FATA MORGANA
quadrimestrale di cinema e visioni

END

In recent years, one word in particular has increasingly resonated in our discourses, a term with ancient origins that has traversed the history of Western thought: *end*. Whether used in the masculine or feminine form, the Italian term *end* (fine) derives from the Latin *finis*, which originally referred to the boundary of a piece of land or a territory: something that circumscribes and delimits. While "la fine" (the end) refers to conclusion, interruption, and finality, "il fine" (the purpose) indicates that towards which something tends: its aim, objective, or goal. In Greek philosophy, and particularly in Aristotle, *télos* precisely denoted the final cause, from which various doctrines of finalism and teleology emerged. Aristotle himself, together with scholastic philosophy, shows how the end represents the fulfilment (*enteléchia*) through which a being realizes its essence: the actualization of what initially existed only in potentiality.

Among the major thinkers of modern philosophy, Kant also made a fundamental contribution to the reflection on boundaries and purposes. In critical philosophy, the boundary becomes a threshold between what can be known and what can only be thought. At the same time, Kant detaches the notion of purpose from the metaphysical tradition of entelechy, introducing the concept of "purposiveness without purpose", through which the subject recognizes an order in things without necessarily referring it to a determinate end. This perspective paved the way for important contemporary reflections: from the relationship between imagination and temporality in Heidegger thought, to Arendt's conception of action as not subordinated to predetermined ends, and to Lyotard's and Agamben's reflections on the limits of representation and the possibility of a "pure mediality".

The semantic field of the word "end" has nevertheless expanded along several different lines: from human finitude to the end of the world and of history, from the crisis of teleological visions of the cosmos to the questioning of the very idea of an ultimate purpose. To speak of *the end*, therefore, means simultaneously to interrogate a limit and a direction, a conclusion and an aim, a threshold and the possibility of transformation.

It is precisely within this space of tension between the end and purpose that this call for papers is situated. It seeks to invite original contributions on the theme of the "end" across philosophy,

cinema, and multimedia arts. The concept may be explored in its individual and ontological dimensions, but also in its historical, political, ecological, narrative, and aesthetic implications, considering the end not necessarily as a terminal point, but also as a threshold, transformation, dissolution, or opening onto new possibilities.

Individual purpose, death, dissolution, and decay

When conclusion becomes the very structure of the being of things, the question of the end turns into a more complex reflection on finitude. As Foucault demonstrated in his discussion of an "age of finitude", the overcoming of ancient visions of the cosmos as the expression of an infinite nature leads to a conception of human beings and things as ephemeral entities, constantly confronted with their own dissolution. Nihilism, existentialism, and *meditatio mortis* have all grappled precisely with this experience.

Cinema, too, has inherited this legacy. Bergman's *The seventh seal* (1957) offers a paradigmatic example of the existential anguish associated with death, but cinema has also explored the end through more rarefied forms. In Antonioni's works, for instance, many critics have identified a crisis of reality and a sense of emptiness. Contemporary cinema has continued this reflection on the meaning of life, time, and dissolution, as demonstrated, among others, by *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) and *The Tree of Life* (2011).

The end can also be represented through the concrete, biological disintegration of the body. Body horror, beginning with the work of David Cronenberg, constitutes a particularly fertile field for investigating decomposition, death, transformation, and the relationship between the body and technology.

The dissolution of identity can also be addressed through psychoanalysis—particularly Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis—which examines the "identity catastrophe" and the relationship between individuation, narcissism, and the thanatic possibility of disintegration. The anguish of death, which structures the project of an "authentic" life in Heidegger (1927), can thus be reconsidered in the light of post-structuralist and posthumanist perspectives.

The ways in which death is processed and experienced have also changed. Following the "tabooization" of death identified by Ariès (1975), new forms of grieving process have emerged through digital technologies and social networks (Sisto 2018), as well as through new forms of spirituality and rituality (Cools 2021). The pandemic has further called into question the continuum between life and death, transforming the virus into a device through which to rethink the experience of endings and limits (Cimatti 2021), up to the phenomenology of "vibrant death" (Lykke 2021). The relationship between cinema and death can also be explored by considering the capacity of images to preserve what no longer exists. Cinema thus takes shape as a dispositif of survival, capable of

rescuing bodies, gestures, and presences from disappearance and making them visible again over time. From this perspective, the end opens up a reflection on the forms of memory and mourning, on the function of the archive, but also on the material deterioration of images and on practices of restoration, reuse, and reactivation of audiovisual materials.

The End as Apocalypse, the end of the world, end of a culture, and of a civilization

Extending the idea of the end beyond the individual sphere, the question of the end of the world arises. In *The End of the World. Cultural apocalypse and transcendence* (La fine del mondo. Contributo alle analisi delle apocalissi culturali), Ernesto de Martino investigates the conditions that produce the feeling of an ending, defining it as an "elective disposition of our age". Kojève, rereading Hegel, addresses instead the question of the end of history, arguing that "the end of human Time or of History" would entail "the definitive annihilation of Man as such".

The apocalypse can therefore be understood as the end of time and of the world, and cinema has extensively explored its imaginary, from science fiction to works such as Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011) and Hitchcock's *The Birds (*1963).

Yet the end does not necessarily coincide with a concluding event. Following apostle Paul and Benjamin, Agamben proposes, through the notion of messianic time, an alternative conception: not the end of time, but "the time that time takes to come to an end". The end is thus already inscribed in the present. The cinema of Béla Tarr, Aki Kaurismäki, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul depicts worlds that seem to be "already lost from the outset", constantly on the verge of ending.

The end can also refer to the transformation of a culture or a way of life. In this sense, De Martino (1977) speaks of a "cultural apocalypse", or the "end of a world". Such an ending, however, may also coincide with the opening up of new possibilities, with what Deleuze calls "lines of flight" (2019), even in the face of the "fears of the end" associated with the ecological crisis and the question "Is there a world to come?" (Danowski, De Castro 2017).

This perspective also entails a critique of Western ontologies. Through cultural anthropology and Amazonian cosmology, "perspectival ontologism" calls into question the *distinctio formalis a parte rei, the individuum vagum*, and the traditional Aristotelian *scala naturae*, opening up a more ecological and participatory conception of subjectivity and, more radically, a reconsideration of the notion of the "end" as the limit of a static form.

Beyond questioning what comes to an end, it is also possible to ask how cinema can represent and make the experience of ending perceptible. This question concerns not only images of death, dissolution, or catastrophe, but also the aesthetic forms and dispositifs through which cinema gives shape to what seems to elude representation: absence, loss, the irreversibility of time, and the disappearance of a world. Framing, editing, duration, off-screen space, ellipsis, and the relationship

between image and sound can become tools for articulating an experience of the end, making it perceptible even beyond its explicit representation. How can one film what no longer exists, or what is about to disappear? What audiovisual forms can convey the experience of a threshold, an interruption, or an irreversible transformation? And what limits does cinema encounter in its attempt to represent the end?

The end as the meaning of a story, a fiction, or a *mythos*

The question of the end also concerns the meaning of narrative. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, mythos refers to the plot and the arrangement of actions, organized according to a development that presupposes both a beginning and an end. This relationship between fulfilment and intelligibility lies at the heart of Frank Kermode's reflection: in *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), the conclusion constitutes the horizon from which events acquire form and temporal succession becomes a meaningful story. In *Time and Narrative* (1983–1985), Paul Ricœur takes up this problem through the concept of "narrative configurations": the plot brings heterogeneous events together into an intelligible whole, integrating the ruptures and unexpected developments of action. The ending thus makes it possible to reread the trajectory retrospectively, transforming the succession of events into a narrative capable of producing meaning.

The relationship between beginning and end is also central to the formal and narrative construction of film. A movie ending does not simply represent the point at which a story concludes; it also contributes to determining its meaning retrospectively, redefining the relationship between events and their possible interpretations. From this perspective, it is possible to investigate the different forms of cinematic closure: open endings, interruptions, circular structures, suspended conclusions, or potentially infinite narratives. The question also concerns the relationship between cinema and seriality: what does it mean to conclude an episodic narrative? How do season finales and series finales reshape our experience of the end? More radically, how does cinematic form change when conclusion ceases to function as a principle organizing the narrative?

A different conception of the ending may, on the other hand, lead to a veritable crisis of the end. In his latest essay *La fine della fine* (2026), Davide Ferrario reflects precisely on how our consumption of images has changed. The transition from communal film viewing in a movie theatre, where watching a film was a ritual with a beginning and an end, to the advent of VHS and the remote control, and eventually to the emergence of serial narratives, has accustomed us to stories without a proper conclusion, radically transforming our relationship with narrative.

Is it possible, then, to give meaning to "a life" without placing it within a coherent and finite narrative? Is it actually desirable to do away with the "end"? What aesthetic forms emerge when the need for a conclusion, a *télos*, or an ultimate destination disappears?

Moving within this space of tension, this call for papers seeks to invite original contributions on the theme of the "end" — understood both as the end/the ends and as purpose/purposes — across philosophy, cinema, and multimedia arts.

Deadline for the submission of the abstract: January 6, 2027
Deadline for the submission of the essay: May 15, 2027

Essays should be expressly written for the journal and should strictly respect the following word limit:

***Focus*: Min 5000 Max 6000 words (including spaces and footnotes)**
***Rifrazioni*: Min 2000 Max 3000 words (including spaces and footnotes)**

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