

Isagogics for Cinema-Aesthetics

Beauty as Argumentum ad Hominem

by

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Abstract

In this essay, we try to clear the way to the general aesthetic theory of film with the hint by Baumgarten. To review the antecedent researches, although Eisenstein and the French Nouvelle Vague challenged the theoretical artificiality in their making films, the audience rejected such works and the attempt itself to make a general aesthetic theory of cinema has abandoned now. Their defeat is caused by their way to take shots one by one according to the script words. We name it 'Articulativist Fallacy'. It lacks betweenness or movements, the most important essence for movie. In this background, there is Structuralism that analyses all things to the single function and tries to create a new mechanism by the combination. Additionally, Eisenstein and the FNV were under the affection of the Hegel-Marx Dialectics; however, it was Plato that established Dialectics and the Hollywood learned it without intent. They developed the film-taking method by the multi-coverage with the huge budget as the Hollywood Griffith Style. However, his theme montage is more important. While the outside expressions are only able to mean the seeming, the various touchstone situations test the truth of the concept in the story. In addition to this Dialectics in the screen, there is another one between the screen and the audience, so we call this 'Grand T Structure' of cinema. Here the audience is able to discover and moved by the beauty of the universal truth in the specific story. Therefore, poetical Aesthetics of cinema beauty is determined by the fineness of the sensibilitive argumentum about the theme.

1. Aesthetics of Cinema

The purpose of this essay is to characterize the concept of the aesthetics theory for entertainment drama films. There are various forms and contents in the genre of movie, for example, documentary, CF and experimental movies. However, we do not ask much beauty of documentary or news report. By contrast, entertainment drama needs beauty and interest in order to work out as commercial hit goods.

Maybe after the consequence of the Romantic, aesthetics talks about only pure Fine Arts and has mood not to treat commercial ones. Even then, not only film but also musical, event and further the most of all

modern art scenes become much bigger by accumulation of various professional skills without patronage by nobility or bourgeois. Therefore, modern art has to depend on famous international corporations and open public audiences commercially.

Commercialism and artistry is not necessarily opposed. Rather, only high quality work successes in market. Above all, to make an entertainment drama film needs huge money and 'box offices' success of all over the world. Although the management theory says generally that we should compress the fixed charges, making a film will improve the quality with the additional produce cost to reduce the investments risk in

contrast.

However, what is the cinema beauty? Is it the same as the interest? Where is the truth of theme? In the first place, is a specific fiction story able to talk the universal truth for all human being? All the same, beauty, interest and truth are the keys to make hit of a film.

In this essay, I would like to make clear the aesthetic thesis according as Alexander G. Baumgarten (1714-62), the founder of Aesthetics, that good film is a sensitive 'argumentum ad hominem' i.e. argument for human preeminently. Various episodes and course of the whole story will show the truth of the film theme polyphonically, so that it gives the audiences emotion for beauty by brilliancy of the truth. Moreover, if the truth is the unexpected universal deep hidden one, then we are interested in the movie more.

2. Review on Antecedent Researches

As the Cinema Aesthetics, we have already many antecedent significant researches. Hugo Munsterberg (1863-1916)'s *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916) may be the oldest essay on the cinema theory. Yet, He was constantly a physio-psychologist and researched psychological reaction and mechanism of human for moving pictures. I.e. he considered movie as one of psychological stimuli under the James-Lange theory. Here artistry of work itself never came to problem.

Rudolf Arnheim (1904-) is known well as the philosopher who distinguished at first cinema as Fine Art from mere mechanical photograph records in his *"Film als Kunst"* (1932) theoretically. To be sure, as the name as 'movie picture', cinema was understood as a sort of photograph in the age of beginning. However, already Georges Melies (1861-1938) discovered the physical possibility of film to cut-and-paste and took advantage of it for the magical trick to surprise the audience in his "Le Voyage Dans La Lune (the travel to the moon)" (1902) and others practically. Beyond that, we accept now not only movie but also photograph in general as art in all reason.

Lev Kleshov (1899-1970) established the artificial

"Montage Theory" by the famous combination experience (1922) in the Moscow Film School. Following him, Sergei M. Eisenstein (1898-1948) advocated, affected by Marxism dialectics, that the film montage should have some confliction to create a new emergent meaning. For this purpose, he used cuts that he took quite piecemeal. Furthermore, Eisenstein planned the cinema-script form that is able to transform to film-cuts word by word.

On the contrary, Bela Balazs (1884-1949) emphasized repeatedly the change of close-up aspect and the passage of long-take scene as the feature of movie in his *"Der sichtbare Mensch"* (1922), *"Der Geist des Films"* (1930) and moreover *"Der Film"* (1949). We are able to express such continuous transition only by movie. That is to say, the denial against Kleshov-Eisenstein's Montage Theory of piecemeal cuts corresponding words.

Young Andre Bazin (1918-58)'s sensational debut was the advocacy of Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane" (1946). Against the big name Jean-Paul Sartre dumping on the past tense and the complex elocution of the work, Bazin dared to maintain that it is rather the very feature of film. He said that the truly cinematic power is consist not in the structure of the story but in the one of the image, so that we should pay more attention on film to the way of expression by the image-makers i.e. the director than the story itself. With the motto 'Camera egal Stylo (Fountain pen)',¹ he took an active role in the cinema work criticism presiding over the magazine *"CAHIERS DU CINEMA"* (1951-) and had a vigorous effect on the 'Nouvelle Vague (new wave)' movement.

In spite of Bazin's approbation for American distinctive movie directors based on his advocating 'Auteurism' or 'Politique des Auteurs', the Hollywood Industry in fact developed the strong Producer Management System to control the growing huge cost at the time. It is true that many works were made following the French Nouvelle Vague all over the world and that they made a boom in 1958-62, however after that the general audiences rejected such artistic films differently from high recognition by academic cinema reviewers and they shifted to the convenient TV entertainments. So in these, there is no

classics that general audience are able to enjoy repeatedly now in contrast to the Hollywood blockbusters to counter with TV under the Producer Management System at the same age, while such system is very what the French Nouvelle Vague accused with insistence.

Recently, abandoning attempt to establish a general cinema theory, socio-economic and psycho-analogical researches are going around such as Feminism, Ethnology and Narratology. In the background, those researches are associated with commercial marketing to make and sell new films, so that those have commercial value in themselves. However, such is just a business of Sociology or Psychology, not Aesthetics, since these have no interest in the value as beauty.

3. Articulativist Fallacy

It is beyond the scope of this essay to esteem the meaning of wide range of the French Nouvelle Vague in the cinema history. However, I would like to point out only that they are all the descendant of Eisenstein Style in a sense in contrast to the Griffith Hollywood Style. Although it may be true that the radical leader of the movement, Jean-Luc Godard (1930-) dared to take a tactics to break the order of dialectics of Eisenstein Montage for the sake of drawing the reality without order on screen², this rather indicates that they are on a same wrong stream in fact.

At the start to think about the right cinema aesthetics again, we should accept the Eisenstein & Nouvelle Vague Style as a theoretical failure severely, even though it has power between academics yet. We name it 'Articulativist Fallacy' and take strategy to explore the problem point and to cut new right way otherwise.

The curse of the Eisenstein Style on cinema is that they believed primitively film as a sort of language of the Understanding, not of Feeling or the Sensitivity. This fallacy is symbolized in the motto of the Nouvelle Vague 'Camera egal Stylo'. Eisenstein himself advocated and executed the conforming cuts to words³. While the Hollywood Style uses generally a visual 'story-board' expressed by the hand-drawn pictures, Eisenstein required the same roll to the literal script as a tool to take shots directly. This linguistic mistake on

film caused him and his descendant unintended fatal troubles that all cuts come to piecemeal. Nevertheless, they made farfetched claims that it is the very montage and the audience side should make effort to see and bridge the jump⁴.

Godard says here that the most important for film is 'betweenness'⁵. Although it may be right, however, it lacks on film very in such jumps. What causes these gaps is the way to construct film through the literal script. Each word is already conceptualized one by one in the Understanding. Therefore, if the film takes shots according to the words of script one by one, then the images are also always already abstract. The work through such way is too speculative to enjoy as an entertainment.

As an example, pick up the case of the famous Odessa Stairs scene by Eisenstein. In his montage, it has to be 'one cut, one shot, one action'. Therefore, when the script says, "By the sword a soldier strikes an old woman", then the first cut is the picture of a sword, the next an angry soldier's face and the last a bloody old woman. It is very ideological because we see here a sword in general, a soldier in general and an old woman in general, so we never know at all, where this affair goes on in this stairs, who are the soldier and the old woman⁶. Beyond that, it lacks the most important essence of a movie here, namely the movement. That is not more than an assortment of the still pictures.

If we should catch the betweenness on film, then we had to take a shot of the dynamic betweenness of the two actors i.e. the sword and the blood directly, not to make it by the artificial montage⁷. We can see the real betweenness not yet articulated by Sensitivity, so film should show it as Balazs illustrated. In our actuality, if we stumble across such an affair, then first we take notice the rubble at the certain point of the stairs from long distance, next look at someone beating someone in it by running to the point, and last see from near the beating is a soldier with the sword and the beaten is an old woman wounded. In Sensitivity, we see things always concretely and individually. Although the image order by the Eisenstein montage may be applied as a cinematic elocution, yet it is the odd inverted order

with emphasis and lacks the most important betweenness image, i.e. the sensational shot of someone beating someone.

4. Structuralism as the Background

In fact, Articulativist like Eisenstein has a larger background. It is the philosophical trend of Structuralism in the 20th century.

Already in the Middle Age, there was an alchemical vision to analyze all things into each single function and to create the new higher truth by the combination. It called 'Lull's Art' as generic term after philosopher Raimundus Lullus (1232-c.1325). It came back again in the 18th century and played a successful role as 'Corpusculian Hypothesis' especially in Chemistry. Furthermore, by the development of Engineering of Machinery and Electronics in the Industrial Revolution, the Structuralism to think things by functional parts and the combination was reborn in Symbolic Logic, Associative Psychology and foremost Saussure's Structural Glossology.

It flowed over to the cultural areas, also in Fine Art. Eisenstein's Montage Theory is one of them. Not only Eisenstein, but also Kandinsky, Schoenberg and so on made the various experimental works in various modern Fine Art. However, it comes clear in the end of the last century that the bulk of the structural modern art except a limited masterpieces are neither beautiful nor interesting without reference of academic evaluation. Apart from the rare works for the modern art snobs, such experimental movies for public audience never successes in market.

I think that there is rather the key to Cinema Aesthetics of the Sensibility here. Such Fine Art works quested only the armchair theories so far that they ignore the existence of the public audience and that no one confirms them naturally. In fact, this defeat is caused by the 'lower excess' to apply the form of the Understanding to the area of the Sensibility. The most important essence of Fine Art is the subjective experience of truth and this is the sensational interaction between the work and the audience.

Wonky filmmakers make the wrong cinema theories. They mix up cinema aesthetic theory with the film taking process. What we want to see and to be moved by cinema

is first the story, neither the film itself nor the visual stimulation. Indeed, we take and edit the film cut by cut; however, we should produce here one story. It is polyphonic; however, each phase is subject to the work absolutely and not able to consist independently. As one work, it has a single unity under the one theme. Therefore, Cinema Aesthetics is also should be more poetical or dramaturgical, not visual of piecemeal parts.

5. Another Dialectics

Not only Structuralism, Eisenstein and his descendants were depended also on the odd Dialectics after Marx or Hegel.

Hegel in the beginning of the 19th century also accepted the Corpusculian Worldview as a given that this world consists of various piecemeal atoms. He gained an insight that there is yet the world reason or logic over such aggregation through the history. Therefore, he called the historical development of the real world as 'Dialectics'.

Marx took over Hegel Dialectics with a socio-economical modification. He schematized it by the social class confliction instead of the piecemeal dogma aggregation. When Marxism got actually the political power in certain societies in the 20th century, they trivialized Marx Dialectics and forced it all over the social lives and academic philosophies. Here Dialectics meant the way to create a new emergent value though the collision of conflictive elements. This is the base for the method of Eisenstein and the Nouvelle Vague.

However, neither Hegel nor Marx invented Dialectics historically in fact. The founder of this method is originally Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher. He believed the Idea Theory that there should be the true master-forms of everything called 'idea' over the heaven and that all things on the world are mere fake copies of them. Therefore, he maintained that we should see the idea itself without adhering to the mundane things.

Nevertheless, since we are also mundane existences, it is not so easy to see though our own eyes the idea over the heaven directly. Therefore, Plato

advocated Dialectics. It is the way to seek the true idea through talking, because logics are never obstructed by seeming in it, so he thought. For this purpose, he gathered rather the many concrete instances as the shadows of the true idea patiently in his arguments, in which his Master Socrates and the friends investigate them polyphenically.

This Plato Dialectics is authentic. Without intent, the worldwide mainstream Hollywood Style to make a film comes to take this method. In fact, the theme to express by films are all the same that philosophy has argued since Plato, namely life, love, justice, courage, friendship, peace, war, nature, states, family, fear, anger, grief, laugh and humanity. Moreover, the cinema shows them to common people much better than any books of past philosophers.

Even if we admire a film work as beauty, it is never mean that the picture is beautiful visually. Far from it, some movie has no beautiful scenes; however, the beauty of the work may move us. This is the beauty of the truth itself and the interest to discover it enchants us. Thus, the beauty of cinema depends on the success as the argument of the Plato Dialectics, not of the Hegel-Marx one.

6. Griffith Montage with Multi-coverage

As we know, Eisenstein and the Nouvelle Vague studied hard the one side of the Hollywood Style; however, Hollywood itself developed an original filmmaking method with the Producer Management System. This may have begun with David W. Griffith (1875-1948). It is characterized with the 'Multi-coverage'. This is the extravagant way to take shots of a scene by plural dynamic cameras through the full footage.

Here the montage technique has a quite different meaning from Eisenstein and his descendants. In editing, the director inserts some sub-cameras cuts into the master-camera shot to help to express it stereoscopically. Generally, the master-camera shot with medium frame size takes the center position and the sub-cameras are laid at the other positions for the close-up or the full scenery shot⁸. Therefore, the result

of this montage gives us an impression as if we are seeing the scene in the center and look it sometimes with help of telescope or illustration. The feature of this montage style is having a real sound track at the master position though the full footage. This cannot be in the artificial Eisenstein Montage.

This is far different from the Eisenstein Montage as Cinematographic philosophy in the point that it bases on the real group action of actors. The Eisenstein Montage is, as it were, the way to build up an empty candy box with flat papers. It uses cuts of each actor taken by piecemeal, so there is no reality of the 'betweenness' of action by the nature⁹. In contrast, the Griffith Montage is the way to take shots a real group action polyphenically and to represent it to the audience as it used be at the time when it was taken.

Instead of this film reality, it needs a giant set with enormous member of staffs. Inevitably, also the productive cost bursts up over the limit. This extravagant way to make a film developed with the Hollywood huge Epic-drama and Film-musicals until 60's. However, the Hollywood film-companies could not support such a huge cost and risk any more even in order to counter with TV. Thus, the film industries came to have to make the cheap serial dramas for TV. Incidentally, since the TV shows of live air casting do not use the film recording, it took over the expertise of dynamic multi-coverage.

By the way, Japanese filmmaking scene made many good works already in the silent age before the WW II. After that, two genius directors, Yasujiro Ozu (1903-63) and Akira Kurosawa (1910-98) appeared in the last war hardship. Ozu worked in the film-industry Shochiku, which is a big entrepreneur of stage play in origin, so it had a tradition to give a free hand to the leader of the stage company, but with a little money. Here, he invented his original effective way to take human drama films like Shochiku stage play within the limited cost and equipment and exerted strong influence on the French Nouvelle Vague. On the other hand, Kurosawa needed always determination by the film-industry Toho derived from the attraction section of a railroad company with big capital. However, Kurosawa was

able to challenge and improve the extravagant multi-coverage and the dynamic camera work of the Hollywood Griffith Style. Thus, he came to bridge the method to the next 'New Hollywood' generation called 'movie brats'¹⁰ inversely after that¹¹.

7. Theme Montage by Diagogue

In fact, the significance of the Griffith Montage Method is not only on the film taking. The Heart of his montage is on the theme of a film work¹². For example, in his "Intolerance" (1916), he set as the theme very intolerance. To quest this theme, he took four episodes, an innocent young man in the modern America, Jesus Passion, dying Babylon and the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. This is also a very montage method to illustrate the truth of the theme polyphenically and conforms to the Plato Dialectics.

As the Plato Dialectics, it is important to approach the theme polyphenically or from multi-angles because the truth of the theme can never be expressed with one words. For this purpose, the story should cut into the same theme by various different episodes repeatedly. Similarly, the characters of the story may have their own problem on the same theme of the whole story. What is important is that these visible episodes and characters make the unspeakable truth of the theme up to show to the audience thus though the whole story¹³.

To apply this Aesthetical Dialectics Theory to the actual cinema works, we need a certain modification. The characters in the story may not talk and discuss about the theme loudly. What show the theme are not only the words of the each character but also the course of the whole story itself. The story is made with a chain of action i.e. a developing betweenness of the characters. Therefore, we should see that the Dialectics of cinema is not by dialogue but by 'diagogue', namely through-action.

In Plato's works, he used the form of dialogue or conversation of plural characters for his Dialectics. Not to wait Heidegger's and Gadamar's remark, to talk is always to do to someone else, so the situation for Dialectics needs the plural characters. That, various character not only checks the other's words and throws

back his/her reaction words. Thus, this way keeps off falling in a dogma different from monologue.

Also in the cinema-story, various characters appear on screen. However, they do not talk all the while. Differently, they make actions for themselves or reaction for some event and other's action. Thus, these actions make a reaction-chain as whole. In this diagogue, the characters do not check the action of others, but instead of it, they make their own reaction and in the way to react, they show how they accept the foregoing action of others.

Thus in cinema, various concepts are shown, not talked, by episodes¹⁴. For example, we try to take the simple concept 'strong'. The cheapest way to express this concept is the 'illustrating comment' as a comedy sketch, like that a boy cries, "My brother is very strong!" The most popular way in movie is the 'pattern expedient' or typage. When the brother is a muscle man, then the audience conceives that he must be strong, since the filmmakers never give him such visual feature if not so. There is also the way of the 'sample plot' like that the brother crushes a can by his one hand. The 'on-job presentation' is no more the additional explanation but a previous episode like that the brother goes everyday the boxing gym. More cinematic way is the 'projecting reaction' like that the men run away fearfully when just the shadow of the brother appears.

We use these ways in various combination to express his strength. However, these are anyway just 'outside expressions'. Even if the brother says he is strong, he is a muscular boxer, crushes a can by his one hand and the men run away, yet he may be very coward in fact like the lion in the Land of Oz. After all, such outside expressions are able to mean only that he seems to be strong and are never to prove his true strength.

The true human strength is nether the same thing as muscle nor the power to crush a can. The true thing is often potentiality that we cannot see with our own eyes directly. It appears only in a certain occasion. The story of the film sets such a situation as 'touchstone'. These the story gives are the trials to test whether the concept is the truth or the fake. Therefore, diagogue is

important. This shows the universal polyphenically as sparks in the concrete story.

It has also some reason, that Eisenstein made much account of a conflict in his montage theory. However, the touchstone may not be the contradiction between two equal things, but rather the concrete situation to let the potential universal concept appear. Therefore, the movie story needs sensitive reality.

8. Argumentum ad Hominem

Is this poetical aesthetics for cinema same as one for stage-play? To put it strongly, while the audience of stage-play remains the outer spectators, those of entertainment cinema are the partner who the filmmaker reach out to positively. Dialectics of cinema does not close in the screen but consist between the screen and the audience. I would like to name this 'Grand T structure of cinema'. The level line of the T figure is the Dialectics of the characters in the story while the vertical line of it is the one of the film work and the audience.

The audience talks nothing but always participates this Grand Dialectics. Standing by some person of the affair in the screen, the audience always has a feeling for or against each phase in the story and anticipate various things before the course of the story. Therefore, the filmmakers i.e. the director, producer and screenplay-writer ask the theme to the audience and they are asked by the audience their own interim answer. We can say the same for all Fine Art, but in film work with the story, this feature comes out most clearly.

By the way, it is Baumgarten, founder of aesthetics, who purported beauty as sensibilitive argumentum. However, he thought under the infection of Leibniz-Wolf school that the sensibilitive argumentum lacks the Reason, so he named the Sensibility as 'analogon rationis' and put the sensibilitive Aesthetics under the rational Logics.

Per contra, we would like to put this Aesthetics of the Sensibility over the Logics of the Reason. Although Kant treated supreme rationality on universals as the problem of belief over the Understanding by concepts and deduction, we are in fact able to see the

universal theme rather in the specific cinema story.

In this sense, poetical Aesthetics of cinema beauty is determined by the very fineness of the sensibilitive argumentum about the theme. It is true that it lacks the Reason and it is not so logical, but when the audience is able to see the truth of the theme sensibly with clara and distincta through the film story, then the film work has beauty already sufficiently.

¹ This word itself is originally Alexander Astruc's in magazine "ECRAN FRANCE", 1948.

² See his lecture documents, Jean-Luc Godard: "Introduction à une véritable Histoire du Cinéma", 1980.

³ Sergei M. Eisenstein: "Drehbuch? Nein, Kinonovelle!", foreword of "Der Kampf um die Erde", 1929.

⁴ See Godard, ibid.

⁵ Godard, ibid.

⁶ Getting idea from the Middle Age Comedy and Japanese Kabuki, Eisenstein maintains a radical mise en scene, 'typage' in 'Strednaya iz trekh (play to film)', 1934. However, such excessive characterizing for main casts is never applied in modern films since it knocks off the reality and interest.

⁷ Compare this scene to the last duel of "Youjinbo" (1961) by Krosawa. He used here the long take to show the betweenness of sword and blood.

⁸ Naturally, the sub cuts to insert may be taken by another occasion and the sound track is also usually made up with many effects.

⁹ However, very this artificial method developed painting animation to the great degree. Yet, the recent animations generally make an effort with checks of high complex continuities to seem like Hollywood style i.e. Griffith's multi-coverage.

¹⁰ 'New Hollywood' is characterized by the marketing strategy of Blockbuster with international Saturation Release. 'Movie brats' means the young educated directors playing in New Hollywood, like Francis F. Coppola (1939-), Brian De Palma (1940-), Martin Scorsese (1942-), George Lucas (1944-), Steven Spielberg (1946-).

¹¹ After the rupture with Hollywood about "Tora! Tora! Tora!" in 1970, Krosawa himself hitchhiked rather on 'Auteurism' of the Nouvelle Vague and he was called 'emperor' based on the international high fame. However, it was not more the way to make a film in commercial Toho with the Star System and so His afterward works are ones of many naff Japanese Epics.

¹² Eisenstein used the similar technical term 'thematic montage', however, such editing point is called now as mere 'match cut'. Although it has a symbolic relationship between both like a joke or wit, no theme of the whole story is brought into question here.

¹³ For Example, in "Le Fabuleux destin d'Amelie Poulain" (2001), not only the main character Amelie but also most of the personage have the same theme, to come over the threshold to get their own happiness, and this theme comes up in various episodes of various personage repeatedly.

¹⁴ 'Be shown, not talked' is the key word of Wittgenstein's philosophy in both of his earlier and later period. See Ludwig Wittgenstein: "Tractatus Logico-philosophicus", 1922.