

MOVIES, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND BODY RESILIENCE: OVERCOMING FOR HAPPINESS

Ivan Fortunato¹, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1870-7528>
Gisele Maria Schwartz², Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9103-8853>

ABSTRACT. This paper deals with an investigation centered on the human relationship with the movies, from a Positive Psychology point of view, which focuses on the promotion of values and well-being. This search emerges from the following question: could movies potentiate the confrontation to overcome strong contingent adversities to human life? Specifically, the purpose of the paper is to discuss how movies can enhance the body resilience. Therefore, the sense of resilience is explored when the body itself seems to limit someone to perform ordinary tasks. For that, the movies *Meu pé esquerdo* (1989) and *A teoria de tudo* (2014), which portray, respectively, the stories of Christy Brown and Stephen Hawking are both used as clear examples that the limitation of the body is not enough to limit the happiness. In the end, the elements identified in the selected narratives are expected to help strengthen movies as foundational technology for human development, especially from the perspective of Positive Psychology.

Keywords: Movies; positive psychology; resilience.

CINEMA, PSICOLOGIA POSITIVA E A RESILIÊNCIA DO CORPO: SUPERAR PARA A FELICIDADE

RESUMO. Este artigo trata de uma investigação centrada na relação humana com o cinema, do ponto de vista da Psicologia Positiva, cujo propósito é a promoção de valores e bem-estar. Essa busca emerge da seguinte inquietação: poderia o cinema potencializar o enfrentamento para superação de contundentes adversidades contingenciais à vida humana? Especificamente, o propósito do artigo é discutir como o cinema pode potencializar a resiliência do corpo. Dessa forma, explora-se o sentido da resiliência quando o próprio corpo aparenta limitar alguém a realizar tarefas corriqueiras. Para tanto, os filmes *Meu pé esquerdo* (1989) e *A teoria de tudo* (2014), que retratam, respectivamente, as histórias de Christy Brown e Stephen Hawking são utilizados como exemplos de que a limitação do corpo não é suficiente para limitação da felicidade. Ao final, espera-se que os elementos identificados, nas narrativas cinematográficas, ajudem a fortalecer o cinema como uma tecnologia fundante para o desenvolvimento humano, especialmente pela ótica da psicologia positiva.

Palavras-chave: Cinema; psicologia positiva; resiliência.

¹ Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de São Paulo (IFSP), Itapetininga, SP, Brazil. E-mail: ivanftr@yahoo.com.br

² Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (UNESP), Rio Claro-SP, Brazil.



CINEMA, PSICOLOGÍA POSITIVA Y LA RESILIENCIA DEL CUERPO: SUPERAR PARA LA FELICIDAD

RESUMEN. Este artículo trata de una investigación centrada en la relación humana con el cine desde el punto de vista de la Psicología Positiva, cuyo propósito es la promoción de valores y bienestar. Esta búsqueda surge de la siguiente inquietud: ¿podría el cine potenciar el enfrentamiento para superar las contundentes adversidades contingentes a la vida humana? En concreto, el propósito del artículo es discutir cómo el cine puede potenciar la resiliencia del cuerpo. De esta forma, se explora el sentido de la resiliencia cuando el propio cuerpo aparenta limitar a alguien a realizar tareas corrientes. Para tanto, las películas *Meu pé esquerdo* (1989) y *A teoria de tudo* (2014), que retratan, respectivamente, las historias de Christy Brown y Stephen Hawking se utilizan como ejemplos claros de que la limitación del cuerpo no es suficiente para limitar la felicidad. Al final, se espera que los elementos identificados en las narrativas cinematográficas seleccionadas, ayuden a fortalecer el cine como una tecnología fundadora para el desarrollo humano, especialmente por la óptica de la Psicología Positiva.

Palabras clave: Cinema; psicología positiva; resiliencia.

Introduction

[...] Movies transcend all barriers and differences, whether these barriers are culture, language, religion, geographic borders, or belief systems. Language is a way of communicating thoughts and feelings, and it is a system that has particular rules, signs, and symbols that shape it and make it meaningful [...] Therefore, movies are a commentary on more than society – they inform us about the human condition (Niemiec & Wedding, 2012, p. 19).

Starting from the perspective that cinema expresses itself through its own language, it is questioned: would the cinema be a media medium capable of contributing to the emotional strengthening of a person, to the point of making it possible to overcome negative aspects of life itself? In other words, could the cinema present itself as a potentiating element of human resilience? A recent systematic survey identified the relation Cinema, Positive Psychology and Resilience as a gap in developmental studies (Fortunato & Schwartz, 2019). We have identified studies that relate Positive Psychology and Resilience (Brown, 2015, Shoshani & Slone, 2016), as well as studies that establish relationships between Cinema and Positive Psychology (Leão, Souza, & Castro, 2015), but none that contemplate this triple relationship. This paper, produced from a doctoral thesis on Human Development and Technologies (Fortunato, 2018), seeks to offer a new perspective, with the intention of filling some of this gap, by demonstrating how cinema can favor the creation of a new impression of reality, constructed subjectively by the inspiration of those who live a reality invented by and for the filmic narrative.

The quote reproduced in the epigraph, developed from the perspective of Positive Psychology (also referred to as PP), concentrates elements that help to consider movies as repositories of resilience for a happy life. This is not because movies are able to reliably portray people's feelings, but because they offer, through the narratives of their characters, offers intense portrayals of 'parts of human life'. Such portraits carry the potentiality of reflecting each of the subjectivities, acting as a metaphorical language of the 'I'. From this comes the basic idea that the adventures and misfortunes experienced by the characters

potentially can modify people, since they can be catalysts for the transformation of personal and collective beliefs, values and attitudes. Even a narrative created (or adapted) for the cinema, can help people better understand their own existence and, perhaps, even help in overcoming limiting adversities. As seen, for example, in the research conducted by Carvalho, Passini and Baduy (2015, p. 397), which sought to demonstrate the intrinsic relation between cinema and psychology, stating that “[...] an issue that articulates these productions is the conception of which they convey and diffuse”.

This paper, pretends to demonstrate a way in which the language of a movie can assist in the development of the perception that a limited body is not at all a circumscription for a happy life; even if there is a cultural implication, in which the limitation is not the deficiency of the body itself, but a kind of social taint that threatens the fundamental right to be in the world of who is different (Medeiros, Diniz, & Barbosa, 2010). For this reason, two life stories presuppose by incurable diseases, which have been dramatized by the cinema are analyzed. On the movie *Meu pé esquerdo* (Sheridan, 1989), it is observed that cerebral palsy was not able to stop Christy Brown from playing with his brothers, learning to write, painting, getting married. While in *A teoria de tudo* (Marsh, 2014), it is detailed the story of coping with the illness experienced by the character that portrays the physicist Stephen Hawking, whose initial diagnosis gave him only two or three years of life.

Both cases were guided mainly by the attitudes of the characters who, aware of the challenges posed by the weakness of their own bodies, were able to overcome what could be seen as a restriction not only to mobility, to work, to self-care, to leisure, and etc., but to the very own capacity of being. So, instead of succumbing to body imperfections, the characters Christy and Stephen demonstrate how it is possible to live life positively, overcoming, removing, subduing obstacles. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to investigate possibilities that the cinema offers so that the viewer can identify, for himself and for the other, ways to deal with the physical limitations imposed by the body itself, whether by illness, accident, violence, genetics and etc.

In order to reach the goals established for this paper, movies, resilience and PP have been intertwined in the sections that follow. First, ‘A left foot for happiness’, portrays Christy Brown’s life as shown on screen by the 1990 Oscar winner for best actor Daniel Day-Lewis. In this section, it is hoped that this re-imagined story will help demonstrate how resilience depends on the action of overcoming to become a founding element of a more joyful life. The second section, ‘from black holes to body resiliency’, takes Stephen Hawking’s life as it was portrayed for the cinema as a supporting element to explain resilience. Affected by a degenerative disease, the character demonstrates how he did to overcome the mishaps that his body’s atrophy imposed upon him, including his foretold death for a few years after diagnosis.

In the end, evidence was sought to identify how movies allow the recognition of actions of overcoming in order to build the resilience of the body and, in this way, increase the chances of a more prosperous life, happiness and well-being

A left foot for happiness

When trying to explain ‘what is the cinema’, Jean-Claude Bernadet (1985) noted that a novelty was brought into human life when, at the end of the XIX century, a small audience, gathered in a French cafe, thought that the train that reached the station Ciotat, in the southeast of the country, would project itself over who was watching it. The author stated that everyone knew that it was an image; after all, the train was designed in black and white

without any sound or noise. Even so, this audience was affected by a great fright. Thus, already in its first exhibition, the cinematic illusion was established as if it were true. In fact, watching a film, Bernadet (1985, p. 12) noted, “[...] seems so true – that one can pretend, as long as the film lasts, that it is for real”.

This perspective makes possible because the cinema extrapolates the impression of reality, as it re-creates it. This is most evident in cases that claim to be based on real facts, such as the dramatization of Christy Brown’s life. This is because the film re-creation of someone who is real, in a materialist conception of existence, that is, a person of flesh and blood, of emotion and reason, of pulse and impulse, is an allegorical and metaphorical form of portraying human existence. Thus, when one sees the challenges of relating to the world only with the movements of his left foot, one does not only see the overcoming of Christy, but, one can project part of the particular difficulties of real life in the interpretation of the actor.

Thus, movies of this genre, it’s easier to recognize the ‘impression of reality’, emphasized by Bernadet (1985), as a clearer expression of Niemiec and Wedding’s ‘cinematic elevation’ (2014, 2012). This is because the movie enhances the process of perceiving virtuous behaviors, amplifies the possible inspiration resulting from overcoming, and consequently brings the viewer closer to a becoming of well-being and happiness. Niemiec (2011) clarified how this ‘elevation’ works: it is a recent term of PP, which refers to the physiological sensations (such as a tingling or warmth in the chest) originated by the observation of a positive behavior, which motivates the observer to perform positive behavior. For the author, when this sensation is provoked by the action of a movie character, motivating to mimic its conducts in favor of self and/or of others, one has the ‘cinematic elevation’.

In this sense, a PP movie seems to be more likely to stimulate cinematic elevation, by its very own positive qualities. Niemiec (2007) presented four characteristics that are necessary to qualify a movie as positive, all of which are easily recognized in the movie *Meu pé esquerdo*. The first is the description of a character who demonstrates character strengths of the PP and, in the first half of the movie, it is already possible to recognize in Christy Brown the following forces, according to Park, Peterson and Seligman (2004) classification: bravery, creativity and hope.

The second feature of a PP movie is the representation of the obstacles that require maximum strength of the character to be overcome. In the case of Christy Brown, the most obvious obstacle is his degenerative congenital disease, but he still had to overcome the prejudice and the abandonment of society and even of his own family. After all, as pointed out by Diniz, Squinca and Medeiros (2006), deficiency is nothing more than a social construction and, therefore, the difficulties of a limited body are never given by the body itself, but by the environment, which can be hostile or receptive to body diversity – having to overcome this complex relationship of hostility and welcoming of his own family is part of Christy Brown’s resilient process. In this way, both challenges were eclipsed by his self-determination to become someone, even though his existence was almost ‘denied’ as it grew. This, therefore, meets the third characteristic of a PP film: the clear display of the actions taken to win over obstacles.

We offer the decomposition and analytical reconstitution for this movie, it’s expected to focus Christy Brown’s character strengths, obstacles and behaviors. In this review, the objective is to highlight the fourth characteristic of a PP film, that is, its inspiring tone. Still,

as *Meu pé esquerdo* collaborates to narrow the relation between movies and the PP, it is intended to emphasize its resilient qualities of overcoming.

This movie was inspired by the eponymous autobiography originally published in 1954 (Brown, 1998). Despite portraying the life story of Christy Brown, somewhat retrospectively since his birth, the film is not a documentary. It is a novel, whose protagonist is a character who has the same name, the same congenital disease, the same family and lived in the same place as Christy Brown, but he is not at all the same Christy Brown who had to deal with all adversities of illness and lack of understanding in the family and society – mainly social, for, as Marques (1998, p. 106) pointed out, there is a stigma of incapacity in those who have a disability, “[...] regardless of their individual potentialities [...]”, which tends to place these people “[...] in a condition of bodily inferiority and productive incapacity”.

Another important distinction between the character and the person that he represents is in what Bernadet (1985) called ‘the narrator’s point of view’. According to the author, this view corresponds to a ‘transparent’ language, i.e. in the case of the life of Christy Brown played for the cinema; his story is told by a narrator who is not part of the story. This narrator does not exist for the viewer, because he only tells the story through the use of plans, sequences, cuts, lighting and etc., while not participating in the plot, since he is not a character. Bernadet (1985) even stated that transparent language has once been called God’s point of view, because even from outside of everything that happens, the narrator can see, hear and know about the lives of the characters, without these do not even think about his existence.

Christy Brown (1998) begins his autobiographical book retrieving memories of his birth, probably as told by his own family: it was the tenth birth of his mother, who would give birth to twelve other children after him. Of these, five were stillborn; four died still infants, remaining 13. The author wrote about the difficulties in childbirth, being necessary to remain in the nursery while his mother recovered. According to Brown (1998), the first person to suspect that something was wrong with him was his own mother in the breastfeeding period when he was about four months old. The author of his own story tells that his parents sought medical help immediately; refusing diagnoses that nothing could be done for the sick child.

In the movie, the narrator, through his transparent language, starts Christy’s life story by portraying the difficulty in childbirth. However, the scene was constructed as follows: the father enters a hospital ward and walks to the midwife, who tells him that the birth had occurred two hours ago and that there were complications. Next, the father is drinking in a bar, being ridiculed by his booze companions, saying that the newborn son should be institutionalized, since it is social stigma, according to Marques (1998), that to be deficient implies to be someone inefficient, unproductive and unsuitable for society itself. But in the next plan, Christy is already a boy in shorts, lying in the span that is under the stairs of his house.

In this way, the autobiographical text reveals that the first evidence of Christy’s illness was noticed four months after his birth, and that both parents were willing to face whatever it was necessary for his well-being. Nevertheless, the language of the cinema preferred to show the disease of the character soon in the childbirth, and also to create a disappointed father and a protective mother. These differences between the autobiography book and the movie, identified at the dawn of Christy’s life, are sufficient to demonstrate that the film *My Left Foot* is a fiction built from the memoirs recorded in the book. So Christy, played by Oscar-winner for best actor Daniel Day-Lewis, is a movie character whose features and attitudes absolutely serve to declare the cinema as a great repository for human

development. After all, the (re)invented character demonstrates qualities and actions with certain purposes to encourage the life of the viewer. One of these qualities may be the amplification of resilience.

Highlighting the differences between the Christy born in Dublin in 1932 in Ireland and movie Christy, whose interpretation was filmed and edited in the late 1980s, is only intended to record that the decomposition of the film and the reconstitution of some passages relate to the character. It is this Christy who displays the strengths of character and demonstrates how he overcame his obstacles, in order to inspire those who watch.

In characterizing the forces of character, Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004, p. 606) thus described bravery, one of the first forces quite evident in the narrative: "Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it". A scene that reveals his physical and emotional bravery, demonstrating his ability to face a challenge, was projected after about ten minutes of film. The scene unfolds in three planes, and the narrator intends to prove that Christy's mother is sick. In the foreground, she explains to the boy that she will leave the house to go to the hospital for a few days. Then the narrator wants to show her panting, with enough difficulty to carry Christy upstairs, until she lies in his bed. In the sequence, the narrator does not show it, but he makes it pretty clear that the mother fainted while trying to descend the stairs, causing a strong fall. So we see the boy joining forces, and only with partial movements of his left leg, he jumps out of bed, crawls to the foot of the stairs where his mother was fallen and kicks hard at the door of his house in an attempt to get help from outside.

Another scene built to show his bravery is that of the soccer played on the street, which took place around 30 minutes past the beginning of the film. Christy is in the late teens, already being played by Daniel Day-Lewis, and the narrator wants to show that even practically paralyzed, the young man gets to have fun with his brothers and neighbors. As a goalkeeper, Christy lies to defend a ball with his head. A neighbor, as a player of the opposing team, begins to kick the ball against Christy's head, which, without being intimidated by the violence, retaliates by biting his shin. To further strengthen the sympathy of the spectator, Christy was carried by his brother until the penalty mark, where, lying down, use his left foot to score a goal.

Creativity is another Christy's strength. It is defined by Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004, p. 606) as "[...] thinking of novel and productive ways to do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it". It is possible to go back to the first scene used to explain bravery in order to locate his non-artistic creativity. In this scene, the boy's ingenuity is shown by moving from his bed downstairs and forcefully kicking the door to attract attention and get help for his mother. Nevertheless, it is the artistic creativity that best defines Christy Brown, the artist and writer of the left foot. The movie narrator reveals, in the scene shown at 16 minutes, how it was the first moment in which the boy could hold a piece of chalk with his left foot and scribble on the floor. In the scene, the father is sitting at the table accompanying the homework of two of his children. The girl asks a math question to Christy and is reprimanded by her father. In the sequence, Christy grabs the chalk with his foot, making the family watch and encourages him to 'leave his mark' – except the father, who grouses that he is 'just a cripple', corroborating the social stigma outlined by Marques (1998), in which the deficiency of the body happens to be synonymous of an incapable individual.

Finally, Christy's hope is very remarkable; hope is a force defined by Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004, p. 606) as: "[...] expecting the best in the future and working to achieve

it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about". It is likely, however, that this hope in the future was built because of his mother's persistence in believing in his potential. In the scene that is shown at around 17 minutes, we can see his mother and older sister carrying Christy around in a cart made of wood. They both laugh, Christy laughs. His father also plays, as do several of his brothers... Laughter and collective joy seem to have given him hope. To reinforce the thesis that the mother was his greatest inspiration for hope, the narrator presents the scene, at the 24-minute film, in which Christy writes his first word with his left foot: the word 'mother'.

Pinheiro (2004) noted that all human existence runs through difficulties and faces with uncertainties and emotional, social, physical or economic adversities. For the author, resilience is a process of coping with these adversities, and this process is a capacity that all people bear it, either in a lesser or greater degree. What amplifies the degree of confrontation, explains the author, is the identification of at least a meaning for existence, which can be "[...] the capacity to love, to work, to have expectations and to project life" (p. 75) The devotion of Christy's mother seems to have unleashed his ability to love and thus awakened the boy for other purposes of life, especially artistic creativity.

The narrator continues to show Christy's growth, becoming young and participating in adolescent adventures with his brothers, falling in love and having his first love disappointment: the girl who refuses his declaration of love in the form of drawing and poetry, because she was mocked by her friends, accused of being in love with a cripple. Subsequent scenes show several situations of family problems: father's unemployment and the need to save money on food and coal (for the central heating of the house), the eldest daughter pregnant before marriage, etc. Time is running fast and the narrator has chosen to elide Christy's motor, speech, and artistic skills developments. Nevertheless, much of the film covers Christy's relationship with Dr. Cole, a medical specialist in cerebral palsy, and all his progress until he became a painter recognized for his art. The narrator reveals Brown's affection for the doctor and his amorous disappointment; exposes his problems with alcohol and his strong personality. The closing scenes reveal how he met his wife at a launching ceremony for his autobiographical book.

By displaying the life of the character Christy Brown, the transparent language of the narrator can allow the viewer to see the elements that allowed the artist and writer of the left foot to maintain his bravery, creativity and hope, although his body did not allow him to do too much. His high resilient capacity can be explained by what Pinheiro (2004) called 'protective factors', which are the favorable conditions for resilience. The main factors, listed in three types, are evident in the film: (1) individual emotional conditions, such as engagement in artistic activities; (2) family conditions, especially his mother's love and unconditional support and friendship with his siblings; and (3) consistent alterity, acceptance, affection, and support relationships existing first in his own home and, when older, in the specialist clinic, in the audience he captivated, and in the end, his wife.

The final scene seems to have been designed to inspire the viewer, for it contains all the predicates of a 'lived happily ever after'. Alone, at the top a mountain from which they could see the Irish capital, his fiancé recommends that they toast Dublin, as it is the hometown of Christy Brown. A merry background music, a champagne is popped and both laugh their happiness... this is the last moment of the movie!

From black holes to body resiliency

A teoria de tudo can be understood as a Positive Psychology? Say, could its plot to inspire human development? Do the protagonist's attitudes contribute to resilience? It is hoped, in the course of this section, to respond positively to these three issues drawn from the choice of the theme film for the discussions that intertwine movies with positive human development and resilience.

Just like the movie about Christy Brown, *A teoria de tudo* is meant to tell the story inspired in a real person. Transparent language is also used by the narrator, who does not appear in the movie. Another similar aspect between the films is that both were instigated by autobiographical books; Hawking's life, however, was romanticized by his wife Jane Hawking (2014), making the narrative of the resilience of the body a witness observed and not lived experience. Another curious similarity between the movies is that the main actors won the Oscar for their interpretation. Nevertheless, there is a full difference: the character Christy Brown was created from autobiographical memoirs and from close people because the film is posthumous, but, the character Stephen Hawking had the opportunity to be interpreted from memoirs told and recounted directly by the scientist Stephen Hawking. Even so, the history of the theory of everything cannot be interpreted as a documentary, but rather as a cinematographic production that creates impressions of reality. Thus, as much as the actor Eddie Redmayne was influenced by the person who would play, it is important to note that the screen Hawking is a character.

It seems reasonable to state that *A teoria de tudo* presents the four characteristics of a PP movie: its main character exposes his character strengths (in a manner equivalent to those of Christy Brown) in facing a degenerative disease as a clear obstacle to his happiness, at the same time in which the attitudes for overcoming it are evidenced by the narrator of the story. The fourth characteristic of a PP movie is probably the most difficult to attest from the decomposition and reconstitution of this film history, since it presupposes inferring an inspiring tone.

As Xavier (1983) warned, movie watchers are not 'passive elements' because they participate in the plot consciously reviving, even in the passive position of spectators, analogous situations of their own experiences in the outer world. All this, explains the author, gives the cinema a privileged aesthetic position, since the color, sound and moving image is capable of relativizing and even softening aspects of the spectators' private life, leading them to share their experience with the characters and/or learn from the impression of reality created to deal with their own lived reality. In this way, it seems that the fourth characteristic of a PP movie lies in a subjectivity that the cinema (producers, writers, actors, etc.) cannot handle. Still, it may be wise to try to locate possible inspirational attempts in a movie. In *A teoria de tudo*, Stephen's coping mechanisms can be qualified as an inspiring strategy, giving this featured film that positive trait.

The first half-hour of the film seems to have as its mission to make the viewer create bonds of affection with the character. This is because the scenes are being constructed to demonstrate the academic challenges of a college student and his efforts to woo a college student. These are inconclusive scenes, designed so that most viewers remain entertained, hoping that Stephen will find his academic potential and, more importantly, begin an affectionate, loving relationship with Jane, that would end with a *happily ever after*. These scenes correspond to the ideas of Munsterberg (1983, p. 27), which should "[...] awaken traces of past experiences, mobilize feelings and emotions, stimulate suggestibility,

generate ideas". In fact, the author himself retakes this reflection, to express that the cinema must have as its goal "[...] to portray emotions" (p. 46).

Therefore, a PP movie must express positive emotions. Fredrickson (2003) had already pointed out the difficulty of researching such emotions, because the positive ones, explains the author, are smaller and very similar, such as joy, fun and pleasure. On the other hand, anger, fear and sadness – negative emotions – are widely distinct and easy to be recognized, either by the person who feels them, or by the facial expressions they provoke. The author also notes that for each positive emotion there are three or four negatives ones. All of this only raises the challenge of a PP movie, because a negative emotion, emphasizes Fredrickson (2003), creates the impulse to act according to what you feel. In a very simplistic way, it can be said that it is easier to make a viewer to identify oneself more quickly with a negative emotion, either because the negative emotions exceed in quantity, or because one recognizes it in a character face expression.

Munsterberg (1983) identified two types of emotions raised by the movies: those that communicate the feelings of the characters and those that a film provokes within each spectator. The first is evident both in the plot and in the actors' face expressions. The second, in the other hand, is so subjective that it can even be opposed to those felt by the characters. This means that a scene of sadness can cause joy to a viewer and vice versa. About this type of emotion, subjectively established by the movie projection, there is no possibility of any kind of control or prediction. Therefore, the decomposition and restitution of a film can only be made from the emotion communicated by the characters.

For Munsterberg (1983, p. 51), movie characters attribute value and meaning to a film, for they are, according to the author, "[...] subjects of emotional experiences". They live, even in the imagined reality, the most diverse situations and, with them, they suffer, fear, grieve, laugh... making the spectators, for the most part, sympathize with those who suffer, become indignant with those who are betrayed, smile with joy and get thrilled with their achievements. This is because, explains Munsterberg (1983, p. 51) "[...] the visual perception of the various manifestations of these emotions fuses in our mind with the consciousness of the expressed emotion; it is as if we are seeing and directly observing our own emotion". Thus, it is more remarkable that the narrator of 'theory of everything' intends to share positive emotions in the first quartile of the movie, showing the impasses of the young Stephen before his doctoral thesis and all the wooing with the young student of medieval Literature.

The scenes that the narrator uses to elevate the affection with the character Stephen demonstrate several forces of character, as described by Park, Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 606). When trying to seducing Jane and finding a theme to develop his doctoral thesis, the young man is always in a good mood, which is a strength defined by the authors as "[...] liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes". Another quite evident strength is love, defined by the authors as "[...] valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people".

In this way, the affection for the young character Stephen Hawking is guaranteed by the humorous way in which he leads his life, enjoying being with friends and having fun with them, acting seriously in the face of the difficult task of defining his line of studies and, especially, planning ways to get close to the girl he felt passionate about. However, when his willingness to develop a theory about the beginning of the universe from a black hole was right, and when he won the girl's heart after a beautiful walk through the university ball,

this is the opportune moment for the narrator to reveal, dramatically, the violent fall, in the middle of the university campus, caused by his difficulty of controlling his own legs. This fall took him to the hospital where, after a dramatic battery of tests, Stephen was presented with his greatest obstacle to life: the diagnosis of his degenerative disease, accompanied by a two-year lifespan prognosis. He suffered from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), a disease that affects the motor system, causing, according to Bandeira et al. (2010, p. 134), a functional decline in the extremities, limbs, trunk, pharyngeal and respiratory muscles, “[...] culminating in the ultimate inability to perform daily life activities”.

His doctor explains his situation when they are both sitting on chairs in the hospital corridor. After finding out that he would lose control over his voluntary movements, he worries about his brain which, according to the doctor, would not be affected, but it would not make a difference because Stephen would lose his ability to speak and any other form of communication. Then, after pronouncing his short life expectancy without quality, the doctor stands up, turns away and disappears from the scene. Stephen remains seated, astonished, by himself – literally, with no one in the hospital corridor – as if the news affected him alone. If one of the characteristics of a PP film is the clear exposure of one (or more) obstacle requiring maximum force to be overcome, the scenes experienced by Stephen in the hospital and the news of their health condition leave this condition undone.

If Christy Brown had his mother as responsible for enhancing his ‘hope’ strength, Stephen Hawking was able to show high level of hope thanks to the young Jane Wilde, who did not allow the discovery of the disease to be enough to extinguish their passion for one another. In this way, the narrator takes on subsequent scenes to display the girl’s character strength, such as persistence, hope, and bravery, as well as zest, which were qualified by Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004, p. 606) as “[...] approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated”.

At first, it seems like that only Jane is interested in life. She is willing to face the obstacles, as hard as they may be, in order to keep them together and enthusiastic with life. At around 38 minutes of the movie, the narrator reveals the scenes of the marriage and, following, taking care of their firstborn, carrying out his studies and research, their daughter birth, etc. The narrator chooses positive moments to portray the life of the Hawking couple but neither the narrator himself nor any character pays any attention to the fact that Stephen had already surpassed the two years lifespan expectation, as if this fact was in line for the viewer observation alone. With this, therefore, it seems that Stephen Hawking agrees with Fredrickson (2003) ideas about positive emotions extend longevity, cause good things to the present time, and it also reduces physical harms to the cardiovascular system, caused by negative emotions.

Feeling good, Fredrickson noted (2003, p. 334, author’s emphasis), “[...] can transform people for the better, making them more optimistic, ‘resilient’ and socially connected”. The author emphasizes that positive emotions are the most fundamental ingredient to resilience, but that they also depend on a positive meaning for life. Stephen seems to demonstrate the importance of positive emotions since the days when he was a young graduate student because, early in the film, he reveals a desire to find a simple (and elegant) equation that could explain the world. Even ill, receiving the news of a gradual loss of control of his own body, his greatest concern was with his mind, for he would need it to find such an equation that would account for everything. This reveals that Stephen had found

greater sense for his existence, so he was unwilling to abandon his purpose because of his body that would eventually collapse due to an unexplained organic condition.

Fredrickson (2003) coined the term 'broaden-and-build' theory – which can be understood as the expanded theory of positive emotions – to explain how positive emotions affect human behavior. According to the author, even when they are discrete, positive emotions broaden the perception of the moment and the thinking, they increase the repertoire of behaviors and help to build perennial personal resources, be these intellectual, psychological and even social. The narrator of *A teoria de tudo* allows the viewer to accompany the enlargement of the positive emotions of Stephen and his wife, as well as the construction of new emotions, demonstrating, by the cinematographic language, how it would be possible to experience the broaden-and-build theory, even before the challenges imposed by life. But shortly after receiving his well-deserved doctoral degree in physics, Stephen and his wife are gathered with friends for dinner at their home, toasting his achievement, chatting, laughing... Stephen is afflicted by certain sadness. His difficulty in participating in the meal is taken as a great challenge, especially when noticing that everyone can handle knives and forks – a common task usually taken by granted by people... until this ability is gradually lost. The character leaves the table with some difficulty, but no one follows him. He tries to climb the stairs, but fails, sad, trying to avoid his son, still a baby, to see his tears coming. He had to assured the baby that everything was fine.

The following scenes reveal how Stephen manages to maintain his good humor as his body makes daily life difficult for him. He cannot go upstairs to his bedroom anymore; he can no longer dress himself, being dependent on his wife for practically for every activity. The only thing he could do was to think cosmology, perhaps his great passion in life, which probably made the disease to be taken as the background of his existence. His daughter is born. His wheelchair is updated to electric motor. His ideas about the universe are presented to the great academics, and so the young doctor is gaining notoriety for brilliant ideas. He kept the search for a single elegant equation, capable to explain everything from the origin of the universe to the prediction of its end.

Thus, the unfolding of the life of the couple and Professor Hawking are counted by the language of the narrator. On the one hand, the lightness of life with which Stephen is facing his illness and the truths of the world of science. On the other hand, Jane's difficulties dealing with the everyday life of her husband, her children, her house, and her dream of studying literature being put on hold because of the contingencies of life she decided to take. Jane meets a young man in the church choir and she falls in love with him. Passion is reciprocal, but they cannot live that love. The narrator reveals Jane's strength in remaining loyal to her family and staying with her husband who, even with his weakened body, would not let himself down... and he was invited to travel to Bordeaux, to listen to the orchestra playing Wagner's compositions – which always accompanied him in his studies. In the theater, his body convalesces a little more, losing the ability to speak.

Thus, the fundamental participation of family and social protection factors in Stephen's resilient capacity is evidenced in the film, in a similar way pointed by Ungaretti (2013). According to the author, resilience is always situational and its structuring in the life of an individual depends greatly on the quantity and quality of events and their relation to protection factors, especially in the contact with the other. Ungaretti (2013, p. 67) draws attention to the quality of needs attendance, since people who develop a high resilient force "[...] had the presence of significant figures and established links, either of support or of admiration". This support found in the other happens to be something capital in the

strengthening of self-esteem and self-confidence. Jane and Stephen divorced and continued their lives with other spouses. But the movie narrator wanted to inspire, so he united the couple again to the final scenes, in the Castel of the Queen of England, for the ordering of Stephen Hawking as a British knight. In the castle garden, their three children play with much joy while Jane and Stephen talk. She explains that he can decline the title and she also thanks for that day and for everything they have lived. Stephen asks her to look at what they have built together: a family.

Like as the black hole theory, some emblematic images are quickly presented in reverse, from the queen's garden to the time when, in the movie, the eyes of Stephen and Jane first crossed: the end of the universe will be the same as its beginning. Here it is the theory of everything: an inspiration to overcome the difficulties of life through love and dreams. Although Stephen has demonstrated the symptoms of his illness throughout the film, which include, according to Bandeira et al. (2010), motor disorders that inhibit speech and swallowing (from frequent choking to pneumonia), as well as the disintegration of voluntary and automatic movements, the character did not let himself down – he did not perceive himself deficient or debilitated by his own body, chasing his dream as a scientist. He contradicts the literature, as in de Mello (2009) for example, since the loss of functional independence was not able to prevent him from living his life with quality. In the film, his protective factors and his work proved to be important elements for the resilience of a body that could limit his very own life.

The overcoming of Christy and Stephen inspire resilience

It is not enough, therefore, to isolate the projection on one side, the identification of the other, and, finally, the reciprocal transfers. It is also necessary to consider the complex of projection-identification, which implies these same transfers. It is the complex projection-identification-transference that commands all the so-called subjective psychological phenomena, that is, those that betray or deform the objective reality of things, or are deliberately situated outside this reality (states of the soul, reveries) (Morin, 1983, p. 146-147).

When Edgar Morin (1983) wrote about the 'soul' of the cinema, he acknowledged that there is no straight line between the created life of the characters and the concrete life of the viewers. This means that the process of identifying with the inspiring scenes of a Positive Psychology film is not so simple: isn't enough to project happiness on the screen for people learn to be happy. To make it is more complex that the spectator's relationship with a movie character. Morin (1983, p. 147) cautioned that the tripartite projection-identification-transference often happens in everyone's one experience, even if one does not go to the movies or watch a movie. However, the author defends the idea of the cinema as a potential repository for human development, because the "[...] image of the cinema is real enough to attest that its perception is capable of originating the projection-identification-transference [...]". Hence, this is because the movies can be considered as proposed by Mariás (1995), that is, as a metaphorical window. For that's reason: the scenes are like horizons that viewers can see, but to act upon the direction of what has been sighted, or to remain in the same place, it is not up to a movie to decide.

The narrated lives of the two characters here taken as motivators for resilience were created to inspire overcoming. Christy was born virtually paralyzed and identified creative ways to be a part of the family, while cultivating his ability to draw and paint. Stephen was afflicted by a degenerative disease early in his youth, having been introduced to a short,

without quality life, but discovering the secrets of the universe seemed more important than perish.

Movies, therefore, enable the flourishing of new perspectives as it reveals to the viewers the mechanisms used both by Christy and by Stephen – the characters – to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to a full life: the almost total immobility of their own bodies. They also overcame social obstacles, as shown by Santos (2010), since disability has become more of an element of cultural inequality, just as there are ethnic, gender, sexuality and other prejudices, there is also the belief that a disabled person represents an individual less capable. The narratives show character strengths that can mobilize, in the viewer, a complex process of projection-identification-transference. Focusing on the possible existence of a standard viewer, being able to look at the movie-window and to see one's own existence, the lives narrated in the movies *Meu pé esquerdo* and *A teoria de tudo* are examples to stimulate character strengths.

The PP found in Yearly (1990, p. 13) a definition for the force of character, being it “[...] a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing”. Based on this definition, Park, Peterson and Seligman (2004) explain that for PP, character strengths are plural, that is, they involve a series of positive intentional traits that an individual can recognize one's own strengths and also about reflect about them, share them and put them within a life plan. So this is how the characters Christy Brown and Stephen Hawking help to understand resilience as a character strength, after all, they both demonstrate attitudes of overcoming their body limitations by putting their lives in a plane larger than merely surviving. They both overcome the social label of incapacitates, and reveal what Medeiros, Diniz and Barbosa (2010, p. 13) had already noted: “[...] deficiency is not a neutral concept that describes bodies with disabilities, but the result of the body's interaction with impairments with environments, practices and discriminatory values”.

It is actually much more than that, since they both exhibit, in their overcoming, the characteristics that help to put together the resilience a one more character strength of the PP theory. This is because these movies show that their actions allowed them to reach the following traits of a character strength, according to Park, Peterson and Seligman (2004) understanding: (a.) allowed fulfilling, as were fundamental to personal satisfaction and building their own happiness; (b.) do not diminish others, that is, they recognized the importance of those who were present in their lives – Christy's mother and the first wife, Jane; (c.) they were traitlike, because they managed to maintain their strength, even with some lows throughout the narrative; and (d.) they can be considered prodigies, because they demonstrated attitudes of overcoming, be it as a child (in Christy's case), or a young boy (in Stephen's case).

At the end, it can be affirmed that the impression of reality created by the narrators of both movies, *Meu pé esquerdo* e *A teoria de tudo*, demonstrate a possible lived reality, as both protagonists inspire to overcome obstacles of life. After all, their immobility and degeneration were not enough to allow their existence to be merely a refraction of organic survival, as they managed to build and consolidate their presence in the world in a very positive way.

References

- Bandeira, F. M. et al. (2010). Avaliação da qualidade de vida de pacientes portadores de Esclerose Lateral Amiotrófica (ELA) em Brasília. *Revista Neurociencias*, 18(2), 133-138.
- Bernadet, J. (1985). *O que é cinema* (2a ed.). São Paulo, SP: Brasiliense, 1985.
- Brown, C. (1988). *My left foot*. Londres, UK: Vintage/Random House.
- Brown, R. (2015). Building children and young people's resilience: lessons from psychology. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 14 (2), 115-124.
- Carvalho, P. R., Passini, P. M., & Baduy, R. S. (2015). Cinema e psicologia: dos processos de subjetivação na contemporaneidade. *Psicologia em Estudo*, 20 (3), 389-398.
- Diniz, D., Squinca, F., & Medeiros, M. (2006). Deficiência, cuidado e justiça distributiva. In S. Costa, M. Fontes & F. Squinca (Org.), *Tópicos em bioética* (p. 82-94). Brasília, DF: Letras Livres.
- Fortunato, I. (2018). *Quando a resiliência vai ao cinema: superação e felicidade pela ótica da psicologia positiva* (Tese de Doutorado em Desenvolvimento Humano e Tecnologias). Instituto de Biociências, Universidade Estadual Paulista, Rio Claro.
- Fortunato, I., & Schwartz, G. M. (2019). Psicologia positiva e resiliência: uma revisão sistemática. *Interfaces Científicas - Humanas e Sociais*, 8(2). No prelo.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2003). The value of positive emotions. *American Scientist*, 91(4), 330-335.
- Hawking, J. (2014). *A teoria de tudo: a extraordinária história de Jane e Stephen Hawking* (Sandra Martha Dolinsky e Júlio de Andrade Filho, trad.). São Paulo, SP: Única.
- Leão, M. A. B. G., Souza, Z. R., & Castro, M. A. C. D. (2015). Desenvolvimento humano e teoria bioecológica: ensaio sobre "O contador de histórias". *Psicologia Escolar e Educacional*, 19(2), 341-348.
- Marques, C. A. (1998). Implicações políticas da institucionalização da deficiência. *Educação e Sociedade*, 29(62), 105-122.
- Mariás, J. (1955). *La imagen de la vida humana*. Buenos Aires, AR: Emece Editores.
- Marsh, J. (Diretor). (2014). *A teoria de tudo* [1 filme].
- Medeiros, M., Diniz, D., & Barbosa, L. (2010). Deficiência e igualdade: o desafio da proteção social. In D. Diniz, M. Medeiros, & L. Barbosa (Org.), *Deficiência e igualdade* (p. 9-18). Brasília, DF: Letras Livres.
- Mello, M. P. et al. (2009). O paciente oculto: qualidade de vida entre cuidadores e pacientes com diagnóstico de E. L. A. *Revista Brasileira de Neurologia*, 45(4), 5-16.

- Morin, E. (1983). A alma do cinema. In I. Xavier (Org.), *A experiência do cinema: antologia* (p. 145-172). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Edições Graal.
- Munsterberg, H. (1983). As emoções. In: I. Xavier (Org.), *A experiência do cinema: antologia* (p. 25-54). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Edições Graal.
- Niemiec, R. M. (2011). Positive psychology cinemeducation: a review of happy. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(3), 328-334.
- Niemiec, R. M. (2007). What is a positive psychology film? [Review of the motion picture *The pursuit of happiness*]. *Psyc CRITIQUES*, 52(38), art. 18.
- Niemiec, R., & Wedding, D. (2014). *Positive psychology at the movies 2: using films to build character strength and well-being*. Boston, MA: Hogrefe.
- Niemiec, R., & Wedding, D. (2012). *Psicologia positiva dos filmes: usando filmes para construir virtudes e características fortes* (Sonia Strong, trad.). Barueri, SP: Novo Século.
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(5), 603-619.
- Pinheiro, D. P. N. (2004). A resiliência em questão. *Psicologia em Estudo*, 9(1), 67-75.
- Santos, W. (2010). O que é incapacidade para a proteção social brasileira? In D. Diniz, M. Medeiros, & L. Barbosa (Org.), *Deficiência e igualdade* (p. 173-192). Brasília, DF: Letras Livres.
- Sheridan, J. (Diretor). (1989). *Meu pé esquerdo: a história de Christy Brown* [1 filme]. Miramax.
- Shoshani, A., & Slone, M. (2016). The resilience function of character strengths in the face of war and protracted conflict. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(1), 1-10 (art. 2006).
- Ungaretti, M. S. (2013). Revisão literária sobre a relação de resiliência com conceitos psicanalíticos. *Diaphora*, 13(1), 63-69.
- Xavier, I. (1983). Introdução. In I. Xavier (Org.), *A experiência do cinema: antologia* (p. 19-24). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Edições Graal.
- Yearly, L. H. (1990). *Mencius and Aquinas: theories of virtue and conceptions of courage*. Albany, NY: State of New York University Press.

Received: Apr. 15, 2018
Approved: Mar. 27, 2019

Ivan Fortunato: Professor at the Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de São Paulo (IFSP), campus of Itapetininga, and at the Postgraduate Program in Education of Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), campus of Sorocaba-SP.

Gisele Maria Schwartz: Ph.D. in School Psychology and Human Development, at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). Adjunct Professor at the Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (UNESP), working in the Postgraduate Program in Motricity Science and Postgraduate Program in Human Development and Technologies. Leader of the LEL – Leisure Studies Laboratory.