

Needs: titles, authors, etc for Bordwell, Eisenstein's Writings, and Jacques Aumont for End-notes.

Eisenstein, my contemporary.

I

Any acquaintance with Eisenstein's films suggests that his artistic career falls into two, sharply contrasting periods. The first is the period of the "mass dramas" of the Twenties that are so specifically cinematic and that rely on a more diachronic conception of montage (conflict between successive units as providing a jolt to the viewer's mental faculties). The second is the period of grandiloquent dramas focused on an individual hero that have an operatic character reflecting Eisenstein's developing interest in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and that rely on a more synchronic and polymorphic idea of montage. An homologous division appears in Eisenstein's theory, with the theoretical works of the earlier period culminating, apparently, with the notion of intellectual montage while that of the second period is encapsulated in the ideas of vertical montage and the monistic ensemble.

In 1975, David Bordwell provided the most cogent explanation of the changes in artistic style, and the deep changes of belief that produced them. In "Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift" he accepted the common view that the films underwent a marked change, but he presented an uncommonly well-defined criterion for discriminating between the two periods. Bordwell claims that the earlier films and writings subscribe to a dialectical model that rests on concepts derived from reflexology while the later films and writings depend on an associationist psychology and replace the idea of the dialectic with that of organic unity. *(delete EN)*

In *The Cinema of Eisenstein* Bordwell qualifies these claims of the article. He says that the constant celebration of Eisenstein's montage cinema was the hyperbolic reaction of Western critics to discovering the Soviet Cinema and to *Film Form's* English translations of some Eisenstein's essays of the Twenties. *(sentence here on the value of the new translations in*

the two new volumes.) He similarly discounts the common tendency to see Eisenstein's later work as formed by the tyrannous situation of its production. Bordwell attempts to work his way past these responses which exaggerated the differences between the two phases of Eisenstein's career.

Similarities with the article remain. Bordwell still attaches importance to the shift from Pavlovian to Vygotskian psychologies. But in both texts he refuses the easy (but basically true) claim that it was a doctrinal shift--from the vanguardism of Lenin and Lunarcharsky to Zhadanov and Stalin's aesthetically reactionary (though, perhaps, politically progressive) Socialist Realism--that split Eisenstein's career into two parts. Instead, Bordwell insists that deeper currents steered Eisenstein's course, leading him to revise his ideas concerning consciousness, nature, and the dialectic. Consequently, Bordwell reads the articles Eisenstein published in his later career ("later" being, in his case, between the ages of 32 and 49, and now assembled in *Eisenstein Writings II*), even such writings as "Pathos in Potemkin," as true expression of Eisenstein's evolving beliefs. *However, I read them as desperate attempts at exculpation, to some extent to be read using the means Strauss lays out in "Persecution and the Art of Writing," and to some extent, to be recognized for the sad product of a time and place even more terrible and tyrannous than our own and, accordingly, discounted. (delete)* I read them as desperate attempts at exculpation, the products of a tyrannous and threatening times and to be discounted. Discriminating what is sincere in the later writings from what is politically necessary is one of the great challenges of Eisenstein interpretation. Bordwell's desire to take Eisenstein "at his word" (to recall Jacques Aumont's chapter title in *Montage Eisenstein*) can become so

ingenuous as to seem like wilful blindness to the context that so greatly affected his production.

Nonetheless, in stressing the integrity of Eisenstein's work--something the article did not--*The Cinema of Eisenstein* attempts to isolate and identify certain basic principles common to both phases of Eisenstein's career. Bordwell seeks to bring them, if not into a static identity, at least into an evolving organic unity. This makes the book something new and its methodological advantages are conspicuous. *The Cinema of Eisenstein* is the first book ever to depict Eisenstein's career whole and teachers and students have lacked such a work until now, despite Eisenstein's formidable reputation. Moreover, Bordwell's film analyses are uncommonly precise and lucid, and this too recommends the text. At last, seventy years after the production of *The Battleship Potemkin*, teachers of Eisenstein's films now have a text to which they and their students can confidently go. That value alone makes *The Cinema of Eisenstein* a magnificent achievement that helps bring cinema studies of age.

II

That said, I believe that Bordwell's study still misses what it aims at: the fundamental unity that binds together all phases of Eisenstein's theoretical work and the profound rupture that cleaves Eisenstein's career into two parts. Eisenstein's most fundamental interest was in the means by which a graphic sign (and, in his later work, an iconic sound) that, due to its resemblance to its referent, possess natural, direct and immediate significations, can be transformed into signs possessing conventional signification and, thereby, made to open to the possibilities of narrative and drama. The importance of this question makes it still the fundamental problem of film semiotics. Yet, among film semioticians, only the Estonian Yuri Lotman makes it central to his semiotic theory. Eisenstein recognized the crucial importance of this question and his efforts towards answering it are still unrivalled. This is a fact that makes Eisenstein the theorist deserve consideration as a contemporary aesthetician.

Eisenstein took an even greater interest than Lotman in the means of transforming an iconic sign into an aesthetic element. One view of the power of aesthetic signs considers that such power results from aesthetic signs' *lack* of communicative function--from their *not* stating something, as most signs do. This view holds that aesthetic signs have the power they do because they exert a force or a pressure on consciousness--they *do* something rather than state something. They are active. A depictive sign, a picture, as T.E. Hulme realized, is a dead spot. Aesthetic signs, as the Futurists, the Cubists, the Vorticists *et.al.* pointed out, can be almost anything, but it must be dynamic.

The question how something as static as an iconic sign can be transformed into an active element is the key question of Eisenstein's film theory. The centrality Eisenstein accords this problematic explains the impact that Fenollosa's classic (and wildly speculative) essay had on Eisenstein in the Twenties. Fenollosa's essay concerns the discharge of forces that occurs as discrete pictographic elements (that themselves are verbs, i.e., are words that do something) are combined in the Chinese written character. (~~deleteEN~~) This question arose at very beginning of Eisenstein's film theory, in the 192X essay "The Montage of Film Attractions," (pp. Vol 1, *Eisenstein's Writings*). Its answer is the key to *agit*, to which the young Eisenstein lost no opportunity to reaffirm his commitment. At the time, Eisenstein defined an "attraction" as something that exerts a measurable pressure on the consciousness of the spectator. It *does*, rather than shows, a point on which Armand is rightly insistent when he observes how consistently the early Eisenstein polemicalized against "representation".

What happened to this problematic in the progress of Eisenstein's evolution? We can discover the answer in Eisenstein's 1932 essay, "Help Yourself!" (Vol II, *E Writ*) There he enthusiastically describes the montage lists he drew up for Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* under the influence of Joyce and Larbaud:

Like thought itself they sometimes proceeded through visual images, with sound, synchronised or non-synchronised. ... [*Ellipsis in original*] sometimes like sounds, formless or formed representational sound images ... [*Ellipsis in original*] now suddenly in the coinage of intellectually formed words, as 'intellectual' and dispassionate as words that are spoken, with a blank screen, a rushing imageless visuality. [*The expression itself gives clear evidence that iconicity has been overcome. R.B.E.*] now in passionate disjointed speech, nothing but nouns or nothing but verbs; then through interjections, with the zigzags of aimless figures, hurrying along in synchronisation with them. Now visual images racing past in complete silence, now joined by a polyphony of sounds, now by a polyphony of images. Then both together.

The passage's use of gerunds ("rushing," "racing," and "hurrying") and of nouns that derive from actions (e.g., "zigzags," and "interjections") is revealing: artworks overcome the conventional signification through kinetic effect. In adopting this belief, Eisenstein allied himself, and very consciously, with those twentieth-century artists like Joyce and Pound who take an interest in the way the accelerated activity of an art work both reflects and stimulates the incessant, rapid flux of the manifold of consciousness. (*delete EN*)

Eisenstein never changed his fundamental ideas about the way that photographic images overcome their iconic significance. He continued to argue that by becoming an element in a set of aesthetic relations, they take on an aesthetic role. Neither did he ever abandoned the question of how that transformation takes place. Nor did he forsake his conviction that this was the central problem of film aesthetics. Furthermore, he never departed from those affiliations that initially provided him with the basic terms with which he worked on this problem, reworked it, and then reworked it again. For, however much he revised this problematic, he continued always to associate the principle of aesthetic transformation with the Marxist conception of the dialectic.

In all this, Eisenstein allied himself with the extraordinarily productive and highly variegated metacritical enterprise known as Formalism. As early as 1921, in *Recent Russian Poetry*, Roman Jakobson proposed that the proper subject of literary study was *literariness*, i.e., the features that distinguish literary use of language from its practical use. Generally, the Russian Formalists suggested that extrinsic relations (relations between linguistic signifiers and the external world) had central importance in practical uses of language, while intrinsic relations (or intratextual relations, i.e., relations amongst elements intrinsic to the work), have central importance in literary uses of language. Mukarovsky summarized the insight elegantly:

. . . in poetry, as against information language, there is a reversal in the hierarchy of relations: in the latter attention is focused above all on the relation, important from the practical point of view, between reference and reality, whereas for the former it is the relationship between the reference and the context incorporating it that stands to the fore . . . As for poetic reference, the weakening of its immediate relationship with reality makes of it an artistic device. That means the poetic reference is not evaluated in terms of a extralinguistic mission but with relation to the role imposed upon it in the organization of the work's semantic unity. (In Matejka and Titunik, *Semiotics of Art*, p. 157.)

In the last two sentences of this passage, Mukarovsky emphasizes the role of what the Chicago critics were to refer as irony. (delete)

The proposition that relations which an element takes on when it is incorporated into work of art alter the character of that element was a key tenet of Eisenstein's film theory as well. And this proposition worked together in his theory with another one already mentioned, that the distinguishing feature of poetic/aesthetic language is that it *does* something rather than states

something. But Eisenstein, even more committedly than most Formalists, worked through the question of how the relations intrinsic to a work of art alter the elements that enter the work art in dialectical terms, by applying the Marxist conception of labour.

The Marxist theory of labour is a key item in the Romantic legacy to Marx's philosophy. It viewed nature as, *ab initio*, an alien being that stands over against humans; labour (or industry) transforms material from this alien realm into an object that reflects the being of the transforming agent. Because this reflection embodies characteristics of the agent of the transformation, and because it overcomes the alienation that originally characterized the relation between human being and nature, the labour process populates nature with objects that reflect attributes of human beings. The agency of transformation has a dual character. It reflects both the humanity of the maker and the character of the implements used in the transforming process. Indeed, Marx's philosophy is enriched by the interest it takes in the interrelations between these two aspects--that is, from its understanding of the way that our nature shapes the implements we use, *and* the way that these implements reciprocally affect our nature.

Eisenstein's film theory took both aspects of the transformation process seriously: Pavlovian (and later, Vygotskian) psychology furnished him with the materialist concepts necessary to understand how human nature is reflected in the process. The Formalist and materialist theories of art provided him with a means for understanding the role that the transforming medium plays. (*from here you repeat the main points of the previous paragraph--delete, re-write?*) Like many Marxist thinkers, Eisenstein believed that the remoulding of nature is a dialectical process. The process begins with an inert lump of matter and ends with an object that, though made from the materials of nature, reflects human needs and human interests. Through the labour process, what originally stood over against human being as alien to its nature takes on attributes of human being and this overcoming the alien character of nature transforms a being into something it originally was not. It is transformed from an object that shares no features with human being into one that has human features--from one thing into its opposite. What is more, this transformation releases the object's real being for, again according to Marx's Romantic heritage, the opposition between nature and human nature is a false notion, to be overcome through history. As does the Hegelian, the Marxian dialectic uncovers the truth of beings through time, struggle and change. (*end of delete/or re-write*)

The Marxist belief that the labour process (like all processes, in fact) has a dialectical character, and the tools used in the transforming process leave their impress on the object that the process explains a feature that has long troubled commentators on Eisenstein's theory of film. Eisenstein, as Bordwell complains, refers to any kind of difference as a conflict. For example, he refers to the conflict between the object in its natural existence and the object as represented through a short lens. Bordwell says that it makes no sense to call such difference a form of conflict. He writes:

The concept of conflict is simply applied too broadly to be of much explanatory value. The term seems to denote any incongruity, comparison, or juxtaposition; it dwindles to difference. When Eisenstein insists on recasting all differences as conflicts, he extends the idea to questionable cases. In what meaningful sense does a camera angle represent a conflict between the profilmic object and the framing? . . . [This is hardly conflict] unless one postulates in advance that all shot changes instantiate conflict--in which case no counterexample will ever test the explanatory hypothesis. [*The Cinema of Eisenstein*, p. 130]

More than any other passage in his book, this one highlights the consequences of Bordwell's central oversight: his failure to grasp the analogy Eisenstein drew between the labour's transformation of raw materials into a humanly useful object and the transformation of the iconic signifier into an aesthetic form. The Marxist conception of labour held that exactly such a

difference is the essence of creative conflict and struggle. The object in its natural existence is analogous in art to matter in its inert state. Labour, the very essence of creative wrestling with nature, transforms the natural object into something it originally was not by endowing it with new characteristics. To describe such differences as conflicts is precisely what we expect from someone whose concept of struggle and conflict is bound up with the Marxist conception of labour to do.

Because Bordwell does not see that Eisenstein's conception of the dialectic entails the notion of the labour process, he misses basic linkages at work in Eisenstein's thinking. He does not connect the Formalist idea of the transformation of ordinary language into aesthetic language with the Marxist idea of the transformation of the raw materials of nature into objects that have use-value. So, Bordwell fails to notice the important role the notion of the dialectic plays in both Eisenstein's earlier and his later works. In this regard, what was true of "Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift," remains true of *The Cinema of Eisenstein*. It is also true of every other commentator on Eisenstein's theory.

III

Understanding the dialectical principle in operation pays rewards when it is brought to bear on the analysis of Eisenstein's films. The dialectical principle highlights the possibility of analyzing a series of shots as a differential succession interacting with each other and inflecting each other more through their syntagmatic than through their paradigmatic relations. As Tynjanov's semiotics made clear, this differential succession suffices to produce aesthetic effects without recourse to traditional plot structures. From this conception of a film--as a series of differential relations--came what Bordwell finely characterizes as Eisenstein's "divagative" style, which mixes narrative and non-narrative modes. However, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* reads Eisenstein's early works retrospectively. Bordwell takes the vantage point of the later Eisenstein to analyze the early films. This leads him to stress their narrative features. Some of us prefer to stress Eisenstein's break with traditional narrative structure--represented for him by Griffith's cinema--and wish Bordwell depicted Eisenstein's efforts in that direction as full of promises that went unfilled, a line of development blocked by the tyrannical Stalinist imposition of Socialist Realism.

Emphasizing the dramatic-narrative characteristics of Eisenstein's silent work makes Bordwell's view of Eisenstein finally seem very American. Worse, despite the great care Bordwell takes in presenting the influence that the various art movements in the Soviet Union exerted on Eisenstein, he neglects the revolutionary excitement of that heady moment, unique in Western history, when a state endorsed artistic vanguardism.

Throughout his career--and well beyond the Twenties--the desire to work out a dialectical theory of film--actually, to create a theory of all the arts consistent with the fundamental principles of Marx and Engels' philosophy--remained Eisenstein's lifelong project. And for Eisenstein, this continued to mean working out a theory of film patterned on Marx' analysis of the labour process. (~~delete EN~~) He never abandoned the Formalist model of poetic language because it emphasized the process that transforms conventional (natural) language into poetic language. But it was uniquely Eisenstein who joined the Formalist insight with Marx's idea of the transformation of raw materials into an object with use value. The film medium's industrial nature and the cinematograph's iconic nature, which ensures that the raw material of film is "a photofragment (~~delete EN~~) of reality", strengthened the bond he discerned between these two notions. *Put the Aumont material from the EN here.*

In a declaration that seems paradoxical, or even facetious, Eisenstein proclaimed that "contempt for raw material" will drive the new cinema. His belief in the transforming power of aesthetic relations explains why this should be taken in earnest. And he was consistent on this.

In 1929, Eisenstein describes art as conflict "between natural being [that is, raw material] and creative tendentiousness." In 1934, supposedly after his "epistemological break," in "Through Theatre to Cinema," Eisenstein describes montage in similar terms--as the "mightiest means for a creative remoulding of nature."

This single project, of describing the transformation of the factual shot into an aesthetic form, was one that Eisenstein consistently modelled on the process through which labour transforms inert lumps of matter into objects that have use-value for humans. However, when Eisenstein began his theoretical endeavours, a mechanical conception of the dialectical process prevailed in the Soviet Union. Eisenstein, too, adopted a mechanical conception of the dialectical interrelations among the conflicting elements in a work of art. It was in this period that he famously proclaimed that he approached the problem of creating a work of art in the spirit of the engineer (his first profession). He claimed he foresaw the day when one could calculate the aesthetic structure to produce a particular change in the viewer's consciousness in much the same way that an engineer calculates the characteristics a town water-system must have to serve its intended role. (*delete EN*)

Eisenstein's early theory and practice stressed the dialectical relation of shots, a feature of his work that has never been described correctly. Bordwell comes as close as anybody in his commentary on *Potemkin*. However, because Bordwell reads Eisenstein's career backwards, his analysis of *Potemkin*'s montage construction still is flawed by pressures to render Eisenstein's Twenties practice consistent with his later ideas of organic unity and "pathos." So Bordwell struggles to see the *Potemkin*'s composition as engaging the interaction of all features of one shot with all features of its successor. (*keep EN*)

Actually, Eisenstein's dialectical montage aims at creating a form that, by synthesizing opposites, conforms to the pattern that characterizes the historical process. Tynjanov's and Kazansky's ideas of complex signs convinced Eisenstein that every shot is a polyvalent element that possesses plural significations. Since a shot possesses several features, its dominant and subsidiary characteristics can conflict: a dominant movement to the left can balance a subsidiary movement to the right. The individual shot, then, can be a synthesis of opposing elements. What is more important, the dominant feature of one shot can match a subsidiary element in the previous (or succeeding) shot, while the subsidiary feature in the previous shot conflicts with its dominant feature. Such "conflict" between a subsidiary feature of one shot and the dominant feature of the next is, in fact, the norm of Eisenstein's practice, although he sometimes, in order to create especially strong jolts at the cuts, juxtaposes opposing dominants. Eisenstein believed such constructions bring the two shots into a unity because the subsidiary feature of the earlier shot matches the dominant feature of the succeeding shot. And, because the dominant features of the successive shots also conflict, this unity is a dialectical unity between opposites.

Eisenstein further claimed that the conflict between the dominant and the subsidiary within the shot "explodes" into the more strongly marked conflict between successive shots because the same form of conflict characterizes both. Examine pairs of successive shots for direction of movement, distance. One shot might be primarily a close-up, although, off to one side, we see through a shadowed passageway into a brighter distant element, *as though* in long shot. The next shot *will be a long shot*, or patterns of dark and light. It does not take long to recognize how schematically Eisenstein in his early films applied his idea that the relation between shots films involves the dialectical synthesis of opposites.

The dialectical character of shot relations ensures that the relations between shots possess a dynamic impetus, and relations of the same form make up the motor that drives history itself.

This homology explains Eisenstein's prefacing "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" with the

quotation from Ruzomofsky's *Theory of Historical Materialism*. He begins that article by comparing the ways that the historical dialectic projects itself into consciousness and into art. As "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" shows with its emphasis on the dynamization of perceptions, emotions and ideas, even the kinetic character of the shots in Eisenstein's earlier films--which he so often "hyperbolizes" (the word is his) to the point of including implausible background actions so as to animate his visual forms--develops from Eisenstein's desire to create film constructions with characteristics similar to those of the historical dialectic. One could cartoon the materialist conception of dialectic on which Eisenstein based his early film theory. The task was to develop an aesthetic theory and practice that conforms to the fundamentals of dialectical materialism. To create film constructions that conform to Marxist principles one must, Eisenstein concluded, create dialectic constructions. And what will clash in the dialectical struggle? One might conclude--and at this point in his career Eisenstein did--that the doctrine of materialism implies, in the realm of aesthetics, that the effects of artworks depend primarily on the character of the material used to create them. Hence, to create artworks that conform to the principles of dialectical materialism, one must arrange the material of the work into patterns of conflict. This, as I noted, is a cartoon of the reasoning that led Eisenstein to the particular formulation of aesthetic materialism that his early film theories offers. But I believe that, with the necessary refinements, it could be made to depict the truth of the matter accurately.

However, Eisenstein's conclusions about the implications that Marx' materialism has for aesthetics, conclusions shared among Constructivist artists, rests on a misunderstanding--a mechanical model--of the implications that Marx's philosophy has for aesthetics. Marx's dialectical materialism implies nothing about the artist's need to be concerned for the materials of his or her medium. Marx' materialism concerns the force that drives history. It affirms that history is *not* the progress of the historical consciousness' acceding to ever higher levels of self-understanding. Rather, developments in the tools that humans use to transform nature into products that have use-value drive history forward. Marx affirms that consciousness is a product of material conditions.

Eisenstein's later film theory rejected the mechanical understanding of materialism--as meaning the material of his medium--characteristic of his earlier career and he attempted to formulate a more adequate materialist theory of consciousness and, specifically, of the effects that artworks have on consciousness. Several conjectures have been offered concerning Eisenstein's turn toward investigating inner awareness and toward more complex ideas about consciousness. One conjecture suggests that Eisenstein's shift was influenced by changes in the philosophical climate in the Soviet Union--specifically the rise of Deborin's philosophy to official status. There is something to this claim. Deborin's teachings about the quasi-autonomy of consciousness and his more organic conception of the dialectic may have helped Eisenstein to recognize the shortcomings of his early theory. But, if the influence of Deborin on Eisenstein's evolution persisted, this was certainly not the result of mindlessly following the rise and fall of philosophical fashions in the Soviet Union. The changes in Eisenstein's theoretical work reflect necessities internal to its development as much as they do Deborin's influence.

Philosophical reputations in the Soviet Union were at best mercurial. Deborin's official status lasted a mere two years before his failure to endorse the Stalinist conception of the Party led to his being condemned--and effectively silenced until Stalin's death. Eisenstein interest in Deborin persisted, however, for he recognized that Deborinite concepts could fill some of the lacks in his early theory. Eisenstein came to recognize the limitations of positivist psychology and Deborin was a sworn enemy of Mach. Similarly, Eisenstein had come to recognize the problems of a mechanistic conception of the dialectic, and Deborin's concept of the dialectic had a much more organic and Hegelian cast.

IV

But what accounts for the centrality that Marx' theory of labour has in Eisenstein's film theory? Eisenstein's earlier theory and practice depended--explicitly and self-consciously--on the Marxist conception of art as ideology, especially the notion of ideology expounded in *The German Ideology (Die deutscher Ideologie)*. There Marx writes: "Consciousness can never be anything than conscious being (*das bewusste Sein*) and human's being is their actual life process." In all ideology, men and their relations appear upside-down, as in a *camera obscura*; this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life processes." (*DI*, p.26, Dietz Verlag edition.) Thus, as the Enlightenment thinkers did, Marx distinguished between *eidolon* and *ontos on*, separating all that is derivative from whatever is originative, shadow from reality, illusion from truth. He considered that art belongs to ideology, along with religion and morality. What is originative is what derives from the production of means to satisfy material needs. The legacy that the Romantics left to Marx instructed him that nature and human nature are potentially one. It is labour that returns human being to nature and so confers on human being the identity of origin. Art based in the labour process does not veil truth; however, it also prepares the way for the overcoming of art--for the time when the installation of a town water system will be the occasion for self-enjoying production.

This notion of the overcoming of art is everywhere implied in the Constructivism, for instance, its emphasis on integrating art and life and on using the contemporary technologies of production in artmaking. Constructivism, however, produced a contradiction at the heart of Eisenstein's early theory of cinema. On one hand, Eisenstein's Formalist convictions led him to affirm the uniqueness of aesthetic experience and the difference between aesthetic forms and the forms of ordinary objects. On the other hand, his commitment to Marx' theory of ideology led him to conceive art as a product that belongs to the long period in human history in which the truth was veiled, a period that would be overcome with the dawning of the communist era. In the communist era all productive activities would become art forms. This contradiction--between the belief that artworks provide unique experiences that ordinary objects cannot and the idea that artworks are simply the products of a phase in human history--propelled Eisenstein into an examination of consciousness, to question what truth is, how we know it and how we fail to know it.

Even this move was no rupture. Eisenstein remained sure that consciousness, as a natural (material) process, operated according to the laws of the dialectic. The attempt to discover a unity that coordinates diverse phenomena and gives life to consciousness. Struggle and conflict, the clash between opposites, produce consciousness. At first, under the influence of the theory of classical conditioning, Eisenstein restricted his interest to how the more abstract, or metaphoric, or conceptual, contents of "mind" can emerge from concrete experience. Eisenstein hoped to remain consistent with a materialism that insisted that the so called "higher faculties of mind" arise from concrete, physical experiences. The pictographic character of Japanese (or Chinese) language provided him with a model for understanding the process. And this is what language remained for Eisenstein: an indication of the powers of the mind and nature of mental processes.

Eisenstein's belief that language and meaning reveal the character of mental processes explains why some contemporary semioticians such as A. Zholkovsky, working in the wake of Chomsky's transformational grammar, have claimed Eisenstein as one early exponent of an intuitively developed generative grammar. The idea that Eisenstein expounds the belief that film has logomorphic form--that Eisenstein draws parallels between the shot and a work (or, under another variant, a sentence), between a sequence and sentence (or paragraph)--is nonsense. In his famous dispute with Kuleshov and Pudovkin he pointedly dismissed such models. In fact, Eisenstein's comparisons of film with language were indirect and his questions about cinema's

relation to language concerned how artistic constructs generate meaning. He seized on the idea that the juxtapositions of concrete terms produce a concept and reveals the existence of an underlying mental process/physical activity which synthesizes the juxtaposed terms. (*delete EN*) Thus, the mental processes that make possible the production of meaning follows dialectical laws. Eisenstein concluded, more generally, that figures of speech reveal figures of thought.

In time, Eisenstein realized that mind's capacity to form a general idea for particular representations (or, more generally, from the experience of particulars) was an inadequate basis for his theory of artistic meaning--not the least because the psychological theory, Pavlovian relexology, to which he petitioned for an explanation of this phenomenon left the mind out of account entirely--and so he adopted a genetic approach to fathoming the mind's construction of meaning. He consulted the work of the psychologists Vygotsky and Luria. And in doing so he anticipated the recent shift in psychological paradigms from Skinnerian behaviourism to Chomskian cognitive psychology. Like Chomsky, Eisenstein turned to examine the processing that goes on within the black-box that is the mind and conducted that examination by considering what the nature of that processing must be to make possible the production of artistic meaning.

What is important to realize here is that in this shift there is an internal logic to the progress of Eisenstein's theoretical development. Eisenstein never broke completely with earlier concepts. He came to realize that Pavlovian efforts to reduce consciousness to material could not account for key features of consciousness (especially the more archaic or primitive features of early forms of thinking.) Given that recognition, Deborin's thesis that consciousness is a quasi-autonomous emergent property held great appeal to him, and Eisenstein adopted it. But he used this new principle to the same ends he had originally used Pavlovian psychology--to explain the mental function that makes possible the production of aesthetic effects.

One aspect of Eisenstein's evolution on which Bordwell is clear and precise is that Eisenstein's theory evolved towards a more organic idea of unity that could accommodate and reconcile greater diversity. However, he fails to emphasize sufficiently how much this is involved with an expanded notion of the dialectic. This should have been evident, for in "The Filmic Fourth Dimension" (*Writings II*) Eisenstein presents a taxonomy of montage types that is based on a dialectic principle of the process (cf. Hegel's Concept) assimilating ever more features of shots (cf. Hegel's Nature) into itself. Furthermore, the principle of organic unity extends, but does not reject, the transformational principle that forms the centre of Eisenstein's film aesthetics.

The principle of organic unity depends upon the belief that aesthetic relations are "internal relations," that is, relations in which the relata are internally changed by the new relations they assume. As the earlier theory of transformation did, this concept attempts to explain how a natural signifier (either an icon sign or a signifier that belongs to a natural language) takes on new, aesthetic significance when it becomes part of a work of art. In doing so, the principle of organic unity provides an alternative account of the same phenomenon that Eisenstein's first transformational principle also explained. Moreover, the concept of organic unity is consistent with Eisenstein's later, revised understanding of the dialectic. The idea that new significances emerge through the construction of complex relations echoes Deborin's claim that dialectical advance produces emergent properties. Admittedly, much that is striking about Eisenstein's earlier theory and practice results from the reductive purity of its project. We must not underestimate the differences that the shift to a less reductive understanding of the dialectic entails. The converse is also true, for one wishes the artist's production to be whole, and one must not overestimate these differences lest one fail to grasp the internal logic of the progress of his career.

Because Bordwell fails to trace the evolution of Eisenstein's conception of the dialectic

towards a more Hegelian understanding, he does not connect Eisenstein's move towards an more organic conception of the dialectic with his shift towards a more flexible and comprehensive understanding of consciousness than reflexology can provide. *The Cinema of Eisenstein* doesn't dig far enough into Eisenstein's theory and practice to enucleate the fundamental dialectic principles that constitute its core and that unify Eisenstein's body of work. This failure leaves Bordwell unable to connect Eisenstein's ideas about the sort of mental processing that must go on within the black box we call the mind with Eisenstein's account of the production of aesthetic effects through the transforming power of what later critics called irony. Bordwell's failure to see that Eisenstein continued to take a dialectical approach throughout his career seems a particularly American failing, and this failing is actually more conspicuous in *The Cinema of Eisenstein* than it was in "Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift."

If Bordwell misses the unifying principle that subtends Eisenstein's work, he also, according to true dialectical logic, fails to describe the progress of this concept and the way its evolution altered the fundamental nature of Eisenstein's aesthetic ideas and his filmmaking. The ideas of the earlier Eisenstein were tied to a narrowly circumscribed psychology that, in its turn, was tied what amounts virtually to a scientific positivism akin to that of the Wiener Kreis. The aesthetic outlook of the earlier writings is close to Enlightenment ideals. This is shown by Eisenstein's efforts to discover the universal and inviolable laws of art--even, to do what the Enlightenment aesthetician Boileau strove to do, namely to derive all aesthetics from a single principle--to establish aesthetics as a rigorous and exact science based on rational principles, to understand artworks as Diderot did, i.e., as constructs of relations.

Eisenstein's Enlightenment outlook changed. Increasingly, as Bordwell shows, archaic levels of consciousness intrigued Eisenstein and he increasingly believed that artworks derive their strength from their close relation to such archaic strata. The impetus for this, as I argued above, derives partly from the logical demands of his theory. But that is only half the story. Just as important was Eisenstein's Mexican adventure. Even the hard-headed Aumont relates the shift in Eisenstein's work to the time Eisenstein's trip to America. Mexico, then as now, demolishes rosy Enlightenment beliefs and opens one to far more terrifying realms of experience. This appears, the commentators agree, to have happened to Eisenstein as well.

No artist can function in the realm of the purely rational, An artist must contact the archaic strata of our being. To the chagrin of those who have impeccable taste, the means by which artists get in contact with these lower centres are often provided by the silly syncretistic religious claptrap peddled by various woolly-minded occult bands. Eisenstein was too much the Enlightenment philosopher-cum-engineer for that. What his scientism could not withstand, however, was his Mexican experience. Mexico opened Eisenstein to strata of our being he had long avoided. After Mexico, he could no longer abide the superficialities of his Enlightenment aesthetics or the superficialities of a positivist psychology. As he opened himself to these terrible realms to which his mathematical disposition had previously forbidden him access, the classical perfection of his early films gave way to flawed sublimity of his later works.