

Cinematic Phenomenology: Theoretical Analysis of the Camera as a Narrator in the Film "Interstellar" By Christopher Nolan

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ABSTRACT: Christopher Nolan's filmography transcends a complex narrative process inherited from a huge cinematic tradition of editing and handling the camera as a narrator. From the first documentary shorts and feature films, where the camera is presented as an active, subjective, phenomenal, intentional and transcendental narrator, Nolan's work exhibits a series of dynamic and dialectical qualities of the narratological expressiveness of the camera as an active narrator. This article focuses on a series of philosophical, cinematic and theoretical reflections on the role of the camera from a phenomenological perspective in the fifth-dimension scene in the film *Interstellar*.

KEYWORDS: Cinematic Art, Phenomenology, *Interstellar*, Nolan.

I. INTRODUCTION

The cinematographic camera is presented as the technical, narrative and fundamentally expressive constructor of the possibilities of language and the cinematic experience. On the other hand, it is also the eyewitness and even hearing of the facts, documents, fictions and impressions told through the lens of the camera. Since the early days of cinema, in the pioneering, experimental and documentary works of the Lumière brothers, it is possible to visualize the narrative role of the camera. In the pioneering 1895 film "La Sortie Des Ouvriers Des Usines Lumière à Lyon Monplaisir" by the Lumière it is possible to trace talents of a narrative simplicity in the staticity of the camera. However, the mechanical eye of the camera produces a filmic account from the intentional act of a phenomenon and manifestation exerted by the person who manages and directs the cinematograph.

II. CINEMATIC AND MONTAGE

There is no cinema if the machine to take the movements is missing, but it is not everything. The camera is a necessary condition, but not sufficient. For this reason, to believe that the machine, without more, produces cinema is wrong ... regardless of our precision, that the camera represents the temporal principle of cinema, the historical moment in which cinema appears. [1]

The example of Anaya introduces the idea that I do not take exercise recorded by the camera, it enters the aesthetic process of cinema. Since some audiovisual works lack the reflective and analytical exercise of cinematography as art. Despite this, the camera is presented as an ontological element not only from the mimetic act of the pioneering documentary reality of the Lumière brothers, but also in the process of creating stories and fictions from George Melies to Akira Kurosawa, Quentin Tarantino, Alfred Hitchcock or Christopher Nolan. Although cinematographic narration is linked to a series of technological and sensory elements, as well as to different sound, textual and photographic channels, the visual element acquires an essential role in the

construction of the filmic story, all of this, since the camera As mentioned above, it is an intrinsic, essential and ontological constructor of cinema.

The handling of the camera does not present a passive element in the narratological exercise, on the contrary, since its inception it is exhibited as an active witness, since the ways in which the cuts and types of shots are executed, play an active role in the viewer. This exercise plays an active role in both what is inside the frame and what is outside the frame. As in Alfred Hitchcock's *Birds* (1963), the exercise of the camera is not only presented in the act of framing, but also in creating an experience of suspense by elements outside the cinematic painting. [2] Hitchcock's work has the deconstructive nature in the Derridian order of creating a narrative not in person or from the qualities of absence. Derrida defines this type of approach as non-logocentric, since it allows us to see the negative or absent part of a sign. [3] All this, seen from a phenomenological point of view, allows creating a deconstructed experience of the camera's viscosity. That is, from the absent, foreign or distant, from the phenomenological outside the cinematographic picture. In this way, the camera has an integral role not only in the technical creation of cinematography, but also in the narrative construction of cinematic works of art. The active role of the camera is linked both to what it presents to us in the picture in a phenomenological way, as well as outside it, in its deconstructive form in the absence of the cinematographic sign.

Documentary works such as the Soviet work "The man with the camera" (1929) by Dziga Vertov show an active role of viscosity, and of the role of extradiegetic narrator in the cinematographic story. The handling of the camera, its cuts and its montage process is not static or passive, since it presents a series of selections and visual accents on certain notions of the temporal and spatial rhythm of the story. Vertov's experimental exercise does not show us reality per se, but rather exhibits a reflective and subjective act of reality present at the forefront of classic Soviet documentary cinema of the 1920s. [4] Vertov's camera is presented as the pioneering extradiegetic narrator, from the space of the absence of a sound one, so that the viscosity of the camera presents the subjectivity of a filmic narrative subjective constructor. [5]

In addition to "The man with the camera" by Vértov, there are also other examples that show the narrative role and the intentionality of the camera, as is the case of the poetic documentary genre in examples like "Rain" (1929) by Joris Ivens. In this particular film, the cinematic construction of a transcendental Kantian or even phenomenological subjectivity in Edmund Husserl's character is exhibited, where the idea of the first impression and its expression close to the epoch of the phenomenological method exhibit a quasi-realistic approach, subjective and transcendental of the cinematic mimesis of the reality present in the experience of the phenomenon of the camera. The filmic noesis is shown in the act of intentionality present in the cinematographic camera as a visual and even sound narrator of the mimetic and phenomenological manifestations of the experience of the camera. In other words, the camera tells us frame by frame the documentary and fictional construction of its own narrative ontology, not only in its selection exercise, but also in its intention of movement. Next we will address from a deconstructive perspective the role of the camera as a visual narrator within the works of Christopher Nolan. All this, from an integrated link of the phenomenological reading of the experience of the camera as a visual witness of the filmic story.

III. INTERSTELLAR'S FIFTH DIMENSION SCENE

Christopher Nolan's cinema is characterized by fully and actively developing all cinematographic channels. Nolan's narratives show an outstanding use of sound elements in filmic construction, such as in the particular case of *Dunkirk* (2017), photography and viscosity in works such as *Inception* (2010), or scripts such as the example of *Interstellar* (2014) where Nolan's art had to cinematically represent the technical, aesthetic and expressive possibilities of a fourth dimension. Despite this, one of the most relevant technical elements in Nolan's narrative discourse is found in the handling of the camera. The handling of the camera within Christopher Nolan's narrative transits from the space of narrative suspense inspired by filmic works of Alfred Hitchcock's character in *Dunkirk*, to speed changes from slow to hyper-slow motion and complex montages of non-linear narratives supported by characters. like Lee Smith in works like *Inception*. [6] Each of the visual and narrative elements that Nolan presents in his films show the studied heritage of a director that refers to the visual magic of George Melies, the narrative camera of Vertov, the suspense of Alfred Hitchcock and the visual refinement of Akira Kurosawa.

In one of the final scenes of *Interstellar* at the moment where the protagonist Cooper tries to communicate with his daughter from the space wasteland of the fourth dimension. It is possible to visualize a dialectical contrast interaction between static cameras, speed changes from fast to slow that generate part of the visual vertigo of Nolan's idiosyncratic camera. This type of dynamism, centered on changes in speed, cuts, cameras and positions exemplify the impossibility of presenting a four-dimensional space from a three-dimensional aesthetic, displayed on a two-dimensional screen.

In this particular case, the camera is not only presented as a passive witness of the narrative events, on the contrary it shows us the noesis of the intention of showing the subjective construction of a transcendental character of the fourth dimension through the camera. Nolan's proposal requires not an exact scientific mimesis of the dimensions proposed in the simulation scenario, on the contrary, it gives us a graphic and aesthetic representation of an element not known to humans, of a non-phenomenological event. It is for this reason that the camera and the montage process are positioned in constant movement in Nolan in order to create the conditions for an experience that goes beyond the limits of the space and time dimension.

"Interpretation is not taking knowledge of what is understood, but the development of the possibilities projected in understanding". [7] As stated by Martin Heidegger in his approach to being and nothingness, it is necessary to understand the interpretive act of the phenomenal and human impossibility of visual understanding of excess of realities.

Nolan's way of approaching the interpretive problem is through the creation of a physical space where the character can move. In the cinematics of this peculiar scene, it is inevitable to think about the positioning of the camera from the possibility of the dynamic and of a narrator with deconstructive characteristics in order to exercise a narrative hermeneutic of each of the space-time dimensions. Despite the fact that the vision of deconstruction proposed by Jacques Derrida has different characteristics in its aims, it does present a form of critical and analytical approach to the less important, more subordinate and more secondary objects. The world of shadows emerges in Derridian construction as a philosophical and interpretive phenomenon that seeks to put a distant reading of logocentrism. All this, inheritance of a complex philosophical tradition of Martin Heidegger in his destruction of metaphysics and his proposal to criticize the absolutes. [7]

This very manifestation of the destruction of stability can be altered within Nolan's camera narrative, as the viewer ends up having a cinematic reading and interpretation of the non-phenomenal manifestation of the fifth dimension. The camera is forced to observe the absent, the unobservable and impossible. In other words, the non-presence in the threads of time, space and the rest of the theoretical dimensions of physics. The framing of the shot, the cuts and the handling of the camera is usually maintained from the exercise of contrast, from chaos to order, from noise to silence, from movement to statism, this type of dialectical exercise presents a series of narrative characteristics of emphasis in the expressive possibilities of the camera in Nolan's cinema.

The camera technically and expressively recounts Cooper's face to keep the audience connected and understood, from the phenomenal interpretive experience of Nolan's cinematics, in detailed shots, close-ups, whole shots and even from American shots but viewed from an inverse way from legs to produce more vertigo and instability. As a contrasting element, the shots also make use of distant shots of the character in a wide non-descriptive space, where the camera tries to communicate that the movement is happening through a physical and visual representation of temporality, implying that the character moves from the future to the past as if walking from one point to another.

This type of narrative handling of infinity and immensity through the camera is present in a recurring way in *Interstellar* film, as well as in other of his film works. The exorbitant sensation proposed by Nolan is shown from the sound qualities in the music of established composers such as Hans Zimmer, as well as through a handling of the visual narrative through a particular use of the camera and montage. The feeling of vastness at *Interstellar* is presented by depicting sublime spaces of the Kantian order such as grasslands, giant waves, black holes, skies, mountains, and other places of enormous proportions. Nolan's aesthetics relies on an exercise in cinematic visuality very similar to the works of Caspar David Friedrich and the reflections of the "Erhabenheit" [8] in the aesthetic representation of the temporal and spatial immensity of *Interstellar*. In this sense, Nolan's camera transits in a radical way between the totality of infinity and emptiness, the camera shows us dynamic spaces of movement of the protagonist falling into emptiness, as well as completely black spaces that represent excess dimensions.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nolan's camera outlines the phenomenal possibility of interpreting and representing dialectically the cinematic effigy of the immeasurable and incomprehensible from human experience. Beyond science fiction, Nolan's camera enables a filmic account of the temporal, temporal and even philosophical and scientific relationship of reality. In the same way as Vertov's man with the camera, Nolan tries to present in a fictional way a quasi-scientific connection of the conditions of the theory of relativity and various philosophical perspectives with a fictional account. Nolan's art and analysis was inspired by a camera handling not only technical and expressive, but even emotional, where the idea of love lies in the capacity of the enormous and incalculable, the camera is part of that narratological process of the aesthetics of the ineffable of the transcendent of love and science, since, as presented by *Interstellar* work, the idiosyncrasy of love belongs to the world of the immeasurable before any space, time and dimension. Nolan's work relies on the specific qualities of the camera as a narrator of the metaphysical and of the in-presence within the distant from logocentrism in narrative absences, but in addition to that, he manages to represent and narrate what is far from the phenomenal in the theoretical possibilities of physics in the five dimensions in *Interstellar*. The camera is presented as a narrator of the active experience of a spectator from the qualities of the intentionality of phenomenology. Nolan's work not only expresses the possibility of telling the story in a neutral way, but also presents a subjective and transcendental perspective of the filmic story in the idiosyncrasy of the camera and the montage.

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