

The Patience of Film

Daniele Rugo

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Despite being usually considered the forebears of diverging schools of thought that take each other as the very negation of philosophy, Heidegger and Wittgenstein can be said to deploy similar ideas to disperse the mist that adumbrates our intellectual lives. The “agreement” between the later Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein becomes even more apparent when, as a number of scholars have already noted (Granel, *Études*; Mulhall; Braver), one focuses on the renewal of thinking that their work is predicated on and calls for. As Braver writes: “their basic objection is that philosophy has been practiced in a way that is fundamentally inappropriate for creatures like ourselves” (9). Similarly, Stanley Cavell articulates the proximity in terms of the two philosophers’ ability to detect and resist philosophy’s “chronic tendency to violence” (*Philosophy* 231) perpetrated against the ordinary world or what Heidegger would call “the heart of things.” The question could be put by saying that whilst philosophy has never stopped being after the heart of things its way of bringing this heart closer has deformed and violated it. Thinking has always directed itself towards that which exceeds it, to the point of constructing out of this excess the principle of creation and the world. As heartless as it is, Reason has not thought for a moment that this principle was in fact nothing else than its own heart, its ability to be affected beyond what it could reduce to an object. Taking things to heart means, then, at least this: not to reduce the world to an object but to be carried into a movement that discredits and unsettles reduction.

daniele rugo

THE PATIENCE OF FILM *cavell, nancy and a thought for the world*

Discarding this as its opposite, Reason has insisted in positing a principle of all things, a One, which it then craved to know but could not. Philosophy ended up wanting what it was not ready to accept.

The impulse to resist this violence continues to inform the possibility for a different articulation of the tectonic rift that splits philosophy into two, so that at times philosophy will recognize itself as motivated by a single demand. It is this very call for a renewed resistance of thinking to its own inherent violence that animates the work of Stanley Cavell and Jean-Luc Nancy.

Retracing paths opened by Heidegger and Wittgenstein, this renewal is produced through and with the concept of the world. The world is in excess of knowledge and this impossible mastery over the heart of things is for both the most productive incentive to thinking, understood as a way of taking things to heart.

For both, the gaps opened by an irregular beating of the heart have provided an impulse, an occasion for thought. Cavell opens his philosophical diary with these words:

The catheterization of my heart will no longer be postponed. My cardiologist announces that he has lost confidence in his understanding of my condition so far based on reports of what I surmise as symptoms of angina and of the noninvasive monitoring allowed by X-Rays and by the angiograms produced in stress tests. We must actually look at what is going on inside the heart. (*Little Did I Know* 1)

Nancy approaches it this way:

A heart that only half beats is only half my heart. I was already no longer inside me. I'm already coming from somewhere else, or I'm not coming any longer at all. Something strange is disclosed at the heart of the most familiar – but “familiar” hardly says it: at the heart of something that never signaled itself as “heart.” (*Corpus* 163)

The texts that record this gap, a time of waiting, suspended, are irrevocably biographical and philosophical, or better one because of the other. There the heart of things trembles with things taken to heart, and philosophy is set to work by an enforced patience. The sense that emerges from these two exemplary parallels is that philosophy is always written as the autobiography of our relation to the world.

The world thus requires to be liberated for thinking to get on its way and this liberation takes place on two sides of the concept. On the one hand, the world requires to be freed from the Western tradition that in various forms has displaced its sense towards an otherworld or towards a more satisfactory reality. On the other, the thinking of the world needs to be affirmed beyond the neutralizing form that an

apparent overcoming of the transcendental tradition has confined it to (finitude as intellectual privation, failure of human knowledge, desire for a more convincing grasp on reality). For Cavell and Nancy it is a question of thinking this world here on both sides of the tradition, interrupting the judicatory authority of divine principles and resisting the reduction of the world to an object. The demand that the two thinkers share is the recuperation of the excess of reason from the “elsewhere” in which our tradition has projected it. This recuperation implies not a new reduction but the acknowledgement (a master tone in Cavell) that our knowledge of the world is not the knowledge of a fact and that this awareness does not lessen our involvement with the world, but at the opposite makes it decisively more acute. In *The World Viewed* Cavell writes of Terrence Malick's films: “if in relation to objects capable of such self-manifestation human beings are reduced in significance [...] perhaps this is because in trying to take dominion over the world [...] they are refusing their participation in it” (xvi). These words anticipate the central question that for Cavell and Nancy thinking needs to ask: what would it mean to see that what assures our relation to the world is not dominion over the totality of objects but the acceptance of our inexhaustible participation with them? In his work on Romanticism Cavell formulates it as follows: “what is our relation to the case of the world's existence? Or should we now see that there is nothing that constitutes this relation? Or see that there is no one something?” (*In Quest* 136). Nancy, on the other hand, writes that “it is up to us to ‘seize’ the infinite chance and risk of being in the world, although we know (but is this a knowledge?) that there is nothing to ‘seize’” (*Sense* 26). The starting points from which one can see the pressure that the world exercises on thinking are then two: there is no knowledge of the world that would conclude our knowing the world; there is nothing we can grasp about the world, no particular thing that will provide us with the key to master the rest. Every singular insurgence of the world is already the exhibition of all the world there is, and yet this insurgence is

simply a modulation that resonates through all the surface of the world. Most recently Nancy has expressed this configuration according to the logic of “struction,” the passage between “more than one” and “less than one” without the mediation of the One (*What’s These Worlds* 20). In designating our experience as liberated by Kant from the dominance of rational thought, Heidegger invokes the idea of a circular happening, “between us and the thing” (*What is a Thing?* 242) and calls this the “Open.” The world is what “is constantly strange” (243). According to Cavell and Nancy our task is thus to install thinking more firmly within this strangeness: the world is strange, irreducibly so, it is a matter of accepting this, and this acceptance leads to testimony, creation and responsibility, rather than grief and resignation. When Cavell writes that with Wittgenstein it is not a matter of refuting scepticism but of setting its truth in motion (our relation to the world is not one of knowledge, when this implies certainty), he means precisely to reject the idea that the limitation of reason leaves man in a position of immobility and intellectual despair. Once the truth of scepticism is acknowledged our possibilities are unbounded, our embarrassments and inhibitions shaken off. For both Cavell and Nancy the emergence from these limits introduces a new chance for thinking.

the world and the viewfinder

The fact that the world no longer has any sense becomes the acknowledgement that the world *is* sense. On the one hand, then, we have nothing to adhere to, neither Divinity nor Reason, neither ultimate goal nor organizing principle; on the other, this situation forces us to enjoy all the possibilities and demands of sense. The withdrawal of sense presents both the terminal expenditure of the idea of destination and the introduction of a constant agitation, a prolific turbulence. The world as the essentially inappropriable and inextinguishable is the world in which our possibilities become our responsibilities and vice versa, where every parcel of sense, every seam in experience contributes to the sense of the world. To this effect Nancy

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writes that “the thought of the sense of the world is a thought that becomes indiscernible from its praxis” (*Sense* 10).

This praxis implies that the world is not a totality one can envisage or represent, but precisely that which escapes representation. For both Cavell and Nancy an insistence on this impossibility leads to an emphasis on film. Cavell’s *The World Viewed* is explicitly written in this direction. How else is one to read the account of our age as one in which “our philosophical grasp of the world fails to reach beyond our taking and holding views of it” (xxiii)? This passage seems to signal that the philosophical way out of this deadlock passes through film. To reach beyond worldviews would mean to reach once again towards the praxis of sense, as that which worldviews block and exhaust. For Nancy, cinema is a way of taking care of “that which resists, precisely, being absorbed in any vision (‘worldviews’, representations, imaginations)” (*Evidence* 18); cinema takes care of the world. Whilst this expression carries an inevitable Heideggerian mark, it should also be heard as an invitation to a more radical dispossession.¹ Inasmuch as philosophy has understood itself as producer of worldviews, systems and principle, philosophy has constantly suppressed the thinking of the world, for any worldview absorbs and dissolves the world in its vision.

Two further methodological points can be made to bear on this: film enters philosophy through a specific scrutiny of the question of the world, a scrutiny that attempts to illuminate the question of the world’s sense without this referring to anything beyond this world here. At the same time film does not simply illustrate a moment of this scrutiny. In other words, the thinking of cinema for both philosophers structures a way to articulate an original thinking of the world, rather than simply providing a sketch, an “image” of its development. For Nancy and Cavell the thinking of film must be able to resist being absorbed within a more original gesture and must be seen as opening up an opportunity for thinking as such.

What is at stake in film is not the order of simulation and dissimulation, the pervasiveness

of simulacra absorbing reality within their reach. It is rather a question of the exposure of sense, an exposure that cuts through the simul and its original. Both thinkers begin their analyses of film by claiming that film exercises a resistance to worldviews: taking views, in Cavell's words; imposing visions, in Nancy's phrasing. In the expression "worldviews" one hears echoes of Heidegger's *The Age of the World Picture* (Cavell mentions the influence this text, once avoided, exercises on his own). It is the very idea of an "image" or "picture" of the world that allows us to grasp the essential nature of our age. Heidegger specifies that the expression has to be understood in the relation between its two constitutive terms. "World" indicates here the totality of "what is" and the meaning attributed to this totality (nature, history and man). By "picture," on the other hand, Heidegger understands not the reproduction of "what is" but the framing of the world into a system. Picturing names the act of framing existents within a plan conceived in advance. "What is" stands before us systematically and only as such a system does it become a "world." Thus "world-picture" means that "what is" is understood only as that which is systematically represented in advance, according to a design conceived prior to any encounter with it. Heidegger writes: "what is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth" (*Question Concerning* 130–31). Man essentially encounters "what is" as that which can be represented according to a fundamental design that is at the same time the opening of a realm of knowledge. This projection, Heidegger says, decides essentially and in advance of how "what is" will be known: "only within the perspective of this ground plan does an event in nature become visible as such an event" (120). Whilst for Greek philosophy man's role is limited to the preservation of "the horizon of unconcealment" (147), with the world-picture man proceeds "into the unlimited sphere of possible objectification, through the reckoning up of the representable that is accessible to every man and binding for all" (ibid.). The expression "world-view" becomes the name for man's power to

decide what the world is. Furthermore, according to Heidegger, since representation has decided of the world in advance philosophy is also abandoned. A world absorbed within a worldview is in no need of philosophy, because "it has already taken over a particular interpretation and structuring of whatever is" (140). With the thinking of man that follows from Descartes begins the setting aside of all philosophy (replaced by what Heidegger calls the "laborious fabrications of such absurd offshoots as the national-socialist philosophies" (ibid.)). The Cartesian worldview replaces man as limited by Being with man as essentially limiting Being through a gesture of representative mastery. The new freedom of self-legislating Reason vanishes in the objectification it has ushered into the world. Because of the priority accorded in this movement to objectification itself, to representation, to the original plan one also loses sight of how, as Cavell puts it, "*different different things are*" (*World Viewed* 25).

The first consequence, then, of film's resistance to worldviews is that films operate under a different regime than that of representations; the second is that this regime renews a call for philosophy. Two gestures intertwine in thinking the world of film: to recapture our relation to the world as one that is not based on knowing as certainty derived from objectification but on the reception of the singular; to recapture thinking as that which is attracted and called for by the insurgence of the singular, by the seam(s) in experience. Understood in this way, film reopens at once the question of the world and the question of philosophy. What film names here, then, is the return to the strange, the interesting, the differentiating pressure of the singular, which cannot and should not be mastered but exposed, worded, acknowledged (as Cavell puts it) and adored (as Nancy phrases it).

retouching the world with the world

Nancy and Cavell decidedly reverse the idea of cinema as completing the regime of representation (an idea expressed perhaps most famously

by Bazin), stressing how cinema produces a step away from thinking as representation, in view of what I will call *thinking as patience*.

Nancy frames his discourse on film through the idea that cinema today cannot be understood as installing anew the problem of representation. This shift – envisaged in particular in relation to the work of Abbas Kiarostami and Claire Denis – is not merely a new development but signals cinema’s return to its most crucial question: the release of a look on the world and the reception of the pressure the world exercises.

Cinema should be understood here as problematizing the act of looking not in the direction of a “representing” but in the direction of a “regarding.” As such, cinema (this cinema, but then possibly cinema as such) develops not an “image” of the world but a regard for the world’s “generating” force (Nancy, *Evidence* 13). This generating force, of cinema and of the world with and through it, is possible only through what Nancy calls evidence: the pressure of a blind spot that withdraws, becoming hollow. Evidence is for Nancy the withdrawal of what *makes* evident, the subtraction of what gives birth to an experience of the world. Every evidence is irreducibly singular, a pressure at the same time applied and received, emptying the looking position of any opportunity to “gather” a vision onto itself. The one who looks is emptied out and is emptied out precisely in receiving and generating the force that makes possible a look on the world. That which makes evident is also that which withdraws from vision, from imaginations: it opens the world in opening itself up to it. As Alexander Garcia Düttmann writes, this “self-evidence exerts pressure on the gaze urging it to [...] observe the world in order to ‘realize the real’” (107). The preoccupation, then, is not how adequate cinema is to the real or to a particular vision of the real but how cinema contributes to what is proper to this world here: the distension of its patency, coming from nowhere and going nowhere. The world’s patency is never a placing or being in view but rather the affirmation that, to borrow Gérard Granel’s words on Kant, “to appear is by no means a ‘moment’

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occurring to a reality posited somewhere else (or ‘in itself’)” (*L’Équivoque ontologique* 54; my trans.). The evidential force of the world is the limiting of an unlimited reality, the sharing out of singular finitude. The fact that cinema directs itself to a safeguarding of the real means that cinema cuts through the unlimited reality and generates that which it receives: the circulation of the singular.

One can then understand why Nancy writes: “such is indeed the definition of the real: it is not what is to be signified, but what runs up against or violates signification” (*Gravity* 69). Cinema deals with the world as a force stripped of significations coming from elsewhere. Thus the realism of cinema for Nancy does not imply the firm subsistence of something and its subsequent mimesis but the opening up of an otherness within the world (in this sense horror, fantasy or melodrama is as effective as the most austere dramas). Cinema addresses the world as the non-given that must be sought through the given. This very same movement can be heard in Cavell’s idea that cinema allows us to “guess the unseen from the seen” (*Themes* 14).

conditions of a life

In his account of film Cavell sees a unique opportunity to test the very conditions that structure our relationship with the world. At the end of *The World Viewed*, Cavell voices in concise fashion the overall purpose of the book: “film’s presenting of the world by absenting us from it appears as confirmation of something already true of our existence” (226). Cinema’s ability to provide access to the world depends on and is made possible by a loss of intimacy (call it a loss of *given sense*) that has unfolded over the course of the West’s intellectual history. At the same time cinema does not simply reinforce this distance but articulates it, making this withdrawal of given senses and therefore of given positions its very figure and strategy.

Cavell’s contention is precisely that this distance or loss that film confirms does not (or should not) mark or sanction our despair but inaugurate and rekindle our interest. The

truth that Cavell's philosophy wants for itself – in inheriting Descartes, Emerson, Thoreau, Wittgenstein and Heidegger among others – is the acknowledgement that “the human creature's basis in the world as a whole, its relation to the world, is not that of knowing” (*Claim* 241). Our work begins precisely from the acceptance of this truth and not from a stubborn refusal of it. If the truth of scepticism is thus what works through us, and therefore what truly needs to be worked through, the situation that cinema makes evident is neither just a symptom of our malady nor a sign of our recovery. In the world of film our relation to the world is never at rest but taken up every time anew. This makes of film not simply a figure of the conditions that have brought it about, but an active reorganization of these conditions. In other words, the world of film is not a matter of images and likeness but a gesture that endlessly invokes, convokes, provokes and acknowledges the conditions of the world. In a parenthetical remark from “Knowing and Acknowledging” Cavell writes that acknowledgement is an existentiale (*Must We Mean* 263). Since for Heidegger an existentiale forms part of the ontological (rather than ontical) structure of Dasein, it becomes clear that Cavell is here using the parallel to illustrate how the concept of acknowledgement puts in play the entire relation of the human creature with the world. Acknowledgement is the existential possibility of our relation to the world. This can take the form of an acceptance of the world (accepting it cannot be *simply* known) or of a refusal of it (refusing it because it simply cannot *be known*). In aligning the ambition to rewrite the human back into the world with that of Romanticism, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Cavell stresses the centrality of acknowledgement by inviting us “to wrestle the world from our possessions so that we may possess it again” (*World Viewed* 22). This double use of “possess” calls for a clarification. The first occurrence (“our possessions”) indicates that we must let go of the world, forgo the desire for total intelligibility after the desire for an omniscient God has been dissipated. The second use of the word “possess”

(“may possess”) points towards a renewal and reversal of the very idea of possession. The second “possess” does not restore what has been wrestled away, it radically changes the sense of possession, in a direction that aims to solicit a new relation with the world. In this relation what we have to possess is the power to be possessed, to make our experience of interest to us, available. The fact that we no longer possess a world on the one hand points to our present condition (sense is not given to us; as Nancy says, “there is no longer a world”), and on the other it addresses our opportunities to articulate this absence: we can now possess it, as long as we become possessed by it. Our route back into the world does not lead to a given signification, a new ultimate order but to interest, the possibility to be called and seduced by strangeness and the ability and authority to express this interest. To be seduced by a close-up means to be able to see it as “part of an object supported by and reverberating the entire frame of nature” (*World Viewed* 25). In other words, the close-up calls for the ability to install oneself in this reverberation channelled by the object itself. This perhaps becomes more convincing once one emphasizes how for Cavell film has not provided the *solution* to the problem of the world. This problem is not one for which it is possible (or advised) to find a solution. Film does not provide in any sense a possibility of complete intelligibility. It releases the world once again from our wish for complete intelligibility – complete because exhaustive but also because independent of us – and it is in this sense that *film realizes the world*, making the sense of the world itself the impulse and drive of our interest and quest.

To realize the world, bringing its evidence into view, implies that we rest, as if arrested, on its force, a force that by its own nature revokes the model, the possibility of conformity. It is then a matter of drawing this evidence out whilst remaining submitted to it, addressing the form received from it as the birth every time singular, every time new of the world. Taking care of the world does not mean representing it, copying or reproducing it but opening up a stance towards it, a gesture that is at once

ontological, epistemological, aesthetic and ethical, collapsing the distinction between the four modes of philosophical enquiry. Taking care of the real implies the arduous effort to install oneself in the world's formative principle, which never donates a completed form one can conform to but a relation, one whose outline is in every case to be made again, to be *realized*. If cinema takes care of the real it is because it can establish a relation with what Granel calls the Nemesis of philosophical impatience, "the reticence [*pudeur*] of the world" (*Apolis* 9; my trans.). The world, to use Granel's words once again, "does not have a form, since it is not something given: it is the *formality of the gift*, which is something altogether different" (11; my trans.). This archi-formality is precisely what cinema turns itself to, by insisting on the given. If, as Nancy implies, cinema has exhausted all its possibilities by working through them, this also means that it has rejoined its initial demand: not to exhaust the resources of the image but to explode our relation with the world they grant access to. Thus it is the very idea of image that changes. It does not name a composition but the agitation of a look, not the thing captured but the thing's release; not a complete proximity with the world but distance, a measure through which something like access is possible. In his *Notes on Cinematography* Robert Bresson writes that the task of cinema is "to retouch the real with the real" (24). The filmmaker seeks the point of pressure that agitates it so that it can carry us (the audience) in the same direction. The look thus is this regard not for the sign it produces but for the engagement and interest it solicits, for the patience it demands. Nancy sees a transition here of cinema from representation to presence. This presence "is not a matter of vision: it offers itself to an encounter, a preoccupation or a care" (*Evidence* 31). Where Cavell writes that cinema has brought the problem of reality to a head, by addressing it automatically, Nancy says that there are no fixed points in cinema – therefore no signs to decipher. With film, then, nothing needs to be deciphered, what is on the screen asks us to become interested.

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Since the given is withdrawn (and this is the original situation cinema installs itself onto; Cavell calls it our displacement) the given is to be given again. Nancy writes: "to look means in the end nothing else than to think the real, to test oneself against a sense that we can't master. The capturing of images in a film is a capture only inasmuch as it is a delivering [...] a realization of the real" (*Evidence* 39). In this sense Nancy's insistent evocation of the phenomenological lexicon (evidence, gaze, eyes) serves to mark his departure from this register even more explicitly. Opening the eyes is not a gesture that seizes the phenomenon but the possibility to deliver oneself to a chiasm, so that "my eyes and the world are opened together, the first included in the second, which, at the same time, penetrates them" (*Adoration* 47). This look that is commanded and penetrated is in turn commanding, renewing the command it receives. Film shows us that we are always *passible* to the world, carried to the moment where a pressure exercises itself without remainder. Nancy insists that the crossing of looking with the evidence of the world is a consequence of having been looked at, therefore of addressing that which always already "shows" itself. The intimacy achieved here does not exercise itself as the proximity of a grasping of the given but as the pressure that, whilst imposing a distance, produces a stance, an ethos. Evidence and look translate not into certainty, firmness, assurance but as regards and conducts, ways of being in the world. Cinema takes care of the real and realizes it, precisely because this real is not what is always already there but what in what is there awaits acknowledgement and expression. If the world is without sense, then this (and only this) is what cinema can address: the fact that "everything refers back to everything and thus everything shows itself through everything" (*What's These Worlds* 54), without this referral elevating itself beyond this world here and the fortuity and contingency of its sense. The address and response are never final, the world is the very impulse of an unfinishable. Film's work begins just before and immediately after the given. It addresses the "just before"

because no capturing “captures” the world, no composition can complete and enclose its sense. It addresses the “immediately after” because capturing is not the right pose, the world demands rather to be made to circulate once again, looked at and shaken, addressed and responded to. The world is not a given but the reticence that comes with the given.

Nancy says it explicitly: cinema structures the world of today because in its looking at a passage without direction it re-cognizes – that is, it acknowledges – the order of this world that catches itself in its own passage, withdrawing from “every kind of visionary seeing, foreseeing and clairvoyant gazing” (*Evidence* 20). It takes care of the real in this sense, “each time it is about a reconfiguration of experience and therefore of the world” (*ibid.*). A reconfiguration of the whole world implies the acknowledgement of the inherent singularity of our many encounters with it. Before any choice, gesture, camera movement or frame, cinema must bring itself to the point where it has to acknowledge a resistance from the world and in this resistance a sort of participation with it. Serge Daney captures this interested resistance with usual eloquence:

because it is impossible to predict everything, what one needs to do is accommodate the “more” that comes from the real [...] The filmmaker looks once and then he too becomes passive and disappears between what he has rendered and what he didn’t want. (*L’Exercice* 60)

a scene of instruction

Cinema can teach us, as Cavell writes, “how *different* different things are” (*World Viewed* 19). This instruction, however, does not originate from a mimetic power, it is rather a matter of what Nancy, playing with the etymology of education, calls a “bringing out,” a gesture according to which the look learns to attend to the world and therefore is led towards that which escapes it. What in the world instructs the look is also what imposes on it a certain immobility, what pushes it not

to penetration but to arrest at the just distance. This distance produces a stance, a way of regarding things.

Cavell insists on a similar point in order to reach this very measure, the acknowledgement of distance. Cinema is of the world and its frames produce a resonance onto the world that is therein implicitly included (because explicitly excluded). This satisfies for Cavell our wish, which modern philosophy had placed as our limit, to see “the world itself” and therefore to fulfil “the condition of viewing as such” (*World Viewed* 102). Film’s education lies in its disclosure of this condition: film forces us to face our yearning to frame the world without our framing of it being revealed as *ours*.

The world of film is *of* the world and as such our relation to it shows that our relation to the world as such is self-defeating. In a passage on Baudelaire, Cavell writes that “film returns to us and extends our first fascination with objects, with their inner and fixed lives” (*World Viewed* 43). From this Cavell concludes, then, that from film we learn the world itself, “which in practice now means learning to stop altering it illegitimately, against itself” (102). Film thus invokes our situation in the world in two ways: on the one hand it tells us that a certain powerlessness is natural to us and on the other it invites us to think that it is not natural to assume that we are always naturally powerless. In other words, our displacement from the events on screen tells the story of our responsibility towards the world. This story has two sides: our displacement is natural inasmuch as our attempts to possess the world are constantly and inevitably rebuked (the world is not to be possessed, not something we can possess by perfecting our knowledge), unnatural if following the failure of these attempts we feel free to decline responsibility for what we say and do. Cavell insists that our inability to know is dictated always by our unwillingness to know, in particular when this takes the form of wanting to know too much: the problem arises not from wanting too much from our knowledge but from wanting knowledge too much. We wish to

overcome our displacement from the world, but we do so in the wrong way and therefore we keep reinforcing the displacement.

On the one hand film enlarges our fantasy of possession and on the other it shows us that possession of the world is precisely *our* own fantasy and that from within this fantasy we can give possession over (and be possessed), wrestle the world away from us so that we can possess it again. Similarly in his analysis of Wordsworth's poetry Cavell regards participation in the splendour of the everyday as achievable only after we have foregone the grief that follows our inevitable departure from childhood. As the final scene of *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) reveals, only Rosemary herself is in a position to give the child over to the Devil, for it is only "from within a fantasy of possession that the child could (logically) have been given" (*World Viewed* 89). In the very different *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) Bobby Dupea (played with subdued solemnity by Jack Nicholson) discovers that it is entirely up to him to let a new possession take hold (in the form of a father, his brother's girlfriend or Chopin's Prelude in E Minor) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, decides against it. In other words, he accepts to remain somewhere between his successful dis-possession of the world and the incapacity to express anything different (be possessed). The truck driver who picks him up at the petrol station after he has left his girlfriend behind suggests that this somewhere, this place between, "is colder than hell" (and Dupea is not adequately attired). Another place exists where we can express the world after having learned how not to "alter it illegitimately, against itself." In this place we are *interested* and cinema reaches for it "naturally." As Cavell writes, the camera left to itself "awakens the self" to the unnatural naturalness of its lack of interest. Left to itself, the camera brings us outside and educates, claiming "our attention wholly for *that thing now*" and showing that it is not "novelty that has worn off, but our interest in our own experience" (*World Viewed* 122). If this is the case, if the camera can produce this turning when *left to itself*, it can also make evident how the world

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left to itself, not manipulated "illegitimately, against itself," can elicit this interest.

Cavell's interpretation of Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934) offers another instance of this. It is worth mentioning that Cavell's essay frames the film as an exploration of knowledge and the limits Kant set for it. The film shows for Cavell that substituting knowledge for acknowledgement produces a specific kind of violence on the world (and therefore on others). Renouncing this violence implies forgoing the ambition for a position outside the world, from which to view and arrange our fate. In these matters there is only one option, to make things happen, but "to make things happen, you must let them happen" (*Pursuits* 109).

Without this acceptance of loss there is no knowledge whose grasping would be worth the price of waiting. What puts the camera in a position to educate is its power to disperse not the loss but the terror of loss, our inability to lose the sense of loss, the paralysing dread at the forfeiture of propriety implied by our emergence from innocence. To allow propriety to vanish means to put oneself in the position to attend to the world, "the reception of actuality – the pain and balm in the truth of the only world: that it exists and I in it" (*World Viewed* 117). For something to be so received one has to be able to let things be, "to act without performing, to allow action all and only the significance of its specific traces" (153).

The equivalent philosophical practice that can produce this turn to and return of the world would move from the idea that "what is of philosophical importance, or interest – what there is for philosophy to say – is happening repeatedly, unmelodramatically, uneventfully" (*This New Yet Unapproachable America* 75). It is a practice that for Cavell is based on the most unpromising ground, "a ground of poverty, of the ordinary, the attainment of the everyday" (77). Nancy uses the same term poverty to designate the ethos of our (need for) abandonment by and to the world as a way to reopen its sense beyond what we *know* of it, call it a movement from knowledge to interest. If philosophy is still awaiting (itself),

if for it the moment of this practice is still to come, cinema can be said to anticipate a gesture philosophy wants for itself.

This gesture registers a different passion of thinking, or better a *power of patience*, necessary to thinking: in order to have the world one needs to let it be, and the fascination therein produced is always to be accompanied by partiality, outsideness, contingency. It is a limited access, but it is this very limitation that ultimately awards it its singularity. A *power of patience*, at once an attentive reception and an intense leap, is needed in order to open one's access to the world, to open it in the only way it can be opened, as something going beyond myself, extending the reach of my words and actions, pushing them beyond my reasonable control, beyond my epistemological doubts. The world is received on this condition or else it is missed. Unless we can open and maintain a connection with the world from the fragments of it that we are given, accepting its survival beyond the reach of our actions and accepting that responsibility for it extends beyond the privacy we wish upon ourselves, the world will drop out, an inert object.

Then cinema becomes a condition more than a technique of representation: patience directed towards the refractory singularity of the world, its sense both received and expressed, neither turned into a project nor into a purpose. Film realizes the fact that the sense of the world is evident, turned towards us, whether or not we want it. This evidence that we confront without mastering calls us to vigilance and attention, to regard and respect. Like any evidence it is not something secret but completely revealed. Nancy writes: "one cannot not see it [...] even if not everyone looks out for it or pays attention to it" (*Adoration* 46). We call evidence that which exhausts itself in its presentation; it is not referable to any outside and yet produces a commotion of sense. We can all see it, we cannot avoid it, it flashes in front of us and yet it arrests us only if we pay attention to it. Only in this moment of attention, in this arrest, do we start articulating, picking up the shaking it produces. Evidence does not bring something forward, does not let a particular

object or person stand in front of us more clearly, it reduces the object to nothing, to something that can neither be grasped nor assimilated.

Nancy calls the gesture that receives and addresses, this evidence that welcomes and salutes, *adoration*. This salutation affords us access to the sense of the world as a relation not to a something but to that which solicits our responsibility to respond. Our access to the world, then, appears where "forces precede and follow us, where forces are not concerned with a subject's calculation and projection, but where one might rather say that a subject, by welcoming these forces, by espousing their impetus, might have some chance of shaping itself" (*Adoration* 47). Our longing for the unconditioned can turn from the desire to be freed of every conditioning into the patience to bear the condition of the world, its presentation of the nothing it comes from and goes to.

It might be, then, that a certain reluctance to accepting film (the passivity it is said to impose) as having an intrinsic force of philosophical instruction resonates with a specific aversion internal to the work of philosophy. There is in philosophical practice an inclination to view thinking as grasping, making and clutching. The intolerance for film manifests philosophy's intolerance for reception and seduction, as if philosophical thinking could not be interested, could not account for its beginning otherwise than as a movement of self-generation. For Cavell and Nancy an embracing of film would also show to philosophy its own repressions, illuminate within philosophy the denial of reception, a tendency to violence and resentfulness. So to take attentiveness and patience as the very founding of philosophy means somehow to open reason to what seems at first its very reversal. Film's ability to tell us "how *different* different things are" is an invitation to patience, at once reception of the singular and salute of the incommensurable value of the world. From then on, after film, philosophy does not speak first and its virtue (thus its force, for that is where the word comes from) becomes patience. For Emerson the conversion to thinking demands that we understand thinking as

accepting, receiving existence, so that our conversion is not the preparation for great deeds but the unfolding of a patient abandonment. It is this abandonment to our romance with the world, abandonment to the response it claims from us, its always initial contestation of our attention, that gets us on the way to thinking.

For both Wittgenstein and Heidegger, getting on this way means letting things be, leaving everything as it is, being vigilant to the heart of things. In Emerson's *Experience* one reads "Patience and patience, we shall win at last" (310). Cavell responds that this "is the work of realizing your world" (*Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* 136). This realization is, like the one of film, the possibility to endure and bear the excess of the world's pressure. Cavell concludes the passage by writing that "the recovery from loss is [...] a finding of the world, a returning of it, to it. The price is necessarily to give something up, to let go of something" (138). Thinking has no remedy for this loss of grasp; our curse is wanting one where none is needed. Patience and patience, we shall lose (and this loss will be a thought for the world).



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note

1 It is worth stressing how in this term one should also hear the "art of 'deremption' (*dessaisie*)" (my trans.) invoked by Granel in his remarks on Rainer Schurmann's *Broken Hegemonies* (*Apolis* 123).

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Daniele Rugo
106 Gaskell Building
Department of Social Sciences, Media &
Communications
Brunel University London
Uxbridge UB8 3PH
UK
E-mail: daniele.rugo@brunel.ac.uk

