

The Resonance between Nature and Humanity: Exploring the Relationship between Art and Philosophy through Visual Narrative

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Abstract

Nature has always been a significant theme in artistic creation. From Romantic painting to contemporary audiovisual art, nature serves not only as a backdrop or subject matter but also as a key medium for artists to express philosophical thought. This video essay, inspired by the narrative and visual style of Christopher Nolan's films, juxtaposes natural landscapes and human activities to explore the subtle relationship between humanity and nature.

Keywords

Subjugation of nature, ecological philosophy, visual narrative, human-nature relationship, contemporary audiovisual art. Theoretical Framework.

1. The Philosophical Relationship between Nature and Art

1.1. Heidegger's "Poetic Dwelling" and the Philosophy of Nature

Within his philosophical system, Heidegger introduces the concept of "poetic dwelling," emphasizing that humans should inhabit the Earth poetically—a philosophical attitude advocating for coexistence with nature [2]. According to him, the essence of human existence lies in understanding and respecting nature, rather than conquering and destroying it. This line of thought has been deeply reflected upon and extended in contemporary art, where works are no longer limited to representing the appearance of nature but seek to capture its spiritual essence and explore humanity's place within it.

Manifestation in the video: The meticulous capture of natural landscapes (e.g., leaves swaying, changes in sunlight) conveys an idea of poetic dwelling. Through the serene representation of natural beauty, the video invites the audience to reflect on the harmony between humans and nature, offering a visual interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy.

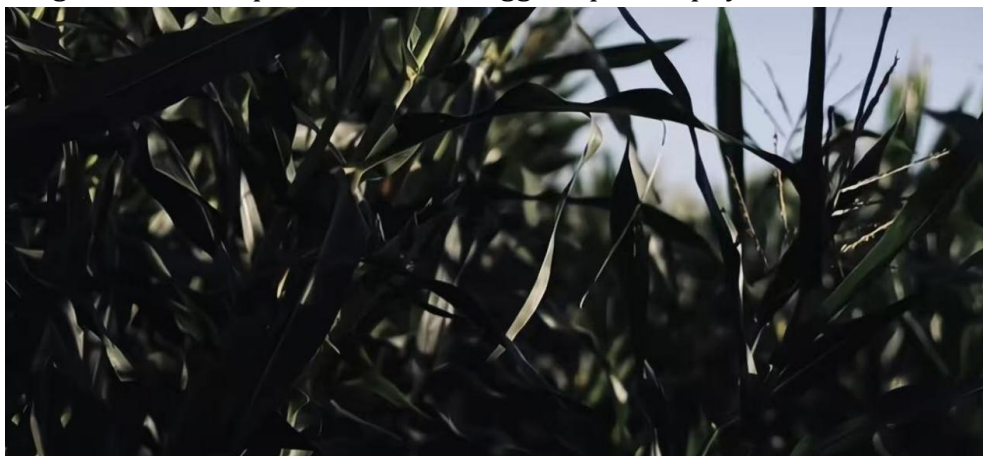


Figure 1: Corn leaves in shadow, conveying the idea of "poetic dwelling"



Figure 2: Leaves in sunlight, symbolizing nature's intrinsic beauty and vitality



Figure 3: Plants in dusk light, creating a sunset atmosphere through a low-angle shot.

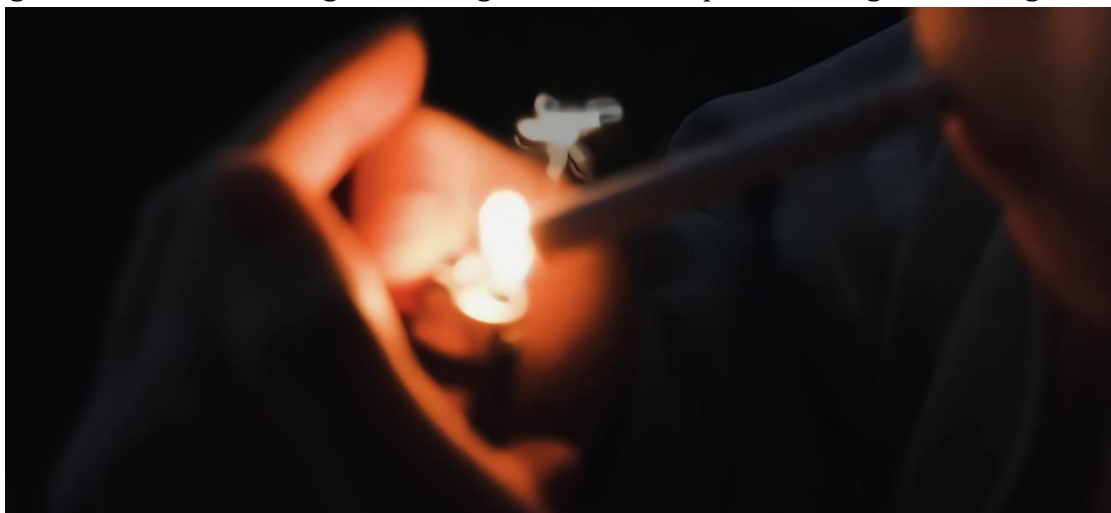


Figure 4: A hand lighting a lighter, symbolizing human intervention and influence on nature

1.2. The Artistic Turn in Ecological Philosophy

Theorists such as Timothy Morton, with his concept of "dark ecology," argue that the relationship between humanity and nature should not be viewed simply as one of subject and object, but rather as a complex interactive system [3]. Nature is not merely the background for human activities but a dynamic subject coexisting with humanity. This philosophical

perspective provides a new theoretical framework for art, encouraging artists to highlight the subjectivity and intrinsic value of nature.

Manifestation in the video: The narrative allows natural landscapes to assume a leading role, while human elements, such as flames and shadows, appear metaphorically, underscoring the independence of nature. This decentered visual representation portrays nature as an autonomous and meaningful entity.

2. Visual Language and Philosophical Expression

2.1. The Philosophical Inspiration of Nolan's Audiovisual Narrative

Christopher Nolan's films, such as *Interstellar*, are renowned for their visual language and philosophical themes [1]. In particular, through the depiction of natural landscapes and cosmic space, they explore the insignificance and meaning of humanity within broader dimensions of existence. For instance, the icy planet scenario in *Interstellar* not only illustrates the harshness and magnificence of nature but also conveys the characters' loneliness and helplessness, reflecting human fear and respect for the unknown [1].

Manifestation in the video: Through wide shots of natural landscapes (such as rice ears, skies, and grasslands) and the capture of changes in light and shadow, the video adopts Nolan's narrative approach. It highlights the vastness of nature versus the transience of humanity, placing human beings within a framework of philosophical reflection. The intention is to allude to the profound contrast and connection between humanity and nature.



Figure 5: Corn leaves under a blue sky, illustrating nature's vastness and humanity's transience



Figure 6: Weeds in a field, showcasing nature's wildness and independence



Figure 7: Weeds against the light, highlighting nature's vitality and eternity



Figure 8: Corn leaves in sunlight, representing peace and harmony in the natural world

2.2. The Philosophy of Time and its Visual Expression

Time is a recurring theme in both philosophy and art. Nolan, through the dilation or compression of time (such as the use of slow motion or rapid cuts), reveals the multiple meanings of time in the relationship between nature and humanity [1]. In nature, time exists in the form of cycles and eternity, while in human life it is often perceived as brief and linear.

Manifestation in the video: Through slow-motion shots capturing the movement of wind in grass and changes in light, the video materializes the "eternal time" of nature. Conversely, the brief combustion of fire symbolizes the fleeting nature of human existence. This contrast illustrates the temporal tension between nature and humanity.

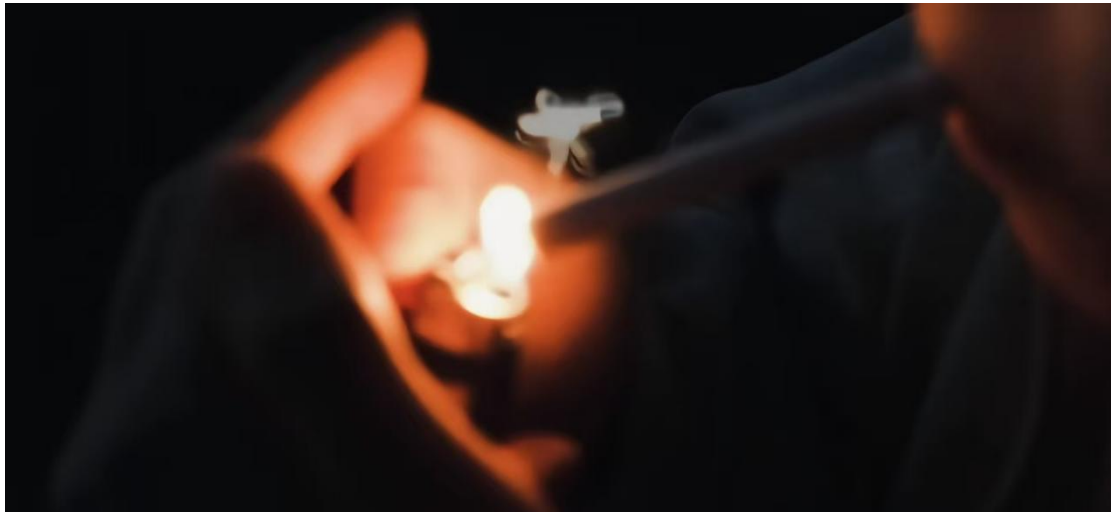


Figure 9: A burning flame, symbolizing the fleeting and instantaneous nature of human existence



Figure 10: Corn leaves in shadow, expressing nature's eternal time through the play of light and shadow

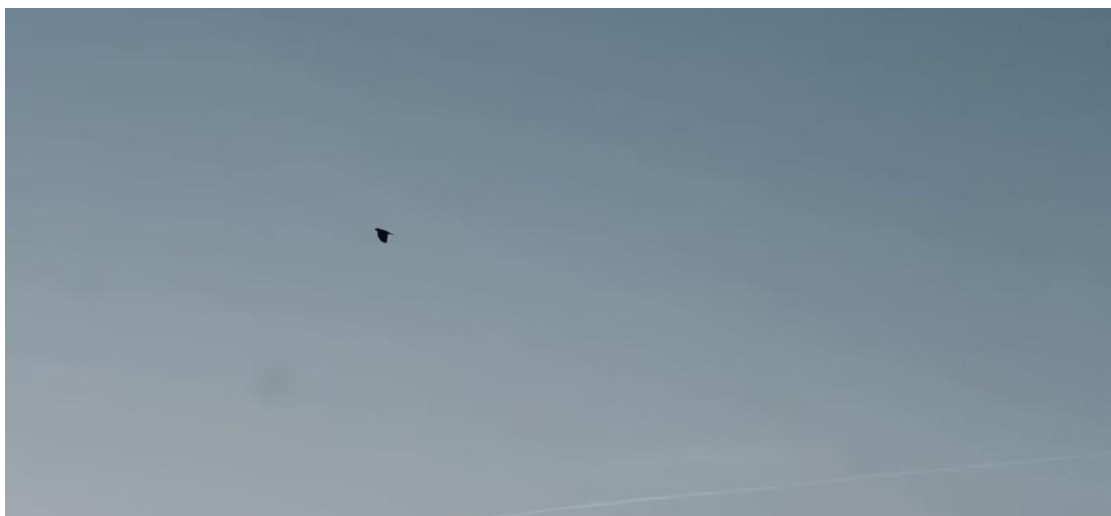


Figure 11: A flying bird in the sky, representing nature's freedom and subjectivity

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1. The Subjectivity of Nature and Human Intervention

In the video, nature is presented as an active narrative subject, not merely as the backdrop for human narrative. For example, the initial scene, which uses a long take to capture rice ears swaying in the wind, emphasizes the independence and dynamism of nature. This visual representation allows viewers to experience the emotions and vitality inherent in nature, transcending the conventional approach that perceives it as a static object in traditional art.

However, the appearance of flames and human silhouettes symbolizes human intervention in nature. This intervention holds a dual meaning: the flames represent both human technological and cultural advancement and its destructive potential (e.g., fires, pollution). This ambiguity reflects the complexity of the contemporary human-nature relationship: humanity depends on nature for survival but inevitably also affects it.



Figure 12: A burning flame, symbolizing the progress and destructive potential of human technology and culture



Figure 13: Water surface and a human silhouette, reflecting the complex relationship and dependence between humanity and nature

4. The Contrast between Eternity and Instantaneity: Temporal Tension

Time is a key theme in the video's narrative. The eternity of natural landscapes is expressed through the use of slow motion and changes in light: leaves stirred by the wind, shadows of flying birds, and the slow movement of sunlight. These combined visual elements construct a notion of natural time—calm and eternal. In contrast, the short duration of the flames represents the ephemeral nature of human activities.

This juxtaposition of the eternal and the momentary suggests a temporal tension between nature and humanity. While nature's time follows a perpetual cycle, human time is marked by brief and linear events. This contrast reflects the philosophical and artistic struggle to understand the coexistence between these two temporal dimensions.



Figure 14: Weeds against the light, conveying nature's eternal time and intrinsic vitality

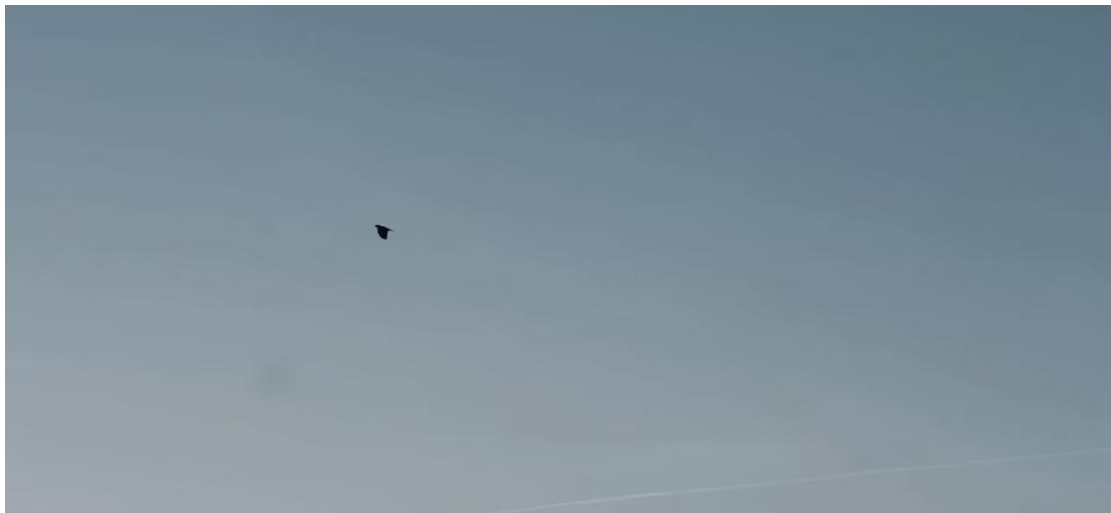


Figure 15: A flying bird in the sky, symbolizing independent life in the natural world



Figure 16:Coastline at dusk, alluding to nature's perpetual cycle and humanity's transient presence



Figure 17:Leaves in sunlight, demonstrating nature's beauty through the interplay of light and shadow

References

- [1] C. Nolan (Director). *Interstellar* (Paramount Pictures, USA 2014).
- [2] M. Heidegger: *Poetry, Language, Thought* (A. Hofstadter, Trans.) (Harper & Row, USA 1971), p.149.
- [3] T. Morton: *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (Columbia University Press, USA 2016), p.5.