emotional reflection or auto-reflection *of/to* the specific historical social or cultural context, or to the time as a lived reality, or a reality conceptualized by the creator, remains as a stable tendency in the development of film art. Good examples in this direction from the Bulgarian cinema can be the films of Eduard Zahariev (*The Sky over Veleka*, or through the truth hidden behind the irony in films like *The Hare Census* and *Villa Zone*), of Binka Zhelyazkova (e.g. *The Swimming Pool* or *The Big Night Bathe*) or of Georgi Dyulgerov (with such a film as *Advantage*). In the Bulgarian documentary cinema, interesting artistic interpretations in this perspective are offered by Nevena Tosheva (e.g. with the films *Am I So Bad* or *Dimensions*) or Yuliy Stoyanov (especially with his last two films *Bulgaria: A Database* and *On the Possibility to Live* that explore the attitude to a man's life as an experience in time, as a place and value in the world that unites one's one world and the worlds of the others), or by such a film as *The Patience of the Stone* or *Under a Cloud* of Kostadin Bonev, or by the deep philosophical

visual expressions and experiments of Ivan Mladenov in *Othello*, as well as the films of Eldora Traykova. In the recent years, there are interesting stylish artistic variations on the plane of the existential in films like *Georgi and the Butterflies* and *The Problem with Mosquitoes and Other Stories* of Andrei Paunov, or *Amateurs* and *A Life Almost Beautiful* of Svetoslav Draganov, and many others.

The second level within which this paradigm mediates specific communication processes is the inscription in one's own time, one's own culture and one's own national cultural context. After a film is completed, it begins to live its own life, with all the reservations to such a statement. This rather metaphorical definition practically relates to the perception, understanding and experience of the film in the mode of active communication with the separate viewer or a given audience as well as with the mass (global) audience. In the case this level reveals the interaction between 'the subject and objective culture, the relation or distance of the individual with regard to his culture' (Mannheim, 1993: 502). This process, on the one hand, develops in at least two directions – inwards to the beliefs, ideas, representations, values etc. of the individual person, and outwards – to the others in the same perspective but in a relation like to a 'familiar otherness' in the context of one's own culture. Examples here may be films like *Breathless* of Jean-Luc Godard or *Dodes'ka-den* of Akira Kurosawa, or *The Color Purple* of Steven Spielberg, *Secrets and Lies* of Mike Leigh, *Crash* of Paul Haggis or *Slumdog Millionaire* of Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan. An especially interesting gaze in this perspective is being developed in Iranian cinema with films like *The Cyclist* of Mohsen Makhmalbaf, *Where is the Friend's Home?* of Abbas Kiarostami, *A Mother's Love* of Kamal Tabrizi, *Children of Paradise* and *The Colour of God* of Majid Majidi. Or films with a specific aesthetic sensitivity like *Climates* and *Three Monkeys* of Nuri Bigne Ceylan, or the peculiar emotional aesthetics of films like *Chungking Express* of Wong Kar-wai and of *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* of Ki-duk Kim. Of Bulgarian films, some good examples here are *Burn, Little Fire, Burn* of Rumiana Petkova or *The Black Swallow* of Geordi Dyulgerov. Balkan cinematographies present within this plane of the paradigm of cultural inscription also some other interesting interpretations through which the possibility is created to recognize one's own identity and culture through the other, but in one's own cultural context, or through the life in a different place and a different cultural context as one of the main existential choices that man faces in this geographic area. For instance, through the peculiar gaze of a film like *The Tied-up Balloon* of Binka Zhelyazkova, or as a romantic interpretation of brutality in human life in *Time of the Gypsies* of Emir Kusturica, *Before the Rain* of Milcho Manchevski or almost a decade after it *I Am From Titov Veles* of Teona Mitevaska, *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven* of Fatih Akin, and many others.

Inscription into one's time, one's culture and one's own national cultural context as a process of reflection on beliefs and ideas, values and notions mediating the

behaviour and attitude of the individual man, as well as their projection in the social interrelation in the external world (as more common social and cultural attitudes), find to a very high degree their reflection in the artistic interpretations in the sphere of documentary cinema. As a good example of that one can cite films like *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* of Michael Moore, or a film like *The Road to Guantanamo* of Michael Winterbottom and Matt Whitecross, despite its specific genre indeterminacy, as well as many others.

It is at this level that the mechanisms work actively of perception, experiencing and understanding of a film work by actualizing the familiar – one's own identity by the recognition of certain social models, cultural peculiarities and layers of human behaviour or attitude, or by evaluative projections on the basis of shared individual experience, observations or histories. Karl Mannheim describes these processes as follows: 'If anyone should ask me the question of the most essential trait of human being, I would point out that we enter into relation with others and in this way with ourselves only in putting between ourselves and the others, and of course between ourselves, a foreign matter, the work. [...] Therefore we live in the state of this double unfamiliarity but nevertheless with the desire for double knowledge.' (Mannheim, 1993: 504).

This regarding the communicative interactions at this level we can say that a possibility is created to reveal the mechanisms of immediate cultural perception (in Merleau-Ponty's sense) which makes possible the drawing of bridges between the concreteness of the objective world that is present to our senses and the invisible, elusive organization of individual consciousness that meet in the immediate sensory experiencing of a film in the silent transcendence of the soul.

The third level of communicative interactions on the plane of this paradigm is the level of cross-cultural inscription. It unfolds in a peculiar space-temporal discontinuity within the framework of history, as history of culture or history of civilization. A work of art, respectively a film work, is not merely the material expression of a concrete human emotion or idea and it doesn't only exist in its own time and space. 'In the course of incessant work of the generations, the presence of material can be improved and the proper laws of mater can become even clearer. [...] Next to this function of the work, there comes a second one: the possibility that it could sometimes serve as a bridge between people. The work turns into an object of culture with becoming valid in this social interrelation.' (Mannheim, 1993: 505) Cross-cultural interactions are based not only on the inherent human curiosity to the other, the different, the unfamiliar, but also presume the realization of communication on the basis of certain common codes, models, or in the direction of a common perspective. The logic of such an inscription refers to interpretations of possible links or bridges between the known (such as historical facts or persons, familiar, similar situations or relationships, stories, beliefs, feelings, etc.) and the unknown (such as another time, another cultural context, other beliefs, cultural practices, traditions or ways of life).

One of the interesting interpretations of such interactions is realized along the lines of eternal themes and plotlines. Good examples in this direction are films like *Love in the City* of 1953, the directors of its composing segments being Carlo Lizzani, Dino Risi, Michelangelo Antonioni, Francesco Maselli and Cesare Zavattini, Alberto Lattuada, Federico Fellini, or the film *Love at Twenty* of 1962 with directors François Truffaut, Renzo Rossellini, Shintaro Ishihara, Andrzej Wajda, Marcel Ophuls. Such artistic interpretations allow one to construct, by familiar themes, a common gaze to the social field and the field of culture on the basis of a mosaic of representations, emotions and experiences re-created by the expressive and pictorial instrumentary of film art. This is how the opportunity is also created for the spectators to become involved in the common picture of the world, provoked indirectly to share or rethink their own experience. On the basis of universal generalizations one can build human stories (e.g. like *Little Buddha* of Bernardo Bertolucci) and also different gazes, themes and plotlines related to diverse aspects of human existence, located in a cultural context different from our own (e.g. films like *The Pillow Book* of Peter Greenaway, *In This World* of Michael Winterbottom, *Struggle* of Ruth Mader, *Lost In Translation* of Sofia Coppola and many others). In this regard, very often even the story of the main character can be perceived by the audience in the plane of the familiar as they discover links to their own cultural belonging, their own experience or even their own identity, which would assist the processes of identification on the part of spectators and respectively would facilitate the perception, experiencing and understanding the concrete film. Such examples can be films like *Lisbon Story* of Wim Wenders or *Beyond the Clouds* of Wim Wenders and Michelangelo Antonioni, *Babylon* of Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, or films like *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face* of Wayne Wang and Paul Auster. Cultural inscription is possible not only in different spaces and cultural context but also in a different time. Bulgarian cinema too offers good examples in this direction with *Monkeys in Winter* of Milena Andonova and *Christmas Tree Upside Down* of Ivan Cherkelov and Vassil Zhivkov.

An interesting variant of cultural inscription can be realized also at the level of artistic interpretation of a given cultural model in a different cultural context. A famous example here is the film *Seven Samurai* of Akira Kurosawa. A variation of this approach can be achieved by mixing different cultural contexts, artistically interpreted by different types of cinema, similarly the two parts of Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* where the classical acting form is enriched by the specific expressivity of the visual kung-fu tradition and choreography of fight scenes, and even by Japanese manga.

Cross-cultural inscription relates the concrete film work to the general course of time, mostly as history of culture but also of civilization, of progress. It permits the legitimation of its status within the common artistic tradition, in the same time constituting the belonging of a film to a certain trend or current cultural practices, to experiment or innovation. By cross-cultural inscription, the unique handwriting of the creator becomes a part of the cultural exchange in the plane of communication



processes at the global scale – it becomes recognizable as the cultural heritage or from the perspective of the present times, it is involved into the flows of artistically interpreted signs and meanings, emotions and ideas that circulate in the global information space and make the world closer and more familiar. The unfolding of communicative interactions at this level, mediated by the paradigm of cultural inscription, possibilitate the formation of such trends and tendencies in cinema as German expressionism, Surrealism, Neorealism, New Wave and author's cinema in general; artistic phenomena like *Dogma 95*; digital cinema as a new aesthetics etc., or the legitimation of national cinematographies as a specific artistic style in the global cultural context, as some of them even are defined as phenomena in the sphere of cinema art as a whole – Iranian cinema, Korean cinema, Taiwan cinema, Scandinavian cinema, or those closest to us like Romanian, Turkish etc.

Within this paradigm, the perspective is clearly outlined of social and cultural interaction mediated by film art in the context of contemporary communications and media, it also presumes the study of the causes and the logic of processes that allow cinema, films to construct bridges between art and everyday life, between people, between man and the world. It is from the point of view of social and cultural interactions within the field of cinema, of films and of each separate film, that the paradigms of cinematic communication function as models that are structuring and facilitating communication, but if we expand the analysis of their action, we could find explicit and implicit premises that logically confirm also the conjecture that paradigms are structuring the 'gaze of the viewer' (as individual and cultural attitudes), but also to a certain degree the intentions of the creators of a film, as well as the expressive, emotional and meaningful consistency of the film itself. In this relation, we can consider these paradigms also in terms of the genesis of cinema as art and as cultural communication. On the other hand, it is in the context of paradigms of communication in the field of cinema and in the line of the classical semiotic tradition oriented to art that studies the dependencies in the relation of 'author – work – reader, viewer, listener', that it can be surmised that in the film itself (similarly to the fiction text) there is implicitly a 'primary structure of the communicative chain and in the same way that we can extract the position of the author (the addressant), we can also reconstruct the ideal addressee (reader, listener, spectator...), which in its turn can be done in the mode of interactive dialogue mediated by the work of art itself (in the case, a certain film) which 'is characterized not only by a common code but also by a shared memory in the addressant and the addressee'. (Lotman, 1992: 241 – 245) Within this definition, in a communicative interaction in the field of cinema, from the point of view of the audience such a memory would appear at least as a formal recognition of the genre type and of the specifics of film expressivity that this genre presupposes. Thus in practice the film itself creates the field of possible interpretation, it turns into the space in which the intentions of the creators meet and interact with the expectations (intentions) of spectators, and within these relations the film succeeds to preserve its own autonomy and essential determinacy as a work of art.

These interactions in the field of cinema also refer to the idea of Umberto Eco of the establishing hermeneutic circle in over-interpreting the artistic text (Eco, 1997: 58 – 63). Referred to the communication processes in the field of cinema, his analysis finds its application here as well. The interpretation itself of a film in the context of its perception, experiencing and understanding by the audience legitimates the participants in the process as well as their intentions within the communication itself, and also of the effect of it. In Eco these relations are summarized as intention of the author, intention of the text, and intention of the reader, which interact in one common system. In this sense, for a film to ‘live’ in the common space of culture, it is necessary for every interpretation of it to be realized as a degree of coincidence between the intention of the creators, the intention of the film (as a semiotic tendency) and the intention of the viewers, based on their own systems of expectations. Eco also makes an important clarification with regard to the communication process, which also has its ground in the context of cinema, namely that in verbal communication the correct conclusion about the intention of the speaker has a crucial importance to the process itself but as regards artistic text, this is rather an exception. (Eco, 1997: 61) Thus if the creation of film is a matter of talent and of professionalism, and its perception a matter of properties or abilities, then interpretation is a matter of culture. One could conclude that the artistic experience in cinema as experiencing a film is a very complex and multi-layered situation of communication. Moreover, the actual historical context also offers an additional circumstance that has its impact on the processes of communication between creators of films, the film itself and the audience – the dynamics of the processes of exchange of informational and *non*-informational cultural content, i.e. the degree of information of the spectators about the creators of films (and conversely), the popularity of the films themselves and their ‘public life’, and even the way in which films reach their audiences, or the fact that viewers have possibilities for active communication and dialogue not only with the films themselves but in the much wider space of social and cultural interactions mediated by the media.

Speaking most generally, the logic of the paradigm of cultural inscription raises as central ‘the question of the mutual interpenetration of social and cultural systems, or said otherwise, the question of the institutionalization of cultural models and their social structural establishment’ (Schluchter, 1993: 594). The processes of integration and adaptation in the social environment of cultural models, values, representations and even identities are essentially communicative processes through which every work of art and of cinema art in particular can legitimate its belonging to a certain *supra*-national tendency or put the beginning of a new one.

### **Conclusion**

The new millennium offers serious challenges not only to the individual man within his own existence but to his very orientation in the world as social, economic,

political or cultural logic and organization. The coming of art beyond its institutional limits 'seems related to the emergence of new technologies that factually permit and even determine a form of generalization of aestheticity. With the emergence of technical reproducibility of art, not only the works of the past lose their aura [...] but forms of art are born for which reproducibility is constitutive, such as cinema and photography; here the works are not simply lacking an original but first of all the difference between producers and consumers tends to disappear because these arts are based on the technical use of machines and therefore they liquidate any discourse of the genius of the creator (who in the final account is the aura seen on the side of the creator)' (Vattimo, 2004: 65). The context of the contemporary situation presumes a revision of traditional positions, functions, involvement and activity of all participant sides in the field of social and cultural interactions, including on the plane of cinema as a 'borderline' space between art, technologies and media. Ever since its creation cinema has carried the potential to perform mediation between the individual, the local and the global in the contest of social and cultural interactions.

It is the determination and theoretical justification of the paradigms of communication in cinema that allows the exploration of the logic of processes and changes that accompany the history of cinema and its legitimation as art, this time in the context of contemporary communications and of the media. Similarly to the paradigmatic division based on the civilizational approach that defines the way and means of communication as fundamental for the formulation of cultural paradigms of whole epochs<sup>2</sup>, the paradigms of communication in the field of cinema too function in a mode of convergence between them. The crucial difference in the case is that it is not only on the plane of specific communication processes that these paradigms can be considered also as base models at the level of constitution of meaning, as paradigmatic matrices or archetypal forms structuring the visual material of the cinema on the plane of meaning. Moreover, if we accept as true the statement of Roman Jakobson that the spectator becomes 'accustomed' to watch and understand the so-called cinema language and in case of anything new appearing he must re-learn to watch and understand (Jakobson, 1988: 341), then it is the paradigms of communication in the field of cinema that facilitate these processes as a model most clear and fundamental with regard to understanding, able to accumulate cultural and creative energy which it will then give out under the form of *submodels*, in the contemporary world it is already in all direction. Due to the fact that in the current situation defined as postmodern, the dynamics of information exchange of informational and *non*-informational cultural content 'refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable' (Lyotard, 1996: 9), the spectator is still strongly in power of the idea that cinema provides the fastest and easiest opportunity to escape the strain, fatigue or boredom of everyday life. And if we add 'sex, money and romantics to the film equation, creating a "channel for desire" for the emerging consumer culture', cinema becomes fully able to displace the real notions of the world of man, of the reality of things, people, Nature,

transforming them into cultural ideas or into models of behaviour, of attitude (Rifkin, 2001: 175). The consumer function referred to a certain cultural notion brings to the fore the necessity for it to be too articulated as a model, so that it could, similarly to the countless messages, be involved in informational flows and brought to its addressees.

Thus, since information and the dynamics of flows change the world in which we live by making it closer and in the same time bigger, today man seems to face the acute need of base orientations that would permit him to organize his own existence as well as to understand what takes place outside of him. Irrespectively of globalization (and its accompanying dynamic global communication), contemporary man is still inclined to articulate familiar models of the past within his own life as well as in art. What the new and crucial is in the so-called postmodern situation are the unprecedented possibilities of choice, the unrestricted opportunities of expanding the horizons of the individual gaze to the world, which nurtures the natural curiosity of man to the exploration of his own nature and of the depth of his own experiences, to understanding the other, the different, the new, new worlds and dimensions (spiritual and material), stimulates imagination and the flight of fantasy. Cinema, thanks to its unique nature of art and technology at once, starts to establish its legitimacy by its active participation in everything that happens in the world as reflection, mediation or look into the future, which is essentially the mission of all art, and the paradigms of communication in the field facilitate these processes as well as the possibility for them to be experienced and understood in their complexity and completeness.

#### NOTES

1. Or in later films like *Last Tango in Paris* of Bernardo Bertolucci, *The Mirror* of Andrei Tarkovski, *Taxi Driver* of Martin Scorsese, *Fanny and Alexander* of Ingmar Bergman, *Matador* or the later *All about My Mother* of Pedro Almodovar, *Husbands and Wives* of Woody Allen, *American Beauty* of Sam Mendes, *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* of Jim Jarmusch, and many others.
2. From the contemporary point of view and despite his technological radicalism, Marshal McLuhan legitimates the logic of this approach with his famous thesis that the Medium is the Message.

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