

# Heterotopia of the film Solaris directed by Andrei

## Tarkovski

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### Heterotopia of the film Solaris directed by Andrei Tarkovski

Jonathon Rosenbaum notes that Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, (Andrei Tarkovsky 1972) unlike Lem's novel, (Lem 2012) is rather anti-science fiction than science fiction. (Rosenbaum 1990, 60)

Rosenbaum suggests that while the film is denying our archetypal space travel, the main concern is the psychological investigation of Kris Kelvin, while trying to rediscover a lost humanity in the face of technology and science. (Duffy 2003) As Tarkovsky noted, "I am interested above all in the character who is capable of sacrificing himself and his way of life - regardless of

whether that sacrifice is made in the name of spiritual values, or for the sake of someone else, or of his own salvation, or of all these things together.” (Andrey Tarkovsky 1996, 217)

Andrew Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) film can also be approached through the philosophy of mind, of key questions in this area. These questions relate to personality and suffering, covering at least the period from Rene Descartes to modern philosophers such as Derek Parfit and Hilary Putnam. (Tumanov 2016)

*Solaris* appears as a suitable vehicle to explore philosophical challenges. Derek Parfit imagined such a science fiction scenario as the Teletransporter Thought Experiment, the philosophical personality requirements that perfectly resemble Tarkovsky's film because of the replication of the character, Harey in *Solaris*. (Parfit 1984, 200)

In fact, Tarkovsky's *Solaris* film allows multiple semantic interpretations. Thus, Manfred Geier sees the ocean through three dominant metasemic lexmas: a picture of female sexuality, and a schizophrenic miracle machine (derived from Deleuze-Guattari's *Anti-Oedip*). Given the extraterrestrial ontological origin of the ocean in relation to human beings, its "meaning" can only be determined negatively: it is to hold in front of human beings a mirror of their own anthropomorphic and geocentric limitations. If there is any purpose/meaning for people, it consists of trying to conquer *Solaris*, not in *Solaris* itself. (Geier 1992)

At the same time, *Solaris* presents an excellent example of how heterotopic spaces can exist in cinematic terms. Tarkovsky's film explores how the experiences gained in the heterotopic space offer the individual the ability to reverse the panoramic vision and how these experiences can ultimately show us how we can recover or restore our existence as individual subjects. The experiences of the characters determine us to see many of the forces and speeches that contributed to the creation of this space from an outside point of view. (Duffy 2003)

Our consciousness can perceive things that are not present. Imaginable or designed objects may be distant from the perceived reality. The concepts refer to things that once were able to be experienced and are now absent; or to a reality that exists elsewhere and whose existence we are sure even if we have never experienced it; or to a fictional world created by the imagination, a world of a film, for example, whose characters and fictitious events can live while we see the film as if they were real; or, ultimately, a fantastic reality. (Geier 1992) In all these cases, the object of consciousness is a conceptualized, imaginary reality, which is represented or expressed in language. All the time our consciousness is intentional; we are aware of something.

For all these approaches the language is important, because it allows consciousness to keep focused on something. The literary or fanciful text, however, can refer to a reality that does not exist. We are dealing here with fictitious utterances that have the same linguistic form as the statements that may be true ("quasi-statements" for Roman Ingarden) (Ingarden 1997) but does not refer to real objects. Statements are not interested in truth, but of semantic precision or consistency. (Geier 1992)

In *Solaris*, within the limits of heterotopic experience, several theoretical and ontological questions are examined through approaches on each character. In *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky commented that "Solaris had been about people lost in the cosmos and obliged, whether they like it or not, to acquire and master one more piece of knowledge." (Andrey Tarkovsky 1996, 198) Berton declares one of the main philosophical themes of the movie when he tells Kelvin: "You want to destroy that which we are presently incapable of understanding? Forgive me, but I am not an advocate of knowledge at any price. Knowledge is only valid when it's based on morality." (Andrei Tarkovsky 1972, 00: 29: 26,099-00: 29: 42,115) Kelvin's father believes his son is a

danger to him and to society, and he agrees with Berton's suggestion that his son's utilitarian vision of life has neither morality nor an essential humanistic approach.

The ocean does not mean anything as an object, it simply exists. The ocean is not found in any of the human experimental approaches. No experiment is repeatable, no generalization determinable. It is something singular, which essentially contradicts human language, a "pure object" without an intelligible or experimentally defined purpose, causing a kind of epistemological optimism. The ocean is an extraterrestrial existence for humans and therefore incomprehensible. It is designated as an ocean, a brain, a protoplasmic machine, a gelatin, although everyone knows that it is none of them. (Geier 1992) Thus, the Solaris ocean can be interpreted as plasma, organized physical structure, with its own metabolism and mechanism, capable of goal-oriented activity, generating new eruptive forms, (Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary 1907, 10: 356) with variants such as the ocean - rhythmically moving waves, smoke and fog rising from its surface with depths and islands - an organic prebiotic formation - a primitive biological structure, gelatinous, a single monstrous, overcrowded, - and brain - protoplasmic, a huge amount of information, a source of electrical impulses, in the form of a gigantic, incomprehensible monoblock, possibly endowed with consciousness) as a symbol of feminine sexuality (the unknown is transposed into a partially similar experience, Berton's child experience is nothing but the occurrence of birth, even if it appears to be a meaningless plasma creation, and the appearance of the mimoids can be interpreted as a birth, or a schizophrenic mechanism (a synthesis of the unconsidered schizophrenic unconscious Harey, the product of the ocean, becomes the object of analysis, experimental examinations and reflections (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 10–11)

Tarkovsky changes the main subject of the novel by reducing the focus on Solaris and focusing on Harey's evolution. A key question from a philosophical point of view is, can it be

considered Harey as human? Harey can be analyzed in the context of Cartesian dualism. Descartes's reductionist view of animal suffering and animal-machine is opposed to Harey's evolutionary experience in *Solaris*. Can only Harey be considered an alien amorphous structure, or should its behavior be considered? Her emotional development and suffering, her epistemological journey toward self-knowledge, and especially her intense relationship with Kelvin, make the film an autonomous and deeply philosophical work of art: (Tumanov 2016) "The major deviation Tarkovsky undertakes in his film consists of a principal shift in the overall intention of the narrative prompted by the firm belief that love and human emotion have a primary meaning in the universe..." (Deltcheva and Vlasov 1997, 533)

The station is as a heterotopic space from which Tarkovsky can project the life, death and humanity in this distant framework. The station will determine the narrative. As Duffy says, it "forms a type ontological no-man's land in which elements, within the narrative and beyond, enter into the work as a whole and provide the audience the opportunity to view a variety of very different discourses at work." (Duffy 2003, 56)

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