Pudovkin's Precept, Part 3:
Bringing Movies to Kant's'
'Transcendental Unity of Apperception'

Evan Wm. Cameron

Professor Emeritus
Senior Scholar in Screenwriting

Graduate Programmes,
Film & Video and Philosophy

York University

[The extended version of Part 3 of the Pudovkin lectures as reproduced here, in company with amplified revisions of Parts 1 and 2, was generated between 1995-1997 with further revisions in 2005-2006 and 2019-2020. No date of origin for its contents can be given with exactness, for they were compiled incrementally over many years to augment Parts 1 and 2 (available elsewhere within the Evan Wm. Cameron Collection). A 'date of issuance' of 1987 has nominally been assigned to it, however, two decades after the earliest presentation of Part 1, to hint at the distinctive timing of its conception, development and use.]

Pudovkin's Precept, Part 3:
Bringing Movies to Kant's
'Transcendental Unity of Apperception'

Having clarified Pudovkin's precept in Parts 1 and 2 of these lectures, we can now return to where we began, able to understand more exactly why the screenplay in master-scene form has long been and will continue to be the key document in the preproduction planning of enacted films.

A master-scene screenplay describes the events that we are to encounter by means of a film as thoroughly as required to imagine them accurately but without specifying to which aspects of the events we ought to attend, in what order, from which perspective and for how long, and without invoking the cinematical tools. A master-scene screenplay thus enables the director, in particular, to play the first two parts of Pudovkin's game as uncontaminated as possible by the constraints of the third – to imagine, that is, how an observer of extraordinary sensitivity and awareness would attend to the events before bringing the cinematical tools to bear upon them.

It might seem, therefore, that any fool, given a screenplay, could play the 'director's game'. Indeed so, and many fools have played it adequately enough to direct a movie. Few filmmakers, however, have made films of importance, fewer of these recurringly so and only a handful profoundly. Perhaps now, in the light of Pudovkin's principle, we can begin to understand why.

Alasdair MacIntyre has suggested that the crumbling of the moral foundations of our modern world came about because people lost sight of an ancient ideal, the obligation to become virtuous.[1] They wanted to appear virtuous and to have the benefits of being virtuous, without undertaking the hard work and discipline required to become virtuous. Since virtuous perception arises out of virtuous being, however, they cannot even conceive of how the world would appear to a virtuous person, for one must have become a virtuous person, step by hard step, before one can imagine it. We thus live in a world of great pretenders, advertising models without substance having neither historical nor moral sensibilities.

MacIntyre's observation can be generalized: one must *be* before one can perceive as someone who *is*. From which we can deduce, trivially, that one can imagine how

[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). See especially the latter chapters beginning with chapter nine.

someone could perceive something *profoundly* only if one could oneself perceive it that way.

A filmmaker, consequently, cannot play Pudovkin's game profoundly without having become a profoundly aware and sensitive observer of things. One cannot wilfully imagine an event as an extraordinarily perceptive human being would attend to it, for one cannot imagine things beyond the limits of one's own sensibilities. One must have become a person capable of perceiving it that way. Directors, when called upon to imagine how a most sensitive and aware perceiver would attend to an event, can only be asking themselves to what they would attend, not to what some other being would attend. But that can result in a profound film only if the director is profound.

I shall have much to say in subsequent lectures about why so few films of significance are now being made in the world, but we have here a hint. Virtuous films can be made only by virtuous people, and if the international industry controlling the making and distributing of films cannot abide uncorrupted beings making them, then no profound films will be made. As I write, it is virtually impossible for virtuous people to make films anywhere in the world, virtue intact, and since the non-virtuous cannot make virtuous films, none are being made.[2]

The form of a film, as Pudovkin insisted, cannot viably be distinguished from its material, for it must be determined by it. It follows, therefore, as we can now sense, that the moral evaluation of an event encountered by means of film cannot viably be distinguished from the other forms of our consciousness of it. To imagine how a most discerning, wise and aware witness would have attended to an event is necessarily to imagine how one would have encountered it morally.

But now we are entering deep waters. What from the broadest philosophical perspective, had Pudovkin discovered about the nature of our cinematical tools and their possible effects? Pudovkin's insight was Kantian, and its Kantian context important. To understand why, we must comprehend it historically.

The Platonic Distrust of Objects

Throughout the medieval ages of the west, human beings were taught by the church to distrust what they saw and heard. Encompassed by inexplicable occurrences while constrained unawares when thinking by platonic doctrines filtered through the Pauline

[2] We can now understand why so many young filmmakers today make a single good film, but are then unable to make any more.

epistles of the 'new testament', almost everyone believed that reality lay elsewhere than in the sensible world, accessible only through the intermediaries of the church – a comfortable conviction both to the churchmen and to the powerful few outside the church who, whatever else occasionally divided them, shared an interest in preserving their advantages over the others.

The Renaissance upset the Weltanschauung of medieval Europe. For the first time in nearly a millennium, many human beings, albeit hampered by centuries of reverse propaganda, began to trust the things they saw, heard and felt – at first tentatively and then with a rush. They began to measure things, make bigger ones, count their money and plot ways to get more.

The threat to the powerful was palpable, demanding a reaffirmation of the unreality of things seen and heard and a renewed allegiance by the many to the special insights of the few. They hadn't long to wait, though the reaffirmation, when it came, proved to be secular in both variants, rendering the church increasingly irrelevant even among the religious.

On the one hand, beginning with Descartes's doubts and continuing through a line of continental thinkers (Leibniz foremost among them), the precept of distrusting the things we perceive received rationalist confirmation. Since we sometimes err when identifying the things we see and hear, ought not we to doubt everything we see and hear? Surely, they concluded, we can only trust our thinking about the things we perceive, not the things themselves.

A century later, on the other hand, another group of thinkers beginning with Locke (then followed by Hume and Berkeley) refocused the critique by giving an empiricist confirmation to the precept of distrusting things as perceived.[3] Since we sometimes err when perceiving things, and always go beyond the immediate sensory evidence when identifying them causally, surely we require access to something other than the things themselves, something of a secure third kind inhering in our encounters with them (impressions, for example, or latterly sense data), out of which we can safely reconstruct the causal things we see and hear.

The rationalists were continental, the empiricists British, and our cultural historians have tended to portray them as antagonists in the progressive disentanglement of European thought from its medieval biases. Our cultural historians, however, have almost always been sheltered urban intellectuals undisciplined in the crafts of which

[3] Francis Bacon is sometimes presented as a precursor of the empiricists. Of the error that we focus upon here, however, he was singularly free.

they speak. Like the philosophers of whom they write, and the many thinkers who to this day remain entrapped in one or the other of the traditions, they have shared unnoticed the bias of both. For the traditions were only superficially opposed: each in their way affirmed implicitly the conservative, power-preserving, elitist bias of the medieval era, the distrust of things seen and heard!

In 1781, however, an aging professor, working alone within the undistinguished university of a small German provincial town, wiped the 2000-year-old platonic bias from the blackboard. We would do well to attend to what Kant said.

Kant's 'Transcendental Unity of Apperception'

What, from the broadest philosophical perspective, had Pudovkin discovered about the nature of our cinematical tools and their possible effects? Pudovkin's insight was inadvertently Kantian and its Kantian context important.

Experience, Kant believed, required an empirical encounter with objects. To experience an object was to come to recognise it; to recognise it was to judge of it; to judge of it was to connect concepts referring to it within a unified act of consciousness. Every experience, therefore, presupposed a synthesizing unity of consciousness. To experience the tree in my garden as a birch, for example, I should have to judge of it by combining the concepts "tree" and "birch" into a unified and conscious reference to it, thus presupposing a synthesizing unity of consciousness unique to my experience of the tree at that moment.

I need not be attending to myself, Kant thought, as I judge consciously of the tree; I need only be attending to the tree. My adjudging of the tree as a birch, however, presupposes as well a possible awareness by me of the adjudicating act itself – a possible awareness, that is, of my judging the tree to be a birch while being simultaneously aware of doing so. When judging that "The tree is a birch", it must always be possible, Kant believed, for me to combine the judgment with the judgment "I am thinking" in a synthetic unity of self-consciousness as well (that is, a unity of apperception capturable in the complex judgment "I am thinking that the tree is a birch").

To experience the tree in my garden as a birch, therefore, presupposes synthesizing unities of both consciousness and self-consciousness, each of them peculiar to my experience of the tree at that moment as evident empirically to me through introspection (or "inner sense", as Kant put it).

But here, for Kant, the fun was just beginning! Consider for a moment the judgment "I am thinking" that, Kant believed, must always be capable of being combined in a unified act of consciousness with all other judgments I make, and hence that implies a unified self-consciousness as well. Were the "I" in the judgment "I am thinking" to refer to an object, and hence to be amenable to an empirical encounter through my inner sense as is the tree in the garden through my outer senses, little of interest would follow, for the unified self-consciousness presupposed thereby would be only an empirical generalization subject to counterexample.

Kant insisted, however, as had Leibniz and Hume before him, that we never encounter ourselves as objects! I may be empirically aware of encountering things from a spatiotemporal perspective that is shared, it seems to me, by no other object, and thus have empirical warrant for supposing that a stable and abiding being, distinct from all others, is having those encounters uniquely. But the being that I may properly presume to exist as the subject of my encounters, consistent with the manner in which I encounter other things through my outer senses and in which my inner sense registers pains, pleasures, thoughts, feelings, etc., never appears to me.

To what, then, does the "I" in the judgment "I am thinking" refer if to no soul or subject encounterable through inner sense and capable of encountering other things. As Kant everywhere insisted, it refers to nothing! Rather, it serves a formal function: it works as a universal place-holder expressing the fundamental formal constraint imposed upon every being capable of encountering things and judging of them as they appear, namely that to experience such things (that is, to encounter them coherently as interrelated objects) one must judge of them as if one were a unified self-conscious being, and conversely.

The "I" that must accompany our encounters with things refers to no subjective, empirical object. It expresses rather the fundamental transcendental constraint on our judging of things. When I adjudge that "The tree is a birch", the judgment is mine. If true, however, it is objectively true (true, that is, of the object), not subjectively so, for the "I" that must accompany all our judgments, and thus entails the judgment "I am thinking that the tree is a birch", is a transcendental placeholder, not a name. It signals that my judgment of the birch tree has been constrained, in Kant's phrase, by the transcendental unity of apperception, and hence has been opened to the possibility of being objectively (and not just subjectively) true.

Kant never claimed (contrary to some commentators) that our encounters with things will always cohere. Rather, responding to the sceptical Hume, Kant claimed that our encounters could never be incoherent provided we brought to them a transcendentally unified possible awareness of ourselves, and conversely. We must either encounter

objects about us as would a self-consciously unified being, or both we and they must jointly deconstruct. We must either experience things as objects (that is, within a transcendentally unified awareness of ourselves), or have no recognisable encounter with them. That is what unified apperception entails and why the constraint is transcendental.

For this reason, Kant argued, no being capable of acting in accordance with the transcendental unity of apperception need fear incoherent encounters with objects, for such a being could synthesize appearances of any kind into a coherently perceivable world of stable, abiding and interconnected objects. Conversely, every one of us us who experiences the world of interconnected objects we inhabit, however diverse we and our encounters may otherwise empirically be, does so only by acting in accordance with the transcendental unity of apperception (that is, by synthesizing appearances as if we were uniformly unified and self-conscious beings).

By drawing our attention to the dependence of perceptual coherence on the transcendental unity of apperception, Kant was excluding neither dreamers nor madmen from the world, nor limiting the possible ways in which it might appear to us. He was simply pointing out, contra Hume, that perceptual incoherence would entail the absence of a self-consciously unified awareness of oneself.[4]

Unless pathologically disturbed, therefore, we need never worry about encountering incoherently the objects that appear to us in the space and time about us. But that returns us to Pudovkin and the fundamental problem of film design, for – wondrously! – we may encounter by means of film objects and events that are patently nowhere about us!

Pudovkin's Unity of Apperception

To experience objects, Kant believed, was to have synthesized into a whole a diversity of encounters (a "manifold of intuition" as he called it). Given the limited 18th-century tools known to him for creating and manipulating manifolds of intuition and thereby experiences of objects, it is hardly surprising that Kant never imagined that we might someday possess tools with which to present to ourselves an object, synthesised from an intuition into an experience of it, that could itself, as object, serve as a manifold of intuition to be re-encountered through a further synthesis as an experience of other objects. It never occurred to Kant that we might someday possess tools that would

[4] From which we may infer a fortiori that philosophers would do well to pay more attention to the conditions of madness than they have done before or since.

enable us to present to ourselves objects in the space and time about us that, by means of that experience, would enable us to experience simultaneously other objects in distinct spaces and times nowhere about us!

In particular, therefore, Kant never suspected that someday, by means of the tools of filmmaking, we might be able to experience as an object a screen, suspended before us in a projection room while being variably illuminated, and yet experience it as a manifold of intuition capable of being further synthesized into a simultaneous encounter with other objects nowhere in the room before us (that is, people, places and things distinct from any of the objects in the projection room).

Consequently, Kant never foresaw either the possibilities of nonpathological perceptual incoherence inherent in the use of the tools of filmmaking. He never foresaw that an incompetent filmmaker might enable us to encounter a variably illuminated screen as an experienced object in our space and time, while at the same time precluding us from encountering coherently the distinct objects and events in other spaces and times perceivable by means of our experience of it.

> Kant, unlike filmmakers, had no 'metaphysical research laboratory' replete with tools within which to test conjectures about the scope and limits of experiential coherence before affirming them.

Pudovkin, to my knowledge, knew nothing of Kant. As a filmmaker, however, he knew only too well that it was not enough for filmmakers to illuminate a screen hung before us so that we might encounter the screen coherently! That experience, as Kant would have affirmed, was transcendentally assured for any viewer capable of encountering an object as would a unified self-conscious being. Rather, the trick was to ensure that a viewer could encounter coherently the other objects encountered by experiencing the variably illuminated portions of the screen.

Pudovkin thus asked himself the fundamental question of film design, namely how must the other objects and events appear to us, when encountered by means of the variably illuminated screen, if we are to experience them as coherently and profoundly as possible? How ought filmmakers to determine how the other things ought to appear, encountered by means of the variably illuminated screen, to ensure, as Kant would have put it, that they are experienced as profoundly as possible?

Thoughtful readers will by now have guessed why Pudovkin's principle was to prove to be the primary precept of filmmaking, for the answer he gave was, at root, the one that Kant would have applauded.

> Events encountered by means of film must appear as if constrained by the transcendental unity of apperception if they are to be experienced as coherently as possible.

A filmmaker wishing to enable a viewer to encounter an event by means of film as coherently as possible ought to ask how the event would appear to a transcendentally unified apperceiver of extraordinary discernment, wisdom and awareness, if freely mobile in space and time, and if encountered otherwise than by means of film.

Pudovkin reaffirmed the transcendental indispensability of Kant's principle of unified apperception if we are to experience as coherently as possible all of the events we encounter when perceiving a film, not simply the illuminated screen. To do anything less would be to prohibit viewers from encountering as coherently as possible all of the things that may appear to them by means of films, no matter how hard they may try.

Pudovkin knew, of course, that the variably illuminated screen (that is, the evolving pattern of light and shadow that we register) may itself engage us artistically if artfully structured as musical things of its kind may be. It may do so profoundly, however, only if no other things are encountered by means of it. Were our encounter with it to be contaminated by the appearance of other objects seen by means of it, we should then be unable to engage with it as an uncluttered musical event, no matter however artfully structured it might be. Were such other objects to appear, and were they to fail to cohere as well, then nothing we perceive could engage us deeply, for while the other objects would appear incoherent to us, the patterned screen would coherently appear to be contaminated by accidental and hence meaningless objectual features.

When encountering things by means of film, therefore, we need never fear exhaustive incoherence, for, as Kant knew, the variably illuminated screen will always as such cohere for us as long as we cohere, however contaminated it may be by the appearance of other objects encountered by means of it. The danger, as Pudovkin recognized, is rather that we shall be bored silly by the meaningless perceptual clutter accruing to the other objects that, through the incompetence of filmmakers, fail to cohere.

A Refinement

The transcendental element in Pudovkin's precept was Kant's, assimilated inadvertently by Pudovkin to a practice of which Kant had never dreamed. By assimilating it to filmmaking, however, Pudovkin compels us to broadens our understanding of it beyond even Kant's ken.

As we have noted, different filmmakers, asking Pudovkin's questions in good faith of an identical event, could give different answers to them, for witnesses of equivalent insight and awareness could be imagined to whom an event would appear as distinctly as their empirical differences would allow. All of them must alike be constrained by the transcendental unity of apperception, for all of them, however empirically distinct, must encounter the event objectively as if they were unified self-conscious beings. But the difference in their encounter would mirror whatever differences in discernment, wisdom and awareness distinguish them.

Pudovkin, as a filmmaker, knew that we could be compelled to encounter objects incoherently by means of film, an inability to experience unknown to Kant. He knew, furthermore, that the coherence (or incoherence) of the objects encountered by means of film was a matter of degree: we can experience them only as coherently as would a witness who was as discerning, wise and aware as possible.

> We may see from Pudovkin's assimilation, therefore, as Kant never saw, that the transcendental unity of apperception, and therewith the objective coherence of our experience of the world, is a matter of degree.

How coherently we encounter things (How 'objectively', that is, in Kant's sense) cannot be distinguished from the degree to which we bring to them the transcendental unity of apperception. The very objectivity of our encounters with things, whether by means of film or otherwise, is never, contra Kant, an all-or-nothing affair. It parallels exactly the degree to which we as witnesses are capable of distinguishing ourselves as discerning, wise and aware – the degree to which we bring a unified self-consciousness to our objective determination of the worlds we encounter, whether by means of film or otherwise.

The Primacy of Practical Reason

To comprehend Pudovkin's assimilation of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, however, is to understand only a part of the whole. For neither to Kant, nor to Pudovkin was the objective coherence of an experience its profoundest feature. Rather, the objective coherence of an experience was simply a means to its subjective moral apprehension, and therein lies the rest of the story.

Kant had claimed that we can experience fully the things we encounter only by judging of them both speculatively (that is, as constrained objectively by the transcendental unity of apprehension) and practically (as constrained subjectively by the transcendental unity of the categorical imperative, the moral law). Indeed, as Kant everywhere insisted,

to experience an event was fundamentally to come to recognize our ethical obligations as subjects with respect to the objects we encountered, for we are fundamentally subjects (ethical beings) and only accidentally objects; for the moral law constrains us, and everything else, as we are in ourselves (that is, as God would encounter us), while the laws of nature constrain us only insofar as we appear to ourselves and others.

The transcendental unity of apperception, therefore (the formal unity of self-consciousness from which the objectivity of things derives), was, to Kant, the moral law objectified. More precisely, it was that aspect of the formal, unifying constraint upon our consciousness of things that rendered them recognizable as objects, and thus capable of being experienced ethically.

Most objects, of course, do not exemplify their status as ethical beings (beings, that is, that are ethical in themselves and not simply as they appear to us). They appear to us as natural beings, with no presentment of their moral stature. On rare occasions, however, Kant insisted, a natural object or event could appear to us as sublime, seemingly extending beyond the measurable confines of the world of appearances, incapable of being gauged by any natural measures. On such occasions, Kant suggested, we catch a glimpse of the other aspect of our being – our world as it is in itself.

Even more transformatory, however, is our experience of works of art, for they, appearing 'purposeful yet without purpose' through a perfection of formal order beyond explanation, compel us to encounter that aspect of ourselves and everything else that is moral, bound by an ethical law that has no natural source or purpose but that rules the world of things as they are in themselves (the world as God encounters it).

When Pudovkin insisted, therefore, that filmmakers present by means of film only those events, aspect by aspect, that would have been given discriminating attention by a freely mobile observer who was of extraordinary discernment, wisdom and sensitivity, he again unwittingly followed Kant's lead into the core of human recognition, reaffirming the transcendental unity of our conscious recognition of objects as ethically significant, and putting the ideality of the observer's spatial and temporal mobility at the service of its moral sense.

He also acknowledged, more explicitly even than Kant, that our coordinated recognition of things as objects having ethical implications was a matter of degree: an observer was to be imagined as attending objectively to an event by means of film only insofar as the recognition of its moral identity would permit. Films were therefore to be constrained as works of art, exemplifying the moral identity of the events encountered by means of them, in precisely Kant's sense.

Pudovkin undertook to solve the fundamental problem of film design, namely how to ensure that viewers can perceive coherently all of the events they encounter by means of a film. Unknowingly, he brought Kant's transcendental constraint of apperceptive unity to bear upon it, reaffirming the fact so often denied in era of artistical incompetence that respect for the self-conscious perceptual integrity of observers is the primal precondition of authentic art.

Pudovkin reaffirmed it so simply and elegantly with respect to filmmaking that his assimilation of Kant's insight could serve as exemplary for other artists as well. No wonder it was to prove to be of unparalleled use to filmmakers and the remaining precepts of filmmaking to be refinements of it.

Conclusion

> Dominant both in the theory and practice of the silent film, [Pudovkin] met a crisis with the advent of sound.
>
> Georges Sadoul[5]

When synchronous sound came to Soviet filmmaking, Pudovkin's career as a forceful filmmaker ended, though he continued to make films to the last year of his life. Since his precept could be extended as easily to sound as to silent films, why did he fail?

Partly, I think, because he sometimes misunderstood the scope of his own precept, as thinkers often do, wandering from it, though never for long.[6] Partly, as well, because he never managed to extricate himself fully from two pervasive and interrelated personal catastrophes. In 1934, at the age of 41, he suffered a long and serious illness, lasting until 1938, that would itself have impeded his career. Coupled with psychological trauma, however, the consequences were devastating, for in 1935 his close friend and

---

[5] From the entry on "Pudovkin" in Georges Sadoul, Dictionary of Filmmakers, translated, edited and updated by Peter Morris (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1972), page 204.

[6] After signing Eisenstein's manifesto in 1928 against the synchronous uses of natural sound, for example (objecting to a common if not unexceptional derivative of his precept), Pudovkin toyed for awhile with natural sounds nonnaturally perceivable (in DESERTER, 1933). He never retracted his precept, however, and thereafter neither he nor Eisenstein ever showed much use for the asynchronous soundtrack. Indeed, Eisenstein, later in life, was to accept Pudovkin's precept in practice, though neither he nor Pudovkin recognized it. (see chapters ??? below). Redo, citing Intro. to The Film Factory.

screenwriter, Zarkhi, died as the result of an accident involving an automobile in which he was riding driven by Pudovkin. Pudovkin never forgave himself for Zarkhi's death, and it deprived him of his closest collaborator. He had always insisted on working as a team with his writer (indeed, that every director work as a team with the writer). Pudovkin, like so many directors before and since, never found a co worker of equal temperament and compatibility, and that, at his age and physical condition, could have sufficed to preclude further accomplishments.

I suspect, however, that Pudovkin failed to make powerful films after the early 1930s largely because the period coincided with the reign of Stalin, and no one could make films of consistent power working under him.[7] Bare survival was a rare achievement among artists working under Stalin, and although Pudovkin managed it, he was, as were so many others, crippled creatively by doing so.[8] Sadly, we shall have cause to reflect again on this period when discussing the career of his colleague, Eisenstein.

But we must never underestimate the contribution Pudovkin made to filmmaking, not only through his early films but through his precept that undergirds all powerful production to this day.[9] When Pudovkin died on 30 June 1953 he had become, with Eisenstein and Dovzhenko, one of "the three wise men" of the Soviet Cinema.[10] The

---

[7] Eisenstein's achievements in ALEXANDER NEVSKY and IVAN THE TERRIBLE, PT. 1 were the only notable exceptions, and it killed him to make them.

[8] I have taken the phrase 'crippled creatively' from the title of Herbert Marshall's Masters of the Soviet Cinema: Crippled Creative Biographies (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), who took it in turn from Sergei Yutkevich, the noted soviet director who lived and worked through the reign of Stalin with Pudovkin and Eisenstein. Yutkevich, once a friend of Eisenstein, had dutifully criticized him along party lines as Stalin had wished. Later, under Khrushchev, he gave an interview from which Marshall quotes the following paragraph: "We must tell our viewers what happened. Tell it honestly, sincerely, truthfully, passionately, without looking back ... How it was not long ago, when art, and indeed not only art, was subjected to the taste of one man [Stalin]. How many crippled creative biographies rise up in one's memory." (page 2; quoted from Sergei Yutkevich, "Great Expectations are being lost", *Literaturnaya Gazetta*, no. 135, 18 November 1972)

[9] Pudovkin was to make other contributions to cinematical practice but none comparable in scope or weight to his precept of perceptual coherence and continuity. He had much to say about film acting and the directing of film actors, in particular, being the first to bring the Stanislavski method of acting and its preparation to the cinema – to the everlasting fury of later directors forced to direct method actors!

[10] The phrase is Ivor Montagu's, I believe.

three men had known each other, their careers had run parallel and their productions had occasionally even involved one another.[11]

Yet, strangely, Pudovkin's reputation among cocktail party thinkers about film has been dwarfed by his two compatriots. Why? Partly, I suspect, because his films appear simple and obvious to nonfilmmakers when compared to the immoderations of the other two. Partly, as well, because his few writings, lacking the pinwheel brilliance of Eisenstein or the poetic passion of Dovzhenko, are of unobvious glamour. Yet a deeper reason should now be apparent:

Pudovkin had rediscovered, once and for ever after, the key Kantian principle guiding the selecting and sequencing of events within powerful films – an insight that, once articulated, was found to be so obviously correct that sensitive filmmakers have used it ever since, despite having forgotten collectively where and by whom it was originally expressed.

Eisenstein was eclectic but erratic, Dovzhenko ardent but abstruse. Only Pudovkin, writing little but to the point, got it right. Of the "three wise men" of the Soviet cinema, Pudovkin was the wisest, and that, I suggest, means the wisest thinker about filmmaking the cinema has yet known.

[11] Pudovkin and Eisenstein, for example, were the adjudicators of Dovzhenko's first major film, ZVENIGORA (Eisenstein later wiring money from the United States to assist Dovzhenko in his first visit to Berlin, a gesture for which Dovzhenko later showed his appreciation by joining those who condemned Eisenstein at the 1935 Congress!); Pudovkin much later acted the part of the mad prophet in Part I of Eisenstein's IVAN THE TERRIBLE; and Pudovkin's worries while shooting THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG in 1927, after having knocked away part of the balustrading of the roof of the Winter Palace, were greatly ameliorated upon discovering that Eisenstein the same evening had broken two-hundred windows in the private bedrooms with an errant explosion.