**In defence of film as philosophy: Bergman beyond Kaila**

One of the current debates in Philosophy of Film revolves around “film as philosophy” (FAP), the idea that (some) films can philosophize. A good part of contributions to the debate derive from Deleuzian and Cavellian ideas on film, mainly in the “film-philosophy” context that gives the name to one of the major European journals and conferences on the topic.

If, in this context, a favourable position has been established for decades, in the Anglo-American context there is a dominant scepticism towards FAP, giving rise to various objections. One of them is the imposition objection according to which, by interpreting certain films, philosophers impose their own philosophical ideas and, thus, the film does not philosophize for itself.

Against this objection, Paisley Livingston defends a *partial intentionalism*, according to which the author’s intentions determine (partially) the meaning of the film (Livingston 2009). To understand the meaning of films, and evaluate if it meshes with its audio-visual presentation, Livingston suggests that an interpreter should research internal (characteristics of what is presented in the work), and external evidence (such as notes or interviews of the author).

In this context, Livingston suggests a reading of Bergman’s work focusing on external evidence in order no understand the author’s intentions and, thus, avoid the imposition objection.

Some common readings of Bergman’s work focus the relation with existentialism and psychoanalysis. Livingston, however, questions this relation and identifies, in Bergman’s own words, a major influence by the psychologist and philosopher Eino Kaila’s work.

Still, the exclusion of any kind of connection to existentialism or psychoanalysis seems counter-intuitive since there is a vast number of publications on this relationship. As other authors identified, many themes approached in Bergman’s work seem to have existentialist concerns (Williams 2015).

To solve this exclusion and accept, simultaneously, Kaila’s influence, we can accept another intentionalist version. Thomas Wartenberg claims that philosophers should avoid making “inappropriate interpretations”. For this, the philosopher suggests two types of interpretations: “audience-oriented” and “creator-oriented”. The former type allows free interpretations, and the latter does not allow the philosopher to “impose” to the film something that the author *could not have intended*. Furthermore, this type of interpretation can identify, in the film, a *problèmatique* (instead of just a thesis of a particular author), considering the author’s historical and social context (Wartenberg 2007, 2016). (Note that Wartenberg does not think that his argument is an intentionalist one). Contrary to Livingston’s approach, this could accept both Kaila’s influence *and* psychoanalytical and existentialism influences. Kaila’s work is in an existentialist context (Smith 2010), and the philosopher had deep knowledge of psychoanalysis, so it becomes difficult to deny such influences: recognizing them could be even essential to understand Bergman’s work.

Livingston’s intentionalism seems to be too compromised with strict external evidence, so there could be a more advantageous strategy that also takes internal evidence and broader external evidence in conjunction into account. We propose, thus, to adopt Wartenberg’s approach with which it would be possible to argue that Bergman’s work has recognized philosophical influences that go beyond illustration of Kaila’s thought, avoiding any imposition, and understanding Bergman’s work as an original philosophical contribution.

**References**

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