

The concept of Sense in Aristotelian and Non-Aristotelian film paradigms

Răzvan DUTCHEVICI¹

Abstract: *This article aims to emphasize the importance of the philosophical and axiological ethos behind the filmic narrative structures. If until now the Aristotelian paradigm has prevailed in film theory as the foundation of cinematographic narrative, through this article I aim to open a door to the deepening of the Non-Aristotelian paradigm, a narrative approach that serves as a model from the beginnings of cinema and which is complementary to the Aristotelian one. But, in order to understand how each paradigm works, it is necessary to first explain why they tend to differ. Because the Aristotelian paradigm mirrors the classicist and neo-classicist view of the world, while the Non-Aristotelian one mirrors the modernist vision.*

Keywords: *cinema; narrative paradigm; Aristotelian; Non-Aristotelian; classicism; neo-classicism; modernism; screenwriting;*

Introduction

In the field of film screenwriting, one narrative structure model has established itself as fundamental to any screenplay. This model is, of course, that of the Three-Act Structure, strongly rooted in the narrative principle system formulated by Greek philosopher Aristotle [384 - 322 BC], in his treatise on good writerly practices titled *Poetics* [cca. 335 BC], of which all that has survived to this day is the first part (mostly covering tragedies and epics), while the second one (dedicated to comic works) has been lost.

“Beyond historic interest,” writes classicist Dionisie M. Pippidi in his theoretical work dedicated to ancient Greek narratology *The Formation of Literary Thought in Antiquity* [Romanian: *Formarea ideilor literare în antichitate*], “that which, throughout the centuries, has ensured unparalleled fame for the Aristotelian body of work among treatises on good writing is the faith in his great authority as a literary law-maker.”² In art history, this authority was decisively reinforced by the rebirth of an ecstatic interest in the arts and philosophy of classical antiquity manifested by the 16th century neoclassicist movement. This ensured the honorary position that the Aristotelian narrative paradigm still enjoys to this day in the world of filmmaking – both at university level, with programs dedicated to the filmmaking milieu, as well as at industry level. I believe that, in its currently widely accepted form, the Three-Act Structure – articulated on the basis of the Aristotelian principles of catharsis, as well as on necessity, verisimilitude, and inevitability regarding the evolution of a unitary plot, constructed through a series of cause-and-effect relationships, constantly connected to the evolution of a major conflict centered on a protagonist – represents a highly important, valid, and useful paradigm. This especially because,

¹ Film Faculty, „I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film, București, razvan.dutchevici@unatc.ro.

² Pippidi, D.M. 1972. *The Formation Of Literary Ideas In Antiquity* [*Formarea ideilor literare în antichitate*]. București: Editura Enciclopedică Română, pp. 125-126.

no matter the number of relativizing variables, most film productions have tended and continue to tend to respect it, one way or another. Yet, one cannot discount the more libertine narrative forms that work and reach their target audiences, precisely because of relativizing this paradigm. Curiously, however, throughout the evolution of scriptwriting theory, these cases have rather been considered exceptions from the rule, or auctorial whims that cannot be systematized or defined. Yet, especially within the context of the festival industry, which at least from the '60s onwards has encouraged the emancipation of arthouse and indie films, these filmic approaches have become increasingly relevant, in a blatantly obvious manner, as numerous filmmakers, as well as ever wider audiences have come to embrace them. As such, departing from my experiences as an impassioned film lover and amateur filmmaker, as well as from my work as a student and university teaching assistant in scriptwriting, I was astounded to discover that there still is no well-articulated theoretic system (at least as a point of departure for discussions) in relation to these relativizing film forms, although many of their prominent practitioners – such as Carl Theodor Dreyer, Robert Bresson, Ingmar Bergman, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, Andrei Tarkovski, Agnes Varda, Jean-Luc Godard, Chantal Akerman, Wong Kar-Wai, Wim Wenders, Jim Jarmusch, Ethan & Joel Coen, Terrence Malick, to list but a few referential names – are often cited as great filmmakers with an exemplary approach to cinematographic storytelling, both in scriptwriting handbooks and academic coursework, as well as within the film industry and various associated programs. Of course, these 'alternative' forms have garnered some attention in several works of theory – such as *Narrative in the Fiction Film* or *Poetics of Cinema* by David Bordwell, *Screening Modernism* by András Bálint Kovács, or even the highly popular screenplay writing initiation handbook *Story* by Robert McKee –, but, to this day, it seems a truly substantial fundament regarding their narrative structures and story techniques has yet to be articulated, as they are often approached as a series of models that take exception to the rule. I would also like to mention that my interest focuses strictly on narrative paradigms and avoids the area of abstract, documentary, experimental, essay, or diary films, or various other non-narrative cinematographic formats.

I have thus embarked upon research, in order to identify and define the forms of film narratives that do not respect the Aristotelian paradigm within the Structure of the Three Acts (at least not completely). First, however, it was necessary to define the deeply profound and epistemological reasons because of which the structure of the Aristotelian paradigm is articulated as it is. And I have found that it comes as a direct translation of the philosophical principles on which it is founded. That is, the principles of classical philosophy. Just as the second paradigm discovered, the Non-Aristotelian one, it is established under the ethos it represents, the modernist one.

1. The Aristotelian paradigm

"All men by nature desire to know,"³ states Greek thinker Aristotle in the opening of his *Metaphysics*. In other words, man possesses a natural aspiration to know, to understand, to find rational explanations for what happens to him. That is, to attain knowledge. That is, to embrace a form that brings him closer to the Sense. That is, to deepen his knowledge of the 'Great Mystery,' or the ('Unmoved Mover,' as the philosopher calls it) behind the existence of all

³ Aristotel. 2007. *Metaphysics* [Metafizica]. București: Ed. Humanitas, p. 55.

things, beings and phenomena around. Because "according to the Hellenistic way of thinking, any form of knowledge develops according to a reality to which it wants to conform,"⁴ as Pippidi emphasizes, while paraphrasing F. Albergiani. This perpetual tension between our physical existence and the deepening of the Great Mystery, as well as our role within it, becomes the source of our constant efforts (be they conscious or not) to perfect our existence. At the core of Aristotelian philosophy stands the concept of 'Eudaimonia' ('happiness,' 'fulfilment'), i.e., the idea or ideal of a life well lived through Virtue, the only way by which an individual can truly approach Sense and feel reconciled. Virtue, in the Aristotelian view, presupposes the ability to know how to choose what is good in life. Yet Virtue must be perceived in relation to one's context and oneself. Honesty is no virtue, if by that you mean always telling people what you think about them, without knowing when it is and when it is not appropriate to speak. Loving someone can become unhealthy, if you completely surrender to this state of infatuation and give up on yourself. And Aristotle strongly believed that these fine lines between virtue and recklessness cannot be taught. It is best for man to mature through exposure to examples, which would make him reach various conclusions on his own, in order to evolve. For Aristotle and for ancient Greek philosophers, in general, personal evolution represented the essence of human existence. Each of us is vitally responsible for our own evolution, according to the classical Greeks. At this point, in comes tragedy, which, based on the principle of mimesis (artistic 'imitation', or artistic 'representation'), is regarded by Aristotle as the ultimate form through which man can approach the understanding of absolute Sense, of the surrounding life, and of his own role in relation to it. Aristotle defines the basic principles of a well-written tragedy in *Poetics*. These principles are centered around a dramatic narrative (called a *plot* in the field of screenwriting), built according to a protagonist's inner need for evolution/maturing and the efforts he undertakes, in order to fulfil himself as an individual. The mysterious laws of the universe and the protagonist's free will end up intertwining, in order to construct a unitary plot, which always relates to the evolution of the conflict, both internally (motivation, desire, need), as well as externally (the observable series of events and obstacles). Thus, the events and characters involved in the action come as a direct response to the protagonist's need to ascend to a new level of knowledge and understanding of himself in relation to the world. Episodic constructions – sudden and unnecessary jumps from one episode to another, based on a probability devoid of necessity and direct causality – and *deus ex machina* constructions – dramatic moments providentially resolved by a divine form, laying things in order so that they all come together as per the author's wish – have no place in a tragic work, because, not only do they make the viewer become detached from the story and the intended *cathartic* effect, but they also represent a deviation from the intrinsic Sense that any event carries, in correlation with the protagonist's inner conflict. Through the concept of *catharsis*, Aristotle (as well as the authors who shared his vision) preached a sort of redemptive exaltation of the viewer/reader through art; by feeling pity and fear for the characters' destinies, the viewer/reader feels a connection with the other destinies, which leads to him being released from certain behaviors or perceptions that are unhealthy for him and/or the community. Thus, the reader/viewer is purified and uplifted. The esthetician Victor Ernest Mašek describes the cathartic experience as a state of ecstasy through which "a fusion of man with existence in its entirety is achieved, while the dividing walls of individuality, which have isolated him from his peers and from other beings, are torn down. We

⁴ Pippidi, D. M., *op. cit.*, p. 108.

are dealing with a simultaneous and instantaneous perception of the world, a perception in which individualized contours are blurred and then obliterated by the dizzying whirlwind of ecstatic experience. [...]hus, we acquire a mosaic-like, multicolored experience of the world."⁵ says Romanian esthetician Victor Ernest Maşek in the introduction to the first Romanian translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, emphasizing that an important component of the cathartic experience is the closeness to people's destinies.

The Three-Act Structure is intended as a metaphor for human evolution, in which both the laws of the universe, as well as those of free will, are interconnected and are constantly adjusting. The four major stages - ACT I (the exposition and the protagonist's decision to step out of the comfort zone, in order to evolve); The first part of ACT II (the protagonist's entry into the dynamics of a new world of experiences and obstacles, designed to test his spirit, in order to build a better version of him); The second part of ACT II (conflict escalation and the moment when, if things had seemed encouraging until now, luck changes and the seriousness of the conflict reaches a higher level of difficulty, so that at a certain moment everything seems lost, and the protagonist is forced to make a new crucial decision, in order to move forward); ACT III (the final confrontation and the resolution of the conflict, more or less happily for the protagonist and the other characters) – are configured to mirror with the ages of human knowledge:

ACT I – childhood and youth (approx. ¼ of the plot)

ACT II: Part 1 – young adulthood (approx. ¼ of the plot)

ACT II: Part 2 – mature adulthood (approx. ¼ of the plot)

ACT III – old age (approx. ¼ of the plot)

In addition, the structure includes FOUR MAJOR NARRATIVE POINTS that ensure the action commences and that it is affixed onto a 'narrative framework,' which ensures that the protagonist and, implicitly, the story, transition from one stage to another. I have found that these points are constructed in such a way that the universal law and free will are well balanced. In ACT I, the protagonist's situation is taken by surprise and shaken by a catalytic event, which appears in the form of the INCITING INCIDENT (universal law), designed in correlation with his need for transformation and/or for obtaining something, so that the subsequent passage into ACT II is achieved through a first TURNING POINT (free will), through which the protagonist makes a certain decision (often forced by circumstances) which stands for him taking attitude to the INCITING INCIDENT, bearing the conflict created in ACT II. Between the first and second parts of ACT II there is a second catalytic moment, the MIDDLE POINT (universal law), which represents the protagonist crossing the threshold to a new level of challenges – in response to his seemingly encouraging evolution up until then and the need to test his capabilities to the limit –, which will bring him to a point where it will seem that all is lost. The transition to ACT III and the resolution of the conflict is achieved through another TURNING POINT, which represents the protagonist's commitment (often forced by circumstances) to go all the way. Then, as I was saying above, ACT III is marked by the final confrontation, which reaches a climax, after which the story ends, more or less happily, for the protagonist and the other characters. And that, departing from this formula, we can explain how and why the Non-Aristotelian paradigm relativizes it, bestowing another level of artistic perception upon cinematic narratives. Presented in slightly differently articulated forms in various screenwriting textbooks and courses, this

⁵ Maşek, Victor Ernest (ed.). 1978. *From Apollo to Faust (anthology)* [*De la Apollo la Faust (antologie)*]. Bucureşti: Editura Meridiane, p. 172.

scheme represents the basic model of the Aristotelian paradigm. But what I have discovered is that, in order to understand why it presents itself as this structure, it is necessary to understand that each ACT and NARRATIVE POINT is designed in accordance with the philosophical ethos of the ancient Greeks, who placed human existence in a permanent dynamic between absolute metaphysical Sense and individual physical experience. I believe that this interpretation of the epistemological intent behind the role and meaning of each ACT and NARRATIVE POINT is needed, in order to fully understand why this formula was arrived at and why it was taught with so much conviction by countless teachers and theorists, yet with no attempt being made at explaining the meanings based on which Aristotle decided it was good for it to present as such.

2. The Non-Aristotelian paradigm

As it is known, the birthdate of cinema is considered being December 28, 1895, when several short films by the Lumière brothers were screened at the Grand Café in Paris. Whether cinema was truly born then or before this date, the important thing is that it appeared around the beginning of the 20th century, during the full swing of modernism, which seen as a movement of questioning, revisions and even rejecting (neo)classicism, which had dominated international culture by a wide margin (at least European and Anglo-Saxon culture) until the beginning of the 19th century. The industrial revolution that had started in the 18th century and the shaping of the liberal capitalist hegemony, as well as the new scale of armed conflicts, strongly shook philosophical perspectives on ontology and axiology, creating an intellectual and artistic milieu that was increasingly refractory to the ideas of absolute sense and of human existence being caught in the tension between the metaphysical and the physical. Men slowly became enslaved to the interests of the powers that governed their existence, strictly based on economic principles and on progress towards an increasingly alienating society. As Professor Dan Eugen Rațiu points out, paraphrasing Matei Călinescu, "the emergence of a new consciousness of time as continuous, linear progress, and of a new vision of the human subject and his relationship with the world were followed by the split between two modernities, which ended up cultivating different values and maintaining distant, if not hostile, relations: the bourgeois or practical modernity stemming from the triumph of capitalism, having as ideals rationality, progress, democratic individualism, the efficiency of the market economy, and the cultural modernity (the modernist cultural movement), polemical and pessimistic in essence, focused on criticism of tradition, demystification and revolt." Regarded as the four great fathers of modernism, the English biologist Charles Darwin [1809 - 1882], the German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx [1818 - 1883], the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche [1844 - 1900] and the Austrian neuropsychiatrist Sigmund Freud [1856 - 1939] have had a colossal influence on this attitude of resetting consciousness to from the reflexes gained in the cave in which we were chained (to refer to the well-known myth of Plato - it becomes interesting to note how Plato spoke of the man who overcomes his condition and ascends towards the truth, coming out of the cave in which the crowd is trapped, but precisely the kind of truths preached to a good extent by Plato by referring to his metaphysical concept of the World of immutable and perfect Ideas/Forms got to be viewed by modernists as one of the main reasons for the limitation of thought and potential at the level of the human individual. So, after Darwin's theory of evolution shook the religious and metaphysical foundations that blew idealistic air into the wings of human souls and minds; Marx's complex concept of economic materialism underlying the shaping of culture, politics and social classes injected a powerful impetus against the machinery of the bourgeois-capitalist system; the sometimes hyper-sensitive, sometimes hyper-aggressive nihilistic pessimism

promoted by Nietzsche's philosophy announced that, fortunately, the old God no longer exists but, unfortunately, the new one that is just emerging - capitalism - seems to be even more dangerous, treacherous and alienating; and the nebulous psychoanalysis promoted by Freud made us realize our personalities are shaped by some factors so deeply and deeply inscribed in our subconscious that we do not know why we are who we are and how to heal ourselves. So human destiny was no longer in our hands. Because, unlike classicism, which is built on sets of beliefs, modernism is built on sets of "skeptisms." Nothing is certain anymore. The individual was often removed from his household and shuttled around without him understanding exactly why, his work was valued without him understanding whether or not he was paid fairly, and his destiny seemed to be in the hands of a new supreme god: capitalism. Thus, the individual was brutally uprooted, his connection with the community and his customs became unstable, and his craft, agricultural or other skills seemed increasingly irrelevant, all because of the economic and political principles over which he had no control. All he could do was try to adapt to these new conditions, to survive in an environment that would allow him to work for the prosperity of an upper class of people, which in no way represented his interests. Also, the proliferation of new discoveries and theories in the newly popular field of psychoanalysis brought more and more evidence that the individual does not really know himself and that his motivations, weaknesses, and personality are sustained by a nebulous network of traumatic and existential factors that influence his every action. Thus, caught between the political-economic games of some high-ranking people and the abyssal depths of a subconscious that was difficult to decipher, the individual felt that he no longer controlled his own existence. What he had believed to be Truth and Sense became more and more relative and difficult to accept, no matter how much he tried to cling to old beliefs and social arrangements. It was only natural that this new general context would lead to a new ontological-philosophical perspective on man's relationship with the universe, Sense and life. And so, the non-Aristotelian paradigm - a term borrowed from the German playwright and theorist Bertolt Brecht, who chose it to define his set of artistic principles, in conflict with Aristotelian ones - naturally becomes a poetic and narrative mirroring of these new attitudes. By analyzing two films, nominated and award-winning at the first edition of the Oscars in 1929, a time when cinematography can be said to have reached a considerable level of maturity (just before the transition to the era of sound film), I discovered one could already speak of the affirmation of both the Aristotelian paradigm, as well as the Non-Aristotelian one. The two films in question are:

1. *The Last Command* [1928; Josef von Sternberg] - Aristotelian paradigm
2. *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* [1927; F.W. Murnau] - Non-Aristotelian paradigm

In analyzing *The Last Command*, one notes that the film exemplarily fits the Aristotelian narrative paradigm presented above, as it features a protagonist whose transformation is needed in order to assert his individuality, outside his status as a Major General in Czarist Russia, to whose doctrine he was extremely attached. Caught up amid Russia's 1917 revolutionary movements, the protagonist meets his tragic end years later, when, having become a Hollywood bit player, he faces a former Russian revolutionary, now a film director. The entire plot becomes the expression of a perfectly unified narrative, like a puzzle of events built around his inner conflict with the new world, which comes crashing down on him and in which he cannot find his place at all. This leads to his tragic demise, which, however, is not bereft of a certain grandeur. Emboldened by the pathos of a scene enacting the 1917 Russian Revolution, he ends up reliving those times and, delirious, expires on set.

In contrast, *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* presents a much more capricious narrative, which connects differently to the need for transformation of its protagonist, impersonally called The Man. He stands as a symbol of the state of the general human condition, challenged to cope with the consumerist-capitalist mirage, which promises him prosperity and fulfilment within the modern world of the city, at the price of him relinquishing the significance of the world in which he grew up and developed. His world is upended by the appearance of The Woman from the City, who seduces him and convinces him to kill his wife and sell his farm in the small village where he lives, in order to have money to set himself up in the city. Interestingly, after this catalytic event (THE INCITING INCIDENT), The Man tries to kill his wife (TURNING POINT 1), but realizes that he is making a mistake and lets her live, so that the film then shows their trip to the city and the rekindling of the love between them. So, if The Man's need for transformation was to realize the significance of his relationship with his wife, this objective has already been fulfilled. The Aristotelian version would have entailed a long series of events through which he would have gradually become aware of this truth. The much more whimsical way in which the Non-Aristotelian paradigm works, however, pushes the story in a completely different direction in ACT II. And if in the First part of ACT II, we follow the efforts through which he manages to convince his wife to return to him, the MIDDLE POINT does not signal the amplification of the conflict, but, on the contrary, the celebration of the love reunion of the two, marked by an episodic and narratively unnecessary checklist of several stages that pertain to the ritual of marriage: getting primed at the beauty salon, a photo of the bride and groom, dancing at the restaurant, etc. And because, in order to proceed to the decisive dramatic confrontation in ACT III, a catalytic event was needed to produce a change of fortune to bad luck, a storm endangers their boat trip back home. The Wife is caught in the swirling waters and carried away by the Man, who gathers all his strength to save her (TURNING POINT 2). He manages to do this with the help of the villagers, which brings the film to a happy ending.

So, even if the film ticks off the FOUR MAJOR NARRATIVE POINTS, they are marked in a relativizing way, which does not directly take into account the protagonist's dramatic need but the need of the story to move forward, one way or another. Thus, if episodic sequences and *deus ex machina*-type devices do not have a place in the Aristotelian paradigm, in the Non-Aristotelian paradigm they are welcome, thanks to a different ethos based on which they are constructed. We are talking about an ethos whose core principles are based on the idea that the existence of the human individual is in the hands of historical whims and vicissitudes, and his ascent towards a certain Sense may or may not be relevant to the way in which life pushes him around. The fact that the Man wakes up from the spell of the Woman in the City to realize that he is making a terrible mistake by trying to kill his wife highlights the fact that we don't know exactly why we do many of the things we do. We do not know if what we want represents us, or if it only represents some ideas planted in us by a political and economic system, that wants to constantly exploit us and is programmed towards the vicious perpetuation of the same political and social class system. So the narrative moments become jerky and capricious, taking us from one place to another, without being responsible for providing a transformative Truth or Sense. It's just life. Aristotelian catharsis becomes irrelevant, once art no longer has a certain Sense to convey. Furthermore, placing a distance between us and the story and constantly signaling that we are only witnessing a story – a subjective interpretation of life – even becomes a desired effect within the Non-Aristotelian paradigm. Because the protagonist's evolution is not connected to a bigger Sense. In a lot of modernist films, the characters are not even connected to

themselves. They don't really know what they want and what is their path. The capitalist system managed to disconnect them from the Values and Virtues that defined the old classical world, and now that are in a continuous search for meaning and fulfilment, but they have no idea what this should mean. So, as the characters are disconnected from themselves, the plot is somehow disconnected from its characters, often allowing itself to move the focus on various elements that are not too important for the main conflict's evolution. Also, sometimes, a scene may stay longer than it's needed in a moment, even if we already understood what we needed in order to move on to the next moment. The plot becomes some sort of entity with its own moods and needs, which jumps from one element to other without a very logical necessity. Just like life happens. In a moment you are very sure of what you want and who you are, but in the next moment you may find yourself on a very different side of things, not really knowing why. Your moods and the world around you are not bothered by your existence in particular. They go forward and it's up to you how you manage to get along.

The *Sunrise* plot represents just one model of this approach, the first I discovered, and one that, in general, still respects the Three-Act Structure, even if the MAJOR NARRATIVE POINTS' role and functions are a little bit different from the Aristotelian model. But there are also films, like, for example, *The Eclipse*, that build another type of story structure, a Five-Act Structure. In *The Eclipse* [1962; Michelangelo Antonioni], we follow the protagonist Vittoria [Monica Vitti] for the first two acts, then the story suddenly jumps to Piero [Alain Delon], her romantic interest, simply because it needed a more dynamic agent in order to go forward. Then, the story's focus slowly comes back to Vittoria's perspective. In *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* [1974; Martin Scorsese], we are following Alice [Ellen Burstyn], as she tries to fulfil her dream of becoming a singer. After her husband's accidental death, she takes her son and moves to another city. Here, she has some luck and gets hired as a singer in a pub, where she also meets Ben [Harvey Keitel], a man who seduces her and then, suddenly, assaults her. Scared, she runs with her son to another city, where she gets a new chance of starting her life, as a waiter in a diner. As a spectator, you feel like a whole new movie begins, a whole new story, that from now on will show no connection with the earlier one, besides, of course, a certain type of accumulated energy and meaning. And the Non-Aristotelian narrative paradigm relies often on a certain type of accumulated energy, even if the story suddenly moves in a whole new direction or, on the contrary, lacks movement.

In one of his studies on Non-Aristotelian plays in Ancient Greek, the great British classicist H.D.F. Kitto highlights "the law of increasing tension" in narratives that seem to not evolve too much, at least in comparison to the Aristotelian ones. Talking about *Prometheus Bound* - a great tragedy with an uncertain author but traditionally attributed to Aeschylus [525 – 456 BC] -, he observes that "the solitary hero is everything; and not what he does, but what he feels and is. At the level of action, between the prologue and the catastrophe, there are no great differences. Prometheus' narratives, while they may create the illusion of action, were not designed for it. It is a drama of revelation, not of action; of increasing tension in a non-moving situation." Thus, "Aristotle's law is not valid here. There is a law here, but it is one of increasing tension, not of "natural" or logical sequence [...] for, as we have seen, Aeschylus dramatizes a state, not events; they come simply to develop the inner drama, Prometheus' defiance of Zeus."⁶ So, besides the fact that the Non-Aristotelian paradigm is not as modern as many of us may

⁶ Kitto, H. D. F. 2003. *Greek Tragedy - A Literary Study*. London/New York: Taylor & Francis Group, p. 63.

believe – it was maybe even more popular than the Aristotelian one in the Ancient Greek -, what we find very interesting in this fragment is the fact that a story can function on the principle of tension accumulation, based on episodic events that relativize the concept of necessity and cause-and-effect logic. This type of fragmentation into narrative episodes hanging on the thread of the life of one or more characters gives a feeling of compassion (in contrast with Aristotelian identification / empathy), in which the attachment to the characters is born in the viewer precisely because no one knows how the context will change, and it becomes touching how a human existence, though vulnerable and fragile, can withstand so many changes of context while also having to struggle with personal problems. The inner need and the outer goal become the same: to endure. Also, the Non-Aristotelian paradigm allows us to build a story even if the characters are not really moving forward to new levels of inner transformation and external confrontation with the world, but just by creating the sense of moving forward. Meaning any narrative uses the MAJOR NARRATIVE POINTS somehow, in order to give the sense of story movement, but not necessarily in the way the Aristotelian paradigm teaches us. And we can discover this kind of story-movement relativization in a lot of films, from classics like *Last Year at Marienbad* [1961; Alain Resnais], *8½* [1963; Federico Fellini], *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* [1975; Chantal Akerman], to more recent ones like *The Tree of Life* [2011; Terrence Malick]. And if it can function without moving (too much), and if it isn't build on the belief in an absolute Sense that connects every individual with metaphysical existence and if it doesn't try to build-up a meaningful and liberating *catharsis*, this means that a story can function in more ways than we can imagine. And some of them, as I showed before, can be placed in certain models of the Non-Aristotelian paradigm.

3. Conclusions

There would be much more to say and analyze in relation to modernist film and the forms that the non-Aristotelian paradigm can take. In my PHD thesis on the subject, *Babel Fiction – A New Perspective on Cinematographic Narratives, from the Aristotelian Paradigm to the Mosaic Films* - I even identify and define a third narrative paradigm: the Post-Aristotelian paradigm, that concerns the „mosaic”, or “network” movies, based on a multi-protagonists structure that builds on interwired events and/or perspectives – films like *Short Cuts* [1993; Robert Altman], *Love Actually* [2003; Richard Curtis] *Babel* [2006; Alejandro G. Iñárritu], *Gomorra* [2008; Matteo Garrone], *Dunkirk* [2017; Christopher Nolan] and so on.

And, perhaps the most interesting conclusion I reached is that, at some level, the plot itself becomes the true hero of any narrative. And, depending on its positioning in relation to the idea of Sense and the artistic effect it pursues, the plot chooses the characters it moves the focus from one moment to another, the events and the way they are linked, etc. Therefore, it is important, first of all, to have a sense of the philosophical and axiological foundation on which each narrative is based in order to examine its narrative principles and story logic. The author's vision of the world becomes crucially important in the analysis of a narrative, because depending on it, you can understand the paradigm in which it is created or, of course, the level of merging the paradigms. Thus, we can discover an impressive variety of narrative forms, some of which can be recognized in the case of several films. Thus, the Non-Aristotelian paradigm becomes a model, a format that one can use in the creation and analysis of a film, not just a category of exceptions to the rule where all forms that defy the Aristotelian paradigm are included. It is also

important to point out that this model of storytelling is as "classical" as the Aristotelian paradigm. Dramaturgical works that defied or relativized the Aristotelian paradigm can be identified since Ancient Greece. Yes, they are exactly those works against which Aristotle took a stand, creating a set of rules and principles for „proper” storytelling. However, we must not forget that Aristotel built this set of rules as an argument against the accusations made against poetic art by the great Greek philosopher Plato [427 – 347 BC], his mentor. Because Plato considered poetic art a form of falsifying reality. That's why, in building his argument for the poetic art, Aristotle used those works that emphasized best the Sense and Truth. Because he wanted to demonstrate that poetic art, especially tragedy, is the most important form of reaching Virtue and Wisdom. But, by doing that, he neglected an important number of poetic masterpieces. Fortunately, with the birth of modernism, the questioning of the idea of Sense and Meaning once again created a fertile ground for the affirmation of narratives that oppose or relativize the Aristotelian paradigm. Which led to the enrichment of models of telling stories. And, implicitly, of creating film narratives. As we've seen, since the first phase of cinema's maturity, we can talk about both Aristotelian and Non-Aristotelian paradigms. So, how can we consider the Non-Aristotelian films just exceptions to the rule? They represent one side of the rule, while the Aristotelian paradigm represents the other side. And both, of course, complement each other in fascinating ways. Just like the (neo)classical and modernist perspectives on Sense and Meaning.

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