Gilles Deleuze's Poetics of Cinema:
Preparatory Remarks for a Re-Reading of *Cinema 1* and *2*

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to lay the groundwork for an interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* as works of film poetics. English-language commentators tend to treat the books primarily as philosophical works, and only secondarily as contributions to film theory. I argue that this interpretive strategy gets things exactly backwards. To understand both the philosophical and film-theoretical value of the *Cinema* books, we need to see them mainly as contributions to the field of film poetics. My argument for this claim proceeds in three main steps. First, I explain what film poetics is and isolate the claims it's primarily in the business of making. Second, I situate *Cinema 1* and *2* within this tradition and compare the books' theoretical approach to the methodology developed in David Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film.* And finally, I gesture towards some of the implications that *Cinema 1* and *2* have for philosophy, showing how the books extend and challenge Kant's "aesthetic" inquiry in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

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Introduction

In his 1957 book, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye writes that "it is time for aesthetics to get out from under philosophy, as psychology has already done."[1] This provocative phrase, an endnote to Frye's so-called "Polemical Introduction," does not express a contempt for aesthetics. Rather, it conveys a conviction that the study of art ought to be a field in its own right. "Most philosophers," Frye writes, "deal with aesthetic questions only as a set of analogies to their logical and metaphysical views, hence it is difficult to use, say, Kant or Hegel on the arts without getting into a Kantian or Hegelian position."[2]

At first glance, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's two books on film, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, appear to display all of the limitations Frye associates with philosophical writings on the arts. Almost every section across the two volumes takes a film, filmmaker or filmmaking movement and attempts to connect it to a concept that appears elsewhere in Deleuze's work. The analysis of relations in Hitchcock, of the idea of the self in *Cinéma Vérité*, and of "non-chronological time" in *Citizen Kane* all parallel discussions in Deleuze's metaphysical treatises (*Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*) and his collaborations with Félix Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*). Due to the many associations that emerge between *Cinema 1* and *2* and the rest of Deleuze's oeuvre, it often seems like the two volumes approach films as just a way to extend the philosopher's otherwise largely complete system.

In his landmark commentary, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, D.N. Rodowick reads *Cinema 1* and *2* in exactly this way, proposing to "treat the two books as philosophical works and to try to understand them as a logical development through cinema of Deleuze's more

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[1] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 357.
[2] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 357.

general concerns."[3] For Rodowick, "Deleuze's larger objective is not to produce another theory of cinema, but to understand how aesthetic, philosophical, and scientific modes of understanding converge in producing cultural strategies for imagining and imaging the world."[4] Regardless of what that exactly means, it's clear Rodowick thinks *Cinema 1* and *2* shouldn't be seen primarily in relation to the tradition of film theory and criticism. *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* proceeds from the assumption that the *Cinema* books are really works of philosophy, and that their engagement with films and filmmakers are more-or-less dispensable illustrations of broader metaphysical issues.

For the past quarter-century, Rodowick's interpretive assumptions have gone largely unchallenged and have often been echoed by other commentators. In his book on Deleuze, Alain Badiou writes that the reason "film buffs have always found it difficult to make use of the two hefty volumes on the cinema" is that "however supple the individual film descriptions may be in their own right, this malleability seems nevertheless to function in philosophy's favor, rather than to fashion, in any way whatsoever, a simple critical judgment that film enthusiasts could draw on."[5] Another of Deleuze's philosophical contemporaries, Jacques Rancière, makes a similar observation about *Cinema 1* and *2*, claiming that Deleuze isn't actually analysing the stylistic features of the hundreds of movies he mentions, but allegorizing his own metaphysical views through his discussion of them.[6] In sum, almost every significant reading of *Cinema 1* and *2* proceeds from the assumption that the books have little, if nothing, to do with film theory or criticism, and that the volumes actually derive their coherence from Deleuze's philosophy as a whole.

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[3] D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (London: Duke University Press, 1997), xiii.
[4] Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 5.
[5] Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, tr. by Louise Burchill (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 14-15.
[6] Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 107-123.

Throughout the 2000s, Deleuze's thought exerted a considerable influence in English-language cinema and media studies. But the role his ideas played in the field ultimately had little to do with the theory Deleuze develops in *Cinema 1* and *2*. By extracting the books' "philosophical insights" from what were perceived to be problematic film-theoretical claims, scholars like Rodowick, Steven Shaviro[7], Patricia Pisters[8], and Laura U. Marks[9] developed methodologies in film studies that were heavily inspired by Deleuzian concepts but that had little to do with *Cinema 1* and *2*'s avowed aim of developing a taxonomy of cinematic images and signs. This has led to an odd state of affairs: Deleuze has been in vogue in film studies for over twenty years, but scholars have hardly begun to contextualise the *Cinema* books in relation to film theory, criticism, and our understanding of cinema as an art.[10]

In what follows, I attempt to reverse the dominant line on the *Cinema* books. Rather than assuming that Deleuze wrote good philosophy and bad film theory, I want to entertain the possibility, at least to start with, that he may have actually written good film theory and bad philosophy. The real answer as to what Deleuze is doing in the *Cinema* books is no doubt more complex, but it is a measure of their reception to date that even this crude approximation gets closer to the truth.[11]

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[7] Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1993.
[8] Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
[9] Laura U Marks. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. London: Duke University Press, 2000.
[10] Dominic Lash and Hoi Lun Law offer a useful summary of the scholarly reception to Deleuze's *Cinema* books in their "Introduction" of *Gilles Deleuze and Film Criticism: Philosophy, Theory, and the Individual Film* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 1-9.
[11] Many of the ideas rehearsed in this section also appear in mine and Lawrence Garcia's "Gilles Deleuze and Criticism: The Cinema Books at 40," *Cinema Scope*, September 2023, 96.

I have written this thesis with two audiences in mind. The first group of readers I address are scholars and interpreters of Deleuze's *Cinema* books. My goal will be to show this community that reading *Cinema 1* and *2* as film theory enables one to render more faithfully, consistently, and coherently the views Deleuze espouses in the two volumes than do interpretations that begin by situating the books in relation to his philosophy as a whole. The second group of readers I address are scholars, critics, and theorists working in a tradition David Bordwell has helpfully characterised as "film poetics." My goal will be to show this other largely separate community that Deleuze makes fascinating and substantive contributions to their field of inquiry.

My dispute with the first group of readers, Deleuzian scholars and commentators, is largely *hermeneutic* in nature: it concerns how to best approach the ferocious technical idiom Deleuze develops throughout *Cinema 1* and *2*.

Deleuze's most sophisticated readers have long acknowledged the deeply systematic nature of his thought. To counteract the caricature of him as a "mad creator of concepts," these interpreters stress the continuities that run throughout his expansive body of work. In book after book, Deleuze deploys the same constellation of concepts and arguments to make sense of a broad range of phenomena. Appearing under various names and guises, his pet examples, ideas, and slogans are constantly repeated in works that might otherwise appear unrelated. Following just one thread across Deleuze's philosophical career, we can see, for instance, how the concepts in "The Image of Thought" section of *Proust and Signs* are integrated into a chapter of the same name in *Difference and Repetition*, before eventually appearing in the introduction on the "rhizome" in *A Thousand Plateaus* and the chapter on "thought and cinema" in *Cinema 2*. This is but one of the many conceptual treasure hunts that run throughout Deleuze's remarkably varied output.

Given the holistic nature of his project, numerous scholars have suggested trying to understand Deleuze's concepts by considering the full range of their applications. To make sense of an idea in one work, we should look at its place in the philosopher's output as a whole. Rodowick forcefully formulates the tenets of this interpretive approach as follows:

> With each new book, Deleuze writes as if his reader were familiar with everything he has published before. This is especially true of the cinema books. Deleuze's style of writing and argumentation is not inherently difficult to understand. In fact, I argue that the cinema books continue a deep and complex meditation on time that is one of Deleuze's central contributions to contemporary philosophy. However, Deleuze takes for granted the reader's familiarity with an argument that has unfolded over thirty years through his books on Bergson, Nietzsche, Kant, Spinoza, and Foucault, as well as *Difference and Repetition, The Logic of Sense,* and his books co-written with Felix Guattari.[12]

If one wants to understand what Deleuze means by, say, "image of thought," "powers of the false," or any other technical term that recurs throughout his work, then one has to examine that concept across its various manifestations. It is only by comparing its use in a variety of other cases that its meaning can be fixed for its current one. For this reason, *Difference and Repetition* or *A Thousand Plateaus* are integral to understanding *Cinema 1* and *2*. Without the context they provide, Deleuze's claims in the *Cinema* books remain either incomplete or obscure.

I think there are a number of problems with this hermeneutic approach. For one thing, it directly contradicts how Deleuze advises his readers to make sense of his repetition of concepts. In the preface to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes: "concepts, with their zones of presence, should intervene to resolve local situations. They themselves change along with the problems…They must have a coherence among themselves, but that coherence must

[12] Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, x.

not come from themselves. They must receive their coherence from elsewhere."[13] The dominant method of interpretation assumes Deleuze's individual works acquire their coherence from a highly abstract problematic that somehow unites all of the philosopher's works together. But here, Deleuze emphatically declares the opposite: we should understand his concepts and arguments primarily in terms of the "local situations" into which they intervene and that lend them consistency and coherence in a given case.

Suppose we ignore the fact that the dominant interpretive strategy directly contradicts Deleuze's own advice. Certainly this wouldn't be the first time a thinker was wrong about the content of their own method. The much bigger issue with the dominant hermeneutic strategy is that it leads to confusion about what the *Cinema* books even *are*. By treating *Cinema 1* and *2* as extensions of Deleuze's system, many commentators have struggled to articulate what philosophical concerns the two volumes actually deal with. What concrete issue or set of issues could possibly unite *Cinema 1* and *2* to the rest of Deleuze's body of work? In the absence of a clear answer to this question, interpreters have often read the *Cinema* books in incredibly insular ways, failing to make them intelligible to anyone not already invested in the author's project.

Aside from the fact that this interpretive approach contradicts Deleuze's own advice and often results in vague readings of the *Cinema* books, another issue with it is that it ends up minimising the importance of the very things Deleuze expends most of his efforts actually trying to address: the hundreds of films and dozens of works of film theory referenced throughout the two volumes. "Philosophical" interpretations of *Cinema 1* and *2* require just a handful of chapters to make their case, and ignore most of the rest of what Deleuze has to

[13] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, tr. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xx.

say. It's hardly an exaggeration to say that most extant readings of *Cinema 1* and *2* would be unaffected by systematically removing all mention to films, filmmakers, and film theorists.

So, to sum up, my *hermeneutic* claim is this: that to understand the *Cinema* books, we have to position their system of concepts in relation to a "local situation," which is Deleuze's attempt to develop a poetics of film. If this hermeneutic claim is correct, then the relationship between the philosophical and film-theoretical value of the *Cinema* books cannot be symmetrical. It would be entirely possible to read *Cinema 1* and *2* as poetics without explicitly considering their implications for philosophy; however, it would be wrong to assume that we can disregard their contributions to poetics while still treating them "philosophically." For better or worse, Deleuze insisted that the two volumes are "books of logic, a logic of the cinema"—one at the exact same time as the other. But that does not mean that we can somehow consider their "logical" or "philosophical" importance apart from their contributions to film criticism, theory, or poetics.

My dispute with the second group of readers, scholars interested in cinematic poetics, is not primarily *hermeneutic* in nature, but *film-theoretical*: it concerns the viability and originality of the system Deleuze develops throughout *Cinema 1* and *2*.

Cognitivists, neo-formalists, and scholars working on questions related to film narration and style have often dismissed the *Cinema* books. In *On the History of Film Style*, Bordwell accuses Deleuze of taking the good, hard work of earlier critics and theorists and simply "[reinterpreting it] according to a preferred Grand Theory."[14] *Cinema 1* and *2* "[rely] upon a conception of cinema derived almost completely" from André Bazin and other *Cahiers'* writers, repackaging their old, occasionally tired claims into a hip, new idiom.[15] Malcolm Turvey is no less disparaging. In his brief treatment of the *Cinema* books in

[14] David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, 2nd ed (Madison: Irvington Way Press), 148.
[15] Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, 116.

Doubting Vision, Turvey lambasts Deleuze for uncritically regurgitating the cliches of "revelationism," and endowing cinema with a magical power to reveal aspects of reality that are *logically*, and not just empirically, impossible for humans to perceive.[16]

At this stage, I won't try to rebut these declamations. For now, all I'd like to show is that there are solid textual grounds for treating *Cinema 1* and *2* as works of poetics. Even though Deleuze never uses that word to characterise his project, it's relatively easy to infer its applicability from the terms he does. Deleuze typically explains what he's up to in the *Cinema* books in one of two ways. The first is as a "taxonomy, an attempt at the classification of images and signs."[17] The second is as a "theory *of* cinema," a continuation or development of what we now call "classical film theory."[18] When using the first characterization, Deleuze typically *compares* his project to other systems of classification, including Mendeleev's periodic table and Linnaeus' categorization of biological organisms. When using the second, he typically *contrasts* his approach to the semiology of Christian Metz and other "theories *about* cinema," which treat the study of film from the standpoint of other disciplines, be it linguistics or psycho-analysis or both.[19] Deleuze's description of the *Cinema* books as a

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[16] Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.), 93-98.
[17] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1986), xiv.
[18] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1989), 280.
[19] Deleuze makes this distinction between "theories *of* cinema" and "theories *about* cinema" on the final page of *Cinema 2*, which might just be the most misunderstood section in either of the two volumes. Almost every single commentator of the books I am aware of has taken this passage as definitive proof that Deleuze is only interested in the philosophical concepts he can extract from films, and not in actually constructing a theory of film, per se. Here's what Deleuze actually says: "The theory *of* cinema does not bear on the cinema, but on the concepts of the cinema, which are no less practical, effective or existent than cinema itself…Cinema's concepts are not given in cinema. And yet they are cinema's concepts, not theories *about* cinema [emphasis mine]." There are two points being compressed together in this passage. The first is that we cannot learn film directly; what we learn is the theory *of* cinema. Earlier on the page, Deleuze insisted that Godard didn't exhibit a strong understanding of what is called film theory when he said that writing for *Cahiers* was already his way of making movies. For this assumes that creating a film also supplies the vocabulary for its own criticism. But Deleuze insists that "theory too is something which is made, no less

taxonomy suggests the *approach* of his study: an attempt to develop a comprehensive and systematic inventory of some kind. But his characterization of his project as a development of André Bazin, Sergei Eisenstein, or Noël Burch's theories, rather than as an application of psycho-analytic or semiotic methodology, indicates the actual *subject matter* of *Cinema 1* and *2*: "the irreplaceable, autonomous forms which [film directors] were able to invent."[20] Putting these two descriptions together, we can surmise that Deleuze devised his project as a systematic, immanent theory of film. Or, for short: poetics.

Poetics comes down to us through Aristotle's fragmentary lecture notes on the subject. In that treatise, Aristotle purports to discuss "poetry in itself and its kinds, and what potential each has; how plots should be constructed…; also, from how many parts it is [constituted] and of what sort they are; and likewise all other aspects of the same inquiry."[21] Since the 19th and 20th century, scholars and art theorists have broadened Aristotle's topic to include not only the analysis of literary genres that didn't exist during his time, but the study of other arts, including painting, architecture, and cinema. In our own day, poetics refers to the disciplines concerned with understanding the formal operations of particular artistic media. Poeticians develop conceptual frameworks to account for the widest possible range of artistic phenomena with the greatest level of specificity.

In cinema studies, poetics is most often associated with the work of Bordwell. Writing in the 1980s, around the same time as Deleuze, Bordwell was eager to distinguish his understanding of film-theoretical inquiry from the views propagated by his contemporaries.

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than its object." The second big point of this passage is that the concepts film theorists create have to be unique to cinema, and cannot be carried over from another discipline readymade. This is what Deleuze means when he says that cinema's concepts are not, in fact, theories *about* cinema. He restates this claim in the very final line of the books, declaring that "no technical determination, whether applied (psychoanalysis, linguistics) or reflexive, is sufficient to constitute the concepts of cinema itself."

[20] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, xiv.

[21] Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. Richard Janko (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), 1.

And he appealed to the tradition of poetics to do this.[22] Like Deleuze, Bordwell was sceptical of the reigning methodological paradigm of his day, which he called "SLAB" theory. A hodgepodge of Saussurian linguistics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism, and Barthesian literary criticism, SLAB purported to decrypt the ideological functions of films by analogizing the cinematic viewing situation to unrelated phenomena that had already been analysed by each of these four thinkers. In polemic after polemic, Bordwell criticised this methodology as dogmatic, anti-scientific, and much else besides. The alternative program he proposed was poetics.

But Bordwell did not just present poetics as an alternative to the reigning methodological paradigm of his present; he also used it as a way to re-describe the aims and intentions of film theorists in the past.[23] According to Bordwell, the central question of classical film theory, "how can cinema be art?", was not really the main concern Bazin, Eisenstein, or any other major representative of that tradition actually dealt with. The primary goal of these thinkers' writings was to develop an idiom through which a variety of cinematic products could be understood. Whatever "essence of cinema" they ended up positing (i.e., whatever aesthetic characteristics they took to authenticate the medium's status as art) was an optional conclusion of their theories, not a load-bearing premise of them.

Remarkably enough, Deleuze positions his theory of film in relation to his predecessors and contemporaries in pretty much the exact same way Bordwell does. First, against SLAB methodology, Deleuze argues that film criticism and theory shouldn't try to build up an elaborate apparatus to "interpret" films. As he once said in an interview, "You can of course link framing to castration, or close-ups to partial objects, but I don't see what

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[22] David Bordwell, "Historical Poetics of Cinema," in *The Cinematic Text,* ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 369-398.
[23] David Bordwell, "Lessons with Bazin: Six Paths to a Poetics," *Observations on Film Art*. October 2018. https://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/lessonswithbazin.php

that tells us about cinema."[24] Second, against a conventional account of classical film theory, Deleuze also contends that theories of cinema shouldn't be concerned with determining what aesthetic characteristics make a film good or bad, worthy of being deemed art or not. As he writes in the preface to *Cinema 1*, "It is not a matter of saying that the modern cinema of the time-image is 'more valuable' than the classical cinema of the movement-image…The cinema is always perfect as it can be, taking into account the images and signs which it invents and which it has at its disposal at a given moment."[25]

The point of comparing how Bordwell and Deleuze relate to their forebears and contemporaries has been to show that *Cinema 1* and *2* attempt to fulfil the exact same criteria of adequacy Bordwell rendered explicit when he characterised film-theoretical inquiry as a form of poetics. Bordwell insisted on two main constraints, each of which was motivated by a shortcoming of either SLAB methodology or classical film theory. The first criterion of adequacy is that theories of film ought to make intelligible how the works they discuss actually constrain our thought about them. There has to be some sort of friction between how films actually are versus how we take them to be. SLAB methodology frequently failed to satisfy this criterion, as its proponents struggled to make intelligible how a film could prove one of their interpretations wrong. The second criterion Bordwell made explicit by thinking about film theory as a form of poetics is that "general theories of film"—ones that aren't centred on particular films or filmmakers, but take cinema as a whole as its subject—ought to answer to the criticism of individual works, and not the other way around. The ground-level descriptions of particular films should be explanatorily prior to the general principles propounded by an explicit theory. Classical film theorists often failed to satisfy this second criterion, as they dismissed all sorts of filmic phenomena that weren't immediately accounted

[24] Deleuze, Gilles. *Negotiations*, tr. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 58.
[25] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, x.

for by their abstract conceptions of what cinema was or should be. By treating film theory as poetics, Bordwell sought to bring these two constraints to the forefront of his discipline's methodological consciousness. To call *Cinema 1* and *2* works of poetics is primarily to say that they should be understood as attempts to develop a theory of film that satisfies these two criteria.

My *film-theoretical* claim, then, amounts to this: that scholars working on questions related to film narration and style should treat *Cinema 1* and *2* as relevant to their ongoing research.[26] Much in the same way that Bazin and Bordwell's writings serve as a benchmark against subsequent positions were and even still are assessed, Deleuze's unique explanations of a wide variety of filmic phenomena should also establish a baseline for analyses of the very same. Unfortunately, at present, roughly four decades since the publication of *Cinema 1* and *2*, the books remain accessible to only a select few specialists, and have hardly impacted those who serve to gain the most from them.

This strange situation has arisen not only from the rhetorical difficulties of the texts themselves (which are considerable), but from the ways scholars have traditionally interpreted them. By treating the books as poetics, I will attempt to make Deleuze's system of cinematic concepts accessible to a readership interested in studying film as an art. If my way of understanding Deleuze risks diminishing the novelty of his achievement, it should also have the effect of clarifying how that novelty is best accounted for in the first place.

The primary aim of this thesis is thus to lay the ground for an interpretation of *Cinema 1* and *2* as works of poetics. I approach this task in three steps: 1) I outline what poetics is, what function it serves, and what sorts of claims it is primarily in the business of making; 2) I

[26] What I have said in this section should suffice to make my *hermeneutic* claim at least minimally plausible. But I have yet to justify this *film-theoretical* one. Just because Deleuze's *Cinema* books are works of poetics doesn't necessarily mean they need to be taken seriously by practitioners of that discipline. I attempt to make the case that they should in Chapter 2.

explain how Deleuze contributes to poetics, so understood; and 3) I reframe the *Cinema* books' philosophical value in light of my interpretation of them as contributions to this discipline. My contention is that an order of explanation of this sort—one that starts with Deleuze's thinking about films, and then pulls back to survey how that thinking has consequences for broader logical and metaphysical issues—is capable of making much better sense of the *Cinema* books' contributions to *both* film theory and philosophy than one that proceeds in the opposite direction.

In Chapter 1, "Film Theory and the New Semantics," I present a view of what film theory is good for, contrasting it with two approaches that have traditionally defined how scholars and theorists think about their own activity. The first approach, associated with the classical film theorists, is "ontological" and seeks to identify the aesthetic properties that define cinema as an art; the second, often advocated for by "cognitivist" scholars, is "piecemeal" and seeks to account for particular films or historical trends without necessarily erecting a "general theory of film" as such. I argue that *Cinema 1* and *2* develop a viable alternative to both of these methodological programs. To elucidate this competing conception, I appeal to the inferential semantics of Robert Brandom, which enables me not only to explain what sorts of claims Deleuze is primarily concerned with but also to justify his unabashedly systematic approach.

With Chapter 2, "Spatio-temporal Perspectivalism in *Cinema 1* and *2*," I move from meta-poetics to the actual discipline itself. Here, my aim is to situate Deleuze's texts within the field of poetics and to isolate a few of their most innovative contributions to the discipline. The chapter begins by examining David Bordwell's 1985 book, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, which ranks among the most influential works of poetics to come out of academic film studies. After raising two objections to the schema developed in Bordwell's

book, I show how *Cinema 1* and *2* overcome these difficulties by engendering narration, rather than treating it as a given.

In Chapter 3, "Aesthetics and Representation," I finally turn to the problem of how the *Cinema* books can be understood as philosophy even when they are treated primarily as works of cinematic poetics. I extract an answer to this question from a quotation in *Difference and Repetition*, in which Deleuze states that aesthetics suffers from a "wrenching duality," referring to the "theory of sensibility as the form of possible" experience, on the one hand, and the "theory of art," on the other. This somewhat cryptic phrase offers a clue to understanding the philosophical import of the *Cinema* books. It suggests that the system of cinematic concepts Deleuze develops throughout the two volumes can be seen as an attempt to challenge the way Immanuel Kant analyses the conditions of representation in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

As its subtitle suggests, this thesis aims to *prepare* readers for more detailed accounts of *Cinema 1* and *2*. Dealing with broad hermeneutic problems in Deleuzian scholarship and high-level concerns in film poetics, it confronts some of the most general obstacles that have gotten in the way of understanding *Cinema 1* and *2*. Practically speaking, this means I often approach the *Cinema* books at a maximal distance from the actual text, occluding many of their finer details in order to bring into focus the larger structure into which those details fit. The most cogent piece here, "Film Theory and the New Semantics," is emblematic in this regard, as it attempts to convey the spirit of Deleuze's inquiry without focusing exclusively on particular, granular aspects of it. The same holds true for many of the pages that follow: I have aspired to explicitly *say* what Deleuze often only implicitly *does*.

Chapter One: Film Theory and the New Semantics

The history of film poetics has been dominated by two methodological programs: the ontological theories associated with classical thinkers like Béla Balázs and André Bazin, and a piecemeal approach advocated for by cognitivist scholars, such as David Bordwell and Noël Carroll. In our own day, the classical approach has been widely discredited, dismissed as narrow in focus and essentialist in outlook; the piecemeal one, however, continues to persist, and in many ways represents the common-sense understanding of how film theorising should work. My primary aim in this chapter is to show how Deleuze's *Cinema* books develop a viable alternative to both of these programs.[27]

I have divided what follows into three parts. In the first, I explain the hierarchy of concept-using abilities presented in Robert Brandom's "How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science." Brandom's essay is a relatively straightforward summary of his inferential approach to semantics, which is developed at much greater length in his 1994 book *Making It Explicit* as well as in his 2006 John Locke Lectures, *Between Saying and Doing*.[28] In the second part, I then use Brandom's demarcation of the different levels of concept-use as a way of analysing what Deleuze calls his "logic of the cinema," which is

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[27] As part of an explanatory divide-and-conquer strategy, I have chosen to omit all mention of an equally notable tradition in film theory: the semiological approach pioneered by the early Christian Metz in *Film Language*. Deleuze accuses Metz of creating a theory *about* cinema, rather than a theory *of* cinema—that is, a theory that views films from the standpoint of a discipline external to the study of cinema, instead of one proper to it. Deleuze's dispute with Metz thus concerns an issue of *demarcation*: how do we distinguish film theory—or what I've been calling film poetics—from the work of other disciplines that also happen to write about films? My concern here doesn't explicitly touch that demarcation issue, so I have decided to leave Metz out of the story. Instead, I will be treating a *methodological* problem about how film theorists should understand their own activity.

[28] Robert Brandom, "How Analytic Philosophy Failed Cognitive Science." In *Reason in Philosophy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 197-225. In what follows, I supplement Brandom's account of concepts in the cognitive science essay with details he presents elsewhere. For an approachable introduction to Brandom's philosophical project, see his recent Spinoza Lectures, *Pragmatism and Idealism: Rorty and Hegel on Representation and Reality* (New York Oxford University Press, 2021).

elaborated throughout *Cinema 1* and *2*.[29] I devote most of this section to exploring how Deleuze intervenes into the history of a single film-theoretical expression: the close-up. Finally, after explaining Brandom's semantics and illustrating Deleuze's logic, I conclude by showing how the *Cinema* books present an understanding of film-theoretical activity that rivals cognitivist epistemology without backsliding into the essentialism of classical film theory.

1.1 Brandom's Semantics

In "How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science," Brandom distinguishes between four different grades of concept-use, three of which will concern us here: labelling, describing, and explicating.[30] As we go through each of these levels, I'll supplement Brandom's toy illustrations with examples taken from art theory. We'll start with labels because they are the lowest type of concept in the hierarchy.

Brandom associates labelling with classifying: the ability to treat some particular thing as belonging to some general kind. All one has to be able to do to label is reliably and repeatably group sensory data into different classes. So, a parrot could be trained to reliably label objects "red" by squawking, "That's red," when it's exposed to red things, and by keeping quiet when it encounters other colours. Here, "red" serves as a label because its sole use is to subsume particulars under a general heading.[31]

A paradigmatic example of a work of art theory that treats *all* aesthetic concepts as labels is Arthur Danto's famous essay "The Artworld."[32] There, Danto argues that we can

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[29] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), trans. Martin Joughin, 47.
[30] The final level concerns the analysis of complex predicates. Brandom's explanation is quite technical, and not strictly necessary for my purposes here.
[31] Brandom, "How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science," 200-201.
[32] Arthur Danto, "The Artworld" (*Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19, 1964), 199-218.

model aesthetic predicates as variables and their contradictories, as either P or ~P. Here, P stands for a term like Heinrich Wölfflin's technical concept "painterly" and ~P for its contradictory "not painterly." It doesn't matter to Danto that Wölfflin's expression may be difficult to define. As long as it can be repeatedly recognized, it is fit to play the role of a label. With a little bit of training, critics and historians could be taught to sort works into "painterly" piles and "not painterly" ones. Just as the parrot can respond to any object as being "red" or "not red," so we can characterise every painting, however crudely, as being either P or ~P.

Now, Wölfflin's's concept and its contradictory may not be able to tell us much about the individual works they classify. But thankfully, we have more aesthetic concepts to work from, and we can imagine not only being trained to group together P works and ~P ones, but Q and ~Q, R and ~R, and so on. Once we've learned to reliably respond to a number of different stylistic attributes, we can then tabulate them all in simple matrices, which Danto draws like so.[33]

STYLE MATRIX

	Mannerist	*Baroque*	*Rococo*
I.	+	+	+
2.	+	+	-
3.	+	-	+
4.	+	-	-
5.	-	+	+
6.	-	+	-
7.	-	-	+
8.	-	-	-

Image 1: Danto's Style Matrix

In the diagram, the stylistic predicates P ("Mannerist"), Q ("Baroque"), R ("Rococo") are listed on the horizontal axis, and the individual paintings they characterise are represented

[33] Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 163.

along the vertical one. The plus and minus signs at the centre of the table indicate whether a work possesses a stylistic attribute or its negation. It's important to note that both the vertical and horizontal axes of the matrix can grow indefinitely. As more artworks are created, new rows are added; and as more labels are identified additional columns appear at the top. It may seem like the more labels we plug into the style matrix, the better we will become at describing paintings. But for Brandom, that is not the case. No matter how many times we multiply the number of columns in the matrix, we will never arrive at a genuine description of a work, at least in the technical sense that he means, and which we're concerned with here. So, what more is required for a label to become a description?

Brandom suggests an answer through the following illustration. Let's suppose someone is charged with cleaning out boxes from an attic and that each of these boxes has a red, yellow, or green sticker on it. For the coloured stickers to genuinely describe the boxes and not just label them, we have to come to understand what *follows* from one box being classified as one colour rather than another. To learn what these stickers *mean* is to learn, for instance, that the owner put a red label on boxes to be discarded, green on those to be retained, and yellow on those that contain fragile objects.[34]

Brandom's point is that for our descriptions to be meaningful, they have to occupy a place in a space of implications. It's only because classifications are capable of serving as a premise in inferences that they describe, rather than merely label. I may know that a coloured sticker picks out a single class of boxes without understanding what the presence of that sticker counts as a reason for. It is only when I learn what conclusions I am able to draw from the application of the label that I am capable of appreciating it as a description. For a concept

[34] Brandom, "How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science," 203. I have altered Brandom's example slightly.

to count as descriptive, its use has to make a move or take up a position in what Brandom calls "the game of giving and asking for reasons."[35]

Brandom's claim is even stronger than this, though. Not only do descriptions have to be capable of serving as premises in inferences, but at least some of these inferences have to be "subjunctively robust"—that is, involve substantive commitments as to *what would happen if*. Brandom isolates two kinds of "modal relations" that express the subjunctive robustness of descriptions. Modal relations of incompatibility articulate what is necessarily excluded by a description, and modal relations of consequence bring out what a description necessarily entails.[36] In the example above, the yellow sticker—which signifies that a box contains fragile contents—acquires the force of a description because it comes with these strong implication relations. It is *incompatible* with a box being labelled yellow that it should contain blankets, rubber balls or other non-breakable objects. And it is a *consequence* of this same yellow label being affixed to the box that I should not drop it or stack heavy objects on top of it.

As I understand it, the primary aim of Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* is to show that aesthetic concepts are capable of being descriptive in just this sense.[37] In that classic study, Wölfflin presents five "polarities": "linear" vs "painterly," "plane" vs "recession," "closed" vs "open," "multiplicity" vs "unity," "absolute clarity" vs "relative clarity." The actual distinctions he draws are not my concern here. What is important is how Wölfflin shows how the applicability of one concept can count as a reason for either using or withholding others. We can see this in two ways. First of all, he shows that between the

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[35] This phrase appears throughout Brandom's work. See the Introduction to *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Massachusets: Harvard University Press), 1-22.
[36] Robert Brandom, "Modality and Normativity: From Hume and Quine to Kant and Sellars." In *Between Saying and Doing*: *Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 92-116.
[37] Wölfflin, Heinrich. *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*. (New York: Dover Books, 1950), trans. M.D. Hottinger.

paired terms exist relations of *incompatibility*: By asserting that a work is "linear," for instance, we are committing to it not being "painterly"; when we assert that a work is "planar," we are committing to it not having "recession"; and so on for the three other polarities. At the same time, we can see relations of consequence *across* the distinctions: When we assert that it is "painterly," we are also committed to it being associated with "recession," "open," "unity," and "relative clarity." Again, the specifics of these concepts are beyond the scope of this paper. The main point to notice is how different this is from the style matrix, where no one label (corresponding to a column) could be used to infer anything about the applicability of any other (another column).

Here, then, are the first two senses of "concept" and "concept-use." It is important to note that there is a hierarchical relation between them: for a concept to describe, it must also be capable of labelling, but just because it can label does not necessarily mean it can describe. Danto's variables and Wölfflin's polarities both have observational uses, but only the latter have inferential ones. The former are labels, the latter descriptions. Throughout his body of work, Brandom returns to this basic semantic distinction again and again. He worries that less strict demarcations of the descriptive won't capture what is special about *discursive* practice. For him, no genuinely conceptual activity can consist entirely of making non-inferential reports. Under these constraints, it would be strictly impossible for members of a community to undertake commitments and thus apply concepts.

The last conceptual ability to consider is *explication*. As we have seen, labels differ from descriptions in that descriptions come with implications and labels don't. Now, when we move up to the final level of concept-use, it becomes possible to isolate these implications themselves, and to make *them* the subject of a claim. This is what Brandom calls

explication—making explicit. And he associates this level with the mastery of logical vocabulary, whose paradigm is the conditional: an if/then statement.[38]

On the descriptive level, the inferences that articulate the content of concepts show up indirectly in assertions. But when we embed these assertions as the antecedents of conditionals, we can then make direct claims about what those contents are. I can say, for instance, that "if Pittsburgh is to the west of Princeton, then Princeton is to the east of Pittsburgh." By asserting the conditional, I am not describing anything: I have not actually claimed that Pittsburgh is to the west of Princeton. What am I doing then? Brandom says I am making an inference explicit. I am putting the implication relations involved in descriptive uses of "east" and "west" into the form of a claim. I am opening up these concepts to scrutiny so that we can either accept, reject or challenge the inferences implicit in them.

Explication differs from description in that it enables practitioners to scrutinise concepts themselves, and not just the particular stances they adopt in using them. Criticising concepts does not just involve correcting particular descriptions but redrawing (or outright rejecting) the lines of inference that bestow content upon descriptions in the first place. False beliefs can be easy enough to repair. But deficient concepts are almost always more obstinate: operating as if behind our back, they restrict what we are so much as capable of being aware of.

In Brandom's account, then, the role of logical vocabulary is *expressive*: its importance lies not in what it allows us to prove, but in what it enables us to say. Before mastering the use of conditionals, we could *do* something—we could treat one claim as a reason for another. But when our language becomes expressively rich enough to include logical locutions, we can then *say*, as part of the content of a claim, that one proposition entails another. Just as descriptions enable us to be conscious of various features of our

[38] Brandom, "How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science," 206-214.

world, so explication makes visible the reason relations that make classifications descriptive in the first place. According to Brandom, "this is a new kind of distanced attitude toward one's concepts and their contents…It is a new level of cognitive achievement—not in the sense of a new kind of empirical knowledge, but of a new kind of semantic self-consciousness."[39]

1.2 Deleuze's Logic

In an interview, Gilles Deleuze once referred to *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* as books of logic, "a logic of the cinema."[40] Using distinctions that Brandom has availed us with, I will now explain what that logical method is. For practical reasons of space, I have chosen to focus on how Deleuze develops the concept of the close-up.

In our story, the close-up first appears on the scene as a label. In this capacity, it can be used to reliably and repeatably classify individual shots as close-ups or not close-ups. Here, one might imagine an AI model that combs through entire films pinging each and every time this type of composition appears. Brandom would say the AI has *labelled* these images, but not yet *described* them. For the term "close-up" to acquire a descriptive use, it has to institute a grouping *and* licence a pattern of inference. To describe an image as a close-up, practitioners can't just know when it is appropriate to use the concept. They also need to understand what they are committing themselves to in doing so.

Béla Balázs was probably the first to think seriously about what we can infer from the presence of close-ups. Like many early film theorists, he was concerned to justify the status

[39] Brandom, "How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science," 212.
[40] Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 47.

of cinema as an art by looking at what distinguished it not just from being a mechanical reproduction but also from the other arts; and what he seized on was the distinctive way the cinematic close-up is able to present the face and facial expressions. For Balázs, the close-up was *the* essence of cinema (that is, "the technical precondition for the art of facial expression and hence of the higher art of film in general").[41] Story and character were but a pretext to the "play of facial expressions" that close-ups made possible, and which existed in a different *order* than the ostensible narrative. These "higher-order" close-ups didn't necessarily have to be of an actual human face. According to Balázs, there was a "physiognomy" to landscapes and other non-human phenomena as well.

For now, what is important about Balazs' view of close-ups is how it contrasts with a conventional account of them. A conventional account of close-ups would see them as offering a more detailed view of something. In this case, all we can really infer is that when something is represented in close-up, it cannot simultaneously be visible in a long shot. But Balázs thinks that close-ups do more than this. For him, cutting to a close-up does not just alter the relative distance between the viewer and an object; it actually transforms the very phenomena being depicted. When a filmmaker "[severs] his characters' heads and [splices] them one by one, full-size, into scenes of human interaction," they do not just "bring the characters into closer proximity" but "[transpose] them into an entirely different dimension."[42]

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[41] Béla Balázs, *Béla Bálazs: Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 37.
[42] Balázs, *Béla Bálazs: Early Film Theory*, 100.

Balázs finds a paradigmatic example of this phenomena in Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Referring to the long Inquisition scene, he writes: "For a thousand metres of film, nothing but heads. Heads without spatial context. But this spatial absence does not alarm us. Why should it? This is not a scene of horse-riding or boxing. It is not within space that these raging passions, thoughts, beliefs clash."[43] In other words, the close-ups used throughout Joan's interrogation abstract her face almost completely from the surrounding environment. This allows her expressions of anger, grief, and doubt to be intelligible apart from the film's dramatic space.

Balázs thus turns the close-up into a description by associating it with an inference or consequence. For him, close-ups dissolve spatial context, preventing viewers from recognizing dramatic actions, intentional agents, and in extreme cases, even causally connected narratives. Now, Balázs' concept works beautifully when describing particular films, such as Dreyer's *Passion*. But the problem with it becomes apparent when we move up to the level of explication. Here, we can make explicit the inferences coiled up in Balázs' concept by putting them into claimable form. We can say, for instance, that "if a film makes frequent use of close-ups, then it dissolves the spatial coordinates of psychological conflict." Or, "if a film dissolves its spatial context, then it makes frequent use of close-ups."

With about an additional hundred years of hindsight, we can see that both of these inferences are faulty. There are numerous films where close-ups aren't used to dissolve the spatial coordinates of action, and others where this dissolution is achieved *without* using

[43] Balázs, *Béla Bálazs: Early Film Theory*, 102.

close-ups. Kazik Radwanski's *Anne at 13,000 ft* is one of numerous recent films that don't use close-ups to wrench their characters from their social context but to highlight their peculiar ways of behaving in it. Robert Bresson's *Trial of Joan of Arc* illustrates the other case, in which objects and people are wrenched from their spatio-temporal context without using close-ups. Throughout that film, Bresson dissolves the space of action not by isolating Joan's face from her environment (as Dreyer did), but by dislodging that environment itself from any encompassing situation. *Anne* and *Trial*, then, make apparent errors in Balázs' theorisation of the close-up. They show how the effects he associated exclusively with close-ups can be achieved without recourse to them (*Trial*), or how this type of composition can be used for entirely different purposes altogether (*Anne*).

What does this experience of error tell us about Balázs' theory of film, and about theories of film more generally? One view might see Balázs' writings on the close-up as a kind of cautionary tale, illustrating why we shouldn't try to move from description to explication, as there's always the risk that new films (in this case, those of Bresson) will necessitate a reformulation of the inferences we codify. Faced with the difficulty of developing modally robust explanations, this view would hold that we should just banish explication altogether. Rather than deal with generalisations and laws, we should litigate things on the level of description. In the *Cinema* books, however, Deleuze does not respond to the shortcomings of Balázs' concept in this way. Just because Balázs' idea of the close-up can't hold on the level of explication does not mean that we shouldn't try to develop a notion

that can. And it's this challenge Deleuze takes head on in his two chapters on "the affection-image" in *Cinema 1*.

Deleuze's analysis of the affection-image initially conforms to Balázs' account of the close-up. The affection-image is also said to "[abstract objects] from all spatio-temporal coordinates," and enact not a relative but absolute change in dimension.[44] But whereas Balázs saw these effects as a direct consequence of using close-ups, Deleuze takes the correlation between this type of composition and the affection-image as only preliminary. Writing some decades after Balázs, he knows that filmmakers like Bresson have shown that objects can be abstracted from their spatio-temporal coordinates without being viewed at a proximal distance. What Deleuze has to spell out, then, is how his successor concept preserves the insights of Balázs' theory (the distinctive effects that come from a dissolution of spatiotemporal coordinates) without rigidly linking it to a faulty inference (i.e., that this effect *must* come from a close-up of a face or "facefied" object). Once this is clarified, he will be able to claim that Balázs' conception of the close-up was really a partial and erroneous appearance of the more complex phenomena he calls the affection-image.

Deleuze begins his second chapter on the affection-image by distinguishing the *actions* of entities in actual states of things—that is, "determinate, geographical, historical and social space-times"—from the *capacities* of those very same entities (or what he calls "affects").[45] The basic principle behind the affection-image is that objects or entities

[44] Deleuze, *Cinema* 1, 96.
[45] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 141.

always have more capacities than they can actualise in any particular state of things. An actual state of things will determine which of an entity's capacities will be activated and which will remain dormant. But even still, an entity can always do *more* than what is required of it in a given case. All of the other actions it *could* perform remain merely possible. While these "potentialities" don't matter from the standpoint of the present state of things, they might be brought into play if suitably elicited.

Deleuze illustrates the difference between the representation of actions in a state of things and the identification of an object's capacities through the famous "Jack the Ripper scene" of G.W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box*:

> "There are Lulu, the lamp, the bread-knife, Jack the Ripper: people who are assumed to be real with individual characters and social roles, objects with uses, real connections between these objects and these people—in short, a whole actual state of things. But there are also the brightness of the light on the knife, the blade of the knife under the light, Jack's terror and resignation, Lulu's compassionate look. These are pure singular qualities or potentialities—as it were, pure 'possibles'."[46]

Jack the Ripper is about to kill Lulu. The representation of this action presupposes an entire state of things, a historical situation in which every object and person in the scene is located. Within this context, only particular aspects of the objects and people involved become pertinent. Take the knife, for instance. Its ability to harm Lulu is crucial to what is unfolding, while its ability to reflect light from the nearby lamp is largely irrelevant to the present situation. What Deleuze hopes to show with this example is that representations of action involve "screening out" some capacities of objects while emphasising others. In considering entities apart from the situations they happen to be entrenched in, the affection-image brings into view these suppressed abilities.

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[46] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 102.

Deleuze sums up his thinking on the affection-image by writing that it "gives a proper consistency to the possible, [it] expresses the possible without actualising it."[47] In other words, the affection-image enables us to reflect on an entity's capacities without having to focus on those relevant to a particular situation. The representation action always involves privileging some abilities and blocking out others. But the affection-image foregrounds a larger range of an entity's capacities by viewing it apart from an unfolding course of action.

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate how Deleuze proposes to refine Balázs' theory is to look at an example where a close-up of a face *does* seem to be essential for representing the sorts of phenomena associated with the affection-image. And here, I have in mind the account of the Kuleshov effect that appears in *Cinema 1*.[48] In the experiment, a man's face is spliced against objects composed in long shots. By pairing the same face with different individual items, Kuleshov is able to imply different actions each time. A conventional reading of this experiment sees the plurality of implied actions in terms of a process of addition (e.g., man + food = hungry; man + coffin = sad). But for Deleuze, the effect is explained less by the specific associations than by the intrinsic ambiguity of the expression itself. The actor's face can actually be connected to *more* than we typically notice, and the potential connections that the facial close-up can form are actually *restricted* by being directly linked to other images.

Deleuze's analysis of the Kuleshov effect makes apparent why close-ups are not necessary to achieve the range of effects associated with the affection-image. For Deleuze,

[47] Deleuze, Cinema 1, 98.
[48] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 110.

what matters is not that the figure be seen separate from the soup, coffin or other objects, but that all of these phenomena retain as many of their potential connections to each other as possible. Affection-images can be achieved by using close-ups or long shots, by depicting faces or other kinds of surfaces. What is important is that no determinate situation ever emerges between the various objects or people depicted. If an entity is considered apart from the particular situation it happens to be embedded in, then that entity will express the full range of its potential interactions with all the other objects or people it is brought into conjunction with.

To sum up: we have seen how the close-up first came onto the scene as a *label*, as a tag that an AI, or a sufficiently trained parrot, could perhaps reliably apply when faced with a given movie or set of movies. Then, we looked at Balázs attempt to move to the level of *description* by seeing what consequences followed from the use of the close-up. Finally, we looked at how Deleuze's concept of the affection-image takes us to the level of *explication*, codifying the inferences that Balázs' theorization of the close-up only partially, and insufficiently, accounted for. To end with, I would like to bring the two strands of this essay together, and show how Brandom's semantics and Deleuze's logic point a way forward for film-theoretical inquiry.

1.3 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have been attempting to develop an alternative idea of how film theorists should understand their own work. The time has come to explicitly state what that

conception is. In my view, film theorists explicate the inferences coiled up in concepts used to describe the aesthetic workings of movies. They put the reason relations implicit in critical descriptions into claimable form, bringing their content out into the light of day, where an inference might be accepted, challenged, or reformulated. On this account, film theory stands to criticism as logic relates to description. It is, per Brandom, an "organ of semantic self-consciousness."[49]

The benefits of adopting this understanding of film theory are on full display across Deleuze's *Cinema* books. In basically every chapter, Deleuze analyses and refines concepts he inherits from prior thinkers. He repairs the inferences implicit in these expressions so that their content might be conditionalized. Above, we saw how Deleuze did this with Balázs' idea of the close-up. But in sections of the books we haven't considered, Deleuze presents equally worthwhile engagements with Eisenstein, Bazin, Vertov, among numerous others. The *Cinema* books synthesise a number of different theories of film, many of which were previously presumed to be incompatible with each other. In Deleuze's hands, it's as if the concepts of two great thinkers never actually contradict each other. When each concept falls into its proper place, all apparent disagreements disappear.

Even though Deleuze devotes a lot of pages to dissecting the works of classical film theorists, he rarely stops to explain how his methodology differs from theirs. With the exception of the books' three prefaces and the concluding page of *Cinema 2*, he seldom addresses the parameters of his own way of working. That is highly unfortunate. Scholars in film and media studies have simply assumed that Deleuze's arguments rest on the same assumptions as the "essentialist" theories of the classical era. In *On the History of Film Style*,

[49] Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), xix.

Bordwell goes so far as to accuse the *Cinema* books of being wholly derivative of this prior research program.[50] Oddly enough, many Deleuzians have been inclined to agree with him on this point. To save Deleuze from himself, they suggest separating the good philosophical insights in the *Cinema* books from their problematic approach to film theorising.

Up until now, this assumption has not really been challenged. No one has provided a framework to make sense of the *structure* of Deleuze's network of concepts. I have taken a first stab at it here using Brandom's account of the different levels of concept-use. Brandom's distinction between labels, descriptions, and explication has provided a way to make sense of the specific sorts of claims Deleuze is primarily in the business of making (namely, ones about the modally robust inferential connections between film-theoretical concepts). In what remains of this chapter, I'd like to further explain how this logic of the cinema—that is, the systematic nature of the *Cinema* books—differs from the approaches taken by the classical antecedents Deleuze often draws from and the cognitive or "piecemeal" theorists that followed in their wake.

The aim of classical film theory was to explain how the cinematic medium was capable of producing art. Each thinker had a different answer to this question, a different "ontology" of film. Some identified the artistic elements of films with montage, others with the realistic viewpoint of the camera. At any rate, every ontological theory sought to isolate the set of aesthetic features they took to constitute film's essence *as* art. For a time, this problem was a helpful heuristic, inspiring a number of theorists to describe different aspects of films. Eventually, though, the issue with it became obvious. By confronting this query directly, the classical film theorists were led to conflate the ontological category, "art," with a particular style of it. They postulated an objective set of features *in* the work that

[50] Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, 116-117,

authenticated it as art or not art. Any film that didn't possess these features simply wasn't real cinema.

In the previous section, we saw a particular example of this "essentialism." Balázs noticed that quite a few great films of his day made frequent use of close-ups. This led him to devise a concept he thought adequate to explain the function of these compositions (and to make especially perceptive claims about, for instance, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*). But it also led him to then say that the essence of cinema just *is* the close-up. In Balázs' hands, the close-up became *the* ultimate vocabulary for all genuine film-theoretical inquiry. Given the methodological paradigm Balázs was working within, this conclusion was the most natural for him to make. The only way to answer the fundamental question of film theory, as he understood it, was to privilege one set of descriptors over others. Ontological approaches ultimately arrived at this deadend: either they produced platitudes so general as to be entirely useless, or they demoted entire swaths of film history to second-class citizenship.

Cognitivist scholars began by recognizing that "general theories" of film—ones that don't take as their subject particular films, directors' bodies of work, or historical periods, but cinema as a whole—face significantly higher criteria of adequacy than the ontologists acknowledged, and that film theorists couldn't simply ignore or write off all works that couldn't be described by their model.[51] In light of the difficulties with "ontological" theories, cognitivist scholars have advocated taking a "piecemeal" approach and doing away with systematic ambitions altogether. To preserve the insights of the classical film theorists, it was thought that we should only take their concepts on a *descriptive* level. Bazin, Eisenstein, or

[51] For two introductory presentations of this approach, see Bordwell's "A Case for Cognitivism" (*Iris* no. 9 [1989]: 11-40) and Carroll's "Cognitivism, Contemporary Film Theory, and Method" (*Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* vol. VI, no. 2 [1992], 199-218).

Balázs could all be useful for talking about particular films. But we need not worry about how well their inferences held up as laws or fared in general.

Brandom presents a powerful argument against the cognitivist understanding of film theory. Bordwell and Carroll's contention that we can only be relatively certain about particular descriptions but not general statements of law rests on faulty semantic assumptions. As the new semantics teaches us, concepts involve laws and are inconceivable without them (and that goes as much for "thick" scientific expressions, such as "mass," just as much for everyday ones like "chair"). Once this lesson is properly understood, systematic approaches come to be seen as essential in making explicit inferences that otherwise remain implicit in the application of descriptive concepts. The goal of a "logic of the cinema" is not to lay claim to a special sort of epistemological authority, but to make possible a greater degree of semantic self-consciousness. Its aim is, in a word, *expressive*.

Deleuze already understood these Brandomian lessons, at least implicitly. Throughout the *Cinema* books, he charts a path between ontological and piecemeal approaches. Unlike the ontologists, Deleuze does not treat system-building as an attempt to develop an ultimate vocabulary; but unlike the cognitivists, he does not rule out the possibility of spelling out robust modal relations between film-theoretical concepts. Across *Cinema 1* and *2*, Deleuze lays bare a vast network of implications, enabling us to see the reason relations that obtain between various film-theoretical concepts—how the applicability of one of them necessarily entails or precludes the possibility of applying another. If the *Cinema* books give us a better grip on our film-theoretical vocabularies, it's because they also develop descriptive concepts, such as the affection-image, that are powerful enough to play this explicating role.

That being said, it's important to be conscious of the limits of this logic. Explicating, making explicit, presupposes the availability of an entire background of descriptive concepts, but description is itself possible independently of explication. A straightforward consequence

of this is that our practical ability to describe will always outrun our logical capacity to make inferences explicit. It is impossible for our conceptual schemes to be totally "out in the open." One reason for this is that the process of asserting, describing, and drawing conclusions both confers content on our concepts and continually alters what those contents are. Despite what the cognitivists and classical film theorists thought, there are no independently transparent concepts capable of stepping outside this process. To paraphrase Brandom one last time, clarifying our concepts in light of our descriptions is always going to be "a messy, retail business."[52]

[52] Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, 75.

Chapter Two: Spatio-temporal Perspectivalism in *Cinema 1* and *2*

Cinema 1 and *2* are among the most ambitious books ever written about film. Those who have seriously engaged with them come to acknowledge that beneath their obscure references, gnomic prose, and often elliptical descriptions of films and filmmakers there is some incredibly systematic and original thinking going on. But that impression is hard won, and rarely comes through immediately. The primary challenge facing prospective readers of the *Cinema* books derives from a persistent ambiguity that runs throughout the texts. It's not always clear whether the theory of movement and time presented in the books addresses problems in film theory, metaphysics, or somehow both of these disciplines at once. For convoluted philosophical reasons, Deleuze doesn't always explicitly specify.

Throughout this thesis, I have claimed that the best way to make sense of the *Cinema* books is to treat them primarily as works of film poetics. In the Introduction, I argued that there are solid textual grounds for reading the books in this way. Then, in Chapter 1, I explained what reading the books in this way consists of, what treating them as works of poetics actually entails (namely, seeing them as attempts to explicate, repair, and rewrite the inferences coiled up in concepts used to critically describe the aesthetic operations of films). And now, I would like to finally turn to the actual content of Deleuze's theory of film. Rather than make a *hermeneutic* claim about how to understand the books or unpack the *methodological* assumptions implicit in that understanding, this chapter will make the case for the actual *film-theoretical* value of *Cinema 1* and *2*.

My argument proceeds in four main steps. First, I offer a cursory summary of what is perhaps the most influential work of cinematic poetics, David Bordwell's 1985 book, *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Second, I motivate Deleuze's intervention into film poetics by pointing to two deficiencies in Bordwell's theory. Third, I explain the main point on which Deleuze and Bordwell's theories of film differ. And fourth, I examine how Deleuze's poetics

overcomes the difficulties that plague Bordwell's system. As a comprehensive account of *Cinema 1* and *2* is impossible within the space available here, my comments will either focus on or build towards an explanation of one important aspect of the two volumes: their account of the genesis of narration.

2.1 Bordwell's Poetics

Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film* takes as its starting point a distinction between three main terms: fabula, syuzhet, and style. Each of these concepts picks out a different aspect of narration. The fabula of a narrative work is its story, a "chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and spatial field;"[53] the syuzhet is the way that story is represented, "the actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula in the film"[54]; and the style is the set of technical procedures used to convey story information, the system of cinematic devices that "reinforce the causal, temporal, and spatial arrangement of events in the film's syuzhet."[55] Bringing all of these concepts together, Bordwell defines narration as "the process whereby [a] film's syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channelling the spectator's construction of the fabula."[56]

All of that may sound more complicated than it actually is. Bordwell illustrates each of his three master concepts through two detective films, Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep* and Edward Dmytryk's *Murder My Sweet*.[57] In both works, the fabula consists of a crime and its investigation—there is a murder or disappearance, and Marlowe shows up to solve it. The syuzhet, however, only provides viewers access to the parts of the fabula that follow the

[53] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 49.
[54] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 50.
[55] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 275.
[56] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 53.
[57] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 64-70.

crime (at least initially). Both the *Big Sleep* and *Murder My Sweet* hitch their syuzhet to Marlowe's investigation, ensuring that viewers will have enough information to piece together the whole fabula only at the very end of the film. In these works, style remains largely in service of the syuzhet's construction of a comprehensible story world. Hawks and Dmytryk follow Classical Hollywood convention, using wide compositions to establish the geography of locations, eye-line matches to stitch together one part of a space with another, and so on.

All three narrational elements come together as an indivisible package. There can be no fabula without a syuzhet to cue its construction, just as there can be no syuzhet without a stylistic system to act as its vehicle. The reason there can be no fabula without a syuzhet is because there's no question of seeing a whole story "directly." The fabula is only ever accessed through a temporally extended representation of it in the syuzhet. But the reason there can be no syuzhet without style is that story events can never be depicted or organised except through certain technical means. The syuzhet is always articulated through some system of devices. In Bordwell's view, then, every narrative text must have a fabula, syuzhet, and style.[58]

Devised to range over every possible narrative film, the distinction between fabula, syuzhet and style gives considerable scope to the theory Bordwell develops in *Narration and The Fiction Film*. But how does it also enable him to discriminate between various modes of cinematic storytelling? Bordwell contends that while every narrative film must have a fabula, syuzhet, and style, not every work will construe the relation between these elements in

[58] Even though all three of these components emerge together in narrative works, it obviously doesn't follow that they must be present in every film. For instance, Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* has neither fabula nor syuzhet. Its stylistic devices run completely free of narrative demands. We can generalise from this example that all films where stylistic devices aren't in any way attached to a syuzhet don't count as narrative works. They thus lie outside the boundaries of Bordwell's inquiry.

exactly the same way. The intuitive differences we detect between different forms of narrative filmmaking can be explained in terms of the unique ways each of these modes make the fabula, syuzhet and style work together to achieve particular narrational effects. In this way, Bordwell can deploy his tripartite scheme to analyse numerous modes that have been influential across the history of cinema. As my aim is to provide just a rough indication of how his theory works, I will focus exclusively on Bordwell's account of only two of these formal systems: classical narration and art-cinema.[59]

To simplify considerably, in classical narration, the syuzhet provides largely unequivocal access to the fabula, enabling viewers to unify all the events relevant to a film's story into a single, coherent causal sequence. Whenever there is a significant gap between what the syuzhet shows and what takes place in the fabula, that gap will almost always be filled. Either we assume that nothing of significance has happened while we're not looking, or the narration eventually fills us in on the pertinent information we missed. Style functions similarly. The system of craft norms that have come to be associated with classical narrative style (e.g., the 180-degree rule, the shot/shot schema) have been designed for viewers to easily build up a consistent, unambiguous spatio-temporal world. At both the level of style and syuzhet, then, classical narration generally aspires to offer the spectator with full and adequate knowledge of the fabula. As Bordwell surmises: "in all, classical narration manages the controlled pace of film viewing by asking the spectator to construe the syuzhet and the stylistic system in a single way: construct a denotative, univocal, integral fabula."[60]

[59] Bordwell's modes are stable sets of formal options, rather than historical periodizations. Though each of his modes are developed historically, they shouldn't be seen as exclusive to the films of a particular time or place. For instance, classical Hollywood filmmaking undoubtedly follows the parameters Bordwell associates with classical narration, but that does not mean that classical narration is exclusive to Classical Hollywood.
[60] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film,* 165.

As opposed to classical narration, art-cinema tends to leave permanent and ambiguous gaps in our knowledge of the fabula. This manifests at both the stylistic and syuzhet levels. The syuzhet of an art film is generally more disarrayed than a classical one, "[leaving] causes dangling and questions unanswered."[61] Information about what happened prior to the arrival of the syuzhet is usually concealed. Consequently, viewers often struggle to place the film's events within a stable situation. Style also courts confusion. Rather than adopt a position in space and time most conducive to the representation of the action, the camera often defies optimal vantage points. Our knowledge of the location in which scenes unfold can be hazy and unstable, and the spatio-temporal relations between shots relatively unfixed. Both style and syuzhet, then, generally mire the viewer in perplexities. Whereas classical narration tends to progress towards the eventual uncovering of unequivocal truths about the story world, art-cinema often ends in a permanent state of ambiguity or confusion.

That, no doubt, is a schematic summary. But it should suffice to suggest three important features of Bordwell's poetics. Firstly, Bordwell's system assumes that the *structure* of the fabula remains constant in each and every case. All narrative films must relate chronological events that occur within a definite spatio-temporal field. Films that systematically deprive us of the ability to arrange images and sequences into a pattern of this sort simply aren't narrative works. Secondly, what actually changes from one narrative mode to the next is the particular way the syuzhet and style mediate our access to the fabula. Because the fabula always has an identical *structure*, the dynamic aspects of film viewing and filmmaking have to be accounted for in terms of the *process* of constructing it through stylistic and syuzhet techniques. Finally, the stylistic and syuzhet techniques out of which the fabula is progressively composed are relatively distinct from each other. For reasons that will become apparent in the next section, Bordwell thinks we need to keep separate sets of books

[61] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 210.

on the way the syuzhet cues narrative information from the way stylistic systems express those cues. The syuzhet embodies the course of a film as a *dramaturgical* process, while style captures it as a *technical* one.[62]

The most important aspects of Bordwell's system all centre around what I'm going to call the concept of *epistemic access*. The idea is that narrative modes can be defined in terms of the specific ways they modulate our knowledge about the story. In a given mode, style and syuzhet will make available a range of inferences about the fabula, while precluding the formation of others. This, in turn, enables some narrational features to come into view, and prevents others from fully appearing. Through this basic line of thought, Bordwell's system seeks to explain how the narrational effects characteristic of certain modes are produced by the specific kind of epistemic access style and syuzhet afford.

2.2. Two Objections to Bordwell's Poetics

At this stage, I'd like to raise two objections to Bordwell's schema, one of which will be directed at his conception of the syuzhet and the other at his theorization of style. The first will take issue with thinking about syuzhet as providing us with more or less access to the same fabula; the second will challenge the idea that stylistic operations should be understood as a process entirely distinct from narration. Both of these objections will be traced back to a common source: the positing of a fabula prior to its actual representation.

Bordwell's entire system gets off the ground by assuming that we can compare the level of epistemic access the syuzhet typically affords to a fabula. His paradigm for talking about different levels of syuzhet knowledge is the prototypical detective narrative. As a general rule, the viewer of these films is permitted to see and know only what the detective also sees and knows. But there's no reason the syuzhet couldn't have revealed who the

[62] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 50.

murderer was at the outset, and provided viewers with *more* knowledge of the fabula than was available to the detective from the beginning of the syuzhet. While that change in epistemic access would radically reorient how the viewer experiences the film, it would not actually affect the *story* in any way. It would allow viewers to know whodunnit at the beginning but that would not actually change who, well, did it.

Bordwell goes on to construe the differences between narrative modes largely in terms of the different sort of epistemic access they tend to provide viewers to the fabula. As we saw in the previous section, his model chalks up the differences between classical narrative filmmaking and art-cinema to the fact that the former strictly prohibits there being any permanent gaps in our knowledge of the fabula while the latter actively encourages the proliferation of ambiguous story points. For instance, what separates an art-cinema interpretation of the detective genre like Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* from other, more overtly classical treatments is that "it presents too few pieces of information to enable the protagonist, or us, to solve the crime (or even to determine what the crime involves)."[63] To paraphrase Bordwell's remarks on a different Antonioni movie (*La Notte*), it's as if the narration has "chosen" to flaunt an omniscient range of knowledge, showing us "less" than what it could know.[64]

There is something deeply, perhaps even metaphysically strange, about how Bordwell construes the syuzhet in terms of whether it provides more or less knowledge to an identical fabula. This whole manner of speaking assumes that we can somehow detach the syuzhet from the fabula it articulates, and compare it to another, more revealing vantage point that would nevertheless open onto the exact same story. I'm not convinced that this is actually

[63] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 54.
[64] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 210.

possible. As a way to begin explaining why, I'd like to quickly examine an example of my own, Douglas Sirk's 1956 classical melodrama, *There's Always Tomorrow.*

The basic setup of Sirk's film runs as follows. A middle-aged toy manufacturer, Clifford Groves (Fred MacMurray), suddenly happens upon a former employee, Norma Vale (Barbara Stanwyck), with whom he was once in love. In the two decades since their last encounter, Groves has married, had three children, and found business success, while Vale has remained single and become a renowned fashion designer. At the time of their re-acquaintance, Groves is highly disaffected: his children are spoiled and wife neglectful. Vale, meanwhile, has never stopped pining for Groves in all the years since they'd been separated. With all of these elements in play, the film clearly points towards Groves having an affair with Vale, leaving his unhappy life as a husband and father behind.

Now, what makes *There's Always Tomorrow* such an interesting film is that its syuzhet depicts only the events immediately before and after Groves and Vale run into each other. The entirety of Groves' marriage is completely obscured from view. This deliberate restriction on the viewer's access to the fabula gives the potential infidelity plot an air of wish-fulfilment it would otherwise lack. From the perspective *There's Always Tomorrow* cannily sets up, it appears only right that Groves and Vale would end up together, providing him the attention he deserves and her the love she has waited for. But the only reason this viewpoint can sustain itself at all is because it completely suppresses the entire history of the relationship between Groves and his wife and children. The details of their past together must be kept from view as much as possible for the potential affair between Groves and Vale to have the romantic pull it does.

Here we have an amazing example of how narrational effects are achieved by playing with the viewer's epistemic access to the story. *There's Always Tomorrow* explicitly thematizes many of the narrational effects that Bordwell's theory seeks to generalise from.

Nevertheless, I think Sirk's film illustrates the deficiencies, rather than the strengths, of the model we've been discussing. Suppose, for instance, that instead of being constrained to a concentrated period immediately before and after Groves and Vale's reacquaintance, the syuzhet had also sprawled across his twenty-year marriage. According to Bordwell's theory, this would expand our access to the fabula, but not necessarily change the fabula itself. But how far can we push this idea before it breaks? What if our access was increased not just to encompass events in Groves' twenty-year marriage, but his childhood as well? Would we still be dealing with the same fabula but different points of access on it?

In providing us with more information, narration isn't simply granting us greater access to a story that's already there; it's actually *adding* to it, *changing* it. My imaginary version of *There's Always Tomorrow* doesn't just offer viewers a larger range of knowledge about the story; it actually alters what the story is. In principle, films can never run out of ways of telling us more about their fabula. But in adding information, they aren't simply increasing our knowledge of a story that remains fixed. They are altering the boundaries of what counts as the fabula in the first place. Thinking we can expand the syuzhet's awareness of the fabula without ever changing the fabula itself leads to the regress problem suggested above: why couldn't a syuzhet depict a potentially infinite number of events before, after, or even between the ones we do actually see, and still be said to provide more knowledge of a fabula that was there all along?

As trivial as this objection may sound, there is an important consequence that follows from it. I have just claimed that altering the level of knowledge viewers have about a story also changes what counts as the story to begin with. It's strictly impossible to have two distinct syuzhet, each with different levels of access to the fabula, that nevertheless open onto an identical story (though they might both take place within the same story world). Now, it follows from this basic observation that more or less knowledgeable syuzhet actually just

disclose different stories. In claiming that a syuzhet restrains our access to a fabula, Bordwell is actually comparing the access we have to a fabula to a completely different fabula altogether, from which our current awareness can be described as limited. But this supposedly "limited" syuzhet provides perfectly adequate knowledge from its own standpoint, according to the story that *it* tells. What appears as a restriction on syuzhet access from the standpoint of a different story is actually perfectly good access from the one proper to it.

Here, then, is my objection to how Bordwell conceives the syuzhet/fabula relationship. In characterising a syuzhet as offering more or less limited access to a fabula, Bordwell is obliged to imagine the story as somehow detachable from its own syuzhet. He is able to describe the epistemic access of a syuzhet as on the whole more or less limited than another only because he has artificially determined in advance what the story is or should be. But this gets things exactly backwards. A fabula is only ever discerned through the particular way the syuzhet represents it, and each of these ways doesn't provide greater or lesser access to the same story, but actually just tells different stories. To paraphrase a Deleuzian slogan, cutting up a syuzhet differently always changes the fabula qualitatively.[65]

There is a striking similarity between how Bordwell thinks about the syuzhet/fabula distinction and how he conceives the syuzhet/style one. Just as there is always a gap between what happens in the fabula and what the syuzhet shows us about what happens in it, so there is also a level of arbitrariness between the narrational cues provided by the syuzhet and the stylistic elements out of which those cues are composed.

Consider, for instance, the various technical devices for communicating simultaneity. The fact that two events are happening at the same time in a story might be expressed by cross-cutting, staging one scene in the foreground and another in depth, or by using split-

[65] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 1.

screen. While these techniques each express the same syuzhet cue, they obviously do not all have the same aesthetic texture. There is always a level of arbitrariness between the syuzhet function a device serves and the technical qualities of it. Filmmakers interested in exploring style for its own sake can exploit this arbitrary gap, making the stylistic devices themselves the primary point of audience attention, rather than the syuzhet cues they communicate. In a revealing passage, Bordwell explains this point as follows:

> "Film style can also take shapes not justified by the syuzhet's manipulation of story information. If in *Rear Window* Hitchcock systematically cut from Jeff's gaze to close-ups of misleading or irrelevant objects which he could not see, then the stylistic procedure itself could vie for prominence with the syuzhet's task of presenting the story. True, we might take this stylistic flourish as a syuzhet maneuver to baffle us about causality or space; but if the device were repeated systematically across the film with no clear link to the developing syuzhet and fabula, then the more economical explanation would be that style has come forward to claim our attention independent of syuzhet/fabula relation."[66]

Bordwell is arguing that style possesses an intrinsic unity that can never be fully accounted for in terms of the operations of the syuzhet. The types of purely technical effects created through style are largely, if not entirely, independent of the causal, spatial, or temporal relations that form the basis of our ability to assemble a coherent diegesis. Formal play with "lines, shapes, colors, movement, or other graphic qualities" do not communicate denotative meaning about a story world. As Bordwell surmises, stylistic patterns are, "in a strong sense, *nonsignifying*—closer to music than to the novel."[67]

Stylistic patterns are "non-signifying" because they need not directly impact our knowledge of the narrative. The "gap" created by distinct stylistic techniques that serve the exact same syuzhet function ensures that there could be two films with the exact same

[66] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 52.
[67] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 306.

denotative meaning but with completely different stylistic textures. At least in principle, two works can be indistinguishable at the level of narrative significance, but differ in stylistic ways that are "inherently non-narrative." Bordwell surmises from the fact that technical effects swing free of narrative ones that style is a distinct process that runs parallel with, but is ultimately not reducible to, the unfolding of the syuzhet. As I said before, style embodies the course of a film as a *technical* process, while the syuzhet articulates it as a *dramaturgical* one.

How does Bordwell propose to discuss the inherently non-narrative elements of style? At this point, it seems, his system breaks down. Insisting that we recognize the significance of purely stylistic effects, but cordoning off these effects from most other elements of films we typically find significant, Bordwell is led to paper over this part of his theory with the highly unsatisfying notion of "artistic motivation."[68] Artistic motivation is what viewers ought to appeal to when encountering stylistic patterns that can't be chalked up to their effect on narration. For instance, the work of Robert Bresson involves a fairly straightforward syuzhet, but a maniacally consistent style that calls attention to its own procedures. But are we honestly to believe that Bresson's style doesn't impact the "denotative meaning" of his films? Is the best explanation we can muster that it "tantalises" us with order—order that ultimately turns out to be devoid of any diegetic significance?[69]

Here, then, is my objection to how *Narration in the Fiction Film* construes the relation between syuzhet and style. Bordwell's conception of style as a process that runs parallel to the syuzhet, and yet remains entirely distinct from it, prevents him from adequately explaining the very stylistic effects he erected this gulf between syuzhet and style to explain in the first place. By locating stylistic effects on a completely different plane than narrative ones, Bordwell prevents himself from actually extracting any significant consequences from his

[68] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 53.
[69] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 305.

analyses of them. Ultimately, he is forced to lump stylistic experimentation into the nebulous realm of artistic motivation.

Even though Bordwell's construal of the syuzhet/fabula relation and the syuzhet/style one seem to be relatively independent of each other, there is a striking similarity between them. In the first case, Bordwell supposes that it's possible for distinct syuzhet paths to run through an identical fabula (and differ only in terms of the epistemic access they provide); in the second, he assumes that it's possible for distinct stylistic devices to convey the exact same denotative information (and differ only in terms of their artistic motivation). We saw above that the syuzhet/fabula distinction, at least when understood in this way, doesn't make sense; and that the style/syuzhet falls short of its explanatory target. But why does this structural similarity between the syuzhet/fabula distinction and the syuzhet/style emerge in the first place?

A more thorough answer to this question will be offered below while examining Deleuze's film theory, but for now I can offer a preliminary suggestion. The reason the syuzhet/fabula and syuzhet/style distinctions end up mirroring each other is because they both arise from a common theoretical strategy. Bordwell's analysis of fiction films always begins by positing a story laid out on a linear timeline. From this God's-eye viewpoint, he envisions an ideal perspective from which the entirety of the story could be known. Of course, an unconstrained representation of a fabula is physically impossible. Nevertheless, Bordwell thinks we can use this absolute perspective as a regulative ideal against which to measure the actual access style and syuzhet provide.

Both the treatment of the syuzhet and the conception of style that I objected to above follow from this initial move. The illusion that two distinct syuzhet can converge on an identical fabula and differ purely in terms of the level of epistemic access they provide arises because Bordwell first individuates stories from an ideal viewpoint and then subsequently

judges how any actual syuzhet path moves through it in more or less revealing ways. The illusion that distinct stylistic devices can serve the exact same function and differ only in ways that are non-signifying likewise emerges because Bordwell first posits a story, and then subsequently envisions the numerous stylistic devices that can be used to communicate it. Both of these aporia derive from a single theoretical commitment: the idea that narrative structure underlies whatever fiction films "literally" (as opposed to metaphorically) represent.

2.3 Narration and Genesis

Deleuze never tires of telling us that narration is not an "evident given" of cinematic images.[70] He repeats this slogan in at least eight different places. It is, undoubtedly, one of *the* axial commitments of his poetics. Through the previous two sections, we have put ourselves in a position to be able to understand what this phrase means and appreciate why Deleuze thought it was important. Bordwell's theory of narrative cinema has furnished us with a paradigmatic example of the precise order of explanation Deleuze offers his own in opposition to.

As we have seen, Bordwell first presumes the existence of a story, and then subsequently explains how a range of narrational forms emerge by modulating the *level* of access we have to it. His theory begins by positing a fabula with a static structure, and then goes on to account for the variety of representational systems that emerge in virtue of how they divide up this pre-constituted element. If this amounts to treating narration as an evident given, what explanatory strategy does Deleuze offer as an alternative to it? At numerous points throughout *Cinema 1* and *2*, Deleuze contrasts a film-theoretical order of explanation that takes narration as a *given* with one that takes it to be a *product*. He writes:

> "The first difficulty concerns narration: this is not an evident given of cinematographic images in general, even ones which are historically established…On the contrary, it seems to us that narration is only a consequence of the visible images themselves and their direct

[70] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 26.

> combinations—it is never a given. So-called classical narration derives directly from the organic composition of movement-images, or from their specification as perception-images, affection-images and action-images, according to the laws of a sensory-motor schema…Narration is never an evident given of images, or the effect of a structure which underlies them; it is a consequence of the visible images themselves, of the perceptible images in themselves, as they are initially defined for themselves."[71]

We will come to the organic composition of movement-images in the next section. For now, our concern is to clarify what it means to take narration as a product rather than as a given. To take narration as a given is to assume that the form of a fabula underlies whatever the images and sequences in a film literally represent. To take narration as a product, however, is to assume that the framework required for the emergence of stories derives from "visible images [and their] direct combinations" and does not underlie them as an immutable given. At first glance, it might seem as though this difference between taking narration as a given or a product doesn't really distinguish Deleuze's approach from Bordwell's. After all, doesn't *Narration in the Fiction Film* tell us over and over again that viewers *construct* the fabula from the cues that style and syuzhet provide?' Is that not what Deleuze also argues when he claims that "narration is only a consequence of the visible images themselves and their direct combinations?"[72] Not exactly.

In the passage above, Deleuze isn't just insisting that individual stories arise as a consequence of some process of narrating them. He is also claiming that story *structure* is produced. That is, to be sure, a much stronger claim. It is one thing to assert that the fabula of a particular film emerges as a result of its temporally distended representation by syuzhet and style. But it's another entirely to say that the basic framework of a fabula also arises as a consequence of images and their possible combinations. While *Narration in the Fiction Film*

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[71] ibid.
[72] ibid.

repeats the first point over and over, it never entertains the possibility of the second. Bordwell simply assumes that the syuzhet's job is to transmit fabula information (and style to convey non-signifying patterns when not acting in service of the syuzhet). It doesn't really occur to him that a fiction film might represent something other than a cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and spatial field.

Perhaps an example will help illuminate what Deleuze is driving at. Jonás Trueba's *You Have to Come and See It* (2022) opens with a piano concert inside a lounge. As a piece plays on the soundtrack, we are shown four close-ups of four different people at the performance, each of which lasts for around a minute. In typical Bressonian fashion, Trueba never provides an establishing shot of the entire room, preventing the viewer from fixing the geographic relations between the slice of space seen in one shot with the slice of space seen in another. It's only at the end of the performance, when we cut to a two-shot of the first man and woman that we saw and then to another two-shot of the second couple, that we are finally able to confirm that the four characters have been seated at the same table directly across from each other all along.

Bordwell would emphasise that the syuzhet in this sequence doesn't initially provide viewers with enough information to be able to spell out the precise spatial relations between the characters depicted in close-up. Trueba simply flaunts our ability to locate each person within the larger geography of the lounge. The reason Bordwell has to say this (or at least something like it) is because his film-theoretical approach takes for granted that the phenomena narrative films represent fall into a single, static structure. Style and syuzhet always work together to depict chronological events that take place within some span of time and at some definite location. Of course, a narrative film like Trueba's can prevent us from assembling its images into a pattern of this sort. But that's not because this structure doesn't

still, in some sense, underlie them. It is rather because we don't have sufficient access to know exactly *how* it does.

Insofar as the opening scene of *You Have to Come and See It* has narrative content, that content emerges from viewers' attempts to fit syuzhet information into a chronological sequence that takes place within definite spatial coordinates. But this narrative framework cannot itself be the subject of a similar genetic account. According to Bordwell, fictional worlds just come with certain parameters built into them. As long as a narrative work seeks to communicate literal, denotative, and coherent information, we have to assume that what they represent occurs within an already defined duration and spatial field.

This is precisely what Deleuze denies in the long passage above. According to him, we can actually furnish a genetic account of how the representation of spatial locations, temporal sequencing, and causally interconnected events (not to mention everything else we might think is necessary for the emergence of a fabula) arises. Indeed, one of the main aims of *Cinema 1* and *2* is to do just that. Throughout the two volumes, Deleuze attempts to show how the elements of a narrational ontology are not behind what fiction films represent, but are actually produced by a contingent way of combining "perceptible images."

Why does it ultimately matter if we treat narration as a given rather than as a product? It matters because taking narration as a given leads one to posit a God's-eye viewpoint wholly external to the access films actually make available. Whenever a film doesn't provide the information necessary for the construction of a story (or even the basic elements of one), this theoretical approach has to treat that film as simply limiting viewers access to a fabula that is there anyway. It is obliged to posit a story prior to—and independently of—its actual representation, essentially setting up an ideal vantage point against which the concrete access provided by a film can be measured.

Now, Deleuze sets himself the challenge of explaining the images and sequences in a film without ever appealing to this ideal viewpoint. The reason this is a veritable challenge is because it obliges him to provide a perfectly positive characterization of what films represent even when they stray from the basic parameters required for the construction of a story. From an entirely imminent standpoint, he has to explain how, say, the opening scene of *You Have to Come and See It* represents something other than a spatial location whose directional coordinates have been obscured from view.

To have any hope of working, Deleuze's theory needs to treat narration as a contingent product of a specific way of linking images together. This move will ultimately enable him to explain the possibility of there being other representational structures that convey literal information about fictional worlds. If narration underlies fictional films as a kind of immutable substratum, we have to assume that it will always be responsible for organising what we see and hear into a denotatively intelligible whole. But if narration is itself a contingent product of a specific way of combining images, then there could very well be other representational structures predicated upon different relational links. Of course, the viability of this entire argumentative strategy rests upon Deleuze's ability to give consistency to these other forms of representation.

In the next section, I will examine Deleuze's system in closer detail. But the potential upshot of his program should already be apparent. Since he never posits a pre-constituted story or an ideal vantage point on it, Deleuze has no reason to treat a film's syuzhet as necessarily limited. Likewise, as he does not assume that the literal significance of a film is exhausted by the narrative information it conveys, he also has no reason to treat "stylistic effects" as denotatively empty. In these crucial respects, *Cinema 1* and *2* open up the possibility of moving beyond Bordwell's treatment of syuzhet and style. Both of these advances are predicated upon a single theoretical manoeuvre: eliminating the God's-eye view

implicit throughout *Narration in the Fiction Film* and replacing it with a purely immanent standpoint instead.

2.4 Deleuze's Poetics

We are finally ready to delve into Deleuze's film-theoretical system. As a thorough exposition is impossible in the space remaining, my goal will be to answer just one question and then extract two important consequences from it. The question is: "how is narration produced in the cinema?" And the two consequences are how a Deleuzian response enables one to move beyond the objections I raised against Bordwell's model above. In engendering narration rather than assuming it, Deleuze is able to 1) analyse narration without recourse to the problematic concept of greater or lesser epistemic access, and 2) give proper consistency to the so-called "stylistic effects" that Bordwell treats in terms of non-signifying artistic motivation.

Deleuze's explanation of how story structure arises begins with a similar observation as the one that gets Bordwell's system off the ground. Just as *Narration in the Fiction Film* argues that there is no question of seeing the fabula directly and that there must therefore be a limited representation of it by a syuzhet, so *Cinema 1* and *2* contend that the representation of stories relies upon an "indirect image of time."[73] An indirect image of time is a spatio-temporal framework in which "movement expresses a change in duration or in the whole."[74] To simplify considerably, it is a representational structure in which visible alterations (say, "a fixed shot where the characters move [and] modify their respective positions in a framed set") express the passage of time.

[73] For ease of exposition, I will leave aside what Deleuze calls a "direct time-image." As I see it, Deleuze's innovations in *Cinema 2* are downstream from the more general shift of thinking about the fabula as a product rather than as a given.
[74] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 8.

Take D.W. Griffith's 1906 *A Corner in Wheat*, for example. Griffith's film presents three distinct groups of characters: a farmer and his family; a baker and his customers; and an industrialist and his cronies—all of whom play different roles in the production and consumption of wheat products. Throughout the film, we see the farmer sowing seeds in his field, the industrialist cornering the market at the stock exchange, and the baker selling bread in his store. What's remarkable about this early experiment in cinematic narration is how each of these disparate actions become unified into a single evolving situation. Despite remaining largely separate from each other, the actions undertaken by a party in a particular location end up changing the situation for the parties at the others.

If Griffith manages to tell a relatively intricate story, involving numerous locations, characters, and actions, it's because he discovered the basic parameters through which the passage of time can be represented in the cinema. The indirect image of time requires visible movements to connect to a larger situation. The movements or alterations we see only express succession insofar as they change the situation they are attached to in some determinate way. To put this point in Deleuze's technical lingo, the indirect image of time—the representation of temporal succession via the depiction of objects changing their position in space—requires the cooperation of three distinct, though interrelated "levels":

> "(1) The sets or closed systems which are defined by discernible objects or distinct parts; (2) the movement of translation which is established between these objects and modifies their respective positions; (3) the duration or the whole...which constantly changes according to its own relations."[75]

Once again, this may sound more complicated than it actually is. Let's return to *A Corner in Wheat*. In Griffith's film, the "sets or closed systems" are the frames depicting the main groups of characters in their respective environments; the "movement of translation" the

[75] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 11.

action these characters perform in the spaces depicted by those frames; and the "duration or the whole" the evolving situation that unites the farmer, industrialist and baker together. All three of these levels come together in the film's inciting incident: the cornering of the wheat market by the industrialist and his cronies. After seeing these characters perform this action, we are able to infer the passage of time because it marks a change in the situation encompassing the baker and the farmer's family. In the very next scene, inside the bakery, a sign informs customers that the cost of bread has doubled. The farmer's wife then enters the store but is ultimately turned away empty-handed when she is unable to pay the new price.

What's crucial to grasp about Deleuze's three-tiered account of the indirect image of time is that the "relative" movements we see and the "absolute" changes we infer from them are inseparable, like "two sides of a coin."[76] The relative movements would not be what they are independently of the larger whole they sync up with, just as the larger whole would not be what it is apart from the kinds of movements capable of expressing and changing it. Both elements of the indirect image of time *are* only insofar as they participate in a relational structure that unites each of them together. Deleuze has many different ways of explaining this holistic aspect of his model. In a striking passage of *Cinema 1*, he offers a particularly picturesque account of it:

> "On the one hand, the cinematographic whole would be one single analytic sequence shot, by rights unlimited, theoretically continuous; on the other, the parts of the film would in fact be discontinuous, dispersed, disseminated shots, without any assignable link. Therefore the whole must renounce its ideality, and become the synthetic whole of the film which is realised in the montage of the parts; and, conversely, the parts must be selected, coordinated, enter into connections and liaisons which, through montage, reconstitute the virtual sequence shot or the analytic whole of the cinema."[77]

[76] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 19.
[77] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 27.

The metaphor of an "analytic sequence shot" is meant to make us think about the deep interconnection between the visible alterations we see and the change to a whole that we infer from them. In this quotation, Deleuze isolates two erroneous ways of construing this relationship. The first is to treat the whole in an "ideal" way, as if it was entirely separate from the visible alterations that articulate it; the second is to treat the visible alterations as themselves capable of signifying succession, independently of a whole whose change they mark. The failure to recognize the reciprocal dependence of changes to a whole on visible alterations, and visible alterations on changes to a whole, renders unintelligible how narration actually arises.

I can now answer the question posed above: "how is narration produced in the cinema?" According to *Cinema 1* and *2*, narration arises as a consequence of organic composition. Organic composition is the particular way of representing an indirect image of time that we have been examining—that is, one in which visible alterations signify changes to a whole, and changes to a whole invest visible alterations with an irreversible forward momentum. As difficult as it may be to wrap one's head around, temporal succession, spatial locations, and causal interactions don't underlie what films represent as a kind of substratum. Rather, all of these elements of a narrational ontology emerge from combining images and sequences in this specific and ultimately contingent way.

I said earlier that Bordwell's system is predicated upon two illusions: first, that two syuzhet can converge on the same fabula and differ only in terms of the sort of epistemic access they provide; second, that two stylistic devices can convey the exact same denotative information and differ only in respects that are non-signifying. Both of these illusions have a common source: the positing of a story prior to its actual representation. This theoretical manoeuvre obliges Bordwell to treat every actual presentation of a story as a limited

presentation of it (first illusion). It also forces him to assume that whatever is denotatively significant about a film will fit into a structure characteristic of a fabula (second illusion).

What remains to be shown, then, is how Deleuze's account of organic composition and the indirect image of time enable him to move past the problems associated with Bordwell's treatment of epistemic access and stylistic effects. How do the *Cinema* books explain the same phenomena Bordwell examined but without relying upon his conception of syuzhet and style?

Let's begin with the syuzhet. In Section 2, I claimed that changes to our access to a story also change what counts as the story in the first place. Every fiction film provides perfectly good access according to whatever it discloses. Even though Bordwell's conception of the syuzhet violates this principle, there is obviously something to the idea that narrative events can be parcelled out differently and drastically change our understanding of what's represented in a film. Deleuze does not seek to eliminate this manner of thinking entirely. Rather, he aims to put it on more solid footing. The challenge he faces is to make sense of how films modulate our epistemic access without having to treat different paths through a story world as more or less revealing than one another.

Deleuze's solution is to think about changes in access to a story largely in terms of a fluctuation in spatio-temporal scale. This strategy derives directly from his conception of organic composition. As we have just seen, whenever a film represents temporal passage, we infer through a visible alteration in space that a change to some situation has occurred. But evidently the situations we use to mark the passage of time and the individual movements from which that passage is articulated are not always the same, and there could very well be other forms of succession operating at different spatio-temporal scales. Although narration always has an identical structure (one specified by an organic way of connecting the three levels of movement), it has no individual type of manifestation. The conception of organic

composition thus leads to a startling conclusion: that there is no idea of succession which is identical for all movements.

Griffith's *Intolerance* illustrates this point well. The film presents four stories from four different epochs in human history, each of which centres around the theme of "love's struggle throughout the ages." Rather than showing each tale in chronological order and following the events from 539 BC Babylon all the way up to modern-day America, Griffith intercuts all four strands together. What's important about this for our purposes is how the film creates a nested set of situations, each of which is encompassed by an even more vast one. At the very limit of the film's temporal perspective is a single situation that contains all others inside of it. To quote Deleuze, "never again will such an organic unity be achieved…from parts which are so different and actions which are so distant."[78]

The point of this example is to show that what counts as a change to a situation at one level may not count as a change to a situation at another. A visible alteration may express temporal passage in relation to, say, the conflict in Babylon, but not immediately mark an epochal progression in the course of human history. Whenever there is succession, we infer from some visible alteration that there has been a change in the course of some overarching situation. But there is no single form of succession common to all the situations that are nested inside of each other. By relating the movements and actions we see to different situations operating at a variety of spatio-temporal scales, filmmakers have the power to drastically modulate the dominant wavelength through which the passage of time is tracked in their works.

How does this conception of nested situations operating at different spatio-temporal scales enable Deleuze to improve upon Bordwell's treatment of the syuzhet? Let's quickly revisit *There's Always Tomorrow* to clarify this point. According to Deleuze, a version of

[78] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 31.

Sirk's film that showed us the decades between Groves and Vale's previous encounter would not be any less limited than the real version. Rather, it would simply embed the situation tracked in the actual movie into a larger, more expansive one that now contains it as a part. In principle, there is no end to all the ways narratives can be divided. But in shifting our epistemic access, filmmakers "continuously [divide] duration into subdurations which are themselves heterogeneous."[79]

To sum up: Whatever a narrative film discloses can always be nested in a larger situation that encompasses the previous one as a part. The temporal perspective established by a work can likewise be broken down into smaller wholes whose form of succession is distinct from those operating at a higher spatio-temporal scale. What Bordwell seeks to capture by talking about how films limit or facilitate our access to a fabula, Deleuze thinks of in terms of how their unfolding situations can be nested inside each other in innumerable ways. The crucial point is that no one duration that films establish is any better or worse, more or less limited, than another. They are all perfectly adequate according to the whole whose progress they track.

Let's move on to style. In section 2, I argued that the concept of "artistic motivation" is a complete non-starter, and that it simply stands in for an explanation that it can't actually provide. Bordwell appeals to this explanatory *deus ex machina* because he thinks the literal significance of a fiction film is exhausted by the narrative information it conveys. Whatever aspect of a stylistic device isn't directly tied to the construction of a fabula is simply "left over," deemed a form of arbitrary excess. Directors can exploit the "arbitrary gap" between the signifying function of a stylistic device and the aesthetic whatsit of that same device. Films that make non-signifying stylistic patterns the chief point of audience interest Bordwell refers to as "parametric."

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[79] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 20.

A signal example of parametric narration is Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket*. In his extended commentary on the film, Bordwell isolates a paradigmatic example of what he takes to be a non-signifying stylistic effect. He cannily notes that each time the protagonist, Michel, returns home to his second-story apartment, Bresson never shows him entering the same way twice. In one sequence, we see Michel enter the apartment building, appear at the top of a flight of stairs, and then walk into his room; in another, we see the foot of the staircase and the hallway that leads to his apartment. As Bordwell observes, "the trivial process of Michel's coming and going has been broken up into several bits, and all of them are never present in any one sequence."[80]

Bordwell argues that we ought not to ascribe any denotative significance to this stylistic pattern. As their literal meaning is exhausted by the fabula information they convey, all we can say about these transitional sequences is that they literally represent Michel returning home or leaving it. For this reason, Bordwell argues that *Pickpocket* simply brings forward style forward for its own sake, "[subordinating] the syuzhet…to an immanent, impersonal stylistic pattern."[81] He sums up this thought as follows:

> "Because no evident denotative meaning is forthcoming from such obvious patterning, the viewer itches to move to the connotative level. Yet nothing very certain is evident here either. When a powerful and internally consistent style refuses conventional schemata for producing narrative meaning, we are tantalized into projecting other schemata onto it."[82]

Deleuze would reject the dilemma Bordwell sets up here: he does not believe we have to choose between projecting a flagrant thematic reading onto Bresson's formal play or treating it as offering a sense of order devoid of meaning. Deleuze argues that the denotative

[80] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 300.
[81] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 305.

[82] ibid.

significance of the film is not exhausted by the story content it conveys, and that it could very well represent phenomena that can't be captured from within the relational framework required for the emergence of narrative.

Here is where the model of the indirect image of time really begins to pay off. For Deleuze, narration emerges through the relational structure of organic composition. Organic composition produces narration by relating visible alterations, typically actions, to an evolving situation commensurate with it. Through the direct presentation of an object or person moving about, we infer a change to some larger whole that encompasses it. For a story to arise, the characters whose actions are directly shown have to be capable of changing some situation to which they are attached, just as the overarching situation whose evolution is being tracked has to be inferred from their behaviour. Both the representation of spatial locations and chronological events—the basis of Bordwell's conception of the fabula—presuppose organic composition.

Once we have made explicit what is required for narration to emerge, rather than treating it as a basic fact, it becomes possible to see its structure as contingent. If narration arises only under these very specific conditions, then there's no reason to assume that it always underlies whatever fiction films represent. There could very well be other relational structures, capable of engendering phenomena that can't be captured within the confines of a narrational ontology. Indeed, a major virtue of Deleuze's model of the indirect image of time resides in how it makes explicit the relation between narrative and non-narrative forms of representation, showing how they differ in degree rather than kind.

Consider, for instance, the case in which a "movement of translation" does not immediately signify a change to some whole. Given Deleuze's understanding of organic composition, this would clearly not support a representation of successive events. But also given his commitment to adopting an immanent standpoint, he nevertheless owes a positive

account of what such a representational form amounts to. In fact, we saw this account in the previous chapter: this is precisely what Deleuze refers to as "the affection-image." When taken to its extreme, abstracting a visible alteration from any whole results in the complete eradication of narrative. But in less pure forms, as in the work of Bresson, the affection-image can still retain a semblance of continuity.

To sum up: The reason Deleuze thinks about Bresson's formal tactics in a completely different manner from Bordwell is because he does not take fabula structure as a given. He does not assume that the information a narrative film conveys ought to involve chronologically ordered events that take place within definite locations. There are other ways of representing a film's world that are also intelligible. For instance, the perspective from which entities are linked together in the sort of relational structure required for the representation of affection is a veritable appearance of how things really are. In tending towards the affection-image, a film is not disclosing less about its world than one more conducive to the development of a story. Rather, there is no question of one of these representational frameworks being better or worse, more or less informative, than another. For they each differ in kind, and disclose something that cannot be grasped from within the context of the other.

2.5 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to bring *Cinema 1* and *2* into contact with the tradition of film poetics, and to argue that the books make substantive contributions to this field. In interpreting the two volumes, my general strategy has been to cash out their philosophical concepts in terms of the film-theoretical points Deleuze derives from them. Consequently, I have not had occasion to explicitly discuss Bergson's analysis of movement, Deleuze's plane of immanence, or his talk of "differentials" (i.e. genesis)—all of which figure prominently in

the English-language commentaries on the *Cinema* books. Nevertheless, I *have* explained (at least in part) what Deleuze actually makes of all these ideas within the practical domain of film theory.

I examined how Deleuze uses Bergson's three-tiered account of movement to replace a distinction between syuzhet and fabula; I demonstrated how he adopts an immanent standpoint to avoid the problems that arise from treating every representation as a limitation of a God's-eye viewpoint on a story; and I showed how his account of the genesis of narration enables him to explain so-called "stylistic effects" that are rendered unintelligible by a film-theoretical strategy that takes the concept of "epistemic access" as its chief analytical tool. All of these aspects of Deleuze's *Cinema* books represent substantive (or at the very least interesting) contributions to the field of film poetics. And yet, scholars working in this domain have scarcely begun to consider them. *Cinema 1* and *2* are often deemed to have little, if nothing, to do with film theory.

In the next chapter, I will move on to the issue that commentators typically start with: the philosophical underpinnings of Deleuze's writing on cinema. Once again, my contention is that we can only begin to appreciate the philosophical value of the *Cinema* books after grasping their significance for film theory. Now that I have offered a (highly preliminary) suggestion of what I take that significance to be, I will show how the two volumes intervene into the domain of philosophy, even as they continue to be understood primarily as works of poetics.

Chapter Three: Aesthetics and Representation

Open to any page in *Cinema 1* and *2*, and one is liable to encounter a barrage of philosophical references. Plato's cosmology in the *Timaeus*, Aristotle's theory of time in the *Physics*, and Augustine's reflections on eternity in the *Confessions* are all invoked and discussed. As if that wasn't enough to deal with, Deleuze also appeals to modern conceptions of space, time, and movement. Innovations in non-Euclidean geometry are alluded to, as are Bergson's famous theses on qualitative change. For a study that purports to describe, analyse and evaluate a variety of filmic phenomena, Deleuze's *Cinema* books often travel far afield from their nominal subject matter. Acknowledging this tendency, Deleuze occasionally even brackets off his diversions by asking: "what, in all this, relates to the cinema?"[83]

By keeping close track of the film-theoretical points Deleuze hopes to extract from this philosophical material, we can make sense of most of what he says in *Cinema 1* and *2*. The trouble is that Deleuze doesn't always encourage this way of reading the books. On the final page of *Cinema 2*, he writes that "there comes a time, midday or midnight, when we must no longer ask ourselves, 'what is cinema?' but 'what is philosophy?'"[84] Here, Deleuze is asking us to move in the opposite direction from the one he previously encouraged. Rather than seeing how philosophical concepts can be used for film-theoretical ends, he invites us to think about how films and film theory can be of value for philosophers. There are thus two criteria of adequacy any thoroughgoing interpretation of the *Cinema* books ought to fulfil. On the one hand, commentators should explain what Deleuze has to say about films; and on the other, they should also make apparent what he has to say about philosophy *through* films.

Nearly all the major commentators of *Cinema 1* and *2* attempt to satisfy the first criterion in light of an account of the second. For instance, D.N. Rodowick reads the books as works of metaphysics and argues that Deleuze is both analysing movies and investigating the

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[83] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 74.
[84] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 280.

nature of reality at the same time. *Cinema 1* and *2* bridge film analysis and ontological inquiry by positing an isomorphic relation between the duration of moving images and the continuity of the world as it is in itself.[85] Jacques Rancière pushes back against this sort of metaphysical reading, contending that Deleuze isn't directly writing a philosophy of nature, *per se*, but an elaborate allegory of his own views on that subject through films.[86] Despite the differences between their respective readings, Rodowick and Rancière agree to the extent that they both think we should situate *Cinema 1* and *2* in relation to Deleuze's philosophy as whole in order to understand the role films and film theory play within the books.

In adopting this hermeneutic method, Rodowick and Rancière struggle to articulate what the concrete case of cinema actually provides Deleuze philosophically. Rodowick admits that the *Cinema* books amount to footnotes of *Difference and Repetition* (the work where Deleuze actually works out his metaphysical system). Likewise, Rancière finds Deleuze's discussions of films more or less arbitrarily related to the aspects of his metaphysics he associates with them. Any work, if suitably gerrymandered, can play the allegorical function Deleuze asks of it.[87] Thus, whether one sides with Rodowick or Rancière's interpretation, it remains unclear how cinema substantively enriches the metaphysical views Deleuze develops better in other works.

Throughout this thesis, I have insisted that we follow the opposite order of explanation. In my view, the *Cinema* books should first be treated as works of film theory, and then subsequently understood as contributions to the tradition of philosophy. The primary

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[85] For a characteristic expression of this view, see Rodowick's *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 39: "For Deleuze, this is why the cinema is so interesting for philosophy. The cinema produces images and signs as movement, that is, as movement- images. No static description can be adequate to the essential mobility of cinematographic images. That movement is immanent to the image is a quality that film shares with duration in its two senses: on the one hand, the universal variation of matter; on the other, movement of thought in time."

[86] Rancière, *Film Fables*, 107-123.

[87] Rancière, *Film Fables*, 116.

aim of this essay is to show how an interpretation of this sort might satisfy the second criterion much better than competing interpretive strategies can fulfil the first one. My contention is that understanding the books' contributions to film theory provides us with all the resources we need to be able to frame their implications for the tradition of philosophy, but not vice versa.

Deleuze never really provided a direct answer as to how film and philosophy fit together in the *Cinema* books. In fact, his most explicit statement about how analyses of art relate to philosophical inquiry appears in his two metaphysical treatises, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*.[88] In the latter, he writes:

> Aesthetics suffers from a wrenching duality. On the one hand, it designates the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience; on the other hand, it designates the theory of art as the reflection of real experience. For these two meanings to be tied together, the conditions of experience in general must become conditions of real experience; in this case the work of art would really appear as experimentation.[89]

Most of this chapter will be devoted to explaining what this quotation means. Doing so, I contend, will make apparent what Deleuze found philosophically valuable in thinking systematically about film. The exposition of this passage will proceed in three main steps. In the first section, I will examine what Deleuze calls the first sense of aesthetics, "the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience," which I locate in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the next section, I will explore what Deleuze calls the second sense of aesthetics, "the theory of art as the reflection of real experience," which I examine through the *Cinema* books. Finally (in the last part of the second section), I will explain what it means for art to "really appear as experimentation." Throughout this exposition, I will make apparent a

[88] For an alternative version of this quotation, see Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, 285.
[89] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1990), 260.

number of parallels between Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Deleuze's *Cinema* books, showing how an identical argumentative pattern emerges in both works.

3.1 Kant and Aesthetics

By referring to aesthetics as "the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience," Deleuze is clearly pointing towards Kant's analysis of space and time in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[90] In a section entitled "Transcendental Aesthetic," Kant examines how space and time act as the form or condition through which objects in the empirical world are presented to us.

His claim is that to individuate particular things in the world requires at least some sensory information as to their spatio-temporal whereabouts. Without this basic constraint on empirical judgments, our intellect wouldn't so much as *seem* to be intentionally directed towards an objective world.

As I understand it, Kant's aesthetic theory is really an attempt to satisfy what Robert Brandom calls the Rational Constraint Condition (RCC).[91] The RCC states that for thought and talk to be genuinely *about* the world, objects in that world must exert rational constraint over representations of them. There must be a kind of *friction* between judgments and what judgments are directed towards, a way assertions answer for their correctness to the way things are with the objects they represent. Peter Strawson helpfully frames this problem as follows:

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[90] The Kantian undertones of the "wrenching duality" quotation are undeniable. But we have to be careful to regiment the elements of Kant's philosophy that are actually being addressed. In this passage, Deleuze isn't talking about aesthetics in its colloquial sense, which typically refers to the theory of taste, the doctrine of beauty and the evaluation of art. While Kant's treatment of those subjects in the *Critique of Judgment* is important for elements of Deleuze's philosophy, I will omit nearly all mention of them here since they do not immediately inform either sense of "aesthetics" he is addressing.

[91] Robert Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's* Phenomenology (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2019), 46-47.

> How in general must we conceive of objects if we are to make empirical judgments, determinable as true or false, in which we predicate concepts of identified objects of reference? Or: what in general must be true of a world of objects of which we make such judgments?[92]

The goal of Kant's aesthetics, broadly speaking, is to determine how we *ought* to conceive the spatio-temporal framework in which objects are embedded for us to be capable of making judgments that are genuinely *about* those objects.[93] Not just any physical world is capable of creating the friction required to make intelligible how empirical judgments answer for their correctness to the objects they're about. Empirical judgements are only rationally constrained ("objectively valid" in Kant's terms) by the physical objects they purport to represent on the assumption that those objects are situated in a world that has a specific (spatio-temporal) form. The task of Kantian aesthetics is to define what that form is.

I will reconstruct Kant's aesthetics in three successive steps. The first step we have already seen: In the "Transcendental Aesthetic," Kant argues that the world our empirical judgments are directed towards becomes accessible through space and time. Every intelligible empirical judgement involves at least some implicit reference to the spatio-temporal location of the object it represents. As soon as we lose sight of this basic constraint on the "objective validity" of empirical judgments, we are tempted to postulate all varieties of phantom entities, leading headlong into the sorts of metaphysical confusions Kant's critical system was designed to dispel.

The second and third step of Kant's aesthetic theory appears in the "Transcendental Deduction" and the "Analogies of Experience." The Transcendental Deduction begins where the Aesthetic leaves off. In the Aesthetic, Kant argues the only possible empirical objects we

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[92] Peter Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (New York: Routledge, 1989), 77.
[93] Robert Brandom, "Kantian Lessons about Mind, Meaning, and Rationality" (*Philosophical Topics*, vol. 34 [2006]), 2.

can have knowledge of are ones that are embedded in space and time in some way. Now, the Transcendental Deduction adds to this the idea that these same empirical objects must also enjoy an existence and identity that persists in spite of changes in our perception of them.[94]

All of our perceptions of objects occur one after another (as stipulated by the Aesthetic), but not every alteration in the series of our apprehensions counts as an alteration in the objects we apprehend. Suppose I stand in front of a house, scanning it from one side to the other.[95] All of this happens in sequence: I cannot focus my attention on every area of the house at once, but must take in its parts one after another, looking at, say, the kitchen on the left and then the living room on the right. In this situation, I do not treat the changes in my perception as changes in the *objects* I am perceiving. I distinguish between the ordering of states in objects from the ordering of my apprehension of those states.

In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant argues that we must already possess a version of this distinction, at least implicitly, in order to make *any* empirical judgments. That is, we have to assume that the empirical world our judgments are directed towards is structured in such a way as to enable us to distinguish between the subjective order of perceptions and the objective order our perceptions count as perceptions *of*. However we ultimately envision the spatio-temporal framework in which objects of experience are embedded, that framework must itself be unified in such a way as to make a series of perceptions a series of *objective* perceptions.

In his famous analysis of the Transcendental Deduction, Strawson sums up this point as follows: "for a series of diverse experiences to belong to a single consciousness it is necessary that they should be so connected as to constitute a temporally extended experience

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[94] My account of the Transcendental Deduction here and throughout the rest of this paper is entirely indebted to Strawson. See *The Bounds of Sense*: 93-108.
[95] This example is a variation of Kant's. See *Critique of Pure Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 262.

of a unified objective world."[96] Unity of consciousness, the coherence of an individual's successive perceptions, is only possible if it is set against an objective order. It is impossible to have the former without the latter. For there to be such a thing as a subjective time-series (in the case above, my act of scanning the house), that series must be understood as a *perspective* on an objective course of events. In moving about, I am carving out one of many possible experiential routes through an objective world that enjoys an existence independent of changes in my perception of it.

Kant's aesthetic theory culminates in the Analogies of Experience. As we just saw, in the Transcendental Deduction, Kant insists that to make empirical judgments we must already possess a distinction between changes in one's perceptions from changes in the objects perceived. His contention is that it would be impossible to make empirical judgments on the basis of subjective perceptions if those subjective perceptions were not already coherent perspectives on a "unified objective world." What remains to be shown in the Analogies, then, is what the unity and objectivity of this world consists in.

Kant's claim boils down to this: a unified objective world is one in which every occurrence can be given a date in relation to every other occurrence. For a subjective experiential route through the world to present a coherent perspective on that world, the world it is an experiential route *through* must be unified in the sense that every successive episode can be dated in relation to every other episode that transpires. The conditions required to make possible judgments about the temporal ordering of events are the exact same conditions that must be satisfied in order for subjective perceptions to be perceptions of an objective world.

Kant articulates three interrelated conditions, which collectively give rise to our sense of time as a flowing present whose successive episodes are all intrinsically related to each

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[96] Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 93.

other in a unitary system. Each of these conditions correspond to a different "mode of time": that is, "succession, simultaneity, and permanence."[97] Simultaneity accounts for when events exist in an identical present, while succession refers to how events are situated before or after one another, as either past or future from their respective vantage points. Permanence refers to what persists across the whole chain of events, enabling it to retain its identity as a single chain. All of these modes of time are individually necessary but jointly sufficient to define the objective temporal system required for us to make empirical judgments. Judgments about the spatio-temporal location of objects are only possible, Kant thinks, in a world that satisfies conditions associated with each of these modes.

The first Analogy concerns permanence. For one to make temporal judgments at all, there has to be something in one's ontology that persists across all durational periods. If nothing retained its numerical identity amidst causal changes, it would be impossible for one to register that a change has even taken place. Changes are only understandable as transformations of something at least relatively permanent**.** Now, insofar as every change can be dated in relation to every other in a single relational system, there must be something in the world that is absolutely, and not merely relatively, permanent. There must be a single temporal framework that retains its identity as one and the same temporal framework throughout all change.[98]

The second analogy concerns succession. For one to make judgments about events that follow one another in sequential time, the changes in the states of objects must be taken to occur in a necessary way according to some causal rule. To treat a series of perceptions as perceptions *of* succession one must take their ordering as irreversible.[99] I judge that the water in my glass went from being in a liquid state at time t1 to a solid state at time t2. To view the

[97] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 248.
[98] Allison, Kant's Transcendental Idealism, 238.
[99] Allison, Kant's Transcendental Idealism, 252.

change in the opposite order, say, to view a solid turning into a liquid (rather than a liquid into a solid), is simply to view a different event entirely. Thus, it must be *impossible* to view an objective change in the opposite order in which it occurs.

The third Analogy concerns simultaneity. Just as the second Analogy claimed that changes in the states of objects always follow according to some necessary causal rule, the third Analogy contends that objects or events that are taken to be simultaneous with each other ought to be capable of being perceived in any order whatsoever.[100] For two objects or events to be judged as simultaneous with each other, these objects or events must coexist within the same spatial system. If it were possible to freeze the world at a particular time slice and survey everything in it, all the objects in that non-successive state ought to be geographically locatable in relation to every other object, and be viewable in any order whatsoever.

To see how all three Analogies fit together, consider a simple perceptual judgement: "The boat is flowing down the stream."[101] For us to make sense of the event represented by this assertion, Kant claims we have to assume everything outlined above. Firstly, in order for me to recognize the boat as being at one moment further up the stream and another further down, I must be talking about the same boat—the boat itself cannot change for me to recognize a change *of* or *in* it. Secondly, for the boat to be *flowing down* the river, its change in position from time t1 to time t2 must be determined in a necessary way (I could not view the state of the boat at t2 and then at t1 without changing the nature of the event: without, that is, seeing it flowing upstream). And thirdly, at any point along the timeline between time t1

[100]In the house example above, we saw that I could apprehend the parts of the house in any sequence I chose because these objects stood in relations of simultaneity rather than succession.

[101] This example is also a version of Kant's. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, 263.

and time t2, I must be able to say that the boat coexists in the same spatial system as every other object I take to be physically real at that moment.

Kant contends that empirical judgments are only intelligible insofar as they are directed towards a world structured by the Analogies. A world that can support empirical judgments ought to include something absolutely permanent, have necessary causal connections between successive occurrences, and include objects that coexist within a single spatial system. Absent a world that includes these things, we would not, Kant argues, be able to make empirical judgments at all. That is a challenging thought.

Before moving onto the second sense of aesthetics, it's worth briefly recapitulating everything that has been said so far about the first. What Deleuze calls "the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience" (aesthetics in the first sense) concerns how we ought to conceive the structure of the world in which objects are embedded for us to be capable of making judgments that answer for their correctness to how things are with those objects. As I've reconstructed his position here, Kant builds up his theory in three big steps:

1) In the "Transcendental Aesthetic," Kant claims that the world of objects that our empirical judgments are directed towards is necessarily conditioned by space and time. All objects that aren't embedded in some spatio-temporal framework aren't ones we can have empirical knowledge of.

2) In the "Transcendental Deduction," Kant claims that objects embedded in space and time have to retain their identity apart from changes in our perceptions of them. To be able to make empirical judgments at all, we have to be able to distinguish between changes in the series of our apprehensions from changes in the objects apprehended. The coherence of an observer's perceptual path through the world entails that it be a perceptual path through a unified objective world.

3) In the "Analogies of Experience," Kant spells out what that objectivity consists in and what is required to ensure it. His claim is that an objective world is one that supports judgments about the temporal ordering of events as being before, after or simultaneous with each other. Finally, Kant also determines that these kinds of temporal judgments are only possible assuming the world of experienced fact includes something absolutely permanent, necessary causal connections between successive occurrences, and re-identifiable objects that coexist in space.

All of these claims are nested inside each other. In moving from one point to the next, Kant is assuming the result of the previous step but filling it in with a greater level of detail. The whole story thus culminates in the "Analogies of Experience," which is where he finally and fully lays out "the formal conditions of empirical truth."[102]

3.2 Deleuze and Film Theory

In *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze defines the second sense of aesthetics as "the theory of art as the reflection of real experience." We can discern what Deleuze might have meant by this phrase by looking at how he actually practises art theory in the *Cinema* books. Published around 20 years later than the "wrenching duality" quotation, *Cinema 1* and *2* retroactively give consistency to the commonalities Deleuze found between aesthetics as the study of art and aesthetics as practised by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Throughout *Cinema 1* and *2*, Deleuze discusses approximately 800 different movies. In examining all of these works, he aims to create a systematic theory capable of accounting for the widest possible variety of filmic phenomena with the greatest level of specificity. To that end, Deleuze posits two distinct "regimes" of the image, each of which is broken down

[102] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 270.

into finer and finer components. My focus here will be on the first regime, which Deleuze calls the movement-image (the second is the time-image). I have chosen to discuss Deleuze's analysis of the movement-image because it relies heavily on the aspects of Kant's aesthetics we surveyed in the previous section.

Deleuze defines the movement-image in terms of "empirical succession." Empirical succession is ostensibly time as we normally conceive it. Under this paradigm, every present moment can be dated as either before, after, or simultaneous with any other. Each past instant is a former present, and each future instant a present to come. The easiest way to envision this framework is in the form of a linear timeline, in which the past is represented by the length of the line, the present by where the line ends off, and the future by a potentially infinite sequence of dots that trail off the page.

Like Kant, Deleuze thinks "a system of relationships of time" is required to produce "the variable present" (i.e., objective succession).[103] We would not be able to say that one event objectively precedes, follows, or is simultaneous with another unless certain relations were actively involved in structuring the events depicted in a film. Only a world that satisfies very particular conditions is capable of supporting a timeline-like ordering. In laying out what these conditions are, Kant took himself to be circumscribing the limits of empirical knowledge. Deleuze undertakes a more modest task by comparison: his goal is to spell out what relations must obtain between images for the formal effects created by a *particular range* of films to actually be possible.

Deleuze's argument about what conditions must be met for empirical succession to emerge in a film parallels Kant's analysis of space and time point by point. The results of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Transcendental Deduction, and Analogies of Experience all have equivalent counterparts in *Cinema 1* and *2*.

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[103] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, xii.

As we saw, the primary contention of the Transcendental Aesthetic was that all objects of possible cognition are embedded in space and time in some way. All of Deleuze's analyses of films and filmmakers stem from an altogether similar conviction. For him, images cannot be determinate unless they form part of at least *some* spatio-temporal structure. There are no filmic phenomena that do not have space and time as forms of presentation. Just as Kant claimed that his philosophical predecessors were uncritical about the conditions under which empirical judgments are actually possible, so Deleuze argues (often implicitly) that many film critics and theorists have been largely indifferent to the *representational conditions* under which their observations and generalisations about filmic phenomena actually hold.[104]

Deleuze's second point about what is required for the movement-image to emerge builds on the first one in much the same way that the Deduction fills in the Aesthetic. Deleuze articulates it as follows:

> A description which assumes the independence of its object will be called 'organic'. It is not a matter of knowing if the object is really independent, it is not a matter of knowing if these are exteriors or scenery. What counts is that, whether they are scenery or exteriors, *the setting described is presented as independent of the description which the camera gives of it, and stands for a supposedly pre-existing reality*."[105] (Emphasis mine.)

> [A realist description]…is that which presupposes the independence of its object, and hence proposes a discernibility of the real and the imaginary (they can become confused, but nonetheless by right they remain distinct).[106]

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[104] For instance, genre critics often study the narrative patterns and character archetypes that emerge in the Western, crime film, musical, and so on. But in identifying a genre's characteristic features, these critics sometimes take for granted how space and time must be represented in a film for these properties to emerge in the first place. If empirical succession did not structure, say, the progression of events in a Western, many of the aspects picked out by genre critics for analysis would never have been capable of arising in the first place (depictions of intentional agency being chief among them). Deleuze doesn't deny the value of genre analysis, but he does insist that it should be sensitive to its own spatio-temporal conditions of representation.

[105] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 126.

[106] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 7.

As Deleuze insists in the first passage, the "independence" of the object at issue here has nothing to do with whether what is represented in the world of the film corresponds to a real-life setting or is just a set constructed for the particular purpose of making a movie. That is not the sort of "independence" at issue here. What Deleuze is after is much more profound. He's asking if there can be a representation of succession (of the sort shown in movies all the time) that does not involve an at least implicit distinction between an objective course of events and a unified subjective perspective on those events? Is it possible to have the latter without the former?

Deleuze argues that for empirical succession to arise there has to be a clear delineation between a subjective order of perceptions and an objective course of events—between the path taken by the camera, and the sequence of happenings that thereby counts as being depicted by that camera's experiential route. At any given moment in a film, the camera has to be seen as having a determinate position in the system of relations to which the objects it captures also belong. For only under this condition can the subjective series of its depictions be conceived as a series of depictions of objects existing independently and enjoying their mutual relations in that system.

In the abstract, these ideas can be difficult to process. But Deleuze contends that the cinema can actually make them easier to understand. As a way of illustrating why objects in empirical succession have to enjoy an independent existence from the subjective apprehension of them, Deleuze turns to the famous murder sequence from Alfred Hitchcock's *Frenzy*.[107] For close to a minute, the camera tracks a serial killer and his future victim as they walk together through the crowded streets of London. Eventually, they arrive at an apartment building, where the woman intends to have an affair with the man. Just as they are about to

[107] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 19.

enter the front door of the apartment, the camera swivels away from the couple, and begins to track the length of the building. While our perspective remains restricted to the apartment's brick exterior, the murder takes place inside.

Deleuze writes that the perspective of the camera in this moment "is only necessary if it expresses something in the course of happening."[108] As long as it is not seen as occupying a determinate place in the film's objective world, this shot cannot support *any* distinctions about what occurs before, after, or simultaneously with it. The camera tracking the wall conveys no genuine succession insofar as it exists apart from a course of events that is taken to be independent of it. For Deleuze, what Hitchcock does in this sequence is explicitly thematize the reciprocity between the "unity of consciousness" and the objectivity of the world: he has shown why the former can't exist without being embedded in the latter. Whether one finds Deleuze's description of Hitchcock via the Transcendental Deduction genuinely illuminating or just plain perverse is about as clear a metric of one's tolerance for his way of working as one is likely to find.

The final step of Deleuze's argument about what is required to produce empirical succession duplicates the series of claims Kant makes in the Analogies. Here, again, Deleuze integrates what are fundamentally Kantian ideas into his theory of film:

> In an organic description, the real that is assumed is recognizable by its continuity—even if it is interrupted—by the continuity shots which establish it and by the laws which determine successions, simultaneities and permanences: it is a regime of localizable relations, actual linkages, legal, causal and logical connections. It is clear that this system includes the unreal, the recollection, the dream and the imaginary but as contrast. Thus the imaginary will appear in the forms of caprice and discontinuity, each image being in a state of disconnection with another into which it is transformed. This will be a second pole of existence,which will be defined by pure appearance to consciousness, and no longer by legal connections….The organic system will, therefore, consist of these two modes of existence as two poles in opposition to each other: linkages

[108] ibid.

> of actuals from the point of view of the real, and actualizations in consciousness from the point of view of the imaginary.[109]

In empirical succession, every event can be dated in relation to every other event. It makes sense to ask of films that follow this paradigm whether one sequence precedes, follows, or is simultaneous with any other. Film viewers, critics, and theorists are all adept at making these kinds of temporal judgements. What they are perhaps less aware of—and what Deleuze is trying to make explicit—are the conditions required to represent these temporal relations in the first place. In the Analogies, Kant provides a sophisticated story about the representational conditions of succession, simultaneity, and permanence. Deleuze interprets all of these findings to account for how films produce empirically successive space-time structures.

For two events in a film to be simultaneous with each other, they must evince the sort of order-indifference Kant characterises in the third Analogy. It must be conceivable to have viewed object or event A and B in either the order B-A or A-B. As long as this condition is satisfied, filmmakers are free to have one image follow another and have them both be simultaneous. (Just because two sequences are apprehended successively does not mean that they are representations of succession.) For events to be depicted as successive, rather than simultaneous, the change from A-B must be seen as irreversible or necessary. To see B-A, instead of A-B, is to simply see a different event: for instance, a boat flowing up a river instead of down it. Finally, there must be a sensori-motor situation—a stable, though evolving state of things—that enables us to measure the passage from one moment to the next.

For us to unite all of the events in a film in a single timeline, all occurrences must be ordered according to these rules regulating the representation of succession, simultaneity and

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[109] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 126-127.

permanence. When an event challenges these principles, it becomes associated with "the subjective pole of existence," which we usually think of as what happens in a character's "head." An empirically successive framework is perfectly compatible with these types of aberrations so long as they are attributed to a peculiarity of the camera or character's viewpoint and are not associated with what is taken to exist "independently" of that viewpoint.

Now, given the highly general nature of his examples, Kant couldn't really make intelligible how one of these rules could be activated more than others in a particular case. For him, all the Analogies were immutable and static. They all obtained identically at all times. But in dealing with the concrete work of filmmakers, Deleuze is obliged to think of each Analogy as a *tendency* that might be actualized more or less in a given case. A filmmaker might mediate our access to the filmic world in such a way that stresses one of these relations over another. While all three Analogies mutually imply each other and are intelligible only in terms of each other, it is still possible for one of them to be more or less dominant in a particular film.

Imagine, for instance, how Kant's highly abstract "boat flowing down a stream" might be represented differently by Dziga Vertov, Fritz Lang, and Alfred Hitchcock. All of these directors made films that follow the parameters of empirical succession, but each of them stressed the aesthetic tendencies that come with one sort of spatio-temporal relation over another. Vertov was incredibly impressed by the cinema's capacity to represent simultaneity, and envisioned a film that connected one part of the globe with another part on the other end of it. In *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926), he realises this dream, cutting from one end of the USSR to another, adding space to space in relations of simultaneity rather than following the effects of an event as they ripple forward in successive time. Lang, on the other hand, was most enthralled by cinema's ability to capture a relatively pure vision of

succession. In *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922), he dynamically traces a world-wide conspiracy and its consequences while screening out basically anything that isn't immediately relevant to the evolution of this event. Finally, and most mysterious of all, is the case of Hitchcock, whose films probe our sense of permanence. In many of his works, Hitchcock calls into question the sensori-motor situation through which the passage of time is tracked, and shows the contingency of the spatio-temporal whole that unites all narrative events together.[110]

From all that has been said so far, it might seem like all Deleuze has really been able to establish is that Kantian aesthetics might usefully inform analyses of art. But it would take a lot more to show how analyses of art can challenge the presuppositions of Kantian aesthetics. From Kant's perspective, the sort of aesthetic analysis undertaken in the first *Critique* always conditions the findings of empirical disciplines, which includes the theory of art. Art theorists must already have in hand the principles laid out by Kant in order to carry out their own practice. Under this assumption, the best films can do is provide useful examples or illustrations of transcendental findings. Their function ought to be seen as altogether similar to the perfunctory anecdotes Kant tells about observers looking onto houses and boats flowing down streams.

With this thought, we finally arrive at the "wrenching duality" of aesthetics. The dualism Deleuze identifies between the two senses of aesthetics arises precisely because Kantian aesthetics purports to have epistemic privilege over and above analyses of art. The work of art cannot be genuinely "experimental" under Kant's construal of aesthetics because the possible spatio-temporal forms we can make intelligible to ourselves are fixed in advance of any experience, and the contributions of artists can do nothing to fundamentally alter our sense of them. To be at least minimally comprehensible, the spatio-temporal structures

[110] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 108.

created by filmmakers have to adhere to the general principles already outlined by Kant's aesthetic theory.

How, then, does Deleuze propose to rectify this divide? In the quotation we have been examining, Deleuze writes that "for [the two meanings of aesthetics] to be tied together, the conditions of experience in general must become conditions of real experience." The "conditions of experience in general" are the conditions that structure the empirical world in such a way as to rationally constrain judgments about it. For empirical assertions to be intelligible, we have to assume that the objects they are directed towards are embedded in space and time in the specific ways outlined in the Analogies. Otherwise, it would be impossible for something in the world to set a standard for assessments of the correctness of our empirical assertions.

Now, Kant thought that this aesthetic inquiry didn't actually have any empirical content. The *Critique of Pure Reason* has basically nothing to say about any particular kind of object. It simply argues that any empirical object we can make intelligible to ourselves must be consistent with the general conditions required for something to be an object at all. In other words, despite everything it has shown, Kant's aesthetic theory could not secure the fact that the actual world—the one we actually direct our empirical judgments toward—does, in fact, come in the form he describes. As Henry Allison puts the point:

> The problem is that the transcendental analysis of the first *Critique*, which guarantees the uniformity (lawfulness) of nature at the most general level, does not also guarantee its uniformity at the empirical level. In spite of everything that the Analogies have shown, it remains possible that nature is so complex that the human understanding might never be able to find its way about in it.[111]

Kant attempts to isolate the spatio-temporal framework in which objects are embedded apart from the individual phenomena embedded in it. He is only able to do this because he

[111] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 260.

conceives the human subject as imposing the intelligible form onto a sensible nature that is not assumed to be in conceptual shape. What matters for our purposes about this Kantian picture is that it makes conceivable how one might extract the immutable form of all possible objects from the contingent matter of any particular one of them.

At this point, Deleuze thinks something has gone badly wrong. For a variety of reasons outside the scope of this paper, Deleuze argues that we ought to give up on this image of a Kantian subject imposing an intelligible form onto a disorganised sensible world. As soon as we admit the possibility that particular phenomena are already in conceptual shape, quite apart from any general structure we might impose on them, it opens up the possibility that they might bring to sensible appearance something that "passes through the net" of Kant's analysis.[112] Once we see aesthetics as dealing with real experience, rather than possible experience (or "the concept of an object in general"), it becomes impossible for aesthetics to set an *a priori* limit on the forms art is capable of revealing to us. In reconceiving Kant's aesthetics as an analysis of real experience, Deleuze makes room for the novelty of artistic experimentation.

Kant purports to rely on introspection alone to produce the results of his aesthetic theory. Given these strictures, it's frankly remarkable how much he manages to achieve. Deleuze contends that studying cinematic forms can provide concrete ways of complicating and extending Kant's results. With a broad range of film examples to pull from, we might be able to better think through the intricacies of the aesthetic problems introduced in the first *Critique*. Not only can film theorists benefit from integrating elements of Kant's aesthetics into their work, but Kant's aesthetic theory can itself be challenged and enriched by being

[112] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 68.

brought into contact with the spatio-temporal structures filmmakers have been able to "grasp and reveal."[113]

3.3 Conclusion

Any thoroughgoing reading of *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* ought to satisfy two basic criteria of adequacy. On the one hand, interpretations of the books should explain why Deleuze discusses hundreds of films and dozens of works of film theory and criticism across the two volumes. On the other hand, they should also account for why Deleuze wrote about film as a philosopher. Deleuze insists that both films and philosophy are integral to his project in *Cinema 1* and *2*.

To explore how film and philosophical inquiry fit together in the *Cinema* books, I have tried to make apparent a number of parallels between Kant's analysis of the spatio-temporal structure in which all possible objects of experience are embedded and Deleuze's examination of the representational conditions associated with the movement-image. The argument that emerges between the Transcendental Aesthetic, Transcendental Deduction, and Analogies of Experience matches point by point the requirements that Deleuze lays out for the emergence of movement-images. What are we to make of this isomorphism?

In the "wrenching duality" quotation from *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze tells us how to understand the connection. He contends that both Kantian aesthetics and the theory of art are primarily concerned with "conditions of experience." The conditions of experience, as I have interpreted them, are the conditions that must be satisfied by the world of experienced fact in order for empirical judgements to be able to answer for their correctness to how things are with that world and the things in it. One of Kant's great innovations in the first *Critique* was to have seen that only an empirical world structured

[113] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, xii.

around very particular parameters is capable of exercising rational constraint over our thought and of thus supporting empirical judgments that count as being *about* that world.

For Deleuze, films provide a veritable model of how the world rationally constrains the judgments directed towards it. Take the parameters of empirical succession for example. In engaging with films oriented around this paradigm, viewers are able to date every event in the film in relation to every other one that happens. But these kinds of temporal judgments are only possible assuming the world of the film is organised in a particular way. Should the "laws which determine successions, simultaneities, and permanences" fail to obtain, we would no longer be able to say that one event really precedes, follows or is simultaneous with another.

Both the allegorical and metaphysical readings of *Cinema 1* and *2* fail to account for the connection Deleuze found between philosophical analyses of space and time and the visual style of films and filmmakers. In describing the murder scene from *Frenzy* with the vocabulary of the Transcendental Deduction, Deleuze isn't just claiming that there is a loose metaphorical connection between these two otherwise unrelated things. Rather, he is arguing that the very conditions of intelligibility of that sequence depend on the principles Kant isolated, just as much as that sequence itself concretizes those principles in a novel way. To make the connection between the Deduction and *Frenzy*, we also don't need to invoke any sort of strange metaphysical relation between films and the physical world: all that is required to account for the isomorphism between Kantian aesthetics and Deleuzian film theory is that both analyse the conditions of possibility of making objective temporal judgments—an ability film viewers exercise every time they say that one event in a film precedes, follows, or is simultaneous with another.

In many crucial respects, Deleuze agrees with Kant's aesthetic theory. But he ultimately thinks it is "too general or too large for the real."[114] Kant thought the world rationally constrains thought in an entirely static way. He argued that there is a single a priori spatio-temporal framework that can be analysed apart from any particular objects in it. Deleuze contends this is untenable. Once one abandons the idea that the form of objects is contributed by subjects, and their matter through actual experience, it becomes possible for films and other works of art to arrange what appears in space and time in radically novel ways. An upshot of seeing the world as already in a shape to be intelligible is that it makes sense of how works of art can really appear as experimentation.

What matters most about Kant's aesthetics for Deleuze's film theory is its contention that we can't just assume the empirical world is amenable to the sorts of judgments we make about it. Philosophers are obliged to make explicit the parameters under which their judgments are actually able to represent objects in the empirical world. We can only ask certain kinds of questions and make particular sorts of judgments assuming certain spatio-temporal relations already obtain in the world of experienced fact. What interests Deleuze most about films is how they concretize these relations in fascinating ways. If the cinema is of supreme importance for him philosophically, it's because great films carve out unique perspectives on, and reveal distinctive features of, the very same spatio-temporal structure Kant attempted to examine by introspection alone.

From Deleuze's standpoint, Kant could only maintain his reflective position because of the highly abstract nature of his examples. As long as one is stuck imagining very general images of observers looking at houses and boats flowing down streams, it's hard to understand how this framework wouldn't just hold in an identical fashion in all cases and thus be truly independent of any actual experience. But when we begin to take seriously how

[114] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 68.

events might be represented differently by a variety of filmmakers, it becomes much harder to see an occurrence as just a pure instantiation of an otherwise stagnant principle. Each great filmmaker "[grasps] and reveals" aspects of the conditions of experience in a singular way.[115] By analysing the full extent of these films' artistic originality, Deleuze attempts to develop an aesthetic theory to rival Kant's own.

[115] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, xii.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this thesis has been to lay the groundwork for an interpretation of *Cinema 1* and *2* as works of poetics. In the Introduction, I divided this task into two parts. The first was *hermeneutic* in nature: it involved demonstrating that *Cinema 1* and *2* are best understood as film theory, rather than as developments of Deleuze's philosophy, metaphysics, or social theory. The second was *film-theoretical*: it involved demonstrating that Deleuze's theory of cinema contributes in a substantive way to the discipline of film poetics. Even though my *hermeneutic* and *film-theoretical* claims both aim to re-centre the *Cinema* books as poetics, they should be seen as relatively independent of each other. It is possible to accept that *Cinema 1* and *2* ought to be understood primarily as poetics, and still deny that they contribute something substantial to the discipline. It is also possible to accept that the *Cinema* books make substantive contributions to poetics, and still deny that they should primarily be understood as part of this field.[116]

In the preceding chapters, I often mixed my hermeneutic and film-theoretical claims together, and didn't sharply distinguish between the task of *understanding* Deleuze's theory of film and actually *defending* that theory. I interpreted *Cinema 1* and *2* in light of the advances I saw the books as making over alternative theories of film, explaining *what* Deleuze thinks through an explanation of *why* he has good reason to think it. There are risks to conflating interpretation and defence in this way, though. When this approach is adopted, it can seem as if the author being interpreted can do no wrong from the interpreter's point of view, and that every view a reading attributes to a text ultimately turns out to be one the reader also believes there is adequate justification for. This can leave an unseemly impression. For it appears to imply that either the commentator has remade their subject's

[116] David Bordwell accepts the first option, while D.N. Rodowick endorses the second. Bordwell thinks Deleuze has written a work of film theory, but finds very little of interest in it. Rodowick finds aspects of Deleuze's film theory interesting, but still thinks we should understand *Cinema 1* and *2* primarily as developments of his philosophy.

positions after their own, or that the subject's views have been ones the commentator has dogmatically adopted themselves.

To conclude, I'd like to repeat the results of the preceding chapters in relation to my aim of both interpreting and defending Deleuze's system. I will treat these issues as separately as possible, and recapitulate the relatively distinct motivation for adopting each of the hermeneutic and film-theoretical positions advocated here. By keeping interpretive and justificatory concerns apart, this conclusion should help counteract the impression that I have blindly followed Deleuze's views or remade them after my own. At the end of the day, though, I don't believe it's possible to fully divide issues related to the understanding and assessment of a discursive text. If I interpret Deleuze as I do, it's also because I think it affords the most profitable understanding of his positions.

My first chapter, "Film Theory and the New Semantics," cut right across the two aforementioned levels, confronting what has arguably been the most significant barrier to both understanding and appreciating the *Cinema* books: their unabashedly systematic approach. The synoptic vision of the two volumes has always been a source of embarrassment among interpreters nominally sympathetic to Deleuze's project. It has also been criticised by film scholars who don't have a vested interest in Deleuze's philosophy. Odd as it may seem, Deleuzian theorists and cognitivist scholars are largely aligned in their dismissal of the *Cinema* books' systematic methodology. But whereas one group takes this as just another reason to throw out *Cinema 1* and *2*, the other takes it as evidence that Deleuze wasn't really interested in developing a theory of cinema in the first place. In either case, though, whether one arrives at the same conclusion as Bordwell or Rodowick, the motivating premise remains largely the same.

The argument of "Film Theory and the New Semantics" can be broken down into two components, then. The first component is to show that Deleuze's systematic approach is

integral to understanding the nature of his project in *Cinema 1* and *2*. It cannot be ignored to preserve some pure "philosophical" insight underneath. The second component is to show that this methodology isn't just integral to Deleuze's theory, but an important and innovative aspect of it. Deleuze's synoptic approach improves upon the classical and "piecemeal" conceptions that have traditionally defined how we think about the aims and ends of film theory.

To elucidate both the hermeneutic and film-theoretical components of my argument in "Film Theory and the New Semantics," I appealed to the inferential semantics of Robert Brandom, whose distinction between the activity of labelling, describing, and explicating enabled me to make sense of and offer a justification of the methodological assumptions behind Deleuze's system of cinematic concepts. On Brandom's understanding of concept-use, all discursive activity involves implicit mastery of the rules governing the application of our expressions. To be able to deploy a concept is to understand at least some aspects of what one is committing oneself to in doing so. Now, the commitments that confer content on descriptive concepts often remain implicit in our perfunctory use of them. Explication, whose paradigmatic form is the subjunctively robust conditional, enables us to bring the implicit norms behind conceptual commitments into the explicit light of day, and make these norms themselves the subject of our claims. Just as description enables us to be aware of features of our environment, explication allows us to control the means through which that awareness is achieved in the first place.

"Film Theory and the New Semantics" argued that Brandom's understanding of explication provides a model through which Deleuze's systematic methodology can be interpreted and justified. On the interpretive side, it makes good sense of how Deleuze engages with classical film theory and slots many of its concepts into his taxonomy. Deleuze systematically explicates and repairs the inferences implicit in Bazin, Eisenstein, and Balazs'

theories. Once the boundaries of their concepts have been properly defined, he finds that they aren't actually incompatible. Each of these theorists finds his proper place within a larger system encompassing all of them. On the justificatory side, the Brandomian understanding of Deleuze's systematic methodology marks a significant improvement upon the two programs that have traditionally dominated how we think about film theorising: the "piecemeal" approach of cognitivist scholars, and the "ontological" understanding of classical film theorists. An expressive or explicative view of systematicity shows how we can accept the piecemeal theorist's criticism of "ontological" essentialism without giving up on the ambition of developing a general theory of cinema. The piecemeal theorist's position actually turns out to be incoherent: it is impossible to use descriptive concepts without undertaking lawful commitments. Once this lesson is understood, systematic theories of film can be appreciated as playing a critical role. They bring the lawful commitments implicit in critical descriptions out into the open, making them a matter of our explicit control.

From the hermeneutic standpoint, chapters 2 and 3, "Spatio-Temporal Perspectivalism in *Cinema 1* and *2*" and "Aesthetics and Representation," aim to show that we can reconstruct important points Deleuze makes in the *Cinema* books by cashing them out in terms of how they contribute to the development of a poetics of cinema, at least insofar as that enterprise was understood in "Film Theory and the New Semantics" (namely, as an attempt to develop a modally robust system of cinematic concepts). We can account for the philosophical value Deleuze found in writing about films by first considering their contributions to film theory, and then subsequently extracting their consequences for philosophy. An account that moves in the opposite order—from philosophy to film theory, rather than film theory to philosophy—is liable to misconstrue the books' relation to both disciplines.

As part of my interpretive argument, Chapter 2 sought to show how many of the philosophical concepts Deleuze deploys throughout the two volumes are introduced to deal

with specific film-theoretical problems. To understand what Deleuze means by the "plane of immanence," "indirect image of time," or "differentials" in this particular context, we also have to understand what these terms are being used to talk *of* or *about*. I insist that we see *Cinema 1* and *2* as no different in kind from recognizable contributions to the field of film poetics. The novelty of Deleuze's writing on cinema resides not in his chosen subject matter, but in his approach to it. In this chapter, my proof for this interpretive argument was largely indirect. It appeared through my attempt to frame aspects of Deleuze's film-theoretical system in relation to the one Bordwell develops in *Narration in the Fiction Film*. By showing how *Cinema 1* and *2* challenge the presupposition of the Bordwellian approach, I pointed to the practical bearing Deleuze's concepts have for the tradition of film criticism and poetics.

Chapter 3 then went on to demonstrate that we don't need to revise our conception of what Deleuze is talking about, namely films and film theory, in order to see them as extending or developing a tradition of philosophy. *Cinema 1* and *2* extend Kant's "aesthetic" inquiry in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, examining the precise conditions under which it's possible for us to represent a successive time series. For Kant, these conditions were conditions of *possible* experience: that is, they were distinct from and not reducible to any form of empirical inquiry. We could come to know them only introspection. For Deleuze, however, the conditions that must be satisfied by a world we can represent as having successive episodes in it are conditions of *real* experience: that is, they are associated with particular phenomena and do not range over every object we can encounter in a single, static way. Consequently, for Deleuze the study of films can help us develop a more robust aesthetic theory in the Kantian sense.

While my hermeneutic argument had to explain how discussing films *as* films could contribute to our understanding of a philosophical problem, my film-theoretical claim owes an account of how the philosophical ambitions of the books likewise have consequences for

poetics. Deleuze's attempt to extend Kantian aesthetics through an analysis of films ultimately serves as the basis for some of his most interesting contributions to poetics. In fact, Deleuze's analysis of the emergence of fabula structure is deeply indebted to Kant's analysis of the conditions of experience. Just as Kant argued that we owe an explanation of the precise conditions under which it's possible for us to represent spatio-temporal objects, so Deleuze argues that we can't assume that films already come with the form necessary for them to depict a story. In Chapter 2, I outlined this theoretical strategy, locating some of *Cinema 1* and *2*'s most interesting contributions to poetics in their account of the genesis of narration. Rather than treating fabula structure as underlying what fiction films, Deleuze explains how images and sequences have to be connected if they're to be capable of producing stories at all. This theoretical manoeuvre enables him to give consistency to so-called stylistic effects and to account for how films shift our access to stories without having to posit a God's-eye viewpoint.

Deleuze's oft-cited proclamation that the *Cinema* books are works of philosophy in the original sense of the word can, I think, be read from two very different perspectives, each of which elicits a different understanding and response. For those primarily interested in poetics, the provocation is designed to make them conscious of how the theory of cinema interacts with a wide variety of other disciplines. The concepts we use to describe and explain the aesthetic operations of films will necessarily resonate with or develop ideas that originally derive from other spheres of inquiry. Film theorists who arbitrarily cut themselves off from conceptual innovations from elsewhere risk losing out on a plethora of explanatory resources. But for practitioners of philosophy, the provocation that the *Cinema* books are works of philosophy reads quite differently. From this perspective, it challenges the idea that philosophy somehow exists in a calm realm of laws untouched by innovations in artistic

practice. Philosophers who evacuate the empirical realm risk trafficking in abstractions and vagaries.

Both the film theorist who tries to insulate the study of cinema from all other areas of conceptual activity and the philosopher who makes their home in the unchangeable realm of the a priori make the mistake of thinking that our concepts come with clear boundaries, fixed for all time. Deleuze's claim that the *Cinema* books are works of philosophy is meant to counteract this picture, inviting film theorists to consider philosophical concepts outside their immediate sphere, and obliging philosophers to consider how films might change their purview. Both of these provocations force readers of either stripe to grapple with the nomadic nature of concepts, which are constantly being pulled outside their traditional territory and made to adapt to novel circumstances and cases. An understanding of the dynamic nature of our conceptual schemes is ultimately what connects *Difference and Repetition* or *A Thousand Plateaus* to the *Cinema* books. All of Deleuze's works are unified not by an abstract philosophical problem, but by a pragmatic vision of conceptual behaviour that, again and again, casts him off into the unknown.

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