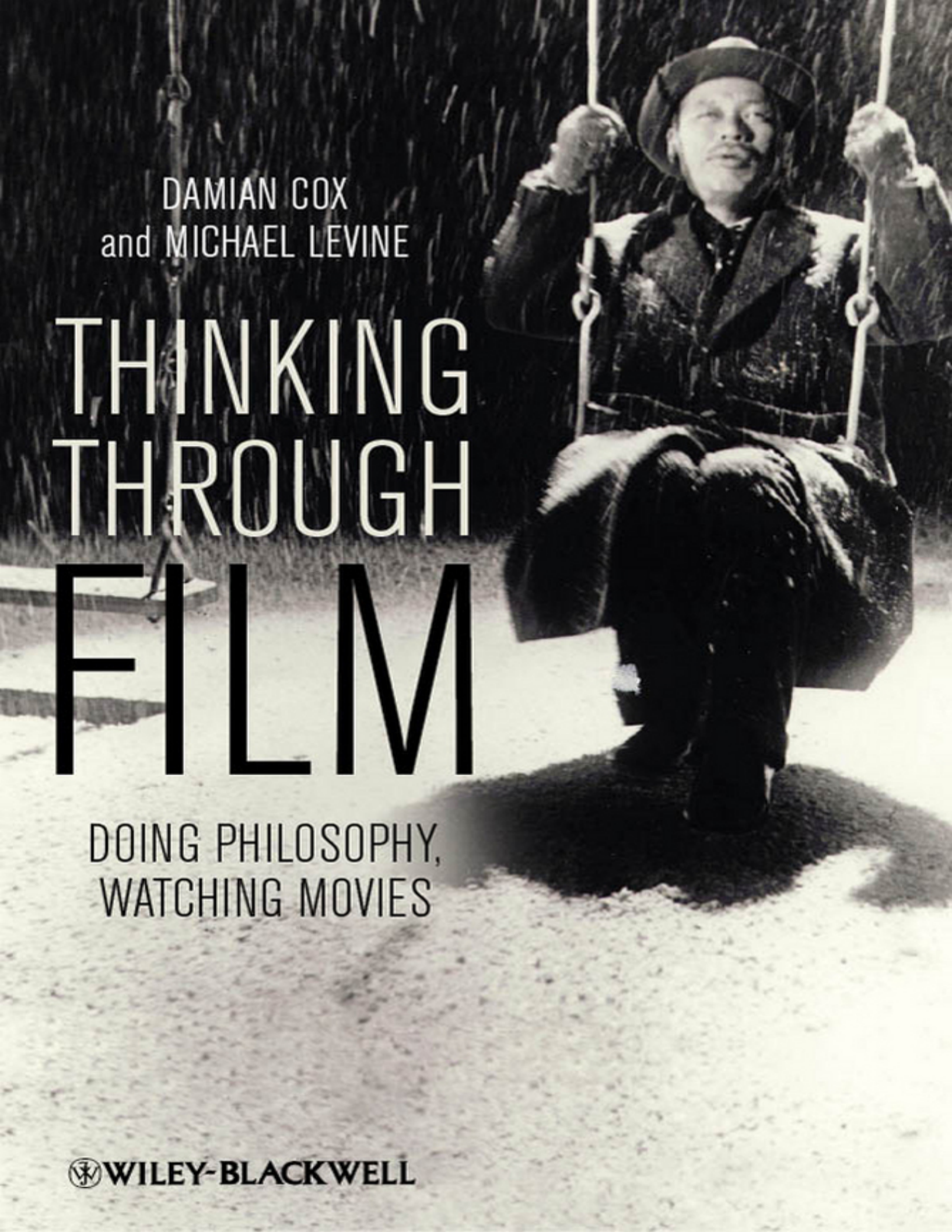

DAMIAN COX
and MICHAEL LEVINE

THINKING THROUGH FILM

DOING PHILOSOPHY, WATCHING MOVIES

WILEY-BLACKWELL

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Thinking Through Film

Doing Philosophy, Watching Movies

Damian Cox
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Preface

This book introduces readers to a broad range of philosophical issues though film, as well as to issues about the nature of film itself – a blend missing in most recent books on philosophy and film. Film is an extremely valuable way of exploring and discussing topics in philosophy, but it is not without its limitations and dangers. Pointing out ways in which film can obfuscate through rhetoric, by playing on the emotions, or by pandering to various desires, is an important part of any approach to thinking through film. We try to bring a critical eye to philosophical-film discussions throughout the present book.

The book has four parts. In part I, chapter 1, we discuss the possibilities of film as a philosophical medium. Why is film a good way of approaching philosophical issues and how is it possible to advance philosophical discussion through film? In the second chapter we discuss some of the philosophical issues raised by film itself. While it focuses on the power of film and its significance, other principal philosophical issues about film and film spectatorship are also raised. Further issues concerning the nature of film and film spectatorship are discussed throughout the book. Why, for example, do we like certain films? How do we get pleasure from films? How can we tell when a film is manipulating our philosophical judgment and the intuitions on which it is based? How can we make use of the confusions that abound in films for philosophical purposes? (Handling both the films and the philosophy with care, of course.)

The chapters in parts II–IV are designed to be read after viewing nominated films, and after having read part I. Part II focuses on films that raise questions about epistemology and metaphysics. These include skepticism, ontology, artificial intelligence, and time (time-travel in particular). In part III we discuss four films in relation to what may broadly

be called “the human condition.” Here we focus on free will, personal identity, and death and the meaning of life. We also examine the nature of film spectatorship in some depth: in chapter 9 our topic is horror, and realist horror films in particular. What, we ask, draws audiences to the experience of horror; to fear and repulsion? Part IV is concerned with ethics and values. We focus on films that address, in turn, the following: motivations for a moral life, moral luck, deontology and consequentialism, and finally virtue theory.

The book aims to give a general overview of core philosophical topics; viewed from the perspective of current work in philosophy and current work in philosophy and film. It is about both philosophy *of* film and philosophy *through* film. These two aspects of the book support one another and it is the idea of bringing these two aspects together that has structured the work. We have chosen films for content, quality, and philosophical potential; films that engage with philosophical issues – at times in circumscribed and distorted ways, but also in ways that help one appreciate the philosophical issues involved and, along with them, something of the significance of philosophy. Where we could do so, we used films to advance philosophical thought, rather than simply illustrate it.

Both classical and contemporary films are used, each chosen to highlight a particular set of philosophical questions, sometimes in unusual ways and with unlikely films. We discuss well-known and popular films, but also lesser-known films. At the end of each chapter there is a brief list of further recommended readings and a list of questions for further philosophical work.

The principle ambition of the book is to do philosophy with films and to think about films philosophically. The chapters are about the issues present in the films from a philosophical *and* filmic perspective. Films can be used to do

philosophy in many ways. They can be used as illustrations of philosophical problems; as ways of testing philosophical theories; as ways of running philosophical thought experiments; as suppliers of interesting puzzles or phenomena, things in need of philosophical examination; as ways of getting clear about the significance of philosophical issues, or ways of getting clear about philosophical possibilities. Reflection on film leads to philosophy by raising questions about the nature of films themselves and film spectatorship in particular. Sometimes philosophical theories are used to interpret films; sometimes films are used to shed light on philosophical theories. All of these ways of watching movies and doing philosophy are represented in this work. There is no unique perspective that philosophy brings to film. Instead, films are themselves – often muddled, but sometimes brilliant – philosophical investigations.

Philosophy and film is still a relatively new field. What we have done in this book could not have been done without the pioneering efforts of those philosophers and film theorists who helped establish philosophy and film as a worthwhile, ongoing, and indeed burgeoning area of inquiry. Even where we disagree with them, we most certainly have learned from them.

Acknowledgments

We thank the many people that inconspicuously and often unknowingly helped us develop this text and our thoughts on the films discussed – often by just saying a few words, and sometimes by presenting more developed views about a film, character, or philosophical problem. In particular we thank our students in film and philosophy at Bond University and The University of Western Australia. We also wish to thank Marguerite La Caze, Amy Barrett-Lennard, Lorna Mehta, Bill Taylor, Ted Roberts, and Carol Mack.

Part I: Philosophy and Film

Part I has two chapters. The first chapter discusses the relationship between philosophy and film. The primary issue here is also preliminary. Is film a credible philosophical medium? Can films *do* philosophy? What should we expect from films philosophically speaking? The second chapter looks at some of the philosophical issues that are either specific to film or applicable to particular films as aesthetic objects (or works of art). What can be said, philosophically speaking, about films' ability to evoke strong emotion and to evoke and even satisfy, at least transiently, phantasies of revenge and narcissistic, even perverse, desires?

In part I objections on the part of philosophers to the philosophical possibilities of film are considered. Various ways in which film and philosophical theory are allegedly related are explained and queried. We make it clear that film can be much more than simply a test or illustration of a piece of philosophical theory. Instead of casting the philosophical possibilities of film in terms of film as servicing philosophy, we turn the tables and view film (or some film) as inherently or naturally philosophical. Various philosophical issues raised by film are discussed alongside relevant narrative and filmic techniques.

Part I constitutes both a background to and a resource for parts II–IV in which central epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical problems are analyzed in relation to specific films.

1

Why Film and Philosophy?

Introduction

This book examines a broad range of philosophical issues though film, as well as issues about the nature of film itself. There are two rather distinct parts to philosophy and film. One part seeks to examine philosophical issues raised in films. For example, films may question a particular ethical point of view or raise questions about skepticism or the nature of personal identity. The other part pertains to issues raised by film understood as an art form. What, if anything, is distinctive about film or cinematic depiction as an art form? What is the philosophical significance of the technique and technology film employs? What is the philosophical significance of audience responses to film? What special benefits or dangers does film harbor given its mass appeal and ability to evoke strong emotion?

One issue that seems to relate to both aspects of film and philosophy is the question of film as a philosophical medium. More than simply illustrating philosophical ideas, can films actually *do* philosophy? Can films be vehicles of philosophical investigation?[1] The present chapter addresses this question. The second aspect of film and philosophy – philosophical discussion of film itself – is introduced in the following chapter. Before launching on the topic of the relation between film and philosophy, let us briefly review some features of film that make it such an attractive basis for philosophy.

The Reach and Power of Film

Academicians sometimes refer to “the canon.” This is supposedly a core body of literature (“classics”) that people in successive generations refer to. The canon is supposed to transmit meaning and modes of conceptualization from one generation to another, as well as form a common body of work for those within a single generation. In theory, canonical works serve to individuate and characterize particular epochs and generations – their views on family, on love, duty to country, and ideals (or alleged ideals), for example. The canon is supposed to be a common source of reference no matter how different people within a particular culture may be. There are questions about whether there really is or ever was such a canon; what it consists in (the Bible; other scripture; Shakespeare; J. D. Salinger?) and also what its status should be. How should it be used? In what ways and for what purposes might it be authoritative?

Arguably, narrative film – and we include in this category feature films and series shown on television and available in numerous other formats – furnishes a canon, something that may even be the first real canon. If so, it is because of the popular and non-elitist status of film art. More people see and discuss films than read – certainly more people see the same films than read the same books – and films cut across socio-economic and other audience barriers in ways that the classic western canon never could do. In developed nations virtually everyone sees and talks about films on occasion. With the availability of films in inexpensive formats, many people in economically deprived circumstances also often see films. For many, films constitute a common core of reference in which values, moral issues, philosophical and other questions are examined. The way these things are presented in films is distinctive. Films are accessible, and often aesthetically engaging and entertaining in ways that make them emotionally and intellectually or ideationally

powerful (see Carroll: 2004). They are generally neither obtuse nor inaccessible in the ways that philosophical texts or formal arguments often are. Films are popular, accessible, ubiquitous, and emotionally engaging.

Film frequently employs other art forms (music, visual arts, literature) and their ability to affect us is integrated into film's power. The ability of film to influence and emotionally affect us is not a straightforward sum of its component art forms, however. There is after all much music, literature, poetry, and visual art that on its own may affect us far more than when taken up in film. Nevertheless, the fact that a feature film can convey so much to so many in such a relatively short time (generally less than two hours, almost always less than three) is one of its most remarkable features. It is also something that has worried many philosophers and film theorists. Adorno and Horkheimer (1990), for example, were concerned with the possible negative influence of mass art on passive and uncritical audiences. (Why not also on active and critical audiences? Is an active and critical attitude enough to dispel the charm of film?) Alfred Hitchcock was alleged to have said "all actors are cattle." However, he didn't quite say this: "I never said all actors are cattle; what I said was all actors should be treated like cattle." One wonders what he must have thought of audiences.

On the other hand, other philosophers, for example Walter Benjamin, are optimistic about the powers of film to enhance social and political freedom and creative thought.[2] Who is more likely right on balance: pessimists such as Adorno or optimists like Benjamin? This turns out to be a very difficult question to answer. Think of a particular case: the power of political speech versus the political power of film. Is a spoken political argument more or less likely to change attitudes than a political film? Chaplin's political speech at the end of *The Great Dictator* (1940) is an

interesting case in point. It has considerable power, and many people fondly remember it after watching the film. But the film's overt aim in 1940 was to turn its audience off any residual appeal that Adolf Hitler and nationalistic fascism in general might have had for them and it achieves this quite independently of the speech. Much of the real work is done when Chaplin, playing Adenoid Hynkel, Dictator of Tomania, bounces an inflated globe of the world off his rear. This is a marvelously effective way of satirizing dreams of world domination. Whether that amounts to a philosophically robust critique of fascism is another story.

By its very nature, film is an extremely valuable way of introducing and discussing topics in philosophy. But it is important to realize the dangers inherent in this. Films can obfuscate and confuse through the way they are framed and filmed, through the way they play on the emotions, or pander to various desires. Keeping track of these obfuscations is an important part of any approach to thinking through film. Many films cater to and pray on unconscious or unwelcome desires, wish-fulfillments, and prejudices. Arguably, the success of a film often depends on its success in catering to these things. (Consider revenge films such as *Harry Brown* (2009), *Death Wish* (1974), and *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968).) Just as we often believe what we want (or would like) to believe rather that what we have good reason to believe, we often believe things because we feel a certain way. Emotions influence belief, as do desires. This is a fact that cinema often exploits, and one that largely accounts for its ability to engage an audience. This is why films so often misinform and mislead us philosophically, just as they often inform and deepen us philosophically.

As we have been at pains to point out, one of cinema's great virtues is its capacity to engage and entertain. It certainly has this virtue by comparison with most

philosophical writing, which is often as dry as a desert. At the same time, the accessibility of film (and mass media generally) to audiences, its power to engage and affect, to emotionally and intellectually manipulate and “do a job” on us, is at the core of ethical concerns over mass media we mentioned earlier, for instance those raised by Adorno and Horkeheimer (1990) and others. Philosophical engagement with film is not always positive. Nonetheless, as Freud noted, art can provide the path from fantasy back to reality. Film is useful in examining a great many, albeit not all, of the areas that philosophy covers. Particular films address topics in ethics, metaphysics, religion, and aesthetics, as well as in social and political philosophy. One area perhaps stands out among all others. Like novels, films often depict and philosophically explore aspects of the multitude of human relations – especially love and friendship. This is no surprise given the extent to which we are generally absorbed most with those things which engage us emotionally.

What is the Relation between Philosophy and Film?

Philosophy and film has burgeoned into a field of its own – and it is growing. This is part of a trend of broadening the range of topics considered suitable for serious philosophical scrutiny. The broadening of philosophical subject matter has been coupled with the recognition that film and other forms of media and entertainment can be powerful vehicles for ideas. Many of these ideas are philosophically interesting and are ingrained in ordinary life – just as friendship, love, death, purpose, and meaning are. It is not exactly a new discovery that everyday life is a philosophical resource. Ancient philosophers knew it, though the twentieth-century professionalization of philosophy may have sometimes

obscured such focus on the everyday. There has been a proliferation of books and journal articles not only on philosophy and film, but more generally on philosophy and culture. Some of these focus on philosophy and everyday concerns as they feature in television (a form of film) and contemporary music. Others consider more classic philosophical issues – ethical, political, epistemological, social, psychological – as they feature in mainstream movies.

Film, especially in its narrative component, provides philosophy with material (scenarios, case studies, stories, hypotheses, and arguments) to scrutinize. Films tell stories, make assertions, and state or intimate hypotheses that give people, and by extension philosophers, material to critically assess. Films can be objects of direct philosophical scrutiny. For example, Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), a film recording the 1934 Nuremberg congress of the Nazi Party, provides us with material for a good deal of philosophical reflection. This includes reflection on the relation between aesthetic and moral value. (Riefenstahl's film is often considered to be an aesthetic masterpiece and moral failure.) Watching *Triumph of the Will* inevitably brings out questions about artists' moral responsibility for their artistic productions. However, films don't become especially philosophical simply in virtue of their being objects of philosophical scrutiny. After all, anything and everything can be an object of philosophical scrutiny (a table, a pen, a cloud, a cathedral). Usually something becomes an object of philosophical scrutiny by representing a certain type of thing, or certain type of experience or phenomenon, that philosophically puzzles and challenges us. Films become philosophical in a more interesting and thoroughgoing sense when they do more than this. They become philosophical by engaging us philosophically as we watch them.

What is the best way to understand the relationship between film (filmmaking) and philosophy (philosophizing)? Can a film *be* a philosophical text, rather than just a resource for philosophers? Can filmmaking *be* philosophizing? Can film-watching *be* philosophizing? Perhaps it simply depends on how expansive and inclusive our conception of philosophy is.[3] One theorist of philosophy and film, Murray Smith (2006: 33), says "I take it to be relatively uncontentious that, in some broad sense, a film can be philosophical. This is hardly surprising if we regard both film (as an art form) and philosophy as extensions of the human capacity for self-consciousness, that is, of our capacity for reflection on ourselves." If we think of philosophy as simply an expression of the human capacity for reflection, then films obviously share this capacity. But there is more to the issue than this.

How should we understand the philosophical potential of film? Paisley Livingston (2008: 3) usefully frames the question in what he terms the *bold thesis*.

> [Can films] make independent, innovative and significant contributions to philosophy by means unique to the cinematic medium (such as montage and sound–image relations), where such contributions are independent in the sense that they are inherent in the film and not based on verbally articulated philosophizing, such as a commentary or paraphrase? Films, it is often claimed in the large literature inspired by Gilles Deleuze's speculative writings on film, do indeed engage in creative philosophical thinking and in the formation of new philosophical concepts.

The bold thesis claims that a film's contribution to philosophy, if genuine, must be irreplaceable or irreducible to any other forms of communication. It is a strong thesis indeed. But why think that the philosophical *value* of film is determined by its philosophical *uniqueness*? Livingston

himself is no fan of the bold thesis. He says (Livingston 2008:12),

> [We should] drop the bold thesis about film as philosophy and shift to more modest and viable claims. Some fiction films are made by an author who uses the medium, in conjunction with linguistic means, to express a philosophically informed perspective. Other fiction films are not so made, but can nonetheless be used to illustrate familiar but valuable views about practical wisdom, scepticism and other topics. Films of both sorts offer a vivid way into philosophical positions and arguments, and may provide worthwhile stimulus to creative philosophical thinking ...

Livingston goes on to modify these "modest and viable" claims in a revealing way. He continues (2008: 12), "... as long as it [is] remembered that the introduction of sophisticated distinctions and arguments will require a verbal articulation that is not provided by the cinematic display on its own. Descriptions of the plot, no matter how subtle, are no substitute for the latter."

Livingston's suggestion seems to be that if we want to do real philosophy, the kind that requires sophisticated distinctions and arguments, we will need to knuckle down and explicitly – that is verbally – articulate an argument. There is no question that certain kinds of philosophical argumentation require this. We know that film is no substitute for certain useful ways of doing philosophy. Why would anyone claim that it is? Why would they want it to be? But Livingston's claim is more deflationary than this. He implies that film is, in some sense, philosophy's handmaiden. Film is (on occasion) an impetus to philosophizing; it is not a way of philosophizing. In contrast to the bold thesis, let us call this suggestion the *null thesis*. According to the null thesis, film has no role at all to play in philosophizing as such. Its only role is to provide an impetus

to, or material for, philosophical work that is done wholly linguistically in written and verbal texts. Films don't themselves make philosophical points (except where they have characters make philosophical points verbally). To make philosophical points films must be paraphrased, interpreted, and then integrated into philosophical argument that carries on much as usual. This is the null thesis. The null thesis is a rather unadventurous and disappointing conclusion to draw. Are there more ambitious options for those who are wary of the bold thesis?

Stephen Mulhall is one prominent figure who rejects what we have called the null thesis. Mulhall (2002: 2) says

> I do not look to these films as handy or popular illustrations of views and arguments properly developed by philosophers; I see them rather as themselves reflecting on and evaluating such views and arguments, as thinking seriously and systematically about them in just the same ways that philosophers do. Such films are not philosophy's raw material, are not a source for its ornamentation; they are philosophical exercises, philosophy in action – film as philosophizing.

At first glance, there is something a little puzzling in this passage. What does Mulhall mean by "just the same ways?" Films can be philosophy in action and just as philosophical as texts (sometimes more so) without being so in "just the same ways." If taken too literally, Mulhall's insistence on equivalence would mean that, methodologically speaking, there is really no distinct category of philosophy in film after all. There would simply be philosophy done in the same way in one medium as in another. It would then, paradoxically, imply that there is no particular value in film "doing" philosophy. Of course, Mulhall can be interpreted more charitably than this. The essential claim in the passage is that philosophy done verbally and philosophy done cinematically are both ways of thinking seriously and

systematically about views and arguments. Let's call this the *modest thesis*. Whereas the bold thesis claims that the cinematic performance of philosophy is unique and irreducible to other forms of doing philosophy and the null thesis claims that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a cinematic performance of philosophy, the modest thesis claims that there is such a thing as the cinematic performance of philosophy and it really is a performance of philosophy. However, the modest thesis denies the uniqueness of film-philosophy. A cinematic performance of philosophy is not untranslatable into verbal philosophical forms; the philosophy can be re-expressed verbally without loss, at least in principle. Philosophy done cinematically need not be done in the same way that philosophy is done verbally (usually it isn't); but it needn't follow from this that doing philosophy cinematically grants us access to philosophical truths and insights that are inaccessible to philosophers working non-cinematically. (This last condition is a way of restating the bold thesis.) The modest thesis lies somewhere between the bold thesis and the null thesis.

The bold thesis might turn out to be false without making the question of the relation between film and philosophy otiose or uninteresting. And for many, the bold thesis is too bold. The modest thesis, on the other hand, seems too modest. It could be right without there being anything particularly interesting to say about the relation between film and philosophy. Is there anything especially philosophically valuable about philosophy done cinematically? Irving Singer suggests that this has something to do with the artistic qualities of films *per se*. He writes (2007: 3) "Apart from any unfortunate efforts to duplicate what trained philosophers do, films we consider great are philosophical insofar as the meaningfulness they embody, and the techniques that convey their type of meaningfulness, exploit at a significantly deep level the

visual, literary, and sonic dimensions of this art form."[4] Is Singer right about any of this? Why can't a film be considered "great," embody meaning, employ techniques to convey that meaning, and "exploit at a significantly deep level the visual, literary, and sonic dimensions of this art form" and yet not be particularly philosophical? (Consider great musicals like *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944) and *42nd Street* (1933).) Furthermore, what is it that Singer thinks "trained philosophers" do? Among the things that trained philosophers do is to examine many of the very same sorts of ethical, political, social, and personal issues sometimes examined in film. They assemble reminders of persistent and persistently overlooked features of human experience; they reflect on the phenomenology of human experience as well as the coherence and evidential soundness of philosophical theories. And there are some films that undoubtedly do a far better (i.e. insightful, accurate, intellectually convincing) job doing at least some of this work than many trained philosophers do.

Perhaps, then, we should adopt a moderate thesis: certain philosophical things are better done in film than in written texts. Perhaps films sometimes deepen philosophical perspectives in ways that written texts struggle to. This would not require film to have unique access to its own mode of philosophizing or its own branch of philosophical insight. It would not require that films be capable of performing philosophical activities that *can't* be managed at all in written or verbal philosophical performances. So it isn't the bold thesis. On the other hand, the moderate thesis requires that films can sometimes do some things better than written texts can. So they aren't simply resources for philosophizing and they aren't *merely* ways of reflecting systematically on fundamental beliefs. They are ways of doing philosophy *especially well*. The moderate thesis is

enough to vouchsafe the deep philosophical significance of film.

The key idea behind the moderate thesis is that films can sometimes be better at presenting certain kinds of philosophical material than standard philosophical genres are. This is not just because film can be more emotionally engaging and entertaining. Films are, mostly, more engaging than standard philosophical writing. After all, philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Hume, Rawls, Dummett – none are real page-turners. If film can be a superior philosophical medium at times, this is partly because film can present a kind of nuance and perspective that is not often found in professional philosophy and is hard to reproduce within the genres of professional philosophy. And this, in turn, is partly because professional philosophy has been too bound by its own specialized genres: the journal article and the monograph.

Underlying some conservative views on whether or not film can do philosophy lies a precious, overly-fastidious, and territorial notion of what philosophy is. It might be that some philosophers simply do not wish to entertain the possibility, let alone the simple truth, that poets, novelists, filmmakers, and others with less lofty professions, may often succeed where they fail and sometimes be better at doing philosophy than professional philosophers are. Concerning a "precious" notion of philosophy, the alleged supposition is that film has something to live up to, standards it must achieve, if it is to be considered as doing, or contributing to, philosophy. It is worth considering, however, whether philosophers have not misconstrued the proper order of the relation between philosophy and film. A more fertile avenue might be to ask the question "What does philosophy have to do, what standards should it strive for, to become more like, or contribute to, (certain) films?"

Some philosophers think that contemporary philosophical practice distorts many philosophical issues. In particular, some philosophers (for example, Iris Murdoch (1970) and Martha Nussbaum (1990)) think that philosophy, at least sometimes and in domains such as ethics, is more at home – more intelligible and more finely tuned – in literature and the arts than it is among the philosophers. The aesthetics and techniques of film, such as montage, deep focus, close-up, and the tracking shot are all suited to focusing and enhancing the attention and due consideration that Murdoch and Nussbaum think good fiction embodies. Film however has an even larger bag of tricks than novels. The camera takes us precisely to where the director wishes to take us, and a point of view can be further emphasized with sound or music. And films show us faces; they give full rein to our capacity to read faces and grasp the significance of gesture. A novelist has to say or hint at things a filmmaker can simply show. This is not to say that films are, on Murdoch and Nussbaum's terms, always better at morally and critically engaging the viewer than novels. (Films generally lack the obvious authoritative voice of some novels – though this is by no means always a bad thing.) Even with the extra dimensions or devices in film, many novels (virtually all the great ones) are better at drawing the viewer in, at morally focusing the viewer, aiding their discernment of relevant particulars (sometimes by obscuring certain things), than films tend to be. Nevertheless, the variety of techniques available in film may well make possible a degree of moral and emotional engagement that in many cases literary fiction is unable to muster. The argument can be expanded beyond ethics and beyond the novel. Film is capable of presenting some philosophical views and perspectives better, for example with greater clarity, than they can be presented in any written form. This view, of course, is what we have been

calling the moderate thesis about the relation between film and philosophy.

In this book, we will be examining many films, some of them will illustrate philosophical ideas; some will represent phenomena that call for philosophical scrutiny; some will themselves *be* objects of philosophical scrutiny. Alongside this, however, are films we interpret as evoking philosophical thought experiments, and others as realizing nuanced investigations of philosophical topics by assembling powerful reminders about various aspects of our experience of life and drawing conclusions from them. In this second category of cases we will be assuming the moderate thesis. We think that thought experiments are sometimes (not always) better run in cinematic form than in the deliberately thin and context- free form typical of philosophical writing. We think that film can sometimes offer nuanced investigation of fundamental features of our experience, well beyond the ordinary achievements of written philosophical texts, and in doing so robustly refute hollow and simplistic ways of understanding life.

Cinematic Philosophy and Authorial Intention

If films do philosophy, then *who* is doing the philosophizing? In *Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy* (2007) Thomas Wartenberg argues that Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) presents a cogent criticism of utilitarianism. This is offered as part of Wartenberg's attempt to defend the claim that films actually *do* philosophy – in this case, by offering a strong counterexample by means of a thought experiment. In the process of developing his case, Wartenberg assumes that the source or home of utilitarianism as a normative ethical