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CRITICAL OPTIMISM: IN NIETZSCHE'S HISTORICISM AND DELEUZE'S CINEMA

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Abstract: In this paper, I take up the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze considering their works in the intersection of critical history and critical thinking in cinema. I argue that Cinema is not just something that allures the spectator, rather it also elicits optimism of being critical from the viewers. Deleuze would say that we have the capacity to think along with sounds and images, this he calls an audio-visual thinking as tantamount of thinking philosophically[1]. Cinema is pedagogical in a way that through the moving images, the presentation could not only inspire viewers but most especially educate to think philosophically[2]. Movies may sometime provoke a cathartic effect upon the person, but there is something more than the fascinating aesthetic characteristic of movies. The technological world of cinema characterized by a widescreen full of drama and suspense is creating a reenacted strand of optimism back in the Greek aesthetic tradition. The tragedy seen in the cinema although vividly presented the pessimistic truth about the world and the human life and since there are only fictional characters in the movies, somewhat makes the show bearable to witness[3]. Then the spectator has the audacity to narrate and encourage others to watch the specific movie which in turn brings optimism; an optimism of being critical. I argue that History on the one hand serves as a guide in the present times. On the other hand, history is something that instructs man and without even increasing, or immediately simulating his own activity[4]. For Nietzsche, one should rethink history in the sense of making history for the purpose of life- a history for life[5]. Looking back to the history is like watching a movie in a cinema where in every block of image and every block of sound become an authority that forces one to stay on his klismos. However, one will always have something to say about history and the movie, but this time, critically. Furthermore, the images and sounds are like events in history that are not really necessary to be acted upon in the present time, given that these don't serve life. Movie as an illusory presentation of reality impinges even the chaotic life of the individual. Out of an anxious life of an individual upsurges an optimistic attitude. Optimism is brought forth by an Apolline tradition to perfectly balance the Dionysian set up, however, being optimistic here would mean the fortuitous of thinking critically. I divide this essay into three parts: First is 'Monumental and Critical History', second is 'Thinking Philosophically in Cinema', and the third part is the Conclusion.

Key words: Nietzsche, Deleuze, Cinema, Critical History, Art, Thinking Philosophically

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Monumental and Critical History

There is no greater feeling than to pose questions over things that one thinks are irrevocable; like for example that history are for the victors and cinema are for the directors. I borrow the idea of 'Critical Optimism' from Paulo Freire as he talks about the revolutionary hope, a critical optimism where in there is a divide of being a mechanistic in imagination of the world nor na?ve in its expectation of what the future can hold[6]. To engage into relationship with others and become a being in the world, is for him being human. For him human is less sentimental and is more political rather having a poetic act. In this regard, man is defined as having a more radical move. Basically, Freire's critique of dehumanization is a reassessment of how man sees the conventional definition of humanism. He also talks about the hierarchy of power structures. These structures prevent man from being human[7]. To say this, this is very close to Nietzsche's idea of history for life, albeit, Nietzsche is pessimistic about the world, he still intends to grapple the existence of monumental history, antiquarian history, and critical history[8]. In consonance with Freire's critical optimism, Nietzsche would say that the history itself makes human being human beings, but with the excess of it, man also

ceases of being a human being eventually[9]. Thus, man has to become critical in a way that history should serve him rightly, not an authority that forces him to obey blindly.

Nietzsche identifies the three kinds of history as: monumental history, antiquarian history, and critical history. This discussion will be spent largely on Monumental history and Critical history since the latter is what impulses Nietzsche to be critical in his view of history. Monumental history is characterized by the greatness of the past that fails to be the model of the present times. Too much glory is given to the past that would urge every historical being to par with or surmount what great spark happened in history. Yet, the sad claim would always be that there is no other greater history than the monumental one. The idea that great alone can survive is vehemently opposed by Nietzsche[10]. To this essence, the past is always brought out in the present commensurating the existence of the present. What I am trying to say is that, in monumental history, the glory of the past should continue to exist at present and still has the claim of the true existence. However, remembering the past is one thing and clinging to it is another. The pass? line "past is past" seems could not penetrate to monumental history.

Monumental history deceives by means of analogies: with seductive similarities it arouses rashness in those who are courageous and fanaticism in those who are inspired; and if one imagines this history in the hands and heads of talented egoists and wicked fanatics, then empires will be destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions incited, and the number of historical "effects in themselves" - that is, of effects without sufficient causes - further increase [11].

There are several worries if the unceasing glorification of monumental history continues. The damage of monumental history goes beyond the good or evil being [12]. Obviously a law even promulgated by learned men in the present that is not in line in the past surely is taken as a failure. So to speak, in monumental history, the weak is unfit to challenge the past and worse is the strong is not and will never be stronger than the past. History presumably hinges the past and present in overcoming unlikely events in the present. The ideal of working hand in hand with the past remains only an idea that lacks representationalism. Monumental history instead of being the mentor of the present becomes a tormentor that is full of indifferences to the present. Monumental history unceasingly raises its banner and stays proud of the greatness it has in the past that despite the circumstances, they choose to be great. However, there is no way of bringing back the greatness of the

past today or there is really no apparent sense of comparison between the past and the present. What exactly happens before, is part of the struggle of the specific people, time, and places. The past is armored of things in protection against different atrocities that are intended for that explicit period of time. The present, for time being has its part and opportunities of facing the loads and challenges without feeling inferior because of the monumental history's glory and reputation.

Nietzsche undeniably refers monumental history to the Greek history particularly in Art. Greeks are known of their talents and skills in arts and music. The glory of the Greeks is still put on the pedestal as far as aesthetic tradition is concern. Nowadays, in the music industry, music like: alternative, reggae, underground, rock, metal, ska, etc; are considered noises by some who practice classical music. For them the only music is classical music, of course this kind of argument receives lots of criticisms. The Greek used to say "Look, this is the only true and real art; of what concern to you is art that is just coming into being or has not yet been realized" [13]. In this line, there is this sense of uncertainty of what is coming in future, so the Greeks as self-proclaimed connoisseurs of art say this in the guise of doing away with art [14]. The fear of not being able to maintain the glory of art of the past hunts their souls because the present art has already become more

brilliant and refined. The art apart from monumental history has encroached monumental art history. The panic at the scenario to do away with art is conspicuous. In Nietzsche's exact words, he said "...they masquerade as physicians, while in fact what they intend to administer poison... For they don't want great art to come into being; their strategy is to say: "Look, great art already exist"[15]. For some men who are fooled by the idea of the great art exhibited by the Greeks, tend to become mediocre in their aesthetic endeavor. The creativity that is so natural to present the man seems to mellow down while praising and levitating monumental history at the nadir. I guess this is the implication of the motto "Let the dead bury the living" [16]. Apparently the works of the Greek Artists of the past from Aetion to Zeuxis presumably considered worth all of the wealth in this world. When Nietzsche wants man to become sometime ahistorical, specifically in dealing with art history, he means of bringing out the best from the present artist. The tendency of a present artist is so engrossed of the past; his work would remain only a pastiche of the past. The sense of originality and creativity is not then credited to him, but to the past, so making the greatness of monumental history immutable.

We should not fall prey under Nietzsche's wit that he only offers suggestions because even though he really finds negativity from being imposed by a certain tradition or

authority, he has this tendency to be assertive in his words[17]. Critical history is the kind of history he really wanted human being to practice. Nietzsche is subtle enough in his approach and his sarcasms become very difficult to notice. Had Nietzsche reached this technological age, he would have been praising of the artists of this era. Yet, he would still remain pessimistic and sarcastic about the world. The soul of his idea about critical history is apparently is to be more sarcastic towards how the Greeks praise their own great existence; that for Nietzsche they are the connoisseurs of greatness with no greatness to offer [18].

Then again, Nietzsche does not necessarily propose a rejection of history. The awareness of history is necessary but not to be an interference for man to realize his own qualities at present. Man should not fail to believe that his actions are result of his own endeavor. Thus, the actions they are purely original and not a timely result of some historical process. Let not the greatness of the past poison our minds to believing that the past is the only thing that is great. Once this thing happens to us, slowly this will destroy our own existence, this idea will eat us alive[19]. However, a fact will always hunt us that we are always products of history, we are the products of earlier generations whether we like it or not. We could not escape from the reality that indeed we are products of the past crimes, errors, misfortunes, and passions. The chain that connects us

from the past is in unscathed and remains firm. We may be able to scrutinize or even curse history; however, this does not change the fact that we are descendants of them[20]. In this regard, Nietzsche maintains that to face this reality is to make the best out of this reality. He suggests that the history should be for life. From the very inspiring words of Nietzsche in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

Good and evil, and rich and poor, and high and trifling, and all the names of values: they shall be weapons and clanging signs that life must overcome itself again and again!

Life itself wants to build itself into the heights with pillars and steps; it wants to gaze into vast distances and out upon halcyon beauties - therefore it needs height!

And because it needs height, it needs steps and contradiction between steps and climbers! Life wants to climb and to overcome itself by climbing [21]. Well indeed, a history for life brings mankind to the pinnacle of his being. The inspirations in overcoming life could be coming from the past but there is nothing more inspiring than the present. Let not the past hold the present stagnant in climbing the stairs of greatness. History is a pivotal element for achieving the height of life. History should not that something that holds us back and twists the greatness in us an eventually will make us to believe that we are not great. History could be a reference for greatness only and

not have the monopoly of greatness. The interwoven relationship of the past and the present can never be denied, but this relationship does not mean that the past is an imposition to the present. The moment life is surrendered to the victors of the past; this imprudent submission is the demise of human kind.

As discussed above about how Nietzsche criticizes the monumental history, he did not depart from the idea that historicism is still pivotal in the life of man. In fact, he suggests that we should be critical in dealing with history to changing it to a history that serves the life and for the welfare of man. He does not absolutely dismiss historicism, but he maintains that being critical to history is the better way. However, the danger remains for three modes of history if the three go unchecked. Nietzsche's ideas in his books are obviously fierce polemics against the indifference of the Greek tradition towards his time, but antiquarian as well as the critical history which the latter he employs; could also be harmful as well. Since the welfare of man and history for life is indispensable in Nietzsche's thought, then history may it be monumental, antiquarian, and critical should not rule unchecked[22].

Thinking Philosophically in Cinema

The way Nietzsche criticizes monumental history is comparable to how Deleuze considers the "thinking philosophically" in cinema.

Deleuze says that cinematographic images are never at the present[23]. The idea of Deleuze did pave the way for the confrontation of the filmmakers not simply with the artists or writers, but most vividly confronted with the thinkers and question of thought[24]. For Deleuze, there are shows in the modern television that don't allow the viewers to think. Supposedly, the images that are invented in the cinema are what it means to think. He continues that cinema is a way of having ideas that is augmented by the images, he coins the term "psychomechanics,"-this is a new way of waking up of our nervous system. Thinking is correlated with the determinations of time and space. The idea of cinema by Deleuze is a response to Nietzsche's idea of critical history where in the fear of the Greeks of art being murdered by art is taking life in Deleuze's works. The instincts of the Greek that telling them that art can be murdered by art and by no means monumental history should come into being again, is happening. The monumental history is facing the horrors of Deleuze own makings in his idea of cinema[25]. The cinema somewhat changes the idea of art because of the modern ways it created to portray the movement and time. The new ways of thinking are together with the new ways of style and technologies. There are new forces. There are new paradoxes and new political use. The art may be expanded or not, the palpable changes are the sorts of

determinations of space and time. There is something great in the cinema as considered a larger aesthetics. Filmmaking becomes just with an inch of pastiche from the monumental art history would play a vital role [26]. Now the cinema has put in motion the movement of philosophical thought itself. Through a temporal cinematographic conception, the movement of the thought becomes indispensable to the philosophical act. In the history of Art, cinema used to be viewed as an inferior art, however, the cinema has reached his glory of becoming the art of time united. In this manner, the Deleuzian film-philosophy is in consonance and agreement with the return of the philosophical domain to the public. Through cinema everybody experiences how to be more critical in a more democratic way. Cinema is called by Deleuze as an "art for the masses" [27].

In Kant's "sensibilia," he has already taken space and time as forms of intuitions, these are a priori conditions. In a 'productive imagination," one could link the distinct characteristics of sensation and categories. However, what concerns Deleuze is to break free from the unified consciousness of how these forms are figured. In this sense, a filmmaker would thus free the forms and making them independent from the schematic way of construing and making instead of an artistic experiment[28]. In this sense, there would be a new invention of another kind of

thinking. The departure of Deleuze from Kant of the disjunction between our 'sensibilia' and our categories for understanding substance, there opens a new opportunity of experimentation. "...where other sorts of determinations of space and time (as when, in music or literature, one 'occupies without measuring' a sensory milieu) are linked to ideas" [29]. This is exactly the same with the case of Nietzsche's temporary detachment from being a historical man to becoming ahistorical man. For man to experience the feeling of being like an animal is somewhat necessary for man's self-preservation. An animal who easily forgets what to say and is always happy is an animal who has no grasp of space and time. In other words, the animal is just living the present moment without even knowing that it is in the present moment. Such a sweet and sound scenario for people who want to forget all the worries in this world offers.

Although the departure of Deleuze from the metaphysics of Kant is absolute as far as his concern about rethinking in cinema, Nietzsche, however, does not display a complete divorce from the idea of still becoming a historical man, who thinks and analyses history. As being reiterated in this essay that Nietzsche is not entirely against historicism. But same with Deleuze, Nietzsche has the attitude to break free in order to explore, to experiment, to challenge the past and the old conventions, and thus to become critical.

There is always this inexplicable feeling of contentment or dismay after one watches a movie. Not to mention the comfort or discomfort one experiences while watching the movie, there is always this sensation of being gazed upon by the images of the cinema. The feeling impales the core of our being. There is a case where a certain movie Francisca in 1981 that involves a horse [30]. In this scenario, the eyes of the viewer are fixed to the center of the cinema or the theater, it is as if, the horse gaze's turns into the viewer's gaze. Though the horse is a soulless creature, its gaze has gone beyond the viewer's soul. The horse is somewhat following a thread of line of direction where the viewer's is passing. The exchange of gaze is where the viewer finds the affect. In this regard, the viewer cannot but look the horse [31]. The feelings elicited from the viewer is the feeling of optimism to be allowed to ask how possible could it be to be staring from an animal that is ahistorical, "soulless", and even only a representation of the true horse. To be doubtful and to cast questions is being pessimistic. This might be mistaken in a way that I am talking about optimism instead of pessimism, but the optimism I am referring to is the optimism of becoming critical being. To say this, there is an optimism before becoming pessimistic. The horse may it be an image in the movie or a physical horse remains the same. Horses are ahistorical creatures and the images in the movie are not in

time. This would always mean that man knows this reality and man should not be affected by this reality. However, when Freire says that man is less sentimental, man is more political rather having a poetic act, this would mean man has more a radical move[32]. I don't wholly agree with his claim on the emphasis of man being less sentimental because man having this inherent characteristic of being apathetic to other human beings sometimes put aside his reason. A mother would always be a mother to a son who does not even treat his mother rightly. What I am trying to say here is that, there are just unconditional things in this world that do fall in affective side of man. However, man if not only taken by madness would surely remain rational.

In thinking philosophically in the cinema, the viewer first indulges himself with the emotions that are stimulated because of the movie's plot. The cinematography would be obviously questioned as to how and why the movie is shown the way it is shown. This incident of questioning goes into the message of the cinema, however the main concern here are the details that include the sounds and images. In the example above about the gaze of the horse, albeit we could say that there is an affection of the viewer towards the horse and seemingly being reciprocated by the horse. However, as much as we want to say that there is really this apparent display of emotion from the viewer, but the image shown is not an image that

represents or expresses affects. Rather it does express the inexpressible, the void, or the irrational connected to the soulless. The viewer could not resist but look to the horse and it is in the viewer that one finds the affect[33]. The horse is ahistorical creature that lives a certain kind of happiness which we humans are envious of not having such attribute[34]. At one point, the viewer, the historical person wants to become ahistorical just to live like the horse in the movie. The only thing the viewer notices from the horse is the sense of happiness which ultimately brings sadness to his very own soul. It is like a feeling of self-piety that the more he becomes critical, the more he moves away from his wishful thinking of becoming ahistorical[35]. To the gaze of the horse that turns to the viewer reminds the viewer that it is sometimes good to become ahistorical, it is sometimes rewarding to become an animal who easily forgets, because in this manner; a human being is reminded of his uniqueness[36]. To say this, being ahistorical connotes a new beginning for man to think and reflect life; to stand up when he gets no back up; and to become original as he is destined to be.

Supposing a person watches a movie for almost a million of times, would still feel the same emotions towards it in a million of times. The spectator's feelings and emotions that are brought out over and over again in a multitude of times are as if unscathed by change. The viewer

suffers an eternal recurrence, which, for him liberation is needed but still choose to endure the situation. People still watch the same movie over and over again, or let us say the same theme of a movie in countless times. For Deleuze, there is the mixed feelings of metaphysical pessimism and optimism that a viewer has affect towards the images. Furthermore, cinema has been used for political propagandas where " 'image constantly sinks to the state of clich?,' but, at the same time, 'the image constantly attempts to break through the clich?,'[37]".

The viewer still notices the gaze of the image in the cinema. The viewer slowly becomes like the cattle that forgets about things and tries to live ahistorically so that he can begin to become critical[38]. One could say that the cinema is the avenue for man to think and experience being ahistorical. In contrast, how can a man think critically when he is in a state of being ahistorical. Thinking does not really happen ahistorically because thinking would mean to have memories and emotions. We could say that when man experiences the gaze of the ahistorical soulless horse, he becomes connected with the horse. For a moment in time he becomes not at present and thus become ahistorical for a while. To hyperbolize the scenario, in turn, the viewer becomes the horse itself. Cinema is characterized by Deleuze as not at present gives hope for the viewer to at least experience the feeling of being ahistorical. Walter Benjamin articulated that in cinema,

we lost the "here and now"[39]. That is to say that, "this 'gaze of the screen,' or 'look back,' has the power to transform our existences, to substantially change our view of our lives, and the world we inhabit"[40]. The transformation is after the thinking and reflection over the images and sounds of the cinema.

Conclusion

There is a silent question in this essay which I would try to at least explicate briefly here in the conclusion. The question is; What is the relationship between cinema and Philosophy? Apparently, cinema's importance to philosophy is a non-linguistic[41]. Furthermore, needless to say that Philosophy had existed since the pre-Socratic era. The philosophy that is being referred to here is when philosophers used images and even metaphors just to state their arguments. The example of the Allegory of the Cave by Plato has become trite in the association of movie theater from the walls of the cave. So for Deleuze, the escape of prisoners from the cave or the "exit of the mind in the cave" in the platonic sense, may appear paradoxical to his idea of cinephellia where in there is a new way of thinking and not the common sensical one, not of that common sense of transmitting knowledge or a mere information[42]. Here we can sense a departure from the traditional viewing of images, like that of Plato's cave, to the Deleuzian cinema. There is an initial divorce between art's theory and cinema and even between Philosophy and Cinema. However,

this divorce is only a way of a critical optimism in viewing images. Like that of Nietzsche's polemic display of disgust over the Greek, Deleuze has also his own ways of challenging the Greek tradition.

A historical man as a viewer of cinema and history needs to have an inkling towards the things before his senses. Man as he lives in the present moment might as well sometimes try to live from being historical to ahistorical. In this manner of temporary departure from the current state in time to a being not at present; man would be able to look into his

greatness and uniqueness. Let the images of the cinema and the pictures of the past serve as the guide to the present. There are great histories as well as great movies. To be stuck with these achievements of the past is inimical to man would lead to man's own demise in the present. To employ a healthier attitude towards the past and the things before man would lead him to understand how to have the kind of critical optimism. what engendered man to fight for the glory of life is his views of the monumental past and the images of the cinema.

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