

Cinema of the Future

A Combination of Oriental Wisdom and Occidental Knowledge

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Abstract

What course will cinema take in the future? This question involves at once technological, ontological and constructional aspects. It is a question about the films themselves, their technical development, the ways in which they are shown, and even such things as movie theater buildings, projection screens and the viewers' opinions on the reality of images. The present article, however, delves into the characteristics of high-quality twenty-first century cinema, the emerging new spiritual horizons, and the dominant stylistic trends of intellectual cinema across the world. I am not at all concerned with commercial films filled with fanciful hallucinatory special effects; although today's fantastic adventures and juvenile sagas may well represent the technological reality of tomorrow's ordinary life. Nevertheless, even in this perspective, cinema still expresses only the surface of the capricious events of the human play. This article, on the other hand, is concerned with the evolutionary process that has defined and heightened the standards of profound, progressive art; the unique creative wisdom that has shaped the life of the public at large.

I confess that for me, the future is not what "will come into being," but is to some extent, the lives that "we will create," that "we will make." Therefore, speculating about twenty-first century cinema is a slightly mischievous effort on our part to have it evolve as closely as possible to our prediction. This in itself is the energy to play and a creative force, and not just a remote contemplation separate from action and separate from us, because it is happening. But, for sycophantic, dogmatic, one-dimensional minds, cinema of the future will inexorably be the continuation of everything that the mercantilist and monopolistic world of cinema has established through sex, violence, fiction, and eye-catching technology. That science-fiction, gangster, horror, or melodramatic movie genres prosper in the future is not important. At this point, thinking about twenty-first century cinema is a disciplined intellectual process, with or without imagination. This is indispensable in any tentative quest for a model of progress in the domain of scientific and theoretical discovery, plus or minus the thinker's personal taste. This taste comprises aesthetic views, attitude "in the face of time" and "within time," and the reaction to existence here and now.

Let us imagine the different methods embracing a retrospective of a cinema of the future, a cinema at the turn of a century, a millennium.

To each of us, twenty-first century cinema has a particular ring. Our expectations of the context of future cinema will bring about a particular interpretation and a particular perspective. Some, following their biases or tastes, and in the wake of such popular, believe future cinema to be one of image films based on the most extravagant computer-made special effects. Some go as far as predicting its death, others look forward to an ideal, pure, reflective cinema, and some predict the continuation of all genres of cinema. The present article, however, bases its vision of the future on the aesthetic processes that have evolved step by step, the developments achieved in the pictorial arts, and the effects of the technological boom on modern art, particularly cinema. This article believes in the human ideal of intellectual and aesthetic change for the better. It perceives the events of modern cinema as indications of it leaving behind the stage of hallucinatory thrillers. It believes that the main characteristic of tomorrow's proper cinema will be the elimination of its ugly and deceptive big business side based on sex, violence, illusion, irrationality, superficial emotionalism, and fictional adventure. It therefore considers twenty-first century cinema the outcome and the continuation of a vision and an experience begun in the past century, and even earlier.

Modernity, followed by its criticism, holds in its bosom the seed of a new art that is cinema, and its fate in the future. As it were, cinema was nothing but the essence of the vision, the thinking, the animation and the achievements brought about by technology. All the technological experiences, production systems, and interpretations of the ideals of modernity (laicism, liberalism, universalism...), which culminated in the technological developments upon which modern life was founded, came together to give birth to cinema: an art specific to the modern world, in which the most progressive thinkers were involved... Caught in a web of capitalistic relationships, cinema of the 20th century deviated from its task of portraying life based on reality. The image was instead geared towards a commercial cinema; in an anti-aesthetic direction and far removed from the above-mentioned ideals.

Today, however, twenty-first century cinema has a new ring. Reaching us now with some delay in both time and meaning, it is the echo of cinematic history, inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy. The new approach to this art is through life and its actual details. It is necessary to first pay sufficient attention to Nietzsche's genial message "Be natural." Also bear in mind

the astonishing effect he had upon Walter Benjamin and his views on technological art and the effects of reproducibility on the structure of art.

It is only in this perspective that the events of twenty-first century cinema guide us towards a new aesthetic quality in cinema. Hand-held cameras have advanced technologically and widespread technological reproduction is leading to changes in the structure of cinema and its future existence, signs of which are already visible in the foremost works. So, it is not important whether different genres of cinema are continued or not in the future. What is important is for us to find out with what kind of art, life and evolution in the new century will be compatible. Now, allow me to say that twenty-first century cinema is, on the one hand, Nietzsche's ideal inspired cinema and the peak of modern man's expectation of art, i.e., a pictorial art that testifies hidden and shocking details of man's existence. On the other, an intuitive cinema which, just like the mystic's quest, transforms the film's quest into a possibility of baring man's soul and bravely contemplating the images of everyday life that have remained in the dark. Is this contradiction understandable? Nietzsche and mysticism! Nietzsche's most important message is the natural inclination of man and art. When this naturalness merges with the reality of the image, given the possibility of a quest for purification, we witness the apparently contradictory presence of both naturalness and mysticism. How will the quest of cinema happen in the century to come? We had better recall the path of films, as well as the meaning of this evolution.

I wish to first review the early period of filmmaking, its trends before WWI. At the end of the nineteenth century, the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière held several paying motion picture spectacles at the Grand Café in . December 28th, 1895 is considered as cinema's official date of birth. *Arrival of a Train*, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, and the aggregate of the films produced by the Lumière brothers reveal the nature of modern, twentieth century technological art. This art, with its reproducibility and public nature, constitutes eyes for seeing the image of life and approaching life through the image; which enables us to pause and review things that are naturally irreproducible and fleeting. However, under the influence of capitalism and mercantilism, cinema soon drifted away from its natural course to become a profitable, and amusing, illusory art. Georges Méliès was the figurehead of a cinema that was focused on imagination. One of his first films, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), a sixteen-minute reel based on Jules Verne's novel, was rendered as a fantasy using the period's new technical developments. The rocket lands in the moon's eye, the passengers fight a dangerous war against its insect-like inhabitants, and eventually return safely to earth. That was a new trend which, with such later works as *The Devil's Four Hundred Blows* (1906), *An Impossible*

Voyage (1909) and The Conquest of the Pole (1912), marked the new path of capitalism. Yet, even then, the challenge of focusing on life existed.

In his famous declaration, Louis Feuillade put forth the idea of transferring reality onto the screen: “The scenes of this film, as it is, are to be slices of life, without any imagination.”* Soon, however, Feuillade’s ideal changed. Gaumont had him turn to producing superficial romantic and criminal movies.

But the confrontation between the cinema of life and the cinema involved in mercantilist pursuits did not end, although cinematic thought remained subjugated until the threshold of the twenty-first century. For example, the film *Lost in the Dark* (1914), from which Neo-realist cinema originated, was made by Nino Martoglio. Gustavo Serena’s *Assunta Spina* (1915) also looked realistically at everyday events, but no distributor could be found for his works. On the contrary, cinema turned to Cecil B. de Mille’s cinema, to the cinema of sex, money and violence. Even D. W. Griffith’s great achievements shifted towards commercial dramaturgy, and, dramatic content, storyline and literary narrative elements were used to create exacerbating illusions and profit making in.

In *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), what is shown on the screen is an inherently distorted reality. From , cinema learned how to show events in a distorted manner and spread the culture of pleasant mystification, which it adopted as rigorous rules. The discovery of the power of image realism culminated in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1926), in which the leader’s dominant and delivering role in a mechanized society was depicted. “The trouble with *Metropolis* and Lang’s other works is not only that they cover up social conflicts and equate the laborers’ freedom with their surrender to an authoritarian leader, but that the anti-life viewpoint of Lang’s expressionist cinema in an incoherent imagination, tries to shape space using the most sophisticated light effects, and fails to pay the slightest attention to the real elements and details of man’s life.”

Throughout the twentieth century, avant-garde aesthetic experiments caused the world’s cinema to progress, but from the viewpoint of everyday life, this cinema fell increasingly under the spell of images evading tangible, real-life details. Even in impressionist cinema—in such works as Abel Gance’s *Mater Dolorosa* (1917), *La folie du Dr. Tube* (1915), etc.—the victors were fantasy, light, and shadow plays. Rather than attempting to create films embodying the essence of life, this cinema sought to achieve a kind of refined impressionism in its decoupage and photography. A case in point is Germaine Dulac’s *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (1923), which tries to give a cerebral meaning to the story by means of frequent cuts and light effects. Of course, even in its most imaginary form, artistic cinema had a poetic

feeling and was filled with life. Jean Epstein's *The Faithful Heart* (1923) is exemplary in this regard.

The formative experience of the third decade of cinema is also unconcerned with life. In producing *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1924), Fernand Léger is only engrossed with the forms of the bowls and frying pans and the heavy breathing of the old lady climbing the stairs of a building. In the same years, with his *Entr'acte* (1924), René Clair also showed that his aim was to rid contemplation of all ordinary logic and relationships. He wanted to confirm the existence of unlimited freedom in cinema. In *An Andalusian Dog* (1928), Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí were also infatuated with surrealist representation. However, Buñuel's opposition to technical tricks and devices somehow preserved the ideal of closeness to reality. In the same decade, Jean Cocteau's *The Blood of a Poet* put him nearer to the tradition of. In all this, Charlie Chaplin was the unique symbol of the ideal of life in the cinema of Hollywood.

Roberto Rossellini's *Open City* (1945) was a successful film in this style. Huizinga describes the Italian Neo-realism as the most dangerous expression of social movement. It was perhaps this characteristic that upset the relationship between Neo-realist works and real life. Although these works have been universally acclaimed as summits of a life-oriented outlook, this movement initially looked at life with a mentality convinced that the meaning of reality was whatever the leftist ideology judged true. As a result, dramatic context proved detrimental to the objective contemplation of life and its countless facets. Positivism, acting as an obstacle between reality and Neo-realist works, prevented cinema from adopting a life-oriented vision. Nevertheless, beyond its real-looking imagination, this narrative cinema did examine man's problems. (According to Antonio Pietrangeli who in 1942 wrote in *Blanc et Noir*: The inevitable fate and the natural roots of cinema must be sought only in the domain of realities—and in the most tangible and penetrating of all, the “domain of truth”). The film magazine, *History of Artistic Cinema* published its 1943 declaration, which may be termed the declaration of Neo-realism, in the following terms:

1. Death to the primitive and artificial spirit ruling the major part of our cinematographic production.
2. Death to imaginary, negativist works in which man and his problems are not dealt with.

3. Death to any historic reconstitution or film that is made from a novel not created due to a political necessity.

4. Death to any speaker who dares say all Italians are made of the same paste, inflamed by the same pure sentiment, and equally aware of the problems of life. **

It should be borne in mind that works such as Alessandro Blasetti's *Four Steps in the Clouds* (1943), Luchino Visconti's *Obsession* (1946), Roberto Rossellini's *Paisan* (1946) and *Germany Year Zero*, Vittorio de Sica's *Shoeshine* (1946) and *The Bicycle Thief* (1948)... all express a sincere feeling toward life and reference reality. Man's attachment to the social environment and his efforts devoted to making cinema a faithful mirror of reality could not prevent the separation of real life from Neo-realist cinema. Paying attention to "Death to ..." slogans, fascist rhetoric, directives of that declaration and one-dimensional works produced in that period, one sees that, in their narration, Neo-realist film, like any other, follow a subjective, interpretive outlook which they present as objectivity. As in all images, the reality of the image in Neo-realism only expresses a particular world evolved from the reflection of reality in the mind and the subjectivization of life on the cinema screen. All the same, this cinema shows that modern pictorial art is seeking a way to establish contact with life, even if it comes under the influence of this or that ideology.

Efforts to strike the level of life and the effects of man's actions upon it eventually gave birth to a profound style led by Robert Bresson. Achieving great success in terms of image aesthetics, this unique style eventually grew to become a full-fledged cinematographic theory in which attention to life was an insatiable quest.

No doubt, Bresson's cinema is also narrative, but by steering clear of hijacking the viewers' emotions, it tries to break free from the artificial sensations of fictional, story-telling works. A natural, and cool composure far from theatrical expressions, and Bresson's particular play arrangement, are very important elements if we are to understand the impending realism of transpiration. Although Jean Grémillon's *Gueule d'Amour* (1937) and *L'étrange Monsieur Victor* (1938) belong to the "film noir" genre, they are Neo-realist in essence, like his documentary, *Le 6 juin à l'aube* (1945).

Unfortunately, life-oriented vision was still a lesser current in the commercial side of western cinema ruled by the mercantilists. The censorship of half of *Le 6 juin à l'aube* was an expression of this reality, which showed a lack of understanding and failure on their part to understand the importance of touching real-life details, and the deep roots of fantastic storytelling. Louis Daquin's cinema and his attempts at depicting life in such works as *Mark of the Day* (1949) caused him, in Ulrich Gregor's and Uto Patalas' words, to remain jobless in France for many years, before being compelled to turn to Balzac and Maupassant. René Clément's documentary films, such as *The Battle of the Rails* (1945), also declined to the level of story-telling cinema of the sixties. In France, works such as André Malraux's *Days of Hope* (1945) and Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique* (1949) did not become unforgettable models of the transpiration list cinema of the future, just as Michael Powell's films, created in the wake of the traditions of Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934), tended to shift from the imaginary genre to the documentary. Nonetheless, as early as 1944, English films began their role of diverting the public from life's tangible problems and daily hardships, throwing a veil between real life and cinema by producing lavish thrillers. In *Night Train to Munich* (1940), *Odd Man Out* (1947) and *The Third Man* (1949), Carol Reed distanced himself from his role in *The Stars Look Down* (1939), turning instead to popular fads and falling deep into the valley of unrealism with *A Kid for Two Farthings* (1955) and *The Key* (1958). And, with *Summer Madness* (1958) and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), David Lean joined a cinema that was distancing itself from real details and moving towards a cinema filled with emotion and adventure.

Ingmar Bergman's cinema is one of the peaks of artistic cinema; a wonderful, enchanting cinema based on a profound psychological method that continues until *Fanny and Alexander* (1983).

In the , Vertov's film-eye emerges as the Stalinian cinema of Danskoi's *How Steel was Tempered* (1942), *The Local Committee Secretary* (1942), Pirieff (1942) and Pudovkin's *In the Name of the Fatherland* (1943), with all their dogmatic destructive ideological power, covering up life and all its pure tangible moments. Eisenstein's technical achievements fall prey to the party's fanatical optimistic messages and most horribly betray reality to a worthless official cinema. Produced in the name of socialist realism, examples of this cinema include: *Ivan the Terrible* (1944), Georgi Vassiliev's *Apology of the Czaritsin* (1942), and works by Grigori Khockrai.

An important point is that the message of returning to reality flourished in American cinema. In terms of style, play arrangement and story, this narrative cinema claims to represent a pure life-oriented current, and has been most successful. Is this true? In my opinion, from behind its mask of realism, deals the most severe blows to the vivid feelings of life and assails the realistic mind with its excessive emotionalism and ignores the little but true details of human experience. Undoubtedly, films such as William Wyler's *Memphis Belle* (1944) demonstrate that American narrative cinema did value human warmth. But is this cinema, or even such films as John Huston's *The Battle of San Pietro* (1945), meaningful? What profound wisdom beyond that of the current snobbish American slogans, what social critique deeper than palpable human success, and what insightful question does it contain? "In post-war years, Robert Flaherty was practically the only director who could find a private investor for his *Louisiana Story* (1948)."* The movement of American documentary-oriented films quickly died down and, paved the way for the growth of mental viewpoints veiled under a mask of realism and films filled with American stimulation and exhortation. This cinema, with its special effects and various narrative arts developed into the present-day cinema: an unrivalled medium continuously disseminating a mass of worthless captivating romances and thrillers filled with sex and violence. *Basic Instinct* (1992), *The Mask* (1994), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), *Star Wars* (1977), *Armageddon* (1998), *Lethal Weapon* (1989), *Rambo: First Blood* (1985), *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999), ... all have one thing in common: they strongly avoid reality and are oblivious of anything related to man's experience of living in the real world.

It is precisely in the context of this cinema that a new trend is emerging in the world, driving us to believe that something happened at the end of the twentieth century causing a change in the cinema of the twenty-first. Is something new happening? Twentieth century documentary film has led to the growth of documented narration, returning to the original naturalness, thoughtfulness, lyricism, and sincerity of cinema, dominated for a century by fiction-oriented currents.

What I mean is that *Where is the Friend's House?*, followed by the other productions of Iranian cinema in this modern approach, called future cinema all over the world to a new fate far beyond Neo-realism or any other documentary experiment. A fate it naturally deserved, interwoven with life and all the heavens and hells, disasters and good fortunes, sorrows and joys which can pour forth from reality into the reality of the image. Iranian cinema exhorted the cinema of the world to rediscover life, to return to naturalness and to contemplate the

grandeur of the picturesque event of living, more laden with catastrophes, quandaries and pleasures than any “story” or “novel.”

Quentin Tarantino’s cinema, Dogma 5 cinema, Chinese cinema and independent American cinema have all been affected by the transpirationalist style of Iranian cinema. The question of documentation even infiltrated American Beauty (1999) with its hand-held camera, as well as The Blair Witch Project (1999), etc.

Something happened in the world, reuniting cinema and life, and against its backdrop the importance of simple, poetic, and natural aspects of transpiration list Iranian cinema becomes clear. This event is technological progress, which has simplified cameras and made them available to all. Today cameras are used in thousands of homes. Television has vastly expanded visual culture, and advanced apparatus have simplified film production. Increased knowledge and know-how have enabled many families to experience filmmaking. It is precisely in this world that cinema, intermingled with life, is realized. A cinema that grows out of life itself depicts the moments of life and, more than at any other time, found the means of being expressed by great filmmakers, and people who make personal films. From among these, greater filmmakers will arise whose cinema will more than ever bring to fruition the ideal film-eye. Unique talents will give birth to utterly realistic and supremely poetic masterpieces.

In fact, this movement will vastly alter the artistic structure and definition of high-quality cinema in the century ahead. This is my guess. From within this cinema, the courage to bare souls, reveal untold details of lives, and throw down masks will arise. In my opinion, this is the same fight against mystification as that championed by ‘Ain-ol-Qozat Hamadani and oriental mystics. Man’s most modern art, cinema, is preparing to take up this same fight, an event that will put an end to art’s multi-millenary duplicity vis à vis the character, and to the masking and hiding of actors behind their roles. Hence forth, new Sophocles, Shakespeares and da Vincis will arise from beyond Oedipus, Hamlet, Madame Bovary, and Mona Lisa, acquainting us with heavenly secrets expressed in the manner of Hallaj or ‘Ain-ol-Qozat. They are re-creating their own images; something James Joyce did in The Portrait of the Artist as a Young.

The main title of this section, “Cinema at the Turn of a Century, a Millennium,” contains Persian words that epitomize the cinema of the future in terms of linguistic fraternization. It is a name in which and by which language becomes a universal reality and cinema mirrors a new awareness.

The reality of dialogue within human civilization makes the meeting of important civilizations possible. In fact, in our text, a bit of the Persian language has been creatively and originally fecundated by items from other languages. Let us repeat the keywords: “cinema,” “turn,” and “millennium.” These linguistic features have gained meaning in the analytical context of the Persian language. Other words include: “enlightenment,” “film,” and “twenty-first century,” brought together in a groundbreaking meeting of Islamic mysticism, modernity and ancient Iranian symbolism in the Celebration of Centuries. The title of this article contains the essence of this article. Here, an ancient civilization, the Iranian civilization during its Renaissance, has something new to tell the world. The Persian language, by juxtaposing signs of various societies and their significant propinquities, is making it possible for man to rid himself from his divergences and believe in his creativity. Three linguistic layers—Persian, Arabic and English—with different artistic, poetic, mystic, intuitive, demonstrative, and rational characteristics make a large dialogue possible, providing a preamble and an opportunity to reflect on the beauty, truthfulness, creativity and freedom of the future. In the third millennium and new century, Iranian art, through its cinema, has something new to say concerning the structure and creation of expression. What is the lure of our cinema which can influence post-modern cinema of the twenty-first century? It might seem as though a few prizes at festivals are the reason behind this lure, but in fact it is the post-modernism of our cinema that is responsible.

With the concurrence of unexpected objective and subjective conditions, creative forces communicated their thirst for freedom and touching life, to the country’s intellectual cinema. The Islamic revolution of 1979 abolished the caricature of a cinema that was busy emulating . The ensuing void made it possible for Iranian cinema to breathe fresh air, abandon its habits and touch upon new experiences. Despite obstacles, the spiritual horizon of a time honored civilization encouraged bold expectations. This cinema style achieved the meaning that had been promised from the time of Nietzsche to Lumière to an ideal modern art yet to be born; a meaning that briefly manifested itself, before succumbing to mercantilism and fiction; the meaning of the palpability of the modern world in the cinema of the future.

Thus, the core of this article is the idea that naturalness is the main force of twenty-first century cinema. This naturalness is deeply in conflict with naturalism and inherently intermingled with the great ideal of mystical wisdom of the oneness of existence and the purification of man, who is to create cinema as a compressed image of modern civilization. This is art’s brave approach to the naturalness of life. Therefore the cinema of the future will be radically different from the thoughtless, artificial, fictional, adventure-packed, commercial

cinema of Hollywood. It will be a transpirationalist cinema and, in my opinion, will conform to the growth of documented narration; a cinema that gives man the courage to bare his soul; a documented bareness that contains both heaven and hell.

In the title of the article, the word “cinema” reflects and represents all that is the product of modern civilization, mirroring modernity. It stands before us, and the magic of viewing its images has done the job. But we have not remained passive and awestruck in front of the image-making mirror; we have drawn our own image in a way befitting a cultured person.

We have become cultured. We have the ability to repay cinema, this gift of modern civilization, with the gift of something ancient but not old: the intuitive power and the understanding of the aesthetic importance of absence. Cinema was the embodiment of modern reason and perception that sought to guide modern man, through the camera’s eye, to a new, Nietzschean horizon, to advise us to “be natural, see naturally,” and to give us the courage of contemplating the realities within and without ourselves and infusing poetry into this “most dangerous profession,” as called by Holden Linton. However, soon after Lumière, capitalism and its international hegemony led commercial cinema to reign over, or at least marginalize, this essential achievement of modern art for a hundred years. The experience of post-revolutionary Iranian cinema rapidly paved the way for the advice “be natural” to be recalled, but in an unexpected way, through the effects of our ancient wisdom and knowledge. The word “preparations” evokes this spiritual character opposed to habits and seeking freedom from the habitual cinema of the past.

‘Ain-ol-Qozat Hamadani was a mystic opposed to habits and his Tamhidat [Preparations] is important for us from three viewpoints: a) its advice to “be natural”; b) its opposition to the cult of habits, and most importantly; c) its message of being a bare mirror and having the courage of depicting and beholding one’s own heaven and hell. To dare and be constantly original and opposed to all that is familiar, means being bold enough to unveil one’s secrets and share them with other men. Long before our time, ‘Ain-ol-Qozat had strangely realized the importance of the image and the reality of its effect upon man’s spiritual development and quest. He was particularly attentive to one of the divine names of God, mosavver (illustrator), and he revealed divine secrets by mere contemplation while in a trance.

Thus far in this text, twenty-first century high-quality cinema will take a major step towards ideal imagery and documented narration, it will acquire the courage of being natural and dispassionately contemplate itself and the world, and, by dropping all masks, it will turn from elaborating on the persona and the personage to simply observing real-life details in men's lives and the hidden tragedy of their daily motions. In this way, cinema will provide an opportunity for a quest; one which mystics long sought in their meditations; and which will bring intuitive experience and poetic wisdom to man. How?

Indeed, he spent his entire thirty-three year-long cultural career standing steadfast against collective triviality and showed the majority, if not all, to be ugly. At the same time, he retained all the originality and value of his personal mirror. Although collective triviality eventually destroyed him—the mirror—did it also destroy his qualities as a mirror?

In this mirror metaphor—mirror/Iranian mystic-mirror/creative text— I see a way opening, to continue in the form of mirror/twenty-first century cinema. Here too cinema is a creative, living and intellectual mirror, whose quality as such the collective triviality of a mercantilist era and the hegemony of mediocre and ugly cinemas are trying to destroy. But cinema's quality as a mirror, which remained subjugated for a hundred years, is raising new questions at the outset of the twenty-first century. Did the ugly, thoughtless world of films filled with fascinating special effects, sex, violence and fantasy, destroy Lumière's life-oriented mirror? Did the new transpirationalist Iranian cinema, with Kiarostami at its helm, begin the style of bare and natural contemplation in a cultivated spirit, thereby encouraging brave documented narration as idealized by 'Ain-ol-Qozat: "truthfulness, purity, integrity, fairness, openness and honesty"?

Let me briefly note that, ever since its creation, modern technological art has been potentially able to help man tear down all veils and acquire the courage of setting out on a pictorial quest aimed at discovering the hidden realities of life, and to overcome the obstacles on his way towards enlightenment and straightforward speech about real-life details.

Cinema's century-long descent into the abyss of commercialism and the utilization of technology to produce entertaining fiction only expressed a transitory crisis.

In the same period, cameras, which allowed real details and individual lives to be recorded, were perfected and made available to the public. The massive vogue of cameras, which allowed life's wonderful details to be readily recorded, made it possible for the first time for

the poignant details of man's existence to be pictorially expressed; an unthinkable feat until yesterday.

Precisely at this point, alongside the development of a visual culture, the post-industrial technology of video cameras is gradually achieving something at the social level which the immense mystic experience with its intense torments was also after. The possibility of contemplating one's dark self, the courage of facing oneself and the dark details of one's life, tearing down one's veil by confessing to all, that which is seen with the inner eye, to eventually become purified and liberated, discovering and attaining bliss, love and joy and awaking to the new vision earned by one's courage of contemplating one's inner night are all things sought by mystics. The ancient mystic's quest and today's brave pursuer of modern cinema, with mirror-like qualities, enter in communion with the tree, the bird, the star, indeed with light, and are thus able to reach true, pure intuition. The vast scope of the experience of the camera, which records life's details and visual culture, dispel the fear that prevented Flaubert from being Flaubert and had him unwind through Madame Bovary's persona, or made da Vinci wear the mask of Mona Lisa, or compelled avant-garde cineastes to speak about themselves through the mask of fictional dramatic heroes. The past century's story-telling cinema is characterized by secrecy and functionality. Digital cameras are making it possible to rise against masks, personae, personages and habituation, and to achieve a documented contemplation of the play of life on a large scale in the cinema of the twenty-first century. From within this cinema, myriad works, both poetic and appalling will grow out; an experience which no contrived drama can equal in poignancy. This, of course, is not due solely to this cinema's mirror-like, truthful quality, but also to the emergence across the world of thousands of new genial talents joining this generalized picture-making revival. Led by an audience-oriented Iranian cinema, which first began institutionalizing, in a formal experience, the mirror-like quality in the vision of life, people began making movies of themselves; something that only became possible in the closing days of the twentieth century. In this way, bringing together the loftiest achievements of human civilization, twenty-first century cinema paradoxically combines modern knowledge and ancient mystic wisdom. It is a cinema based on the formation, omission and organization of white pages by which the image of real untold secrets takes shape as an architectural whole in the viewer's mind; a cinema in which Kiarostami and 'Ain-ol-Qozat meet to generate an art that is revealing, truthful, bold, poetic, opposed to habits and mass mediocrity, joyful, tragic, documented, original, natural...; a cinema in which man has the courage to show his life's play; a cinema

filled with friendship, love, originality and courage; a cinema which seems to have inherited from 'Ain-ol-Qozat Hamadani, what he uttered in in anguish, "... they have been in fetters but lacked the guts to speak these secrets out."

Initiated by late twentieth century Iranian cinema, the cinema of the future has found the guts to be natural, free, poetic, revealing anti-fiction and life-oriented, assuring its hegemony by these attributes.

In my opinion, Iranian cinema, dominated by Kiarostami's life-oriented art, is the leader of twenty-first century cinema and its most moving Nietzschean event; a bridge that links Western knowledge to Oriental intuition and resolves a century-long feud between two attitudes in Western cinema to the benefit of a living cinema that springs out of the experience of life.