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Cinema and human dignity: Pope Francis's cinematic proposal and its relationship with filmic personalism

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ABSTRACT

This article considers whether the Pope Francis's proposal in his approach to cinema as a subject for reflection, i.e., as a suitable media for presenting ideas, can be related to an interpretation of the best cinema that highlights the dignity of the person, particularly the most fragile and defenceless, and which thereby helps us train our gaze on true humanity. To answer this question, the meaning of Hollywood's 'filmic personalism' as a cinematic philosophy and its relationship with film studies will be analysed. Following from this, the cinematographic phenomenology of film studies of French personalism will be related to Hollywood's film personalism to show that there are elements of deep convergence around defending cinema as an art that serves personal dignity, despite certain aspects of difference. This will be particularly visible in the interrelationship that can be traced between Italian neorealism and Hollywood filmic personalism, proving that neorealism was a form of personalism for some Italian writers. At the same time, we keep in mind that there are current expressions of filmic personalism. We conclude with solid arguments that are given to establish an approach between the cinematic proposal of Pope Francis and filmic personalism.

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1. Pope Francis's proposal in his approach to cinema

1.1. *The presence of cinema in the teachings of Pope Francis*

The presence of cinema in Pope Francis's teachings represents a decisive step forward over the presence that this medium has had in papal teachings. The fact that specific quotes from films and documentaries are included in the magisterial texts affords clear support for the seventh art. It is a gesture that, to us, seems interlocked with the research that we have been developing on the concept for which we have coined the name 'filmic personalism' (Peris-Cancio, Marco, and Esplugues 2022, 31–65).

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A recent book by Dario Edoardo Viganò clearly explains Pope Francis's vision of cinema. By means of a significant title—*Lo sguardo: la porta del cuore* (Viganò 2021)—Viganò emphasises that the way Pope Francis approaches cinema is characterised by a declared respect for the seventh art and its possibilities, to the point that he has not hesitated to expressly quote the content of some films in magisterial documents (Della Maggiore and Subini 2020). Indeed, Viganò explains that Pope Francis's most characteristic approach to cinema:

is that it becomes part of his teachings, not the most important and not only as an "object" of attention or pastoral concern, but also as a "subject" accepted as a form of language, culture, art, even to the point of being able to be quoted as a text among others, in his speeches, his homilies, his encyclicals. (Viganò 2021, 10)

Cinema as an object of attention simply implies dealing with everything that it supposes as a social and artistic fact, and, where appropriate, valuing it. Cinema as a subject implies actively collecting the possibilities offered by the filmic medium to humanise reflective discourse through its own resources. That Pope Francis considers cinema as a subject is easily verifiable. For example, we can see this in number 129 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in which he refers to the film, *Babette's Feast* (1987), by the Danish director—who, however, lived for long periods in France—Gabriel Axel (1918–2014).

The most intense joys in life arise when we are able to elicit joy in others, as a foretaste of heaven. We can think of the lovely scene in the film *Babette's Feast*, when the generous cook receives a grateful hug and praise: "Ah, how you will delight the angels!" It is a joy and a great consolation to bring delight to others, to see them enjoying themselves. This joy, the fruit of fraternal love, is not that of the vain and self-centred, but of lovers who delight in the good of those whom they love, who give freely to them and thus bear good fruit. (Francis 2016a, n. 129)

Gianluca della Maggiore and Tomaso Subini offer another example in which Pope Francis turns to cinema for a representation of what he wants to communicate to those who listen to him:

... less visible, more refined, like the profound filmic allusion to Fellini's *La Strada* that the Pope makes during a homily delivered in a relaxed manner for Easter 2016, where he mixed the Old and New Testament metaphors of the "stone discarded by architects" that "is now the cornerstone" with that of the "pebble speech" that The Fool gives to Gelsomina. (Della Maggiore and Subini 2020, 28–29)

These are express and direct allusions to fiction films. With them we could include references to the documentary essay by Wim Wenders, *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word*, which was quoted by the Pope in his encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*. These are expressions that give clues to understanding some attitudes that are typical of what can be identified as 'filmic personalism': listening, authentic human progress, the glance ...

Indeed, the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti. On fraternity and social friendship* (Francis 2020) refers to the documentary by Wenders in no fewer than three paragraphs: 48, 203 and 281.

Number 48 quotes an expression from the documentary referring to Francis of Assisi. What comes from the audio-visual text is undoubtedly inviting us to broadly reconsider the figure of the Saint of Assisi. So do the images of provenance, which

thereby help us to consider the complete personality of this exemplary disciple of Christ. We are facing a subtle way of intensifying the degree of listening¹ with which we must welcome the allusion to the *poverello*, as if the Pope were inviting us to interact with him in person.

Yet “today’s world is largely a deaf world ... At times, the frantic pace of the modern world prevents us from listening attentively to what another person is saying. Halfway through, we interrupt him and want to contradict what he has not even finished saying. We must not lose our ability to listen”. Saint Francis “heard the voice of God, he heard the voice of the poor, he heard the voice of the infirm and he heard the voice of nature. He made of them a way of life. My desire is that the seed that Saint Francis planted may grow in the hearts of many”. (Francis 2020, n. 48)

The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* again quotes Wenders’ documentary on Pope Francis in the context of asking what it is that allows people to work together:

Public discussion, if it truly makes room for everyone and does not manipulate or conceal information, is a constant stimulus to a better grasp of the truth, or at least its more effective expression. It keeps different sectors from becoming complacent and self-centred in their outlook and their limited concerns. Let us not forget that “differences are creative; they create tension and in the resolution of tension lies humanity’s progress”. (Francis 2020, n. 203)

The third allusion to Wim Wenders’ documentary is made in number 281, and perhaps here we find a magnificent expression to understand filmic personalism as a broad exercise in understanding the human condition, with a gaze that seeks to tune into the merciful eyes of Jesus Christ (Francis 2016b). Pope Francis does so by addressing the necessary antagonism that there must be between religion and violence. Here, we quote the paragraph containing the words from the Wenders documentary in full:

A journey of peace is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God’s way of seeing things. “God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart. And God’s love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion. Even if they are atheists, his love is the same. When the last day comes, and there is sufficient light to see things as they really are, we are going to find ourselves quite surprised”. (Francis 2020, n. 281)

1.2. The vision of Pope Francis on Italian neorealism: between memory and the now

An interview with Pope Francis is included in the book by Dario E. Viganò, as its first chapter. It is an invaluable text in verifying that, for the Supreme Pontiff, there is a way of making cinema that is particularly relevant when it comes to understanding the filmic experience itself, when it comes to verifying how cinema can renew our vision of the world. It is Italian neorealism.

Without a doubt, there is concordance between Pope Francis’s procedure and that which we have developed in our research on filmic personalism. It is found in his consideration of the filmic experience as a starting point. Indeed, when we refer to cinema, we do not refer to an object or an art outside of us, but we start from our own experience, from our cinema going. Cinema does not exist on celluloid, or on any other electromagnetic medium. It happens when there are people who watch—and in that sense

recreate—films. Pope Francis expresses it this way clearly when he recounts how he discovered the films of Italian neorealism.

Above all things, I owe my film culture to my parents. When I was a child, I often went to the local cinema, where they would show three films back-to-back. It is one of the best memories of my childhood: my parents taught me to enjoy art in its different forms. On Saturdays, for example, my mother, my brothers, and I listened to the operas that were broadcast on Radio del Estado (now Radio Nacional). She made us sit next to the apparatus and, before the broadcast began, told us the storyline of the opera. When a key aria was about to start, she told us: “Pay attention, this is a very nice song”. It was something wonderful. Then there were the films in the cinema, for which my parents applied the same method as they did with the operas: they explained them to us so that we could get our bearings. (Viganò 2021, 13)

Getting to grips with Italian neorealism films allowed us to better outline what that experience consisted in. More clearly, it showed that it was not just about entertainment or aesthetics, but also about acquiring a broader view, widening the possibilities of empathising with a range of manifestations of the human condition.

And it was in this context that your relationship with Italian neorealism was born ...

Yes, among the films that my parents wanted us to see were those of neorealism. Between the ages of ten and twelve, I think I saw all the films with Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi, including Roberto Rossellini’s *Rome, Open City*, which I liked a lot. For us, the children of Argentina, those films were significant because they gave us an in-depth understanding of the great tragedy of the world war. In Buenos Aires, we mainly learned about the war through the many migrants who arrived: Italians, Poles, Germans, etc. Their stories opened our eyes to a drama that we had no direct knowledge of, but it was also thanks to the cinema that we acquired a deep awareness of its effects. (Viganò 2021, 14)

Pope Francis specifies the values that the films gave him, which, in general, are part of neorealism, and which—in his opinion—are still fully valid.

You have often defined neorealist cinema as a “catechesis of humanity” or a “school of humanism”. These are very subtle expressions with which he attributes a universal value to this cinematography. Where is the relevance of these films?

Neorealism films shaped our hearts and still can. Even more so: those films taught us to look at reality with different eyes. I very much appreciate this book capturing this fundamental aspect: the universal value of that genre and its relevance as key tool in helping us renew our world vision. What a need we have today, to learn to look! (Viganò 2021, 14)

That ability to give a piercing look to discover true hope among difficulties is a tool that Italian neorealism offers us, and that has been important, according to Pope Francis, during the pandemic, which in a certain way we have not stopped living through, although we now experience it with less intensity.

The difficult situation we are going through – framed by the pandemic – generates concern, fear, and discouragement, which is why our eyes need to be able to pierce the darkness of the night, to gaze up beyond the wall to scan the horizon. Today a catechesis of the gaze is so important, a pedagogy for our eyes that are often incapable of contemplating the “great light” (Isaiah 9:1) that Jesus brings, during darkness. (Viganò 2021, 14)

As we have also done in our comments on the films by Capra and McCarey—which we justify later—Pope Francis finds a very significant contribution in Simone Weil’s reflections on the gaze to understanding the virtuality of cinema when it comes to educating it.

A mystic of our time, Simone Weil, writes: “Compassion and gratitude descend from God, and when they are given through a look, God is present at the point where the looks meet”. This is where the reflection on the gaze opens to transcendence. How wonderful it would be to rediscover the importance of education in the pure gaze through cinema. Just as neorealism has done. (Viganò 2021, 14–15)

The humanism² of neorealism shows itself very efficiently as an educator of the gaze:

But how can this cinema teach us to gaze?

Neorealist cinema is a gaze that provokes consciousness. *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*) is a 1943 film by Vittorio De Sica that I like to quote often because it is so beautiful and rich in meaning. In many films, the neorealist gaze has been the children’s gaze on the world: a pure gaze, capable of capturing everything, a clear gaze through which we can immediately and clearly identify good and evil. (Viganò 2021, 15)

The children’s gaze of Italian neorealist cinema is itself capable of judging our intentions. This is something that Pope Francis repeats nowadays regarding the situation of refugees, in perfect communion with the opinion expressed by the Orthodox Archbishop of Athens, as he says.

I remember the words of my brother Jerome, Orthodox Archbishop of Athens and of all Greece, regarding one of the harshest realities of our time: “Whoever sees the eyes of the children we meet in the refugee camps is able to immediately recognise the ‘bankruptcy’ of humanity in its entirety” (*Speech at the Moria refugee camp*, Lesbos, 16 April 2016). On many occasions and in many different countries, my eyes have met those of children, rich and poor, healthy, and sick, happy, and suffering. Being seen through the eyes of children is an experience that we all recognise; one that reaches the depths of our hearts and forces us to examine our conscience. Neorealist cinema has universalised this gaze of children: their gaze, which is so much more than a simple point of view, questions us even more nowadays, as the pandemic appears to multiply the bankruptcies of humanity. (Viganò 2021, 15)

A third aspect that Pope Francis finds in Italian neorealism revolves around its ability to remove people from a logic of separation, of atomism. Neorealist films contributed to rebuilding the social fabric in Italy. The same thing can continue to promote cinema today, when the pandemic can generate feelings of distance and isolation from one another.

In addition to providing a pedagogy of the gaze, cinema, in general, also has great social value...

Cinema was and is a great aggregation instrument. Particularly in post-war Italy, it made an exceptional contribution to the reconstruction of the social fabric with many aggregation moments. How many plazas, how many cinemas, how many oratories, encouraged by people who, when watching a film, conveyed hopes and expectations. From there, with a sigh of relief, they again began the anxieties and difficulties of everyday life. It was also an educational and formative moment, to reconnect

relationships consumed by the tragedies experienced. Even today, looking beyond the difficulties of the moment, cinema can maintain this capacity for aggregation or, better yet, for building a community. Without communion, aggregation lacks a soul. (Viganò 2021, 18)

Finally, the fourth aspect that we shall dwell on refers to Pope Francis's reference to the dynamic between the history and memory of Italian neorealism.

It is a decisive question for the future.... In this sense [...] the history-memory dynamic finds an important point of reference in cinema. Let's look at neorealism: the art of cinema managed to light the path of events to reveal their deep meaning. This is another reason why it is important to return to those films with a commitment to the future rather than nostalgia (Viganò 2021, 19)

Can Pope Francis's vision of Italian neorealism and its ability to educate the gaze be inserted in a broader context? Can we find links with the personalistic cinema of Capra, Ford, McCarey, Leisen, La Cava, Borzage, etc.? What about the Dardenne brothers or Aki Kaurismäki? We will try to show that all these questions can be answered affirmatively.

2. Hollywood filmic personalism as a cinematic philosophy and its relationship with film studies

2.1. What is filmic personalism? A concept of cinematic philosophy

The Philosophy of Cinema is a relatively recent discipline. As such, it has had to open its own domain among those who, led by the usual philosophy of science model, were prone to consider cinema as something alien to the methodology of an analytical philosophy. On the other hand, however, it has also had to limit its object because, in response to the above, there have been those who consider cinema to be the authentic current way of doing philosophy, naming the new discipline as *Filmosophy* (Frampton 2006).

To fully understand the concept of film personalism, we need to place ourselves before a philosophy of cinema that has been able to effectively delimit its role and has been able to integrate films into philosophical discourse, recognising their full role (Read and Goodenough 2005). A philosopher or professor of philosophy can go to the cinema to see it as philosophy and, in a certain manner, 'do' philosophy. This is something where schools as different as personalist thought or that of the Spanish philosopher Julián Marías (Marías 1971, 2017), or the treatment of ordinary language in Ludwig Wittgenstein or Stanley Cavell (Goodenough 2005; Read 2005) can agree.

Therefore, the best justification for a philosophy of cinema is found in demonstrating how certain philosophers have found an ideal medium in cinema where they can clarify their conceptual questions with their own resources. It points towards a philosophy that has been exercised in integrating films as texts that intrinsically enrich philosophical reflection, since they provide elements that would not otherwise be found.

To clearly express the task of cinematic philosophy, we can turn to the work of Robert Buford Pippin who, in our opinion, successfully sums up the task of cinematic philosophy.

If at least part of what happens to us when we watch a film is that events and dialogues are not just present to us but are shown to us, and if the question this fact raises – what is the point of showing us this narrative in this way? – does not in some cases seem fully answered by purposes like pleasure or entertainment, because something of a far more general, philosophical significance is intimated, some means of understanding something better, that all of this occurs in an aesthetic register, in our attending aesthetically to what is shown, then that much larger question, of a film's philosophical significance, with philosophy understood in some sort of traditional way, is obvious. (Pippin 2017, 6–7)

What Pippin considers obvious, for those of us who research filmic personalism, has been a goal of our work in recent years. Our starting point has been a somewhat surprising discovery. Turning our attention to the deep human meaning of certain films of what has been termed classic Hollywood, we sense that what they convey—without being a cinema with a message or committed to an ideology—is a concern for the centrality of the person, the world of the person, and his links with others. It is a conception that is deeply related to the philosophy of the mid-twentieth century that certain philosophers known as personalists had developed in those years.

For greater clarity, filmic personalism encompasses the various proposals by classic Hollywood film directors that what they show on screen has at its centre the human person and his links with others, as well as the communities of which the person is a part, from marriage and family to national and international political society. And the discovery of the reality of these links entails a series of positions that define the cinematic philosophy that sustains them. We have concentrated these positions into eight.

- i. From an epistemological point of view, the philosophy of filmic personalism sustains the centrality of the filmic experience. We can all talk about cinema, inasmuch as when something in a film stirs us, we usually enjoy discussing that thing. This makes cinema a clearly open and democratic art. Filmic personalism is done in a way that is perfectly parallel to one of the expressions of philosophical personalism, such as integral personalism: in the adventure of knowledge, the faculties of the subject do not operate in a broken manner, but from the unity of the personal being. This modality of personalism—as developed by Juan Manuel Burgos (2015) following the path of Karol Wojtyła (2017)—proposes the centrality of human experience as a key element for overcoming the opposition between ‘realism’ and ‘idealism’. *To know* is an activity of the person. Similarly, the most solid starting point of knowledge when talking about cinema is the viewer's own experience—even before that of those involved in creating the film—which, of course, must be developed and educated, not repressed or unconsidered.
- ii. In this centrality of experience, filmic personalism coincides with Emersonian perfectionism, as justified by Stanley Cavell (1981). This way, cinema appears as an art for freedom: it is made so that the person develops his knowledge, not for any form of indoctrination. Indeed, cinema, the last of the great arts, achieved—at least in its first six or seven decades—what Stanley Cavell names a ‘democratisation of perfectionism’ (2005, 340) of moral reasoning about what

- makes our lives valuable. Cavell developed these ideas when the artistic avant-garde was dominant. (1979, 108–117).
- iii. For a personalist cinematic philosophy, and therefore, for reflection on films from the point of view of filmic personalism, filmic theories (of a psychoanalytic, semiotic, sociological, historical, etc. nature) that have been developed especially during and since the second half of the twentieth century may be necessary. Even more imperative, though, is a cinematic philosophy that develops its mission around filmic theories, harmonising and ordering them—which avoids film interpretations being subordinated to preconceived theories, even if the theories claim to be scientific. What Noël Carroll has pointed out—and rightly in our opinion—is how to be vigilant in avoiding the risk of so-called Elevated Theories (Carroll 2003), which reduce the interpretation of cinema to its taglines. As Robert B. Pippin (2017, 7) points out, an adequate articulation between filmic theories and philosophy much be achieved. Filmic theories are necessary when they help light up the viewers’ own experiences. But not when they try to override or subdue them.
 - iv. In this way there is no division—in personalist cinematic philosophy—between the habitual claim of cinema to present itself as entertainment and its philosophical mission. Cinema must appear as ‘entertainment’, but as ‘intelligent entertainment’, which puts the poetic possibilities of the medium into play to delight viewers in a way that favours their loyalty to something that is providing them with something truly new. As Robert Bresson pointed out: ‘You will call the film that gives you a good impression of the cinematographer good’ (Bresson 1997, 29).
 - v. A lofty idea of cinema seems to point to the centrality - without exclusivity - of the director as author, as the first to represent with cinematographic language (visual, dramatic, musical, luminous, colourful, embodied by actresses and actors...) that which the film has to communicate (being the first to see the film with the means at his disposal). The director has a privileged position as a catalyst for a group of people—sometimes very large—in which the screenwriters stand out for the importance of their contribution. This allows the director to be characterised as ‘the one who has no right to complain’ (Truffaut 1963), as the one who imprints the aesthetic dimension on films (Perkins 1993).
 - vi. The philosophy of cinema benefits from film studies that highlight the value of cinema as an art, and that allow directors to be valued as true creative artists. Specifically, two types of studies: those that delve into the creative working lives of the great filmmakers, and those that propose a study of cinematographic narrative with its roots not so much in the narratology of the twentieth century as in its more properly philosophical aspect, following the tradition cultivated by Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The cinematic philosophy of filmic personalism conceives of itself in perfect harmony with the emergence of a growing need for identity and recognition (Fuster 2017).
 - vii. The philosophy of filmic personalism is inspired by the dual understanding of the person as man or woman, which has meant putting ‘a new woman’ on screen, whose voice and presence needed to be rescued. The anthropological

- insistence of Julián Marías and Karol Wojtyła finds a surprising endorsement in the remarriage comedies (Cavell 1981) and in the melodramas of the unknown woman (Cavell 2004), in which the mutual recognition of man and woman in marriage is placed at the centre of happiness.
- viii. Finally, and without wishing to be exhaustive, the cinematic philosophy of filmic personalism includes how the films by these directors express the faces of the poor, the excluded, those who apparently do not count, the presence of those people whose lives experience a greater risk of social exclusion, or whose lives are considered disposable (Bauman 2005). Simone Weil's writings on the *malheur* (Weil 2009), Gabriel Marcel's reflections on human dignity (Marcel 1961), or Levinas's observation of the questions on the faces of widows and orphans (Levinas 2012) or of the revelation of the human in a privileged way in the face of the woman (Levinas 1993), etc., help to verify the presence of those who thus manifest their humanity on screen—they are fully evident in the works of authors of filmic personalism.

2.2. Which texts have contributed to the discovery of the film personalism? The combination of films and philosophy texts

2.2.1. The discovery of the authorship of personalistic directors in the films

The first step in discovering personalistic directors was letting we ourselves be questioned by the strength of their films in presenting deeply human moments and situations with a penetrating capacity to create emotion. Before beginning to write about this philosophical-filmic category, the task was to make a selection from among the films of those classic Hollywood directors who presented greater perseverance and coherence in these approaches. In order to do this, we set out to view their filmography in the most complete way possible—something that was feasible due to the wide distribution of such films on DVD throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century—and then draw conclusions.

The comparative study had provided us with a wealth of 'personalistic films'. For this new study, we took as a starting point the films of the first six directors that we had already studied as personalists. The work of these directors comes from the end of the 1920s, as well as especially from the 1930s and 1940s.

In our opinion, the most urgent item to underline is that the discovery of filmic personalism was what allowed us to start articulating an aesthetic expression of philosophical personalism. It presented the beauty of the human person and its community and transcendent sense in the face of ideologies of the death of God and of the human on screen, something that Nicolai Berdiaeff, the Russian philosopher exiled in France, had dramatically claimed (Berdiaeff 1933, 1963). It soon allowed us to ask ourselves questions such as: Doesn't that which sows pessimism as opposed to supplying hope have an unfounded intellectual prestige? (Marcel 2005; Laín Entralgo 1978). Isn't an ideology of demobilisation being favoured that essentially favours the use of power, under whatever sign? (Mounier 1976, 1992).

2.2.2. *The guide to film studies*

The cinematic philosophy of filmic personalism posits that the vindication of the ability of filmic experience to properly study the audio-visual implies a second phase: stabilising it through inductive processes (Burgos 2015). To confirm that what is perceived is faithful to what presented on screen and, consequently, that the films are not being forced to fit philosophical premises—an excess denounced by authors such as Žižek (2015)—we needed the support of argumentation. This is provided by those film studies that have critically analysed the life and works of the directors in question. This allows us to present a summary of those sources that enabled us to critically support our proposal of film personalism as a theoretical framework on which the research of this article is based.

- a. The analysis of the work of Georges Stevens was guided by the monographs of Donald Richie (1970) and Marilyn Ann Moss (2004), the book of interviews edited by Paul Cronin (2004) and the unpublished doctoral thesis by Bruce Petri (1987).
- b. The study on Henry Koster had a direct influence on the work of Irene Kahn Atkins who supplied the director's biographical data (Atkins 1987). The work edited by Carlos Losilla (2009) made it possible to provide a suitable framework for the transit that Koster himself experienced in his passage from Germany to the United States.
- c. The deeper study on the work of Mitchell Leisen had the indispensable reference of David Chierichetti's monograph in its two editions (Chierichetti 1973, 1995). In addition, the analysis of this filmography consolidated the methodology of the filmic text (which we would later define as philosophical-filmic).
- d. The research on Gregory La Cava benefited from the collective work edited by Tony Partearroyo (1995), which included contributions from Joseph Adamson, Stephen Harvey, Roger McNiven, Frank Thompson, Elisabeth Kendall, Miguel Marías and Santos Zunzunegui, among others. We verify the coherence of the personalist message of La Cava, very close to people who are fragile and at risk of exclusion, who therefore need the social dimension of the virtue of mercy, and of marriage as the first community of help and solidarity, between spouses who are equal in dignity.
- e. The study of Capra's work, which we have practically analysed in full as far as his fiction films are concerned—we have excluded the war documentaries because they are a different genre, although Capra developed them with an argumentative coherence with respect to his films (Girona 2008, 2009)—benefited first of all from Stanley Cavell's own analyses of some of Capra's films (Cavell 1979, 190, 1981, 4, 40).

We also refer to the central role played by Capra's own autobiography (1997), as well as the reply by Joseph McBride (2000), in turn answered by Leland Poague (1994). In addition, Poague developed Cavell's theses, and what he correctly detected as Capra's 'protofeminism'. Poague also made it possible to adequately listen to the claims declared by the director himself, so often omitted or distorted by McBride (Poague 2004).

The constant dialogue with Raymond Carney's monograph (1986), which placed Capra in the tradition of American transcendentalism, both in philosophy (with Emerson, Thoreau, James, etc.) and in painting (with Eakins, Homer, Sergeant, etc.), was very suggestive.

Capra's moral and political proposal is well characterised in the studies of Charles J. Maland (1980) and Michel Cieutat (1990), as well as his roots in American thought. To discuss the assessment of Capra as the author of his films, the set of studies edited by Robert Sklar and Vito Zagarrio (Sklar and Zagarrio 1998) was very useful. Likewise, a solid and well-founded argument about the need to reread Capra's work to recover its greatness and value can be found in Christian Viviani (1988).

Although focused only on *Meet John Doe*, the contribution by André Bazin's biographer Dudley Andrew (Andrew 1984) made it possible to understand the conflicting elements in Capra's work. More decisive in recovering Capra—not only as an extraordinary artist but also as a humanist critic of American middle-class values—is the collection of contributions by Richard Glatzer and John Raeburn (Glatzer and Raeburn 1975).

Likewise, the proposal of Wes D. Gehring (1995), who sees in his films the best expression of the legacy of a cinema of popular wisdom, of valuing the people as a responsible subject, along the lines of the Gettysburg Address, contributed to restoring the value of Capra's work. Donald C. Willis seeks to free the figure of Capra from ideological and reductive labels (Willis 1974), a purpose agreed to by Allen Estrin, who sees a parallel between the director and the novelist Charles Dickens, in their moral perception of social ills (Estrin 1980).

Eric Smoodin (2004) began a study on the reception of Capra's films that values the viewer's point of view, a methodology that is used to develop analyses that take the filmic experience into account. This work served to interpret Frank Capra's latest films, as an exercise in resistance in unfavourable times.

At the end of our tour of Capra's work, we had the opportunity to read the splendid monograph by Carmen Sofia Brenes. We fully endorse her conclusions: 'Somehow, the work of Frank Capra, being genuinely poetic, will always be there, open to the personal consideration of each viewer.' (Brenes 2008, 373).

- f. There is no autobiography of Leo McCarey, nor has there been a critical biography written as yet. Such lack has been in some way covered by two extensive interviews that quite authentically reflect the director's thinking. These are *Leo et les aléas* by Serge Daney and Jean Louis Noames (alias Louis Skorecki) (Daney and Noames 1965) and the one that appeared in the work by Peter Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It? Conversations with Legendary Film Directors* (Bogdanovich 1998, 379–436).

The articles written by McCarey himself also confirmed not only his versatility as a director who sees complete people in his actors (McCarey 1935), but also his commitment to a humanity at peace with God and with men (McCarey 1948).

Studies on the work of Leo McCarey provided us with a first articulated reflection on what filmic personalism entails. Reading the work of Wes D. Gehring made it easier for us to place the figure of McCarey (Gehring 2005), his style

within the panorama of North American cinema (Gehring 1986, 2002), his similarities and differences with the work of Capra (Gehring 1980) and his proximity to comic actors like Charley Chase, Max Davidson, Laurel and Hardy, and Marion Byron.

For the conceptualisation of filmic personalism in Leo McCarey as a cinematographic style, the contribution of Miguel Marías was decisive in his successful monograph on Leo McCarey, as well as in other later works (Marías 1998, 2018, 2019).

Two collective works have also been of great help to us. The first is *Leo McCarey: Les burlesque des sentiments* (Garcia and Pàini 1998) and another is *Leo McCarey* (Ganzo 2018). We also found interesting counterpoints to anthropological aspects of McCarey's work in Poague's monograph (1980) and in the writings of Robin Wood (1976, 1998).

The McCarey research is ongoing. At the time of writing this text, we are completing the analysis of *The Awful Truth* (1937).

2.2.3. The texts of cinematic philosophy that have allowed the basis of filmic personalism itself

The personalistic author who pointed us in the direction of this joint work between cinema and philosophy was Julián Marías. In his *Admission speech at the San Fernando Academy of Arts*, he made a statement that backed this.

And then I discovered something unexpected and perhaps even more interesting: that there can be a “cinematic anthropology”, because cinema is, with its own methods, with resources that until now had not been available, an analysis of man, an inquiry of human life. (Marías 2017, 268)

A few paragraphs earlier, Julián Marías had picked a text published in a previous work of his, *La educación sentimental* (1992, 212–213) dedicated to reflecting on the aesthetic possibilities of cinema for broadening people's experience. It was a reflection that had accompanied him from very early on in his philosophical career (Marías 1971, 1982).

The vigour of his filmic reflection accompanied both the centrality that the theme of the person was acquiring in his philosophy (Marías 1996), and the demand that cinematographic art would not stop being a faithful testimony of the personal character of the human being (Marías, 1994); the dual condition of masculine person, feminine person (Marías 1970, 1982, 1998).

These synthetic brushstrokes are the reason for the impulse that Marías's work gives to those who want to approach cinema with an interest in finding anthropological arguments. At the same time, they bring us closer to the proposals of Stanley Cavell.

Film takes our very distance and powerlessness over the world as the condition of the world's natural appearance. It promises the exhibition of the world in itself. This is its promise of candour: that what it reveals is entirely what is revealed to it, that nothing revealed by the world in its presence is lost. (Cavell 1979, 119)

Cavell has provided a set of decisive convictions for our research. According to him, he experienced cinema as made for philosophy (Cavell 1996, xii), to recover the happiness of conversation in the recognition between men and women (Cavell 1981), to

restore a moral tenor (Cavell 2001) that, beyond calculation or rules, will be concerned with the growth of people (Cavell 2004), with their education as adults (Cavell 2012), to favour the review of our access to knowledge:

Film turns our epistemological conviction inside out: reality is known before its appearances are known. The epistemological mystery is whether and how you can predict the existence of the one from the knowledge of the other. The photographic mystery is that you can know both the appearance and the reality, but that nevertheless the one is unpredictable from the other. (Cavell 1979, 185–186)

This recovery of realism will allow him to approach the work of André Bazin, which he read in 1968 thanks to the translation into English (Cavell 1979, xxii).

For this reason, Cavell's work favours readings that liberate our common imagination with respect to cinema, especially if we refer to Hollywood cinema. His proposal to link this cinema with the transcendentalist tradition (Emerson, Thoreau, etc.) (Cavell 2005) makes it possible to recognise that Hollywood directors were not reproducers of the economic system of the studios, but rather frequently acted as critics of it. But not so much on ideological issues, rather for moral and aesthetic coherence.

A careful reading of Cavell's work invites us to consider that the personalism of classic Hollywood is perhaps better presented as the 'filmic personalism of American cinema'. We should stop thinking of a uniform system in this way, in order to detect the creative tensions within it and, consequently, the director's struggle to occupy a creative space. What we have detected for Capra (Estrin 1980; Andrew 1984; Carney 1986); or for McCarey (Gehring 1980, 2005; Morrison 2018) can be extended to the rest of filmic personalism.

From the same tradition of Emersonian perfectionism (Cavell 1990, 2003b), Cavell gives a wider scope to the philosophy of the ordinary, which he had defended in his doctoral thesis (1979) and in his comments on Shakespeare's work (2003a), whereby cinema was going to occupy an increasingly larger space. His awareness grows that deep down his 'remarriage comedies' are 'comedy of the ordinary' (Cavell 1981).

The work of Robert B. Pippin furthers that of Cavell in a certain manner and allows us to verify its fertility. And this he does in two ways. In one way, the methodology of grouping films around genres—for example the *remarriage comedies* (Cavell 1981) or those that form part of the *Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Cavell 1996)—in one which Pippin uses in his vision of westerns as myths of the founding of the United States, with particular reference to John Ford and Howard Hawks (Pippin 2010), or with fatalism in American film noir (Pippin 2012). It is a procedure that—in a certain manner—also endorses filmic personalism as a large network of connections between films.

Secondly, Pippin's cinematic philosophy has increasingly justified cinema as a reflexive form (Pippin 2017; 2019; 2020), which implies reading films with a stress of knowledge, an expectation of the possible acquisition of a new concept.

3. The cinematographic phenomenology of filmic studies of French personalism and Hollywood filmic personalism

From our first presentations of classic Hollywood filmic personalism or American personalism, we received invitations from scholars of the philosophy of cinema to put this time

in the history of cinema in relation to the French thinkers who had developed their cinematographic thought around Emmanuel Mounier's area of influence (Leventopoulos 2012; Ayfre 1957). These French authors did not actually develop a filmic personalism; or, at least, not expressly under that term. They did however put a phenomenology of cinema into practice that converged with personalism in many aspects (Agel 1958, 1961, 1968, 1976; Ayfre 1964, 2004), as they sought to put the human experience first, both that of the viewer and that of the filmmaker, as an expressive means.

On the other hand, and in a more literal and direct way, the readings by Stanley Cavell—whose philosophy of cinema is largely centred on classic Hollywood—of the work by the film scholar André Bazin (Cavell 1979), very close to Mounier's personalism, raised the question about how we should understand the relationship between both thinkers and, consequently, between classic Hollywood and French personalism. This is a topic whose importance has already been highlighted by one of the most accredited scholars of Cavell's work, William Rothman (2019).

3.1. Phenomenology as a search for a method to avoid reducing the understanding of cinema

It is worth insisting that the authors of French personalism on cinema concurred in emphasising the importance of phenomenology as a method that would make it possible to avoid reductionism in understanding cinema. Those were times when the ideological use of cinema was a well-known risk. Leni Riefenstahl's work had shown this with respect to the figure of Hitler and Nazi propaganda.

The path, as Karol Wojtyła clearly stated, should be a 'study of the act that reveals the person, i.e., a study of the person through the act' (Wojtyła 2017, 44). In other words, far from being a new Babel, the plurality of people's experiences was an opportunity to enrich the human person. Following Pope Francis, this is something that can be expressed with the image of the polyhedron. It is an expression that Pope Francis develops in a theological and ecumenical context, but that can be successfully transferred to the explanation of the plurality of forms that capture the same reality with its own nuances:

Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren. Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. (Francis 2013, nn. 235–236)

Phenomenology provided a method that the person could use, for the personalisation of cinema. This is how we see it in Henri Agel's work. He makes it clear that cinema brings culture a complete and embodied humanism.

In my personal experience, I am certain that cinema can contribute to replacing an incomplete humanism with what I would call a total planetary humanism. I am convinced that cinema can, to a certain extent, allow us to replace an exhausted humanism with an incarnate humanism, and that this humanism – that comes somewhat in a system of airtight compartments – can be replaced by cinema with a

vertical and living humanism. The very technique of cinema... the innumerable resources of the camera, its power of intensity and intimacy, its extraordinary mobility allow it to grasp the real in all its richness, and that gift of ambiguity... is one of those that... is most effective. (Agel 1961, 65)

The consequence that Agel draws is that this cinematographic humanism must be characterized as a double search: on the one hand, that of the individual in a full way, in a whole way, in his natural, cosmic environment, and also in his group; on the other hand, that of a living humanism that replaces an abstract and petrified humanism.

... we are fully immersed in the everyday, an “everyday” that is so opposed to the timeless, to the abstract that we find in traditional humanism. Certainly, I am not unaware of the importance of the abstract, the importance of general ideas; but I also think that if these abstract, these general ideas can be embodied, introduced in the development of everyday life, summarised in everyday life, the gain will be considerable. (Agel 1961, 66)

Agel has referred to the everyday as that which opposes the timeless, the abstract, as it appears in cinematographic humanism. Inasmuch as that Cavell calls his marriage renewal comedies ‘comedies of the ordinary’ (Cavell 1981), we find another possible approximation between French and American personalism.

Even Agel will open the door to the need to recognise ourselves as a human family, something inherent to the medium of cinema. Taking Leon Moussinac’s expression, he states that ‘cinema, in its definitive form, will proclaim human Unity’ (Agel 1961, 67).

Perhaps it can be proposed that the reading of Miguel Marías’ monograph on Leo McCarey (Marías, 1998) strengthens a complementary argument to approach the cinematographic humanism of Agel (1958, 1960a, 1960b, 1961a, 1961b, 1963a, 1968, 1976, 1981, 1987, 1996), of Ayfre (1957, 2004) and of Bazin (2000a, 2000b). Indeed, the key to interpretation is to be found in McCarey’s style, which Miguel Marías rightly focuses on reflecting the personal world on the screen, with the resources of cinema.

3.2. Points of distance between French personalism on cinema and American filmic personalism

However, we find the opposite when turning to other texts; points of distance between American filmic personalism and French personalism. A reading of the writings by André Bazin summarised in his magnum opus (Bazin 1966) pays scant attention to the personalist directors of classic Hollywood that we referred to in the second section of this article. In another work dealing with the cinema of Preston Sturges (Bazin 1977), he takes advantage of the occasion for a full-on attack on Capra’s cinema.

For his part, Henri Agel considers only Frank Borzage a great director among those we have designated as personalists (Agel 1967, 59–63). In *Romance Americaine*, his comments on these authors are negative. Let’s look at a sample. Capra’s work is treated with derogatory judgements that ignore his most significant films (Agel 1963, 35–36). His spiritual vision of cinema makes him lean towards putting his attention on *Lost Horizon* (1937) and makes some more positive assessments towards it, with a rather vested tone.

Provided this film is relegated to the modest rank of productions in the same genre by Van Dyke or Dieterle, it seems to me that it is not without its attractions: the aristocratic melancholy of Ronald Colman, the photogenicity of Thomas Mitchell, Sam Jaffe, H.B. Warner, the luminous landscapes, the poetry of the “lost world” (Agel 1963, 36)

Concerning the rest of Capra’s work, after noticing its decline after 1940—in which he includes *Meet John Doe* (1941) and *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), which can hardly be considered a moment of decline—his comments about *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *You Can’t Take It With You* (1938) are limited to disparaging reviews. Indeed, there is talk of ‘verbalism and theatricality’, but no cinematographic arguments are furnished to support these affirmations beyond personal taste (something that is more typical with criticism than with filmic studies).

Something better is his brief reference to La Cava (Agel 1963, 44). On the other hand, unlike other analysts who praise McCarey, he relegates him to the ranking of merely a commercial director (Agel 1963b, 47–48). Indeed, the French writer considers him a ‘skilful craftsman’, whom some have overvalued. (Agel 1963, 36). That is why he considers that he shone with *Duck Soup* (1933), to the extent that the film was taken up by the Marx brothers, or with *The Awful Truth* (1937), because Cary Grant and Irene Dunne were the duo that gave value to the film. He also finds *Going My Way* (1944) and *The Bells of St. Mary’s* (1945) excessively sentimental, only granting that a better balance was struck with *Love Affair* (1938) (Agel 1963, 36–7). In his allusions to George Stevens he also considers him to be of the lowest category (Agel 1963, 50–1)

With a more conceptual reflection, Amédée Ayfre is very critical of Leo McCarey’s vision of the priest and, therefore, his personalism (Ayfre 1958, 80–83).

What young people ask of a “minister” is that, above all, he not be sour, but sensitive, direct, understanding, open-minded and that he knows how to share the tastes and impulses of his environment... But will he know how to reach the deepest, the most sensitive fibre of the soul, that unique area where man stands alone before God? (Ayfre 1958, 81)

However, this split between humanity and transcendence seems to be nuanced in a later work, *Le Cinéma et la Foi Chrétienne* [Cinema and Christian Faith] (Ayfre 1962). Why? It could be because he emphasises the Christian mystery of the incarnation.

After Christ, we said, no other human face can claim to be the human face of God. But could it not also be said, in another sense of truth, that from Christ, any human face can be the human face of God for his brothers? The transcendence of the Incarnation would not then be accentuated, but I dare to say, the *incarnation* of the Transcendence and the possibility of its extension among men would be accentuated. (Ayfre 1962)

Going one step further, Ayfre notices the presence of God in the unfortunate, the poor and sick, just as they appear in the biographies of Francis of Assisi or Saint Vincent de Paul, both of which were brought to the screen on several occasions.

His example teaches us that they considered all men around them, and above all the most miserable, even the most sinful, brothers in Christ, as images of Christ. The unfortunate, the poor and even the sinner – considering that they, above all, are called to conversion and salvation – were literally sacred for them, because if the saint is an image of the holiness of God, the poor and the sinner are a sign of his mercy... For a Christian, no man is irredeemable, no man is an object that can be thrown away when

he no longer serves a purpose, and in this sense any human face can be the human face of God for his brothers. (Ayfre 1962, 98–99)

Had Ayfre paid more attention to the signs of mercy when analysing *Going My Way* (1944) and *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945), he would have reached other conclusions about McCarey's artistic potential that would have been more in line with Miguel Marías (1998) or the North American specialist Wes D. Gehring (1980, 2005). And what is seen in McCarey, we also see in Frank Capra, in Mitchell Leisen, in Gregory La Cava, in John Ford, in Harold Lloyd, etc.

Without going much further into this, we can recognise that Bazin, Ayfre and Agel shared a somewhat monolithic vision of the American production system, which prevented them from differentiating the 'economic interests' of the producers from the 'artistic concerns' of the directors. We have been justifying this throughout this article, in which the filmic studies dedicated to these authors value them better. Particularly timely are the contributions made by French authors on vindicating the work of Capra (Viviani 1988) or McCarey (Lourcelles 1995, 1998).

In the criticism of Capra, the weight of authors such as Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 2003) or Jean Paul Sartre probably influenced Bazin's mood (Andrew 1978) so that he did not clearly perceive that there was no follow-up of the American economic system in Capra, but rather a moral criticism of the excesses of the tycoons against the desired economic freedom of the popular classes (Estrin 1980).

For his part, William Rothman states that one of Bazin's greatest errors was in not perceiving the realism that was bubbling up in American cinema in the 1930s, a realism that, as Cavell pointed out, did not exclude interrelation with the fantastic (Rothman 2019, 80).

3.3. Points of proximity between French personalism on cinema and American filmic personalism: Cinema as a means of personalisation

Faced with these points of distance between French personalism in cinema and the personalism of classic Hollywood, we also see other elements of approach between these two expressions of filmic thought.

The collective work in which Henri Agel and Amédée Ayfre participated, *Cine y personalidad* (Agel and Ayfre 1963), can be recognised as being identified with personalist theses. This is for three reasons. First, faced with the temptation to manipulate the viewer, Amédée Ayfre considers cinema to be mediation.

...instead of fascinating the viewer...the cinematographic work can also be actively oriented towards reality, values, or men...cinema is particularly suitable for filling that role of mediator without stopping works of art being made, but rather on that condition. In fact, there are numerous films that bear witness to this unequalled role of revelation that the cinematographic work supposes when it remains faithful to the aesthetic orientation that is unique to it. But understand well, this loyalty demands a very particular attitude of putting their most personal powers of initiative, reflection and dialogue into play and not only from the filmmaker, but also from the viewer. The creator must use the instrument at their disposal, not because they have exhausted the subject they are proposing, but with the intention of opening new horizons. (Ayfre 1963, 64)

A second vindicating feature of French film personalism is what they call ‘victory over passivity’ (Agel 1963).

We have seen that true filmmakers rarely know the full meaning of their work. And that this work can be modelled infinitely and constantly expands in the consciousness of informed viewers. This is what must be developed in young people; the sense of a reality that their teachers have had to communicate to them...: the mystery or, at least, the profound ambiguity of their masterpieces. Note that, however conscientious the research, a part of the shadow remains, to make it understood that it is typical of a saturated and living work to enclose multiple and often contradictory echoes... [that] are subtracted from a rational elucidation and branch out as we approach them. (Agel 1963, 77–78).

Finally, the third feature that we are going to highlight comes from the director François Truffaut (1932–1984), in a chapter written shortly after the release of his first film—the first of a new wave—*Les quatre cents coups* [*The 400 blows*, 1959]. There he makes a presentation of the role of any director or filmmaker that we believe to be fully personalistic.

It seems to me that the filmmaker is the only member of the film crew who has no right to complain or feel cheated; filmmakers have to know themselves in order to estimate themselves at their fair value and decide whether to support this or that constraint or turn it in their favour – in favour of the film, or if this or that constraint will become a compromise and harmful to the result as such. Let’s not forget that the best director who is still alive, Jean Renoir, has mainly only made films by mandate or adaptations, immersing his soul in them until he has turned them into absolutely personal works. (Truffaut 1963, 142)

There are, therefore, three caveats that we clearly see assumed and incorporated into the aesthetics of personalist authors, but that will also be present in Italian neorealism. It is worthwhile to consider this aspect in its own right and to relate it to Hollywood’s filmic personalism.

4. Italian neorealism and the filmic personalism of Hollywood

It can be concluded that for André Bazin, ‘Rossellini’s style is a gaze above all, while that of De Sica is a sensibility above all’ (Bazin 1966, 500).

In subsequent pages, Bazin expands on the meaning of these expressions, but what should now be emphasised is that there are two means of approaching the person.

Could it perhaps be said, finally, that both Rossellini’s and De Sica’s neorealism is a total awareness of our incarnation, but that it leads Zavattini [De Sica’s screenwriter] to subdivide reality more and more while Rossellini reveals all the forces that unite this same reality and compress the dramatic freedom of man everywhere? From another point of view, I would say that the progressive approach to Zavattini’s hero, his description in a certain microscopic way, corresponds to a desire for active sympathy, which I would call *kindness*, while the Rossellian perspective – because of the tension it creates between us and his hero, because of the psychological waiver that this distance implies, imposes a relationship on us that is of *love*, but a love that is not sentimental and that can only be described as metaphysical. (Bazin 1966, 543–544)

Henri Agel pronounces himself in similar terms when referring to Vittorio De Sica (Agel 1957) and Rossellini (Agel 1963, 202–211). For his part, Amédée Ayfre generalises

these details by proposing a more significant term for Italian neorealism, such as 'phenomenological realism' (Ayfre 1964, 230).

Italian neorealism was a concept as luminous as it was unstable because it was the identity card of Italian cinema itself (Brunetta 2009a, 2009b). This made it equally attractive for drawing it into post-war Italy's ideological debate between the Communist Party and Christian Democracy. The exemplary collaboration between the Catholic priest and the communist leader against the Nazi domination of *Roma, Città Aperta* (directed by Roberto Rossellini, 1945) would not continue, and soon there would be a fight for leadership how about how to make films.

What brings Bazin, Ayfre and Agel's vision of Italian neorealism closer to filmic personalism is that it is a vision of cinema that starts with the directors themselves. A similar image to that we have presented for filmic personalism could be made from the core of the neorealist films they selected: *Roma, Città Aperta* (1945), *Paisà* (1946), *Germania anno zero* (1948) by Roberto Rossellini; *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), *Miracolo a Milano* (1951), *Umberto D* (1952) by Vittorio De Sica; *La terra trema* (1948) by Luchino Visconti; *La Strada* (1954) by Federico Fellini.

It is the opposite path to what they had been doing to classify the filmic experience of films in previous schemes. Now what it is about is to be up to date with the novelty that these films project on screens. The phenomenological realism advocated by Ayfre is actually an extension of the filmic experience provided by watching these films.

Neorealism is an aesthetic orientation of cinema in which directors... use all the resources of their conscience (feelings, ideas, values, commitments) to definitively say what is real in its entirety, to reveal the different levels of its meaning. (Ayfre 1964, 230)

Aware of the risk of ideological polarisation, Ayfre, Bazin and Agel vindicated their Italian neighbours for the need to objectify what neorealism intended. What is real must be understood as the opposite of ideological; that which unites rather than divides. Bazin's long letter to the Marxist critic Guido Aristarco, editor-in-chief of the magazine 'Cinema Nuovo'—'Defence of Rossellini' (Bazin 1966, 577–586)—has Ayfre's definition of neorealism as its core; abbreviated as: 'a global description of a reality by a global consciousness' (Bazin 1966 581).

However, it was in Italy where a collaborator of Federico Fellini, the screenwriter Brunello Rondi (Parigi and Pezzotta 2010), went a step further and argued that what had been promoted with neorealism was literally a personalist philosophy (Parigi 2020, 283). He did so in two works on Italian neorealism: one simply called *Italian neorealism* (Rondi 1956), the second titled *Cinema e Realtà* (Rondi 1957).

Only with Rossellini's work did the new Italian realism enter, decisively, into a phase of rupture with the old moral and stylistic schemes and with all the cognitive and narrative conventions, and, in charge of a rebellious sensibility, crystallize in it the revolutionary force of the moment... which must be seen and narrated, above all, as participation and discovery, with the affirmation of the truly universal point of view of the person, and of his or her moral moment, above the illusory consistency of the individual's point of view, intended to pose and propose only himself to draw a wider circle of knowledge and vision... this objective discovery, which has been misunderstood as purely documentary discovery, as renunciation of personal interpretation and as renunciation of stylistic transfiguration is, in reality, above all the discovery of the cognitive moment of the "person". (Rondi 1956, 24–25)

At that time, in a footnote, Rondi wants his personalist proposal to be his own and distances himself from Mounier's, probably fully aware that the overcoming of the individual through the communitarian logic of the person was a point extensively developed by the French thinker (Mounier 1976, 1992).

But we are not referring to the old personalist concept of Mounier. We think of the "person" as a social and relational organism and a centre of historical consciousness. The war has certainly contributed to make the sense of man's relationship with the other fall back on him. (Rondi 1956, 25)

In *Cine e Realtà* he develops ideas that are undoubtedly close to those from which he wants to distance himself, insisting on the consideration of love in human relationships.

If you can then say that the community and "alteristic" interest present in the neorealist perspective affects the life of human relations with an effective, varied, constant attention, it is an attention of spontaneous love, i.e., marked in the metres of a plurality of existence seen in their relationships resulting from a normal daily life. The interest, i.e., the look towards reality and the humanity that surrounds us is a truly human, simple interest in neorealism, which is concerned with articulating a global understanding of others; it is a discovered and humble interest, of virginal totality... it also acts as a healthy reaffirmation of the human *person* (conceived as a powerful subject of relationships and as an object of love) against the oppressive roller of the flattening organisms that, in Italy, had been fascism and war. (Rondi 1957, 23)

5. Final points and conclusion

Both American filmic personalism and French personalism on cinema, as well as Italian neorealism, show ways of understanding cinema that focus on a proper look at the human person and, in this sense, can form a tradition in film-making that harmonises perfectly with Pope Francis's proposal. We can also talk about a pragmatic dimension of this cinema: films that make us better or that give us the opportunity to be.

Certainly, films of this type are still valid in the cinema of today. Directors like the Dardenne brothers or Aki Kaurismäki offer us stories on the screen that make our gaze more human, more personalist. Dario Edoardo Viganò also quotes other directors highlighted by the Pope, such as the Argentine Fernando 'Pino' Solanas, the Spanish Maite Vitoria Daneris or the Estonian Martti Helde (Viganò 2021, 8).

The filmic personalism that we have verified exists in American cinema, mainly in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s was an anthropological and aesthetic proposal that accompanied the arduous years in which humanity went from two world wars to seeking out hope of a new political order, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It also knew how to reflect what we recognise today as the joy of love (Francis 2016b) in marriage and family. This way of understanding cinema fully connects with and is enriched by the contributions of French personalism around cinema as an exercise in personalisation. It is also enriched by the achievements of Italian neorealism, and its own way of also putting the person at the centre of the renewal of the life of a population. It continues to be present today, particularly in the face of migratory crises and the reception of refugees.

They are questions that are recognised in the expression of Pope Francis about the enormous responsibility of cinema in the education of the gaze, since it is a door to the heart (Viganò 2021); a responsibility that we cannot waive if we are to build fraternity among all (Francis 2020).

Notes

1. Something that the Holy Father insisted on (Francis 2022).
2. We could also say personalism, in the sense of a cinema that underlines the dignity of the human being.

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