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The Ethos of Cinema

Martin Seel

Abstract

The history of film has always been accompanied by a theoretical debate over its artistic potential. In the works of many theoreticians, more or less explicit anthropological speculations have played a significant role, focusing on the relation between cinema and formerly dominant modes of perception and living. Against this background, this paper addresses the position of film within the arts, and thus also the position of *this* art form *vis-à-vis* the role of art in relation to the human condition. One essential characteristic of films is that they are capable of bringing their audience into a specific state of being moved by what makes them move. Films have the potential to articulate an attitude of active passivity, which neither the other arts nor philosophy can mobilize in the same way.

Key Words

active passivity, film and the arts, film and philosophy, the value of art

1. Introduction

Cinema remains a relatively young art, even though the current question as to whether and to what extent we are entering a "post-cinematic era" has sparked significant discussion over how cinema has aged.^[1] Along with photography and unlike other, much older art forms, the history of film has always been accompanied by a theoretical debate over its artistic potential. In the works of many theoreticians, from Arno Münsterberg to Vachel Lindsay, Walter Benjamin, Erwin Panofsky, Siegfried Kracauer, André Bazin, Edgar Morin, Stanley Cavell, Gilles Deleuze, and many others, more or less explicit anthropological speculations have played a significant role. These theorists deal with the relation between cinema and formerly dominant modes of perception and living. These relationships, however, cannot be examined without turning to the tense relationship between film and other art forms, for example, architecture, music, theater, dance, literature, photography, painting, sculpture, and installations. A theory of film addresses the position of film within the arts, and thus also the position of *this* art form *vis-à-vis* the position of art in relation to the human condition.

Just like any other theory of specific art forms, a theory of film deals with a dual difference. On the one hand, it must clarify what makes the basic disposition of this particular art form. On the other hand, it must keep in mind how forms of art-related artistic praxis deviate from life-praxis in general. The difference between both the productive and receptive treatment of art and other forms of praxis can only be understood in terms of the former's partial continuity with the latter. This view is also based on an anthropological motive, for the value of art, as I would like to show, consists in the

particular way in which it activates a specific, elementary dimension of human praxis in general. This activation is, nevertheless, possible only through a relation of discontinuity *vis-à-vis* the pursuit of non-artistic practices. In this article, however, I will restrict myself to the artistic potential of movies, or at least do so as much as possible. For, as I have already mentioned, a theory of film cannot succeed without a sensibility for its almost permanent dialogue with the many other arts. Thus, my thesis is that, when it comes to cinema, the function of art forms referred to above can be realized in a certain extreme sense.

2. A motto

For the sake of clarity, I will restrict myself to feature films, more precisely, to how feature films appear in the space of the movie theater. This means that I will be ignoring other film genres, especially the many other contemporary forms of presentation and use of motion pictures. To give an idea of where I will be heading, let me begin with a motto that I have taken from my book, entitled *The Arts of Cinema* published in 2013. The following sentences are from the conclusion to the Preface:

Cinema is only one of the possibilities of encountering the world and the self in an art-related fashion. All arts are capable of acquainting their audience with themselves in a particular way. However much films might demand of their audiences in terms of presence of mind, knowledge and understanding, desire and ability to interpret individual films, cinema is above all a place for living out involuntary receptiveness. In the cinema, we celebrate the passive side of our existence, without the enjoyment of which all our activities would be somewhat for naught. This invitation to passivity, this willingness to let things happen, is what makes up the ethos of cinema. No further demands are attached. The arts of cinema merely demand that we be moved by the light and shadow of its movement.^[2]

Taking up this line of argument, I will try to meet an obligation I failed to fulfill in my book, to explain what this "ethos of cinema" is all about.^[3] I would like to try to make good on that debt here.

3. The anthropology of cinema

"Ethos" sounds like "ethics," and ethics sounds like philosophy, which might give the impression that I am declaring film a philosophical enterprise, which today is, in fact, a rather fashionable thing to do.^[4] It is important to keep in mind a crucial distinction here. Every form of art, each in its own way, carries out an experiment on human attitudes within the natural and historical world. In the presence of their works, the arts disclose a space for encountering ourselves and the world, a space that is free of at least most of the obligations our other practices impose. The manner in which one art form relates to other art forms is partially a result of *how* a given art form discloses this space. This is also true for how art

relates to philosophy, since they also diverge in the very manner in which both sides elicit the way humans relate to the world. Their common point of reference lies in the fact that they explore the human form of life from the inside out.

From various perspectives of being involved and caught up in this form of life, art and philosophy provide occasions for humans, in Heidegger's terms, to get an "outlook on themselves."^[5] In this regard, the arts have always interacted and cooperated with the reflexive enlightenment that is the task of philosophy. For the same reason, however, the arts remain in a permanent conflict with philosophy; after all, the non-conceptual products of art bring the individuality of the real and its inexhaustible experience to appearance, an individuality that must remain underdetermined, if not entirely neglected, in philosophical discourse. It is within this space of competition that the imagination of cinema, as well, is at home. Its anthropological expeditions lead us onto paths that philosophical thought cannot follow.^[6]

In contrast to the indifference of an unmoved mover, human life has continually been regarded as being caught in an inescapable tension between two contrary poles, as an alternation between movement and standstill, and tautness and relaxation, as a pendulum swing between pain and boredom, and as an antagonism between the pleasure principle and the death instinct. However we might interpret these various interpretations, they suggest that we should not view the polarity between moving and being moved as a basic principle exclusive to human life. Nor should we grasp this polarity as a conflict between independent or even antagonistic forces. Instead it illustrates a basic tension that equally impacts both active and passive behavior. Being moved and moving complement each other. We cannot move without being moved; what moves us influences how we move. Everything we strive for physically and mentally moves us physically and mentally. Everything that moves us physically and mentally modifies our capacity for physical or mental movement. This is not only a situation we cannot avoid but one that we inevitably desire in all our thoughts and actions. We cannot help but *want* to be moved in one way or another. We desire situations we expect or hope to move us in an accommodating, surprising, or otherwise uplifting way. In everything we are determined to *do*, we are also determined to let ourselves *be* determined.^[7]

It is in this fabric of movement and being-moved that film intervenes. The cinematic situation gives a particular spin to the human position between being determin^{ed} and being determin^{ing}. However, films not only vary the human situation; they present variants and variations of human being-in-the-world. They do not do so once and for all; rather they do it over and over, and in constantly different ways. Films play with the possibilities and impossibilities of human experience and expectation by playing out specific constellations in which both are combined. Unlike other arts, though in an either latent or obvious relation to them, movies organize their own relations of space and time, image and sound, protention and retention, appearing and disappearing, relation to and distance from the world, and motion and emotion. They create a specific tension between movement

and being-moved, and they do so in a way that cannot be found in other art forms.

The space-time of cinema discloses a landscape in which every outside corresponds to an inside and every inside corresponds to an outside. Within this landscape, the ambivalent desire for secure spaces and their transgression is fulfilled. These accessible and inaccessible, opening and closing cinematic spaces take place within film together with its own time. Everything that takes place in the course of a film indicates what is no longer, not yet, or not at all present. Throughout its unfolding, film allows us to experience a present that is passing. Because the filmic space is an essentially *happening* space, filmic presentation always unfolds in the present tense, even if it tells stories of the past or the future. The dynamic of filmic space and filmic time discloses a zone of examining and understanding within a horizon that simultaneously goes beyond examining and understanding, just as is true of life outside the cinema. Movies present artificial landscapes that we explore through sensing awareness. By presenting a world in a way that withholds many of its dimensions from the audience, films demonstrate to their audience what it means to be a temporary inhabitant in a natural, cultural, social, and historical world.

Each film, however, establishes its own time and space. Through the course of its development, the interplay of the perspectives through which it unfolds, and through the way it combines narration and attraction, each film takes on its own individual shape and content. The procedure of film is therefore always distinct from that of philosophy. Nothing here is captured in conceptual abstraction once and for all. Everything is developed in the presenting of particular situations. Filmic explorations expose what is concealed in the open, what is passing in the present, what happens to us in our doings, what is unknown in what we know, and what moves us in movement. By virtue of its formal dispositions, film illuminates constantly different facets of human dispositions. Its aesthetic anthropology operates in a radical manner, both historically and experimentally. By surrounding the bodies of its viewers with its audiovisual installations, it puts them a position of involuntarily testing their passions and beliefs.

4. Active passivity

To be sure, however, we could say something similar about other art forms and the way they interact with still other forms of art. In order to get a more precise understanding of the particular accent that film gives to the anthropological sense of the arts, we must recall an impulse that film shares with many other art forms. Inspiring works of nearly all species of art give whatever they may present a form that compels the reader, viewer, or listener to experience it in both a capturing and liberating manner. We are compelled to awaken our receptivity and spontaneity and activate our receptivity and sensitivity, paired with imagination and the capacity for insight. Great works of art do so in a way that other modes of thinking are incapable of achieving.

In his lecture course on aesthetics during the winter semester of 1958/59, Adorno gave a rather emphatic description of this

phenomenon with reference to music:

If, for instance, you truly listen to a complex symphonic movement in a way that connects all sensual aspects contained there; if you truly hear them and sensually perceive them in their unity and mediation; if you thus not only hear that which you hear as it appears to you now, but also hear it in its relation to what has already occurred in the work, and to what you are still to encounter, and finally to the whole, then that is certainly the highest possible measure of precise, sensual experience.

This highest possible form of sensual perception, however, also demands highly intellectual powers of comprehension, as we must follow the web of relations in such a way that every passage of the work appears in these relations. Therefore, Adorno is somewhat suspicious of the term "artistic enjoyment" [*Kunstgenuss*]. Especially in his twelfth lecture on January 8, 1959, which (once again) is dedicated to "the problem of the concept of beauty," Adorno argued that the vitality and intensity of the experience of significant works of art must not be understood as a kind of self-confident consumption: "Thus I would say that aesthetic experience essentially consists in taking part in an activity of comprehending a work of art by being *in* the work of art, by living in it, as it is often expressed in simple terms."[\[8\]](#) The metaphor of "living" here indicates, above all, the fact that, and just how much, subjects of artistic perception are moved by what they perceive. They experience themselves as part of an occurrence to which they are subjected despite their active participation. Thus Adorno continues by saying that "enjoyment [*Genuss*] has no place here, because the type of experience I am trying to define for you in a certain sense represents a path away from the subject, whereas enjoyment is necessarily something that the subject gets something out of."[\[9\]](#) This not only represents a rejection of a culinary instrumentalization of aesthetic experience, but of every effort to derive some utility or result from the process of aesthetic experience. So Adorno says in the same lecture that it is not so important "what a work of art 'gives' to us, rather what we give the work of art, that is, whether one gives to the work of art, in a certain kind of active passivity or in a strained form of giving-oneself, that which this work expects on its part."[\[10\]](#)

'Active passivity' is the crucial term here. An encounter with works of art demands that we be willing and able to attend to them in a way that allows them to unfold their own processual nature, in a way that draws the listener, observer, or reader into this process. They *actively* determine themselves in giving themselves over to a *passive* state of being determined.[\[11\]](#) In light of this, it is rather irrelevant whether this takes place, as Adorno puts it, in a mode of "strained" participation or, as Benjamin describes in his essay on the work of art with reference to cinema, in a mode of "distraction." In either case, what is important is that we give ourselves over to the play of powers of the objects at hand. And also in either case, what is needed is a reflective following of the respective work. The "precise, sensual experience" of art implies a remembering and anticipating, a differentiating and combining, and thus an

implicitly or explicitly interpreting attentiveness.

Adorno's description of aesthetic perception is one of willing devotion. When it comes to aesthetic freedom, we are not freed *from* some "thing" but we give freedom *to* something and thereby become free ourselves. Adorno also joins this ethic of aesthetic "giving" to a profound concept of happiness, which we achieve not only but also through encounters with objects of art. After Adorno goes into more detail about the ecstatic dimension of the experience of art and its "liberating or uplifting" and "transcending" character,^[12] he immediately turns to its hedonistic dimension:

These moments are certainly the most sublime and the most decisive moments of which artistic experience is capable. And it is certainly possible that these moments represent the origin of the notion that works of art can be enjoyed, as they truly are marked by a kind of pleasure [*Beglückung*] that, though it might not put all other moments of happiness to shame, can measure up to the highest moments of happiness there are, which have the same force [*Gewalt*] as do the most real moments we know.^[13]

The term 'force' indicates the key moment of being drawn in by a work of art because of our own involvement in it. Just as in normal life, in the face of profound works of art we cannot produce our happiness at our own command, we can only acquiesce in it.

5. An encore

We are now ready to touch on the particular impetus through which cinema enriches the play of the arts along with other forms of human play. In the cinema, we can enjoy the passive side of our existence in an exceptional way. We can let ourselves be involved in a world by letting ourselves and the world be. We are animated to be moved in a way that is basic for our entire ability to act.

But that's not all. Film creates a situation for its viewers in which the latter, by being *beside* themselves in a particular way, can be *at one with* themselves in a way that cannot be achieved by other forms of perception, in general, and the perception of other kinds of images, in particular. By being subject to film's visual and acoustic dictates, we come closest to fulfilling our desire to not have to determine our situation but to *let* ourselves be determined by it. Film grants us the special enjoyments and sufferings of passivity. In the cinematic space, we have the opportunity to allow ourselves to be emotionally and intellectually touched by everything that is capable of moving us.

This state of being captured by film, however, does not come about automatically. After all, cinema is not a sleeping chamber in which we merely follow our own dreams (although that sometimes can be a pleasure in its own right). It surely is necessary that we be awake, aware, and attentive. To follow the imagination of film is always an active achievement in that in order to follow *along* with a film, we have to *follow* it.^[14] In the space of the cinema, that is, perceivers, more than in

almost any other mode of awareness, are deprived of their ability to determine the time and direction of their perception. But in this case, being deprived can mean being liberated through a spontaneous activation of the passions that seize us, or at least *could* seize us.

6. Ethos and pathos

In this kind of cinematic energy, there lies a particular ethos, one that must not be equated with theories of *ars vivendi* or morality. Cinema is not a moral institution, regardless of how much individual films might offer elements of existential, moral, political, or other valuations. This would only be a matter of philosophical content, as can also be found in other works of art. Instead cinema is first of all an aesthetic institution that provides a unique stage for the specific energies unleashed by the very *form* of film. In a unique way, cinema can disturb, rattle, play out, and thus question the configurations of our impulses, affects, and affinities in their opaque intertwining and interlocking with convictions and emotions of all kinds.

The ethos of cinema, I would like to say, lies in this activation of our *passiones*. It draws its impetus not from some doctrine on how we are to live but rather from the unique dynamic of its films, a dynamic that it passes onto the experience of the audience. The particular ethos of the cinema consists solely in the particular pathos of its movement.

The cinematic relationship between ethos and pathos, however, should not be misconceived. Hegel, for example, who obviously did not have the chance to experience the cinema, regarded pathos from the perspective of a philosophy of art as an "inherently justified power over the heart, an essential content of rationality and freedom of will."^[15] He goes on to state that "pathos forms the proper centre, the true domain, of art; the representation of it is what is chiefly effective in the work of art as well as in the spectator."^[16] According to Hegel, what is represented in the work of art is the tense and conflicted sway of "universal powers."^[17] It is the "moving pathos" of the characters or states of mind represented in the object of art, which moves the viewer emotionally.^[18] Hegel grasped artistic pathos as that which is represented in a particular work of art. Through the manner of its presentation, the work of art gives expression to an exemplary form in which humans are moved. For Hegel, therefore, this pathos is primarily a matter of artistic *content*; it serves a philosophical ethos that is committed to the representation of universal ethical powers.

However, if we are to do justice to cinema as well as the particularity of other art forms, we cannot be satisfied with this analysis. The priority that Hegel accords to the represented over representation must be inverted. Artistically represented pathos depends on the pathos with which it is represented. This pathos, to be sure, can also exist independent of a figurative representation of human events. In this case, it consists in the pure form of artistic presentation. The "true domain of art," to use Hegel's terms once again, is therefore not *represented* pathos, but a pathos of *representation* or *presentation*. This pathos is a result of the inner processuality of its works, its rhythm, its gestures, and its compositions and

constellations. It does not result from a *content* presented by an artistic production but from the specific *form* in which the respective content emerges and to which this content remains constantly bound.

The pathos of the arts, therefore, stands in the service of nothing. This is their common ethos: They grant their audience the freedom to let themselves be determined in an uncensored manner, uncensored by theoretical and practical dictates and prejudices, or by habits of feeling, thinking, and acting.^[19] The pathos of specific art forms and art works, their respective law of movement, and thus their respective power of appearing meets that of the audience, that is, the latter's ability to be animated, agitated, and, therefore, irritated by the artistic process. This disturbing vitalization and vitalizing disturbance is the core of their very ethos.

This is also and especially true of the cinematic space of resonance. Here, also, and perhaps even all the more, the space of movement enjoys priority over the space of meaning.^[20] Everything represented in the course of a film follows from the temporal dictate of the audio-visual event. Films such as *North by Northwest*, by Alfred Hitchcock, *The Bourne Supremacy* and *United 93*, by Paul Greengrass, *Zabriskie Point* and *Blowup*, by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Taste of Cherry*, by Abbas Kiarostami, *Perpetuum Mobile*, by Nicolás Pereda, *A Night at the Opera*, by Sam Wood and the Marx Brothers, *Fontane Effi Briest*, by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *In the Mood for Love*, by Wong Kar-Wai, *Hamburger Lektionen*, by Romuald Karmarkar, *Goodfellas*, by Martin Scorsese, *Apocalypse Now*, by Francis Ford Coppola, *Caché*, by Michael Haneke, or *Prénom Carmen*, by Jean-Luc Godard, to name only a few of the main movies in my above mentioned book—each of these quite heterogeneous films realizes the artistic potential, and thus the pathos and ethos, of cinema in its own way. The quality of a film, whether it be in the mainstream of a particular genre and conform to a certain epoch or be directed against it, always depends on the accuracy, sophistication, and calculation of its timing and framing, and on whether it has the power to affect *our* ability to be moved through *its* being in motion.

Examples of the dynamics of filmic time-space are legion. One of the most well known is the final scene of John Ford's film, *The Searchers* (USA 1956). The camera recedes into the interior of a farm house and looks out at the restless John Wayne, alias Ethan Edwards, walking off toward an uncertain fate. This shot takes up the opening shot of the film, which had already been repeated once in the middle of the film. At the end of the film, during the second repetition, Ethan returns young Debbie to the house of her murdered parents' neighbors after years of searching for her. The couple lovingly receives Debbie and leads her into the house, approaching the camera that recedes into the house's interior until the doorway and the view out onto the bright landscape only cover about a third of the screen, framed in darkness by the house's interior. John Wayne takes a few steps toward the front door, steps aside, allows the young couple to pass, turns away, and moseys into the distance. The door of the house closes. But *no one*, none of the characters in the house, closes the door. We no longer see any interior. With the closing of the door, the space of the

film itself is closed. Together with distance, nearness fades away; along with the exterior, the interior. There is no longer any division of space, only a background of blackness upon which appears the insert, *The End*. The screen becomes a wall, once again demarcating only the space of the cinema. It no longer acts as a passage into an imaginative space *in its* space.

On the one hand, this scene is a paradigmatic example of the ambiguous anthropological desire for a protective inside and for a liberating outside, a desire that provides the motivation for the stories of so many feature films. We could also interpret this scene, in a more fundamental way, as an allegory on the segmented character constitutive of the space of film. The composition of this scene additionally makes it an emblem of the *unstable framing* to which all filmic events are subjected.

Everything here depends on this variable boundary. It demonstrates that filmic space is both much more open *and* much more closed, and more stable *and* more unstable, than all the spaces in which we otherwise move and find ourselves. A filmic space is more closed and more stable because the movement to which it is subjected and that takes place in it occurs in an unchangeable order, independent of the position of the viewer. All its movements are determined, and all viewers are subject to this movement. On the other hand, a filmic space is more open and more unstable than all others precisely because it is a moving space that always obeys the law of its own dynamic. The horizon within which the visible appears does not shift or fade away in relation to the movement of the viewers' body. It captures and plays with them by constantly eluding them. As much of this horizon might become visible *in* the image, such as in the final scene of *The Searchers*, it is not the horizon *of* the image. It lies outside the latter's frame in a decisively different way from other types of image, and especially photographic images.^[21] The space of films does not generally go beyond *our* horizon, as only very few actually do; it goes beyond its *own* horizon. With every angle, every segment, every swing, every zoom, and every object that moves into or out of its field of visibility, the sphere of what lies beyond its appearing changes, without this outside being present other than in ever new fragments, and thus in ever new dimensions of the outside.

Hence, filmic space is imagined space, not because it is *produced* by imagination, as often as this might be the case, and not only because it must be almost constantly *supplemented* by the spectator's imagination, but mainly because everything that becomes visible in its space is related to an invisible horizon. That makes this space virtual. That makes the *experience* of this space one in which we are taken into an otherwise inaccessible world, which even in its perceptible accessibility always remains inaccessible. Filmic space is a mobile space for viewing that launches its viewers into a movement of perception that goes beyond itself at the very point at which it is spellbound by the play of the appearances within the cinematic space.

7. Continuity and discontinuity

Let me conclude. "The value of art," I said at the beginning,

“consists in the particular way in which it activates a specific, elementary *dimension* of human praxis, an activation, to be sure, that is only possible through a relation of *discontinuity vis-à-vis* the pursuit of non-artistic practices.” This preliminary statement did not yet determine which dimension of our practices is uncovered and unleashed by the arts in a particular way. My final answer, focused on the example of cinema, can no longer be a surprise. The arts are predestined to rouse and trace the dimensions of being determined that back up our determining actions and omissions in a substantial way. On the one hand, herein lies the continuity between artistic and art-related praxis and the other forms of human commitment: *Art plays out the passive side of all activity*. On the other hand, herein lies the *discontinuity* between artistic and art-related praxis and all other practices: *Art enables the active exploration of our passivity*. It concerns us because it undertakes an experiment with everything that might concern us. In this being determined to experience what we might wish or want to be determined by lies the potential of almost all art forms, and especially of movies.

Translated by Joseph Ganahl

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Endnotes

[1] E.g., David N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge/Mass.-London 2007); Francesco Casetti, “Die Explosion des Kinos. Filmerfahrung im Postkinematographischen Zeitalter,” *Montage AV*, 19.1 (2010), 11–35; Francesco Casetti, “Back to the Motherland. The Film Theatre in the Post-Medium Age,” *Screen* 52.1 (2011), 1–12.

[2] Martin Seel, *Die Künste des Kinos* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2013), p. 15f.

[3] This text can therefore be read as an alternative version of the concluding chapter of this book.

[4] For the current state of the discussion, see *Film as Philosophy: Essays on Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell*, eds. Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); *New Takes in Film-Philosophy*, eds. Havi Carel and Greg Tuck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[5] Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 43.

[6] Cf. Martin Seel, “The Appearance of Spaces in Film,” in *Paradoxes of Appearing*, eds. Michael A. Andersen and Henrik

Oxvig (Baden: Müller, 2009), pp. 109-127.; see Edgar Morin, *Der Mensch und das Kino: Eine anthropologische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1958).

[7] Cf. Martin Seel, "Letting Oneself be Determined: A Revised Concept of Self-determination," in *Philosophical Romanticism*, ed. Nikolas Kompridis (London-New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 81-96.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[9] *Loc. cit.*

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[11] There is an astounding correspondence between Adorno's strong emphasis on the aspect of passivity, not only here but also in his subversive utopian fantasy in aphorism #100 in *Minima Moralia*, and a passage in Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*, in which he writes: "Industry and utility are the angels of death who, with fiery swords, prevent man's return to Paradise. Only calmly and gently, in the sacred tranquility of true passivity, can one remember one's whole ego and contemplate the world and life. How does any thinking and writing of poetry take place, if not by complete dedication and submission to some guardian genius? And yet talking and ordering are only secondary matters in all the arts and sciences: the essence is thinking and imagining, and these are possible only in passivity. To be sure, it's an intentional, arbitrary, and one-sided passivity, but it's still passivity." Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 65f. Related motives play a major role in Friedrich Schiller's letters (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, bes. 13,14, 20 u. 21 letter).

[12] Adorno, *Ästhetik*, pp. 195, 196.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 196f.

[14] Morin likewise emphasizes this aspect in *Der Mensch und das Kino*, 109ff, where he also speaks of "active passivity" (118).

[15] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 1, p. 232.

[16] *Loc. cit.*

[17] Here we should note, however, that even Hegel emphasizes the heterogeneity of the passions awakened by art: "But in the light of the *rationality* of what is inherently total and therefore living, this illogicality is precisely what is logical and right. For man is this: not only the bearer of the contradiction of his multiple nature but the sustainer of it, remaining therein equal and true to himself." *Ibid.*, p. 240

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[19] A path towards this claim can also be found in Hegel's works. After a complex discussion of how the treatment of works of arts relates to our theoretical and practical stance toward the world, Hegel wrote in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, "Thus the contemplation of beauty is of a liberal kind; it leaves

objects alone as being inherently free and infinite; there is no wish to possess them or take advantage of them as useful for fulfilling finite needs and intentions. So the object, as beautiful, appears neither as forced and compelled by us, nor fought and overcome by other external things." (*Ibid.*, p. 115). This is an elegant reformulation of Kant's theorem of "disinterestedness" in his *Critique of Judgment*. But here as well, the thought becomes more plausible once we reverse the direction of observation. Then we will find that *we* leave objects of beauty be in a distinguished manner because they allow *us* to be in the animation of our feeling, thinking, and imagining in an exceptional manner. See Martin Seel, "Aktive Passivität: Über die ästhetische Variante der Freiheit in Freiheit," *Stuttgarter Hegel-Kongress 2011*, eds. Gunnar Hindrichs and Axel Honneth (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 2013), pp. 195-214.

[20] See Martin Seel, *Die Künste des Kinos*, esp. pp. 26, 45, 60f.

[21] See Martin Seel, "The Imagination of Photography," in *REAL. Aus der Sammlung der DZ-Bank*, (Ostfildern: Cantz, 2008), pp. 20-33, and Martin Seel, *Die Künste des Kinos*, p. 66ff and p. 180 ff."