

Folding and Doubling

Re-visiting Freud's Screen Memories

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The cinematic medium, according to Deleuze, enabled a new way of 'seeing' by relocating perception from the human eye to an 'eye in matter'.¹ This paradigmatic shift away from a perception 'anchored in the subject' allowed for the image to be thought anew. In *Cinema 1*, this other eye is defined via the 'movement image' as being equivalent to an objective eye found in all facets of matter. The 'movement-image' embodies a duration whose essence is constantly transformative.² This 'movement image', however, is restricted by subjective perception, as the privileging of a human eye organizes and frames the reception of images. Deleuze defines this as the 'perception image'. The human eye, the organ of natural visual perception, is thus only one potential of the cine eye (the cinematic eye), as the perception image is already contained within the movement-image. In other words, the eye's visual perception can be reproduced by the cinematic medium, but the capabilities of the cinema go beyond human visual perception.

This paper proposes to consider the human eye as not dissimilar to the cine eye. In this respect, the eyes' functioning will be re-thought as that of organs that operate as machinic assemblages rather than as simple mechanisms of contraction. The difference from Deleuze's account of the human eye is that the eyes, in this case, operate both through their binocular and monocular functioning and not simply according to the latter, the singular eye. Furthermore, in Deleuze's writing the human eye has been relegated to an organ that mostly contracts, ignoring its other function (expansion); the eye is portrayed as an organ that frames, selects, in other words it is 'reductive'. This paper proposes to reposition the human eyes as diverse machinic assemblages that may be connected with /extended from the Deleuzian cine eye to form the prosthetic eye. What happens when this prosthetic eye incorporates the 'movement image' within its bodily schema?

The formation of the 'perception image' needs to be further explored by examining confluences and contradictions between Deleuze's elaboration on the recollection image through notions of 'duration' (1966) and 'fold' (1988), and Freud's proposition of the overlap between the conscious and the unconscious in memory formation, as exemplified in his study 'Screen Memories' (1899). To 'recall' for Deleuze and to 'remember' for Freud share in their construed mechanisms a transposition or translation, yet they diverge in their understanding of their psychological or ontological significance in relation to the present and the conscious, as well

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as in their effect of active alteration.³

The interaction between a cine eye and the human eye produces (an) other understanding of the image. Whilst the 'movement image' is being re-absorbed by the corporeal body, the interaction with this other (superhuman) eye becomes internalized. This reception does not imply a re-anchoring of the subject, but rather the constitution of a new corporeal-technical interaction. Upon its return to the cognitive body, the 'movement image' triggers another type of image, one that is related to Freud's articulation of the double. The role of the 'double',

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central to this paper's argument, reveals both the ontological potential of a recollection image which doubles up in the psychophysical, and the impregnated double at the unconscious level

that modifies both the present and the past onto a new layer of consciousness.

The interaction between the human and the cine eyes induces an image that may be related to the unconscious image. The dream image and its operation, in a manner that evokes the account of the human eye, is only partially analyzed by Deleuze. The dream image is rendered as a non-contracting mechanism – coincidentally, the reverse of the contractible human eye. For this reason, it is necessary to turn to Freud's work on memory images in order to begin to understand this other type of image, one that is based in subjective memory formation. This will allow for the superimposition of these two divergent propositions in order to produce a new understanding of the image and its connection to the corporeal techno-body. The subjectivity that is proposed here is not anchored or fixed in the reductive framing that is assumed by the 'perception image'. Instead there is a shifting interplay between the other eye (or cine eye) as articulated by Deleuze and the human eyes' reception of this image.

The thinking of this post-cinematic image, based on this formulation of the prosthetic eye, is produced by the interaction between the cine eye and its return to the corporeal body. The re-configuration of corporeal vision, based on the cinematic eye (and extending beyond that via other technologies) implies that our bodily cognitive perception and its duration conflate with new configurations of memory. The image is no longer simply considered as dynamic; it multiplies and extends, breaching the boundaries between bodies and environments, mediated and threaded by memory optics.

a. Eyes Wide Shut

This is not a human eye, even an improved one.⁴

Contrasting the human eye to the cine eye of director Dziga Vertov, Deleuze relegates the human eye to only one of its functions. The eye as an organ is reductively considered merely as a mechanism for contracting. The reverse of an efficiently operating eye (in the mechanical sense), i.e. a degenerative eye, might be more revealing as a machinic assemblage rather than a mechanical system.⁵

Here the constituent elements of the eye structure an image that cannot be easily reduced to Deleuze's 'perception image'. Taking the degenerative eye as a starting point, it is useful to

think of the complexity that arises in the reception of the image when we assume the eyes' binocular and monocular dual functioning. This dual functioning might be further challenged when there is an imbalance in the operation of each eye (this is the case with my visual experience, as I have keratoconus in one eye).⁶

If the importance assigned to the cine eye lies with the fact that it is the medium that best captures duration, how does it achieve this? Deleuze's answer is – through montage. Montage allows for the superimposition of the moving image; the possibility of (at least) a double durational trajectory displaces the sense of the interval in relation to the standard frame-by-frame scene. This exceptional articulation of the cine eye has parallels however to the human eye, as outlined above. The durational immanence of matter may be experienced when the double vision (created by a combined degenerated and a 'normal' eye for example) produces two overlapping images that converge and diverge. This reception of the images creates an embodied montage as the two divergent monocular perception images include divergent durations that are superimposed via the eyes' binocular operation. These separate yet superimposed visual durations are cognitively experienced by the body. Beyond that, there are instruments or prosthetics of vision that might further extend the notion of the cine eye and the human eye, creating another reception of images. The meaning of duration will first need to be further developed, as it is what defines the 'movement-image' and the cine eye.

b. Duration

If we follow a line of inquiry through Deleuze's own thought on the differential within the fold as developed in *The Fold and Bergsonism*, we can begin to trace how these notions are also articulated in the cine eye. Deleuze's interpretation of Bergsonian duration becomes the precursor of the cine eye, as he claims:

When we divide something up according to its natural articulations we have: on the one hand, the aspect of space, by which the thing can only ever differ in degree from other things and from itself (augmentation, diminution); and on the other hand, the aspect of duration, by which the thing differs in kind from all others and from itself (alteration).⁷

Deleuze explains that the aspect of duration operates by means of 'actualization' via 'translation, rotation'.⁸ He goes on to state that 'the past literally moves toward the present in order to find a point of contact (or of contraction) with it. The second moment ensures a transposition, a translation, an expansion of the past in the present'⁹.

The line of investigation of *Bergsonism* (1966) is continued in *The Fold* (1988). Here, the differential is extended from the earlier relation between the difference in degree and kind that is developed in *Bergsonism*. The difference in degree and kind is analogous to space and time, where space correlates to a change in degree (e.g. augmentation, diminution) and duration differs in kind (alteration). In *The Fold* however, the monad introduces the notion of duration in relation to the formation of 'pre-individual singularities'.¹⁰ The temporal co-extensity developed in *Bergsonism* corresponds to the multiple potentialities of the monads in *The Fold*; this is made evident with the example of Borges' *Garden of bifurcating paths*.¹¹ The emphasis turns towards 'pre-subjective' and 'pre-individual' singularities. This is an important difference from Bergson, because here Deleuze extends the privilege of the body image to all images. The folding is directly connected to the difference in kind developed from Bergson's duration, however the primal image assigned to the body by Bergson no longer applies in Deleuze.

In *Bergsonism*, there seems to be an uncomfortable position when this line of investigation meets the unconscious image. This becomes evident when Deleuze very briefly refers to the dream state; he mentions that one dreams

with no interest other than “disinterest”, it is as if the contraction were missing, as if the extremely expanded relationship of the recollection with the present reproduced the most expanded level of the past itself.¹²

This statement is of course contrary to Sigmund Freud’s analysis in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), where the contraction operating within the dream works in a different way than it does in consciousness. Equally problematic is the short passage where Deleuze does mention Freud in relation to Bergson, in order to posit that ‘the psychological is the present. Only the present is “psychological”; but the past is pure ontology; pure recollection has only ontological significance.’¹³

In these statements, Deleuze applies the Bergsonian model of duration as exemplified through the conic memory diagram to the unconscious image. In these two instances Deleuze seems to be well aware of the fact that the unconscious image as developed by Freud provides the basic challenge to the articulation of his own interpretation of recollection in relation to duration. This is because the pure recollection (the base of Bergson’s cone) is never pure in the unconscious, and it isn’t a case of non-contraction. The mechanism defined by Freud operates in a more elaborate way.

In Freud’s analysis of *Screen Memories*, another type of transformation occurs with the memory image, one that considers the role that memory plays in determining how conscious and unconscious image overlap. According to Freud, the recollection of certain memories might conceal others, operating in this case as repressive mechanisms. The screen or repressed memory reveals that one memory is already impregnated or associated with others.

... Freud’s investigation of his first memory, made him aware that what he had taken to be his earliest memory was in fact a compound fiction, just like the dreams he was deciphering at the same time. But though fictional he suggests that it has its roots in childhood memories which it screens and overlays even as it screens its adolescent origins in the ‘innocent’ disguise of childhood memories. The notion of the ‘screen’ or ‘cover’ becomes increasingly many-layered and multi-directional.¹⁴

Thus, a memory is already impregnated or associated with others. This understanding of memory is interconnected with Freud’s reading of the double. The screen in this sense might be conceived as an elaborate mechanism which functions with the ever changing overlaying of various screen partitions and their association to what is screened off. The complexity arises because of the link between, on the one hand, the screened, the screened-off and their contingency, and, on the other hand, the movement (alteration) of their arrangement.

If the cine eye’s appropriation by the eye corresponds to a Deleuzian folding then its reception through cognition might relate to the screen. And what are the implications on the corporeal body that is experiencing this folding/screen? The incorporation of the ‘movement image’ by the corporeal body brings with it something residual. The cine eye treats the subject as an ‘object among other objects.’¹⁵ The ‘confrontation of the acting self and the recollecting self’¹⁶ triggers the doubling. The body in its response to this new construct produces another understanding of the image, one that is yet to be defined. This type of image that emerges from the prosthetic eye (or the post cine eye) considers the ‘unfolding’¹⁷ of two divergent elabora-

tions of memory and their association to duration and vision. The micro-environments of these bodies become the sites for inhabitations.

Endnotes

1 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1, The Movement-Image* (1983), Trans. H. Tomlinson, B. Habberjam, (London: Continuum 2005), 41.

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (1966), Trans. H. Tomlinson, B. Habberjam, (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 94. The transformative here is correlated to the differential, as Deleuze states: 'Duration is differentiated according to the obstacles it meets in matter, according to the materiality through which it passes, according to the kind of extension that it contracts. Duration is differentiated within itself through an internal explosive force.'

3 Alteration according to Deleuze is based on the differential, as developed from Bergsonian duration. In Freud this term is linked to the active alteration that occurs in the formation of screen memories. These will be further explored in this paper.

4 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 83.

5 *Ibid.* 61. Deleuze contrasts the machine and the mechanical. The notion of mechanism is developed from Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (tr. Arthur Mitchell, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911). Deleuze writes: '... mechanism involves closed systems, actions of contact, immobile instantaneous sections. This is not mechanism, it is machinism. The material universe, the plane of immanence, is the machinic assemblage of movement-images. It is the universe as cinema in itself, a metacinema.'

6 Keratoconus is a degenerative disorder of the eye in which the cornea changes to a more conical shape, hence the Greek name *kératos* (horn). The reception of images becomes distorted, unfocused and multiplied.

7 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 31.

8 *Ibid.* 70.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988), Trans. T. Conley (London: Continuum, 1993), 68-73.

11 *Ibid.* 70.

12 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 67.

13 *Ibid.* 56.

14 Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (1899), Intro. H. Haughton. Trans. D. McLintock (London: Penguin Classics, 2003)

15 *Ibid.* 20.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Deleuze, *The Fold*. See in particular 'The unfold', pp. 35-36, in chapter 3, 'What is Baroque?' pp. 27-38.