

‘Don’t educate me—move me!’ Why we need art and artists (especially films and filmmakers) to love education into existence

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the anthropological and ontological conditions of our ‘educational movement’ in aesthetic experience and illustrates these through a range of examples from popular cinema/film (the *Empire Strikes Back*; *Memento*; David Lynch’s musings). For the anthropological framing of education, I enlist the help of German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer and his notion of ‘formation’ as it unfolds in the aesthetic appearance of the cultural world—with film’s moving images’ coming-into-form-and-meaning as my key example. For Gadamer, the artwork’s formative potential is bound up in its capacity to *move* our senses and intellect into an encounter with what is *other* to our subjectivity. Drawn into a mode of paying attention to *what appears* (e.g. in film’s moving images), we are called to lose ourselves and be present in a new way to familiar world objects and relations. The second part of the paper imagines the ontological conditions that make possible our formative movement in the cultural world: the mode of the beautiful. Why do certain artworks shine forth and summon us to be present to them? To pursue this question, I turn to French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain’s notion of Beauty and craftsmanship. He turns us (like Gadamer) to a neo-Platonic notion of Beauty rooted in St Thomas Aquinas’ notion of the *mystery of B/being* (i.e. God). In Maritain’s reading, our hermeneutic aesthetic experience—and with that our movement into *self-formation*—is held in existence through the artist’s participation in the mode of the beautiful and their loss of self in the labour of love of craftsmanship.

KEYWORDS: Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jacques Maritain, aesthetic education, film, formation

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THE COMING-INTO-BEING OF THE CULTURAL WORLD

For German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (2012, 2013), aesthetic appearance (he calls this *Darstellung*)—that is, the coming-into-being-and-meaning of the cultural world, including our cultural *self*—also constitutes the relational structure of ‘education’. Being is here the movement of education as *self-formation*; one which (culturally) realizes what is held in the *actuality* of the intersubjective and participatory structure of language and tradition. Hence, the ‘real’ (truth, being) is brought forth in our dialogic participation in the dynamic reservoir of historical consciousness (he calls this *Wirkungsgeschichte*). As such, the process of education as self-formation in the mode of *Darstellung* is not solely agentic. Our formation is set in motion through our being present with shared cultural meanings (in words, forms, symbols, sounds, movement), which are also *other* to our (cultural) subjectivity. It follows that our interpretation of the cultural world is structured by language(s) and (cultural, historical) notions that are not entirely our own and in which we are embedded, but in whose meanings we also participate (again and again). The hermeneutic encounter with the artwork is for Gadamer a key example of this dialogic educational *event*. Here we are summoned into a (sensory, intellectual) participation in the artwork’s unfolding meaning, which orients us beyond what we know of the world—even of ourselves. Art’s address is of course a material one. Stirring both our intellect and our senses, we are summoned to pay attention to its *specific* language of (material) structure and form.

Yet, art also defies our epistemological efforts. For Gadamer (2012), art’s call to meaning also constitutes our learning to be present with what can ultimately never be fully conceptually owned but must be experienced. Although this *other*—of truth, being—is anticipated beyond our existing horizon of meaning, the artefact can never be *fully* assimilated into our existing schemata of understanding. Complete conceptual ‘ownership’ of the *other* (here: the artwork, but also a text and, most importantly, a person) would not only deny my own cultural, material embeddedness (in a shared language, tradition). My conceptual assimilation of the other would also halt the hermeneutic circle’s motion to result in a kind of solipsistic hermeneutic tyranny, seeking to absorb the uncomfortable otherness of the *other* into my familiar (then static) understanding of the world. Consequently, Gadamer (2013) reminds us that the hermeneutic event is a highly artful and serious act of *playing* with meaning; one that requires the players’ careful conduct towards alterity.

The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias [even if we can never escape our own situatedness in the world—K.F.], so that the text [and we shall add the person and the artwork—K.F.] can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings. (Gadamer 2013: 282)

For Gadamer, the artful conduct of being with alterity is at the heart of an understanding that reaches beyond subjective (and conceptual) truth in dialogue, but also does not erase subjectivity of course. The circular, ever-unfinished event of

interpretation (captured in Gadamer's metaphor of play) consists in the continuous working out of our fore-projections, so that we can stay open to the (unexpected) truth(s) that are revealed in the interpretive encounter. Our hermeneutic conduct in the world then develops from within a shared form of (social, historical) life, even if this does not necessarily guarantee that the encounter with meaning will be harmonious or seamless. Hence, the hermeneutic event can be said to yield aesthetic experiences, that bring forth certain subjectivities in specific socially and historically, dialogically located events; ones which can of course also be 'incommensurable'.

The artwork's agency and presence

In sum, in Gadamer's conception of the aesthetic hermeneutic event we are neither imagined to conservatively decode and assimilate the artwork's pre-existing meaning into a fixed cultural horizon of backward-looking tradition, nor is the encounter with meaning conceived as an agentic detangling of the various information/data points hidden in the artefact, so that we can fully *possess* it as abstract knowledge. To the contrary, education—as the movement of our and the artwork's *coming-into-form*—is not constituted in a mode of conceptual assimilation, but in a mode of *paying attention* to the call of the *other*—here, the artwork—as a particular agentic form. It is of course the artist (as a craftsperson) who has intentionally arranged the artefact's material form and structure, so that it may give rise to signs and symbols able to move us into an encounter with meaning. At the same time however, these signs and symbols, as they emerge from the work's intentionally constructed, spatial-temporal form, also always introduce an *excess* of meaning. This is because *Wirkungsgeschichte*—that is, the effect that language, history, and tradition have on our human understanding in the interpretive encounter—can never be fully transparent to the participating human agent. Thus, to some extent we must also stay other to ourselves.

Hence, it is in Gadamer's pointing to the structure of the *movement* of interpretation and our conduct towards the possibility of meaning (beyond our existing horizon of meaning) that we are closest to grasping this call-and-response event of education. Curiously then, our self-formation—and our understanding of its conditions of possibility—are intimately tied to our cultural self's continuous dispossession; a loss through which a new cultural horizon, as the potential transformation of our cognitive and sensory relations to the world (including to our self), may also (re-)emerge.

In essence, to elucidate the anthropological conditions of aesthetic education, Gadamer suggests that the intentionally crafted artwork (*Gebilde*) calls us into an intellectual-sensory encounter with meaning. Here, our senses, intellect, and intuition are summoned *into* the (self-guided) response of interpretation, yet in a rhythm and dialogue set by the various, crafted elements—and their spatial relation—to the artwork's overall form; that which constitutes the specific artwork's *presence*. In this structure of Gadamerian 'arts education', the artefact's spatial presence is what constitutes its moving capacity. More importantly even, the artwork's spatiality also determines the temporality of interpretation (I will give an example in a moment). In

short, it is the artefact's materiality that dictates the time and rhythm of our intellect's and senses' (educational) movement, stimulated by its particular aesthetic elements (e.g. texture, colour, composition, perspective—depending what art form we refer to of course). Drawing from a broad range of (mostly Western) classic, modern, and postmodern examples across various art forms, [Gadamer \(2012, 2013\)](#) references painting, sculpture, music but also drama.

Accordingly, he points to Cubism's rejection of figurative references, as well as theatre-maker Bertolt [Brecht's \(1978\)](#) *Verfremdungstheater* to show how the modernist avant-garde's break with convention (e.g. the all-pervasive central perspective in painting; the unity of plot and character in theatre) demanded a *new* rhythm of engagement with the art forms' arranged elements (and their relation). That is, their aesthetic experimentations reminded the spectator that a play/a painting is indeed constituted by *specific* spatial-temporal conditions. They demonstrated that forms and symbols (or their deliberate absence) do not only mediate our understanding of the 'real' (cultural world). Most importantly perhaps, their new aesthetics *performed* how forms and symbols function to create or withhold meaning *in* human understanding and communication.¹ The avant-garde's break with familiar conventions brought home that 'seeing' an artwork (and creating cultural meaning) is a dialogic event; one that requires a certain conduct of interpretation as a cultural technique that must also be learned.

Absolute presence and self-forgetfulness

In *Truth and Method*, [Gadamer \(2013\)](#) draws on the example of the *festival* to further clarify the temporal mode of aesthetic being—which is that of absolute presence (from Greek: *parousia*). He shows that our (active) being with an artwork (our seeing it) is also a concomitant (passive) mode of participation in its unfolding. In sum, our (self-)formation is tied to the acquisition of a conduct of *losing ourselves* in what presents itself to us. Learning the cultural technique of 'seeing' is here a habituation into getting *fully involved* in what is present to our senses and intellect, so that we can fully participate in the artwork's (and subsequently, our own) *coming-into-form* (to use the German word, *Bildung*). For Gadamer, this self-forgetfulness is then by no means a private or merely psychological condition. It is part and parcel of the 'public' structure of education. *Bildung* (usually translated as *self/formation*) always has a social orientation because it 'takes form' in a commonly, and always potentially meaningful, shared cultural world (see also [Cleary and Hogan 2001](#)). The social-public orientation of aesthetic education (as *Bildung*) is then best thought of as the aesthetic mode of being as/in 'presentation' (*Darstellung/appearance*). *Darstellung*, for [Gadamer \(2001\)](#), does not only capture the (relational) nature of aesthetic knowledge (a presentation always requires a responding/participating spectator). It also describes the temporal dimension of *Bildung*, unfolding in the rhythm and time imposed by the 'presenting' artwork. Appearance is then the mode of being of

¹ Gadamer suggests, for example, that the nature of symbols cannot be 'grasped' only intellectually, as symbols always retain meaning in (and of) themselves and, with that, withhold meaning from intellectual abstraction (2013: 61).

knowledge in the arts and humanities more broadly (different to the social and natural sciences). This is because the aesthetic mode of being understands itself as always already part of the cultural world (at the point of observation), which of course also includes the viewpoint of the spectator (and the artist for that matter).

Being totally involved and carried away by what one sees The ecstatic condition of being outside oneself is not madness. It is instead the positive possibility of being wholly with something else. This kind of being present is self-forgetfulness. (Gadamer 2013: 127)

The radical temporal mode of *festival time* (as the ultimate *present* time) illustrates, for Gadamer, the spectator's key role in bringing the artwork into cultural existence. The festival is more than just a historical event in the calendar. It only exists as an entity with a temporal structure when it is celebrated. That is, only when a spectator is genuinely *being present* and carried away in celebration (which always takes a specific cultural form every time) can the festival be said to be experienced *as* a temporal form (p. 126). At first glance then, film seems a rather curious example to illustrate the self-forgetfulness that is at the heart of Gadamer's ontological mode of aesthetic being. In contrast to the festival, film indeed exists as an entity (with temporal structure), prior to, and even without, the spectator's participation in its coming-into-form.

FILM: AN IMPURE ART

Film, it appears, is a cultural artefact closed onto itself, in no need of a spectator, fixed and accessible in the various acquisition formats that mark its (relatively short) history. Yet, at the same time, as Carruthers (2017) poignantly reminds us, film (e.g. in contemporary cinema) also embodies the value of *cinematic time* for our education. 'Cinema forges arguments about temporality by diverse aesthetic means' (p. 2). These cinematic 'arguments'—according to Gadamer—can then only unfold within an encounter with an audience sharing the experience of a common (spatial-temporal) form of life. It is only because the spectator has a *specific* (historical, socio-cultural) viewpoint that they have the capacity to be in dialogue with the *other* world-relations presented in the cinematic argument. Hence, the audience can only participate in film's unfolding (as meaning), manifested (e.g.) in our laughing, crying, our bewilderment, wonderment, or outrage and of course intuitive-intellectual understanding, because we are able to recognize the (im)possibility, (un)desirability, and potentially provocative nature, of the (other, new) world-relations that film brings into focus. Perhaps like no other art form then, film embodies *Bildung's* social-public orientation at the heart of the mode of aesthetic being.

Film's unusual capacity to curate the vulgar, the mundane, and the sacred by bringing into visual dialogue seemingly incommensurable (material) relations between people, objects, concepts, and ideas, makes film perhaps the ultimate Gadamerian *aesthetic mode of being* in a democratic mass art (without carrying the aristocratic baggage of other art forms) (Badiou 2019). By drawing on and synthesizing all other artforms (Gadamer's examples: painting, theatre, music,

literature, etc.), to present us and play (us) with its mimetic (spatial) presentations of lived time, film's 'impurity as the seventh art' (pp. 302–3), and its subsequent mass appeal, may be claimed as a prime example of Gadamerian *Darstellung*. The democratic mass art of the moving image dwells in a mode of (performative) playful self-presentation, calling us to get in touch with its cinematic arguments. Film frames the material (and with that, public, social) dimension of life, summoning us into paying attention to what we see and sense, so that our (hermeneutic) consciousness may be present in new ways to its objects, familiar world-relations and utopian/dystopian future horizons (Sobchack 2016).²

Film: the art of the moving image

Strangely then, film's capacity to *move us* to be present with new world-relations and future horizons of being is also grounded 'technically', in the spatial-temporal conditions of the artform itself. Firstly, film's perceptual space (that which occupies our visual field when watching a film) relies on a technically precise timing of its frames to ensure the smoothness of the moving images through motion blur (nowadays, this is 24fps (frames per second)).³ Here, film appears as the ultimate Gadamerian *Gebilde*. This is because even when seemingly still (when we linger on one shot, for example), our relation with film's unfolding meaning is still constituted by movement. As such, film's pedagogical space emerges in the technical movement of images, even if imperceptibly. It follows that, as the *artform of the moving image*, film manifests the anthropological conditions (i.e. the spatial-temporal bond) of our educational encounter with art, as its basic technical condition.

Secondly, film's technical movement also grounds the artform's capacity to render present (our) active human relationships' spatial-temporal conditions. Our loss of self in another's (fictional) story of a lived life, is hereby determined by our (broadly 'bodily-spiritual') human ability to be actively present to what appears to our intellect and senses. In turn, film's sense—and our *Bildung*—only emerges in and through our actualized participation (as absolute presence, *parousia*) in the unfolding meaning of film's movement (of images). As Sobchack (2016: 67) drawing on Metz (1991) summarizes, 'cinema's basic phenomenological "realism" is attributed to movement's presentational (rather than representational) presence to perception'. We are reminded that, 'film is a temporal medium and (...) a film's sense emerges, as in life, over time as well as spatially' (Merleau-Ponty 2019: 101). In sum, our *Bildung* through film is (technically, ontologically) conditioned, and made possible, in movement. Moved to be present to what appears to our intellect and senses, when immersed in the spatial-temporal arrangement of film's moving

² Badiou gives the example of Mizoguchi's 1954 film *The Crucified Lovers*. Here, two forbidden lovers (in ancient Japan) are taken to be tortured because they are in conflict with the social law. In the framing of the unity of their smile, Badiou suggests, another possible society is heralded (Badiou 2019: 294).

³ Since the invention of sound on film (in the 1920s), frame rates have been (mainly) standardized to 24fps. In the silent film era, the range lay between 16–24fps—sometimes varied by projectionists and cameramen depending on the subject matter (Salmon et al. 2011).

images, we are invited to forget *and* find ourselves, and the cultural world, again (and again).

Rupturing the familiar: *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Memento*

Film's democratic mass appeal and spatial–temporal grounding in movement, make the artform of the moving image a perfect example of Gadamerian *Darstellung* and its public conception of education. In the following, I focus on two popular Hollywood films to illustrate phenomenologically the *self-forgetfulness* that is at the heart of the mode of aesthetic being (as *Bildung*): George Lucas 1980's *The Empire Strikes Back* (the second film in the original *Star Wars* Trilogy, henceforth *Empire*) and Christopher Nolan's neo-noir mystery thriller *Memento* (2000). At first glance, both films have very different ways of drawing us into the filmic narrative. *Empire* is structured as a classic hero's journey; *Memento* was the first time that a film was constructed in reverse chronology—defying what may be said to be a classic (Aristotelian) dramatic structure (i.e. a classic hero's journey). Despite these aesthetic differences, however, both films can serve as an illustration of Gadamer's (key) anthropological condition for the artwork's, and our own, coming-into-form (*Bildung*): *parousia*. That is, *Empire* and *Memento* summon their viewers into *absolute presence* and *self-forgetfulness*, even if by different aesthetic means. My chosen scene from *Empire* exemplifies hereby a *specific* moment of loss, and subsequent expansion of the self's horizon in *parousia*. My example of *Memento*'s (overall) reverse chronology aesthetic demonstrates the continuity of the play with meaning at the heart of *Darstellung* (as the perpetual movement of the hermeneutic event).

But let me start with my *Star Wars* example. For me, the most striking phenomenological case of *parousia* is perhaps to be found in YouTube's *Children React to Darth Vader's True Identity* videos. These short reaction videos show children (roughly from the age of 3.5 onwards) unselfconsciously immersed in watching the key revelatory moment in *Empire* (Lucas 1980). Here, Luke Skywalker, our hero, seeking to save his friends and defeat the evil empire, confronts the dark Jedi and overlord Darth Vader—only to discover that he is not merely the embodiment of (an external) evil, but his own father. Filmed by parents who (perhaps) wish to recapture some of their own aesthetic pleasure when first encountering *Empire*'s narrative climax in their early film reception experience, these home videos often vividly capture the semantic displacements (the rupture and re-emergence) of the young viewer's horizon of meaning.⁴

⁴ I wish to acknowledge the very valid point made by one of the reviewers, that I 'may be too generous here by framing a parent who violates their child's privacy for online recognition (likes and shares) as moral education'. I would like to clarify that I am using the video to illustrate the relational structure of aesthetic education (which is always to some extent a moral education) and the 'self-forgetfulness' that ensues in the encounter with film, which Bria's engagement with this scene from *Empire* aptly illustrates. I do not seek to show that the parents' action (i.e. their arranging this public viewing situation for perhaps nefarious purposes, such as gaining status through 'likes') is in and of itself moral—although I grant that they may equally be trying to recapture a pleasurable moment from their own early viewing experience (for good or ill).

I am your father

In these clips, the children's facial expressions can be observed to oscillate between horror at the discovery of Vader's true identity, sympathy with their hero (and fear for him), as well as sheer disbelief that good and evil could be so closely related in the Jedis' unforeseen parental relationship. It may be argued then that these short reaction videos, such as 'Bria discovers Darth Vader's True Identity' ([Filmsbysam 2011](#)), give us a glimpse of the phenomenon of Gadamerian self-formation in the mode of film's aesthetic appearance. *Empire* frames the relation between parent and child (known to the viewer) within the (possible, but unexpectedly) close relation between good and evil in the fictional scenario, thus orienting the young spectator beyond their familiar horizon of meaning.

Empire's sci-fi world calls the young audience to forget themselves/their self. Instead, the Skywalker–Vader confrontation scene moves their senses and intellect into being present to what appears as a new and surprising way of conceiving of familiar (moral) world-relations. These semantic displacements pertain to the dualist relation between good and evil embodied in the hero–villain trope, as well as to the familial caring role of the parent. And at the same time, the young spectator also of course learns *how to see*. They practise the cultural craft of *parousia*, learning to be carried away by what is present to their senses. The *Bildung* that ensues in the wake of this key moment of self-forgetfulness then also influences the way that the child is now (potentially) able to actively reconsider other world-relations in the film.

For instance, the revelation of Darth Vader's fatherhood and ambiguous moral stance (a good man who turned to the dark side, rather than a good man simply killed by a bad man) resituates, and puts into question, Luke's own good intentions to restore peace to the galaxy. Although a laudable (Jedi) goal, Vader's seemingly irreconcilable double identity acts as a mirror for Luke's own potential road to corruption. Here, a thirst for justice may turn out to be a thirst for revenge and the relation between the good and the dark side may be closer (in a Jedi's life) than expected. As can often be seen in these reaction videos—this ethical education and change of cultural (moral) horizon can of course overwhelm. That is, the existential question of good and evil (and their complicated, even paradoxical, relation in a material world, in which good people can turn bad and perhaps vice versa) dispossesses the young viewer's self and ruptures the culturally familiar. This can evoke fear, as well as disbelief and sympathy.

FILM ART AS PLAY—MOVING IMAGES THAT MOVE US

Aristotle would of course insist that 'fear' is part and parcel of the aesthetic pleasure that is integral to a well-crafted tragedy (at least for adults). In his *Poetics* (1996), he defines tragedy as 'an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete; ... performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through *pity and fear* the purification of such emotions' (49b23). Aristotle's key contribution to our understanding of the mode of aesthetic being (through the tragic in art and life, as shown in *Empire*), is that he included the *effect* of the tragic on the spectator in his definition

of the structure of the dramatic form. And as such, Aristotle paved the way for Gadamer's own point of departure: the spectator is, ultimately, part of the dramatic structure's and, with that, the play's unfolding meaning. 'The way the spectator belongs to it [the play] makes apparent why it is meaningful to figure art as play' (Gadamer 2013: 131). We may conclude then that the (anxious) discomfort experienced (in Bria's 'moral education') is part of the dramatic structure's unfolding meaning. Concomitantly, it is part of the formative movement of our self's (here is Bria's) *coming-into-form-and-being* in the mode of aesthetic being (I am expanding Aristotle's and Gadamer's observations to film's dramatic unfolding). *Empire's* framing of material life in fiction calls the young viewer to get in touch, linger, and engage their senses and intellect within a to-and-fro movement of dialogue with what 'appears'. *Bildung* is set in motion—spatially and temporally—by film's playful mode of being as a self-presentation in moving images.

The unique way that film's sense may emerge within this continuous two-way play with meaning, when adults (not just children) are 'played by' film's spatial-temporal arrangements in moving images, is also demonstrated by nonlinear, neo-noir mystery thriller *Memento* (Nolan 2000). The film's innovative aesthetic, constructed as a reverse chronology of narrative events, draws us into the mystery of a murder. We are shown a Polaroid photograph depicting a dead man. As the photograph reverts into the camera, our curiosity is peaked as to the circumstances, which led to this pictured moment of crime. The viewer learns that the photograph's owner Leonard Shelby—our protagonist—seeks to avenge the murder of his beloved wife. Suffering from a unique form of amnesia, Leonard cannot store short term memories and tattoos his body to keep track of the clues of the investigation. The filmic narrative unfolds in nonlinear time. Two sequences of events—in colour and in black and white—alternate. We are moved between the protagonist's 'coloured' experience of reality (in reverse, starting with the Polaroid) and the chronological (seemingly objective) unfolding of events in black and white.

This interpretive encounter with *Memento's* doubled narrative framing, conceals and congeals the film's being—and with that also the meaning of the events depicted in this mystery thriller. Put differently, *Memento*—not unlike Gadamer's examples of the aesthetic innovations of Cubism or Brecht's theatre—reminds us that watching a film is indeed grounded in spatial-temporal conditions; ones which we must learn to attend to and 'see'. To recap, film is not an artform forever closed unto itself (fixed in conventions and acquisition formats). It is a Gadamerian *Gebilde* grounded—technically, ontologically—in movement. The moving images and their various possible spatial arrangements, their curation of (seemingly incommensurable) world-relations, hereby constitute film's temporality (*Eigenzeit*). *Memento's* framing of Leonard Shelby's life calls for our continuous signification, as we wish to figure out the circumstances of the murder and see justice restored. Yet, the constantly *moving* images, and their various constellations of meaning (exemplified in the two temporal—chronological and nonlinear—unfolding of events), also deny the images' full abstraction as truth. The moving images play with our agentic, adult

efforts to unravel the sense of the story. And until the end of the film—and perhaps not even then—can we ever be entirely sure where truth (e.g. the meaning of justice, good and evil) is to be found in this ever-changing landscape of often contradictory, storylines and timelines.

Toing and froing with meaning

Memento illustrates the ways that the viewer's play with meaning is of course at the same time a *being played*. Our knowledge of the work of art or, as Gadamer puts it, our hermeneutic consciousness, is intimately bound up in this (pleasurable) event of play—of being played and playing with the possibility and impossibility of revelation (of knowledge, being) (Gadamer 2013: 107). In *Memento*, the film's particular modus of revelation and concealment is constituted, by its spatial arrangement of (edited) images—framing the various, possible circumstances of the murder—into a nonlinear temporal regime. Curiously then, it is film's (technical) mode of spatial being in *moving images* that makes possible our *self-formation* in each film's own temporal rhythm (*Eigenzeit*). As such, *Memento* brings forth a hermeneutic double gesture. It reveals *and* conceals what this film *is*, and what it wishes us to know (or not) about its world's objects and relations.

Initially, our playful encounter with film always of course reveals a meaning. It produces knowledge, which *can* indeed be categorized in abstraction—otherwise we would not be able to access a film's world. Film frames the material dimension of human life (Sobchack 2016). Watching *Memento*, we can recognize, even (potentially) name the productive conditions it frames, because we are part of these world-relations ourselves. It is not alien to us to 'see' and 'feel' the loss of a loved one; we 'recognize' feelings of anger and revenge about injustice; we 'know' the trust and mistrust we can have of foes, friends, even of our own mind. That is, we understand the basic images of what frames a human life: its actual or potential material, psychological, emotional, imaginative, spiritual conditions, and capacities. Film frames life's possibilities and deprivations, even when the cultural *specifics* of what is presented of a life and its unfolding in film—in *Memento*, a white, US American man with amnesia avenging the death of his murdered wife—are rather remote from the *actual* circumstances of our personal lives.

As such, *Memento* also needs to connect, in some general sense, with our existing understanding of the concept of justice in our human world. Otherwise, there would be no access point for our reading—for our play with the meaning of justice. At the same time however, art is just *present* to our senses. That is because the symbolic in the visual metaphors, materiality, and symbols of film, never just gives us access to what is known and classifiable. Here, film renders present what can only be experienced and anticipated as a *potential* of meaning the *movement* of our cognitive and sensory faculties. Hence neither film's nor our own being can be possessed as a *finite* grasp of appearance—for example, of the concept of justice in *Memento*. At the end of the film, we are in fact left with an epistemic rupture (perhaps even a betrayal). Our encounter with *Memento*'s particular *Gebilde*—film's composition in images, music, and dialogue—also conceals a meaning; one which

cannot be so easily owned and, in fact, evades (full) epistemological and ontological capture.

Film's epistemological defiance

When watching the film, we are indeed moved (and moving our senses and intellect) to figure out this film's being. Is this the story of a hurt, handicapped husband avenging the murder of his beloved, dead wife? Or the story of a suffering, sick man deeply manipulated by his friends, foes, and his own mind? Or indeed the story of a crazy killer who uses his illness to manipulate people (including himself) to justify heinous crimes? Having experienced Leonard's own forgetfulness (his amnesia) through the film's nonlinear aesthetic, we are left, at the end, with a shocking character revelation. This final insight leads us not only to re-evaluate the overall meaning of the film, but also our viewing (hermeneutic) experience. The man that we judged innocent (a victim of amnesia) turns out to be unscrupulous, even in his exceptional state of mind. Having already murdered his wife's killer years ago, we 'see' that he manipulated the clues that would have revealed his crime. Tricking his own amnesic self into murdering his accomplice instead—Leonard ensured he never had to learn the truth about himself. Film's gesture of epistemological defiance—its concealment of what it is (not) and what it wishes us (not) to know of the world and *when* (at what point in the unfolding drama)—calls us beyond what *can* be abstracted, to what can only be anticipated as a mystery (of being) in our experience of aesthetic pleasure and desire for revelation.

As such, it is not *Memento's* role (i.e. director Nolan's) to 'educate us' into a finite concept of justice to better the viewer morally. Film's purpose as art is firstly to instigate the movement of our senses and intellect in *anticipation* of revelation (of knowledge, being). Film is crafted, so that it can *be there*, and move us in aesthetic pleasure (as a secondary phenomenon), without having to act as a carrier for an abstractable truth. This does not mean of course that we do not also engage in a (self-forming) 'ethical education'. And in *Memento's* case, we may even be said to learn about the potential tyranny lurking in the hermeneutic event—where we may be deceived (or deceive ourselves) in the play with meaning and must face our own (potential) failure, perhaps inability, to 'see' (justice) correctly. Film's capacity to call us into an encounter with meaning is tied to the ways that its fictions (of world-relations) are crafted to give rise to signs and symbols. These do not only mimic (that is, mirror) our existing knowledge of objects and world-relations but invite us to be present *in new ways* to them—yet without epistemological imposition (even if we may of course be deceived in the world of fiction).

THE MODE OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Having looked at two quite different examples from popular cinema as artworks that instigate our movement into *Bildung*, two questions emerge: how does the spectator acquire the cultural craft of *parousia*? And how does the artist craft an artefact, so

that it may ‘call us’ into the hermeneutic event in the first place? Here, Gadamer turns us to the question of Beauty. To start with, he suggests that we need to conceive of *parousia*—absolute presence—as part of the ontological structure of the *mode of the beautiful*.

Aesthetic being is instigated by the beautiful form that ‘attracts the desire of the human soul’ (Gadamer 2013: 498), summoning us *into parousia*. Drawn to *what appears*, we are moved into the event of understanding. Hence what separates artworks that participate in the mode of the beautiful from those that do not, is their ability to ‘shine forth’ as (material) form, that is *to appear* to us in the first place. Consequently, Gadamer supposes that there is a difference between works, which only *superficially* draw our attention and curiosity (as a means to some other end, e.g. clicks and likes for status elevation) ultimately the capacity to ‘call us back’, and those artworks that operate in the mode of the beautiful—as a recurring summons into the event of understanding—as an *end in itself*. Referring to Plato’s (2005) *Phaedrus*, Gadamer concludes that Beauty has a key ontological function in illuminating the being of the hermeneutic event. The beautiful, according to Plato’s metaphysics, mediates between the realm of the visible (here, the artwork) and the invisible (the movement of our intellect, senses, towards a more universal horizon of meaning). It is the *beautiful form* that draws us into a desire (Gadamer’s *aesthetic pleasure*) for the revelation of being: ‘The Beautiful reveals itself in the search for the Good. That which manifests itself in perfect form attracts the longing of love to it’ (Gadamer 2013: 496–7).

Aristotle (1934) adds to Plato that this mediation between the visible and invisible, fuelled by our longing for understanding (we get to ‘love’ in a moment), is only possible by virtue of the material artwork’s craftsmanship. It is because of the harmony of the work’s relations between its various aesthetic element that we are drawn to *be with* it. What makes an artwork beautiful is that ‘nothing can be added to it and nothing taken away’ (p. 498, referring to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 6, 1,106b 10). This should however not give the false impression that Beauty (and the work’s resulting attraction) is merely the result of adhering to formal criteria of balance between aesthetic elements. Pointing to Plato’s *Philebus* (and his metaphysics of the beautiful as *light*) (Plato 1982), Gadamer explains instead that Beauty cannot be discerned by reference to its aesthetic structure alone. It is the (materially rooted) artwork’s *appearance* (its disclosure, in Greek: *alethia*), as an event of ‘radiance’ or ‘shining’ (in German: *er-scheinen* equals *appearance*), which constitutes the being of the beautiful. Hence, the beautiful, as a form of knowledge, appears in the mode of *being light*. It appears (i.e. shines) whilst *illuminating* our intellect and senses. As such, ‘both the appearance of the beautiful and the mode of being of understanding have the character of an event [and of immediacy]’ (Gadamer 2013: 500). Importantly, then, our illumination and the *erscheinen* (the shining or appearance) of the well-proportioned artwork never occur in abstraction. *Shining* is part of our own *and* the artwork’s participation in the being of the beautiful, a mode which can only unfold in our genuine experience of absolute presence to the material or *parousia*.

Beauty's shining

As I have shown with *Memento's* reverse chronology aesthetic, how exactly the well-proportioned form (i.e. the beautiful) may shine in the particularities of a historically and culturally rooted art form like film, cannot be entirely determined in a formal or abstract manner (e.g. by reference to universal dramatic forms, such as laid out in Aristotle's *Poetics*, even if this may be a good starting point). Instead, the appearance of the beautiful must be thought to emerge from the internal coherence of an intentionally crafted material structure (in a specific historical time and place). Given Beauty's rootedness in the visible (sensible), our self-formation (as *Bildung*) is not instigated by abstract moralistic assertion. The artist can neither piggyback on art's materiality (and fiction) to impart generalizable (e.g. universal moral) truths. Nor is Gadamer's reference to the mode of the beautiful to be understood as snobbish advocacy for superior educational art forms (Arthouse versus Hollywood or the like).

As indicated, popular cinema can indeed act as an illustration of Beauty's mode of *shining* in Gadamerian *Darstellung*. Here strict subject-object relationships (spectator-artwork) are dissolved within the pleasurable movement of our, and the work's, coming-into-form in appearance. As such, Bria's discovery of Darth Vader's true identity in *Empire's* famous dramatic climax (phenomenologically) demonstrates a key Gadamerian (Aristotle- and Plato-inspired) insight. The effect on the spectator (for Gadamer, *parousia*) is part of the dramatic structure, because spectator and artefact both participate in the ontological mode of the beautiful, through which both drama and spectator come into being. Concomitantly, *Memento's* new, unusual film aesthetic (the reversal of a chronological dramatic structure) also reminds us that we can only be habituated into the art of *being fully present* to a film through the mode of the beautiful. Our education (as self-formation, and habituation into *parousia*) then requires not only 'well-proportioned' (i.e. internally coherent) artworks, but also skilled craftspeople to create them. In other words, we must turn to the question of craftsmanship.

THE VIRTUE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

How does the artist craft an artefact, so that it may shine and appear, to invite us into the hermeneutic event? Gadamer's Plato- and Aristotle-inspired emphasis on the key role of Beauty's *shining* in/as the material necessitates a closer look at Beauty's craft-related ontological conditions. Hence, in the following section, I will explore the artist's *act of making* as their mode of participation in the beautiful. My curiosity about the ontological conditions of aesthetic education leads me to French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain's concept of craftsmanship (1930, 1953, 1960). Maritain elucidates the craftsperson's hermeneutic experience of making (rather than spectating) by pointing us to St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (1998) and his scholastic (Plato- and Aristotle-inspired) notion of the beautiful as participation in the mystery of Being (which for Aquinas is what we culturally refer to as God).

Maritain, like Gadamer, invites us to imagine the ontological conditions that bring forth the mode of the beautiful (key to understanding the Gadamerian

hermeneutic event), when it is instigated by a (well-crafted) material form. Beauty is here imagined to be *beyond* material existence (and read as analogous with the mystery of Being/God), yet also located in the structure of an artefact that *moves us* to be present to its intentionally arranged form (which is also always beyond mere conceptual assimilation). Hence, Maritain's Beauty, like Plato's and Aristotle's (and Gadamer's, of course), is not thought to be in the eye of the beholder, located in the spectator's subjectivity and reflected in private, personal preferences, and culturally determined aesthetic tastes.

The key to the (beautiful) artwork's formative potential in the actuality of its specific form, is constituted in its capacity to draw a spectator *outside* their subjectivity and into losing their (cultural) self in the hermeneutic event. In turn, the craftsman's creation of 'perfect proportions' is not to be understood as a wilful manipulation of an audience's emotions and desires, or a mere pandering to their aesthetic sensibilities and tastes for external ends, even (seemingly) laudable ones (although such manipulation may happen of course). In contrast, the artist's act of participation in the mode of the beautiful—like the spectator's participation—is to be (ontologically) conceived as an end in itself. This is because, for Maritain, the craftsman's participation in Beauty is ultimately a partaking in the mysterious *event of Being* itself. In short, Beauty is conceived as a property of *Being*—as 'the being of all things [of all creation—K.F.] derives from Divine Beauty' (Maritain 1930: 124). Beauty is considered analogous with the Divine Life itself (like the other transcendentals: Goodness, Truth, Love). In sum, in losing themselves (their self) in the act of craftsmanship, the artist participates in the wondrously strange occurrence that there is something (existence) rather than nothing (which Aquinas calls the mystery of God).

Importantly for our understanding of the artist's hermeneutic experience of making (different to the spectator's understanding), the transcendentals (although all analogous with Being) shine forth and mediate between the visible and invisible in *different* ways. Here Beauty's effects must be distinguished from Truth's shining (we get to the other transcendentals shortly), because Beauty's mode of being cannot be separated from its rootedness in the material world. On the one hand then, Maritain (like Gadamer) explains that Beauty is of course like Truth. The beautiful illuminates the mind (e.g. of a spectator), when we (suddenly) 'understand', that is, recognize *something* about the cultural world (and for Maritain, the transcendental) in the artwork. Yet, on the other hand, Beauty can also be said to *exceed* the being of Truth—moving us towards what *cannot* be held as knowledge *about* being, but only experienced *as* Being (in the specifics of the material artefact). Hence, Beauty's mode of movement (continuously) turns us towards the (unknowable) mystery of Being. Beauty and Truth are inextricably linked, as both move our hermeneutic consciousness—even if to different effect. 'Understanding is the sister of mystery, and it is foolish to reject mystery or to reject understanding' (Maritain 1930: 110).

Participations in the beautiful

Beauty, as a transcendental, is experienced *as* Being and cannot be known as a thing in itself. This also means that it cannot be put directly into a work in the act of

craftsmanship—for example, as a (culturally/historically agreed-upon) pleasing aesthetic form. The artist encounters and ‘works with’ Beauty only *indirectly* during the act of making—via their attention to how the material may manifest Beauty’s shining as *other-being* in material form (we are back at *parousia*). Here it is not only the artist’s senses and intellect (as for the spectator), but also their *practical* craft-related actions, which are oriented towards (or participate in) Beauty when they lose themselves in the productive encounter with the material. ‘A creative idea is not conceptual. It is an intellectual form, which contains the thing that will be brought into [material] existence’ (Maritain 1953: 136). Art—and its formative potential (i.e. its capacity to draw a spectator into the mystery of Being)—is brought forth in the productive dialogue between Beauty’s shining (as a transcendental *other*), the artist’s responding mind in creative intuition, and their hands-on actions as a skilled artist in their respective field.

The coming-into-being of Beauty’s *other-being* in material form (as that which holds the hermeneutic event in existence) depends on the free, intentional choices of a skilled labourer who works well with (certain) materials. ‘With steady labour of intelligence, poetic intuition actualises and unfolds within a [concrete] production process’ (p. 139). The artist’s creative intuition, and their subsequent structuring of matter towards certain signs, symbols, and forms (and their ‘excess’), is constituted (for Maritain) in the artist’s mind’s and hands’ orientation towards the mystery of Being. As such, Beauty is not conceived as a purely aesthetic category. As a transcendental, it ultimately (always) also *exceeds* our culturally and time-bound notions of what may be considered (by us) as ‘beautiful’. (This is also why it is difficult to have a preconceived notion of high art and low art, for example.)

Curiously then, the artist’s knowledge of Beauty is always consubstantial (Maritain 1930: 25). It arises during the practical act of making, when ‘lost in’ the mode of the beautiful in *parousia*. As already indicated, what is ‘understood’ (truth) here cannot be separated from the artist’s attention to the material and their experience as a skilled artisan in their specific art form. It is in the *movement between* intellectual and material form that the artist participates in (and knows) the beautiful. Correspondingly, the artist shapes material in dialogue, and in some important sense, also in conformity to Beauty—as something that ultimately exists *beyond* matter; yet also must reveal itself *in* matter and, with that, *through* the craftsperson’s skilled arrangement of forms, symbols, sounds, etc. In this productive process of bringing an intellectual form into material existence, the artist is moved ‘to procure immediately by resources peculiar to oneself and one’s neighbour, with the help of elements assembled together, a certain picture of the world at once delightful, significant and reasonable’ (p. 210).

To be able to respond to this indirect call of Beauty through creative intuition and arrange a (potentially) delightful⁵ ‘picture of the world’ in their artform, the artist needs to be (ideally) an excellent craftsperson. Although the artist is here thought to be in service of Beauty—to create intellectual–sensory delights that

⁵ ‘Delightful’ is used in the Thomist sense of the beautiful, which stirs the mind/intellect on sight.

may move people (into a kind of contemplation of b/Being), they do not need the habitus of a contemplative (e.g. a saint or mystic). Instead, the artist must be a good artisan who can labour well with specific material. Although art's end is, for Maritain, *not* human but oriented towards a transcendental *other*, the artist's working methods need to be firmly down to earth. To acquire any 'spiritual sensibility in contact with matter' (Maritain 1930: 50), the artist does not have to firstly be a good person but must be concerned with the good of the work.

Where do the filmmakers' ideas come from?

In relation to our film examples, the narrative filmmaker's labour may be said to be 'prudent' (i.e. virtuous) when they craft a (fictional) life in moving images that reveal something about human relations in the world and as such uncover a mystery [of Being] (Williams 2005: 88). The act of craftsmanship (in the mode of the beautiful) is then to some extent also always an entering into this mystery of Being (Maritain's and Aquinas' Divine Life/God). Here 'the act of poetic labour is itself theologically charged' (p. 99). Maritain explores the artist's 'theologically charged' craftsmanship through examples from painting, poetry, literature, and at times theatre (e.g. in his exchange of letters with Jean Cocteau (Maritain and Cocteau 1948)). And Rowan Williams, in his *Reflections on Art and Love*, takes Maritain's philosophy of art-making into the realm of fiction. He reads the mode of the beautiful through the writer Flannery O'Connor's artistic practice (and her reflections), as she 'cut her aesthetic teeth on' Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism* (Williams 2005: 93).

Importantly, both Maritain's and Williams' examples focus on the individual artist's practice and narration of their process of making (i.e. its technical and ontological conditions). Hence, my film examples run the risk of universally claiming all filmmakers as (artisanal) auteurs. Hence when hinting above at the 'narrative filmmaker's labour as an artist' (referring back to George Lucas and Christopher Nolan as makers of *Empire* and *Memento*), I run the risk of denying the many and various acts of craftsmanship that make up an always-collective film production process (which includes the art of directing, scriptwriting, camera, editing, acting, lighting, costume and sound/foley design, colour grading, etc.). The necessarily shared task of filmmaking brings forth varying degrees and types of top-down and bottom-up collaboration, and various forms of control of the artistic process. Depending on the budget, the commercial/artistic aims of a production, and its subsequent divisions of labour, who does (or does not) count as the 'filmmaker' differs.

That is to say, the reality of a production process and/or the reality of marketing a film in micro, low, high-budget filmmaking, Indie versus Hollywood productions, frame the role of filmmaker in different ways. My earlier Hollywood examples (*Empire* and *Memento*) aptly illustrate the mode of the beautiful in the to-and-fro dialogue between the (well-crafted) artwork and the spectator. They might, however, be a less helpful model for illuminating the hermeneutics of the act of making in craftsmanship as sketched in Maritain's aesthetics. This is not because they are popular cinema examples as such, but because the individual acts of craftsmanship

that constitute the overall production of *Empire* and *Memento* (as artworks), due to their high division of artistic labour (and perhaps top-down directional control), would have to be carefully phenomenologically mapped.

Desiring ideas like bait on a hook

Consequently, the ‘operation’ of the mode of the beautiful in the cultural reality of my previous film examples would have to be mapped through all contributing craftspeople’s acts of making (from director to costume designer) in the various stages of the overall film production. Given that Maritain’s (Plato-/Aristotle-inspired) notion of the beautiful, like Gadamer’s, manifests in between an intellectual form (received in the maker’s mind) and the (external) material they intentionally shape, this mapping process would also have to include all artists’ own reflections on the ontological conditions of their act of making (i.e. where their ideas come from). Since I wish to continue with my filmmaking exemplars but could not source suitable phenomenological–ontological reflections on the artistic process by craftspeople actually involved in the *Empire* or *Memento* productions (not for a lack of *Making-of* books), I decided instead to consider US American auteur–filmmaker and visual artist David Lynch’s ontological reflections on the artist’s participation in the beautiful. Although Lynch does not directly refer to Maritain’s philosophy of art-making, his description of *where ideas come from* (BAM 2014), in an excerpt from a conversation with Paul Holdengräber at the Gilman Opera House/Brooklyn Academy of Music, invites us to picture (in the rather vivid imagery of *fishing*) an important stage in the filmmaker’s hermeneutic experience of making: the conceiving of—and being present to—the arrival of an intellectual form (what we might refer to as creative intuition).

Like Maritain, Lynch locates the instigation of the mode of the beautiful in the artist’s *desire* for Beauty. He uses the metaphor of bait on a hook, which pulls in ideas from an (always) other room. In Lynch’s narration of the moment of arrival of an intellectual form (like a TV on your mind), we can then not only think of the filmmaker alongside other artists (Lynch himself includes the painter, carpenter, sculptor, etc.). We can also extend this key initiating moment in the act of craftsmanship—the formation of an idea/intellectual form—to (potentially) any of the craftspeople that are involved in, and contribute ideas to, the collective task of *shining forth* the art of the moving image (to stay with our neo-Platonic terminology).

- Lynch: An idea comes and you see it, and you hear it, and you know it.
 Holdengräber: How does it come?
 L: It comes like on a TV in your mind (laughs, audience laughs too).
 H: You know there’s a line I’ve always loved of Leonard Cohen. He said: If I knew where the good songs came from, I would go there more often.
 L: Absolutely. We don’t do anything without an idea. So, they’re beautiful gifts. And I always say desiring an idea is like a bait on

a hook, you must pull them in. And if you catch an idea that you love, that's a beautiful, beautiful day. And you write that idea down, so you won't forget it. And that idea that you caught might just be a fragment of the whole, whatever it is you're working on. But now you have even more bait. Thinking about that small fragment that little fish will bring in more, and they'll come in, and they'll hook on. And more and more come in, and pretty soon you might have a script, or a chair, or a painting, or an idea for a painting.

H: But they come, as in small ...

L: More often than not, small fragments. I like to think of it as in the other room. The puzzle is all together there. But they keep flipping in just one piece at a time.

H: (turns around theatrically) In the other room over there. In a sense, David, there's always another room somewhere.

L: That's a beautiful thing to think about.

H: Let's *think* about it a bit.

L: *You* think about it (laughs, audience laughs too).
(BAM 2014)

MYSTERY IN THE MAKING

Beauty can then only shine in the filmmaker's mind, and on the material, when the artist is fully present (in *parousia*) to the 'good' of the work as it is revealed in the mode of the beautiful. Curiously, Maritain suggests that although the artist must lose themselves in this act of making (of which the conception of an intellectual form is an initial stage), the moral virtues the artist displays (such as humility, integrity, fortitude, temperance, simplicity) must be considered secondary phenomena. That is, the craftsman is first and foremost virtuous in relation to the act of *making art*, as their mode of participation in the beautiful, not in relation to the act of doing good as such (Maritain 1960: 99). Their virtues are not those of a '[wo]man as a [wo]man' (p. 99) but as one who imitates (e.g. frames world-relations in moving images). 'The reason for the difference is that art is right reason with regards to things to be made, whereas prudence is right reason with respect to things to be done' (Aquinas 1998: Article 4). Accordingly, the craftsman (e.g. the filmmaker David Lynch) is not to evaluate their artistic making and mimesis in relation to an ultimate moral end, with the hope to produce 'good people' as a result. Instead, artists need a certain way of forgetting themselves (their self), so they can be present to the ideas arriving from the 'always other room' (for Maritain, the mystery of Being/God).

Here, they cannot be too concerned with how other people might view their work but must be focused on the virtue of craftsmanship. By implication, they are to be attentive to the formative tension in between idea and matter and to

what Beauty may reveal of its coming-into-being. As Lynch put it above: the artist *desires* the beautiful idea, which is bait on the hook (for its arrival) and the catalyst for any craft-related actions. Despite Maritain's metaphysical flights of fancy, and Lynch's vivid imagery, we have to keep in mind that it is not the artist or their art that is transcendental: 'Art was more unaware of itself when it was only considered a trade and craftsmanship rather than declared a "transcendental"' (Maritain 1960: 104). In short, *they* are not God, the Good, Truth, Beauty, Love, or *Being*. As a craftsperson, the artist is 'in service' to Beauty (like a fisherman hooking up bait), which is never fully or directly accessible to any human being (there is always another mysterious room). Thence, the craftsperson can only know Beauty's (mysterious room) through the double act of entering into the mystery of Being whilst structuring material (being).

In conclusion, the artist's educational relation⁶ with their material is constituted by the virtue of their *craft habitus*, not their moral aims for the work. Yet, the act of making is never entirely removed from the moral either, as it is located in the human (and with that the moral) sphere. The artist is a person who is part of a (historical, social, cultural) world—if they wish it or not. Hence, their ideas and (life) practices always reference certain conceptions of the Good (Maritain 1953) and can be critiqued as such. Additionally, the encounter with the work of art may draw an audience into contemplation of the 'Good' of human life, its conditions, deprivations, and possibilities (as I showed in *Empire* and *Memento*). 'The problem arises when the artist becomes a hero and art is elevated or equalised to the level of moral virtue' (Maritain 1930: 64–5). In the act of making, the aesthetic–material focus is to precede a premeditated moral message. Maritain would insist that this is because the artwork is unlikely to draw our intellect and senses and, with that, our educational movement, when it is not crafted in the ontological mode of the beautiful.

In short, as audiences, we cannot be 'called' into self-formation, as a form of moral education that (may) also involves a contemplation of the Good of human life, when for example, narrative film's images cannot be recognized as a plausible mimesis of (actual or potential) world-relations. Here, our material life's productive (psychological, spiritual, moral, material) conditions may not be framed 'prudently' enough to reveal to us the specific 'laws of being' of the artefact (Maritain 1930). As a result of this lack of artistic virtue, film's images may not be able to draw our intellect and senses into *parousia*, invite our (continous) self-formation (and the aesthetic pleasure that accompanies such hermeneutic movement). This does neither mean that a good (e.g. prudently made) artwork must move everybody in excitement (it often does not!). Nor is the virtue of craftsmanship merely constituted by a reproduction of existing conventions, techniques, and forms, so that a 'recognition' (of world-relations) and mimetic pleasure are guaranteed.

Maritain (1953) considers the act of making as *craft* a form of practical intellect (like prudence/phronesis). In the craft of filmmaking, such artistic virtue may pertain to the plausible, prudent construction of a 'readable' material life (in film's

⁶ 'Educational relation' refers to the way that the artist intentionally structures their material to bring forth certain signs, symbols, and shapes.

fiction); an act of making good work, which is not the same as the ‘mindless’ mimicry of existing world-relations. Art’s rules and aesthetic conventions are then not imperatives, but only ways of describing a (historical/cultural) work method (Williams 2005). Hence, the artform’s traditions and methods are to be considered ways of stating how the artist’s working reason is going to work at mimesis (e.g. in film) in a particular historical place and time. By implication, aesthetic rules and traditions are useless in and of themselves when separated from the artist’s virtue of the practical intellect. ‘The virtue of art resides in the intellect but must overflow into the sensitive faculties and imagination as well as into the artist’s appetitive faculty [their passion/will]’ (Maritain 1953: 48). The exact question as to how Being (as Beauty) will manifest in a particular artwork’s being cannot then be (fully) answered prior to the work’s emergence in the artist’s own movement of their own intellect, senses, will, and craft-related responses.

In essence, Beauty’s otherness draws the artist’s search in desire for the beautiful—sometimes towards aesthetic experimentation (as shown in *Memento*, or indeed David Lynch’s oeuvre). For Maritain, creative intuition and craft skills unite in the exploration as to how this particular *becoming* artefact, in its own unique way (but also in relation to its nature, i.e. as a poem, a painting, a film—and its respective tradition), participates in the beautiful that pertains to all created things. ‘The brilliance of form, the essence of Beauty, shines on matter in an infinite variety of ways’ (Maritain 1930: 28). Accordingly, the artist’s craft habitus is refined and sharpened, as they perfect their specific object in the process of making. This means that they develop practical ‘operative [technical] efficiency’ as well as creative intuition; a kind of [combined] spiritual sensibility that can attend to the ‘brilliance of form’ (p. 29). In sum, the artist’s working reason is pictured as a well-honed habitus of productive dialogue between (a receptive) intuitive mind and (skilled, self-guided) craft-related action. The craftsman intuitively Beauty’s otherness in the material as a radiation of a mystery (of Being) and assembles matter, in the hands-on, responsive mode of the skilled artisan, to shine forth *this* work’s ‘ontological splendour’ (p. 162).

What’s love got to do with it?

The mode of the beautiful, as it comes to play in the act of making, is imagined by Maritain as the ontological seedbed of the (spectator’s, maker’s) hermeneutic movement in the cultural world. This means that the artist neither merely conforms their mind (internally) to new horizons of meaning (as in truth), nor solely contemplates the ‘other-worldly’ mystery of Being. Importantly, the artist’s act of making is *external* to their mind. As such, it is located in cultural traditions and historical time. In other words, Beauty’s strange brilliance must *incarnate* in the material/cultural (Lynch would perhaps say that it must be pulled from the other room into this one). As a result, Beauty, in the act of craftsmanship, is actually closer to the transcendentals of Goodness and Love than it is to Truth. Hence, Beauty does not (only) conform our mind to an immaterial concept of Being but *moves* our mind—in desire and love—towards what can never be fully known, but which

we seek to *be with* and experience *as* material form. ‘The beautiful is essentially delightful. Therefore, by its very nature, Beauty stirs desire and produces love, whereas truth as such only illuminates’ (Maritain 1930: 26–7). Beauty, Love, and Goodness are pictured here as the (ontological) ground for our ‘being drawn’ to the artwork and into our self-formation. The address of the artwork is thus not unlike the (intellectual, sensory) address of our beloved, or of the act of self-giving love (*agape*/charity). Our love and desire are stirred on sight of their ‘beautiful form’, moving us to linger with them, so we may ‘know’ them in *experience*—that is, with *more* than just our minds.

In sum, it is Beauty, Love, and Goodness that give rise to the decentring of our self/ego in *parousia* and our hermeneutic movement in the cultural world. Importantly, this stirring of love, desire, and subsequent self-forgetfulness is not only set in motion by what we may consider conventionally ‘beautiful things’—whatever these may be in a certain time and place. To the contrary, Beauty’s secret call for intelligibility through matter may take new and unexpected forms. In fact, Maritain argues that the artist needs to be ‘in love’ with their material, because they are to intuit Beauty in the raw material—anticipating its potentially manifold beautiful arrangements—even those that may transcend conventions and rules, even (perhaps) people’s tastes (think of Flannery O’Connor’s or David Lynch’s at times disturbing manifestations of the beautiful). ‘Love tends to what can delight the mind. A beautiful end is always unique to the artwork, so there is always a fresh way of regulating matter and conforming to the end’ (p. 49). Consequently, there is always a potentially unforeseen way of manifesting the artefact’s ‘laws of being’ in historical time and its artistic forms and methods, even in a perceived imperfection—a ‘sacred weakness through which the infinite wounds the finite’ (Maritain 1953: 167). In relation to the film *Memento*: it is the (seeming) narrative ‘weakness’ of its plot’s nonlinear temporal unfolding that instigates our pleasurable play with meaning and movement into self-formation.

Beauty can then be glimpsed as (equal to) Being when we have learned to see ‘in love’ (i.e. with a decentred ego): ‘Every form, every light is a certain irradiation proceeding from the first brightness, a participation in the divine brightness’ (Maritain 1930: 31). In turn, our participation in the beautiful is also a *participation* in the (mystery of) Divine (Life). Here, Maritain concludes that when we have learned to ‘see’ (and lose ourselves in *parousia*), *all* material creation may be potentially looked at in love from a certain perspective. It follows that the Beauty of the artefact is then indeed not in the eye of the beholder.

Strangely, the beautiful resides in the artwork (as a Gadamerian *Gebilde*), for example, in a film, even when we as spectators are not moved by it, do not get it, that is, when the film is not intelligible (beautiful) to *us*. Given the various (infinite) material ways through which an artwork may reveal its laws of being (think about the aesthetic difference between *Empire* and *Memento*), Beauty is then simply where the artist made ‘beauty shine on matter’ (p. 28) in the act of craftsmanship. Beauty’s call into absolute presence (*parousia*) resides *in* the material structure of the *Gebilde*, whose ‘moving capacity’ is loved into existence in the act of making.

CONCLUSION: LOVING FILM INTO EXISTENCE

As shown in this article, the curious case of film is a delightful illustration of a Gadamerian *Gebilde* drawing us into the mode of the beautiful. As a democratic mass art, cinema/film is always socially oriented, reminding us thereby that our movement into *Bildung* (self-formation) takes place in a commonly shared world with others. Film frames our material, actively lived life, summoning us into paying attention to what we see and sense, so that we may be present afresh to familiar world-relations (and perhaps even to ourselves). Film, like no other artform, performs its playful self-presentation as *Darstellung* (aesthetic appearance) in moving images, which can call (even lure) us, shock, and of course deceive us in our play with meaning. Most importantly, however, film's uncanny ability to render present incommensurable relations between people, objects, and ideas, summons us (again and again) into paying attention to what is heralded (of future/other ways of being) just beyond our horizon of meaning. As such, the artform's technical movement (in moving images) grounds our participation in the mode of the beautiful and, with that, also the aesthetic appearance of the cultural world.

At the same time, the slow, practical labour of Love (as self-forgetfulness) of conforming matter to the specific artefact's emerging laws of being, is of course not always in itself 'delightful'. Artists (including filmmakers) regularly despair of the laborious act of productive labour, even if it may also be experienced as meaningful. The act of making is an expression in matter *external* to the artist's mind because they are part of the cultural-material world. The craftsperson is not 'transcendental', that is, a God who creates *ex nihilo* as an uncreated being beyond material existence, the way that the book of Genesis pictures the story of creation:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said: 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the Light was good (Revised Standard Version Bible (RSV), Catholic Edition 2004: Gen. 1: 1–4)

In Maritain's Thomist metaphysics, God is *uncreated* and, as such, synonymous with Beauty, Goodness, Truth, Love, and analogous to (the mystery of) *Being*. Here, the Divine (unlike us) does not need to *decentre* an ego, to be drawn 'in love' by Beauty's mysteries, as illustrated in the creative tension between darkness and light (e.g. in the seemingly incommensurable world-relations presented to us in films like *Empire*, with its unexpected parental relations). Thence, God does not *participate* in Beauty but (simply) *is* self-generating Love sustaining our (hermeneutic) movement in the world—symbolized in the movement of the Spirit over water who speaks being into existence. In the Christian creation story, this divine act of loving things into existence imbues all materiality with Beauty and Goodness—and its potential moving capacity. Importantly, the artist (unlike the uncreated Divine) cannot create *ex nihilo* but 'knows' (with more than just their minds) that beautiful things (*Gebilde*), like films, are laboriously crafted in spatial-temporal form. Yet, curiously, the artist also partakes in 'loving into existence' our hermeneutic movement in the cultural world, when entering into this (greater) mystery of Being (and

of Love) in the act of craftsmanship; even when (to end with David Lynch’s vivid metaphor) the making gets tough and the jigsaw pieces only ‘arrive’ in small fragments from the always other room.

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