

# Stanislaw Lem vs. Andrei Tarkovsky

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## Stanislaw Lem vs. Andrei Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovski (1932 - 1986) was born in Russia. Tarkovsky directed the first five of his seven films (*Ivan's Childhood* (1962), *Andrei Rublev* (1966), *Solaris* (1972), *Mirror* (1975) and *Stalker* (1979)) in the Soviet Union; his latest films, *Nostalghia* (1983) and *The Sacrifice* (1986), were produced in Italy and Sweden. *Andrei Rublev*, *Solaris*, *Mirror* and *Stalker* are regularly listed among the greatest movies of all time. Ingmar Bergman was quoted as saying:

"Tarkovsky for me is the greatest (director), the one who invented a new language, true to the nature of film, as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream." (Bielawski 2018)

The film history, Steven Dillon, says that much of the film was profoundly influenced by Tarkovsky's films. (Dillon 2006) Tarkovsky developed a theory of cinematography, which he called "sculpting in time." Through this he wanted to highlight the unique feature of cinema as an environment, to address our experience of time and to change it. The irregular film transcribes the time in real time. Using long shots and some cuts in his films, he sought to give viewers a sense of time, lost time, and the relationship between time and time.

The book *Solaris* (Lem 2012) is a 1961 philosophical novel of fiction by Polish writer Stanisław Lem. The book focuses on the themes of the nature of human memory, the experience and the inaction of communication between human and non-human species. The novel was transposed three times: in 1968, directed by Boris Nirenburg, closely following the book and maintaining the emphasis on the planet, rather than human relations; in 1972, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, respecting the book vaguely and emphasizing human relations; and in 2002, directed by Steven Soderbergh, with George Clooney and produced by James Cameron, also going on human relationships and neglecting the themes suggested by Lem. In fact, Lem himself noted that none of the film's versions focus on the Solaris ocean:

"... ..to my best knowledge, the book was not dedicated to erotic problems of people in outer space... As *Solaris*' author I shall allow myself to repeat that I only wanted to create a vision of a human encounter with something that certainly exists, in a mighty manner perhaps, but cannot be reduced to human concepts, ideas or images. This is why the book was entitled '*Solaris*' and not '*Love in Outer Space*'."

- Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris Station* (December 8, 2002) (Lem 2006)

Tarkovsky recognizes these differences, saying that there is a contradiction with Lem's initial idea, because he was interested in the problems of inner life, spiritual problems, so to speak, and Lem was interested in the collision between man and Cosmos. In an ontological sense of the word, in the sense of the problem of knowing and the limits of this knowledge - it is about that. Lem even said that mankind was in danger, that there was a crisis of knowledge when man did not

feel ... This crisis is growing, a snowball, takes the form of various human tragedies, including scientists. (Jerzy and Neuger 1985)

The difference is evident from Tarkovsky's explanation of Solaris's transposition process. Tarkovsky commented Lem's novel saying that he was attracted by the book only because he first met a work that could say it is a story of atonement, a remission, in a simple, classic sense of the word, when we remember the sins of the past. (Jerzy and Neuger 1985)

In 1972, Tarkovsky finished the film *Solaris*. He worked on the script along with Fridrikh Gorenshstein.

*Solaris* has as characters Natalia Bondarchuk (Hari), Donatas Banionis (Kris Kelvin), Juri Järvet (Dr. Snaut), Vladislav Dvorzhetsky (Henri Berton), Nikolai Grinko (Kris Kelvin's father), Olga Barnet (Kris Kelvin's mother) Solonitsyn (Dr. Sartorius) and Sos Sargsyan (Dr. Gibarian).

The film is a psychological drama unfolding aboard a space station that orbits the Solaris planet. The three members of the team have psychological problems, so the psychologist Kris Kelvin is sent there to assess the situation but faces the same mysterious phenomena as the others.

Tarkovsky and Lem collaborated on film adaptation of the novel.

Tarkovsky focuses on Kelvin's feelings for his wife, Hari, and on the impact of space exploration on the human condition.

The soundtrack of the film is the prelude to Johann Sebastian Bach's chorus for organ, *Ieruf 'zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 639*, played by Leonid Roizman (the central theme of the film), and an electronic composition by Eduard Artemiev. Hari has his own musical subtext, a *cantus firmus* by Artemiev inspired by J. S. Bach's music, which is heard at the death of Hari and at the end of the film. (Artemyev 1991)

Solaris premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 1972 and won the Grand Jury Special Prize and was nominated for the Palme d'Or. A list of the world's best 100 movie releases compiled by Empire magazine in 2010 ranked Tarkovsky's *Solaris* 68<sup>th</sup>. (Empire.com 2017)

Stanisław Lem claimed that he "never really liked Tarkovsky's version" of his novel. (Lem 2012) Tarkovsky would have gone so far as to produce *Crime and Punishment* rather than *Solaris*, omitting the epistemological and cognitive aspects of his book. (Bereś 1987) For Tarkovsky, the existential conflict exposed by Lem was just the starting point for developing the character's inner life. (Jerzy and Neuger 1987)

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