

Three questions about Six fois deux

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Cahiers du Cinéma has asked you for an interview, because you're a "Philosopher" and we wanted to do something philosophical, but more specifically because you like and admire Godard's work. What do you think of his recent TV programs?

Like many people, I was moved, and it's a lasting emotion. Maybe I should explain my image of Godard. As someone who works a great deal, he must be a very solitary figure. But it's not just any solitude, it's an extraordinarily animated solitude. Full, not of dreams, fantasies, and projects, but of acts, things, people even. A multiple, creative solitude. From the depths of this solitude Godard constitutes a force in his own right but also gets others to work as a team. He can deal as an equal with anyone, with official powers or organizations, as well as a cleaning lady, a worker, mad people. In the TV programs, Godard's questions always engage people directly. They disorient us, the viewers, but not whoever he's talking to. He talks to crazy people in a way that's no more that of a psychiatrist than of another madman, or of someone "playing the fool." He talks with workers not as a boss, or another worker, or an intellectual, or a director talking with actors. It's nothing to do with adopting their tone, in a wily sort of way, it's because his solitude gives him a great capacity, is so full. It's as though, in a way, he's always stammering. Not stammering in his words, but stammering in language itself. You can normally only be a foreigner in another language. But here it's a case of being a foreigner in one's own language. Proust said that fine books have to be written in a sort of foreign language. It's the same with Godard's programs; he's even perfected his Swiss accent to precisely this effect. It's this creative stammering, this solitude, which makes Godard a force.

Because, as you know better than I do, he's always been alone. Godard's never had any popular success with his films, as those who say 'he's changed, from such and such a point onward it's no good' would have us believe. They're often the very people who initially hated him. Godard was ahead of, and influenced, everyone, but not by being a success, rather by following his own line, a line of active flight, a repeatedly broken line zigzagging beneath the surface. Anyway, in cinema, they more or less managed to lock him into his solitude. They pinned him down. And now he's used the opportunity presented by the holidays, and a vague demand for creativity, to take over

the TV for six times two programs. It may be the sole case of someone not being duped by TV. You've usually lost from the outset. People wouldn't have minded him promoting his films, but they can't forgive him for making this series that changes so many things at the heart of TV (questioning people, making them talk, showing images from a variety of sources, and so on). Even now it's over, even if it's been stifled. Many groups and associations were bound to get annoyed: the statement from the Union of Photographic Journalists and Cameramen is a good example. Godard has at the very least stirred up hatred. But he's also shown that a differently "animated" TV is possible.

You haven't answered our question. Say you had to give a "course" on these programs... What ideas did you see, or sense in them? How would you try to explain your enthusiasm? We can always talk about everything else afterward, even if it's what's most important.

OK, but ideas, having an idea, isn't about ideology, it's a practical matter. Godard has a nice saying: not a just image, just an image. Philosophers ought also to say 'not the just ideas, just ideas' and bear this out in their activity. Because the just ideas are always those that conform to accepted meanings or established precepts, they're always ideas that confirm something, even if it's something in the future, even if it's the future of the revolution. While 'just ideas' is a becoming-present, a stammering of ideas, and can only be expressed in the form of questions that tend to confound any answers. Or you can present some simple thing that disrupts all the arguments.

There are two ideas in Godard's programs that work this way, constantly encroaching on one another, getting mixed up and teased apart bit by bit. This is one reason why each program has two parts: as at primary school there are the two elements of learning about things and learning about language. The first idea is to do with work. I think Godard's constantly bringing into question a vaguely Marxist scheme that has spread everywhere: there's supposed to be something pretty abstract called "labor" that one can buy or sell, in situations that either mark a basic social injustice or establish a little more social justice. But Godard asks very concrete questions, he presents images touching on what exactly is being bought and sold. What are some people prepared to buy, and others to sell, these not necessarily being the same thing? A young welder is prepared

to sell his work as a welder, but not his sexuality by becoming an old woman's lover. A cleaning lady's happy to sell the time she spends cleaning but won't sell the moment she spends singing a bit of the "Internationale", why? Because she can't sing? But what, then, if one were to pay her for talking about not being able to sing? A specialist clockmaker, on the other hand, wants to get paid for his clockmaking efforts, but refuses to be paid for his work as an amateur filmmaker, which he calls his "hobby"; but the images show that the movements he makes in the two activities, the clockmaking sequence and the editing sequence, are so remarkably similar that you can mistake one for the other. But no, says the clockmaker, there's a great difference of love and warmth in these movements, I don't want to be paid for my filmmaking. But then what about filmmakers and photographers who do get paid? What, furthermore, is a photographer himself prepared to pay for? He's sometimes prepared to pay his model. Sometimes the model pays him. But when he photographs torture or an execution, he pays neither the victim nor the executioner. And when he photographs children who are sick, wounded, or hungry, why doesn't he pay them? Guattari once suggested at a psychoanalytical congress that analysts should be paid as well as analysands, since the analyst isn't exactly providing a "service," it's more like a division of labor, two distinct kinds of work going on: there's the analyst's work of listening and sifting, but the analysand's unconscious is at work too. Nobody seems to have taken much notice of Guattari's suggestion. Godard's saying the same thing: why not pay the people who watch television, instead of making them pay, because they're engaged in real work and are themselves providing a public service? The social division of labor means it's not only work on the shop floor that gets paid but work in offices and research laboratories too. Otherwise we'd have to think about the workers themselves having to pay the people who design the things they make. I think all these questions and many others, all these images and many others, tear apart the notion of labor. In the first place, the very notion of labor arbitrarily sets one area of activity apart, cuts work off from its relation to love, to creativity, to production even. It makes work a kind of maintenance, the opposite of creating anything, because on this notion it's a matter of reproducing goods that are consumed and reproducing its own productive force, within a closed system of exchange. From this viewpoint it doesn't much matter whether the exchange is fair or unfair, because there's always selective violence in an act of payment, and there's mystification in the very principle of talking in terms of labor. It's to the extent that work might be distinguished from the productive pseudoforce of labor that very different flows of production, of many disparate kinds, might be brought into direct relation with flows of money, independently of any mediation by an abstract force.

I'm even more confused than Godard. Just as I should be, since the key thing is the questions Godard asks and the images he presents and a chance of the spectator feeling that the notion of labor isn't innocent, isn't at all obvious –even, and particularly, from the viewpoint of social criticism. It's this, quite as much as the more obvious things, that explains the reactions of the Communist Party and some unions to Godard's programs: he's dared to question that sacrosanct notion of labor... And then there's the second idea, to do with information. Because here again, language is presented to us as basically informative, and information as basically an exchange. Once again, information is measured in abstract units. But it's doubtful whether the schoolmistress, explaining how something works or teaching spelling, is transmitting information. She's instructing, she's really delivering precepts. And children are supplied with syntax like workers being given tools, in order to produce utterances conforming to accepted meanings. We should take him quite literally when Godard says children are political prisoners. Language is a system of instructions rather than a means of conveying information. TV tells us: 'Now we'll have a bit of entertainment, then the news...' We ought in fact to invert the scheme of information theory. The theory assumes a theoretical maximum of information, with pure noise, interference, at the other extreme; and in between there's redundancy, which reduces the information but allows it to overcome noise. But we should actually start with redundancy as the transmission and relaying of orders or instructions; next, there's information-always the minimum needed for the satisfactory reception of orders; then what? Well, then there's something like silence, or like stammering, or screaming, something slipping through underneath the redundancies and information, letting language slip through, and making itself heard, in spite of everything. To talk, even about yourself, is always to take the place of someone else in whose place you're claiming to speak and who's been denied the right to speak. Orders and precepts stream from Seguy's open mouth. But the woman with the dead child is open-mouthed too. An image gets represented by a sound, like a worker by his representative. A sound takes over a series of images. So how can we manage to speak without giving orders, without claiming to represent something or someone, how can we get people without the right to speak, to speak; and how can we restore to sounds their part in the struggle against power? I suppose that's what it means to be like a foreigner in one's own language, to trace a sort of line of flight for words.

That's "just" two ideas, but two ideas is a lot, it's massive, includes loads of things and other ideas. So Godard brings into question two everyday notions, those of labor and information. He doesn't say we should give *true* information, nor that labor should be well paid (those would be the just ideas) . He says these notions are very suspect. He writes FALSE beside them. He's been saying for ages that he'd like to be a production

company rather than an auteur, and to run the television news rather than make films. He didn't of course mean he wanted to produce his own films, like Verneuil, or take over TV. But that he wanted to produce a mosaic of different work rather than measuring it all against some abstract productive force, and wanted to produce a sub-informational juxtaposition of all the open mouths instead of relating them all to some abstract information taken, as a precept.

If those are Godard's two ideas, do they correspond to the theme of "sounds and images" that constantly recurs in the programs? Images-learning from things-relating to work, and sounds-learning the language-relating to information?

No, there's only a partial correspondence: there's always information in images, and something at work in sounds. Any set of terms can and should be divided up in various ways that correspond only partially. To try and articulate the relation between sounds and images as Godard understands it you'd have to tell a very abstract story, in several episodes, and then finally see that this abstract story corresponds to a single episode of something terribly simple and concrete.

1. There are images, things are themselves images, because images aren't in our head, in our brain. The brain's just one image among others. Images are constantly acting and reacting on each other, producing and consuming. There's no difference at all between *images*, *things*, and *motion*.

2. But images also have an *inside* or certain images have an inside and are experienced from inside. They're subjects (cf. Godard's remarks on *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* in *Godard on Godard*, pp. 239-42). And there's a *gap* between actions upon these images and the reactions they produce. It's this gap that enables them to store up other images, that is to perceive. But what they store is only what interests them in other images: perceiving is subtracting from an image what doesn't interest us, there's always *Less* in our perception. We're so full of images we no longer see those outside us for what they are.

3. There are also aural images, which don't seem to have any priority. Yet these aural images, or some of them, have an *other side* you can call whatever you like, ideas, meaning, language, expressive aspects, and so on. Aural images are thus able to contract or capture other images or a series of other images. A voice takes over a set of images (the voice of Hitler, say). Ideas, acting as precepts, are embodied in aural images or sound waves and say what should interest us in other images: they dictate our perception. There's always a central "rubber stamp" normalizing images, subtracting what we're not supposed to see. So, given the earlier gap, we can trace out as it were two converse

currents: one going from external images to perceptions, the other going from prevailing ideas to perceptions.

4. So we're caught in a chain of images, each of us in our own particular place, each ourself an image, and also in a network of ideas acting as precepts. And so what Godard's doing with his "words and images" goes in two directions at once. On the one hand he's restoring their fullness to external images, so we don't perceive something less, making perception equal to the image, giving back to images all that belongs to them-which is in itself a way of challenging this or that power and its rubber stamps. On the other hand, he's undoing the way language takes power, he's making it stammer in sound waves, taking apart any set of ideas purporting to be just ones and extracting from it just some ideas. These are perhaps two reasons among others why Godard makes such novel use of the *static shot* ("plan fixe"). It's rather like what some contemporary musicians do by introducing a fixed aural plane so that *everything* in music is heard. And when Godard puts a blackboard on the screen and writes on it, he's not making it something he can film but making the blackboard and writing into a new televisual resource, a sort of expressive material with its own particular current in relation to the other currents on the screen.

This whole abstract story in four episodes sounds a bit like science fiction. But it's our social reality these days. The strange thing is that the story corresponds in various ways to what Bergson said in the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*. Bergson's seen as a sedate old philosopher who's no longer of any interest. It would be good if cinema or television revived interest in him (he should be on the IDHEC syllabus, maybe he is). The first chapter of *Matter and Memory* develops an amazing conception of the relations between photography and cinematic motion, and things: 'photography, if there is such a thing as photography, is caught from the outset in, drawn from the start right into the interior of things, and this at every point in space,' and so on. That's not to say Godard's a Bergsonian. It's more the other way around; Godard's not even reviving Bergson, but finding bits of Bergson along his way as he revivifies television.

But why does everything in Godard come in twos? You need two to get three... Fine, but what are these twos and threes all about?

Oh, come on, you know better than anyone it's not like that. Godard's not a dialectician. What counts with him isn't two or three or however many, it's AND, the conjunction AND. The key thing is Godard's use of AND. This is important, because all our thought's modeled, rather, on the verb "to be," IS. Philosophy's weighed down with discussions about attributive judgments (the sky is blue) and existential judgments (God

is) and the possibility or impossibility of reducing one to the other. But they all turn on the verb “to be.” Even conjunctions are dealt with in terms of the verb “to be” – look at syllogisms. The English and the Americans are just about the only people who’ve set conjunctions free, by thinking about relations. But when you see relational judgments as autonomous, you realize that they creep in everywhere, they invade and ruin everything: And isn’t even a specific conjunction or relation, it brings in all relations, there are as many relations as ands, and doesn’t just upset all relations, it upsets being, the verb... and so on. And, ‘and... and... and...’ is precisely a creative stammering, a foreign use of language, as opposed to a conformist and dominant use based on the verb “to be.”

And is of course diversity, multiplicity, the destruction of identities. It’s not the same factory gate when I go in, and when I come out, and then when I go past unemployed. A convicted man’s wife isn’t the same before and after the conviction. But diversity and multiplicity are nothing to do with aesthetic wholes (in the sense of “one more,” “one more woman”...) or dialectical schemas (in the sense of “one produces two, which then produces three”). Because in those cases it’s still Unity, and thus being, that’s primary, and that supposedly becomes multiple. When Godard says everything has two parts, that in a day there’s morning *and* evening, he’s not saying it’s one or the other, or that one becomes the other, becomes two. Because multiplicity is never in the terms, however many, nor in all the terms together, the whole. Multiplicity is precisely in the “and,” which is different in nature from elementary components and collections of them.

Neither a component nor a collection, what is this AND? I think Godard’s force lies in living and thinking and presenting this AND in a very novel way, and in making it work actively. AND is neither one thing nor the other, it’s always in between, between two things; it’s the borderline, there’s always a border, a line of flight or flow, only we don’t see it, because it’s the least perceptible of things. And yet it’s along this line of flight that things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape. ‘The strong people aren’t the ones on one side or the other, power lies on the border.’ Giscard d’Estaing made a sad observation in the lecture on military geography he recently gave the army: the more that things become balanced at the level of the largest groups, between West and East, u.s. and USSR, with planetary consensus, link-ups in space, global policing, and so on, the more they become “destabilized” between North and South – Giscard cites Angola, the Near East, the Palestinian resistance, but also all the unrest that produces ‘a regional destabilization of security,’ airplane hijacking, Corsica . . . Between North and South we’ll keep on finding lines that derail the big groups, an AND, AND, AND which each time marks a new

threshold, a new direction of the broken line, a new course for the border. Godard’s trying to “see borders,” that is, to show the imperceptible. The convict *and* his wife. The mother *and* child. But also images *and* sounds. And the clockmaker’s movements when he’s in his clockmaking sequence *and* when he’s at his editing table: an imperceptible border separates them, belonging to neither but carrying both forward in their disparate development, in a flight or in a flow where we no longer know which is the guiding thread, nor where it’s going. A whole micropolitics of borders, countering the macropolitics of large groups. At least we know that’s where things come to pass, on the border between images and sounds, where images become too full and sounds too strident. That’s what Godard’s done in *Six Times Two*: made this active and creative line pass six times between them, made it visible, as it carries television forward.

Originally published as ‘Trois questions sur Six fois deux’ in ‘Cahiers du cinéma’ no. 271. (nov. 1976). English version found in ‘Gilles Deleuze: Negotiations 1972-1990’ (Columbia University Press, 1995), translated by Martin Joughin.