TRANSPERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CINEMA

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ABSTRACT: Transpersonal dimensions of the cinematic art form are explored, including transpersonal elements inherent in the nature of the cinematic medium; transpersonal influences on cinematic content, structure, and style; and potential transpersonal effects of the cinematic experience. A preliminary classification of transpersonal cinematic effects indicates potential synchronization effects between constructed cinematic reality and various aspects of creator/viewer realities. Personal filmmaker observations and a review of theoretical, empirical, anecdotal, and historical sources suggests that the transpersonal or boundary-transcending nature and capacities of the cinematic medium make it a potentially powerful and valuable tool for the mediation of transpersonal experience and perception.

What is the connection between the transpersonal and cinema? When we use a basic definition of the transpersonal as the transcendence of perceived boundaries (Wilber, 1985), the very nature of any creative medium can be viewed as being transpersonal. The cinematic medium, as well as all the arts, is ultimately the ideas, thoughts, and feelings of a ''personal'' mind (or minds) being extended outward to other minds. The creation of all forms of art has also been equated to a spiritual (and hence transpersonal) process through which the artist uncovers and conveys a sacred ''internal truth which only art can divine, which only art can express by those means of expression which are hers alone'' (Kandinsky, 1977, p. 9).

THE TRANSPERSONAL NATURE OF THE CINEMATIC MEDIUM

Every creative medium has its own unique material reality that dictates its specific structure, generates its own set of rules and limits, and establishes its own distinctive communicative and perceptual environment (Arnheim, 1974; Wilber, 1996). For example, one of the material realities of painting is the artist's canvas, which dictates the specific structure of a relatively static and bounded two-dimensional plane. This two-dimensional structure engenders certain inherent limits and rules, such as the depth limitations of the flat surface and fixed edges of the two-dimensional canvas, and the rules of two-point and three-point perspective drawing that can be used to partially transcend these limits. The structure of the artist's canvas also dictates the idiosyncratic communicative and perceptual environment of how a painting is viewed, such as a relatively frontal angle of viewing.

In the specific case of the cinema, some of the basic elements of the medium's material reality include a mechanical and/or electrical device that captures moving

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images and sounds (e.g., motion picture camera, digital camcorder), and a device that transmits and projects these images and sounds (e.g., projector, VCR) onto a two-dimensional screening surface (e.g., projection screen, television monitor). Within the boundaries of this unique material reality there appear to be several structures, rules, and aspects of the cinematic medium that can be viewed as transpersonal, or boundary transcending, in nature.

The cinematic medium is a creative synthesis of numerous creative structures or forms of expression that transcend their own boundaries and integrate into a greater whole. These various expressive forms include the writer's narrative, the actor's performances, the cinematographer's visual images, the sound recordist's auditory atmospheres, the composer's musical score, the art director's environmental design, the editor's patterning of the images and sounds, and the director's orchestration of all the elements (Nilsen, 1959).

Renowned Russian filmmaker and film theory pioneer Sergei Eisenstein (1942) postulated that the unique nature of the cinema produces a holistic and transcendent "synchronization of the senses" through the "integration of word, image and sound, and the accumulation of successive images and sounds [that serve] to construct perception, meaning, and emotion" (p. 69). After years of cinematic experimentation and "a thorough analysis of the nature of audiovisual phenomena" (p. 70), Eisenstein believed that the conscious manipulation of this sensory synchronization could allow the filmmaker to converse with his or her audience on higher, deeper, and subtler levels of communication by more closely replicating the multidimensional sensory stimulation of actual lived experience.

An example of the power of this consciously controlled sensory synchronization can be found in the film *Chariots of Fire* (1981). In this British cinema classic, the filmmakers combine the images and sounds of the experience of running with an emotionally expressive musical score to viscerally communicate the peak experience of running. When this synchronization of image, sound, and music integrates with the film's plot, performances, and dialogue, the audience is able to experience the ephemeral and transformative emotions involved in the physical and spiritual struggle for glory.

Avant-garde filmmaker James Broughton (1978) declared that "the secret name of cinema is transformation" (p. 20), referring to the cinematic medium's ability to juxtapose and dissolve wide-ranging images into and against each other. Using a vast array of image transitions, including dissolves and computer generated image-morphing techniques, filmmakers can speak the language of transformation by turning "stairways into planets, buttercups into navels, [and] icebergs into elephants" (Broughton, 1978, p. 20).

The theme of transformation is also inherent in the nature of the cinematic viewing experience. The juxtaposition of the stationary nature of the viewing environment (*constancy of projection*) and the variable movement and placement of the camera and objects in the frame (*variability of camera and objects*) transforms the screen's two-dimensional plane into the perception of a three-dimensional reality (Vorkapich, 1972). This transformation is so powerful that when the earliest motion picture audiences first saw the image of a speeding train projected on a screen in front of

them, they leapt from their seats and ran out of the theater screaming (Arthur Knight,[1] personal communication, 1976).

Broughton (1978) also suggests that going to the cinema is akin to a religio-mystical experience. From this perspective, the movie theater can be seen as a sacred ceremonial space, the audience members as the participants of a religious ritual, and the motion picture screen as a holy altar. The projection of the cinematic image by means of a beam of light cast through a darkened space can also be seen as an archetypal and visceral representation of the symbolic interplay between the light of divinity and the darkness of illusion that is often referred to in the sacred stories and myths of many of the world's cultures and traditions (Arnheim, 1974).

> For the moment, look at cinema as a mystery religion. Going to the movies is a group ceremony. One enters the darkened place and joins the silent congregation. Like mass, performances begin at set times. You may come and go but you must be quiet, showing proper respect and awe, as in the Meeting House or at Pueblo dances. Up there at the alter space a rite is about to be performed, which we are expected to participate in. Then comes the beam of light out of the shadows: the Projector, the Great Projector up there behind us! Turn out the little lights so that the big light can penetrate the darkness! Ah, behold the unreeling of the real reality of practically everything: our dreams, our idiocies and raptures, our nativity, passion and death. (Broughton, 1978, p. 19–20)

Broughton (1978) contends that this projected ''real reality'' of the cinema is more than just a mere reflection of actual reality because the filmmaker can construct meaning out of what he or she chooses to include and exclude. The cinema is ''both a mirror and ever-expanding eye. It creates what it sees and destroys what it does not see ... [it] is a lie which makes us see the truth'' (Broughton, 1978, p. 69). Broughton relates this ability of the cinema to construct and communicate meaning and truth with the spiritual quest of seeking the light of enlightenment because it has the capacity ''to make visible the invisible, express the inexpressible, [and] speak the unspeakable'' (Broughton, 1978, p. 15).

TRANSPERSONAL INFLUENCES ON CINEMATIC CONTENT

Beyond the transpersonal nature of the medium itself, the transpersonal also reveals itself in the cinema through the incorporation of transpersonal subject matter and themes into a film's cinematic content. Some of the transpersonal content explored in the cinema (with illustrative examples) include: Alien encounters (e.g., *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977); altered states of consciousness (e.g., *Altered States*, 1980); angelic encounters (e.g., *It's A Wonderful Life*, 1946); archetypal forces (e.g., *Star Wars*, 1977); dreaming (e.g., Kurosawa's *Dreams*, 1990); life after death (e.g., *Ghost*, 1990); mystical realities (e.g., *The Last Wave*, 1977); near death experiences (e.g., *Resurrection*, 1980); paranormal activities (e.g., *The Fury*, 1978); religious experiences (e.g., *The Last Temptation of Christ*, 1988); and spiritual quests (e.g., *The Razor's Edge*, 1946).

Films with transpersonal cinematic content appear in every major film genre including (with illustrative examples): Action-adventure films (e.g., *Raiders of the*

Lost Ark, 1981); comedies (e.g., *Defending Your Life*, 1991); dramatic films (e.g., *The Green Mile*, 1999); fantasy films (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings*, 2001–2003); horror films (e.g., *Poltergeist*, 1982); musicals (e.g., *The Guru*, 2002); science fiction films (e.g., *The Matrix*, 1999); and westerns (e.g., *Dances with Wolves*, 1990). There are also several minor genres or sub-genres that more directly relate to transpersonal content including religious films (e.g., *The Ten Commandments*, 1956), spiritual films (e.g., *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, 1979), and supernatural films (e.g., *The Natural*, 1984).

While some films are clearly defined by a single genre or content category, many films are a mixture of several genres and/or content categories. For example, *Star Wars* is a series of science fiction films with dramatic and stylistic elements of the swashbuckler (e.g., swordfights), war movie (e.g., dogfights), and western (e.g., gunfights) genres that include the transpersonal cinematic content categories of alien encounters, archetypal forces, paranormal activities, and the spiritual quest.

TRANSPERSONAL INFLUENCES ON CINEMATIC STRUCTURES

Transpersonal content is often translated into a film's cinematic structure, which is comprised of the various elements of the narrative construction of a film. These narrative structural elements include dramatic action, character, and tension, camera and object placement, and scene and shot order, transition, and pacing. The specific patterning of these narrative elements constitutes a film's cinematic structure. Common cinematic structures include traditional linear-time-based, flashback, parallel character, and subjective first-person story structures. Some of the cinematic structural patterns that have been used to communicate transpersonal or boundary-transcending experiences and concepts include:

Shifts in temporal and spatial reality: The story structure of films like *Field of Dreams* (1989) and *Groundhog Day* (1993) integrate shifts in normally perceived structures of time and space to capture the essence of the dramatic through-line. In *Groundhog Day*, the main character relives the same day over and over again until he reaches a true understanding of himself and the world. In *Field of Dreams*, the main character is divinely guided to build a baseball field where heaven and earth, and the past, present, and future all meet and conspire to heal the heart, mind, and spirit of all those who enter into its ''field'' of influence.

The deconstruction of consensual reality: The labyrinthine mind-bending story structure of films like *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), and the latticed layers-of-illusion story structure of films like *The Matrix* (1999) entice the viewer to question the very nature of reality itself. In *Being John Malkovich* characters are allowed to physically enter into the mind of another person, and the lines between person and personality blur past the edge of reason. In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* we follow the main character through the gradual erasure of his memory and discover that without memory his world, and perhaps our own, ceases to exist. In *The Matrix* trilogy (1999; 2003; 2003) a world that looks very much like our own is revealed to be a computer program with layers and layers of programmable realities.

The integration of personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal experience: Films like *The Sixth Sense* (1999) integrate personal subjectivity, interpersonal relationships, and transpersonal realities to produce a sense of interconnectedness between inner, outer, and transcendent experience. The inner and personal experiences of the films two main characters, the boy who sees dead people and the doctor who tries to help him, are intimately tied into their relationship with each other, and with the world of physical and non-physical reality.

The interrelatedness of normally perceived discreet domains and events: The synchronicity-based story structures of films like *Magnolia* (1999), *Serendipity* (2001), and *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993) reveal a mysterious and mystical relatedness between seemingly separate people, situations, and events. In the film *Timecode* (2000) this interrelatedness form of cinematic structure is taken to the extreme by filming four different stories, with seemingly dissimilar but related characters and events, and then projecting all four stories on the screen simultaneously in a four-quadrant configuration.

The relativity and/or aperspectival nature of perceptual reality: In films like Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) the relativity of human perception is captured in a story structure that looks at a single event from the perspective of different people, showing how each person sees a totally different reality. In *Memento* (2000) the main character's short-term memory loss becomes the fabric of the story's structure, taking the audience through a maze of disjointed perceptual experiences that lead to the visceral aperspectival revelation ''that no perspective is final'' (Wilber, 2001, p. 193).

All of these cinematic structures seek to transcend the boundaries of some aspect of the *Cartesian-Newtonian* constructs of time and space.[2] Films with these structures attempt to cinematically express alternate views of personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal reality by structurally going beyond the confines of linear time and bounded three-dimensional space.

Additional boundary-transcending cinematic structures include the emergence of trans-genre and trans-media storytelling (e.g., *Star Wars; The Matrix*). Trans-genre storytelling is the blending and integration of the cinematic structures of various genres into a whole that is greater than the sum of its individual genre structure elements. Trans-media storytelling is the utilization of various media (theatrical film, interactive DVD, video games, etc.) to tell a story on multidimensional levels. The cinematic structure of trans-genre storytelling represents a transcendence of the boundaries between previously separated aesthetic conventions, while the manifestation of trans-media storytelling signifies both an aesthetic and technological transcendence of some of the limitations and rules of the material reality of different audiovisual mediums.

TRANSPERSONAL INFLUENCES ON CINEMATIC STYLE

A cinematic style is a ''general representative form'' (Wolfflin, 1950, p. 13) that uses various audiovisual expressive elements to convey an auditory, visual, and visceral reality that communicates the ideas, thoughts, and emotions of a film's content and structure (Moholy-Nagy, 1965). These expressive elements include the manipulation

of space, line, shape, tone, color, movement, rhythm, and contrast and affinity (Block, 2001). For example, in the opening of the first *Star Wars* (1977) we see a relatively large spaceship fly across the screen. Suddenly, another spaceship appears in hot pursuit of the first ship. As the hull of this pursuit spaceship progressively enters the frame for an extended period of time, the viewer is surrounded by a deep rumbling sound that moves from the back of the theater to the front. This amalgamation of the visually expressive elements of *open space* (the ship extending beyond the edges of the frame), *spatial contrast* (difference in size between the two ships), and *movement* (the relative movement of the two ships), combines with the spatially-moving depth-representational sounds to produce a powerful synchronization of the senses that replicates the experience of actually sitting under this massive ship. In an instant filmmaker George Lucas stylistically and viscerally communicates a deep archetypal message to the viewer, the message that we are about to see an epic struggle against a great and mighty force.

While individual stylistic elements of expression have been used independent of a specific representational form, they have also been combined together in a particular way to create a general style of expression. Some of these general cinematic styles evolve within a certain genre (e.g., the dark and brooding visual atmospheres of the *film noir* detective film genre), and many filmmakers develop their own distinct styles of cinematic expression (e.g., Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, Stanley Kubrick). In addition, there are cinematic styles that go beyond a particular genre or filmmaker. Many of these broader cinematic styles are variations of some of the styles of classic, modern, and post-modern art (e.g., realism, neo-realism, naturalism, surrealism, expressionism). Although most of these broader styles have been used in films to express transpersonal content and structure, the surrealistic and expressionistic styles appear to have a greater capacity for the expression of transpersonal concepts and experiences because of the symbolic, intuitive, visceral, and arational nature of these styles.[3]

Another cinematic style that is more directly related to the transpersonal is the transcendental style (Schrader, 1988). The transcendental style attempts to create an audiovisual representation of transcendental or non-dual reality ''by eliminating (or nearly eliminating) those elements which are primarily expressive of human experience, thereby robbing the conventional interpretations of reality of their relevance and power'' (Schrader, 1988, p. 11).

Even though there is not a currently classified transpersonal style, there are several transpersonal or boundary-transcending stylistic approaches that filmmakers have used over the years. Some of these transpersonal stylistic approaches include:

Camera/object boundary transcendence: Filmmakers have used camera movement and special effects to transcend all boundaries by moving through walls and floating through the air to convey the visceral reality of other realms. In *Wings of Desire* (1987) the camera captures the point-of-view (POV) of angels as they effortlessly float through the barriers of time and space. In *Grand Canyon* (1991) the camera flies across the cultural and economic divide of modern day Los Angeles, viscerally expressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual ''canyon'' that separates rich and poor.

Image/object transformation: From the dissolving body of *The Invisible Man* (1933; 1958) to the morphing persona of everyone who wears *The Mask* (1994), optical and computer generated imaging (CGI) visual effects allow filmmakers to transform the physical structure of a character or any physical object into different physical forms.

Audiovisual representations of altered states of consciousness: Various technological and expressive techniques have been used to represent the differences between normal and altered states of consciousness by audiovisually transporting the audience into the subjective experiences of these states. In the film *Brainstorm* (1983) the juxtaposition of different film stocks, aspect ratios, frame rates, and visual and sound atmospheres is used to represent distinctions between normal reality and a machine-induced telepathic reality. In the film *Altered States* (1980) special effects enhanced character point-of-views are employed to capture the main characters subjective experiences of drug-induced experiments with consciousness.

Audiovisual representations of temporal and spatial distortions: In *The Matrix* (1999), CGI visual effects viscerally communicate the spatial distorting experience of a character being able to stop bullets in midair with his mind, and capture the perception of the stillness within the actions of the marital artist.

THE SYNCHRONIZATION OF CINEMATIC CONTENT, STRUCTURE, AND STYLE

The cinema's unique transformative powers, which arise out of the synchronization of the senses inherent in the medium (see above), depends on the filmmaker's ability to integrate a film's thematic content with the structure of the story and the film's audiovisual expressive style (Eisenstein, 1942). When this synchronization of content, structure, and style occurs a film's meaning and purpose permeate every frame, its message is communicated through every image, action, word, and sound, and its impact can be felt in the body, heart, mind, and spirit of the viewer (Lester Novros,[4] personal communication, 1977).

Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* (1987) is a classic example of this transformative synthesis of content, structure, and style. The thematic content or narrative core of this film is the story of an angel who gives up his eternal sensory-deprived angelic existence for the sensory-rich world of human life and love. This thematic content is translated into a two-part narrative structure; the first part of the film takes place in the angel's reality, and the second part in the human realm when the angel chooses to ''fall'' to earth and enter into human form. The world of the angels is structurally represented by a thought-driven scene construction as the story jumps from scene to scene driven by the angels hearing the thoughts of random people in distress or contemplation. In the second half of the film, after the angel takes human form, the story structure becomes more ''normal'' with a time/space-driven scene construction. Wenders stylistically separates these two worlds by shooting the angel's sensory-deprived realm in black and white, and the sensory-rich human world in vivid color. Additionally, these two realms are further distinguished by the use of a floating boundary-transcending camera style in the angelic universe (see above) and a more traditional rooted and bounded camera style in the human universe. The

result of this integration of content, structure, and style is a film that viscerally communicates the existential struggle between body and spirit.

<div align="center">TRANSPERSONAL EFFECTS OF THE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE</div>

McLuhan and Fiore (1967) contend that all forms of audiovisual media are powerful and persuasive environments that appear to influence the individual and society on multiple levels of experience and being. ''They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered'' (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 26).

Throughout the history of the cinema, films have had both a positive and negative influence on individuals, society, and culture (Petric, 1973). The German propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (1935) has been credited with helping bring the Nazi party to power in 1930's Germany, and the Hollywood nuclear reactor disaster movie *The China Syndrome* (1979) appeared to have a strong influence on the collective reaction to the Three Mile Island nuclear accident that brought about sweeping changes to the United States nuclear power industry (Petric, 1973; Walker, 2004). Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) reportedly induced psychological phobias and fears in many of their audience members, and *The Exorcist* (1973) reportedly provoked extreme physiological reactions in the audience including fainting, heart attacks, and vomiting (Harrison, 1999; Kermode, 1990).

Therapists have also used the persuasive power of the cinematic medium in the therapeutic environment by utilizing the viewing of films as a means of ''metaphorically promoting therapeutic change'' (Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002, p. 269). In this *Journal*, Lu and Heming (1987) have demonstrated ''that a fictional film can be successfully used in reducing death anxiety and altering attitudes toward death'' (p. 158). Researchers at Yale University have effectively utilized the viewing of films to reveal patterns of perception and brain functioning in people with autism (Klin, Jones, Schultz, Volkmar, & Cohen, 2002).

Hurley (1970) and Ferlitta and May (1976) assert that one of the cinema's strengths is its ability to powerfully portray transformations in consciousness, and to effect attitudinal and perceptual change on the personal and transpersonal levels of experience. All of the transpersonally-oriented films previously mentioned that have attempted to portray these powerful transformations in consciousness in their content, structure, and style have the potential to produce transpersonal effects in the viewer.

Some of these transpersonal effects of the cinematic medium include the replication and inducement of transpersonal experiences and perceptions for individual viewers, and the incorporation of transpersonal concepts and ideas into the viewer's constructs of self and world, and into the greater culture. For example, the peak experience of the runner portrayed in *Chariots of Fire* (1981) or the altered states of consciousness depicted in the film *Altered States* (1980) may induce similar experiences in audience members. These transpersonally-oriented films also have the potential to extend their transpersonal concepts and ideas to the individual and the

greater culture. An example of this powerful extension of a film's transpersonal concepts and ideas to both the individual and culture is the audience member identification and cultural saturation of the *Star Wars* mythology of "the Force" (Campbell & Moyers, 1988).

In addition to effects directly related to transpersonally-oriented films, there also appear to be transpersonal cinematic effects that are independent of a film's transpersonal content, structure, and style. These transpersonal cinematic effects generate experiences and perceptions that seem to transcend the perceived boundaries between a film's *constructed cinematic reality* (CCR) and the perceptual and emotional reality of the viewer.

The power of the films that produce these effects appears to depend on the relation between the viewer's life journey and the journey of the film. Consequently, any film can become transpersonal; from pop culture escapism to great works of cinematic art. A character in any film may be going through situations and events that appear strikingly similar to the viewer's; or an on-screen character may be experiencing emotions the viewer has experienced or is currently experiencing (Hoyes, 1997). When this connection between the viewer's life and the film's life occurs, the synchronistic nature of the experience can usher the viewer into a powerful transformative experience. The images and sounds of these life-transforming films can appear to penetrate the viewer in mysterious ways. The viewer's reality and the film's projected reality can seem to magically unite and reflect something greater than each of these separate realities. Viewers may experience subtle and profound shifts in their mental and emotional constructs of self and the world, and a new experiential reality may be born.

This synchronization of a film's constructed cinematic reality with the viewer's reality seems to be able to occur on the personal, interpersonal, and collective levels of viewer experience. There also appears to be potential for similar transpersonal synchronization effects between constructed cinematic reality and the members of the cinematic creative team. A preliminary classification of these transpersonal cinematic effects includes:

Synchronization of constructed cinematic reality and personal viewer reality: For example, on the personal level, a young woman stutterer told me that *Voice in Exile* (Kaplan & Fienberg, 1985), a dramatic film I wrote and directed about the subjective experience of a stutterer, had miraculously stopped her from committing suicide. She further explained that my film came on television right before she was about to end her life. The main character's inner life so perfectly reflected her own that it made her feel that she was not alone. She then had an emotional and spiritual catharsis as she listened to the words of the main character's therapist, who synchronistically looked and spoke exactly like her own therapist.

Synchronization of constructed cinematic reality and interpersonal viewer reality: On the interpersonal level, another woman stutterer reported that the viewing of *Voice in Exile* (Kaplan & Fienberg, 1985) transformed her entire family when they all viewed the film together. It seemed that the inner and outer experiences of the on-screen family so synchronistically mirrored her own family's dynamics that each family member was able to see themselves and each other in a whole new light. The

cinematic viewing experience seemed to help them experience feelings that they had not allowed themselves to feel before, and appeared to foster deep empathy for each other. The woman stutterer's parents confirmed their daughter's observations when they joined us and tearfully thanked me for helping them finally see and feel their daughter's emotional and perceptual reality.

Synchronization of constructed cinematic reality and collective viewer reality: On the collective level, the powerful cultural impact of the viewing of the nuclear reactor disaster film *The China Syndrome* (1979) before, during, and immediately following the real-life Three Mile Island nuclear reactor accident was mediated by the film's many synchronistic parallels to the actual event. There was even a line of dialogue in the film that poignantly referred to this type of nuclear reactor accident as being able to ''render an area the size of Pennsylvania permanently uninhabitable.'' The fact that the real Three Mile Island nuclear reactor accident was actually occurring in the state of Pennsylvania turned this minor line of dialogue into a hauntingly synchronistic experience for many audience members. This cinematic synchronicity, along with the many other narrative and technical parallels between the film's reality and the actual events, contributed to the manifestation of this powerful cinematic/cultural phenomena (Osif, Baratta, & Conkling, 2004).

Synchronization of constructed cinematic reality and creative team reality: Creative team members may also experience transpersonal synchronization effects from the constructed cinematic reality of the film they are creating. For example, during the filming of *Voice in Exile*, the main character's sense of isolation and inability to communicate with others appeared to reverberate through the whole cast and crew, causing personal, interpersonal, and collective communication problems throughout the entire production process. Conversely, during the production of another one of my dramatic films, *Write This Down* (Kaplan & Lewis, 1982), the film's theme of mystical interconnectedness appeared to magically play itself out through the personal lives, interpersonal relationships, and collective group experience of the cast and crew.

Synchronization of constructed cinematic reality and the evolution of consciousness: In reference to possible transpersonal cinematic effects at the more collective level, motion picture director and editor Robert Wise noted a possible connection between the evolution of consciousness and the evolution of the cinema. Over his illustrious 60-year career he observed that the perceptual consciousness of the cinematic audience appeared to advance along with the cinema in the ability to communicate more information, in more abstract forms, within shorter durations of time. Wise explained that when he first started in the film industry the motion picture audiences required very clear linear story structures, and that gradually throughout his career the audiences seemed to develop the ability to more readily and quickly project meaning across discontinuous and non-linear cinematic structures[5] (Robert Wise,[6] personal communication, 1985).

To illustrate one aspect of this evolution, Wise used the example of a cinematic sequence that has a character driving to another character's house for a meeting. In the old days filmmakers had to show the person driving the car, stopping the car, getting out of the car, walking up to the house, knocking on the door, and then going

inside. Gradually over time, the audience has advanced to the point of being able to accept a direct cut from a person driving a car to them suddenly being inside someone's house. Wise believed that these advancements in both cinematic expression and the perceptual consciousness of the cinematic audience were the product of an interdependent and coevolutionary relationship between the cinema and the audience (Robert Wise,[6] personal communication, 1985).

Wise's observations appear to concur with Gebser's (1986) contention that artistic movements and trends have a tendency to influence and be affected by the evolution of consciousness. Another possible indication of this parallel development of the cinematic art and the evolution of the perceptual consciousness of the cinematic audience is the growing interest in films with transpersonal content, structure, and/or style. A comparison of the above criteria for transpersonally-oriented films and international box office statistics reveals that 20 out of the top 25 most financially successful films of all times are films with transpersonal content, structure, and/or style (Box Office Mojo, 2005, November). Some of these enormously popular transpersonally-related films include *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001; 2002; 2003), *Star Wars Episodes IV, I, II,* and *III* (1977; 1999; 2002; 2005), *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* (1982), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003), and *The Sixth Sense* (1999).

<div align="center">TOWARD A TRANSPERSONAL CINEMA</div>

In conclusion, the transpersonal or boundary-transcending nature and capacities of the cinematic medium make it a potentially powerful and valuable tool for the mediation of transpersonal experience and perception. There are preliminary findings that suggest the effective use of the viewing of films in the therapeutic environment (Lampropoulos, Kazantzis, & Deane, 2004). The growing popularity of films with transpersonal content, structure, and style implies an increasing interest in transpersonal ideas and experiences. Additionally, expanding perceptual capacities of the cinematic audience indicates a probable receptivity for more powerful and direct transpersonal applications of the cinematic medium.

Promising transpersonal applications of the cinema include the conscious use of traditional and new cinematic media formats to mediate transpersonal experience, induce transpersonal insight and awareness, stimulate healing and personal growth, and possibly even assist in the personal and collective evolution of human consciousness. These applications could take a wide variety of forms from transpersonal cinematherapy to interactive media (IM) entrainment, personal-media-player (PMP) trance induction, high-definition video (HDV) meditation, and digital cinema (DC) vision quests.[7]

In order to develop the full transpersonal potential of the cinema, additional theoretical analysis of the transpersonal dimensions of the cinema is required, as well as further research on both the therapeutic application of existing cinematic productions, and on the creation and use of original transpersonally-designed productions. Research into the creation and application of these original transpersonally-designed cinematic productions could utilize Eisenstein's cinematic research method of cinematic analysis, design, experimentation, and testing (Eisenstein, 1942). These cinematic inquiries into potential original transpersonal applications of the cinematic

medium might include analyses of the effects of individual and various configurations of transpersonal cinematic structures and stylistic elements (cinematic analysis); the development of transpersonal cinematic models for the usage of these structures and stylistic elements to produce the desired transpersonal effects (cinematic design); the creation of original cinematic productions based on these transpersonal cinematic models (cinematic experimentation); and qualitative and quantitative testing of these experimental productions (cinematic testing).

There is a long-standing tradition among filmmakers and film theorists to apply the latest theories and discoveries of psychology to cinematic production and analysis, from the development of psychoanalytic film theories to the creation of Jungian cinematic dream sequences (Hauke & Alister, 2001; Metz, 1986). In this light, the application of transpersonal psychology theory and practice to cinematic theory, research, and production is a natural progression. One example of this potential synthesis between the cinema and transpersonal psychology would be the application of transpersonally-related audiovisual theories and practices (e.g., EMDR, color, light, sound, and music therapies[8]) to the creation of original transpersonally-designed cinematic productions.

In all of this, there is the potential for the emergence of a transpersonal cinema; a cinema that has the power to heal, inspire, and transform, a cinema that fully realizes the inherent transpersonal nature of the cinematic medium. For the cinema is not just ''a reflection of reality, it is the reality of a reflection'' (Jean-Luc Godard,[9] *La Chinoise*, 1967); it is not merely a mirror of our world, it is a journey through the ''looking-glass'' into a parallel universe that has the capacity to reveal the truth beneath the surface of things and call us toward our highest potential.

NOTES

[1] Arthur Knight is a noted film historian, critic, author, and educator who taught at the University of Southern California's department of cinema and television. He is considered one of the central figures in the establishment of film studies as a valid academic pursuit, and his book on the history of the cinema, *The Liveliest Art* (1978), is considered a classic in the field.

[2] The Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm is the mechanistic, dualistic, and reductionistic worldview that has arisen out of the scientific and philosophical theories of Sir Isaac Newton and Rene Descartes (Capra, 1984). This paradigm includes the supposition of the primacy of linear time, mechanistic three-dimensional space, and the dualistic separation of mind and matter. A cinematic exploration of Capra's theories on the deconstruction of this paradigm can be seen in the film *Mindwalk* (1990).

[3] Wilber (2000) associates the surrealistic and expressionistic styles of art with the symbolic, impulsive, and emotional ''patterns of being and consciousness'' (p. 7), and Gebser (1986) suggests that the arational nature of these styles can potentially portray the aperspectival world.

[4] Lester Novros (1909–2000) was an acclaimed motion picture animator, special effects artist, large-format film technology (Imax/Omnimax) pioneer, and cinematic expression theorist and educator. His animation credits include Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Fantasia* (1940), and he created special effects for Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Through his renowned filmic expression classes at the University of Southern California's department of cinema and television, he taught generations of filmmakers (including George Lucas) how to use the transformative powers of the cinema.

[5] The developments in the perceptual abilities of the cinematic audience observed by Wise[6] correlate with Gebser's (1986) notion of ''the mutative unfolding of consciousness [that] appears to represent both 'progress'—insofar as there is an accrual of new capacities or modes of responsiveness—and 'progression away' from . . . simplicity'' (Feuerstein, 1987, p. 38).

[6] Robert Wise (1914–2005) was one of Hollywood's most illustrious editors and directors. During his 60-year film career he directed 39 films including *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956), *West Side Story*

(1961), *The Sound of Music* (1965), and *The Sand Pebbles* (1966). His motion picture editing credits include such film classics as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939), *Citizen Kane* (1941), and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942).

[7] The emergence of New Media technologies such as interactive media (IM), personal-media-players (PMPs), high-definition video (HDV), and digital cinema (DC) expand the aesthetic and technological potential for transpersonal applications of the cinema. Even though the unique material reality of each of these new audiovisual formats needs further analysis and exploration, these new forms appear to represent an extension of cinematic communication into more interactive, immediate, intimate, and effect-driven environments.

[8] The potential synthesis between the cinema and transpersonally-related audiovisual theories and practices includes: EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) theory and techniques applied to camera/object movement; hypnotic trance induction theory and techniques applied to audiovisual expressive element patterning; light, color, sound, and music therapy theory and techniques applied to cinematic expression style and design; and biofeedback and audio visual stimulation (AVS) theories and techniques applied to interactive media applications.

[9] This memorable line of motion picture dialogue is from Jean-Luc Godard's classic film *La Chinoise* (1967). Godard is known for expressing his philosophies of life and cinema in his films, as well as in his venerated writings in film theory and criticism. He is considered one of the grand masters of French avant-garde cinema, and his films include the avant-garde film classics *Breathless* (1959), *Contempt* (1963), and *Alphaville* (1965). Many of the transpersonal cinematic structures and styles that have appeared in mainstream cinema were inspired by the trans-rational structures and styles explored by avant-garde filmmakers like Godard.

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