

Two unpublished notes on Eros and Wonder

Note 1: For Renewing Energy

In the absence of the sense of the One that binds pages of the universe into a single volume, phenomena have become impoverished, eroded by desacralization. We live in a realm where nothing is higher and nothing is lower. Exchange value has all but consumed Be-ing

The Logos was the common framework that integrated all, that all brought all beings together. Now we find ourselves enclosed within a broken space that lacks transcendence. Only the brutality of Power can accomplish anything in the way of organizing the fragments. Nothing from above brings order, and lacking any reference what is above, we cannot even make contact with our deeper selves.

The Logos, in encompassing all, gave all meaning. The spectacle has reduced this unity to a series of fragments which it interrelates through the pseudo-connections of a thinned-out rationality whose characteristic form, as Bergson pointed out, is the series of linear succession. This denatured reason constructs a life-world that depends upon an abstract temporality that assigns us positions according to the co-ordinates of power. Such a thinned-out, eroded rationality is what puts the spectacle, a feeble organization of appearance, on display. At the same time, the spectacle has colonized every area of modern experiences, and has subjected all phenomena to the iron law that no real change is possible – that only insignificant changes to fragmentary aspects of the system will be allowed. All we are left with is an enfeebled, eroded awareness of our role the spectacle.

Immersion in the phantasmagoria of a delirium-inducing ocean of sights and sounds is the condition that culture industries has imposed upon; they have even established that state of semi-consciousness as normative. A most dire facet of this new regime is that the very ontology of our image culture increasingly includes its participants and has incorporated their perspectives within the constitutive mechanism of representation. Subjects are no longer the absolute centre of seeing – subjects, we are now convinced, are simply nodes of network of vision/visuality that operates beyond their control as phantasmic centres, by facilitating currents that course through the network, affecting the peripheral nodes by engendering a distorted replica of desire. This, to be sure, entails that vision has its blindspots

But Reality has not vanished – nor will it. It simply mutates, and this process of mutation is incessant. Reality is ever re-produced, for reality is never anything more than the product of the technique of a given epoch (remembering, of course, that technique is form in which the dispensations of Be-ing occur.) Be-ing arises only within the whole that is the form of the dispatch (the *Geschick*, as Heidegger puts it); and the dispatch is historical (the *Geschick* is always *geschichtlich*). Be-ing appears only through the activity of transmission (*Überlieferung*). Reality is always being re-invented: humans transform themselves and nature through activity – this is something that always has been, is, and always will be.

Subtending the belief in the precession of the simulacrum is the tendency to regard information as an autonomous form from Beyond, a magic form of being without roots in the realm of concrete particulars, and therefore beyond our control. Is it really surprising if that which we exempt from the condition of being a product of labour, and from being subject to transformation by labour, should be accorded a spiritualized form of existence? Yet, in reality, both the realm of the simulacral and the technology which is used to produce it are expressions of the social relationships between real humans. It is human activity which is objectified in machines and information. And remembering that fact should remind us of the importance of the now unfashionable questions about how are the rewards of this labour should be allocated to

the different groups involved in the production of machines and information.

We must ask how to counter the effects of the delirium that the culture industries have induced, and how to rediscover our groundedness. At the most profound level, Heidegger was right to have asserted that carrying out the task is not within our powers, that “only a god can save us now.” But the gods have flown. Still, we must do what we can to recall the gods from their flight. And we must do what we can to prepare ourselves for their return.

The Renaissance fostered the impulses that drained the arts of their integrative function. The bardic function of the artist, no longer possible in an all-too-rational society, was abandoned. The frustrations of being refused this crucial role drove the artist first into open rebellion, and then into silence and exile. What is needed is to re-enfranchise art’s power to create an integral order of intimacy, and this can be accomplished only through the combined power of art and magic. Art does have the means to effect moral and spiritual change in the real world.

How can we rescue ourselves from immersion in the phantasmagoric? The phantasmagoric operates by creating the impression that it is a seamless unity. Our art must overcome that impression. This demands that art become physical – that we must acknowledge that artworks are machines for affecting the bodies of those whom they address. Immersion in the phantasmagoria of sounds and images has reduced our capacity for direct sensory – and sensuous – experience. We must emphasize the physicality of the making and the reception of artwork. That is to say, we must emphasize the body’s role in making and experiencing art. Art – *ars*, making – should teach us about the body’s way of knowing. The body learns first through activity, not through concepts. Recall that the unity of thought and practice that was central to the concept of *techne* – acknowledging the unity of thought and practice is a key to countering the pernicious notion that human beings are information processing systems, an error that traced back to the Platonic form of idealism (which also disparaged the senses and maintained the unreality of the physical world and the superiority of a “hyperreality”). Our art must distort and fragment all with which it comes into contact: it must do all that it can to damage the wholeness of a work of art, to tear apart the seamless unity that is that staple form of the entertainment “arts,” that seamless form that absorbs our being and leaves inert and unproductive. Further, it must make the mediation of the apparatus explicit, for the occultation of the apparatus figures among the phenomena that has led to erroneous thinking about the disappearance of reality.

More, we must use every extreme means for restoring our connection to our bodies. The first step towards this end is to make the body palpable. Artworks must be physical, and intense beyond all measure. Arabic and Sanskrit poetry often was set to music and chanted, to alter consciousness through its corporeal effects. The drumming and dance of the Ewe and Yoruba peoples of West Africa, the Santeria drumming and dancing of Cuba, Voudun drumming and dancing of Haiti can engender weeping, dancing, and fits. These are all intense, physical response to art. “Re-connect poetry to the body” – that must be our slogan.

The spectacle depends upon a certain torpor of the subject, which is countered by confronting the spectator’s passivity. Erotica, when it does not go over into the spectacle, teaches us that artwork is a magical engine operating on the body. Erotica is physical – it operates by elevating the corporeal unconscious to consciousness in sexual arousal. It reveals, and revels in, unacknowledged desire. Erotica plumps for the liberation of desire. Erotica shows the way for art to become a desiring machine that operates by induction to shape liberatory energies. Erotica demonstrates that the marvelous inhabits the everyday, that the physical bodies around us constitute the dreamworld and that the true dreamworld is made up of real physical bodies. Of course, most pornography conveys only body-hatred, but that should not

lead us to the erroneous conclusion that erotica has no potential for the enhancement of bliss-consciousness. If ours is a culture mad for death, erotica has a role in transforming it into one mad for love – into one blessed with *amour fou*.

Furthermore, the truly erotic reaffirms joy – even a joyfulness of “repetition” that acknowledges that there is no such thing as exact repetition. But there is no reason why we should accept Baudrillard’s despairing claim that melancholy is the fundamental tonality of functional systems, that is, of the grindingly repetitive systems of simulation, programming and information. There is no reason to believe that, by implosion, history has collapsed into inertia, into the endless repetition of the same – the same dead forms organized again and into new permutations and combinations.

Reconnecting art to the body and the body to physical reality – these are our goals. They demand that we eschew narrative. For making our bodies palpable requires us to sense our presence in the immediate here-and-now. To do that, we must avoid all retrospection, and all narratives are retrospective. We must intensify the image to the point that it takes effects on our bodies. Vaneigem commented on the importance of the intensification of lived experience in *The Revolution of Everyday Life*.

Which leaves the hopeless cases - those who reject all roles and those who develop a theory and practice of this refusal. From such maladjustment to spectacular society a new poetry of real experience and a reinvention of life are bound to spring. The deflation of roles precipitates the decompression of spectacular time in favour of lived space-time. What is living intensely if not the mobilization and redirection of the current of time, so long arrested and lost in appearances? Are not the happiest moments of our lives glimpses of an expanded present that rejects Power’s accelerated time which dribbles away year after year, for as long as it takes to grow old?

Intensification of the image requires desublimation. We are familiar with the orthodox psychiatric view on the matter of desublimation: “Identification with an imago (which in its re-projected form is what Vaneigem calls a “role”) leads the individual to expend his sexual drives on cultural goals, and this is the best way for him to defend himself against these drives.” It is the counsel of the despair, for it turns the individual against him or her self; the reified projection of desire becomes an object of identification, the aim of which is to absorb vital energies and to reduce the energy of erotic desire through sublimation. Erotic reality is transferred from the body to the spectacle. These projections ensure orgasmic impotence.

But the converse is also true: true pleasure, true *jouissance*, true *joie de vivre*, true orgasmic potency return erotic reality to the body. The pleasure accomplishes desublimation. When individuals stop seeing the world through the eyes of the re-projected imago, and look at it from within their own pleased bodies, when they reclaim the erotic energy as their own, they will see through these claims about the erosion of reality. If, as Debord claims, the era of the spectacle is the era when all that was once directly lived has become spectacle, the response is the return those energies invested in identification with the projected image to lived experience – to intensify life, and to intensify it brutally if necessary.

The more we have denied the body corporeal pleasure, the more we have allowed life to be sacrificed, the more we have allowed ourselves to be seized by its double, the mere spectacle of life. And the more daily life is thus impoverished, the greater the spectacle’s attraction. Thus, the spectacle has dislodged us from the core of our lives, as the simulacrum conspired to make lived reality seem trivial by comparison, and eventually the idealized

projection obscured the importance of the reality of actual bodily pleasure. We have allowed identification with the re-externalized *imago* to compensate for the life energies we sacrificed to the projection. The first goal of the intensification of life is to dissolve the subjugated consciousness that feels itself impotent.

Intensity makes us feel our belongingness-to-others. The recognition that social relations are between real, embodied human beings is a key to overcoming that fetishism that generates the sensation that autonomous relations between simulacra has become the core reality for present-day metaphysics. It is important to remember the psychological conditions that allow relations between things, or between images, is a certain measure of anomie. The antidote to that *anomie* is intensity.

A cinema of radical perception must take the place of the cinema of ideas (which, analytically, includes all narrative films) because only such a cinema can be truly spontaneous. The idea inevitably compromises with Power. I believe fervently that the artists of the future will make immediacy their most radical demand. Only spontaneous attunement to the gift of the given, the immediate consciousness of lived experience can overcome the sense that the dialectic of identification is one that inevitably involves strife. In extemporaneous creative attunement to the gift of the given, we discover that self-denial is the assumption of the true self, that by abandoning our limited selves, we become more truly ourselves, that we become what we behold. This way of getting out of oneself occurs through the discovery of oneself as dispersed through all that is.

More important yet is to forego imposing conceptual order upon experience. Terry Eagleton points out that “the thing must not be grasped as a mere instantiation of some universal essence, instead, thought must deploy a whole cluster of stubbornly specific concepts which in Cubist style refract the object in myriad directions or penetrate it from a range of diffuse angles. In this way, the phenomenal sphere is itself persuaded to yield up a kind of noumenal truth, as the microscopic gaze estranges the everyday into the remarkable.” This is just what I referred to in “The Cinema We Need” by a cinema of experiences, not a cinema of ideas – that it would eschew concepts that serve as laws that govern images.

We intensify the image by steering it towards immediate perception. Immediate perception, too, is attentive to what is, to the gift of the given. Thus, it combats the devaluation of the everyday realm. A cinema of immediate perception is opposed to the world of the spectacle, to the devaluation of the real world of actual, everyday pleasure through the spectacle.

Spontaneity, too, intensifies the image. Spontaneity blasts open the prison-house of false-consciousness, the alienated *méconnaissance* of the society of the spectacle, consciousness which turns the subject against his or her real interests. It blasts apart the sedimentation of the self in the petrified projections of the spectacle, and carries us away in the *dérive*.

Attunement to the rhythm of what unfolds beyond us – a rhythm that is flexible and ever changing, has the strength to release us from the tyranny of an abstract, rationalized temporality. Awareness of rhythm, because rhythm is experienced corporeally, also undoes the effects of the rationalization of space into a wholly abstract form. Contemporary virtual existence has rendered space wholly abstract. The etiology of that form of space can be readily charted, beginning with the geometric optics of the Renaissance. The development of geometric optics and camera obscura led to the rationalization of vision around an axis consisting of the fiction of a single, fixed vantage point outside the depicted scene, at a place established by the vertex of a pyramid, whose base is the surface of the painting and the slope of whose sides is arbitrary. Thus, the body was removed from the scene of vision. But in the nineteenth century

representation took on a different character: the space of a drawing, especially those drawings whose primary purpose is to provide information about reality, came to be understood as a Cartesian plane, and the relations between elements in the drawing were to be determined not through appearance, as projective geometry had attempted to do, but rather through measurements, which were then transposed orthogonally to the drawing surface. If the body had been excluded in the system of Renaissance perspective, the subject was excluded in the representational regime that developed in the nineteenth century. When the subject is given no place, the drawing surface itself becomes utopian. That utopic space is the predecessor of the utopia of cyber-nonreality – a non-place where “there is no there there,” and, above all, no place for the body. Paul Virilio points out that cyberspace constitutes a new space without the usual space-time coordinates; as a result, cyberspace engenders a disorienting and disembodied form of experience in which communication and interaction takes place instantaneously in a new global time, overcoming boundaries of time and space. It is a disembodied space without fixed coordinates, a space in which one loses connection with one’s body, with nature, and with one’s community. It is a dematerialized and abstract realm in which cybernauts can become lost in space and divorced from their bodies and social world. To counter the abstraction of space and time, we insist on working methods that, in their intensity, leave the trace of the body all over them.

That the illusory object world is taken to arise from an unreal (because divided) ground that accounts for the widespread sense that the object world has ephemerized. We need to rediscover the reality of the Absolute. The Seventeenth Century saw reason awaken to powers to dominate reality, both theoretically and practically. It could do so only by repudiating the proposition that God is the beginning and the end of all knowledge. The end of knowledge became understanding of the rational constitution of reality. Furthermore, a new epistemology developed on which, not contemplation and prayer, but mathematical reason and the experimental method were the means that provided the knowledge of true constitution of reality. The Seventeenth Century and the Enlightenment promoted the conviction that a mathematical and physical explanation of reality could be a thorough and exhaustive account of nature (that mathematical and physical sciences could give an account of *phusis*, while the concept of *energeia* was not required to understand the nature of beings). And the purpose of knowledge was no longer to vouchsafe intimations of the character of the Divine, nor even to cultivate the soul through the contemplation of eternal truths but to extend human’s power over nature. Thus, Galileo proposed, science leads not to a qualitative but to a quantitative understanding of nature – not of the quiddity of beings, their inner reality or essence, but of their external physical characteristics that can be measured and described in fixed laws. Pre-moderns had understood objects and events as outward manifestations of occult inner causes. With the rise of modern science, this understanding of nature was repudiated. The purpose of knowledge was to control nature, for human benefit. Thus Francis Bacon, one of the earliest advocates of the modern of nature maintained that the goal of knowledge was “to extend more widely the limits of power and greatness of man, [to command natural forces for] the relief of man’s estate.”

To counter all that – intensify, intensify!

Note2: Transform! Transform! The Alchemical Aesthetics of *Eros and Wonder*

Eros and Wonder is a film about transformations – about transformations of imagery, about history as transformation, about eros as a transformative power, about that old

Eisensteinian idea of collage and montage as transformation, but most of all, about the transformations of the self. The film combines two sorts of transformations – electrical transformations, produced by digital image processing, and chemical transformations, produced by processing the film by hand, in small batches. Thus, *Eros and Wonder* involves a dialogue between two technologies, the older chemical/mechanical technology of the era that gave birth to the cinema, and the new electronic/digital computing technology more commonly associated with video – a dialogue between what was and what is yet to be.

In my academic life I have been studying the foundations of twentieth-century art. At first, my interests were purely scholarly – like any teacher, I try to ensure that the material I present to class is accurate. In the effort to ensure that my approach was fair, judicious, and well-balanced, I began reading as many artist's comments, interviews, manifestos and occasional writings as I could get my hands on. Over time, I realized that the history of early modernism that taught in university art history and art theory departments (and, especially, in film study programmes) was largely incorrect – that the history of early modernism was far less clean, analytical and precise than it had been made out to be. In fact, many of the early modernists had a deep interest in the occult. To understand the influence of the occult, I began to study texts by Gurdieff, Blavatsky, Ouspensky, and by the alchemists, less as a disciple than as an art-historian attempting to understand the ideas that gave shape to some of the artworks he most admires.

In the esoteric world of experimental filmmaking, hand-processing has become common – and very often practitioners of the art refer to their endeavours as “alchemy”; the Toronto filmmaker Carl Brown, who has done such fine work of this sort, is one practitioner who refers to his art of hand-processed images that way. I began to think about the connections between the transformation of the image by chemical and electronic means and the alchemical conception of transformation. Most people, I suspect, still associate alchemy with the effort to transmute lead into gold. Most historians of ideas propose that this effort was really a sort of metaphor for the transmutation of the self, for transforming the baser self into gold of freedom and ultimate awareness. Alchemy concerned the transformation of the human psyche; the gold the alchemists sought to produce was the wholeness and health of the human spirit.

I became intrigued by these ideas. The richness of the metaphor, which has base metal standing for the baser self, and gold standing for the higher self, relies on an fundamental article of alchemical faith – that what goes on without imitates that which goes on within, that as it is within, so it is without; in fact, the original alchemists probably believed that they were studying the processing of nature – but what is fascinating is that their study of natural processes led them, by analogy, to psychological insights concerning the achievement of psychic wholeness.

The faith that there is a correspondence between the inner and the outer worlds seems especially appropriate to photography and the photographically-based cinema, arts that begin with what lies outside us (the world we photograph) as a image what goes on within us. (It presents the gift – the present – of presence as visible representation of an invisible realm).

Occult and alchemical systems intrigued me for another reason as well. I had studied for many years the ideas of John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, James Tenney and Udo Kasemets, composers who have made use of aleatory methods (or stochastic methods, or chance operations). Cage's purposes for introducing chance operations had a particular attraction for me: I had developed concerns about artistic methods that put the artist's will at their centre. I found many reasons for avoiding authorial imposition and 'egocentric' making.

To advocate avoiding authorial imposition is not a brief for formlessness, however – rather, it is based on the faith that there is a creative force beyond the individual, and that when one finds the means to escape from willfulness, one stands a chance of aligning the processes that bring an individual work into being with a higher creative force. That, at any rate, is the goal.

The artist's task becomes one of finding a plausible field on which the creative forces can be unleashed – on discovering a range of materials (or, more precisely, their attribute) and the principles that shape these attributes (the principles that decide what values these attributes will take on). This task can be carried well or badly – the extraordinary richness of the work of John Cage, James Tenney, and Udo Kasemets is testimony to fact that the some composers can bring their thinking in line with these higher shaping forces, can sense their basic manner of operation. The details of work are beyond the composer's choosing – the process that decides them goes on beyond the composer's control. When a composer taps into this unfolding process at a deep level, when a composer abandons the limited self and goes with the process, then the process can produce forms that are richer than anything the limited self can conceive.

Processing film footage by hand is one way that I introduced chance operations into *Eros and Wonder*. Because the chemicals are applied by hand, not by machine, the effects of the chemicals will fluctuate through the film, producing a considerable amount of visual activity that will sometimes have the effect of interfering with our ability to see the structure of the underlying images. But if I do my job well, then the images behind these surface fluctuations, the images underneath these surface abrasions, will have visual interest; and the interference will seem just a little bit sad – in much the same way that it is sad that surfaces often become more appealing as they become more decrepit. But like the decay of the objects themselves, the evidence of the image's impending decrepitude is a source of considerable visual interest. When I am working I can never predict exactly what the effects of chemicals will be – however, some experience with hand-processing gives one an inkling of what the results will be. It allows me to collaborate with the natural forces that shape the final form.

I was struck by a certain co-incidence between the ideas of the alchemists and Cage's ideas on chance operations: both held the achievement of selflessness to be the highest state that the self can reach. This idea was a key to John Cage's thoughts on creative method. I was interested in extending chance operations into the cinema. It was obvious that the computer could aid me with this. James Tenney's writings on music helped me understand how to do this. Tenney made extensive use of measures of similarity in the analysis of music structures in his book *Meta+Hodos*, and subsequent composers applied those methods to generating series of musical events. I was intrigued by the possibility of developing analogous compositional procedures for working with sets of images and, in particular, by the possibility of using measures of similarity to constrain random processes. I decided to develop a computer application that would allow me to do this – and that, at the same time, would be consistent with the principles I have used in composing films. I usually relate shots by their plastic characteristics, taking into account (among other factors) the dominant colours and shapes in the image. I began to construct a digital tool that would emulate my way of working – and would extend it, by eliminating subjective whim. This program, as I conceived it, would allow me to collaborate with the machine (which, of course, is ultimately nature at large, or, at least, the laws of physics) to produce "visual compositions." I first developed a rudimentary application that stored a set of images (that might constitute a sequence in film) in a database along with a set of image descriptors ('meta-data") and a set of image processing algorithms. The application applied image-processing methods to the images in the database; the methods to be applied were selected by constrained random processes – the constraints, as I noted, were based on the similarities between images. Images were partitioned in groups based on the similarities indicated by their descriptors, as were the image processing methods (my decision on which methods most closely resembled other methods was completely informal and subjective) and the image processing methods to be applied to a reference image were chosen at random – after that, the methods most similar to the randomly chosen method were applied to the images

in the database that most resembled the reference image. Later I began using machine methods to allow me to “calculate” the similarity between images.

Another way that Cage’s work has influenced me was in the idea of making experience of time as duration central. Most lyrical writers/filmmakers focus on the experience of time as rhythm. The experience of time as duration is quite different – but it can open one towards the experience of emptiness that so many religious and spiritual traditions have celebrated. Cage frequently collaborated with the choreographer Merce Cunningham, and when they worked on a piece, they would not try to create correspondences between gestures in the dance and the sound. The performance was a time-frame, a duration, which each of them – after reaching an agreement on certain factors, would fill in his separate way. Cage would compose the music, Cunningham would choreograph the dance.

This way of combining the two separate arts (music, i.e., organized sound and choreography, i.e., organized body movements) extended the use of chance operation of a larger frame. I decided to use an analogous principle in composing *Eros and Wonder*. After agreeing that a poem (which I wrote) would provide a basic framework for the sound and image, the composers (Greg Boa and Alex Geddie) produced a sound track (integrating electronically generated sound – electronic sounds whose qualities were decided by attributes of the poem that structures *Eros and Wonder* – voice synthesis, and passages of Romantic music that were written in the German towns that one sees in the film) that was an autonomous, self-standing object. The sound and picture were combined only when the film was printed – until we saw a print, we did not know how the picture and sound would go together. (This was a novel approach for me, and I was very anxious about it – I told several friends that I would probably cheat and try to co-ordinate the picture and sound at the last minute. However, I had the courage to go through with the idea, and I think that the apparent correspondences between picture and sound confirm the faith that if one forsakes wilfulness, a higher shaping power will take over.)

Alchemy actually proposes there are stages in the transformation of the self, beginning with the restoration of essence, rising through the transformation of essence into energy, (the development of awareness), the transformation of energy into mind (coordination of mind and energy in movement) and ending with transformation of mind into emptiness (moving energy with the mind). I was struck by the very cinematic language in which these stages are described: the first phase is the discovery of be-ing of things (akin to what some photographers do); the second phase is the dynamizing of reality (that process that Eisenstein – who was briefly member of the alchemical group known as the Rosicrucians – valorized); the third phase, in which the mind is swept along by the movement of that energy is analogous to the stage in which we experience our thought being moved by the dynamic forms we see on the screen; while the final phase is analogous to the experience of ecstasy (that state Glenn Gould tells us he tried to cultivate through his music), in which we set ourselves, and experience the movement, the energy as everything.

A core idea of the alchemical system is that one cultivates a way of being in the physical world in which one experiences the spirit’s (the imaginations’s) capacity to influence matter, the spirit’s (the imagination’s) capacity to become incarnate in matter. One witnesses the soul in action at the physical level. This is such a wonderful analogy to the creative process, in which the physical world and the imagination co-create the forms we experience – or more accurately, in which the mind enters into the world of matter and senses its potential, and allows the world of matter to guide the shaping force of imagination – remember Michelangelo’s remarks about the block of stone instructing him on how to carve it. The world of nature and the imagination “co-influence” one another – mutually co-operate with one another to bring forth the work; you forge a partnership with the creative force in life. Of course, this union of the self with not-self is a goal

of many religious traditions. This idea is also a wonderful analogy to the cinema itself – the digitally processed diary footage suggests, I hope, that co-influence of the physical world and the imagination. We experience this “co-influencing” in a general form all the time – we adopt a negative attitude towards life, and no matter how wonderful the opportunities we are presented are, what we do (or make) becomes quite toxic – you have to learn to melt down this lead to let gold appear. This “co-influence” can be extended right down to the finest levels – when we let our will go and collaborate with nature in a profound way, when we have faith that nature is “il miglior fabbro” (the better maker), then the process produces wondrous surprises. We learn not to judge what aleatory processes produce – we attain the faith that we should accept what they create for us, and with us. This acceptance can engender that state the Canadian experimental filmmaker, Jack Chambers (another filmmaker who wrote about photography as a means of collaborating with the creative force), referred to as “WOW!” The human artist learns to trust what “il miglior fabbro” made was created for him or for her – and for one particular occasion. The experience of making becomes very much an experience of “NOW.” This experience is another form of creating (a topic about which the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott has taught me much). This experience I refer to (accepting the paradox) as “ecstatic peace.” Art and life become one. The form of *Eros and Wonder* derives from these ideas. The film begins with rather long, slow images that present what for me was fairy tale country (German villages, seen in my father’s German language texts when I was a boy), becomes more dynamic, and strives to evoke those states in which the mind is first swept away in the movement (the energy) until, finally, the mind falls down, and you are the movement, the energy – you are all there is (or All That IS). This is a state rarely achieved in film (Michael Snow’s *La Région Centrale* certainly attains it), but it does sometimes come forth.

The poem that *Eros and Wonder* includes alludes (in poetic fashion) to the transformation of the self – of being lifted out of the fallen world (the world of the plague, of blindness) to higher realm. (The feast of life that the poem mentions is itself an image from Christian Rosenzweig, supposedly the reviver of alchemical knowledge.) It concerns the idea that eros, love, is really the experience of, at once, loving-and-being-loved. And wonder can absorb us. I hope the form of the film hints at the feeling of attaining a state of selflessness, of ecstasy.

For the past several years I have been working in digital cinema – that is, cinema that incorporates digital images. To be able to do this, I went back to night-school and, I suppose, did the equivalent of a degree in applied mathematics and computer science – and devoted much of research efforts to writing computer programs for processing images in ways that conform to my aesthetic ideas. There is, I believe, a radical breach between the classic, photographically-based cinema and new, digital cinema. Of a photograph, it is always reasonable to ask: “Who created the photograph, the photographer or nature?” The question cannot be answered, but one must acknowledge that an aspect of the beauty of a photograph, is that a photograph, as André Bazin pointed out long ago, strikes us as a phenomenon of nature. Thus, making photographs, or photographically-based films, seemed to me a way of cherishing the gift of what reality – actually, of what is more accurately described as *natura naturans* – makes for us. Photography, I concluded, succeeds when the photographer transcends wilfulness and learns to cherish the gifts given him or her. That the will of the human “maker” should have no place in the creation of the image is the most radical implication of photography, its most profound rupture with the traditional image-making. Photography even allows the

imagination to be circumvented, and by this, it reveals our being-with-the-world

Digital cinema is another matter entirely – digital cinema gives the subject back its traditional role – or, rather, something close to its traditional role. The imagination resumes its traditional function in image-making: digital images once again require that we step back from the world and enter into the space of subjectivity. And all the usual ontological and epistemological problems that tradition has with images – both philosophical tradition that descends from Plato and the theological tradition that developed out the Judaic religion – reassert themselves with digital images: one can ask whether what one sees in the image is an object; the image allows for contradictory interpretations, and so exposes the knowledge we gain through them to doubt; images mediate between the subjective and the objective world (and so, in a process that Baudrillard's writings expose, take precedence over the objects they purport to represent and, finally, block access to those objects).

The digital image does offer something that changes the tradition of image-making: it makes it possible to realize the Pythagorean dream of producing images/reality through number and through calculations of a complexity that Pythagoreans could never have conceived them rather than through the depictions of facts (pictures as Wittgenstein understood them – arrangements of elements that mirror states of affairs). This is a whole new possibility for the imagination, and, though I have dabbled with it, I have not been able to come to terms with it.

Insisting on the role of subjectivity and imagination in the production of digital images of course raises the question of the subject, and issues around the subject are vexed. One can see the appeal of the idea that the subject is something that can be detached from one body and transplanted. For let's admit that the term "I," as it is ordinarily used in intellectual discourse, is hopelessly troubled – its meaning all but indiscernible, inasmuch as it is surrounded by a thick fog of philosophical, theological and psychological confusions. The new technologies, and the new media they have produced, promise to help render this traditional confusions obsolete, for they propose a new definition of the subject: "I" am a complex system of electromagnetic and chemical brain processes. This new start on the description of the subject at least promises to clarify what this reality that we refer as "I" really is.

But it also proposes the hope that the "I" might be transplanted – already the brains (or parts of brains) of rats can transplanted from dying bodies to fetuses. In this sense, the immortality of "I," through the repeated transfer of brain parts, has become a theoretical possibility that the new technology will undoubtedly strive to realize.

Despite all the confusions that have surrounded the traditional concept of the subject, and potential of the new conception to sweep away that fog of confusions, I find the whole idea really pernicious. It denies the important role of the particular body that each of has in establishing his or her identity – thus, because our identities are so crucial, it devalues the body. All my recent work – and much of the work that have did earlier (though I didn't realize it at the time) – has been in devoted to enhancing the sensation of flesh (and flesh's belonging to the world). I think the topic of the body is the most important topic one can devote oneself to in this contemporary climate, where "despisers of the body" are so prevalent. If I were starting out now (or, rather, if were young enough) I would surely be doing very "in your face" performance pieces that dealt with the body. They would be "in your face" pieces not so as to be transgressive – the idea of transgressive art strikes me as among cultural theory's most boring ideas – but because body art can so bring to our attention the importance of rapture. By "rapture" I mean any intense experience (because of its extreme intensity, such experience is sometimes is felt as unpleasure) that deranges focussed, analytical consciousness – experience so intense that it leaves conventional ways of thinking in ruin (at whatever cost). This sort of experience invariably makes us sense the body's role of experience: we feel at once acute anxiety (one can even feel

a some measure of nausea) and acute pleasure as every nerve ending seems to tingle and we feel waves of bliss surge through the body, from head to toe and from toe to head. One experiences this when the energy of the body rises up and imposes itself on us, as occurs in love-making, or when we find ourselves intensely aroused and intensely embarrassed at the same time – I sometimes experienced it when my assistant photographed me for films we made together (as she did many times), and it was primarily those occasions that taught me the crucial importance of this sort of experience. I am sure that making performance art would allow me to focus much more directly and clearly on that sort of experience, which I believe is so important. The most important thing that the body teaches us through experience of this sort is that we are “owned” – first by the divine, that fills flesh with desire, and then, through the divine, by all other people. Thus flesh teaches us we owe deep allegiance to one another. It teaches us that the obligation that any other person imposes on me, just by being human, is absolute and unconditional; and we have even more profound obligations to those who fall into the circle of our love. I have no choice but to care for others around me, and seek to a life in which I care profoundly for a number of friends whom I love deeply. Through the divine, they own me; and I am not free to choose what I wish to do – I belong to them and must act out of my concern for them.

Art should reveal areas of experience that we cannot reveal to others except by making art -- forms of imagining that we cannot reveal in any other way. By doing this, art gives us a more profound sense of what human be-ing is – it acknowledges that we think in ways other than the analytic/instrumental/propositional forms that have dominated us (in the West) at least from the time of the Enlightenment (and possibly earlier). Propositional thinking, thinking that can be modelled by rewriting of one string of symbols into another according to an established rule (thinking of the sort that computer scientists are prone to think of as the sole form of thinking available to us), is “deranged” by the intense feelings surge through the body as it responds to the field of energy that lies “beyond us.” I believe it is important to tell one another that we possess the capacity for rapture, too – and for all those sorts of experience that are close to rapture (such as mad love or the states that strong, repetitive rhythms induce, a state akin to trance and prayer). To do this, art has to acknowledge the less seemly contents of our thoughts.

The fundamental responsibility that artists have to is to make contact that beneficent field of energy that lies around us and to enter into that energy. When one does this, it takes control. Then one’s responsibility is to obey its commands; in this, there is no “freedom of imagination.” One takes orders – an image flashes into your mind and you have to make it, no matter how wrong-headed or embarrassing or unaesthetic or humiliating it might be. One cannot be allow considerations of audience/reception to intrude upon this; such concerns make one less willing to go to the extremes to which one might be commanded to go – one might get to thinking “What will people think?!?” When one becomes disobedient, one breaks with the source of one’s imaginings. This is why the Muses were frequently thought to be very jealous.

I am concerned to reject assertions like those of Arthur Kroker that the new media (cyberspace and virtual reality) will lead us into a better future – a future that will undo all the devastations of the centuries since the Enlightenment have wreaked on us, a future that will be heaven-on-earth. One hysterical comment from Kroker, formulated on the model of neo-Platonic philosophers Robert Grosseteste’s metaphysical light proposes “So begins our violent descent into the electronic cage of virtual reality. Down we go into the floating world of liquid media where the body is daily downloaded into the floating world of the net, where data is the real, and where high technology can fulfill its destiny of an out-of-body experience.” Gibson opines that soon we be shuffled off into “bodiless exultation.” And Microsoft asks “*Where do you want to go today?*” as we sit in front of the screen of our monitor. Eric Voegelin, in his *The New Science of*

Politics identifies the historical shift that generated these hysterical, and body-despising, comments: in the 13th Century, Joachim of Flora (or Fiore) broke with the Augustinian notion of a de-divinized “Civitas Dei” by resurrecting the Gnostic notion of heaven-on-earth. Joachim was nominally a Cisterian monk in Calabria but actually a Gnostic. One of Joachim’s contribution to the history of millenarianism was the notion that history should be divided into three periods that correspond to the three persons of the Trinity. The Second Age of the Son was coming to a close, Joachim professed, and the glorious Third Age of the Spirit was about to dawn.

Later Utopian movements adopted this formula for dividing history into three periods. Ivan IV forced Constantinople to recognize Moscow as the Third Rome in 1589 – an early painting of the Theosophist/Gnostic painter Wassily Kandinsky in fact depicted the dream that Moscow would be the Third Rome. The historical fantasy that was the Third Reich incorporated possessed the same mythological structure. The later example, especially, imposes on new media thinkers who adopt the gnostic metaphysics – and they are many – the responsibility of considering with whom else (besides the Urantians, Tim Learyian reprogrammers, and other extravagant cult-adherents who have played a role in formulating the received “metaphysics of digital reality”) they are associating themselves

According to one prevalent conception of the metaphysics of digital reality, the convergence of the media (of text, image, moving image, and sound, all “interactively” available) promises to unite non-corporeal information and non-corporeal individuals in the same electronic medium, in which everything and everybody are co-extensive. This total co-extensivity is the basis for the “total awareness” my new media students keep telling me is dawning (or rather, I understand, their classes inform them is dawning). This idea of the non-corporeal self, of the self that is identical with information, is a modern version of the soteriological dream of transcendence through the emptying out of the self. The appeal that the idea of dematerialization has to new media theorists is that it supposedly exposes that nothing possesses an internal principle that accounts for its growth – that the self, to take it as an instance, is wholly and completely malleable, and can – and is – constantly made and remade by changes in the conditions of the system of representation that shape it. The Gnosticism of this conception is evident: our world is a wrong world not only because it is a bad world, but also because it offers the illusion of corporeality (that things have an nature by virtue of their constitution). According to the soteriological principles of these new media theorists, why it is so important to see through the illusion of the self – why it is so important to understand that we possess no internal principle but are subject to endless remaking – is that the new non-corporeal world can come under our complete control, because we know how we made it and how to reproduce it. In the end, we would act as a new Creator – this is the dream that fuels those who proclaim that the new media offer unlimited creative freedom, that we might usurp the place of the Divine. We are unshackled from all moral limitations of our world as it is, and nothing outside of us limits our capacity to impose on the world.

The great Canadian philosopher George Grant critiqued this very position in such stunning books as *Technology and Empire* and *Technology and Justice*. Grant showed that the belief that the Good is not inherent in the order of nature underpins that belief, essential to the regime of technique in which we exist and through which we conceive the world, that humans are free to remake the world. Grant pointed out the notion of technique is central to modern civilization – so much so that the progress of techniques has now become the horizon for those who seek to understand the Good. Moderns have lost the ability to understand the standards of goodness by which particular techniques may be judged. The conviction that human knowledge has the purpose of mastering human and non-human nature is central to moderns’ ideas about

the nature of human being. The idea that new media theorists expound, that human being possesses no inherent nature has the purpose of justifying the proposition that humans can be made and remade at will – that nothing in the nature of human being limits society's/ideology's/ the artist's freedom to refashion them. And that conception, in its turn, belongs to a discourse on value and freedom that is associated with the will to technique – indeed it is part and parcel of the modern belief that nature, since it is objectively devoid of value, can be remade at will.

What more than anything impresses me about what the propositions issued as the metaphysics of digital reality is their tendency towards imperial aggrandizement. The consequence of this, I fear, may well be tyranny. I mean “tyranny” here in the Straussian sense, as it arose within a remarkable exchange between Leo Strauss, the renowned conservative political philosopher, and Alexandre Kojève, France's great interpreter of Hegel. A key topic of the debate was Kojève's affirmation that “that the universal and homogeneous state is the best social order, and that mankind advances to the establishment of such an order.” Kojève pointed out that the final stage of civilization, the establishment of the universal and homogeneous state, comes into being as the secularization of the political ideal of the Christian community, which proposed that all humans could transcend their given differences through their faith, and be made one in the body of Christ's church – I hope everyone noted that this claim resonates in the beliefs of the new media communitarians. Behind this lies the assumption (not unlike that of soteriological assumptions that undergird the metaphysics of digital media), that thought (and specifically, for the ancients, philosophy) takes its bearings not from an ahistorical eternal order, but from eternity as the totality of all historical epochs (the sum of all knowledge that our new hypertextual “koran” represents).

Strauss argued, against Kojève, that the goal of Hegel's state, universal happiness, is unachievable – and what is worse, that it will end in tyranny. I don't find myself in agreement with much in Strauss's political outlook, but on this matter I think he is absolutely right – his thesis turned out, in fact, to be prophetic. Strauss' argument was founded in the classical belief that humans find their fulfilment in that thinking which leads to wisdom – a premise the Hegel had rejected for the premise that humans find adequate fulfilment in that form of recognition that is available to all. Hegel's gambit, Strauss argued, had effectively lowered the goal of political action, for his idea of universal recognition as the basis of community and state cannot recognize the inevitable differences among humans, and conceives of communities as nexûs of undifferentiated humans. When we must all be the same, no person will be a true thinker. Philosophy will disappear in such state, through the wedding of technology and ideology (a process that probably is now too far advanced to be reversed). The ideas of a totalization of truth and of total awareness (acquired through the complete co-extensivity of the decorporealized mind and the decorporealized text) that cyberspace promises will surely eventuate in tyranny.

It is time to put away this myth of decorporealization, of the totalization of knowledge that will bring history to end. Because it is grounded in the myth of total identity, total transparency, the prevalent metaphysics of digital reality neglects the actual condition of knowledge: it arises from the Gnostic belief in the possibility of immanentizing of the *eschaton*, a belief that goes hand in hand with the idea that the future can be foreseen and planned. The prevalent metaphysics of digital reality is simply the “dream world” of Gnostic lore, where the structure of reality is disregarded, the facts ignored, and the openness of history replaced by a revolutionary step into the New Age. To replace this myth, may I suggest that we return to where all true understanding starts – with the real body, not the amalgam of metal and flesh that is the cyborg nor the data body of Kroker's Gnostic dream, but the real body of flesh.

Attunement to the rhythm of what unfolds beyond us – a rhythm that is flexible and ever

changing, has the strength to release us from the tyranny of an abstract, rationalized temporality. Awareness of rhythm, because rhythm is experienced corporeally, also undoes the effects of the rationalization of space into a wholly abstract form. Contemporary virtual existence has rendered space wholly abstract. The etiology of that form of space can be readily charted, beginning with the geometric optics of the Renaissance. The development of geometric optics and camera obscura led to the rationalization of vision around an axis consisting of the fiction of a single, fixed vantage point outside the depicted scene, at a place established by the vertex of a pyramid, whose base is the surface of the painting and the slope of whose sides is arbitrary. Thus, the body was removed from the scene of vision. But in the nineteenth century representation took on a different character: the space of a drawing, especially those drawings whose primary purpose is to provide information about reality, came to be understood as a Cartesian plane, and the relations between elements in the drawing were to be determined not through appearance, as projective geometry had attempted to do, but rather through measurements, which were then transposed orthogonally to the drawing surface. If the body had been excluded in the system of Renaissance perspective, the subject was excluded in the representational regime that developed in the nineteenth century. When the subject is given no place, the drawing surface itself becomes utopian. That utopic space is the predecessor of the utopia of cyber-nonreality – a non-place where “there is no there there,” and, above all, no place for the body. Paul Virilio points out that cyberspace constitutes a new space without the usual space-time coordinates; as a result, cyberspace engenders a disorienting and disembodied form of experience in which communication and interaction takes place instantaneously in a new global time, overcoming boundaries of time and space. It is a disembodied space without fixed coordinates, a space in which one loses connection with one’s body, with nature, and with one’s community. It is a dematerialized and abstract realm in which cybernauts can become lost in space and divorced from their bodies and social world. To counter the abstraction of space and time, we insist on working methods that, in their intensity, leave the trace of the body all over them.

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The Foreignness of the Intimate, or The Violence and Charity of Perception.

Imagine everything beyond one’s self to be turned into nothing. What would then be left? Not a pure negativity, but an indeterminateness that retains a measure of positivity, an absence we experience as something present. Would this absence, this nothing, be an imaginative projection? An external absolute? Be-ing itself, anterior to all beings? It is not possible to determine. We know only this much: though this idea would be of a universal nothing, it would not be of a nothing that is without be-ing. What it would concern, though indefinite, nonetheless is. It is not thought. It summons no words; indeed it deranges discourse. For it disturbs, like a miscreant that threatens to return, particularized, anywhere and everywhere. This nothing is not

weightless; to the contrary, as a fluidity of forces, as an atmospheric pressure, it exerts pressure everywhere, and always differently.

Awareness which is not of anything definite, of anything concrete, of anything that definitely is, then, is the awareness that nothing also is, the awareness that nothing is not without being. As it is on the side of object, so it is on the side of the subject – the subject is no more a definite entity than the object is. Each is nothing other than flux – a flux of such indefinite character that we might as well call it a nothing. It is simply a presence, a force, an atmosphere, that has no definite being. There is, in fact, only the universality of an epistemic process anterior not just to the formation of a definite subject but even to the division between subject and object. In order to acknowledge its primacy, let us call that awareness which is anterior not just to the formation of a definite subject but even to the division between subject and object, “thinking.” All thinking is a revelation of a transcendent be-ing, and is, in its ownmost be-ing, itself a transcendence of the given (as an object of awareness).

This nothing is the underworld of things, an underworld anterior to anything definite. But if this realm is the primal, what possibly could be the appeal of cinematography, for cinematography is a means for reproducing definite things? Because an image’s ontology bears evidence, through a sort of inversion, of be-ing’s ontogenetic capacity (its capacity to create beings). For an image comes into evidence as the double of an object in the very act of the object’s withdrawing – this is the very meaning of representation. An image is not a transparency that our mind passes through on the way to apprehending the object it refers to. An image is actually the double of the object, the appearance that an actual being leaves behind as it departs – the ghost of a departed object one might say. In creating its own double, which it highlights through the emptying – the *kenosis* – that appears as it withdraws, an object indicates the ontogenesis of its own existence.

Every image, then, speaks of origins, of beginnings. Every image is an evidence of fecundity. For every image belongs to another order entirely different than that to which ordinary existents belong. Hence the dimension of transcendence pertains to all images. Because an image belongs to a transcendent order, it can seem so terrible. But there is more to its *terribilità* than just the transcendence of its referent: because the image reveals the substantiality, the weightiness of nothing, it reminds us that the other side of be-ing is not non-existence. It terrifies us with the prospect that seems to have haunted the vast majority of pre-modern people (and which Dante’s *Commedia* allegorizes), that our passing out of existence will not be an utter annihilation. Images, as the leavings of beings, testify that to pass beyond being is not really to go out of existence, that everything that is really is forever, that for be-ing there is no endgame. Film’s character as midden speaks to this condition.

An image, in revealing the presence of the past and the future in the here-and-now, also reveals the temporalizing that is the origin of time. For a particular existent reveals itself only in the mode of immediacy, while an image always speaks of what has departed and what is yet to come – it speaks of the departed because its appearance is the result of that which has been left behind after the object has departed, and it speaks of the future because every image summons what it might become: the tablets are forever about to slip from the pressure of Moses’ right elbow (or not to slip – we do not know which, for the future *is* unknowable). The ontology of the future, like the ontology of the image, is that of pressure, a force, an atmosphere, exerted by something that has no be-ing; it is that of absent presence.

Images shatter the consolidated presence of focal awareness and, by animating thinking, introduce what is foreign to reality, what belongs to the realms of the “has been” and the “yet to be” into our spiritual life. Images, by their association with thinking, introduce the Otherness of what has been and what is yet to be into consciousness; but they do so not as something that is,

but as pressure emanating from that which has no existence.

All artmaking begins with an intimation of the uncanny, with the intrusion of something foreign, something that is close to non-being, into the everyday realm. It begins with a particular form of thinking, one that begins in a scene of violence that wrenches us from presuppositions concerning what is. These presuppositions that, despite the complacency they engender, are really the ultimate of will's violent imposition upon reality, for these presuppositions violently hold at bay reality's (Be-ing's) eruptive disposition. I call that thinking which opens itself towards what is foreign, uncanny, wholly other, and to be disturbed and disordered by it, "genuine thinking," because it is creative and because as a form of thinking it lies closer to the origin of thinking than any other. This form of thinking breaches the monotony of time which presuppositions engender. Genuine thinking emerges from a power that prevents what it receives from ever being closed, from a power that disrupts all finality, and that renders self-identity impossible. From the power of genuine thinking emerges something that is more like an electric sensation-in-and-of-flux than it is like an idea. I call this electric sensation "perception." Rendering the strangeness of perception is the goal of artmaking. Perception, the source of all genuine thinking, is attentive. Through this act of attention what hides is able to impose itself upon us with the force of a shock.

Yet, despite their violence, these shocks are charitable. Without them, we would have to surrender to our fear that the world, in its sheer givenness, is without novel possibilities. We would succumb to the lethargy of believing that everything is determined in advance – would succumb, that is, to the mechanistic world-view that made early modern philosophers shudder. We would inhabit a too familiar world of mechanistic necessity, a world bereft of good and evil, a world where the "being there (*Dasein*) of human be-ing" made no difference. The convulsions induced by genuine thinking produce wonderment – a wonderment that soon enough devolves into a more rationalized, instrumental form of thinking. But before that occurs, this wonderment give one over to something primal.

They also encourage us to be aware of the act of perception itself. They lift one out of what Edmund Husserl called the "naive standpoint," where consciousness, because it is absorbed by its object, avoids the question of what human beings – what the fact that the human be-ing is there, as an opening for disclosure – contributes to the object perceived, the objects that make up the world we inhabit. The opening towards disclosure that characterizes the "be-ing there" of human beings, is at one with that openness, that emptiness, that nothingness that is the scene of beings' coming-to-be. This essential unity allows us to sense, however vaguely, the being-together of human be-ing and what there was even before all creation. We discover thereby the primordially of Be-ing, that which makes human be-ing, in its openness, the image of the Divine.

The shock induced by a sensation creates an opening through which that which is strange, foreign, unexpected, novel disrupts the complacent surface of everyday experience that is constituted when our perceptions are filtered through ideas (pre-conceptions). The strangeness, the foreignness, the alienness of what comes through the clearing prised open by a new electric sensation is a result partly of its paradoxical temporal attributes. For this opening is created by attention, and through attentiveness we learn that the future creates the present.

It is the fact that an aesthetic object comes to be through a similar retroactive creativity that makes aesthetics relevant to ontology – and that is one (among several) reasons why indeed aesthetics should found ontology. For an aesthetic object is apprehended through the poetic principle that shapes it, insofar as every work teaches us how we should consider it. But the poetic principle that shapes each work (the principle we learn by attending to the work), is

absolutely unique for each individual work – indeed it develops through the process of making/reading the work. To recognize that, however, is to acknowledge that it comes into being only through what it makes. The principle that guides the making of the work is constituted only retroactively, even though its existence is presumed by – and therefore prior to – what it brings into being. The poetic principle, insofar as it is unique in every poem, designates a particular configuration of experience that gives a poem its shape; but reciprocally, it comes into being through the poem itself. Thus, the principle of its be-ing is both presupposed by and derived from the poem.

Aesthetic experience, accordingly, makes generative temporality palpable, for generative temporality is a surface twisted into the form of a Möbius strip, in which the future generates the past even as the past brings forth the future. Generative time (unlike narrative time) is not composed of a series of “nows” strung out along a line – on the contrary in generative time, the future creates the past from which the present is inherited. This generative time is the time of attention, of resoluteness: through resoluteness all my actions are inflected by an anticipation, for they are informed by my understanding that the future will inherit what I do. In claiming that resoluteness involves the understanding that the future will inherit my action, my deliberation is determined by my recognition of what it will mean for that action to belong to the past. Through resoluteness, then, the future brings the present into being through the mediation of a past which it (the future) creates for itself.

The reality of temporal convolution, in which the future creates the present through its influence on the past, is not the only ontological understanding that aesthetic objects furnish. Another results from aesthetic objects’ capacity to make perception difficult. By making perception difficult, aesthetic objects also make us aware that human be-ing, which is an opening towards disclosure, is there to play both an interpretative and a constitutive role in bringing forth the meaning of beings – in *reading* beings. It restores to human be-ing that self-reflexive awareness that informs it of its primordially empty condition; recognition of our primordially empty be-ing, which human beings share with what lies beyond beings, grounds the possibility of human be-ing grasping the constitutive role it has in the be-ing of beings.

Formulating a thought is an act of violence – a violence that holds the eruptive, kaotic propensity of reality at bay. For a thought imposes a conceptual order on that which has no conceptual order – and the less genuine thinking is, the greater is this imposition. The character of the violence involved in formulating a thought can be understood through considering the analogy a common political situation offers. A law takes form as a means of stabilizing and perpetuating a relation between unequal parties – one nation wages war on another and loses; the victor then grants rights and privileges to the vanquished, guaranteed under treaty. The two parties are unequal, but, in the supreme act of the charity of human self-understanding, the accord is reached between them that fosters the illusion that both parties enter into the agreement with the measure of freedom requisite to assuming the obligations they contract to take on. The same occurs when law demands that the aggressor pay retribution to the victor.

The violence and charity of law is to place the weaker on an equal footing with the mightier – and of course, the prototype for this attribute that all positive laws evince is the moral law, which, by its universality, requires that the unlike all be treated alike. To the might of power, the law counterpoises the irrevocable demands of the humbled. The law brings both the victor and the vanquished, the mighty and humble, into an ungainly accord, the end of which is to quell any possible upheaval, to quiet any possible uprising.

So it is with thinking. All thinking, and all perception, is endangered by the object of thought, for the be-ing of any and all beings exceeds thought – that which elevates be-ing above beings is intimated in the resistance that a raw perception exhibits to being turned into a thought

(a representation). Attention to these features of perception disclose that even though the subject participates in the transformation of the elemental into a percept, there is nonetheless a transcendental element associated with every object of perception which refuses to be reduced. That transcendental element is what, following Heidegger, I call “earth,” and the creative transformation which perception effects results in the emergence of what, again following Heidegger, I call a ‘worldly’ being. But perception, like all thinking, enters into a truce with beings; the truce is forged as one learns to cherish the gift of what is given in perception – learns that however troubling, upsetting, and violent perception is, human be-ing, through abiding with the gifts perception brings, may establish an ungainly, awkward peace with what brings these gifts, a peace wherein what is poorer and humbler, that is to say, consciousness, accedes to a status equal to that of the gifts that are given it. But against Heidegger, I insist that such an “abiding-with” is the result of a truce, a pact that a violence mightier than our own establishes with us, to grant us the time wherein we can complete the work of Be-ing.

Thinking does not passively render a pre-existent reality that lies before it. Rather perceiving transforms – violently transforms – what gives rise to it, by converting “what might be” into “what is.” The violence of the conversion is that it reduces potentiality into actuality, possibility into determination, the infinite into the finite. Perception configures one particular arrangement out of the infinite possibilities that are implicit in the nothingness that hides itself in darkness. But this sacrifice of the infinite for the finite is also, like the Great Sacrifice, an act of charity, for it grants the beauty of all that comes to pass. It brings what is into be-ing.

Nonetheless, the primordial lies in darkness and is never disclosed as it is, for that element, in being perceived, changes its character – its nature changes when it enters into language. The transformation by which a thematized being takes form and gains membership in the world (that, is to say, since perception is a form of reading, when it becomes part of the “world-structured-in-language”) results in the occultation of the earthly elements that go into its making. That process therefore has the nature of what I call an “apophantic process.” The Pseudo-Dionysius wrote about this darkness, and its occultation by light in such an apophantic process:

Darkness disappears in the light, the more so as there is more light. Knowledge makes unknowing disappear, the more so as there is more knowledge. However . . . the unknowing regarding God escapes anyone possessing physical light and knowledge of beings. His transcendent darkness remains hidden from all light and concealed from all knowledge. Someone beholding God and understanding what he saw has not actually seen God himself but rather something of his which has being and which is knowable. For he himself solidly transcends mind and being. He is completely unknown and non-existent. He exists beyond being and he is known beyond the mind. And this quite positively complete unknown is knowledge of him who is above everything that is known.

Following Merleau-Ponty, I give to this earthly darkness, insofar as it is a faculty of disclosure, a faculty of the unveiling (*aletheia*) that grants us the perception of beings, the name “flesh”. The term “flesh” emphasizes the mutuality of the disclosure of self and other, the fact that the other is needed for the self to be. For flesh is at once a medium of experience and the ground that makes possible one’s “being with” the world.

Flesh is the body antecedent to thematization – antecedent to being represented in thought. Flesh cannot be grasped through concepts. It is the evidence that cohesion in be-ing occurs without the mediation of any concept, that cohesion can defy the logic of form, and that,

finally, cohesion is not the antithesis of dispersion. Flesh is what makes the body open to (or what, in a peculiar twist, is the same thing, prey to) influence through sensibility – for how could body grant sensation and consciousness except through the fact that body is not simply material, but also the possibility-of-knowing/sensing/feeling.

Flesh is what is brought into being through an *energeia* of a mutuality through which (as Merleau-Ponty was fond of pointing out) every grasping is also a “being-grasped,” every touch a “being-touched.” But flesh is also what disrupts the surface of being that the ????? creates. It can do this because flesh is non-coincident with itself; that is, it is not the same in pre-reflective consciousness as it is in self-reflective consciousness. It was Merleau-Ponty who was fond of pointing out this fact, to which he drew attention through his well-known example citing the presentiment that one has, by putting the fingers of one’s right hand on one’s left, of the possibility “of being able to touch [oneself] touching.” However he pointed out that this “reflection of the body upon itself always miscarries at the last moment: the moment I feel my left hand with my right hand, I correspondingly cease touching my right hand with my left hand.” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 9). What he describes as miscarriage is the transformation of a thought from pre-reflexive to a self-reflexive form – an apophantic process that eclipses that mutuality of thought and its object characteristic of pre-reflective thinking (the flesh’s thinking) as thinking takes a thought as a thematized object. This transformation is a violent limitation for with it thought becomes self-enclosed.

Reality is a language activated in the dialogue between the earth and our flesh (which is anyway part of the earth) that I call “perception.” The statements of this dialogue are enigmatic, because they interlace multiple; in fact, they possess greater depth and variety of meaning than those which appear in a penetrating philosophic discourse on a profound topic, precisely because flesh, which is the basis of the communicative practice, is so mutable. It is its resistance to flesh’s character, indeed to all that lies in darkness, that has made dominant cinema (“the movies”), like every other reactionary social form, hostile to ambiguity, lability, transformation, dispersal, contamination – those very attributes of flesh that the cinema was destined was embody.

For image and flesh are joined together in a unfathomable unity, each of which is just as strange as the other – the strange intimacy of the image is suited to unconceptualizable closeness of flesh. Accordingly, the true image is the very antithesis of narrative. Narrative valorizes the reduction of possibility into actuality, for that reduction provides narrative’s founding form – the creation of a *diegesis*. Attention discloses the event of coming-to-be, the event whereby the Unlimited becomes limited, the Indeterminate becomes determinate. Attunement knows this reduction to be a sacrifice, an act wherein charity and violence mingle: attention requires that the sovereign self be deposed. Narrative, to the contrary, establishes the conditions under which the self legislates to perception by quashing all awareness of beings’ coming-to-be. It demands – and in doing so places conditions on – the revelation of the future, in imposing expectations of what is to be.

Cinematography also reveals that the beautiful shines within the time-bound. To say that the beautiful shines within the time-bound is to say also that the beautiful can become dynamic – another lesson the cinema was created to convey. But if in the aesthetic of the cinema, the beautiful is dynamic, and if whatever is dynamic requires time, and time implies death, then in this aesthetic, beauty is allied with death – as closely allied to death as it is to life, as closely associated with violence as it is with charity. Thus, in this new aesthetic, beauty condemns what is beautiful to perish.

What is – that which is – shines with effulgence of the beautiful. But whatever else it is,

the beautiful is still the result of a reduction in as much it is not as rich as What-might-be. The reduction involved in all thinking, all perceiving (and all artistic representations) speaks of the deficiency of what is in comparison with what might be. It is the pressure of what is greater than beings (that is to say, the Good), to manifest itself that accounts for this impulse to dismantle form and to liquefy all that is fixed (just as it is the pressure of what is beyond being to manifest itself that impels beings to change). The violence of the process reveals the judgement of what might be on what is and the Good's striving for realization. The gap between what is and what might be is the real source of our intimations of deprivation; it is that gap which draws our attention towards the Good. That is why genuine thinking cannot be simply a loving acceptance of the gift of the appearances (though true thinking must never dismiss the given, as scientific thinking does, and in fact must cherish the given). So perception must open itself even to the Violent Power that is beyond all that is, that would destroy whatever is. True thinking must be more than patient, loving attention toward all that is – more than a quiet listening that is chary of the tendency to impose upon things. Though we rightfully feel awe that anything whatsoever is, that there is that which is beyond beings is a cause for even greater wonder.

But of the arts, it is the cinema that is most disposed towards the elemental. If the cut is the formal sign of cinema's disposition towards fragmentation, the inner cause of that disposition is its affection for the world, an affection so profligate and so unjudging that it results in self-dispersal. The assimilation of reality that is the mission of film disposes it to contamination. Film is massively promiscuous, and as impure as all whose nature is promiscuity. Its readily-given affections carry it beyond itself, towards the other. Its proclivities, accordingly, result in dispersal. Its nature calls for forms that are fragmentary and incomplete; its promiscuity demands that works composed in the medium be dispersive *opera*, deploying multiple structures, plurisemic, incomplete, imperfect, unresolved, without closure. Their forms must be contaminated, impure, and full of strife. Each element in every moment must be foreign to every other. A film must allow text to contend with image, image to contend with sound, and sound to contend with text, and must do so without striving to reconcile the contention in something we conceive as good form. Films must incorporate the maximum of diversity for the cinematic medium is an outrageous violation of the ideal of purity. Furthermore, the cinema must favour repetition over narrative progress, for repetition shows contamination at work, by showing that the purity of self-identity is an impossible ideal (nothing is ever the same on two appearances). Repetition in art, because it demonstrates that any linguistic element is wrenched from self-identity with every reappearance, manifests violence at work.

The cinema itself is multiple – comprising image, movement, sound (which, often, is itself multiple, comprising speech, music, and natural sounds). Accordingly a film consists of constellations of elements that are alien to one another, and these constellations are arranged serially into higher-level constellations. Eisenstein taught, I think correctly, that each successive element in this serial constellation must be “estranged” from what preceded it, in order to incite strife. He also considered, correctly, that this strife was the mark of the cinema's essential constitution. For the cinema *is* multiple, and this multiplicity itself lays waste to any efforts at formal consolidation premised on purist ideals. The cinema's multiplicity opens it onto that which cannot be represented, which is similarly plural, similarly labile, similarly without identity. This multiplicity, accordingly, should be intensified, carried to the extreme. Its sensory elements, whether visual, aural, intensive, affective, rhythmic, tonal or even verbal (oral and written) must be made to contend, for that contention evokes the unrepresentable. The cinema has the ability to show process; it does so best by emphasizing speed which liquefies, by stressing dynamism's ability to dissolve boundaries and lay form to ruin, by animating light's searing destructive power (light's power to destroy what hides) through allowing changes in light to

overwhelm spatial form, and by allowing cutting, which is the domain of mutability, instability, and ambiguity, to achieve the maximum of fragmentation. Only the cinema allows us thus to effect a *dérèglement de tous les sens*.

Perception that attunes itself to the process by which what the Infinite Beyond Be-ing becomes determinate is privy to the mystery of the incarnation – and to the mystery that, like The Incarnation, that incarnation, demands sacrifice. Sacrifice, it seems, is the condition of charity's being manifested. For there is still that which is left over, that excess of unrealized possibility, that which passes into nothing when a thought is configured, that which language consigns to silence. That excess subsequently rises against language, against thought, and against representation, to destroy them. Its violence is the violence that is characteristic of the revenge of the repressed. Perception that rises against preconceptions create a disposition towards a strange element foreign to perception, towards the uncanny that allows one to respond, however vaguely and indefinitely, to the return of the repressed. This vague sense of something beyond knowing vouchsafes an awareness that what is does not exactly coincide with what might be. Flow, speed, liquidity, dynamism, perpetual dynamism, transformation reveal the multiple possibility inherent in that which precedes beings, and so provoke a sense of the gap between what is and What-might-be.

As in many folk tales (for example, the Lorelei legend to which Heine gave poetic form), this call of the beautiful is also, though, a lure, that results in destruction. Its call is savage: "*Den Schiffer im kleine Schiffe / Ergreift es mit wilden Weh*" ("The boatman in his small boat / It seizes with unrestrained woe"). The violence of a perception is like the violence of the poetic principle: the unrepresentability of the poetic principle endangers thought only insofar as it exceeds any *a priori* precept. For through the poetic principle that which belongs to time becomes timeless, for the poetic belongs to the realm of ecstatic temporality; and in so doing, it comes to exemplify the nature of language. (That is also the very reason why the offspring of the Creator — who through some strange temporal twist is also identical with the Creator — is called the **?????**). So it is with cinematography: making the time-bound timeless, that act which cinematography accomplishes, is a violent act, for it puts that which is humble in a relationship of which it is not worthy; that exactly is what calls a regulatory principle into being (for, as I have remarked, this inequality is the basis of law).

We apprehend the dynamics through which things come-to-be through the faculty for rhythm. An epistemology that accords thinking-through-rhythm primacy is far more sound than the currently vogueish epistemologies based on narrative –in fact better than *any* other – because rhythm better reflects the discourse of Be-ing. We become aware of Be-ing in a certain throb, a certain stress, torsion and flex we feel in our body, a sense of something whose very being is indefinite, but which we know with a certainty that quells all questions, something that participates in a pulse of something that is far larger than ourselves.

About the physicist David Bohm, David Peat wrote "...That ability to touch preverbal processes at the muscular, sensory level remained with him all his life. It was not so much that Bohm visualized a physical system as that he was able to sense its dynamics within his body: 'I had the feeling that internally I could participate in some movement that was the analogy of the thing you are talking about.'" This form of corporeal thinking is close to what I mean by thinking-in-rhythm (as everything that has to do with the body is periodic). And what does Bohm's theoretical physics arrive at? That reality is process, and that mind and matter are inextricable – that same view we have been propounding. Our richest and deepest apprehension of flux, flow, dynamism comes through our capacity to respond to rhythm. For rhythm always discloses itself at once both as something beyond us, to which we give ourselves, and as something deep in

ourselves. Thinking-through-rhythm thus reveals the mutuality of self and Other. Thinking-through-rhythm can engage us in prayer by which we tune ourselves to an alien, foreign pulse, to the pulse of an Other, the pulse of something wholly beyond us, and we woo It, while in response, It draws us ever more closely into its embrace. In responding to rhythm, something deep in us responds to some profound attribute of the dynamics of earth. Giving a place of privilege to thinking-through-rhythm changes thought's relation to its object. Thinking-through-rhythm allows multiple patterns to contend, without resolution. Thinking-through-rhythm belongs to the modality of the flesh's time. Rhythm makes time, and time is the fundament of our relation to alterity, to what lies beyond us. Time, and therefore rhythm, reveals to us that future is always without apprehensible content. It aims towards an *ideatum* that eludes being thought or perceived, for it is infinitely greater than the thought that thinks it. Thinking-through-rhythm reveals the future's transcendence, i.e., it discloses that beings and possibility cannot be thought together, and that beings require non-be-ing. The pulse of rhythm too has a violence at its core. For its throb can lay order and law to waste, by accommodating the unexpected at the very heart of its being and, what is more important, by allowing the unexpected to arise continuously, from moment to moment. Rhythm, like all artistic form, invites regulation, only to undo the word of the law and the law of the word. The disordering of thinking that results from being-in-relation to the unapprehensible is an effective antidote to the self's desire to establish its sovereignty. The disproportion between the act of thinking itself and what the act aims at that summons the regulatory agencies of objective perception, and only the utmost of resoluteness, issuing in attunement, can forestall the violence of the imposition of law.

Thinking-through-rhythm uncovers what the be-ing of actual beings excludes; it discloses what is rejected by the order that thought imposes on experience. It acknowledges what is excluded from objective perception, cherishes the unwanted and the destitute, for it appreciates that the insignificant and absurd is that which cannot be reconciled with the conception of the world of objects as a standing reserve available to technique. Thinking-through-rhythm acknowledges the future is for the lowly, for time will raise them. Thinking-through-rhythm discloses that abjection and destitution lie closer to be-ing than do the vaunted and the celebrated. That proximity accounts for the redemptive power of the outcast and the rejected; and that proximity also explains why a humble cinema, a *cinema povera* (better names for the "experimental cinema") is needed.

Narrative thinking arises from the desire for totalization, from the desire to reduce reality to an ultimate unity through panoramic overviews and dialectical syntheses. Thinking-through-rhythm is dispersive: only it, therefore, can intimate the ungraspable and incomprehensible character of what is alien to rational thinking. Only thinking-through-rhythm can intimate the power of Other that breaks through the homogeneity of the familiar world and, with its unlimited power, shatters its totality. Only thinking-through-rhythm can intimate the violent potential of this intruder, this Other that encroaches on my familiar world, but can neither be experienced nor reduced to an object of knowledge.

Thinking-through-rhythm makes the time of the flesh palpable. Thinking-through-rhythm incorporates in the body what *dianoia*, rational thought of sort that practised in mathematical and technical subjects, can never apprehend, viz., that which Plato, in the *Timaeus*, refers as "*khÇra*," an element that defies the logic of *logos*, for it is neither intelligible nor sensible. *KhÇra* (like earth) is an invisible element, that cannot be made present in a sensible form (i.e., cannot be made present-to-consciousness), yet it participates in the constitution of every worldly being – and does so even as it disrupts the process of its formation. "Earth," like "*khÇra*," is another word for what I ordinarily call "be-ing." Be-ing, I have said, is what is eclipsed by beings, for in order for a being to come forth, it is necessary for be-ing to withdraw into that darkness which is

its element, in order to leave a lighted clearing in which beings can come to be – and of *khÇra* Heidegger writes, “Might *khÇra* not mean: that which abstracts itself from every particular, that which withdraws, and in such a way precisely as admits and “makes place” for something else?” (Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp 50-1). In light, the objective world is severed from observer, but beyond the range of illumination, *khÇric* darkness reconciles what light has sundered. *KhÇric* darkness is where the endless reproduction by acroamatic logic of narrative comes to rest. “In every word, there is a blaze of light” – against this we plead, again: “Let there be darkness.”

Every work of art involves a contention between two impulses: toward form and against form. Every work of art exists simultaneously as, on the one hand, a disciplined structure, the order of which evolves out of a inner sense of the need for – or, better, a tropism toward – harmony and as, on the other hand, a process that exceeds all boundaries, refuses all containment, that dismembers syntax, destroys form and lays representation to ruin. The necessary union between form (i.e., configuration, or what is the same, the spiritual dimension of the work) and matter in a work of art manifests the necessary unity between the timeless and the time-bound, a unity that can only be maintained by the violence of law. But this violence condemns the be-ing of an artwork to restlessness, to the instability of the uncanny, for as we have seen, the poetic principle which orders the work of art (both in the sense of giving rise to it and in the sense of shaping it), because it appears uniquely in every one of its appearances, is supremely unstable. The unity of form and content, Hegel opined, exemplifies the mystery of the incarnation, through which spirit is turned inside out, in order to enter the material realm and to take on a material dynamism. But incarnation, we know, requires a sacrifice.

We cannot assess a work of art by its gestalt form because it is restless and unstable, because it is inhabited by an element that does violence to representation and perception, that is to say, by the uncanny. The idea that artwork is an achievement of form was the old conception of art, and it has wasted itself in its constant effort to repress the dynamic element left over from perception, to hold at bay that excess of unrealized possibility left behind as be-ing emerges as a being (as an object), to obviate that which language consigns to silence, to ward off the return of that which passes into nothingness as a thought is configured, to expel from sensation that excess which rises against language, against thought, and against representation, to destroy them. Faced by the unremitting violence that is characteristic of the repressed, it has exhausted itself in the constant effort at pacifying that is required of it – it has become spent, it has had its day. Now we assume that the power of the work of art is measured by its capacity to mime the dynamics of the power of be-ing. Form serves to focus thought in order to create an opening towards the power of be-ing – it does this by engendering a stillness that fosters the grace one requires to respond to the violence the power of be-ing unleashes. By focussing attention, it enables the elemental to lay established patterns of thought in ruin. Thus, form creates an opening for the violence of the elemental – and it does so in order to enable that violence to liberate us from our customary ways of perceiving.

Every image, because it speaks of what is too luminous to be apprehended has an affinity with nakedness. But the relation of imagery’s essential character with the nude body is more profound than this. Nudity makes us aware of the wisdom of modesty, which has its ground in the fact that our being is refractory to the light of analytic reason and available only to the super-rational understanding of the care human being solicits (a solicitation nudity renders more compelling). Nudity teaches us that our ordinary metaphorical system of historically-based rumination that privileges light over darkness is wrong: the strange intimacy of darkness that relates us to something we cannot apprehend makes darkness higher than light. Nudity flees the light, as be-ing slips away from the light of reason. Like nudity, be-ing seeks darkness as the

condition for revealing itself. What is revealed by the modesty that nudity desires is that the Other is constituted in mystery; and just as every image of a nude person discloses the essential nature of imagery by its concern with fecundity, so every image of a nude discloses the nature of imagery. For the subject of every image withdraws into the modesty of non-disclosure even while it assigns to a double (that which shines forth in the image) the role of disclosure. The image of the nude, like every image, compresses the absence of what it depicts into a material force apprehensible by a sensibility.

A image of a nude body informs us, too, that our being is not external, and so is not apprehensible by the senses either. The image of a nude person offers paradigmatic proof of the non-reciprocal character of relation that obtains not just between a representation and the object represented but even between visibility and being: just as objects give us knowledge of representations, but representations do not afford knowledge of objects, so too, while be-ing produces visibility, visibility affords no understanding of be-ing. Just as the object withdraws from representation, so too be-ing withdraws from visibility. It is that lack of reciprocity that makes for that peculiarity that the frankness and explicitness of that special form of visibility we call nudity conceals be-ing, that the greatest of intimacy conceals a most profound alterity.

A nude implores us to caress; but a caress acknowledges that we cannot close the divide across which the Other resides. In caressing, or in imagining caressing, we acknowledge that erotic relations are not really reciprocal relations as our sense of justice would have us believe. Caresses tell us that *eros* is bound into an unintelligible, unfathomable condition (and so a condition that cannot be reduced to signification), for they tell us that our most profound, most creative (“self-making”) relationships are to a being that not only is totally separate, but belongs to a different realm altogether. They tell us, then, that we are most deeply linked to what withdraws from us.

So profound is the gulf that separates us from the beings with which we form our most profound and most intimate relationships that our be-ing and that of the be-ing which, in soliciting us, creates us, belong to different orders of time. The status of the image makes this known to us as well, for, just as the image elicits expectation, so awareness of the Other (an awareness that, like all sensory experience belongs wholly to the immediate present) solicits a longing to give care to that which belongs wholly to the future. Thus here we encounter again that twisted temporality, in which what comes later creates what comes before. But only a twisted temporality would be appropriate to the meaning of flesh, which is the revelation that the visible turns upon itself and that a carnal unity of the sentient with the sensed is antecedent to representation. The longing expressed in the futurity of the image is evoked not simply by the Other’s voluptuousness (though it may be); rather the longing arises from all that separates me from the Other. The Other, speaking to me, in the present but from the future, constitutes the ground of time as process. What delights us in the erotic relation, and in the caress, is the tension, and so anticipation involved in sensing a relation sufficiently deep to constitute our identity, yet not reducible to an identity.

The cinema has an affinity for the faces and bodies – for the flesh of the other. We feel the other call out to us, to invite us to know her as an alike that is not alike. She calls out, invoking our desire, our sympathy, our hopes for an encounter. By the presence of an other, the film image calls out for a dialogue, and our inability to enter into a true dialogue with the other in the image – our inability either to integrate her into our world as real associate or to become a part of her world – makes us sense the gulf that separates what is closest to us.

The image of flesh, to which cinema is attuned, opens us onto the primordial realm which grants us being. The primordial grants us the recognition that the self and world unfold mutually. What accounts for this “togetherness” of self and world, of language and perception? It is,

surely, that beings are always already articulate – that is they are dis-jointed. Darkness is one, but beings are many; and because they are many, they are configured similarly to the way language is – that is, non-sensible similarities exist among them. Flesh is the medium through which these non-sensible similarities are revealed; flesh is the medium that opens us towards the world, for it is the medium through which that which addresses itself to us emerges. Through the earthliness of flesh, beings emerge as worldly (that is, as belonging to the “world-structured-by-language”), for incarnation is a condition for having impressions through one’s interaction with the world. Flesh reveals the prediscursive configurations that pronounce themselves silently in each mute thing, and in which our bodies participate; these configurations are active – they are prediscursive activities that lay good form to ruins, that disperse all consolidated *Gestalten*, that dismember all patterns. But these revelations are vouchsafed to us by virtue of flesh only through adopting this silent language’s manner of signifying. It is through conflict, discord, plurisemicity, irresolution, the refusal of closure that makes flesh felt (narrative, a form that achieved its present condition in the Enlightenment, invites none of these attributes). The cinema is disposed to flesh, and for this reason, the cinema should eschew narrative, and adopt rigorously plural – it should intensify the strife between the elements in the constellations that constitute it, by incorporating elements that are alien to one another. It should emphasize dynamism’s ability to dissolve whatever forms might pacify the strife between these elements.

“Flesh” is the name for the condition of our “be-ing between.” Awareness of flesh undoes the fiction that the reactionary forms of the dominant cinema are based on, the fiction of “outside spectator” (to use that term from Merleau-Ponty); repetition helps make the flesh evident, for repetition, like the flesh, is dynamized by passion – and it is passion that, ultimately, renders the sign mutable, unstable, labile, unsystematic (thereby rendering fatuous every hope for a project for a scientific semiology). Flesh subjects the sign to passion; and passion makes every perception an interpretation. Flesh imprints itself on all that we perceive – and on our body (the worldly representation of the earthly element) and the body of the object alike, indeed on our body and the body of the object mutually. Flesh is an archive of passion-forms that, without actually being them (for they are earthly elements), inform our decoding of things. Flesh makes every perception a communicative act. “Flesh” names the physical pregnancy that issues in perception.

Darkness is required to divulge the interweaving of language and matter in perception. Why does it require darkness to reveal this interpenetration? Because what blends language and matter together in perception is itself never perceived. The form of thinking which brings a work of art into being, however, lies much closer to the dark element than everyday thinking – scientific thinking or instrumental thinking – does. Accordingly, art has much to teach us about this essential togetherness of spirit and matter, form and content, language and perception, for which flesh is the primordial ground. Art is the consummation of language for it reveals there is, outside of language, no object of speech which language communicates. Similarly, there is no antecedent intention by which expression (or, better, configuration) can be limited, no external gauge by which it can be measured – we communicate *in* language, not *through* language. Language does not describe a pre-existing reality; rather, language transforms what stands before it, and through this transformation, summons beings to be-ing, and gives them membership in the world (i.e., the “world-structured-by-language”). Beings come into being through $\{ \{ \{ \{ \{ \} \} \} \}$, the home that harbours them. But this charity, as we have pointed out, is also a sacrifice, for it reduces be-ing to beings, potentiality to actuality, indefiniteness to definiteness.

Flesh is an infinite surface, on which an infinitude of terms can be inscribed – but though

it is infinite, it is bounded, for we can discover that there is that which language cannot say, or what is the same, that we cannot experience. In fact, there are an infinite number of these infinite surfaces. We call them collectively by the name “flesh,” which, then, must be both one and infinite in number. Flesh entwines itself with be-ing; for it is through flesh, which is the ground of the unity of the physical and the psychical, that consciousness arises out of matter, out of “earth,” really, and that thereby the world is erected. We cannot posit a single sensible thing without recognizing the role that flesh has in its disclosure, for flesh is the surface on which every inscription is inscribed. Flesh is prior to beings; yet, without beings, flesh cannot disclose its essence – Can you imagine a consciousness that has utterly withdrawn itself, a consciousness out of relation to anything and everything? The impossibility of imagining that is another reason why I describe flesh as an “*entre deux*,” and why I have concluded that it actualizes itself only in conjunction with the world.

The thinking that makes art belongs to the flesh. That is what spares art from being self-expression – self-expression that would eclipse the Infinite. The poetic principle is prior to all reflection, including self-reflection. The operation of the poetic is prior to thought, prior to reflection, prior even to the self. When the evangelist says, “Not I, but Thee in me, knows. . .,” he is acknowledging being possessed by this prior-to-self anonymity, by a grandeur that shatters the vessels of self. The flesh is one; all flesh *is* the same flesh – it is made one through the reciprocity of sense, that is, through an utterly anonymous and therefore common sensibility inhabiting all humanity. So far as artworks reach towards the flesh, they reach towards something that is common to all, something that is prior to the self. Self-expression concerns what separates one individual from another; cleaving to flesh reaches towards a numinousness that binds all together in an anonymous universality.

The elements of the primordial are connected to each other in a genuine time that I have called time of the flesh. So I have emphasized rhythm and rhyme and flow over good spatial *Gestalten*. Indeed, I believe that the cinema is first and foremost an art of time, and not an art of space; and that the emphasis on the spatial design of the image, more than on its dynamic flow, is the most deleterious feature of most current cinema pedagogy. The awareness of that time is elemental, is productive, that beings come forth in time only, and would not be without time, is a secret that cinema was invented to disclose.

This elemental factor with which every work of art engages is also what Dennis Lee refers to as “cadence.” He writes

Most of my time as a poet is spent listening into a luminous tumble, a sort of taut cascade. I call it “cadence.” If I withdraw from immediate contact with things around me, I can sense it churning, flickering, thrumming, locating things in more shapely relation to one another. It feels continuous, though I may spend days on end without noticing it.

What I hear is initially without words. But when a poem starts to come, the words have to accord with that energy or I can’t make a poem at all. (I speak of “hearing” cadence, but the sensation isn’t auditory. It’s more like sensing a constantly changing tremor with your body: a play of movement and stress, torsion and flex – as with the kinaesthetic perception of the muscles.) More and more I sense this energy as presence both outside and inside myself, teeming towards words.

The image of nude is a cause for exultation, because, in revealing a human being, it also reveals that human be-ing, as an opening towards disclosure, completes the work of creation by

enabling what is mute, or what became mute through the Fall (in which God's word curses the ground), to speak. For as Walter Benjamin stated, muteness is "the deep sadness of nature." "It is a metaphysical truth," Benjamin wrote, "that all nature would begin to lament if it were not endowed with language. . . . Speechlessness: that is the great sorrow of nature (and for the sake of her redemption the life and language of *man* – not only, as is supposed, of the poet – are in nature). . . . Lament, however, is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language; it contains scarcely more than the sensuous breath; and even where there is only a rustling of plants, in it there is always a lament. Because she is mute, she mourns."

Naming beings summons them into being by making them definite and distinct — that, I believe is why Benjamin proposed that "*in naming, the mental being of man communicates itself to God.*" For in doing this, human be-ing extends what the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?] inscribed at the time of the creation. So Benjamin concludes from considering the difference between human language and the language of things:

The quintessence of this intensive totality of language as the mental being of man is naming. Man is the namer, by this we recognize that through him pure language speaks. All nature, insofar as it communicates itself, communicates itself in language, and so finally in man. Hence he is the lord of nature and can give names to things. Only through the linguistic being of things can he gain knowledge of them from within himself — in name. God's creation is completed when things receive their names from man, from whom in name language alone speaks.

Aesthetic objects help us to understand a peculiarity in this discourse of things. Through aesthetic experience we have come to understand that art objects often concern the medium in which they are realized and the process of their coming-to-be. But the discourse of things has similar intentions: the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?] creates the world, and its icons, the objects of the world, speak of the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?]. Thus language of things speaks of the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?]; or, to put it otherwise, the language of objects speaks of the word, of language itself; that language speaks of language itself is another ontological revelation the aesthetic experience allows us to understand.

The cinema's mission, I contend, is to reveal the discourse of things. Cinematography, the duplication of the order of creation, helps human be-ing complete this work for the sake of which human be-ing is in nature. Nature finds consolation for lamentation in cinematography, and by reason of this consolation, it exults. Benjamin might have understood that order. He realized that inversion of the proposition, "because she is mute, nature mourns" is even truer: the sadness of nature makes her mute." Cinematography discloses the beauty of the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?]' inscription, and makes her glorify Him. To glorify the Creator is the reason of all exultation.

Nature, the order of things, speaks only mutely. Cinematography, the duplication of the order of things, translates this mute speech into an audible language. The secret language of things is vouchsafed only to those who can abide in that form of contemplation that allows the be-ing (the first actuality) of beings to enter into human be-ing, who can endure the violence of that form of charity which Keats called "negative capability." Hearing the mute language of things demands an openness, to allow the gifts of be-ing to come to presence – the receiving of which is the mission of photography. That practice perhaps is not creative, but is something higher, for it is a practice which enables the fugitive discourse of things to be preserved. This miracle

should not be shunned; rather but to be taken up as the wonder it is.

But even as the image, the “seen” form, enters into human be-ing in this wondering abiding with things, and even as the “unseen” but visible gestalt form enters into human be-ing at the same time, so too does an unseen and invisible principle. That unseen, invisible principle is an activity, an *energeia*, indeed a violence that actualizes all that becomes present. It operates according to an apophantic logic, as it discloses itself only by withdrawing. Its operates behind the constraints of repression, and is known only through the phantasmic constructions which it produces, and which, more often than they straightforwardly reveal, reveal it only by concealing it.

Against the present climate of despair, I continue to believe that language is grounded in truth. I cannot accept that nothing fastens words and things, that language is free play. To quote Benjamin again:

Hölderlin’s translations from Sophocles were his last work; in them meaning plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language. There is, however, a stop. It is vouchsafed to Holy Writ alone, in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed for the flow of language and the flow of revelation [that is language and revelation flow in the same direction in the Holy Writ]. Where a text is identical with truth or dogma, where it is supposed to be “the true language” in all its literalness and without the mediation of meaning, this text is unconditionally translatable. . . . Just as, in the original, language and revelation are one without any tension, so the translation must be one with the original in the form of the interlinear version, in which literalness and freedom are unity. For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings.

But the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?] also wrote all things, into the book of Creation. The discourse of things also constitute a Holy Writ. The cinema was born to make evident that visible objects constitute the signs of a language, and to do so simply by repeating them. Or, as Benjamin might have had it, translating them. Because it is without the mediation of meaning, this text is unconditionally translatable. “Cinematography” is the name for the immediate process of translating the discourse of things, of filling in the translation between the lines in the sacred text which the [?] [?] [?] [?] [?] composed – an activity that results in a sort of interleaving of the translated images of things with things themselves. In the course of making that translation, I too am translated, as Bottom realized.

“Let us think of love, whether we are speaking of divine or angelic or intellectual or psychic or natural love, as a certain unitive and continuative power which moves the higher things to provide for the lower, and again those of equal form to exercise a close influence upon one another, and those things which are placed lower to turn to those that are better and are placed above them.” The Pseudo-Dionysus, “Amatory Hymns.”