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Ejzenstejn, *Symbolisme* and the Occult.

Ejzenstejn, the paradigm of an engineer/designer, an enthusiast for science and technology—we know the description. But we might also be aware, however vaguely, that the description rests on a set of assumptions—assumptions that concern, *inter alia*, what science is. However, Russia in the first decades of the twentieth century understood science to be something different than we do. I want to consider briefly what sorts of ideas Ejzenstejn and the Constructivists might have harboured regarding science and its implication for design. In particular, I want to consider what it would be to be an engineer of human souls, and so I focus on the idea of the conception of the design and production of "the new human" and the ideas that gave shape to it.

We all know that Ejzenstejn's cinema was a cinema of effects, calculated (in the strictest sense of the word) to produce new human beings, endowed with a new sensibility, that would be the ideal citizen for the new Soviet state; this conception of the cinema drew Ejzenstejn to an interest in psychological issues. We all know, too, that Ejzenstejn's conception of the cinema began with a notion of the effectivity of the attraction, which he defines as "any aggressive moment in the theatre," that is, "any element if it the subjects the audience to emotional or logical influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to provoke certain emotional shocks in the spectator in their proper order within the whole." Pavlov is usually cited as the psychologist whose ideas swayed Ejzenstejn towards this notion of the attraction. Pavlov was an influence, but the ideas of another pioneering psychologist, whose influence in Russian was enormous, were just as important. I refer to Gustav Fechner, a versatile *Naturforscher*, who performed the first rigorous experiments in psychology.

Gustav Fechner developed a law that states that the intensity of a sensation varies with the natural logarithm of its physical stimulus. That is, he proposed an empirical finding that relates sensation to stimulus, mental effect to physical cause. His work began with the recognition that sensation could not be measured directly, but only indirectly, through gauging the stimulus that gives rise to it. Accordingly, he needed a way of correlating a sensation, an ideal phenomenon, with the physical stimulus that gives rise to. He took a clue from E.H. Weber, who had observed what many now learn from looking at VU meters on audio recorders and apertures on photographic equipment: that the greater the stimulus, the greater any change in the stimulus must be for us to notice a difference. Weber, that is to say, observed that the rate of change in response varies with the magnitude of the stimulus. So a "just noticeable difference" (a "jnd") in sensation is given by the differential equation: the constant, $jnd = \delta R / R$ (where **R** is the magnitude of the stimulus (*Reiz*). Fechner generalized from this, holding that if the equation holds for a jnd, it must also hold for any small increment in sensation. So he proposed that any change in sensation, $\delta S = c \delta R / R$ (where **c** is simply a constant of proportionality). Integrating, rearranging, and taking **r** to be the unit of **R**, we get

$$S = c \ln R.$$

This is Fechner's famous "psycho-physical equation." Its form must have resembled that of the equations that Ejzenstejn had in mind when he proposed calculating the effects of his aggressive moments. Indeed it may even have been the basis for the formulae he hoped to

use, for Fechner's work was well known in Moscow in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The form of the equation is remarkable, for it states an identity between ideal and material phenomena. Thus, a core idea of Eizenstejn film aesthetics, the idea that the physical phenomenon, the attraction, results in a determinable magnitude of sensation was exactly the point of the Fechner's ideas about the sensations. The idea of the artist as an "engineer of human souls" arises out a similar notion of a psychophysical correlation to that which formed the core idea of Fechner's research program.

Fechner was a pioneer of empirical psychology, and his 1860 book, *Elemente der Psychophysik*, which set out the conclusions that he arrived through investigations into sensations that resulted from lifting weights, into visual brightness, and into tactual and visual distance, promulgated, as he said, the "exact science of the functional relations or relations of dependency between body and mind." The work Fechner conducted in his laboratory was painstaking, and *Elemente der Psychophysik* showed him to be a sober and scrupulous researcher, with real talent for conceiving and constructing experiments and for formulating mathematical models of findings those experiments produced.

There was another aspect of Fechner's work that was less rigorously scientific, judged by the contemporary scientific protocols. The central idea of Fechner's research program, that mental and physical phenomena could be equated, suggests a continuity between the inner and outer realms such as that which the mystics and the occultists discuss. Fechner followed up on this suggestion in a rather extreme manner. Though he was committed to empirical investigation, this commitment was strictly methodological, not ontological—Fechner's ontology was not restricted by publically observable entities. Indeed Fechner was a fierce critic of the materialist outlook of his time, which he condemned as the *Nachtansicht*, (the nocturnal view), and a major portion of his life work was devoted to the advocacy of a new spiritual *Tagesansich* (a diurnal view). He published a number of books on spiritual types: the first in 1836, *Das Büchlein vom Leben nach dem Tod* (*The Book of Life after Death*); the second, in that fateful year, 1848, *Nanna oder das Seelenleben der Planzen* (*Nanna, or the Spiritual Life of Plants—Nanna was the Norse goddess of flowers*); three years later he published *Zend-Avesta, oder über die Dinge des Himmels und des Jenseits* (*Zend-Avesta [the revelation of the word] or, concerning the things of Heavens and the Time to Come*), in which he argued that consciousness exists in all things, that our universal mother, the earth, is a being akin to us, but more perfect, and that the soul cannot die, because all being is conscious; and in 1861, *Über die Seelenfrage*, in which he exhorted the public, *Steh' auf!*—"Get up," or "Get out of your bed"; in 1863, he brought out a fifth, *Die drei Motive und Gründe des Glaubens* (*The Three Motives and Bases for Belief*); and in 1879, his exposition of his convictions about the struggle between diurnal and the nocturnal views of reality, *Die Tagesansich gegenüber der Nachtansicht*.

Fechner spent fourteen years (1851–1865) on his psychophysics, a period that carried him into his sixties. As many do, he then turned his investigations away from his professional, career concerns and towards his personal interests. He spent the next eleven years (1865–1876) founding "experimental aesthetics." His scientific bent led him to the attempt to approach art through discerning empirically the laws that govern aesthetic experience, rejecting those Hegelian inspired methods that approach art "from above," through ideas about art, beauty, and style, and instead working from below, by considering our actual experience of artworks. He was convinced that comparison of many aesthetic experiences would allow us to formulate general laws (even though the rigour of those laws might have to be somewhat attenuated by the variations between one individual's experience and another's). Towards the end of formulating general laws of aesthetic experience, Fechner introduced the notion of "*Wohlfälligkeit*," to refer

to an object's being adapted to give pleasure in being perceived. His ideas about how the object was adapted to perception were profoundly Pythagorean: the eye would respond to an object with pleasure according to system of relationships within the objects, relationships that could be stated mathematically in terms of proportions. Fechner's key example was a phenomenon that impressed Fechner as much it impressed many other nineteenth and early twentieth century art theorists, *viz.*, the Golden Section. That famous ratio was the topic of Fechner's first paper in the field of experimental aesthetics, published in 1865. In it, Fechner maintained that it was demonstrable that when the eye perceived an object as having parts that are such that the magnitude of the smaller part of an object to the larger part is the same ratio as the magnitude of that the larger part has to the whole, then (other factors being favourable) the mind will react to the object with pleasure.

Ejzenstejn too was interested in the Golden Section and generally in Pythagorean applications to aesthetics. Of course, that interest fits none too well too well with other aspects of Ejzenstejn's theoretical work. For, if the eye responds to such mathematical relation, the eye responds to the object immediately and directly. Our pleasure is not determined (or, at least, is not exclusively determined) by social experience or by our previous experiences with aesthetic objects as Ejzenstejn generally maintains it is. We respond directly to the form of the object—for this reason, Fechner referred to such forms as the Golden Section as forms of "direct pleasantness" ("*direkte Wohlfälligkeit*"). But the proposition that there is a level of perception more fundamental than those that operate influence of the social process contravenes the metaphysical principles of Ejzenstejn's aesthetics. Nonetheless, it appealed strongly to Ejzenstejn, and provides a justification for his frequent recourse to mathematical models; I suggest the reason it appealed to Ejzenstejn is its association with heterodox ideas whose role in Ejzenstejn's *oeuvre* I shall soon consider.

Fechner's psychophysical psychology engendered considerable interest in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of twentieth century. A German chemist, Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1932) transformed it into a theory of a psychophysical or nervous energy, by claiming, in occult fashion, that energy, not matter, was the basic principle of reality. Ostwald developed a theory of Energeticism which asserted that reality was nothing more than energy in the various states of transformation. Ostwald's cosmology was monistic, for he claimed that energy is the sole primal substance, and is eternal for it can neither be created nor destroyed. Ostwald became obsessed with conserving energy, and using it only to some purpose. He was especially concerned that proper use be made of the holy energy given off by the sun; in time he became a sun worshiper and eugenics as means to perfect human being. His concern with the conservation of energy implied too that he treated sex exactly as the Rosicrucians do, as a force that humans must preserve. Ostwald's concern with the conservation of energy put him out of sympathy with ideas about the redemptory beneficence of the female principle such as his well-known follower Solov'ev taught. It also convinced him that the future being that evolution would bring forth would be asexual, a conviction that, later, would be evident artistic representations of the new human such as El Lissitzky's.

Stimulated by Ostwald's work, a Moscovite psychiatrist, Naum undertook to investigate this psycho-physical energy. In 1904, Kotik published a book entitled *The Emanation of Psychophysical Energy* (German edition, *Die Emanation der psycho-physischen Energie*, 1909), which argued that thinking acts are followed by an emission of special kind of energy. It also proposed that thinking is both mental and physical in character. As physical phenomenon it is an energy that circulates in the human body from the brain to the extremities and back again, and finally accumulates on the surface of the body, penetrates that air with difficulty, and physical

objects with even greater difficulty; and the flows from a body with a stronger psychic charge to a body with negative psychic charge. As a mental phenomenon, it directly enters into other brains and produces the same images there as in the brain of the person who originally conceived it. This energy allows thoughts to be conveyed telepathically; in higher concentration it can be used for mass suggestion. As odd as the idea of telepathic communication seems to us, whose ideas of scientific rigour are very different from the those of Russians of the first decade of the twentieth century, the idea of telepathic communication was astonishingly widespread and interested Maxim Gorki, amongst others. The notion that the brain emits physically measurable radiation—a notion referred to as “brain radio” (a term with wonderful resonance of Dziga Vertov’s terms “radio ear” and “kino eye”)—was the foundation for many research programs. relation such ideas to the cinema, and their relevance to how Soviet artists conceived the cinema, is striking—one of the appeals of the cinema was that it was a machine that radiated mass suggestion.

It was largely on account of the strength of the Symbolist movement in Russia that these occult ideas had such widespread appeal. For example, the poet Andrej Belyj, who was commanded considerable interest in the early years of the Soviet regime, conception of language was permeated by heterodox beliefs. A word, Belyj stated, is a “conductor” that “connects two unintelligible essences: the space which is accessible to my vision, and that inner sense vibrating mutely inside me that I provisionally call . . . time.” The poetic word serves as a connecting agent between the poet’s inner “speechless, invisible world swarming with subconscious depth: and the “speechless, senseless world” of extrapersonal realities. Thus, words conjure up a “third world.” Indeed, if the French Symbolists maintained that the poetic symbol connects, through correspondence, a higher realm beyond space and time and the ordinary realm, the Russian Symbolists characteristically maintained the poetic language connects the inner world to the realm of empirical fact—it connects, that is to say, the world awareness of which intuition once granted to the world of which the senses inform us. The similarities to Ejzenstejn’s remarks on montage and inner speech, his ideas about which he illustrates with examples from *An American Tragedy* (though he probably really intended his readers to think of the Joyce), are telling; but that Belyj develops these ideas in reflection on hieroglyphs—not on the Chinese written characters, as Ejzenstejn did, but rather on ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs—makes the affinity all the more evident.

In common with other Symbolists, Belyj believed that word—or, at least the poetic word—possesses magic powers. For Belyj, naming is a magic act, by which the artist controls the hostile and unintelligible world that presses in from all sides; and the connections amongst words are essentially charms. Despite the filiation of these ideas from natural magic, these ideas are not so remote from Ejzenstejn’s scientific and technological enthusiasms—after all, technology, too, is a way of controlling the world, and the gnostic character of moderns’ faith in technology has been brilliantly illuminated by the philosopher Eric Voegelin. And Ejzenstejn’s commitment to the propagandistic use of film can fairly be characterized as a belief in art as magic (to adopt a phrase from the great philosopher of art R.S. Collingwood): Andrej Belyj and Konstantin Bal’mont might have believed that verse is directed towards the goal of changing nature, but Ejzenstejn maintained that film was directed towards the task of changing consciousness and, thereby, changing society. Like the Symbolists, Ejzenstejn was convinced of the possibility of charming the new world into existence. What is more, Ejzenstejn’s theory of montage devoted considerable attention to the question of how montage could transform natural existence into an artistic de vice.

Wasn’t Ejzenstejn a hard-nosed scientist, an artist who approached the construction of

an artwork much as one might approach the installation of a town's water system? ideas, one must admit, are somewhat. The reader would be justified in wondering whether such ideas had any role in Ejzenstejn's thought whatsoever. Such doubts about the role that heterodox ideas played might be dispelled by considering that Ejzenstejn's carried his belief about the pragmatics of artworks, according to which physical responses can produce effects of higher order (emotional and intellectual effects) that will reform the person, beyond any degree that any scientist or engineer could endorse: he maintained that scientific means could afford us knowledge what the precise physical stimuli must be to produce the reformed person—an extravagant notion for which one would be hard-pressed to discover any scientific basis. We are clearly in the realm of magic here, not sober empirical science.

For people living in the first two decades of the twentieth century, for whom moving pictures were themselves a miracle, the connections between the cinema and marvels of unseen waves were many. The earliest cinema audiences, in fact, attended the exhibitions primarily to see the newest technological spectacle. The attraction was not so much the actual film that was shown, but the novelty of seeing of moving-pictures; and these pictures were often presented in the context of technologies related to the cinema, X-ray and microscopy. Micro-cinematography exerted a considerable fascination, and not the least because to its connection with the topic, pollution: in 1903, using pseudo-microcinematography Cecil Hepworth made a film with the revealing title, *This Unclean World*; a Pathé film of 1905, *Le Déjeuner du savant*, intercuts a scientist having lunch with repulsive close-ups of microbes; a Biography comedy of 1907, *Love Microbe*, reprises the same theme, but treats it in a lighter vein. Undoubtedly such films exploited potentials inherent in the cinema. But it should not be thought that the desire to demonstrate the potentials of the new medium alone accounted for these micro-cinematographic works, for the same topic was also treated in works realized in other media. For example, in 1922, the year of his death, the poet Xlebnikov wrote, perhaps out of presentiment of his death, a dream play, *Pruzhina chakhotki (The Tuberculosis Spirochete)*, depicting the activities of a blood cell and coil-shaped bacterium that causes consumption. On this matter of contagion, one should recall that the topic of pollution is a favourite gnostic *topos*, for it can easily be taken as evidence of the corruptness of matter.

The fascination humans have with pollution was not the basis for artists' interest in microphotography—microphotography also appealed because of its apparent capacity to render matter transparent, somewhat after the fashion of Röntgen rays. As evidence of this appeal and of the influence that micro-cinematography had on other arts, one can point to the play that Nikolai Evreinov mounted in a St. Petersburg cabaret in 1914, *V kulisakh dushi (In the Side-Scenes of the Soul)*, a short piece that took place entirely inside the body: The stage formed a diaphragm. Above this was a large heart, suspended by an aorta and beating between 55 and 125 times a minute, surrounded by lungs contracting and expanding 14 to 18 times a minute, and vertebrae at the centre of the backdrop, and nerves stretched over the diaphragm. The actors moved through their viscera, with Mikhail Bobyshev's sets conveying their dynamics of the emotions. Using a giant rendering of the inside of the body as a stage set invites other associations: of the return to the womb, a subject to which Ejzenstejn devoted an autobiographical essay. What is more, occult science claims that there is a chamber in the left ventricle, near the apex, where a little atom, called the "seed atom," exists. The force within the seed atom moves the heart and keeps the organism alive. All other atoms in the body must vibrate in tune with this atom. The forces of the seed atom have been immanent in every dense body ever possessed by the particular Ego to whom it is attached, and upon it are inscribed all the experiences of that particular Ego in all its lives. From the moment we are born, and

continuing throughout our entire lives, the ether drawn into our lungs when we breathe carries with it a complete picture of our outside environment, of our actions, and of the actions of other people who are with us. This record is impressed upon the seed atom in the heart. Thus, all that we say or do, from the best to the worst, becomes written in our heart in indelible characters. This record is our life history, and its individuality is as indispensable to our evolution as the heart itself is indispensable to our survival in the physical world.

And the characters themselves? They represented the division of the person familiar from occult thought: the Emotional Self, the Rational Self, and the Subconscious Self. The occult context of this division is striking, for Rosicrucianism too speaks of the Intellectual soul will be absorbed by the life spirit in the seventh Revolution of the Vulcan Period, the Emotional soul will be absorbed by the human spirit in the fifth Revolution of the Vulcan Period and the Conscious soul will be absorbed by the Divine Spirit in the seventh Revolution of the Jupiter Period..

Belyj and the Symbolists also deliberated on the capacities of the word to transform inner reality, to charm a new subjective world into existence, and this brought them to consider the parallels between art and telepathic communication, and more generally the idea of making thought palpable—visible. This led them to that association which was so frequently remarked upon in the cinema's early years, between the cinema and Röntgen's enchanting discovery. With the development of the X-ray arose the fantasy of a human being with enhanced vision that could penetrate barriers, of a person with x-ray eyes, as the movie title has it. Consider early films on the topics: Méliès *Les Rayons Röntgen* associated magic and X-rays, while his film, *Le Monstre* (1903), showed an Egyptian pharaoh performing magical tricks with his wife's skeleton, an image to which X-rays had given special significance; Emile Cohl's *Les Lunettes Féerique*, which shows a family gathering, with each person putting on X-ray spectacles that reveal whatever passes through the wearer. Both Stanislaw Prysbyzewsky and Maxim Gorky imagined that X-rays made it possible to see the soul—to actually see thought. Stanislaw Prybyszewsk wrote

They were sitting face to face. They were looking into each other's eyes and were totally alien and indifferent to each other. A beam of light dwelt in his eyes, something similar to Röntgen's rays: he could see through her and through himself, he could see something emanating from inside their souls, he could see their hidden selves coming closer to each other and looking at each other with so much curiosity and desire.

And, in a pseudonomously published essay concerning X-rays, Gorki wrote

Imagine that someone wants to know you better.

He takes a picture of your skull, and if this skull contained some thoughts, the negative will reveal them as black blots, or snakelike spirals, or some other unattractive form.

If he wishes, he can try to photograph your conscience, and the negative will also show all the excrescences and blots.

In a word, every person will be seen through now, and however thick and impenetrable your skin might be, the new light makes it transparent like glass.

X-rays make thought visible; the cinema is the sister of X-rays; the cinema too can

transmit thought. This suppressed deduction helped shape the Soviet filmmakers' ideas about montage. Cinema is an occult tool: the technology of cinema, they believed, made available a means of telepathic communication. This idea had a role in shaping the Soviet filmmakers' ideas about film montage, for montage construction enables the cinema to become the mimesis of human thought (as Ejzenstejn's preliminary notes for a film on Dreiser's *American Tragedy* makes evident), which thoughts the projection of the film could than transmit. But, beyond its general influence on the idea of montage, the idea that the cinema is the sister of X-rays might have had a more concrete result, that Yuri Tsivian points out: Ejzenstejn's film *Strike* (1924) offers a sequence in which the faces of police spies dissolve into the faces of animals. In a conversation with Alexander Belenson, Ejzenstejn explained that he liked the technique of dissolves when he made *Strike* because of their ability to "bare the essence of things."

The X-ray was a machine that could render matter transparent. In its intrusive immodesty, which rendered privacy obsolete, the X-ray was akin to the cinema. Such were the ideas that impelled Ejzenstejn to the project to the project he worked on after filming *The Battleship Potemkin*. Between 1926 and 1930, Ejzenstejn developed a script based on the kinship between the cinema and X-rays, for an avant-garde parody of American living, entitled *Glass House*. The action was set in a multi-storeyed building made entirely of glass—glass walls, glass ceilings, glass floors, glass windows. Ejzenstejn's described the impression he hoped the building would give.

The transparent building should look like a person under Röntgen rays. The sole opaque object in the glass house, the elevator (a black iron box with lights like gloomy all-seeing eyes) looks like the backbone or the key in the pocket [of this X-rayed figure].

And of course, the ultimate violations of privacy are visited on the inhabitants. Ejzenstejn's notes juxtapose the clothed and the nude, as well as mechanical and human flesh. "The mechanical man sent to rape the nudiste girls. The nudiste chief succumbs [sic] with the tailor's daughter." Ejzenstejn even claimed that the project was to be about "graduation in nudity." But the end of privacy can also mean the advent of communality, for which nudity serves as a metaphor:

L'Idéaliste "en Jesus-Christ."

Looks like [the poet] Nadson. But blond and wearing horn-rimmed spectacles. Cloven little beard. His "enlightenment: He preaches. [As he does so], his luxuriously clad audience becomes naked. Gradually. "Bare your souls." A transitional stage is particularly good, when all that is left on gentlemen are starched ruffs. Nothing except adornments on the ladies. A transition from *recueillement religieux* to erotic curiosity . . . Of course, all this [should be treated as] *symbolique*, [in the same manner] as the transparency of the walls in the house.

Whence do these "*nudiste*" ideas arise? One source is found in the strange and wondrous "cosmicism" of Nikolai Federov (1828-1903). Federov was an extremely curious figure who worked in the library of Rumiantsev Museum, and was said to be familiar with the contents of every one of its holdings. Perhaps because he was the bastard child of an aristocratic father and a neighbour woman, he was predisposed towards asceticism—he lived in a closet-sized room at the back of the museum, slept on a humpback trunk, wore the same clothes winter and

summer, refused all promotions, and gave away most of his meagre salary to the poor. He was also among the most erudite people of his generation, and attracted an extraordinarily talented group of people to him—among them Fedor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy and Vladimir Solov'ev. Federov published no books in his lifetime, though after his death, two disciples, N.P. Peterson and V.A. Kozhevnikov published a two volume edition of discourse he had dictated, with the title *Filosofia obshchago dela* (*Philosophy of the Common Task*). The book was printed in an edition of 480, everyone stamped "not for sale," and placed in institutional libraries and the libraries of whoever requested them).

Federov's thought was eclectic, and far-ranging; however it is ultimately dominated by a single theme, the annihilation of death. He proposed that the common task of humanity was to overcome death, and that this was to be done by collecting the dispersed atoms of the dead and, guided by the loving recollection of the departed, by reassembling them. This was all to be accomplished through technological means: Federov advocated colonizing space (so as to accommodate the increased population when the dead were raised), harnessing solar energy, regulating climate, and irrigating Arabia with icebergs that would be brought down from the Arctic. He also foresaw the technological reproduction and remaking of the human body, through cloning and use of prosthetic organs.

Federov's secretness about his sources makes it difficult to determine the provenance of his ideas. It is reasonable to say, however, that the configuration of the themes in his writing has a gnostic shape: one belief-system that Federov frequently cites with approval is religion of the ancient Iranians outlined in Zend-Avesta, and Zoroastrianism is generally considered one of the components that went into the making of ancient gnosticism. Furthermore, the great twentieth-century philosopher Eric Voegelin has written brilliantly on the gnostic character of our conception of technology; and in no body of thought than Federov's is that tendency of modern thought carried to a farther. Like Ejzenstejn's, Federov's thought was an unstable mixture of science and religion—in Federov's case, that mixture fuelled a rather striking enthusiasm for technology for Federov maintained that science should take on what was formerly the business of magicians and sorcerers, that is to say the conquest of natural law, the transcendence of space and time, the advance into new dimensions of reality, and, above all else, the victory over death.

Rosicrucian convictions, which were widespread in the Russia of Federov's times, probably had a role in shaping Federov's ideas. Rosicrucianism teaches that there is only one force in the universe, namely, the Power of God, which He sent forth through space in the form of a Word—not a single word, but the Creative Fiat. This Creative Fiat, by its sound vibration (and, again, the term vibration was central in Symbolist thought), marshaled the millions of chaotic atoms into many shapes and forms, from starfish to star, from microbe to man; in fact, all things that constitute and inhabit the universe. The syllables and sounds of this Creative Word, Federov averred, are being sent forth, one after another through the ages. They create new species and evolve the older ones. All this goes on according to the thought and plan conceived in the Divine Mind even before the dynamic force of creative energy had first been sent out into the abyss of space. And if Federov proposed that love guides the synthesis of the dispersed atom, the Rosicrucians maintain a similar conception: a Rosicrucian prayer asks, "Our heavenly Father, according to Thy will, may the Love-Widsom Principle of Divine Power eradicate discord and establish harmony and universal peace in the hearts and affairs of men."

The idea for which Federov is best known is that of the immanent universal resurrection, which, in characteristic gnostic fashion he averred would be accomplished by human effort. Federov plumped for the unstinting allocation resources to accomplish this ultimate task. He

maintained that technology had made universal salvation possible. The issue of universal salvation had been a thorny one in the Orthodox Church, as in most other Christian denominations. Matthew (25:31) predicts a Last Judgment, at which God “will separate people into two groups as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” On the other hand, fundamental to Christian teaching is the proposition that forgiveness must be universal. Will the judgment at the end of time extend forgiveness to all, or will it distinguish the saved from the damned? The official doctrine of the Orthodox church is that the latter will be case; but since Patristic times some thinkers (e.g., Origen and Gregory of Nyssa) have maintained that the former possibility will, or at least might, be realized. The philosophers who provided the groundwork for the Symbolist movement, Nikolai Federov and Vladimir Solov’ev, insisted that universal salvation was the only alternative, that it would be contrary to God’s plan for humankind for only a select group to be saved. Federov’s cosmicism depicts the universe as unfolding in an evolutionary process, from matter, through consciousness, to perfect self-consciousness. Thus, one feature of Federov’s notions about the role of human effort in salvation departed from the esoteric doctrines of the gnostics: Federov portrayed the progress of history in Hegelian terms, as advancing not through the knowledge that particular individuals possess, as the gnostics did, but rather through the development of the universal, or cosmic mind. Accordingly, Federov maintained that Enlightenment comes by all, through all, and for the sake of all.

Federov’s cosmicism was markedly anthropocentric, a feature that linked it with the famous Russian God-builder movement of the early twentieth-century. The anthropocentric roots of Federov’s cosmicism are reflected in the concept of “the new human.” Like so many late nineteenth century cosmologies, cosmicism proposed an evolutionary conception of reality, but one in which human being played a key role. According to the cosmicist conception, the human world is a site of transition between the biosphere (the sphere of living matter) and the noosphere (the sphere of reason), since humans are living matter endowed with reason. Cosmic evolution depends on human beings to reach its goal, which is the perfection of total integration—during the final stages of the evolutionary process the whole of humankind must be united into a single organism, a higher planetary consciousness capable of guiding further development, of guiding and perfecting the universe, of overcoming disease and death, and finally bringing forth an immortal human race. This would be accomplished through the effects of aesthetic experience.

His belief in the role that of the aesthetic transformation led Federov to an issue which had a large role in the film theories of Ejzenstejn and Vertov, the production of new bodies, suited for the future. Art, Federov argued, lies at the intersection of material and ideal reality, and it is capable of the transfiguration of the human body—science will resurrect the bodies of the departed, Federov predicted, but art will restructure them. But Ejzenstejn too, in “Laocoön,” discussed the idea of breaking a person into pieces and scattering his parts around, leaving it to the reader, through an application of “Osiris principle” would bring him to life as whole person.

Federov’s ideas on the transformed human being of the future resurrection made possible the wide acceptance, among Russian artists of the early twentieth century, of the conviction that the technology that the historical process had produced ultimately would transform the human body, endowing it with increased sensory capacities. That idea is an element of the theories of both Dziga Vertov (with its celebration of the technology as latest step in the evolution of sensory devices) and Sergei Ejzenstejn (consider the text “Laocoön”) as well as the 1913 ballet *Victory over the Sun* mounted by Malevich & Co. The idea of the perfection of human nature was widespread. Mikhail Vrubel’ insisted on the need for supplementary limbs,

Pavel Filonov argued that dietary practices could result in greater visual acuity, and Matjushin developed a conception of Zor-Ved, or Expanded Viewing (recall how the intelligensia had responded to the discovery of X-rays), to which his painting and microtonal music were linked. Learning that the common housefly has a very wide radius of sight, while a dog has a very narrow one brought Matjushin to reflect on the natural variability of optical phenomena, and those reflections led him to conclude that human beings could expand their optical radius. But this expansion was not to be effected simply by improvements to the eye itself: Matjushin maintained that there were dominant optical reflexes in the soles of the feet and the back of the head, and that these reflexes could be awakened, allowing one to paint “landscapes from all points of view.” This extravagant hypothesis of circumvision was subjected to further investigation, throughout the 1910s and 1920s, but Matyushin’s colleagues Boris Ender and Pavel Mansurov, and at the Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences (RAKhN) in Moscow.

Others artists were less patient—their notions about the remaking of the human body were more revolutionary than evolutionary, and they decided to engage in ways of redesigning the body that would have immediate results. Thus in 1912–4, a number of cubo-futurists, including David Burljuk, Goncharova, Laryonov, and Il’ia Zdanevich mounted performance art works *avant la lettre*, by painting their faces and bodies with codes, cryptic messages, and ceremonial images of animals and birds, along with rayonist forms and parading their decorated through the streets. They explained their activities in a 1913 manifesto, “Why We Paint Ourselves,” in which they noted their connection with Filippo Marinetti and Umberto Boccioni, and they proposed that their body art transformed the body into a hyperaccelerated phenomenon. The strategy of taking a “primitive” form (in their cases, from American Aboriginal and African body painting, from Polynesian tincturing, and from Ancient Scythian tattooing), and transforming it into a technological phenomenon was a common device of these painters whose commitment was sometimes to Primitivism and sometimes to Futurism. What made the ancient practices attractive was that they were means for contacting divinity, and that this impulse was preserved within the technological form.

Thinkers such as Lev Bakst had expounded on the importance of the body, which he idealized. Indeed the Russian artists of the period took a considerable interest in the idealized body. This idealization took several forms. One was the interest in body amplification and the development of the body through exercise and eurhythmics, whose Utopian motivations are well-known. Another was the fashioning of new, technologically improved body—that idea, most readers will know, was an idea that appealed to El Lissitzky, Sergej Ejzenstejn, and Dziga Vertov, amongst others. The third was recovery of the innocent prelapsarian body. Thinkers went to great efforts to discover what must be done is to recover the pristine body. A common proposal was the practice of nudity, which would enable one to be comfortable in one’s body. The idea was not utterly shocking—the paganism that underlies Russian Orthodoxy was more tolerant of nudity than the Roman church; and Czar Nicholas II, in his time, had not only removed all restrictions on social nudity, but he was also an avid participant and believer in nudist ideals. He thought that nudity could help preserve and improve the health of society. The nudism that Mjasodev expounded attracted many converts, including Leonid Andreev and Maksimilan Voloshin; it even received a degree of official recognition when the first Soviet Nudists organized “Evenings of the Denuded Body” in Moscow in 1922, to celebrate nudity as the truly democratic manner of presenting oneself. Among artists, there were three Nicholaj’s—Nicholaj Evejnov, Nicholaj Kul’bin and Nicholaj Kalmokov—whose collaborations were based on this conviction. Between 1910 and 1912 the playwright Nicholaj Evejnov and the painter Nicholaj Kul’bin collaborated on the manifesto “Nudity on Stage,” which celebrated the expressive

potential of the naked body; during the same period Ejevnov collaborated with the painter Nikolaj Kalmakov on a version of *Salomé* whose set was to represent intimate details of the female anatomy—and though the play was banned, Kalmakov continued to produce paintings for the set, and signed them with a stylized phallus. They were not alone in their interests in presenting nudes on stage. In 1914, the director of the Chamber Theatre of Moscow, Alexander Tairov, mounted a production of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, with designs by Pavel Kuznetsov, which presented painted nude bodies on stage, and proclaimed that nudity should be accepted as a distinctive and joyous theatrical costume. Lev Bakst, too, proposed putting nudes on stage.

Among the most dedicated believer of the principle that nudity had redemptive potentials was the painter, boxer and life model, Ivan Mjasodev. Mjasodev's activities fused the idealization of the body through corporeal amplification to the idealization of the pristine body. In 1912 issued his *Manifesto of Nudity*, declaring that the naked body is preferable to the clothed one.

As Burljuk, Goncharova, Laryonov et. al's remarks about the hyperaccelerated body reveal, the idealized body was a body of energy; and notions about energetics that animated artistic efforts to put nudes on display have parallels in Federov's system. Federov himself, probably on the basis of the occult conviction that reality, is ultimately energy assumed that nervous energy was identical with electricity and that psychological thought processes could be transmitted by means of electric current. The *fedorovtsy*, Federov's followers, extended Federov's discussion of the extension of human capacity into plans to increase humans' occult powers—to transform nervous energy into light and heat and to use telepathy as forms of human communication. These ideas about telepathy have resonances in Ejzenstejn and Vertov's writings (though nowhere in their theories do these ideas reach the extreme they do in the writings of the physiologist Sergei Beknev, who, in 1923, suggested that in the future human being would be able to turn themselves into generators of heat and light whenever they wished, and could, by thought, directly change the structure of matter). But the idea that consciousness can act on consciousness is also found in Rosicrucianism, which maintains the invisible bodies of man that they are acted upon by Will.

Federov's stress on the human effort's playing the key role in salvation is typical of gnostic thinking—our striving can carry us beyond the world as it is, to bring forth the world as it ought to be. In its ideas about bringing forth the ideal kingdom, Federov's cosmicism simply reworks the gnostic ideas of self-perfection and self-deification, including the idea of the resurrection of the dead, which has a long tradition in occult and gnostic thought. The idea that science can uncover powerful psychic-cosmic energies so fundamental to Federov's redemptionist program also has gnostic provenance. But the gnostic shape of Federov's thought is most evident in gnostic technologism evident Federov's ideas on transmutation. Solov'ev, writing to his "dear teacher" asks how, if the dead were merely to be reconstituted as they were, they would avoid killing each other, and even devouring each other, in the ideal world to come. In this exchange, Solov'ev maintained that the intervention of the grace was necessary if the resurrected humans would be free of the desire to visit harm on one another, while Federov, true to his gnostic principles, rejected any suggestions that a miraculous transformation, effected through grace, was necessary. No spiritual transformation is necessary, Federov argued, for only an aesthetic transformation can effect this.

The concept of transformation was fundamental to Federov's thought. But the Soviet montage theorists held closely related transformationalist ideas—Sergej Lutkevich, a film director who worked with Ejzenstejn in the early 1920s on theatre projects commented rather dismissively on the project of identifying the essence of cinema

Nowhere is there such a search for a philosopher's stone, so much quasi-medieval Scholasticism, as in the problem of cinema theory. Working as they were in a new art, the artists and innovators really needed to recognize and establish its specific quality. In its time it was montage which was named the philosopher's stone of cinema, and it was furiously defended, as much in theory as in practice, as the major element in the specificity of the new art.

It is in fact in the concept of transformation that the occult and Symbolist provenance of Eizenstein's is most clear. Every film student, and every student of modern aesthetics, realizes that Eizenstein's conception of one was one in which the individual object-fragment would not be significant in itself, but would be transformed as it entered into a pattern whose unity was forged by considerations of its effectivity within a matrix of active elements. Eizenstein recognized, of course, that the relation between a signifier and its referent in photographic and cinematographic media was especially strong; but this only entailed for him the necessity of finding that the mightiest means of first dialectically negating, and then of sublating, this reference. He insisted that he had found such a means in montage.

Through montage, a fragment of natural reality is transmuted into new entity, with a new significance; this transformation occurs as the fragment from natural reality is incorporated into a new, higher reality. Eizenstein would have disagreed with Symbolists concerning the nature of the ligature that holds the individual elements that make up an artwork in a higher unity. Of course, this new higher reality, since it significant, would have to belong to the order of ideas. But for the Marxists, consciousness is simply an epiphenomenon of matter, supervening upon natural processes—and Eizenstein seems genuinely committed to some view about consciousness and meaning rather than to the Symbolist view that consciousness opens upon a Beyond that is higher than the realm of matter.

But even this difference is ultimately of less import that it seems *prima facie*. A key to the Symbolist theory is notion of the correspondence of the inner and the outer worlds — this notion, for is, for example, the basis of the idea that the objects of nature constitute a hieroglyphic language; but the Marxists, for their part, argue for a form of monism (even though the single reality they conceive has a profoundly different character from the Ultimate Reality that the Symbolists conceived). Furthermore, Symbolism conformed to the ideals of the oracular, illuminist and idealist traditions, and it placed extreme emphasis on subjectivity. But Eizenstein's interest in the James Joyce's inner monologue, an interest Eizenstein developed through the idea of inner speech, which he true from Lev Vygotskij, was similarly subjectivist. Moreover, Eizenstein's understanding of both Joyce and inner speech was massively influenced by Symbolism.

Eizenstein's frequent references to Mallarmé have much to tell us about the filmmaker's Symbolist proclivities. Mallarmé was obsessed with the idea of correspondences, which Baudelaire had introduced in *Fleurs du Mal*. The Symbolists generally accepted the metaphysics of Baudelaire's *Sonnet des Correspondances*, with its suggestion that all phenomena of the material realm have symbolic value, for they point to higher, metaphysical reality—that the phenomena of the material are linked to one another and to realities of the higher realm by the mysterious bonds of analogies that can be conveyed only through poetry. Mallarmé saw the universe as bound together by subtle analogies that only the poet could detect, and this notion of correspondences drew Mallarmé towards forms that employed ellipses and unconventional syntax—generally towards a paratactical style—the purpose of which was to evoke a sense of mystery. Eizenstein's montage is similarly paratactical in character, in

Ejzenstejn's use of parataxis developed out of Symbolist notions, akin to the notion of correspondence that Mallarmé drew from Baudelaire. Thus Ejzenstejn praises Mallarmé's poetry for its power to create a "generalized image"—and the filiations of the idea of the generalized are extraordinary to ponder. Baudelaire and Mallarmé pursued the notion of correspondence to ideal realms; for them, the analogies that bound the universe together lay beyond the realm of the appearance—they claimed they belong to a realm that can be likened only to the ideal realm of Plato's forms.

Reading them carefully, one discerns nothing in Ejzenstejn's remarks on the generalized image, and indeed of his remarks about a higher reality that is disclosed in the relationship between juxtaposed shots, offer nothing inconsistent with such a Platonic conception of the universal. In 1937, Ejzenstejn asked himself questions about the Odessa Steps (Potemkin Stairs) sequence:

What is it in our example that achieves this effect of lifting the generalisation beyond the bounds of mere depiction? Or rather, which one of the complex of expressive means used in our examples carries out the function of this ultimate, maximal generalisation?

Then, likely recognizing the accusation which he has exposed himself to, he attaches a footnote that this maximal generalisation would occur "[w]ithout making a 'leap' into the 'cosmos'." Whence he proceeded to answer the question he had just posed:

It is not the narrative by montage, but the rhythm of the montage, for of course the rhythm of the scene is the final, ultimate generalisation to which the theme can be subjected while retaining the vital link with the event yet simultaneously extending far beyond it; not breaking its texture but raising it to the utmost limits of specific generalisation

To which he again appends the parenthetical qualifier "i.e., without drifting off into 'cosmic abstractions.'" One suspects that in explicitly disavowing any tendency towards a cosmic drift in his thought and practice, Ejzenstejn feared that the filiation of his ideas, and his allegiances, might be recognized. Lest one be prompted to dismiss such suspicions for being founded in an unwarranted tendency towards psychological speculation, consider this Symbolist text of Pavel Florenskij:

An artistic perception of objects in movement can occur only when the law of outer movement is interpreted and assimilated as a specific rhythm of our inner life; when the object in motion almost dissolves in our soul, imparting its movement in the form of vibrations. In an artistic sense, the movement of external objects indicates merely the trembling of the motionless soul. The artist's task is to contain these inner rhythms within the soul that vibrates.

Or again, as evidence of the Symbolist provenance of Ejzenstejn's ideas on transformation, consider this passage from Ejzenstejn

there are fights and fights. There is the fight which is planned and rehearsed, in which the chosen scenario unfolds move by move and action by action just as it

was planned; and yet that fight will be as lifeless, ineffective, unconvincing and emotionally unexciting as the depiction of a fight in 'long shot' on the screen. On the other hand, there is the fight in which every phrase 'arises' in the spectator's eyes. . . . [I]t is . . . created, brought to life, as the active expression of an emotional logic deriving from the aims which the actors set themselves in their progression from phase to phase of the action. . . . Its effect will be distinctive to the same extent that the effect of the *montage-structured* fight differs from the fight shot in one set-up in long shot. The art of montage in film-making *is not an analogy with but is exactly the same thing* as an actor's playing on stage; provided that the actor is not playing something ready-made but if, instead, his playing is a *process* within which, step by step, emotions are brought into being that are in true accord with the circumstances.

Contrary to the materialist principles that most have argued are the basis of the Eizenstein's film theory, Eizenstein argues that representations in different media can be identical—they are identical if their effects are identical. Eizenstein reveals, then, that his is perlocutionary theory of art, and I have suggested that the Eizenstein's idea of perlocutionary effect is associated with heterodox ideas about thought transmission, magic and setting the soul to vibrate. Consider, more specifically, the connection between the perlocutionary conception of art which is the central concern of this passage, and Eizenstein's remarks on the composition of Scriabin.

Scriabin too sets himself this objective: 'What he sought was not a description of the act, not a representation of the act but *the act itself*.

Scriabin achieves this objective better than anyone else. Nay, more in his work the very act of creativity can be perceived through the act of bringing the work of art into being.

Scriabin is attracted by the *dynamic of the creative process* and its embodiment in art. In this respect he is reminiscent of Rodin, who daringly attempted to convey in sculpture not merely the movement of forms *but their very genesis*. In *Sadko* Rimsky-Korsakov shows us an image of the artist performing existing works or improvising, and we see the same thing Liszt's *Orpheus*, but no one except Scriabin reveals to the listener the very *laboratory of musical creativity*. When we listen to him we are initiated into the agonies of artistic creation; this can be seen of the 'Divine Poem' and the 'Poem of Ecstasy.'

And the same thing can be perceived in montage, the method of art form within which both Stanislavskij and Scriabin were destined to merge in synthesis, an art form which, in ways achieved by no other, unites man in action with the music of active form and reveals him both visually and aurally.

The passage hardly accords with the proposition that Eizenstein's ideas about process derive from a modernist conception of the artwork as self-referential. Something else has influenced Eizenstein's thoughts on topic, and that something derives from heterodoxy, and handed down to him by the Symbolists.

Ejzenstejn's explanation for cinema's perlocutionary effects contains resonances of the parapsychological research of Leonid Vasiljev of the notions about telepathy of Federov and the Biocosmists. Ejzenstejn extended the discussion of process which we cited above:

You are not seeing the depiction of an argument: the image of an argument is evoked within you; you participate in the process of the image of an argument coming into being, and thereby you are drawn into it as though you were a third participant in the evolving dispute . . . The art of montage in film-making is not an analogy with but is exactly the same thing as an actor's playing on stage; provided that the actor is not playing something ready-made but if, instead, his playing is a process within which, step by step, emotions are brought into being that are in true accord with the circumstances.

Herein lies the relevance of Stanislavskij's advice to the effect that the actor must, when playing, recreate a process and not act out the results of a process.

In this context one might recollect remarks on the experience of synaesthesia:

An image of colour may come through in an author's writing not only by his verbal use of a palette of colours, not only by his choice of sounds, but from the actual prototype of what he describing in words: the shimmering effect of light and colours which one occasionally senses through the 'canvas' of a verbal description can at times glow even more brightly than the same subject matter depicted, but less perfectly, on actual canvas (see, for example, Huysmans' description of jewels 'glowing' like flowers', or the texture of the of descriptive passages in Oscar Wilde) . . .

I think Gogol wrote with no less an *immediacy* of colour perception [than a Chinese painter], the only difference being that, unlike the Chinese primitive painter, with Gogol colour played not only a superficially depictive role; it was also integral to his total visual and aural conception of his subject matter.

His characters are so lively and many-sided and at the same time so strongly individualised that each of them 'comes through; with his own range of colours. This chromatic gamut is twofold, and, depending on the style and genre of the particular work, it emerges differently in the various characters. [Gogol's] realistic novel *Dead Souls* tends to use colour in character drawing in a straightforwardly pictorial way, whereas a tale of fantasy, such as *The Terrible Vengeance*, uses colour more as a generalising device, coming close to a strictly chromatic image (at times almost to a symbol).. . .

There are places where Gogol's descriptive use of colour reaches such a degree of 'tangibility' that it is almost as much a direct transference from the mental picture [!] that was obviously in his mind's eye as was the example taken from Chinese painters. The optical equivalence is so strong that the descriptive colours begin to cast reflected tones on each other! . . . In other words, the drama itself, the struggle between characters, is not confined to the structure of the plot! It also 'shows through' in colour . . . It is also curious to note that this battle waged in terms of the dynamics of colour relates not only to the fictional characters but also to the struggle that was going on inside the author who

created. The range of colours in Gogol's early works, blazing with the brightness of the spectrum of primary colours, undergoes a change in the later works written towards the end of his life, when he moves over to a palette containing more grey and black. 'He gets closer to the palette of the cinema', as remarked to the late Andrei Bely, whose researches into colour and statistics on Gogol's work I have used here.

Ejzenstejn's interests in the monistic ensemble, and his associated ideas about the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, owe as much to those of Mallarmé and his followers as to Wagner—what Ejzenstejn wanted to do continue the efforts of some of Mallarmé's followers, of extending Mallarmé's poetic explorations by carrying them into the domain of the theatre. To do so, Mallarmé and his followers understood that they would have to reject the Naturalistic theatre and the *pièce à thèse*. So they created works in which fragmentary poetic dialogues were read against fragments scenery, and accompanied by music, and illustrated by mime or dance—essentially integrating corresponding elements in a monistic ensemble as Ejzenstejn proposed to do.

In 1929, Ejzenstejn presented in Stuttgart, for that marvelous exhibition "Film und Foto," a text that caps his theoretical *oeuvre*; this essay appears in the first volume of Richard Taylor's anthology as "The Dramaturgy of Film Form." In that essay Ejzenstejn deals with the core concept of the theory of transformation, the concept of the "third meaning," i.e., the question of the combination of two representable objects achieves the representation of something that cannot be graphically represented. Ejzenstejn also in that work locates the material basis for this phenomenon in the relation between two successive still frames which, in combination on the retina (where they superimpose one on the other rather than succeed one another), produce movement through a phenomenon that perceptual psychologists refer to as the *phi* phenomenon. The phi phenomenon is a perceptual effect that had been investigated by Gestalt psychologists. If two graphic forms are projected alternately, for very short durations, on the same screen, the observer either sees one form transforming into the other or sees the two shapes existing simultaneously. Correspondingly, if the same object is projected alternately, for very short durations, at two different areas of the screen, the viewer sees the result as a single object jumping from the one point to the other. Ejzenstejn's discussion of the issue in "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" is revealing

We know that the phenomenon of movement in film resides in the fact that still pictures of a moved body blend into movements when they are shown in quick succession one after the other.

The vulgar description of what happens—as a *blending*—has also led to the vulgar notion of montage mentioned above.

Let us describe the course of the said phenomenon more precisely, just as it really is, and draw our conclusion accordingly.

Is that correct? In pictorial-phraseological terms, yes.

But not in mechanical terms.

For in fact each sequential element is arrayed, not *next* to the one it follows, but on *top* of it. *For:*

the idea (sensation) of movement arises in the process of superimposing on the retained impression of the object's first position the object's newly visible second position.

That is how, on the other hand, the phenomenon of spatial depth as the optical superimposition of two planes in stereoscopy arises. The superimposition of two dimensions of the same mass gives rise to a completely different new higher dimension.

In this instance, in the case of stereoscopy, the superimposition of two non-identical two-dimensionality gives rise to stereoscopic three-dimensionality. In another field: concrete word (denotation) set against concrete word produces abstract concept.

As in Japanese, in which *material* ideogram set against *material* ideogram produces *transcendental result* (concept).

“Higher dimension,” “transcendental result”—the lexis is not that of scientific psychology; nor is the concept of the transcendent in material forms in a higher unity. Elsewhere, in “Unity in the Image,” another essay in which he takes up the question of how combination of two representations can produce something that cannot be represented in this way Eizenstein stated: “what happens is not a summarising construct, but a truly *new entity*, with its *new qualitative signification as an image*.”

A close reading of Eizenstein remarks on the unity of the monistic ensemble certainly raises serious doubts about the prevailing idea of the arc of Eizenstein’s career. The idea of process Eizenstein alluded to above (“the *image of [the event]* is evoked within you; you participate in the process of the image of [the event] coming into being”) gradually took a more central place in his thinking. Its importance becomes evident in his essay “Laocoön,” and, unsurprisingly, it relates to the issues of transformation of individual particles as they enter into a higher unity.

A fight filmed from a single viewpoint in a long shot will always remain the *depiction* of a fight and will never be the *perception* [notice the alternation of terms that intend elements that belong to exterior and interior realms respectively] of a fight, i.e., something with which we feel immediately involved in the same way that we feel involved in a fight between two live people, genuinely (even though intentionally) fighting before our eyes. So what *is* the difference between this and a fight consisting of a number of fragments which *also* depict a fight, though not as a whole but in parts?!

It is that these separate fragments function not as depiction but as *stimuli that provoke associations*. The convention of their *partialness* is particularly conducive to this, because it forces our imagination to add to them and thereby activates to an unusual degree the spectator’s emotions and intellect. As a result, the spectator is *not* subjected to a series of fragments of actions and events, but to a swarm of real events and actions evoke in his imagination and his emotions by the use of skillfully chosen suggestive details.

As the event itself progresses, you are drawn into its sequence, its unfolding, its coming-into being — unlike your ready-made perception of a scene in long shot, which presents itself instead of unfolding before us as an evolving process. . . .

You are *not seeing the depiction of an argument*: the *image of an argument* is evoked within you; you participate in the process of the image of the argument coming into being, and thereby you are drawn into it as though you

were a third participant in the evolving dispute.

In short, through this process, a sympathetic correspondence between the inner and the outer world develops. Ejzenstein's reason for rejecting straightforward, literal depiction is much the same as Hegel's: literal depiction makes the artwork too external a phenomenon. Through depiction no higher unity evolves, and so the object or event depicted remains external.

This concern with the artwork remain taking on too external a character reveals the concern that Ejzenstejn has in the subjective dimension of a the higher unit that is an image. That in itself suggests the Symbolist affiliations of Ejzenstejn's aesthetic theories (or, at least, of his later theories), for an art based on the importance of overcoming the exteriority of represented action possess at least one very important feature of Symbolist art. If there were any doubt about this, it is dispelled by the implications of passage later in the same text, in which Ejzenstejn attributes objective reality to correspondence between the proprioceptive gesture and external gesture.

Herein lies the relevance of Stanislavsky's advice to the effect that the actor must, when playing, recreate a process and not act out the results of a process. He expresses it as follows:

The mistake most actors make is that they think about the result instead of about the action that must prepare it. By avoiding action and aiming straight at the result you get a forced product which can lead to nothing ham acting.

Scriabin achieves this objective: What he sought was not the description of the act, not a representation of the act but *the act itself*.

Here Ejzenstejn used the term "process" to refer to the proprioceptive development of an act or gesture; the importance of that proprioception was that involved a sympathetic response in the internal world to the dynamics of the external world and, conversely, the projection of the internal sense onto the representation of an exterior realm. This notion, of course, would have been familiar to the Symbolist followers of Schopenhauer, who, like the renowned pessimist, also stressed that proprioception underpins a participatory form of consciousness. For his part, Ejzenstejn, in his *Memoirs*, waxed poetic on the participatory mentality, "Generally speaking, museums should be visited at night. Only at night . . . one can merge with what one says and not just look at it." Or, in related vein, to convey the primitive nature of the experience: "The bulb has only to blow . . . and you are completely of the mercy of dark hidden powers and forms of thought." This is the groundwork of Ejzenstejn's perlocutionary conception of a work of art.

Ejzenstejn goes so far as to say that our understanding of representation depends on a mental process that relates to a participatory mentality: it not resemblance in outward appearance that allows us to understand the relation between representamen and represented form — it is rather a feeling, at an undifferentiated stage of thought that allows us to have an empathic response to the outward contours of what we see or touch. When our empathic response to one contour resembles our empathic response to another, we sense a primeval generalization, or principle, that allows to stand for the other.

Imitation . . .

According to Aristotle, the basic principle of artistic creativity.

Like the creative urge, itself, therefore, also the key to mastery of

form. . . .

But imitation of what?

Of the form that we see? No! . . .

Mastery of principle is the real mastery of objects!

Principle or form?

Anyone who sees Aristotle as an imitator of the form of objects misunderstands him. . . .

India has the god Brahma. The god is depicted sucking his own foot. The phallic symbol is crystal clear. Brahma, who is also the god of eternity and immortality, is devouring his own *sperm*

But . . . were the wretched Indians really so wrong? . . .

If the greatest mystery of immortality is addressed in this instance, then the most that medicine has to offer us is conceived in accordance with the same principles.

I was overwrought. Had a headache and so on. The doctor prescribed glycerine phosphate. I wanted to know what it was made of. Æsculapius explained to me that it was the same stuff that parts of the brain were made of. [Here we approach Boehm's idea of signatures]

How many people take blood cures . . .

How many mineral cures . . .

The age of form is drawing to a close. [Notice the idea of eras? What is the provenance of that idea?]

We are penetrating matter. We are penetrating behind appearances into the principle of appearances. [The underlying reality, behind the illusion? — of what provenance is this?]

Later in the same piece he becomes even more definite on the role that participatory consciousness plays in artistic representation.

The actor was and is the most direct object of imitation. We never know precisely *what* is going on inside another person.

We see his expression. We mimic it. We empathise. And we draw the conclusion that he must feel the same way as we feel at that movement.

The actor shows us how to feel.

This is all well and good, Ejzenstejn suggested, but there are better ways to penetrate behind appearances to the principle. The method? To use the Symbolist method of montage to evoke something that is never really shown: the composite, formed through montage, Ejzenstejn refers as the "total image."

But by now we have come to accept that where we find Symbolist influence, we also find occult influence; the principle applies in thinking about Sergej Ejzenstejn's theory and practice as well. The title also identifies mimesis as a form of mastery. In what sense? Ejzenstejn's answer is stunning

Play with facts (montage of visible events) The creation of a new world.

. . . We must seize the principle of nature and the new technological man will become Almighty in the sense that the Bible attributes to the Almighty.

Lest one consider this remarks on participatory mentality as the basis for representation an aberration, then consider this passage from another essay. He proposed that there is a human urge toward objectification (in fact, he suggests that drive has a masculine character), and acknowledges its importance in drawing. All that he says to that point conforms to the principles of the Marxian theory of labour. However, he then stated

But complete objectivization is possible only in the case of complete (psychological) identification with the image of the model. This is the moment of simultaneous perception of her within oneself. This is the fusion. From this derives complete knowledge. . . .

You can only imagine another person at the second stage. After the first stage in which at first you mimic the model. You reproduce her subjectively in yourself in order to return her once again to objectivity, an image on paper.

It is only when the process of mutual penetration — getting inside the model and accepting her within you — is achieved that the image will come on paper.

For the image is precisely the combination of features that, when we perceive it, forces us to recreate the original. . . .

Thus the image on paper is a reliable indicator of the fact that this mutual penetration, with its accent on man as the active originator, has already happened. . . .

. . . The degree of penetration is furthermore an indicator of the defensive position of the besieged citadel, the degree to which and to what extent the attacking forces have been admitted into it.

That is probably why we are not allowed to depict an image of god.

To depict him is to amalgamate with Him.

To possess Him.

To stand in His place.

The doctrine that by knowing the Higher Power, we become the Higher Power is ordinarily called Gnosticism. Ejzenstejn, a Gnostic!? The evidence is in.

Ideas about participatory forms of consciousness of the sort that interested Ejzenstejn are often associated with synaesthesia. So it should not be surprising that Ejzenstejn took up the notion of a chromatic parallelism between the audial and visual sensory modalities. In the typical fashion of a persecuted writer, he generally critiqued the interest, before qualifying his criticism with remarks that reveal his true commitment. Thus, in the essay “On Colour,” he introduces the topic of synaesthesia with the apparently dismissive remark that, “some eccentrics claim to find a musical note that is the sole, absolute equivalent to a single colour which possesses such a multitude of objective links and subjective associations. . . . [T]his urge to find an absolute equivalence between colour and sound persistently rises to the surface of the human psyche; what is more, I can say without fear of contradiction that they invariably coincide with periods when mysticism is in the ascendant.” He goes on to discuss A.W. Schlegel and Rimbaud’s notions about audio-visual correspondence (an to acknowledge that the phenomenon of audio-visual correspondence preoccupied the Symbolists). He dismissed their ideas about such correspondence only to establish an almost identical conviction, on purportedly “scientific” grounds.

Cases are certainly known to medical pathology in which a regressive type of patient is possessed of synaesthetic perception to such a degree that he cannot walk across a multicoloured carpet without stumbling. He perceives the polychrome patterns of the carpet as though they were actually at different depths or heights, and as he gauges the need to lift his foot in accordance with them he is inevitably caused to stumble by the disparity between the different heights to which he raises his feet and the absolutely smooth surface of the floor.

He goes on to discuss a man 'S' whose regularly experienced synaesthesia, but whose experiences of colours accompanied not vowels, as Rimbaud and Schlegel claimed, but consonants. This hardly seems to me the difference between a mystical and a scientific belief.

Synaesthesia offered Ejzenstejn what he took evidence of a primitive substratum of experience (notice his remark that there is medical pathology in which regressive type of patient exhibits the symptom of synaesthesia); and Ejzenstejn went to great pains to identify this substratum, examining writings by Frazier, exploring myth and Greek theatre, Otto Rank's and Sigmund Freud's psychology; the Scythian's artistic program, and Kruchenyx and Xlebnikov's engagement with related issues, highlight the irrationalist ("trans-sense") source of these ideas, for they offered parallel beliefs to Ejzenstejn that there is a primitive substratum to language that reference has concealed. The substratum operates beyond reason (the *zaum* poets claimed to accord a role to transrational knowledge and transrational experience), and affects us immediately, without our being aware of it. Marie Seton's commentary on the topic offers some insight into the depth of Ejzenstejn's interests in these topics. Ejzenstejn hoped to produce synthesis the various fields of knowledge he considered to be important to a filmmaker, in a series of volumes, each devoted to a different subject and its relation and application to filmmaking. The third volume three, she claimed, was to be

devoted to painting and what it could teach the cinematographer about the unity of form and content. The full realization of the importance of composition in the enrichment of the film medium had come to Sergei Mikhailovich in Mexico, where composition had become one of his primary concerns. It was then he told me of his conviction that primary form — the triangle and the circle — revealed to man the 'mystery' of higher truths in symbolic form — the triangle: God, Man and the Universe, and the circle: immortality.

One can imagine a Theosophist, a Rosicrucian, or a Gurdjiebian talking this way— but a scientific materialist? Edoardo G. Grossi advances the claim that Ejzenstejn's project is based in an ethnological study of the Soviet scientific school; indeed he goes so far to say to say that Ejzenstejn is really better understood as a participant in that scientific school than in the Soviet avant-garde. The evidence points in the opposite direction: the Soviet avant-garde was rooted in the Symbolist tradition (which took a deep hold on Soviet culture because its leading ideas resonated with features of the Russian spiritual and philosophical tradition). It points in the direction that the idea of primeval proto-logical form of consciousness, which Ejzenstejn pursued into such writers Lévy-Bruhl, Vygotskij and Luria, came to Ejzenstejn through his Symbolist and avant-garde involvements, and that he tried to reconcile these enthusiasms with his commitment to scientific material by arguing that the alternative forms of consciousness in which he was interested are the vestiges of primitive mentalities, and confirm the proposition

that mentalities are superstructural features whose features are determined by the social formation within which they arise. For the historical materialist, who is convinced the changing nature of consciousness is of the utmost importance, must maintain no good could come from the preservation of atavistic mentalities—to cling to such outmoded forms of consciousness is to attempt to defy the march of history. The advance of history has rendered forms of consciousness obsolete, and there can be no good reason to try to reawaken them. But Ejzenstejn's interest was not the purely scientific pursuit of establishing, through historical study, how changes in social relations bring about transformations in mentality — exactly what he wanted to do was to awaken atavistic mentalities.

Marie Seton's comments on the projected fourth volume are just as revealing.

In a fourth [book], he intended to examine the customs of people through the ages, analyze symbols and create a reservoir of research material for the film director. In connection with this book, he talked at length about the surviving customs of Greece and retraced the life of centuries to the ages of myth, the age when it seemed to him that there had existed a certain primal unity of all of man's activities.

Again, the idea that human consciousness had been altered profoundly—changed nearly completely— when the primal unity of consciousness was shattered is one that Symbolists held dear — they called upon artists to restore the primeval mentality which is the home of the human heart and mind. This historical materialist take on the issue is considerably different.

And then there was the book that Seton admitted Ejzenstejn dreamed of, but allowed that he would never write

though the notes for it existed on many pages of his books and on sheaves of paper. It was to cover the meaning of religious experience, of ecstasy and man's relations to his gods. . . . For him there was a 'mystery', and the 'mystery' was finding God and Christ. The names evolved, the forms and symbols changed from place to place and epoch to epoch, but the 'mystery' remained.

The true importance of the idea of synaesthesia in Ejzenstejn's system is simply this — that it reveals a higher form of consciousness, through the unity of sound and colour (as modes of energy propagated through vibration), could still be felt. This inner unity is a higher form of reality than the sundered world of externally directed senses. The inwardness of this prelogical realm caused Ejzenstejn to associate synaesthesia with the phenomenon of inner speech and to associate inner speech with the Symbolist doctrine that the purpose of art is to objectify the inner world. Ejzenstejn recognizes the affinity of this idea with the Marxist idea of objectification of the human being through labour — and so he quotes Lenin, to the effect "this genuine inner synchronicity [of colour and sound in synaesthesia] is like the truth, of which Lenin wrote, "The truth is a process. From a subjective idea man proceeds towards objective truth through "practice 'and technique'" — but I think the Symbolist affinities of Ejzenstejn's notions are evident. Unpublished fragments from 1934 confirm this interpretation in Ejzenstejn's interest in synaesthesia and in participatory forms of consciousness. In one passage in these notes, he considered, first, the mysticism of Swedenborg, then proceeded to the idea there being multiple phenomenal worlds but that underlying this multiplicity of phenomenal appearances is a real, objective unity. The world had been divided into "a multiplicity of worlds: the world of the world of

affairs [*Handlungswelt*], the world of imagination [*Vorstellungswelt*], and the world of concepts [*Begriffswelt*] But from beyond this multiplicity, the world of “things in themselves” emerged, glimpsed through a veil of illusion. This is the world that artist-clairvoyant (Rimbaud’s notion of the *voyant*, so beloved by Symbolists) also glimpsed.

The idea of a primitive participatory form of consciousness also undergirds Eizenstejn’s ideas about vertical montage. For all the graphs and charts of parallelism between the shape of melodies in Prokofiev’s score for *Alexander Nevsky* and the shape of the movements, or of the visual forms, on screen, Eizenstejn was required to admit, in the end that all that held the two together was a similarity in gesture between the image and the sound. Responding to the criticism that Theodore Adorno and Hanns Eisler had offered to the idea of vertical montage (which linked sound and images that had similar contours), Eizenstejn responded:

Eisler thinks that there is no common denominator between the pair:
galoshes and drum (even though a linear connection is possible, for instance) . . .
Image is transformed into gesture: gesture underlies both. Then you can
construct what ever counterpoints you want.

Eizenstejn’s interest in primitive forms of consciousness brought in its wake the idea of evolution. But of course, there is evolution and there is evolution: there is the evolution of Darwin, of Plekanov and of Lenin makes evident. There is also the concept of evolution expounded in writers such as Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, Blavatsky, Besant, and Steiner, and of course, it is the concept of evolution that the Symbolists favoured. And what about Eizenstejn—which did he favour. Given the number of times he deliberated on the differences between the theories of gradual evolution expound by Plekanov and the theories of revolutionary change expounded by Lenin, one might think it is obviously that some form of economic/social evolution was closer to Eizenstejn’s. However, we should also be careful to acknowledge that allusions to Gurdieff, Ospensensky, Blavatsky and Steiner appear in Eizenstejn’s work with a frequency that one might trouble more those who wish to see Eizenstejn as the avatar of the artist-engineer. More troubling yet is that their frequency reflects how deeply embedded Symbolist ideas were in the constitution of Eizenstejn’s thought. In his splendid article on mimesis in Eizenstejn’s film theory, Mikhail Yampolskij writes

Since for Eisenstein any hypothesis was finally proved by projecting it on to evolution, he developed this metaphor [of an underlying principle which is the basis of representation] in an evolutionary way. He quoted from Emerson’s account of Swedenborg’s [!] teaching (*Representative Man*) in a fantastical passage in which the entire history of evolution from the serpent to the caterpillar to man himself is depicted as the history of adding to skeletons and rearranging them. And in a note written in 1933 he enthusiastically revealed another fantastical evolutionary law of correspondence between a skeleton and a thought pattern: “Self-imitation. (Hurray!) Shouldn’t I write about as a process of developing the consciousness? Nerve tissue reproduces the skeleton etc. and thought reproduces action. It is the same in evolution.” The nervous system as the purveyor of thought graphically repeated the pattern of the skeleton of the purveyor of action. In man there occurred an internal mirror-image mimesis of the schemas, structures and principles from which consciousness derived.

Yes, and ontogeny repeats phylogeny. Is this science or is it the occult (e.g. Swendenborgian) doctrine of signatures?