

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### **Role of Director's Philosophical Approach in Cinematographic Expression**

*Arts and Social  
Sciences Journal,  
Vol. 2012: ASSJ-55*

# Role of Director's Philosophical Approach in Cinematographic Expression

S Cereci

Fine Arts Faculty, Batman University, Batman, Turkey.

**Correspondence:** Sedat Cereci, s.cereci@gmail.com

**Accepted: Dec 25, 2012; Published: Jan 04, 2013**

## Abstract

The original idea for a feature film may come from a writer, director or a producer. Director is the person responsible for the creative aspects, both interpretive and technical, of a motion picture production in a film. Director may be shot discussing his project with his or her cowriters, members of production staff and producer, and director may be shown selecting locales or constructing sets. All these activities provide, of course, ways of externalizing director's ideas about the film. A director sometimes pushes both the film image and techniques of narration to new artistic limits, but main responsibility of director is take the spectator to an original opinion in his philosophical approach. Director tries to find an artistic angle in every scene and change screenplay into an effective story and sets his film on a spiritual and philosophical base.

**Keywords:** Director; role; film; approach; opinion.

## 1. Introduction

Metin Erksan, a Turkish film director shot a film, "Sevmek Zamani" in 1965. A house painter, Halil goes in a house to paint it, and watches a photograph of a woman on the wall of the house, and falls in love with the woman in the photograph in the film. Halil goes to that house every day during a year and watches the photograph. It is the story of that platonic love and the events around love and theme in film proves philosophy of the director in a mysterious atmosphere. One day, the woman on the photograph comes to the house and saw Halil, by the time he watches her photograph, and she thinks that he loved her. But the man, Halil does not love the woman, but loves only her photograph actually. Halil's story changes into a lyric story in the film and actually reflects director's lyric philosophy. The director, Metin Erksan shot the film in an extraordinary style by using a philosophical method and revealed a unique approach that only those who are interested in philosophy can understood.

Audience can sometimes find philosophy of director in a film but they sometimes can not find philosophy and meet only some exciting views or adventures but not philosophy. Whereas a film must include philosophy because of its traditional character and convey some philosophical messages to audience.

Another director, Carmelo Bene from Italy has his own philosophy in his own approach and reveals his approach in his theatrical sets. *"He is an experimentalist, through and through. For him, the stage is only peripherally a place of entertainment. He has the talent and the professional know-how to transfer intelligently"*. Bene has an ironical philosophy about universe and about people and use his philosophy in his films to explain meaning of life [1]. Bene conveys some philosophical messages via history, via psychology, and via intensity.

In the early-morning hours of July 23, 1982, a film crew working in the Santa Clarite Valley on the outskirts of Los Angeles was shooting a scene for a film set during the Vietnam War. In one shot, a helicopter meant to hover over the film's star, Vic Morrow and two child stars. As the helicopter approached, a nearby hut built for the occasion was to explode. The charge for the explosion was set by professional technicians. The helicopter was flown by an experienced pilot. After photographing the shot, the force of the explosion proved too great for the pilot to handle, sending the helicopter careening out of control. As it crashed to the ground, its rotors decapitated Morrow and the two children. The pilot survived the crash.

*"Under California labor regulations in effect at the time, the two children were working illegally, since the shoot took place later than the children were allowed to work. Fines totaling \$62.375 were levied against the studio producing the film, Warner Bros, three other companies, and some individuals involved in the production. Attention then shifted to assigning responsibility for the accident. Blame increasingly focused on the film's director, John Landis" [2].* An action film was it, but it also had the director's approach in its exciting images. When director plans his shootings kindly, he can not miss interest of audiences and he also exactly catches public opinion.

Director's kindly approach in film about his humanistic philosophy always attracts interest and admire of audiences because of hopes of people who watch his film. Audiences usually hope some sensitive, humanistic, and philosophical messages in any film even an action film or a horror film [3]. In his nature, human often behave with his feelings and he looks for sensitive clues on what he watches or he touches. Nature of human is always a matter of planning and shooting in director's process.

*"Location shooting and latitude give theme and time it takes for shoot to be completed created a unique atmosphere and freedom for photographers. This sense of freedom is clearly evident in intimacy and candor of images, images in which idleness, anxiety, and terror that mark the space of shoot are clearly apparent. This is concerned with director" [4].* Whatever is director interested in, he tries to convey a humanistic or politic message to audience and has a method to create his approach. In a way, director's approach which is formed by his philosophy is a point in where director and audiences meet [5]. Films have different themes but all they have philosophical approaches and philosophical messages.

*"In 1925, Alfred Hitchcock was promoted to director, getting as his first assignment an Anglo-German production, The Pleasure Garden. Back in 1922 had collaborated with actor Seymour Hicks on completing the final scenes of Always Tell Your Wife for an ailing director. In the same year he had also directed a two-reel fiction film, Number Thirteen, but the production was never completed. The Pleasure Garden was his first real stab at directing, and despite some flaws it proved an impressive debut" [6].* Hitchcock was known as the director of horror films but he had many humanistic messages in his films and his approach taught the audiences many humanistic realities. *"Hitchcock's Notebooks – a tantalizing, frustrating glimpse through a narrow chink in the thick door of a hallowed vault – will not doom the myths of the author to their final resting place, but the book tellingly reveals the many negotiations, improvisations, sleights-of-hand, and slipknots that went into the crafting of Hitchcock's exacting, austere precisionist films. To the extent, it contributes some compelling new information to both the meaning of the films and the image of their maker" [7].* Hitchcock always told different dimensions of human spirit in his films and invite people to live in a humanistic world.

Every director has his own style and has an original approach to reach audiences via a philosophical way. Director's philosophy naturally appears in an artistic image in his film and almost every director is known with his original philosophical images like Eisenstein, Hitchcock, etc. Director's approach is like a stamp that is pressed on audience's memory via his film.

Cinematographic expression is a way of describing human and life, and film is one of communication languages in humanistic and artistic places. In this study, role of director's approach was evaluated in cinematographic expression and director's process how he proves his philosophy in his film via his approach was emphasized. A primary element of film production, director, was analyzed as the most essential person of a film under different examples. Film direction was thought not only a stage of a film production, but also process of production of a social and artistic product. Some directors who named their films were chosen and connection between directors and their films were examined and their film directions were evaluated. Characters of directors and methods of directions were studied and responsibility and function of a director in a film was tried to defined. Bases of a film set were analyzed and role of director and director's approach was especially emphasized. Besides this, connection between director and art was analyzed and it was tried to define how much a director is artist. Some directors who characterized a director pattern were chosen to define role of a director's approach, like Alfred Hitchcock, Vittorio De Sica, Sergei Eisenstein, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Elia Kazan, etc. Importance of director's approach was tried to emphasized in social, humanist, politics, and artistic dimension of a film. Importance of director's approach was explained as philosophy of film and spirit of message of film that director aims to convey to audiences.

## 2. Role of Director

Basic anxiety of a director is telling his artistic message to audiences. He generally shapes his message in a deep and complex philosophy and ornaments his philosophy with artistic elements in his original approach and presents to audience. Director's approach changes into his own individuality and individuality of film and identifies with director's name in memory of audiences for many years [5].

Director is a person responsible for the creative aspects, both interpretive and technical, of a motion picture production in a film. In addition to orchestrating action in front of camera and guiding acting and dialogue, film director controls camera position and movement, sound, lighting, and all other ingredients that contribute to final look of a motion picture. *"In carrying out the task of transforming a screenplay into a film, he supervises a versatile crew of artists and technicians, each responsible for his own area of specialty but all answerable to the director, who has the final word on all aspects of production during filming"* [6]. Director, who is known as owner of a film is a man who gives an original spirit to film via his approach and tell his effective story in his sensitive philosophy.

Director is a man who works from idea of film to screen in a crowded path. While script is being put into final form, director works with members of his crew. Design and construction of sets also have to be considered well in advance. *"As early as some weeks before production date, director and scene designer have a short meeting to discuss specific set problems of film. At a second meeting, scene designer brings in rough sketches of set and an estimate of set-construction costs. Then rehearsals, shootings, and editing are done by director with contribution of associate directors, photograph director, audio, and light directors. A television director usually works with a technical director in control room"* [8].

*"In shooting the scenes in the Old Bailey in The Paradine Case, Alfred Hitchcock used six cameras. However, each of these cameras picked up a separate chose-up, so that actually six separately lighted and composed shots were photographed simultaneously. The advantage gained by the director in this instance was the sustained playing of the scene, not the manner in which it was photographed"* [9]. Idea of a director can change any moment because of his artistical sensitivity, but at the end he finds the best image because of his approach. Director's approach always manage director's way until arriving at screen.

*"Somebodies know that Federico Fellini changed the profession of his protagonist in 8.5 from writer to a writer director, at least in part so that there would be some external activities to photograph. He has remarked: "It's difficult to portray a writer on the screen, doing what he does in an interesting way. There is not much action to show in writing. The world of the film director opened up limitless possibilities". The director may be shown choosing, auditioning, and coaching his or her actors. "The director may be shot discussing his project with his or her cowriters, the members of the production staff, and the producer, and the director may be shown selecting locales or constructing sets. All these activities provide, of course, ways of externalizing the director's ideas about the film being made, and they are more interesting to watch than a person seated at a typewriter. Fellini uses all these element in 8.5 as a director"* [10]. Any director having some extraordinary character like Fellini, can naturally because of success of a director via his extraordinary philosophy. Philosophy of a director shapes the most effective persuasion in director's approach.

*"A director sometimes pushes both the film image and techniques of narration to new artistic limits. He tries to find an artistic angle in every scene and can change screenplay to an effective story. He sometimes shatters manuscript because of its artistic negativeness. In a way director is an artist too"* [11]. Source of all artistic and intellectual efforts of director is his approach through his philosophy. *"Odessa Steps montage sequence from Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925) followed by a screening of the massacre scene from Richard Attenborough's Gandhi (1982) and then compares and contrast the two clips. Both are remembered with their artistic sequences"* [12]. Both directors conveyed their humanistic approach through their philosophies.

Ever since the movies began as an art, there always has been a question as to the nature of "the cinematic". The fact that the movies can encompass so many arts, visual, theatrical, literary, has made the definition of "cinematic" forever unstable. *"If someone looks at a photographed stage performance, and it is very clear, obviously the direction is, in film of great importance in determining the trajectory of how scenes are photographed, but the determination of acting comes in decisions as to what reveal in terms of reaction"* [13]. Success of art and photography in film is success of director actually. Any director images and plans film story like a philosopher and proves his photographs in his philosophy.

Only a few people know that producing a film is a highly coordinated effort by dedicated professionals, but to most people it is a bit of a mystery what all these people do. When people starting to watch a film, they are encouraged to forget about all that mysterious collective labor. *"A Hollywood film usually asks people to get caught up in the story, in the world that has been created, so that people are not aware of the behind the scenes effort"* [14]. People tend to forget the thousands of minute decisions that consciously construct the artificial world that has been created by especially director. A film leaves its heritage into memory of audience via director's approach.

The original idea for a feature film may come from a writer, director or a producer. But it does not often work out this way. When director does not develop his or her own projects, the director is hired by a produce at some early stage in the project to execute the production of a film. *"He may or may not be a party to the selection of the story or subject of the film, but it is important that he will be involved in the preparation of the shooting script, preferably, that he write the screenplay himself, alone or in collaboration. Other preproduction stages the director may or may not (but should) be involved in are casting, selection of technical crews and locations, and determination of the pictorial design of the film with the art director"* [15]. Though all technical necessities, director's approach to topic of film provides most facilities for film, because it manages all levels of film.

Editor is also a principal working friend of director in producing process. Ideally, on a high-budget feature film, editing may be integrated into the early stages of production. The editor is present on the set. *"He attends the daily screenings of the previous day's shooting and discusses with the director the choice of takes and ideas for the editing of a sequence"* [16]. There may be a second editor preparing the material in the cutting room, to whom he relays the instructions of the director, and there may be an assistant doing the routine organizational work, such as classifying and cataloging the footage, syncing up picture and sound by means of the slates, and checking the camera and sound reports against the picture and track. The editor works closest with the director, who is the chief instrument of unity in the film.

*"There is a main way to learn rules of directing a film: Assist a director. Assistance of a director can point out how his director works during film process, his early sense of telling a story in a cinematic way, how he forms his situations and builds his sequences, how he opens a picture and how he finishes it, when he is an assistance director"* [17]. Most of successful directors began to direct a film as an assistance of a director, and after a great experience they became master directors. While an assistance works with a director, he begins to set his philosophy via his experiences and shapes his approach step by step towards an artistic or a humanistic message. Many assistances accept and apply approach of their master and then his approach becomes their approaches.

According to Elia Kazan, directors must be fearless hunters, hypnotists, poets, great hosts, old-fashioned mothers, and construction gang foremen. What a cat might mean to a love scene? How to get a chicken to enter a room on cue? How to direct actors: normal, neurotic, and erotic? Then the crafts of camera and tape recorder. Every experience leaves its residue of knowledge behind, says Kazan, every experience applies [18]. A film person must be a most contradictory combination of the bedrock pragmatist and the driven idealist.

Director has his own style and directs his film through his viewpoint. Some directors plan their films carefully and rarely deviate from their scripts, notes, and storyboards once filming has begun. Others like to improvise and make on-the-spot changes in the script or the visual aspects of the film. *"But advance preparation by all directors is thorough and meticulous, for film is a highly expensive medium and mistakes and last-minute changes or adjustments can prove costly and embarrassing"* [5]. Different types of shots give different feelings. *"It is concerned with narration. Narrative film, what people ordinarily think of as 'the movies', is a combination of literary, theatrical, and purely cinematic elements"* [19]. Cinematic result of a film always appears by director's approach.

*"A film develops via imagination of a director like in 'Three Colors' of Kieslowski. Kieslowski's alterations to the script drastically abbreviate its dialogue. In the modern era, the classical Greek opposition between a seeing derived from the action of the subject (via eyebeams 'extramitted' to strike the object) and a hearing originating in the object (causing airwaves that then strike the ear) persist in the conceptualizations of sight-sound relations by such phenomenologist as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hans Jonas: the one sensory register (that of sight) being immediate, the other (that of sound) mediated; the one continuous, associated with space, the other discontinuous and linked to temporality"* [20]. Nobody can confuse and compare Kieslowski's films with others because of his approach. He had an original philosophy in his approach like other directors.



*"John Huston's We Were Strangers, would not have been a better film if Huston had included a fuller discussion of the moral problems involved. A director must have an imaginative understanding of everything connected with the material he is working on, and if his materials involves, as Huston's did, a sense of deep ethical issues, then the director's own awareness and understanding of these issues is relevant"* [21]. A director can sometimes tell politic, social, and humanist messages in his film like in Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thief*. *"In The Bicycle Thief, there is a shortage not only of luxury goods but also of basic necessities. In Reconstruction Italy, the borsa nera (black market) was an important source of all goods, including basics. The black market thus became a running motif in Italian films of the early postwar period, including Alberto Lattuada's Il Bandito, Gennaro Righelli's Abasso la Richezza (Peddlin in Society, 1946), and Camerini's drama Molti sogni per le strade" (Woman Trouble, 1948). "Camerini even directed a postwar black market drama, The Angel and the Devil, based on a story by Zavattini"* [22]. Topic of film and character of director are mostly united by director in many films, therefore a film which resembles character of director is always watched. While audiences perceive philosophy of director, they can never give up to follow steps of director in film and they permanently wonder director's next step because of director's extraordinary approach.

*"Directors usually use their dreams, nightmares, and artistic crisis to shoot. They use stories and poems in their mind to make sequences"* [23]. "Poetry can not be discussed meaningfully unless one can assume that everything in a poem – every last comma and variant spelling in it is by poet's specific act of choice. Only bad poets allow into their poems what is haphazard or cheaply chosen. Assuming that, best film directors are poets, people can ask *"Why that scene there? Why that dissolve? Why that music? Why does the actor walk from right to left? Why that long shot? Why that close-up? Why that camera angle?" and on and on..."* [24]. Poetry is one kind of director's approach to film but it generally has some risk because of relativity of poem.

Under the studio system, most directors were interchangeable and little of their personal mark could be detected in the final product. In most cases, it was easier to identify a film by its "look" as the product of a certain studio than as the work of a particular director. *"It is not, therefore, surprising that only a relatively few directors were known to the general public by name and that for so many years the film's stars, not the director, were the main attraction at the box office"* [6].

Contemporary film audiences (as a consequence of a greater familiarity with the history of cinema thanks to television, publishing, and film education) are likely to recognize and appreciate elements relating to an image of the director/star's ingenuity, especially to the director's manipulation of familiar generic forms and conventions. *"In Laurence Olivier's Branagh, in the role of director, he is also credited with being able to mobilize stars of the stature of Robin Williams and Hannah Schygulla to play cameo roles in his film"* [25]. An experienced director always tries to catch lives of audiences via his images in his approach. Because any of audiences looks for his life in film images to watch himself.

A director must rely entirely on his own guess and hope for best, but one thing he can be sure of: the minute he sets his hand on someone, that person's price will skyrocket. *"Apparently myth of a film star and how much money he makes has penetrated to wherever films themselves are known. Although business of casting is primarily a matter of a single decision, directing is a much more complex affair. It is a continuous job, involving a tremendous amount of detail and a great deal of time. In primitive societies, directing becomes more complicated because neither cast nor crew really understand exactly what director wants"* [26].

A director is like a climber on a high cliff, a dancer on a tight rope. *"One false move, and he is ruined. Every minute of a day, he must be aware that this may be his last shot with a given performer"* [26]. A difficult and anxiously job is direction, but produces the most meaningful and effectual products of culture. Director usually avoids of false by help of his approach that provides director a systematic method to direct film and to convey his message to audiences.

### 3. Conclusion

Any film is result of a director's effort, director's point of view, and his feelings. Because of this, films are firstly presented by name of their directors, but generally not by their producers or their stars. Director is the man who creates spirit of a film and gives a character and a humanist sense to film via his philosophy and his approach. He is primary element of a film with scriptwriter and producer but a film undoubtedly belongs to its director because of the role of director in a film. Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thief*, Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*, Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colors*, and Elia Kazan's *East of Eden* are always

remembered via their directors. Because each film is product of its director because of director's approach. Films are naturally identified with their directors. A director is also an art director in a film besides being a philosopher, he shapes a film as an artistic product. Director is responsible either for technical requirements or artistic angles of a film. His role is more than being a creative for a film, but giving a spirit to a script via his approach. Experienced directors always try to catch lives of the spectator via his images in his approach. Because any of audiences looks for his life in film images to watch himself. Therefore a director reaches the spectator by help of his approach and convey his approach in his philosophical view. In a way, director's mission is meeting the hopes of audiences via his approach and his philosophy in his film. Director's approach provides director a systematic method to direct film and convey his message to audiences.

## References

- [1] Dasgupta G, 1985. The director as thinker: Carmelo Bene's *Otello*. *Performing Arts Journal*, 9(1): 12–16.
- [2] Tashiro CS, 2002. The 'twilight' zone of contemporary Hollywood production. *Cinema Journal*, 41(3): 27–37.
- [3] Hicks EJ, 2008. *The Law of Attraction*. Istanbul: Butik.
- [4] Kouvaros G, 2002. 'The misfits: what happened around the camera'. *Film Quarterly*, 55(4): 28–33.
- [5] Cerci S, 2001. *Television Program Production*. Istanbul: Metropol.
- [6] Katz E, 1994. *The Film Encyclopedia*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- [7] Morrison J, 2001. Hitchcock's notebooks: an authorized and illustrated look inside the creative mind of Alfred Hitchcock by Dan Auiler. *Film Quarterly*, 55(1): 62–64.
- [8] Lynch JE, 1956. The case history of a live TV drama. *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television*, 11(1): 83–93.
- [9] Pichel I, 1951. Films for television. *Hollywood Quarterly*, 5(4): 363–372.
- [10] Stubbs JC, 2002. Fellini's portrait of the artist as creative problem solver. *Cinema Journal*, 41(4): 116–131.
- [11] Guerin F, 2003. Dazzled by the light: technological entertainment and its social impact in 'Variété'. *Cinema Journal*, 42(4): 98–115.
- [12] Tomasulo FP, 1997. Theory to practice: integrating cinema theory and film production. *Cinema Journal*, 36(3): 113–117.
- [13] Chin D, 1996. As time goes by: the century of cinema. *Performing Arts Journal*, 18(3): 26–40.
- [14] Smith GM, 2001. It's just a movie: a teaching essay for introductory media classes. *Cinema Journal*, 41(1): 127–134.
- [15] Llewellyn S, Walker S, 2005. *A Career Handbook for TV, Radio, Film, Video, and Interactive Media*. 2nd Edition, London: A&C Black.
- [16] Falkenberg P, 1967. The editor's role in film making. *Cinema Journal*, 28(2): 22–28.
- [17] Werner G, 1974. A method of reconstructing lost films. *Cinema Journal*, 14(2): 11–15.
- [18] Shepard DH, 1985. Film study and filmmakers. *Cinema Journal*, 24: 43–47.
- [19] Sayles J, 1987. *Thinking in Pictures*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- [20] Coates P, 2002. Kieslowski and the antipolitics of color: a reading of the "three colors" Trilogy. *Cinema Journal*, 41(2): 41–66.
- [21] Barnes P, 1956. The director on horseback. *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television*, 10(3): 281–287.
- [22] Celli C, 2001. The legacy of Mario Camerini in Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* (1948). *Cinema Journal*, 40(4): 3–7.
- [23] Chin D, 2001. The film that we wanted to live: Re-releasing modernist movies. *A Journal of Performance and Art*, 23(3): 1–12.
- [24] Baker WD, 1964. Film as sharpener of perception. *College Composition and Communication*, 15(1): 44–45.
- [25] Landy M, Fischer L, 1994. 'Dead again' or a-live again: postmodern or postmortem? *Cinema Journal*, 33(4): 3–22.
- [26] Zebba S, 1956. Casting and directing in primitive societies. *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television*, 11(2): 154–166.