Thinking Reality and Time through Film

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

NEW REASONS TO ESTABLISH
PHILOSOPHY OF FILM

CHRISTINE REEH AND JOSÉ MANUEL MARTINS

Towards a New Approach

During the last few decades, film has increasingly become an issue of philosophical reflection from an ontological and epistemological perspective and the claim "doing philosophy through film" has raised extensive discussion about its meaning. This book aims to reassess, over 100 years after the invention of film, the question "What is film?" as a philosophical interrogation emphasizing an intrinsic relation between philosophy and film. The mechanical reproduction of reality is one of the very philosophical questions raised by the emergence of film at the end of the XIXth Century, inquiring into the ontological nature of both reality and film. Yet the nature of this audio-photographic and moving reproduction of reality constitutes an ontological puzzle, which has widely been disregarded as a main line of enquiry with direct consequences for philosophy.

The filmic re-production of reality has profoundly changed our relation to reality itself: on the one hand we have the image of reality, on the other hand the image dominating reality, tending to substitute reality, becoming real in itself. As deep-rooted cave dwellers we have learned how to switch sides: film enables us to double our being-in-the-world, to overcome the subjective condition by reproducing it. It constitutes a unique way of how we can look at reality from the inside on the outside, how we can think within x from outside x, and it is a device to overcome the limits of reason established since Kant. This switch of perspective on reality implies a change of thought and of knowledge, which has not only established film as a form of philosophy, but altered philosophy itself: "There is always a time, midday-midnight, when *we must no longer ask ourselves* 'What is

cinema?' but 'What is *philosophy*?'"[1], proposes Gilles Deleuze, and to this purpose we ask: how has philosophy changed through film? And furthermore, what does it mean to understand film as philosophizing? Can we access specific, reliable knowledge of the world and our relation to it through the aesthetic form of moving images? What is, after all, the essence of film in general and, most specifically, regarding the reproduction of reality?

Regarding this background, we have selected the best essays from our *Lisbon Conference on Philosophy and Film: Thinking Reality and Time through Film* (2014). What they all have in common is the attempt to create new aspects and approaches of how philosophy relates to film. Whether by philosophizing through concrete examples of films or whether looking at film's ontological reliance on time and image, or its intra-active entanglement with reality or truth, this book is intended to grasp film's nature philosophically and provide new insights for the film philosopher and the filmmaker as well as for the freshman fascinated by film for philosophical reasons. We have complemented the list of classical philosophical essays with the reworked transcriptions of two compelling film-philosophical dialogs among filmmakers and philosophers, which took place at pivotal moments of the Conference and which will now bring to the book the vivacity of the personal reflections of the creators, drawing on their own works at the crossroads of a robust philosophical inquiry.

Conversely, this volume makes a distinctive contribution to the field, by deepening the philosophical discussion of the ontological co-implication of time and reality as fuelled by the paradoxical phenomenon of the cinematographic image. Furthermore, it is our aim to establish parts of this volume as an epistemological contribution to the recent ontological turn in philosophy, by attempting to approach film as a special way to access truth. And finally, through different approaches, we hope to lay out the intrinsic relation between film and philosophy.

Overview of the Included Essays

In the first part of the book entitled "Mental Approaches: On the Nature of Time, Perception and Images" we have collected texts which open up new mental or subjective dimensions of film, reflecting on the nature of time, perception and image, as well as describing cinematic narrative as the most adequate vehicle for elucidating personal identity.

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[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert (New York/London: Continuum, 2008), 269.

In her article "The Image of Temporality", Maria-Teresa Teixeira engages in a full intermedial discussion of the interlocked models of sculpture, photography, cinema, painting and music, in relation to the fundamentals of Bergson's philosophy of time, movement, space and consciousness. Starting from the famous analogy between our usual perception of the world and the workings of the recently invented cinematograph, Teixeira contends that Bergson's recourse to this example should be seen solely as an analogy to stress the similitude between our intellect and the mechanical aspect of cinema. However, just as our spatializing intellect does not strictly eliminate temporal intuition, so too in cinema the mechanical aspect does not impair the artistic élan. In a final twist, which expresses her theoretical contribution to the ontological debate about cinema, Teixeira imports from an unexpected quarter what we could call her musical explanation of cinema as *pure durée*: in fact, music reveals to us a movement without any underlying mobile, whose ontological truth is that reality is process, not substance. Finally, it is shown that cinema, thanks to the accrued, non-human powers of technological mediation, can not only depict movement and change, albeit its ruling mechanism, but do it better than natural perception and human insight: not only can it depict and thoroughly represent reality, it can also fathom and present its very essential core, which is time. Finding in Bazin's *Picasso* essay a most valuable ally to the closing argument in favor of cinema's reality-aptitude, Teixeira additionally casts a perhaps unexpected light upon the utterly temporal nature of the celebrated Bazinian realism.

Given the transmedial trajectory of British visual artist and film director Steve McQueen, and the persistence of painterly and photographic models in his video and filmic imagery, Susana Viegas, in her article "The Integrity of Gesture in Steve McQueen's Films", resorts to a comparative approach championing cinema's medium-specific ability to redeem such former spatial, frozen representations of the human gesture, reinvested in film as its inner temporal "integrity". Parallelling Teixeira's core thesis, the author postulates a cinematic integrity with "nothing beneath" against which its own inner indivisibility can be matched and measured and, thus, de-integrated. Faithful to its own concept, this integrity operates thoroughly on the temporal, intermedial, ontological, ethical and bodily levels. Resonating Bergsonian undertones, the crucial opposition governing this integrity runs between deep (temporal, integral) and deceptive (spatialized, subdivided) presentations of reality. Viegas argues from a Deleuzian perspective: if the cinematic image is to achieve the ultimate liberation of time and fulfill the "temporal turn", it must begin with itself

and develop creatively, thus enhancing and bringing to the forefront the hidden time-bound quality of reality itself. In the Phenomenological essays that follow, we find a similar stress on the self-creative momentum of the moving image, way beyond empirical (or "spatialized") reality, through the variational role of imagination within the 'reality-free', non-positional interface of image consciousness. In this first part of the book, the philosophical notions of a substratum-free temporal process of reality without positivized "present" (Bergson) and of a non-positional ontology of phenomenological suspension without positivized "existence" (Husserl), "meet on screen" and engage in a rare dialogue with the cinematic concept of the redemption of the integrity of bodies and gestures. Accordingly, in McQueen's cinema, individuals do emerge as ongoing figural, non-narrative individuation processes, modulated from the inside – a view that the next chapter both complements and challenges.

From the process of individuation we come to a further thematic viewpoint, that of personal identity and film, which concerns Carlos João Correia's central purpose in "Cinematographic Narrative and Personal Identity". The author seeks to answer the question of to what extent cinema, considered within its narrative dimension and in comparison to literature, can advance the elucidation of the main dilemmas of personal identity. Correia argues that there is a particularly promising way of thinking about personal identity through narrative identity. Both kinds of identity do not coincide, naturally, but narrative identity can be enlightening for personal identity. Correia examines several historical, philosophical, fictional and thought-experimental models. By discussing their shortcomings he finally reaches a comprehensive theory and sees cinema as possibly the most appropriate vehicle to embody it. According to Correia cinema is, among all narrative forms, the most suited to mediate first person and third person perspectives. In fact, cinema places selfhood (*ipse-identity*) at the crossroads of the *edited* narrative-fictional enlargement of its self-experience, and the unanswered question concerning its affective core, permanently recurring within the long, speechless *shot*, as in Bergman's *Persona*, a film that shows how "personal identity" consists only of its own endless inquiry. In its own way, this "noble failure" anticipates one crucial theme of both the end of the first part and the central section of the second: namely, the groundlessness of being itself and/or its manifestation, and the ability of film to make that all the more evident.

The Phenomenological angle is addressed by two neighboring, complementary exposés: Przemysław Bursztyka in "The Phantasmatic Reality – A Phenomenological Study of the Cinematic Imagination" and

Claudio Rozzoni's "'Back' to the Window? A Husserlian Insight into Film Image".

The main aim of Bursztyka is to provide an outline of the phenomenological theory of cinematic experience with special reference to its imaginative components. The two – essentially connected – leading motifs of the essay are: film as such is a kind of phenomenology, based on the same intentions – of revealing and analyzing the modes of appearing of the world. While doing this it also suspends the binding power of schematic, superficial and pragmatically oriented perception. In this sense, film, by its very essence, employs the methodological operation of phenomenological reduction. Bursztyka thereby emphasizes the equivalent roles of the threefold phenomenological, transcendental and eidetic reductions and of cinematic phenomenality, wherein we also find the founding epochê of the positional attitude towards reality (the suspended screen-world), the effacement of the empirical intramundaneity of the subject and the insight into the essence, the limits of perception and of representability, which the quintessential cinematic spectacle provides. As opposed to a Bazinian approach, film's "phenomenological reduction", while suspending any existential judgement, reveals the former objective, posited factuality of the world as consisting instead of pure phenomenality, while cinematic fiction's role as "eidetic reduction" further discloses its ontological consequence: the active synthesis it demands from its "pure viewer" obverses the usual relationship between "reality" and the founding realm of the possibles, wherein the former is henceforth located. A comprehensive reading of the various chapters of the first part suggests that the Phenomenological standpoint can thus be seen to converge with Bergson's non-substantial philosophy, preparing a possible post-Deleuzian destiny for this lack of underlying *ontic* reality in the last two essays, which scrutinize at different stages the vanishing point of the very distinction between virtual and actual, real and mental.

A closely related angle is disclosed by Rozzoni, who fully rehabilitates Husserl philosophy's wrongly reputed inadequacy regarding aesthetics, through a close reading of a set of connected writings from 1904/5, 1912 and 1918, which allows us to trace the significant deepening of the German philosopher's initial intuition about image consciousness until its last, refined stage. Rozzoni accompanies, amongst other aspects, the transitional role, between 1912 and 1918, of the ontologically "hefty" example of a theatre play. Furthermore, the Bergsonian "movement without a mobile" is achieved by Rozzoni in Husserlian terms, those of imaginative variations, headed for that eidetic sphere cinematic images so rapturously spotlight – not unlike the living of pure time on its own terms,

which cinematic time-images prodigalize, according to Deleuze and *pace* Bergson. Thereby, Rozzoni's main question is very simple and yet complicated at the same time: How can we characterize the film image, taking into account the triad of an "image thing [*Bildding*]", an "image object [*Bildobjekt*]" and an "image *sujet*" – once we abandon the depicting bond for characterizing figurative art? The answer lies alongside the line Rozzoni minutely explores, concerning the sort of specific epochê which applies eminently to image-consciousness: in iconic consciousness (by watching a movie), we are prompted by the phenomenon itself, and not by way of a methodological decision, to live in a state of suspension of any position taking whatsoever, concerning the existence or non-existence, the reality or non-reality, of the image itself.

The relation between film image and subjectivity is then the concern of the next two essays. "In Reality: The Ultimate Cinematic Quest" by José Manuel Martins is an approach to the philosophical consequences of the indiscernibility of dream and life, the false and truth in film. Martins claims that in a world where, through the device of technology, it has become impossible to tell life and dreams apart, the classical philosophical struggle for reality - from Plato's Cave through to Descartes's Malign Genius, Kant's Copernican revolution and Hegel's "in itself for us" - no longer applies. Martins observes that in the recent technological age a new transcendental screen arises between the subject and itself and between the subject and reality, a screen in a double sense, to be denominated as a *techno-transcendental equipment*. In order to distinguish the external screen of representations and the "immanent" brain-screen of neuro-images, Martins proposes to reinterpret the Deleuzian movement-image / time-image binomial in terms of Patricia Pisters' Neuro-image. He takes the case of the movies *eXistenZ* and *Inception*, which are purely neuronal films and not temporal ones any more. The new ontological *angst* no longer lies in this classical philosophical state of a permanent (*de facto*) deceptiveness or lack, regarding "true reality", but in the sheer impossibility (*de jure*) of recognizing it, were one to ever come across its realm – either because "reality" itself vanished and only its ghost remains, under the guise of a formal constraint to "quest" for it (the ultimate MacGuffin); or because the very question is itself completely obliterated and no longer applies within the circumscription of a self-enclosed world, as we may see in the next essay by Atėnė Mendelytė. In the first case, "reality" as a heuristic phantom still plays a structural role in layering the "vertically" stratified stage where the quest takes place (to the great amusement of the action-image cinephile); in the second case, it closes

monadically around itself to the point of its Beckettian disappearance, "without no outside".

Following on from this approach, Atėnė Mendelytė in "The Filmic Century/Centuries of the Mind – Tracing the Beginnings of the Subjective Cinema" develops another perspective of mental worlds in film, in particular subjective worlds. Mendelytė proposes the neologism "sobjective cinema", a subjective yet subjective-objective cinema, referring to given film worlds, which are contracted and subtracted by a specific filmic perception, the "objective" subjectivity of the "mental image". This mental image is a complement to Gilles Deleuze's mental image, yet by no means to be confounded with it. Mendelytė defines the characteristics of her mental image: Firstly, the virtual mental becomes the only existing reality, substituting the actual. Secondly, its time is timelessness, escaping from the three Bergsonian syntheses of time. Most importantly, in the mental image the whole filmic universe has to be mentalized in one way or another and such a mentalization can be specifically based on a number of mental modes: hallucinations, affects, memories and dreams which here become parts of the actual. Furthermore, there is a subtle although significant difference between the time-image's indiscernibility of the real and the fictional, the actual and the virtual, the physical and the mental and the mental image's presentation of the mental as the actual. The three intriguing case-studies selected by Mendelytė – Shimane's *Odds and Ends*, Beckett's television plays and Maya Deren's seminal *Meshes of the Afternoon* – allow us to perceive the inimitable cinematic means employed for the ontological purpose of ruling out any "outside" and thus converting the remaining "mental" "inside" into the sole absolute, neither subjective nor objective, but both – which is not to be confounded with the antepredicative phenomenologically given, adressed in previous essays. It is not, e.g., the confinement within a claustrophobic room where time has blatantly come to a halt, together with the immobile attendance of the isolated character, that does the trick (not the stasis of the shot, not the theatrical side of the presentation), but the unremittingly centripetal properties of all the objectual, spatial, temporal and meaningful elements of the film, leading into each other through montage as much as they are devoid of any outward horizon, as happens in the circular vertigo of indeterminate time, space and meaningfulness of objects in *Meshes*.

The second part entitled "Ontological Realism and Accessing Truth Through Film" somehow constitutes the core of our contribution to the field. It follows up on some recent discussion of different and new forms of realism and materialism, and reacts to film's immediate capacity to reveal a new kind of access to philosophical truth. Thereby the connection

between ontology and film is elucidated from different angles. The first three texts rely on classical film theory, trying to reassess its potential for contemporary debate by framing political as well as epistemological consequences.

Firstly, Leighton Grist in "Bazin, Style, and Digitization: Ontology, Epistemology, and the New Myth of Total Cinema" draws attention to the new challenges that digital cinema causes to classical film theory and reflects on the much debated negation of the pro-filmic in the digital image. Grist therefore evokes André Bazin's conception of cinema that sees the photographic image as ontologically indexical, by comparing the photographic image to "a fingerprint", and the photographic process to "the molding of death masks". As a conception of cinema it has, accordingly, become increasingly challenged, and even abrogated, through the replacement of the photochemical by the digital image, and the consequent replacement of the indexical trace by the algorithmic code. Grist argues that beyond its own technologically specific significations the digital image has a potential to mitigate cinema's indexical link with a pro-filmic reality, as digitization is, in its very nature, a *manipulable reference*: it contains the potential to utterly negate the pro-filmic. Consequently, some proselytizers of digital cinema have proposed a new myth of total cinema, whose connotations are opposed to those of the analogous myth that Bazin previously invoked. This paradoxical operation involves, on the one hand, a careful reexamination of Bazin's own internal flexibility concerning the complementary aspects of ontological and stylistic realism(s) and, on the other hand, a thorough building of the case – via Baudrillard and Jameson – of a postmodernist cinema whose perfect "CG" simulacrum of reality has fulfilled that mythical totality to the point of no longer being cinema, as Bazin himself predicted, but instead, the ultimate late capitalist commodity.

Equally political and following the discussion of the pro-filmic by turning it into a more radical issue of the very nature of reality in film, the article "The Revolutionary Gaze for the Real: Dziga Vertov's 'Kino-Eye'" by Tatjana Sheplyakova approaches the question of the filmic fact. According to the author, from a philosophical perspective, the cinematic "factory of facts" relies on a new kind of *normativity* that is intrinsically connected with Dziga Vertov's filmmaking. Tatjana Sheplyakova therefore focuses on the new logic of normativity that the principle of "Kino-Eye" stands for, as well as on those technical elements of the dialectical montage through which this logic is brought to realization. In the end, she presents an attempt to reassess the "revolutionary" potential of Vertov's ideas in the following sense: What is the potential of movie

making where reality and its assemblage merge into political statements? What can we learn from it with regard to a theory of revolutionary action today?

A similar fusion between the sphere of the political and the sphere of the philosophical concerns Hyun Kang Kim in "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology: Film, Time, and Politics in Walter Benjamin". The article provides insight into the complexity of Walter Benjamin's partially enigmatic thinking, the scope of which hasn't yet been exhaustively examined. Kim argues that Benjamin establishes an ontology of monism of Man (and his technology) and nature on the one hand, and a new political philosophy on the other, as conveyed in his epoch-making artwork essay. In Benjamin's monistic approach, technology isn't opposed to the collective body, but rather plays a constitutive role in its production. According to Kim, Benjamin abolishes thereby not only the boundary between spirit and matter but also the distinction between Man and machine. His concept of technology is related to his concept of the "optical unconscious": the film camera works as such and makes visible for the human eye what would otherwise remain hidden. For Benjamin, technology in general allows access to what Man can't perceive and recognize by himself. Kim concludes therefore that the film camera enables a change of perspective from *in-itself* to *for-itself*. According to Hegel, this change in perspective means the truth. In this sense, technology is for Benjamin the place of truth par excellence, and the cinematograph is its carrier. The core of Kim's argument challenges, and indeed redeems the loss of reality and of Bazinian cinematic realism Baudrillard's hyperreality was censed to produce, as Grist's previous essay emphasized: technology does not replace reality, rather, it places reality at the crucial point where the blue flower blossoms, prompted by the constitutive interpenetration of apparatus and reality, which only by this means becomes retrospectively manifest as itself technologically mediated and constructed. This time through a realist constructivism thesis, reality's non-substantiality keeps resurfacing across the various chapters as one of the chief leitmotifs of the book, a fate it shares with the new political subject, time-bound (herein coming explicitly across the Bergson – Deleuze axis) as much as historically situated and cinematically produced by the shock potential of the eminently readable "dialectical image" – whose kinship with Deleuze's crystal-image Kim explores and offers as a bonus for the reader.

The next text opposes an ontological perspective reassessing some of the questions raised by Grist, Kim and Sheplyakova. "Philosophy in Media Form" is the transcription of a dialogue of two artist-philosophers,

namely media-artist Peter Weibel and filmmaker Andrei Ujica, who, after the screening of extracts from their filmic work, involve themselves in a discussion about the relation between philosophy and film. Peter Weibel in his talk makes the criticism that many film theoreticians try to turn cinema into a part of ontology, whereas with his film "Chants of the Pluriverse" he wanted to demonstrate the opposite: that reality is just a map, and therefore can easily be changed with tools. The tools of today, as cinema shows, are image machines – a consequence of the motion machine. So the big challenge for Weibel, regarding film, is still in front of us: how can we generate thinking through the means of technological, moving images? With his film Peter Weibel proposes a science of image which goes beyond the cut, beyond perception, so that we learn a mode of thinking. Technical perception sees what the human eye cannot achieve, or access.

In this part of the volume Ujica adds to the ongoing debate by suggesting that the question about truth in cinema and photography is the wrong one to ask. It is based on the illusion that technical media, like photography and film, are here to reproduce reality and that reality is the truth. This is linked to complex questions such as "Why is reality the truth?" and "What is reality?" This is why all these questions are linked to ideological and political implications of the period, when the technical mediums like photography or film were used as instruments of political struggle. They were then used as propaganda and each party was interested in establishing its version of the truth.

"A Multimodal Theory of Film Experience" by Colin McGinn summarises the conclusions of Kim and Weibel, that the film camera accesses something to which the human eye does not have access, yet orienting the debate toward a very different chain of thought. By proposing that the film experience is highly multi-modal, incorporating a number of distinct sensory and cognitive channels, McGinn reassess Plato's allegory of the Cave, which is often referred to as being parallel to the movie watching experience. As in the cave, so it is argued, watching movies is held to be detached from reality, a mere substitute for contact with reality — a film is a kind of weightless simulacrum. But is that the best way to understand the film experience? McGinn proposes instead that it is our experience of the empirical world *outside* the movie theater that is analogous to Plato's cave dwellers, and our experience *within* the movie theater is analogous to the escapee's experience *outside* the cave. In other words, we gain a special insight into reality by watching movies, which we don't obtain by means of our ordinary empirical experience. The movie screen, argues McGinn, is a window onto a transcendent level of being. This is due to an unprecedented mutation in both being's manifestation

and the form of knowledge – and, crucially, in their correlation – introduced in human history by cinema and cinema alone. The phenomenon of film exerts itself twofold: on the side of the moviegoer it induces a heightened state of integral consciousness, encompassing and merging into one single mental activity of the brain all possible levels of perception from dream, sensation, affect and imagination to discursive thought and intellectual intuition. On the ontological side, the dematerialized entities and events on screen present themselves as a whole palette of Platonic universals directly shining through the particular beings, featuring them as their carriers, thus filling the age-old gap between the sensible and the intelligible. By grasping essence directly through the insightful intuition thereof, this approach is not far away from the eidetic reduction that Husserlian phenomenology recognizes cinema to be able to practice. To sum up, film does not convert reality into its image, but rather into its idea, and cinema consists of directly screening whole sets of imposing Platonic ideas before the insightful spectator they themselves institute and "saturate".

Integrated into this line of assimilating film, truth and transcendence, Christine Reeh in "On the Rise of Solaristic Philosophy" argues that from an epistemological point of view, film's transcendence of materiality inquires into the nature of reality and the way we have access to what is real. Reeh thereby sketches a proposal of ontology of film committed to this perspective by proposing a reliance on the fictive set up of the movie "Solaris" by Andrei Tarkovsky. What makes this movie so intriguing is exactly its inquiry into a withdrawing realm of reality and the real where presence and simultaneous absence actually cross. The most important chain of argumentation then is that film conveys the impossible vision of the Heideggerian "being a whole", which Dasein only achieves in death. For several reasons *being-in-film* is a *being-in-death*, relying on a spectral characterization of film. Correspondingly, *being-on-Solaris* is the transcendent sphere of the dead. It develops the cinematographic principle of transcendence of matter into a *being-without-being*. Reeh then sets this *being-without-being* as the main aesthetic and conceptual principle of her solaristic system and as the main ontological characteristic of film, unfolding "a new relationship to the Real itself" (Alain Badiou).

The crucial importance of this chapter consists of bringing to fruition what can be discerned as the guiding principle underlying the "second part's ontology" in this volume, in contrast to the first. The initial series of essays examines to what extent film, suspected of betraying the very essence of being, on the contrary embodies and unravels it, offering philosophy in return a few exemplary ontological and epistemological

models for the nature of reality. Reality – similarly to film – is seen now as a Bergsonian non-substantial duration, further as a Husserlian non-positional phenomenological appearance, then as a Deleuzian temporal compound of virtuality and actuality… Each position starts, however, from the immediate phenomenological given of the cinematic image in the spectatorial context, keeping the parallel realms of reality and image somehow separated until the later eventually close in upon itself, completing and exalting the sphere of pure image: what is thus skipped, happens to be the very linkage – either material, representational, or ontological – between reality and the image *thereof*. This is precisely the point of the entire second series, variously based on a strong Bazinian thesis that provides the springboard for its own in-depth reassessment. While Grist's article demonstrates it *a contrario*, by showing that the digital subrogation of the material continuum of reality and image ends up in the dissolution of both cinema and reality, Kim's or Sheplyakova's Vertovian constructivism installs the cinematic image as a revolutionary praxis in the middle of reality, which it only registers as far as it penetrates and transforms it – for it takes a constructive power to reveal another. The image no longer merely addresses the spectator phenomenologically, within a model-to-model correspondence with reality, it *traces* reality *back* to its real, in front of the spectator it engages and helps generate therethrough. In McGinn, the filmic image is itself the operator that converts the material event of being it seizes through light (it photo-graphs) into the sensible act of self-presentation of its own Platonic idea: onscreen, a particular red (thing) is raised through dematerialization to its pure being red, enabling the spectator to watch first-hand an ongoing Platonic "participation", when "general" (though not abstract universal) redness presents itself "there" as "that one" and the essence allows itself to be seen by an essential vision; and yet this is but the operation of cinematic photography upon the pro-filmic reality which shows through.

Christine Reeh's starting point is then the aforementioned strong Bazinian thesis of the transference of reality from the actual thing to its photographic image, generating the presence of absence by giving it the same impact as reality because of the special reproductive ability that photography *set in motion* has. Reversing the cinematic course from reality to its image, what the ontologically puzzling notion of a re-produced reality points back to is that the transcendental real of reproduction abides in Being's innermost ontological core: as a void (Lacan) and a time-bound (Heidegger) absolutely infinite multiplicity (Badiou), Being's non-being (Heidegger's "nothingness") attests its own immediate ontic reproducibility, which accordingly is not to be understood

as simply an adventitious technological property of a new medium, in a Benjaminian sense. Being is utmostly "film-ic" in its very essence, and a movie about the reproducibility of non-being like *Solaris* shines as a film about being *because* it is a film about cinema, *and conversely*. Moreover, it provides the kind of extreme cinematic thought experiment that allows the author to think about being in an unprecedented way, and to ask all the (im)pertinent post-ontological questions. As the film par excellence of Bazinian transference, *Solaris* also conjoins and merges into one the two different lines of enquiry – physical, and philosophical – concerning matter and being: in fact, light has the property to transcend both matter and being, for it is the one vehicle able to survive and to presentify the self-absence structure upon which film and being alike are established. But all this is just half of the story of Harey, as the essay continues: if you want to know about being, *cherchez la femme*.

The ontological angle is further complemented in Josef Früchtl's text "Aesthetic-Philosophical Realism: How Intuition Matters for Ontology and Cinema". As Früchtl proposes, Gilles Deleuze and Stanley Cavell offer prominent examples for a deep connection between theorizing film and ontology. For Deleuze ontology means a reversal of the ratio between identity and dif¬ference, between what is identifiable and thus being, and what cannot be identified. Deleuze connects this idea epistemologically to intuition as non-discursive and metaphysical knowledge. As Früchtl argues, Deleuze's concept of intuition is better understood as a gesture that should be unfolded in a consequent aesthetic and cinematic way. In a side turn, Früchtl views the so-called speculative turn in continental materialism and realism as an alternative to Deleuze and Bergson. He regards as striking that Quentin Meillassoux' ontology, based on mathematics, has to refer to intuition, in the sense of *intellectual intuition*, going back to Descartes and Kant, meaning a productive unity of thought and being. Yet to draw a conclusion as regards cinema, Bergon's concept of intuitive knowledge remains the most helpful to Früchtl. An intuition can present us an object (in-itself) only immediately, and as something, which cannot be identified via concepts, yet (in Bergson's words) by "images", or "flexible, mobile, almost fluid representations", or "gestures" Film can be regarded as the most adequate medium for this. It is an art of gesture that returns narrative and movement to images and in such a way delivers an objectivization of intuition.

In the third part "Unmasking Violence – Trauma and Film" we have gathered together closely related essays and prompted a film-philosophical discussion of trauma in film, inquiring into violence in film, as well as into

ethics, and finally into the nature of the documentary image. Suffering compels any ontology of the real and any politics of cinema to become an ethics of reality and a deontology of the image. Accordingly, the relationship at stake is no longer the Bazinian one of the image to reality or the Deleuzian one of the image to itself, but that of the workings of the image upon itself in order to retrieve the sorrowful heart of the real that is desperately hiding in it. Not in the face of reality in general, but of *this* reality that allows no escaping, the ethical urge of actual pain and suffering and death demands a specific sort of epistemological operation that transcends reflexion and, in a way, philosophy itself. It is with this Other of philosophy that film-philosophy concerns itself in the following chapters.

In "Where's The Rewind Button On The BETAMIX Of Life? Cruelty As Transgression And Virtualization In Michael Haneke's Funny Games" Schaub assumes that with its fixation on causes rather than effects, neither the traditional philosophical discourse of evil, nor the sociological debate on violence, offers an explanation of why cruelty, though ostracized, remains an ubiquitous and culturally adaptive practice. With this text Schaub proposes to reconstruct cruelty as a powerful scheme of behavior and reflection bound together by the notion of transgression and virtualization. The latter becomes obvious in Michael Haneke's counter-use of traditional stage techniques (such as the Brechtian estrangement effect) in his scandalous movie *Funny Games* (Austria 1997). Instead of enabling us to distance ourselves from the (poorly) seen and (massively) heard, we, the spectators, become hostages and witnesses alike. Our powerlessness is thus only deepened. Whereas many praise the film's fundamental critique of modern media use, Schaub argues that the "forced emotional interaction" with the gruesome reveals regular traits of our *conditio humana*, shot through with claims to legitimacy and truth.

The title "Mask" brings together three different interventions on the film *Faces* by Christoph Korn, two of which have been orally presented (by the director and the deceased Cristina Beckert). The third, by Maria João Madeira, involved the screening of the film at the Lisbon *Cinemateca*. In her text Madeira explains the background to Christoph Korn's film work, based on the slowdown of "found footage" – namely the 23 min. fragment of *Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet*, produced by the Nazis and filmed in 1944 in the concentration camp Theresienstadt, as a pseudo documentary about life in the "ghetto Terezin," which for many Jews was the previous stop to their deportation and extermination in Auschwitz or Treblinka. The film's direction was entrusted to Jewish director and actor Kurt Gerron, who had

left Nazi Germany in 1933. He was then arrested in Holland after the occupation, sent to the concentration camps of Westbork and Theresienstadt, and finally killed in Auschwitz in October 1944, just after having concluded the film. Korn explains that the composer Antoine Beuger came up with the idea of a dialogue throughout the film to replace the deep frequency sound, allowing the possibility of the viewer to be somehow *with* the filmed people during the 12 hours of the film's duration. "The conversation is borne by a peaceful, tentative, often silent sense of approaching and receding. In the course of the conversation, a type of reading gains both duration and power, a type that becomes condensed in the concept of the 'face' by Emmanuel Levinas." (Korn)

Beckert explains that the face for Levinas is not the totality of the physical shape. It is rather a metaphysical and an ethical concept, presenting the absolute otherness of the other. We can't grasp it through knowledge or mere consciousness. Beckert stresses that Korn's film is about many faces, visible in their smallest details, due to the slow motion of the film. Yet how can we put together the invisible face of Levinas and the visibility of the faces in the film? Beckert proposes that when these faces look directly at the camera, there is the look of the face, provoking a strange reaction in us. We are seen directly, but we can't see. We are absolutely passive and must offer ourselves to that look. This is the effect the face has upon us: it poses the terrible question of my right to be, and not that of the other.

The base for the montage of Susana de Sousa Dias' "48" lies in the cinetic ambiguity of its images and in its narrative modalities. From this ambiguity, the next chapter, "A Sort of Microscope of Time: Decelerated Movement and Archive Footage" exposes how the image-word articulation promotes not only the pensiveness of spectators during the film screening, but also the "pensiveness of the image" (Rancière). Particular attention is given to montage of "time depth", to the specific treatment of the testimonies' temporality, and to the spatio-temporal conception of the film. With "48" Susana de Sousa Dias creates a living requiem from recently excavated photographs of Portuguese political prisoners taken by the Political Police during the 48 year long dictatorship of Estado Novo (1926-1974). The hypnotizing sequences of faces flows eerily through an absorbing narrative arrangement, guided by the voices of the surviving prisoners and the very present ambient space around them. The subtle zooms, slow fades and heavy pauses isolate and vibrate the historical and emotional charge of the routine identification photos. Through a painstaking account of the epistemological consequences and the ontological import of a rigorously medium-specific technical work on

the material, the author shows how a different historical episteme and ethical-political approach stems from the threefold methodological procedure of opening up from the inside non-causal and non-narrative connexions within the three constituents of the cinematic whole – space, time and word – in a crossbreeding between the visual and the aural, the present and the past, which is redolent of Deleuzian time-crystal meditations. The detailed theoretical explanation provided by Sousa Dias spreads beneficially over the kindred essays about Christoph Korn's and Víctor Erice's very similar cinematic strategies. Together they delineate a constellation of chapters revolving around the same paradox or anguish: how can the inventiveness of form redeem pain and past, as well as retrieve a sense of reality and history that does the dead and the living justice, beyond institutional discourse and any clichéd mode of representation?

Unfolding with a processional cadence and tone the successive sections of her sensitive reading of Víctor Erice's *Vidros Partidos*, Maria Filomena Molder highlights in her essay "Green Leaves, Green Sorrows: On Víctor Erice's Broken Glasses" the almost confidential thematic web of the film, attuning resonant chords to the final constellation of this book. The huge mural picture of and in the canteen dominates the scene in silence, as a visual phantom doubling place and time, whose poignancy is brought to bear by the interplay of the words that give the image a voice. As Beckert explained, these mute faces regard. and thus concern us, in so far as the director's camera finds a way to let them do so, eyes in eyes. But, if it is the words of the living that grant the access to the faces of the dead, acknowledged in their muteness by the testimonial rite of reciting as a spiritual exercise – analogously to Christoph Korn's voice-over –, the *word* is in its turn bestowed on these words by "mortifying" them, as they become "trans-personal" monologues through the joint workings of the characters and the filmmaker, the oral and the written, the lived and the fictional. This doubling – and crisscross – of space and time, life and art, the living and the dead, relies on the riskier operation of tripling person, actor and character. With Erice, Molder calls this act, leading to self-transcending and self-discovery, "miscegenation". While confronting the silence of the face, the word faces the poignancy of a shared pain it strives to heal at the same time – the pain of the living and the dead. Between reenactment and simulation, such a *truer*-to-life sort of documentary echoes the final model Víctor Moura also favours, together with the concept of "effabulation" Deleuze applies to Jean Rouch's strategy, which corresponds here to the notion of "miscegenation". And an intriguing affinity surfaces at this point: Jean Rouch's famous title "Moi, un noir" is directly quoted from the less known continuation of Rimbaud's text

exemplifying the possible senses of the celebrated dictum "Je est un autre" – incidently, a subject already tackled in Correia's chapter, under the label of the first vs third person perspective problem, which Molder explores on the basis of its illuminating misquoting by Erice. Now, Rouch is the master of the effabulation approach as a cinematic device to extract a deeper truth in the process of becoming: by quoting Rimbaud, Erice is quoting, perhaps unintentionally, the common source of his and Rouch's inspiration, and his "miscegenation" matches Deleuze/Rouch's "effabulation" – or Moura's "simulation". Molder's conception, drawing on Genet, of the artwork as an intercessor between the living and the dead, "endowed with the strange power of penetrating this domain of death" so that the dead are not left enclosed in their pain, in the end meets Christine Reeh's former Being-in-death as a regenerative power of film, where "there is a burning that the photographic image cannot absorb: they were there".

Finally, in "Unexpected Findings and Documentaries" Vítor Moura reexamines the on-going philosophical discussion concerning the precise meaning and defining criteria of John Grierson's 1926 coined term "documentary", mapping the different standpoints of the key interveners in relation to one another. The difficulty lies in the object itself: docudrama, propaganda film, trans-media documentaries and the genre of "docufiction" challenge the defining capability of the "documentary" label and force a reassessment of the ideas of objectivity and realism that are inherent to that label. Moura then refers to several positions within the analytical approach, namely Carl Plantinga and Gregory Currie, who hold two opposing standpoints: Currie argues that documentaries are filmed narratives and that the corresponding narrative is supported by the images, due to the simple fact that these are photographic representations. Plantinga sees documentary as an assertion, proposing to define nonfiction film as a film in which a filmmaker makes "an assertive stance toward the world projected by the film", a thesis further developed by Noël Carroll under the formula "film of presumptive assertion", where the recognition of the structure's assertive stance through the recognition of the author's intention seems sufficient to distinguish fictional and non-fictional film. Moura concludes his detailed analysis by advancing his own theory, drawing on a reassesment of the weaknesses and strengths of those of his predecessors. The author privileges the *Documentaries as Simulations* model, which blends an appropriate weighting of the relative importance of direct visual "evidence" and authoritative testimonial assertion with the half-fictional powers of re-enactment and simulation (reminding us, though in a quite different key, of the effabulatory quality Deleuze praised in Jean Rouch's practice). This procedure not only provides the

opportunity for a constant self-correction and mutual mediation of different versions of events alongside the "path of truth", but also allows the "unexpected finding" to supervene and to disruptively reveal, beyond "truth", the secret play of the other side of things.

Concluding Remarks

Since the beginning of the new millennium the enquiry into the entanglement of film and philosophy has been growing and even become a fashion, but there is no institution in the world dedicated to this field of research. In this sense we are hopeful that this collection helps to establish – besides the analytical discussion prominently engaged by Noël Carroll - a continental project of philosophy of film, which resumes but may also go beyond the domination of Deleuzian thought and the references to Stanley Cavell. Both are committed to a perspective on film, which cannot be separated from a specific, broader project of philosophy, in which the concern about film is only one chapter, not to be understood without referring to the whole framework. We hope with this volume to inspire future generations of philosophers who may reveal the yet unexplored potential of films to philosophically explain the world and raise new insights, which otherwise might not be disclosed.

PART 1 –

MENTAL APPROACHES:
ON THE NATURE OF TIME,
PERCEPTION AND IMAGES

CHAPTER I

THE IMAGE OF TEMPORALITY

MARIA-TERESA TEIXEIRA

Bergson's philosophy is founded on the study of change, movement and duration. Time is depicted as duration (*la durée*). It is a qualitative reality, which is hard to seize. When it is seized, it no longer maintains its temporal character; it becomes spatialised time. When time is measured, it is replaced by space. And space, as we understand it, is a homogeneous medium. Conscious experience, Bergson contends, is heterogeneous, i.e. it cannot be seized as if it were composed of different elements. States of consciousness interpenetrate as they carry the past into the present. Duration is indivisible and whole. Whenever we try to take it into parts, we draw spatial representations of time. Change and movement are also qualitative. We can perceive differences of states and different becomings. But when we truly perceive change and movement, we grasp them in their wholeness and indivisibility. On the other hand, when we try to measure movement, we spatialise it and represent it as the contiguous points that make up a line. Juxtaposition replaces wholeness and indivisibility.

In a famous passage at the end of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson makes use of the cinematographic image to describe the way we usually represent movement. Like the images of the cinematograph, our representation of movement is a collection of snapshots, i.e. a collection of immobile and juxtaposed images. As the cinematographic unrolls, it brings about an illusory movement that is in effect composed of many contiguous immobile images. Our knowledge of things is mostly exterior to them. We generally do not try to seize their inner becoming. So we end up taking snapshots of reality, and re-making it artificially with these bits and pieces. Our knowledge of things is directed towards action and action is discontinuous. In action, isolated and clear-cut pieces replace becoming and the continuous, heterogeneous flow of reality.

Bergson has been criticised by many for his cinematographic analogy. Cinema could hardly be taken as an artistic means of expression, because it would be unable to capture duration in its pure form. If the camera is

only capable of making successive snapshots of reality, then we will have no depiction of temporality, only still photographs that picture frozen, immobile moments.

However, Bergson's recourse to the cinematograph should be seen solely as an analogy that wants to stress the similitude between our intellect and the mechanical aspect of cinema. Its mechanics offer a very good representation of our intellectual knowledge of the external world. Our knowledge, like the camera recording, is a collection of juxtaposed images, nothing else. This does not mean that cinematography cannot represent true duration. To illustrate how cinema can contribute significantly to the understanding and depiction of duration, we will draw on Bergson's favourite metaphor: music.

Bergson emphasises how we overlook true duration, so that we can focus on everything that fosters our action in the world. Everything is forced upon us in a logical or mathematical way. The world thus becomes a non-temporal, static entity. The goals of our activity in the world determine what is in our minds. We do not care about the movements that make up our action. The mind focuses only on the goals we want to achieve. Bergson writes: "The intellect, then, only represents to the activity ends to attain, that is to say, points of rest. And, from one end attained to another end attained, from one rest to another rest, our activity is carried by a series of leaps, during which our consciousness is turned away as much as possible from the movement going on, to regard only the anticipated image of the movement accomplished."[1]

True duration is thus not perceived; it does not even attract our attention. Our consciousness only represents the fixed, immobile results of our action, because our activity is developed within the material world. If we pictured matter in its dynamic and flowing aspect, we could assign no end to our actions. We do not seize change in itself; we need to identify a mobile before we can seize movement. Permanence can only be guaranteed through the repetition of movements. "The primal function of perception is precisely to grasp a series of elementary changes under the

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[1] *Creative Evolution,* pp. 299-300. « L'intelligence ne représente donc à l'activité que des buts à atteindre, c'est-à-dire des points de repos. Et, d'un but atteint à autre but atteint, d'un repos à un repos, notre activité se transporte par une série de bonds, pendant lesquels notre conscience se détourne le plus possible du mouvement s'accomplissant pour ne regarder que l'image anticipée du mouvement accompli. » *L'évolution créatrice*, p. 299/748.

form of a quality or of a state, by a work of condensation."[2] Action implies the concentration of elementary changes or vibrations. Our perception contracts millions of vibrations into one instant of time. That is how we perceive quality. Bergson had recourse to the example of red light, which became famous. He illustrated how perception synthesises millions of vibrations; as a result of that synthesis we can see a unified red light.

Bergson distinguished our *durée* from general time, because we can only be aware of a "limited number of phenomena."[3] There seems to be a continuity of matter. Life, on the other hand, is evolution. But our perception is able "to concentrate a period of this evolution in a stable view which we call a form"[4], although things constantly change. "What is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition. Therefore, here again, our perception manages to solidify into discontinuous images the fluid continuity of the real."[5]

We are never free of the artifices of language, and for that matter of perception. Perception extracts from different and individualised sorts of becoming a sole representation that synthesises all those diverse flows of reality. In so doing, it immobilises the real so that we can get hold of it. We tend to lay these still images side by side, in juxtaposition. Now, if these images succeed one another rapidly enough, they will create the illusion that they are moving. This mechanism that places very similar images side by side for the appearance of movement is called the cinematographic image. Bergson's well-known example of the marching regiment duly illustrates this mechanism: "take a series of snapshots of the passing regiment and […] throw these instantaneous views on the screen, so that they replace each other very rapidly. This is what the cinematograph does. With photographs, each of which represents the regiment in a fixed attitude, it reconstitutes the mobility of the regiment marching."[6] This passage shows very clearly how we never perceive

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[2] *Ibid*. p. 301; « La première fonction de la perception est précisément de saisir une série de changements élémentaires sous forme de qualité ou d'état simple, par un travail de condensation. » *Ibid*. p. 300/749.

[3] *Matter and Memory*, p. 272-273. *Matière et mémoire*, p. 230-231/340.

[4] *Creative Evolution*, p. 302. « Nous concentrons une période de cette évolution en une vue stable que nous appelons une forme […] » *L'évolution créatrice* p. 301/750.

[5] *Ibid*. p. 302; « Ce qui est réel, c'est le changement continuel de forme : *la forme n'est qu'un instantané pris sur une transition*. Donc, ici encore, notre perception s'arrange pour solidifier en images discontinues la continuité fluide du réel. » *Ibid*. p. 302/750.

[6] *Ibid*. p. 305; « C'est de prendre sur le régiment qui passe une série d'instantanées, et de projeter ces instantanées sur l'écran, de manière qu'ils se remplacent très vite