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## **Psychophysics of Cinematic Experience: Transformation Through Film Spectatorship**

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# **Psychophysics of Cinematic Experience: Transformation Through Film Spectatorship**

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# Introduction

At least once in their lifetime, every spectator has a life-changing cinematic experience that leads them to acquire new thoughts. In this thesis, I will centralize the following questions: How can film spectatorship be a transformative experience? What physical and psychological processes lead the spectator to acquire thoughts in the cinematic experience? What does it mean to think of the cinematic apparatus as an apparatus that changes human beings?

The inquiries concerning the cinematic apparatus and the cinematic affect led scholars including Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz to examine film through its implication of reality and ideological influences on the spectator's mind.<sup>1</sup> According to Baudry and Metz, the spectator is immobile during the cinematic experience. In this immobility, the spectator is unable to prevent their mind from absorbing ideologies and consequently is vulnerable to the film's influence on their mind below the threshold of their conscious experience. Taking a different stance from these prior discourses, Gilles Deleuze argues that the spectator undergoes a transformation through cinematic experience rather than being projected to the ideological influences by cinematic apparatus.<sup>2</sup> According to Deleuze, cinematic affect is a complex combination of intellectual-bodily and affective-cognitive processes rather than being a mere bodily response to stimuli.<sup>3</sup>

In examining the cinematic apparatus through ideological influences, the prior theories undermine the spectator's autonomy over the cinematic apparatus. But, does the spectator's mind merely absorb what the film presents or is it possible for the mind to subtract and filter the perceptions according to their compatibility with the spectator's consciousness? Although Deleuze took a step forward from merely focusing on ideology and impression of reality, his examination of the spectator's transformative cinematic experience focused on the image rather than the spectator and their physical and psychological processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Rosen, introduction to "Part 3: Apparatus," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 281.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Åkervall, "A Differential Theory of Cinematic Affect," *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 15, no. 4 (2021): 573-574.

<sup>3</sup> Åkervall, "A Differential Theory," 574.

Similar to Deleuze, I think that affect is indeed a complex combination of physical and cognitive processes. However, we must think beyond the image, components, concepts, and techniques. In order to understand the transformative influence of the cinematic apparatus, we must seek a new understanding of cinematic affect that centralize the spectator's physical and psychical processes leading them to acquire thoughts in the cinematic experience. I believe that the spectator's cinematic experience is a combination of physical and psychical dynamics that lead to the spectator's transformation. Thereby, I propose *psychophysics of cinematic experience*: a new approach in film studies that will evaluate the cinematic apparatus and the cinematic affect by focusing on the spectator's transformative cinematic experience, the physical and perceptual interaction between the film and the spectator, and the psychical dynamics within the spectator's mind. To clarify, when I examine the physical aspects in my inquiry of the *psychophysics of cinematic experience*, I will not be referring to cinematic space. Instead, it will suggest the perceptive interaction between film and spectator and the movement of phenomena from the unconscious to the consciousness in the spectator's transformation.

While building on the prior theories of cinematic apparatus and affect in film studies, I will examine the spectator's perceptive and psychic experience to move the cinematic apparatus and affect from the dominance of ideological capture, image, and cinematic technique. In order to explain the spectator's transformative experience and thus the *psychophysics of cinematic experience*, I will follow an interdisciplinary framework that centralizes the spectator and the dynamic between them and the film through examining theories and concepts from philosophy and psychology. In my overall investigation, I will infuse these theories into film and film studies to achieve a general proposal for the *psychophysics of cinematic experience*.

The first chapter, "Rethinking the Cinematic Apparatus," will focus on the cinematic apparatus. I will analyze the cinematic codes and the spectator's filmic identification to differentiate the characteristics of the film from the general notion of apparatus through the discourses of Giorgio Agamben and Christian Metz. Despite Agamben views the apparatus as something that captures and separates the individual from their environment, his theory examines the interaction between apparatuses and individuals. In my view, the focus on the individual's experience and transformation in the process will position the cinematic apparatus in a new perspective that centralizes the spectator and their interaction with the film. Moreover,

Metz's concepts of filmic state and primary identification will contribute to detach the cinematic apparatus from the notion of being an apparatus of ideological capture.<sup>4</sup>

The second chapter, "Spectator's Physical Cinematic Experience: Perception and Transformation," will concentrate on the physical aspects of the *psychophysics of cinematic experience*, in which I will turn to philosophy through the theories of G. W. Leibniz and Aristotle. Leibniz's theories regarding ideas and perception will lead us to an understanding of the spectator's transformative cinematic experience that results in the acquirement of thoughts. Furthermore, Aristotle's concepts of change and potentiality-actuality in *Physics* and *Metaphysics* will explain the spectator's transformation and the dynamics between the film-spectator and unconscious-conscious mind.

The third chapter, "Spectator's Psychic Cinematic Experience: Unconscious Perception and Repression," will dwell on the psychical aspects of the *psychophysics of cinematic experience* and examine the actual influence of the cinematic apparatus on the spectator's mind and the mind's transformative process. In the chapter, I will analyze the spectator's conscious cinematic experience and the concepts of dynamic unconscious and repression through the theories of Fred Dretske, Howard Shevrin, and Sigmund Freud.

The inquiry of *psychophysics of cinematic experience* will provide an expanded discourse of cinematic apparatus, cinematic affect and spectator's transformative experience, detached from technicality, the implication of reality, and ideological influence. In order to understand the spectator's autonomous cinematic experience and transformation, it is essential to turn to philosophy, psychoanalysis, and film philosophy. The awareness of the spectator's affective and cognitive processes in cinematic experience will enable us to develop a better understanding of film in our inquiries of the human psyche and reestablish the notion of cinematic apparatus and the spectator's autonomy in cinematic experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Although Metz's view of the cinematic apparatus is one of ideological capture, adopting his concepts will dismantle this view and will distinguish the film from other types of apparatuses.

# Chapter I

## Rethinking the Cinematic Apparatus

### 1. Introduction

Apparatuses have existed and taken an active part in human life since the appearance of Homo sapiens; however, individuals have been the subject of the domination and propagation of apparatuses since the beginning of the capitalist era. In *What Is an Apparatus?* Giorgio Agamben uses a much broader notion of apparatus than that was used in film studies before. According to Agamben, every term that referred to apparatus served the purpose of having control over the behavior and thought of the individual subject throughout history. While the originating Greek term *oikonomia* referred to household management, it was later interpreted as the management of the mortal realm to guide towards the good by theologians.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, the term *oikonomia* was translated into Latin as *disposito* and later translated into French as *dispositif*. In his writing, Giorgio Agamben reflects on the Foucauldian notion of *dispositif* to derive a discourse of apparatus that manifests in the apparatus theory through the ontology of creatures.

According to Agamben, apparatus refers to the network within the power relations of knowledge in the Foucauldian notion.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the apparatus that establishes the network between the power relations includes various elements and practices – both linguistic and non-linguistic – and it always functions strategically within the power relations. Following the Foucauldian notion of apparatus, Agamben proceeds to expand the discourse. While discussing the apparatus, Agamben examines the dynamics of interaction between apparatus and individual, and inquires about how the apparatus influences the individual. In the discourse, he argues that the apparatus that is part of the individual's daily life captures and controls them. In

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<sup>5</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?*, 2-3.



the process, the apparatus subjectifies the individual and alienates them from their environment and themselves.

Although Agamben expands the notion of apparatus by including objects commonly thought to be outside the power relations of control, how can we situate the cinematic apparatus in this theory? Does every apparatus have the qualities to control and capture the individual? Can we distinguish the cinematic apparatus from other apparatuses and redefine it as something that changes the spectator in cinematic experience?

In this chapter, I will first analyze Giorgio Agamben's apparatus theory as explained in *What Is an Apparatus?* in an attempt to expand and rethink the cinematic apparatus and distinguish it from the apparatus's general notion. After going through Agamben's discourse, I will attempt to rethink the cinematic apparatus in the apparatus theory by emphasizing the apparent dynamics of the film and its relation to the spectator. In the second part of the chapter, I will examine the cinematic codes and signs to reevaluate the spectator's role and position in their interaction with the film. Next, I will examine the influence of cinematic codes on the spectator with respect to filmic identification in cinematic experience through Christian Metz's writing *The Imaginary Signifier*. Finally, I will rethink the process of subjectification as the formation of the primary and secondary spectatorial identification.

## **2. Examining the Concept of Apparatus Through Giorgio Agamben's Discourse**

Following the Foucauldian notion of the apparatus, Agamben attempts to situate the apparatus in a new context and defines the apparatus as follows:

Further expanding the already large class of Foucauldian apparatuses, I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and –why not– language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the spaces of control, such as prisons, which appear to be evident in the referred power relations, Agamben incorporates participants in the individual's everyday life, including language, philosophy, and computers. Consequently, his notion of apparatus includes the film

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<sup>7</sup> Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?*, 14.

and attributes the capacity to capture and control the behavior and thinking of its spectator to the cinematic apparatus.

According to Agamben, apparatuses' existence and their control over the individual are not accidental. In its origin, the apparatus detects and subjectifies the basic human desire for happiness, for which the control over this desire by forming a detached sphere reflects the exact power of the apparatuses.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the apparatus is active in the 'humanization' of the individuals from merely being animals. The process of humanization separates individuals from themselves and their direct relation to their environment. The disturbance of the relation between the individual and the animal has two results. First, when it results in boredom, a possibility of the individual ending their direct relation to their environment emerges. Second, it may result in the Open, that is, a possibility of the individual to experience being as such by constructing a world.<sup>9</sup> Within the Open, various apparatuses exist with 'instruments, objects, gadgets, odds and ends, technologies.'<sup>10</sup> While experiencing being as such in the Open, the individual tries to abolish the separated animalistic behavior through the apparatuses.

In the expanded discourse of the apparatus, Agamben divides the beings into two classes, namely, the living beings (or substances) and apparatuses.<sup>11</sup> He identifies a third class of beings between the living beings and apparatuses, which is the subjects that correspond to the outcome of the relation between the living beings and apparatuses. According to his theory, the living being that is the subject of one apparatus can likewise be the subject of another apparatus and consequently be the subject of numerous processes of subjectification. The control established by the apparatus always involves a process of subjectification, otherwise, it would turn out to be a 'mere exercise of violence'.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, there cannot be a definitive process of subjectification for each specific apparatus in the relationship between the living beings and the apparatuses, otherwise, it would not be possible for the individuals to use an apparatus 'in the right way'.<sup>13</sup> In the process of subjectification, Agamben further argues that apparatuses alienate the individual from themselves in capturing and controlling the living beings through a process of 'de-subjectification'. In de-subjectification, the division of individuals from themselves causes them to adopt their identity as the subject.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 21.

Following Agamben's discourse, a question arises: How does the cinematic apparatus, as an audiovisual medium, fit into the apparatus theory and yet differ from other types of apparatuses that do not have multi-perceptual qualities? What is the role of the spectator in distinguishing the cinematic apparatus? How can we, media scholars, situate the film within the framework of the apparatus theory in examining it through the spectator's cinematic experience?

### **2.1.Rethinking the Cinematic Apparatus**

In cinematic experience, the spectator perceives the cinematographic illusion made of image and movement, which is a result of consecutively put instantaneous images. The film can act as a device that captures and establishes control over the perceptions, opinions, behavior, and emotions of the living being, i.e. the spectator, within the cinematographic illusion similar to the other types of apparatuses. Following Giorgio Agamben's theory of the apparatus, the film has the fundamental features of an apparatus in its foundation. The spectator who is the subject of other apparatuses in their daily life, i.e., a computer user or the reader of a book, becomes the film's subject in cinematic experience. The film, in its totality, authorizes control over sensory perception and subjectifies the spectator. Every spectator's interaction with the cinematic apparatus differs from the others' through the unique process of subjectification and perception. Every film is composed of different linguistic and non-linguistic signs, codes, and interconnected networks of knowledge that act selectively in the spectator's mind. Hence, as there is not a definitive process of subjectification that corresponds to every apparatus, there is not a definitive way of perceiving and understanding the film for every spectator.

Although it seems that the cinematic apparatus has the fundamental characteristics of an apparatus as Agamben describes (such as the subjectification of the living beings), it is crucial to distinguish the film from other types of apparatuses that merely exercise control over the spectator's autonomy, consciousness, and perception. In reflecting on Agamben's discourse, I think it is true that within the essence of the cinematic apparatus lies the fundamental desire of living beings (happiness) since the film is a medium of entertainment. However, cinematic apparatus reunites what was already separated by other apparatuses instead of forming a detached sphere that separates the spectator from themselves. In cinematic experience, the spectator does not get separated from themselves and their environment but unites with themselves through emotional processing of repression. In the process of humanization, the film uses cinematic codes and signs to alter the perception and stimulate the conscious and unconscious minds of the spectator. In the process of subjectification, the film

enables the unconscious mind to reflect on itself and its repressions by alienating the spectator. Therefore, the film stimulates the unconscious phenomena to become actualized in the consciousness for the spectator to acquire ideas. In my view, the cinematic apparatus reverses the anticipation of de-subjectification as a negative phenomenon by the spectator's interpretation of the cinematic codes in the unconscious through perception and subjectification of the film. Although cinematic codes are not generally thought to produce knowledge or thoughts without the spectator's further inquiry into them, they act as the stimuli that trigger the movement of the potential unconscious phenomena to become actualized in the consciousness as thoughts when they are considered from a broader perspective. Thus, cinematic codes enable the required conditions to produce thoughts without the spectator's intentional analysis and interpretation of the cinematic code. Does the cinematic apparatus differ from other apparatuses in its smart use of codes, signs, and networks that communicate with the spectator's perception and unconscious mind? Can the analysis of the cinematic apparatus and the spectator enable us to become aware of our perceptions, alterations, and conscious and unconscious workings in cinematic experience, rather than serving the purpose of using an apparatus in the correct way?

### **3. A New Understanding of Subjectification: Spectator and Filmic Identification**

As an audiovisual and perceptual medium, the film provides distinct stimuli compared to those of apparatuses that merely operate on words. The film, as a whole, consists of codes that stimulate the unconscious mind of the spectator by transmitting signals and evoking responses and meaning. Film language and grammar created by filmmakers is a form of visual language composed of signifiers that are universally recognizable by the spectator. In other words, I think that the film uses codes and signs that are universally perceptible to the spectator, where the unconscious mind can find identification for the related phenomenon. The film can convey the signifiers to the spectator in an experiential context which is peculiar to the cinematic apparatus and its audiovisuality. The spectator is stimulated by the codes and signs by partaking in the objective reality of the experience. Thus, the experiential and audiovisual context of the cinematic apparatus enables the spectator to interact with it on an emotional and unconscious level rather than an intellectual and rational state. For instance, propaganda films in the sixties influence the spectator's unconscious mind to force the social and political structures of the time in utilizing and exploiting the cinematic codes, signs, and experiences within the film. From the spectatorial perspective, propaganda films were perceived and experienced as objects of entertainment due to the smart use of the codes and signs to affect the unconscious operations while covering the propaganda aspect. However, it is worth noting that

although propaganda films adopt this aspect of the cinematic apparatus, thinking that the spectator's perception is subjective, it does not mean that the spectator absorbs the propaganda. Furthermore, fiction film also adopts cinematic codes to enforce the narrative and meaning in cinematic experience. In fiction film, the influence of the cinematic codes on the unconscious mind occurs through the spectator's subjective interaction with the presented experience. Similar to the spectator's position against propaganda films, not all codes or subjectification apply to every spectator in the fiction film. Consequently, the spectator does not simply perceive and apprehend everything, but their mind filters perceptions according to the spectator's consciousness. Nonetheless, how does the spectator filter the perceptive experience? Does the spectator identify with cinematic apparatus and get affected by what they identify with in cinematic experience? What is the screen-spectator relationship's role in filmic identification?

### 3.1. Screen and Mirror Identification

Thinking of the film through semiotic and psychoanalytic aspects will lead us to an explanation of the spectator's relationship with the screen. In *The Imaginary Signifier*, following Jacques Lacan's discourse on the imaginary and his account of the mirror stage, Christian Metz identifies the spectator's relationship with the screen as mirror identification.<sup>14</sup> According to Jacques Lacan, the infant recognizes itself when facing the mirror and forms the identification with the self through the image during the mirror stage. In other words, the first stage of forming a distinction between the ego and the subject occurs by the infant's identification with a phantom, an image, in the imaginary discourse. The film diverges from other forms of art and apparatuses in presenting an image, a recording of the actual space. In comparison, other art forms present the perceptual stimuli in the actual space within the presentness. Thus, the film presents a phantom, an absence of what was once there.<sup>15</sup> Since the spectator's perception of what is absent is real, the film cannot be imaginary or phantasy.

As for fiction film, the spectator is aware that the film's diegetic world neither exists nor refers to objective reality. However, it is not necessary for the spectator to believe in objects but understand them as existing in perception.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, what the spectator perceives in the

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<sup>14</sup> Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Hanich, Julian, and Daniel Fairfax, eds. "The Film Experience," in *The Structures of the Film Experience by Jean-Pierre Meunier: Historical Assessments and Phenomenological Expansions* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 93.

present presents itself as real. While experiencing what is absent on the screen, the spectator is aware of their act of perceiving the phantom. As a result, since the spectator perceives an image and not the actual object, the screen becomes a new kind of mirror resembling the one that reflects the infant's image during the mirror stage.<sup>17</sup> According to Metz, the echo of the mirror stage is apparent in the spectator's relationship to the screen as the spectator behaves in a filmic identification. Because the screen possesses some fundamental features of a mirror, the reflection of the spectator's body is always missing in the projected image.<sup>18</sup> Without the spectator's perception and identification, the imaginary representation within the film would not be possible. Therefore, the spectator acts in filmic identification in their interaction with the film, otherwise, the experience would become incomprehensible. How does the spectator form filmic identification and what do they identify with in cinematic experience if their body and reflection are absent in the image?

### 3.2. Primary and Secondary Identification

Unlike the mirror, the spectator does not exist on the screen as an object and is not present on the perceived side. According to the theory of mirror identification, individuals who experience the mirror stage acquire the ability to form and identify the sphere of objects around them without needing their reflection. Similarly, the spectator that is beyond the mirror stage can easily form identification without the necessary need for the existence of their reflection and their presence on the screen as an object. The spectator situated on the side of perceiving in the spectator-screen relationship acts as the 'all-perceiving' subject.<sup>19</sup> As Metz states that ‘...the spectator *identifies with himself*, with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness): as the condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject, which comes before every *there is*.’<sup>20</sup> Although the spectator is not present on the screen as the object of perception, they are still present as the perceiver. Thus, instead of identifying with the reflection of an object or a body, the spectator identifies with their gaze.

Similar to the infant forming identification of the self and the ego through its gaze at the mirror, the spectator's projective gaze at the screen establishes the fundamental identification base for them. The primary cinematic identification of the spectator is the look, precisely, the

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<sup>17</sup> Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 48.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 49.

perceptive gaze. The perceptual passions or the perceiving drive of human beings lie in the essence of the gaze and assist the spectator in forming primary identification in cinematic experience.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the spectator remains at a distance from the screen in cinematic experience. The distance between the spectator and the screen separates the perceiving drive and the object of perception with audiovisual qualities. While the spectator experiences the perceiving drive intensely, in this filmic state, they are situated in the silence and darkness of the theatre and become more vulnerable to the perceptions and emotional alterations.<sup>22</sup> The filmic state nourishes the perceiving drive of the spectator and leads them to form an object relationship with the film. In the object relationship, the spectator positions the film as a good or a bad object accordingly to the conscious and unconscious effects of the film on the spectator's perceptive and emotional states. Thus, the spectator's filmic pleasure or unpleasure depends on the spectator's evaluation of the cinematic object in the filmic state. Consequently, I believe that the spectator's object relation to the film can explain the variations of like and dislike between the spectators of the same film. If the spectator's conscious and unconscious cinematic experience is disturbing or causes unpleasure, the spectator designates the film as a bad object. Similarly, if cinematic experience is pleasant and pleasurable, the spectator can appoint the film as a good object.

The spectator forms a second filmic identification while existing in the presentness within the filmic state as the all-perceiving subject. The spectator identifies with the characters and events that have significance in the film to be able to follow and engage with the presented narrative when they form the secondary identification. Hence, the spectator identifies with the characters and events within the film to better grasp the film's diegetic world and participate in it. In forming an object relation and primary and secondary identification with the cinematic apparatus, the spectator forms conscious and unconscious evaluations and judgments of the film, narrative, and characters.

If cinematic experience becomes unbearable for the unconscious and consciousness, the spectator can break the filmic state and end their interaction with the cinematic apparatus. That is, as the spectator believes in the diegesis of the filmic world to be able to experience the narrative, in the vulnerability of the filmic state, the spectator can break the belief at times when the story becomes too intense to bear for the conscious and unconscious workings of the spectator. An event perceived as tragic by the spectator can force them to realize that it is just

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 58-9

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 103.

a film and place them directly back into the place of the observer of the unreal, thus, breaking the filmic state. Since the spectator can choose to break the filmic state and end cinematic experience, the spectator is autonomous and not solely captured by the cinematic apparatus.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The ongoing discourse regards the apparatus as something that captures the individual and controls their behavior and thinking. Traditionally, theorists take the cinematic apparatus to captivate the spectator, taking away their autonomy and seeding ideologies in their mind. In *What Is an Apparatus?*, Giorgio Agamben expands the ongoing discourse outside the general notion of the spaces of control and power relations of knowledge by analyzing the apparatus in its relation to the individual and by including objects existing in individuals' everyday lives. The expanded discourse, thus, comes to include the film, which differs from other apparatuses in its being an audiovisual medium that stimulates various perceptive points. However, in his essay, Agamben does not form a division between the types of apparatuses and does not emphasize the distinctive nature of the film and the spectator's cinematic experience.

The spectator's interaction with the apparatus is not merely accidental but is in their humanization; therefore, the apparatus adopts an indispensable and inevitable role in forming the individual. Moreover, Agamben argues that the individual's interaction with the apparatus is not accidental since the apparatus humanizes the individual through subjectification and makes them the subject. It seems that in the case of the film, the spectator does not simply adopt their identity as the subject. The spectator subjectifies the film by forming primary and secondary identification in cinematic experience. In other words, in cinematic experience, the process of subjectification appears as the spectator's identification with, first, their gaze, and second, with the characters and events within the film. In the primary and secondary identification process, the screen acts as the mirror that reflects the spectator. Although the spectator does not have an exact physical reflection of their body on the screen, for Metz and Lacan, individual who has already experienced the mirror stage can form identification with the objects without the reflection of their body. In cinematic experience, the spectator does not simply acquire their identity as the subject; nevertheless, they identify with their gaze as the all-perceiving being. The spectator identifies with themselves and their perception before identifying with the cinematic apparatus's components. Thus, within the experience of the film, the spectator exists as and adopts their identity as the all-perceiving being. Since each spectator's decoding and interpretation of the cinematic codes vary from individual to individual, and since there is no definitive process of subjectification for each specific



apparatus; therefore, following the primary identification with the gaze, each spectator's secondary identification takes a different state. Every spectator identifies with different objects in the film, or if the film causes a disturbance, they end the filmic state. Thus, the identification process and unconscious and conscious stimulation have an integral and decisive part in the spectator's investment in filmic state and cinematic experience.

The film captures the spectator and affects their behavior and thinking; however, the discourse disregards the spectator's autonomy, perceiving drive and conscious and unconscious workings. The cinematic apparatus 'captures' the spectator by altering the sensory perception and mind through the image. In other words, the film does not capture or control but stimulates the spectator's perception and mind. Specifically, in fiction film, the cinematic codes alter the spectator's perception to create meaning and stimulate the unconscious mind to reflect on itself. When compared to the individual's interaction with other types of apparatuses, instead of capturing and controlling, the filmic state provides an intense and secluded space of cinematic experience for the spectator. The spectator is separated from their surroundings and spaces of habituation and placed in a state where they become open and sensitive to stimuli. The spectator can break the filmic state and belief in the diegesis of the cinematic apparatus and move to a state of ignorance if the unconscious workings of the interaction create too much disturbance. Considering the cinematic apparatus and the filmic state, the spectator is not merely captured and controlled but autonomous in cinematic experience.

# Chapter II

## Spectator's Physical Cinematic Experience: Perception and Transformation

### 1. Introduction

The cinematic apparatus varies from other types of apparatuses in that it transforms the autonomous spectator through cinematic experience instead of capturing and controlling them. What happens in the spectator's perceptive cinematic experience if they are autonomous and not captured by the cinematic apparatus? How does the spectator transform and acquire thoughts after receiving perceptions? What are the dynamics between film and spectator that stimulate the movement of change in the spectator's mind and transform the spectator? In this chapter, I will first examine perception and the spectator's perceptive experience of the film to clarify the dynamics between cinematic apparatus and spectator. In order to reflect on these issues, I will turn to a different discourse and take a philosophical approach through the Leibnizian philosophy of mind. Furthermore, I will analyze Aristotle's concept of change and potentiality-actuality to develop a framework that clarifies the transformative dynamics between the film and the spectator.

### 2. Perception

In *New Essays on Human Understanding*, G. W. Leibniz introduces the concept of perception as the most basic unit of an idea that an individual receives. In order to acquire a thought, the mind should voluntarily reflect on the ideas.<sup>23</sup> In daily life, every individual receives numerous perceptions; however, most of the perceptions pass through the mind unnoticed. Since the individual's mind is always active in forming thoughts, the mind cannot consciously notice each of the received perceptions. Furthermore, the mind is passive in the

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<sup>23</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, trans. Alfred G. Langley (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1916), 135.

process of perception and cannot prevent incoming perceptions. The individual's mind receives each unit of perception; however, not all are noticed or received above the threshold of consciousness. Leibniz introduces the term *petites perceptions*, i.e. minute perceptions, in further examining the unconscious perceptions that are unnoticed by the mind. According to Leibniz, *petites perceptions* are the perceptive units that are low in strength and stay below the threshold of conscious experience.<sup>24</sup> The mind receives the *petites perceptions* when the individual is presented with and experiences innumerable perceptions all at once.

According to Leibniz, there are three levels of perception: bare perception, sensation, and thought.<sup>25</sup> In the lowest level of perception, which is the bare perception, the mind receives the perception unconsciously without processing it. In the intermediate level of perception, the mind distinguishes the bare perception from other perceptions in terms of its strength and, through associating it with memory, transforms it into sensation. In the highest level of perception, the mind reflects on the sensation and transforms it into thought by moving it to consciousness.

In his discourse, Leibniz argues that the mind contains drives besides perceptions.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, the drives within the mind urge the individual to pursue different and new perceptions that present representations of the world. Correspondingly, the spectator has the drives that urge them to seek distinct and unfamiliar perceptions through cinematic experience. Thus, the all-perceiving spectator becomes receptive to the unconscious perceptions and is affected by the alterations in the senses as they seek new and distinct perceptions in the vulnerability of the filmic state. How does the spectator form thoughts and undergo a transformation in the perceptive cinematic experience if they receive unconscious perceptions?

## 2.1. Perceptive Cinematic Experience

The spectator receives unconscious perceptions and forms thoughts through memory and reflection in the film's perceptive experience. The film presents the all-perceiving spectator with countless *petites perceptions* simultaneously. While the spectator consciously perceives

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<sup>24</sup> Janice Thomas, *The Minds of the Moderns: Rationalism, Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind* (London: Routledge, 2014), 120.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Kulstad and Laurence Carlin, "Leibniz's Philosophy of Mind," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last modified October 12, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/leibniz-mind/>.

<sup>26</sup> According to Leibniz, drives (or appetitions) are tendencies, inclinations, human motivation and striving in the individual's mind. Specifically, the perceiving drive leads the individual to seek new perceptions representing the world. For more details, see *Stanford*, "Leibniz's Philosophy of Mind."

the predominant bare perceptions, they perceive the bare perceptions that are lower in strength unconsciously. The mind receives each perception, but the spectator consciously experiences the perceptions that appear predominant. The *petites perceptions* that the spectator receives from the cinematic apparatus are the bare perceptions which are lower in strength and are unnoticed by the mind by being received unconsciously. However, in some cases, the mind perceives the predominant perceptions unconsciously. The predominant bare perceptions that have more strength and intensity than the *petites perceptions* can go unnoticed by the mind in these cases: When the film presents quantities of other perceptions that capture the individual's attention or when the emotionally charged perceptions outweigh other predominant perceptions. That is, a bare perception can be perceived unconsciously by the spectator when either the filmic image presents quantities of perceptions or is drowned out by emotionally charged perceptions.

### **2.1.1. Quantities of Perceptions**

The film is composed of various elements that present numerous details to be perceived, including mise-en-scène, cinematography and montage. The mind disregards some predominant bare perceptions that are weak against others when the film simultaneously presents quantities of perceptions to the spectator. This characteristic of the film is apparent in other objects of perception that exist in the world. For instance, I do not necessarily become aware of the perceptions I receive from each brush stroke when I look at a painting. However, I must receive each perceptive unit of *petites perceptions* or bare perceptions presented by the painting to see and become aware of the painting as a whole. Correspondingly, the spectator is presented with various *petites perceptions* and bare perceptions in cinematic experience, and they receive every perception. Otherwise, cinematic experience would not be possible for the spectator to experience in its totality. However, similar to the viewer of the painting who does not notice every brush stroke, the film's spectator does not notice every detail and predominant bare perception when the film presents quantities of perception.

### **2.1.2. Emotionally Charged Perceptions**

The spectator's perception is highly subjective and is subject to the limitations of each individual's drives and secondary identification in cinematic experience. They become emotionally involved with the story and the characters by forming the secondary identification within the filmic state. Moreover, the spectator follows and gives attention to the characters and events that they identify and resonate with the most and those they invest in emotionally, which

causes the mind to not notice some predominant perceptions and leads to their failure to notice the details of secondary characters and events. The mind filters the objects of perception from the film as a whole accordingly to the spectator's conscious and unconscious interests. As a result, what is consciously perceived by the spectator is every perception minus what does not interest them, which is less than the film presents.<sup>27</sup> The spectator consciously perceives lesser than the film's total perceptive presentations as their conscious and unconscious interests limit their conscious experience and perception of the film. Furthermore, the spectator perceives the perceptions outside of their interests on an unconscious level since the mind is passive in receiving perceptions and thus receives every perception. Moreover, the spectator may also unconsciously perceive the perceptions related to the repressions and traumas. The spectator subtracts the perceptions and turns their conscious experience of the cinematic apparatus into their subjective experience through the process of secondary identification. Hence, the relationship the spectator establishes with the cinematic apparatus in their conscious experience through the secondary identification is subtractive by its very nature.

As a philosopher interested in the Leibnizian discourse, In *The Movement-Image*, Gilles Deleuze reflects on the perceptive experience of the film in discussing the cinematic affect. In his writing, Deleuze identifies the perception of things as *prehensions*.<sup>28</sup> While the film presents total objective prehensions, the spectator's mind subtracts the total objective prehensions according to their conscious and unconscious interests and perceives what Deleuze calls the subjective *prehensions*. Subsequently, the spectator filters the total objective *prehension* presented by the film and subtracts the subjective *prehension* related to their interests and the characters and events they identify in the process of secondary identification.

Therefore, the spectator has a subjective and subtractive perception in cinematic experience, in which the components of the film take shape and vary accordingly to the relation and association of perceptions to their conscious and unconscious interests.<sup>29</sup> Since the subtracted subjective *prehensions* are related to the spectator's interests and secondary identification, they become emotionally charged perceptions as the spectator emotionally invests in them. When the film presents an emotionally charged bare perception, the emotionally charged perception gains dominance over other already predominant bare

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<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 63.

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze, *The Movement-Image*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> In subtractive perception, the spectator has the conscious experience of what is compatible with their conscious and unconscious interests by subtracting the perceptions the film presents.

perceptions within the mind of the spectator. Although all conscious perceptions are predominant, in receiving numerous perceptions simultaneously, some predominant bare perceptions go unnoticed and are perceived in the unconscious mind when presented together with emotionally charged perceptions.

## 2.2. Cinematic Codes and Complex Perceptions

The film can alter the senses of the spectator and present perceptions on the level of the unconscious. The spectator is inclined to perceive some of the cinematic codes and signs without being conscious that they perceive them. In addition to low-strength perceptions, the mind perceives perceptions that are too complex to grasp unconsciously.<sup>30</sup> The cinematic codes, symbols, and metaphorical representations within the film are complex perceptions for the spectator to apperceive at the moment without reflecting on these perceptions consciously. In my view, the film can emphasize some perceptions, insert unconscious perceptions, and direct the perceptive experience of the spectator to support the narrative and the secondary identification of the spectator.

In one of the beginning scenes of *Eyes Wide Shut*,<sup>31</sup> where Bill Harford (Tom Cruise) and Alice Harford (Nicole Kidman) attend the Christmas party, the star symbol that appears in the background can be given as an example of the utilization of complex perceptions. The film presents the symbol as a Christmas decoration that is shaped like a star. The star appears as a simple idea and perception in its literal meaning. However, the shape of the symbol also represents and refers to the Star of Ishtar.<sup>32</sup> The conjunction of the star as a shape and as a signifier makes it a complex perception that the mind cannot consciously perceive and apprehend instantaneously. The object appears as a Christmas decoration shaped as a star in the bare and conscious perception of the spectator. The perception must be first associated with memory and then move to consciousness by being reflected on by the mind for the spectator to consciously perceive and apperceive the object as the Star of Ishtar. The insistent appearance of the symbol throughout the scene strengthens the stimulation of the unconscious mind of the spectator. While the unconscious mind receives the complex perception, the symbol prepares the spectator for upcoming scenes through the signifier without conscious awareness.

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<sup>30</sup> Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, 121.

<sup>31</sup> *Eyes Wide Shut*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> The Star of Ishtar is the eight-pointed Mesopotamian symbol that symbolizes the goddess Ishtar. The goddess and the symbol represent and refer to lust and sexuality.

Furthermore, it constitutes habituation for the image and an acceptance of what is coming in the narrative.

It is crucial to clarify the difference between perception and apperception to understand the spectator's perception of the cinematic codes. As seen in the example above, the spectator perceives the shape of the star; however, since they do not perceive the signifier (the Star of Ishtar), they do not apperceive the object. The spectator does not apperceive the complex cinematic codes upon perception. The mind must reflect on the perception and move it to the consciousness in the form of thought for the spectator to apperceive a complex perception.

### **2.3. From Perception to Transformation**

The spectator undergoes a transformation and acquires thoughts in their perceptive cinematic experience. I think it is necessary to examine how the bare perception moves to the consciousness and takes the form of thought to better understand the spectator's transformation. According to Leibniz, only the living beings that possess a soul can have sensations and take the first step in acquiring thoughts since the allocation of the bare perception with the subject's memory and remembrance is necessary to acquire sensations.<sup>33</sup> As for the spectator, the bare perceptions should appear predominant in the unconscious mind and later be associated with the memory, that is to become a part of their history, for the bare perceptions to become thoughts. The mind establishes the necessary conditions to reflect on and transform the bare perception into thought by situating it in the memory and transforming it into sensation. That is, to transform the unconscious perception into a conscious thought. Therefore, the unconscious perception has the potential to transform into a sensation, and equivalently, the sensation has the potential to transform into conscious thought by the mind.

The movement and the process of forming thoughts begin when the spectator receives the bare perception. Therefore, the bare perceptions presented by the film act as the inciting incident or the first mover in the spectator's transformation. The sensation is the mediating step in the process of the perception becoming thought since the mind must first associate the perception with memory and reflect on it for it to become a thought. Hence, the sensation is the mediator in the spectator's transformation in cinematic experience and exists between the movement from the unconscious to consciousness. However, the bare perception does not just move on its own in the process of becoming a sensation and a thought. First, the bare perception stimulates and unites with the repression it provides a representation for in the unconscious.

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<sup>33</sup> Janice, *The Minds of the Moderns*, 121.

Afterwards, the perception moves to consciousness conjoined with the repression to become a thought through association with memory and reflection by the mind. In other words, the processing of the spectator's perception in the unconscious mind occurs simultaneously with the repression it stimulates. The unconscious mind of the spectator reflects on and processes the stimulated repression together with the perception through each spectator's unique reasoning and understanding and finally apperceives the repression and perception jointly in the conscious mind. The spectator has the processing of unconscious repression by the stimulation of unconscious perceptions in cinematic experience. As repression and perception move to consciousness together to transform into a thought, the spectator also transforms by acquiring thoughts. Since the spectator undergoes a transformation as phenomena move from unconscious to consciousness, what is the nature of this movement that changes the spectator in cinematic experience? How does the bare perception and repression become a thought and thus become apparent to the spectator in the consciousness?

### **3. Spectator's Transformation in Cinematic Experience: From the Potentiality to the Actuality**

In the writings, *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, Aristotle examines the concept of change and the concept of potentiality and actuality. Although his examination of the concept of change in *Physics* is towards a material understanding of movement and change in objects, his discourse still provides a thorough examination and guidelines regarding change and actualization that can lead us to an explanation of the spectator's cinematic experience and transformation in film studies. For this reason, I will first analyze Aristotle's concept of change and later examine his notion of potentiality-actuality to examine the physical aspects of the spectator's transformative cinematic experience.

#### **3.1. The Concept of Change**

The spectator transforms and undergoes a change in cinematic experience. In the concept of change, what is absent takes form and comes into being in a state of actuality. Furthermore, the spectator brings what is in an initial state within the unconscious mind to cinematic experience. In other words, the spectator brings the repression which is absent in a potential state and that can be actualized by taking the form of thought. In the initial state, the unconscious repression is in a state of privation or in a state of absence in their potentiality. In the finalized state, the unconscious phenomenon is moved to the conscious mind to take the form of thought. Hence, what is absent and repressed in the spectator's mind takes the form of



thought and comes into being in the consciousness through cinematic experience. The unconscious phenomenon maintains its existence throughout this process or movement of change. That is to say, the repression does not cease to exist when it moves to the consciousness, but it undergoes a change in its form. In both initial and final states, unconscious phenomena exist, in the former as a potentiality and in the latter in its actualized form.

In the Book VII of *Physics*, Aristotle discusses the concept of change by arguing that "Everything that changes must be changed by something."<sup>34</sup> Although Aristotle's notion of change here concerns the material and physical entities, it still applies to the spectator's cinematic experience. If the source of change is within the object, part of the object responsible for the change is not changing. Thus, the object is not going through a change in its totality. According to Aristotle, since the source of change is not found within the changed object, something external to the object must initiate the change.<sup>35</sup> It is clear that change must come from an external source for the object to be changed. If the source of the change were to be found in the spectator, then it would not be possible for the spectator and their mind to transform in their entirety. Furthermore, the repression would remain repressed without the initiation of an external object as the mind would have already processed repression on its own if the source of the change was within the spectator. Since the repression in the unconscious mind of the spectator cannot change or begin its movement to the consciousness by itself without a stimulating phenomenon, it is evident that there must be a stimulus that is external to the spectator that triggers the transformation, namely, the film.

In the second thesis of the Book VII of *Physics*, Aristotle argues that "The agent of change and the object that is changed must be in contact."<sup>36</sup> According to him, the source of the change and the changing thing must be contiguous and have nothing in between each other. That is, there must be no object of mediation, and the interaction of the agent of change and the object of change must be direct. In my view, the contiguity of an agent of change and object of change can indicate something beyond a physical or material sense. Film and spectator must be contiguous and have nothing in between in cinematic experience, however, the contiguity here does not concern the amount of space between the spectator and the screen. In cinematic experience, the spectator is in a filmic state and perceptive 'contact' with the film. If the spectator ends the filmic state and their perception, they would no longer interact with the film

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<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7, 241b34.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 7, 241b34-37.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 7, 243a32-36.

and consequently not be in contact with it. Therefore, the spectator must remain invested in the filmic state for their transformation through cinematic experience to be possible as the agent of change and the object of change must remain in contact for a change to occur.

Does this imply that the cinematic apparatus captures the spectator forcibly since the spectator must remain in the filmic state to have cinematic experience and undergo a transformation? Aristotle's analysis of the naturalness of change in his discourse can lead to further explanation of this issue. According to him, the object changes naturally if the object of change has its inner source of change or if it is not moved or changed forcibly by the external agent of change.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the object's movement by an external thing must actualize the potentiality of the object for the change to be natural and not forced. In my view, although the change that the spectator goes through in cinematic experience is a movement caused by an external agent, it is still a natural change. That is, film and other audiovisual mediums alter the sensory perception of the spectator through their perceptive qualities by their nature and essence, which initiates a change in the spectator. Furthermore, the spectator actualizes the repression that was in a potential state through cinematic experience. Thus, the cinematic apparatus changes the spectator naturally and not forcibly.

In his writing, Aristotle differentiates between three sorts of change: the change of place, the change of quality, and the change of quantity. Corresponding to the sorts of changes, Aristotle classifies the agents of change under three categories: one which causes movement, one which causes alteration, and one which causes increase and decrease.<sup>38</sup> The sort of change and the agent of change that concerns the spectator's transformative cinematic experience are the change of quality and the agent of change that cause alteration. When the agent of change causes alteration, it affects or alters the affective qualities of the changing object. The film alters or affects the mind through the sensory perception of the spectator in order to initiate the change through cinematic experience. Aristotle further identifies the characteristics of the process of alteration in the third thesis of Book VII by stating that "Only perceptible qualities can be altered or can alter other things."<sup>39</sup> In other words, the alteration can solely occur by something perceptible to the senses. As claimed by Aristotle, mental states and the states of the intellectual part of the mind cannot be alterations, but the process of alteration is involved in their generation.<sup>40</sup> According to him, organs of perception must be altered by perceptible things for

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<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 8, 254b12-19.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 7, 243a37-41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 245b3-9.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 247a20-22.

mental states and states of the intellectual part of the mind to come into existence. As the film is an agent of change that is perceptible to the spectator's senses, the repression that stands potentially within the unconscious mind comes into existence and becomes actualized through the mediation of the organs of perception that are altered by the film.

According to Aristotle, while the inanimate things are unaware of being changed, the living beings are aware of being changed in the process of alteration.<sup>41</sup> So far, I have considered the spectator to be unaware of being changed in cinematic experience until they acquire conscious thoughts. Thus, this argument may seem paradoxical in my case. Nevertheless, Aristotle expands his argument by stating that living beings can also be unaware of being changed if the alteration does not occur in the organs of perception.<sup>42</sup> In cinematic experience, the film alters the spectator's mind through their sensory perception. That is, although the alteration occurs in organs of perception, since the change occurs in the spectator's unconscious mind it is the main point of alteration. In a sense, organs of perception act as the mediator between the spectator's mind and the film in the process of alteration. However, the organs of perception are not a mediating 'object' that disturbs the change by breaking the contiguity of the film and the spectator. The organs of perception are undoubtedly a part of the spectator as an entity and their perceptive system. Hence, this does not concern nor harm the prior arguments that there should not be a mediating 'object' between the spectator and the film within the filmic state and that they must remain in contact for the change to occur. Therefore, living beings can stay unaware of the change and the alteration of the mind through sensory perception until the movement from the unconscious to the conscious mind is finalized. In other words, I think that the spectator is unaware of the alteration and change within the unconscious mind through the organs of perception until they become aware of the actualized phenomena in the consciousness.

In applying Aristotle's concept of change to the spectator's transformative cinematic experience, the film presents itself as the external agent of change that alters the spectator's mind through their sensory perception and transforms them in the process. Although the spectator changes within cinematic experience by acquiring thoughts, does this apply to every spectator? Why do each spectator's cinematic experience and investment in films differ? In what process does the actualization of the repression not occur in the spectator's cinematic experience?

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 244b18-19.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 244b19-22.

### 3.2. State of Ignorance

In *Physics*, Aristotle argues that ‘when something that is capable of acting and something that is capable of being affected come together, what is potential becomes actual without exception’.<sup>43</sup> According to him, the spectator with the potentiality will actualize the phenomenon and move it to their conscious mind in the form of thought if nothing interrupts the process of change or transformation.<sup>44</sup> Hence, an individual might actualize potential or repress the process unconsciously, interrupting the process of actualization. If the movement is interrupted and the phenomenon is not actualized, the individual is in a 'state of ignorance'.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, according to Aristotle, capacity and actuality are different concepts since something can have the possibility of being a thing but yet not be; equivalently, something can have the possibility of not being a thing and yet be.<sup>46</sup> That is, cinematic experience can change the spectator. On the other hand, it is also possible for the spectator within cinematic experience to break the filmic state and not change by initiating the state of ignorance.

Since the transformative affect of cinematic experience is not observable in every spectator and every film, I think that the state of ignorance can explain the selective affect of the film. The film does initiate movement of the potential phenomenon in the spectator's unconscious mind. However, in a state of ignorance, the spectator can interrupt the process by breaking the filmic state and consequently stopping the movement of transformation. Furthermore, the mind can re-repress the phenomena after its actualization and thus disregard the process of change. In cinematic experience, the film that is capable of acting on the sensory perception of the spectator and the spectator that is capable of being affected by the moving image come together. If the spectator is not in a state of ignorance, what is potential becomes actualized. Thus, the state of ignorance and the workings of the unconscious play a decisive role in the spectator's transformation in cinematic experience.

### 3.3. Potentiality and Actuality

In the Book Theta of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle further elaborates on the concept of potentiality-actuality, in which he differentiates potentiality from actuality in that it needs to be united with the movement of change to become actualized. According to him, while change is

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<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 8, 255a35-37.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 255b2-5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 255b2-5.

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Book Theta*, trans. Stephan Makin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 9.3, 1047a10-15.

incomplete and still in process, on the other hand, the actualization that was in a state of potentiality has been through the change and became completed.<sup>47</sup> According to Aristotle, potentiality has two modes: active and passive. While the object of change has a passive potentiality to be changed, the agent of change has an active potentiality to change the object. In the completion of the process of change, both the active and passive potentialities of the agent of change and the object of change become actualized. In cinematic experience, the spectator has a passive potential to be changed by the film, and the film has an active potential to initiate the change by stimulating the spectator's mind. While the spectator's potential is actualized by processing the repression and acquiring thoughts, the film actualizes its potential by stimulating the spectator's mind and transforming them within cinematic experience. Hence, the spectator and the film have potentialities to be actualized through cinematic experience.

Every spectator brings their unique background and knowledge into cinematic experience. However, the potentialities and capacities of the spectator already exist before they step into the experience of the film. The spectator possesses the potential and capacity to perform spectatorship and transform before, during, and after cinematic experience. Therefore, the spectator's possession of the potential and capacity do not correlate with their action, transformation, and performing spectatorship. For instance, the painter who is not performing the act of painting at this very moment is still a painter and, consequently, capable of painting. Similarly, the spectator has the potential and capacity to perform spectatorship and be transformed or changed in cinematic experience before and after the experience. Suppose it were the case that the painter who is not presently painting is not capable of painting since one needs to be capable of painting to be a painter. In that case, the spectator who is not presently having cinematic experience would not be capable of performing spectatorship and hence transform. Thus, every individual perpetually possesses potentialities to be actualized and has the capacity to be transformed by performing spectatorship in cinematic experience.

#### **4. Conclusion**

According to G. W. Leibniz, while the mind is active in forming thoughts, it is passive in receiving perceptions and cannot prevent them from being received. Consequently, the mind cannot notice each perception and receives some of them below the threshold of consciousness: the *petites perceptions*. As there are conscious and unconscious perceptions, Leibniz further distinguishes three levels of perception: bare perception, sensation, and thought. In the different

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<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 9.1 ,1049a28-35.

levels of perception, the bare perception has the potential to be a sensation and, consequently, a thought.

Besides the *petites perceptions* that are low in strength, the predominant bare perceptions go unnoticed by the mind when emotionally charged perceptions prevail, or there are quantities of perceptions presented simultaneously. When the spectator subtracts the total objective *prehensions* the film presents, they acquire the subjective *prehensions* that are emotionally charged and gain dominance over other predominant perceptions. Furthermore, as the film has various components that simultaneously present quantities of perceptions to the spectator, several perceptions gain dominance over other already predominant perceptions. Additionally, the mind cannot notice the predominant perceptions that are too complex to grasp without reflection. The predominant bare perceptions that are unnoticed stimulate the mind and are perceived unconsciously. With that in mind, the film can utilize *petites perceptions*, bare perceptions, and cinematic codes to reinforce the narrative and the process of secondary identification.

According to the Aristotelian concept of change and potentiality-actuality, the spectator transforms by what is absent to take form and come to being. In other words, the spectator transforms by the unconscious repression's movement to the consciousness to become actualized in the form of thought. First and foremost, the film initiates the spectator's transformation as the external agent of change. The bare perception presented by the film stimulates and unites with the repression in the spectator's unconscious mind and later moves to the conscious mind conjointly to reach actualization in the form of a thought.

When an agent of change that is capable of acting and an object of change that is capable of being affected come together, within the process of change, the spectator will actualize the potentiality given that nothing will interfere with the process. Suppose the spectator breaks the filmic state and consequently interrupts the change process. In that case, the spectator is in a state of ignorance, which explains the variable and selective effect of the change process in cinematic experience. To actualize the potential and complete the movement of change, the spectator must remain in perceptive contact with the film in the filmic state throughout the experience.

In cinematic experience, as the agent of change, the film changes the spectator by altering their mind and sensory perception, which results in a change of quality that changes the potential form of the repression. As the film alters the spectator's unconscious mind through the alteration of the sensory perception, the spectator stays unaware of the change process until its finalization as a thought. Since cinematic experience actualizes the spectator's potential

repression in the form of conscious thought, and the film alters the spectator's mind and perception by its nature, the change that the spectator undergoes is natural.

The film and the spectator have potentialities to be actualized in cinematic experience. However, their potentialities differ in their modes. In cinematic experience, while the film has an active potential to change the spectator, the spectator has a passive potential to be changed by the film.

To conclude the chapter, I can say that both the film, i.e. agent of change and the spectator, i.e. object of change, have the capacities and potentialities prior to their interaction within the experience. In their interaction, film stimulates and alters the unconscious mind of the spectator through their sensory perception and initiates the movement of change to actualize the unconscious repression. The potentiality becomes apparent to the spectator only when it moves to the conscious mind in the form of thought.

# Chapter III

## Spectator's Psychological Cinematic Experience: Unconscious Perception and Repression

### 1. Introduction

While examining the spectator's transformation in cinematic experience, I have focused on the peculiarities of the cinematic apparatus and its relationship with the spectator. I think it is crucial for me to turn my inquiry to the spectator's mind and the processes following its stimulation by the film to thoroughly comprehend the spectator's transformative cinematic experience. Thus, I will now turn to psychoanalysis and the concepts of the unconscious mind, repression consciousness and the dynamics between them in order to examine the cinematic affect and the spectator's conscious and unconscious cinematic experience solely through the spectator's standpoint. In my inquiry, I will refer to the terms conscious and unconscious within the context of experience concerning the spectator's awareness in the transformative cinematic experience.

I will first investigate how the spectator can have unconscious perceptions and processes during the conscious experience of film through Fred Dretske's concepts of thing awareness and fact awareness in order to examine the spectator's conscious and unconscious experiences and processes in cinematic experience. Next, I will examine the unconscious mind and repression through Sigmund Freud and Howard Shevrin's notion of the unconscious to understand the spectator's psychic processes in cinematic experience. Finally, I will analyze the film's contribution to the temporary and permanent lift of the repression and the role of the mind in the movement and actualization of phenomena in consciousness.

### 2. Spectator's Conscious Mind

In cinematic experience, film stimulates the repression through the spectator's unconscious perceptions. The unconscious perception and the repression it stimulates transform into thought and become apparent to the spectator in their consciousness. While the spectator



is not aware of the unconscious and transformative processes until they acquire thoughts in consciousness, they are aware of performing the act of spectatorship. Since the spectator must be aware of spectatorship and have the ability to break the filmic state to be autonomous in their interaction with the cinematic apparatus, they must have a conscious experience of the film. If the spectator's cinematic experience is conscious, how can they have unconscious experiences and processes within the state of conscious experience and awareness of the film and spectatorship?

### **2.1. Spectator's Conscious Cinematic Experience: Thing Awareness and Fact Awareness**

The spectator's cinematic experience consists of conscious and unconscious perceptions and processes within the conscious experience of spectatorship. Although cinematic experience is a conscious experience in its totality, it does not necessitate the spectator to perceive and experience each component of the film within their conscious awareness. In *Conscious Experience*, Fred Dretske reflects on how the mind can fail to have conscious awareness of things in the individual's conscious experiences and introduces the terms thing awareness and fact awareness. In my judgment, examining the difference between thing awareness and fact awareness and applying the concepts to the case of cinematic experience will demonstrate how the spectator can have perceptions and experiences below the threshold of conscious awareness within the conscious cinematic experience.

In his writing, Dretske evaluates the distinction between thing awareness and fact awareness through the case of an individual's awareness of a change in an object at different times. Accordingly, he describes the terms as "To be thing-aware of a difference is to be aware of the thing (some object, event, or condition,  $x$ ) that makes the difference. To be fact-aware of the difference is to be aware of the fact that there is a difference (not necessarily the fact that  $x$  is the difference)." <sup>48</sup> That is, an individual can have thing awareness and be aware of the object or have fact awareness and be aware of the state or the significance of the object. However, while one can be thing-aware of the object's presence and immediate appearance, they may not be fact-aware of what the object signifies. Dretske argues that being thing-aware does not require being fact-aware, and he formulates his claim as "S is conscious of  $x$  does not necessitate that S is conscious that  $x$  is  $F$ ." <sup>49</sup> As for cinematic experience, the spectator (S) can

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<sup>48</sup> Fred Dretske, "Conscious Experience," *Mind* 102, no.406 (1993): 268.

<sup>49</sup> Dretske, "Conscious Experience," 266-69.

be conscious of the cinematic codes or objects ( $x$ ) presented within the film; however, they may not be conscious of what the object symbolizes or represent ( $F$ ), and thus perceive them below the threshold of consciousness.

In my view, the difference between thing awareness and fact awareness corresponds to the distinctness of the spectator's perception and apperception in cinematic experience. The spectator perceives everything that the film presents and, as a result, becomes thing-aware of all perceptible objects; however, the spectator does not apperceive and becomes fact-aware of each of these objects. That is, the spectator's conscious experience does not entail the apperception of the object's significance above the threshold of consciousness. For instance, in the case of *Eyes Wide Shut*, the spectator has conscious awareness of the object's presence; thus, they are thing-aware of the star. However, they do not apperceive and are not fact-aware of the object as a representation of the Star of Ishtar. As the spectator has a conscious experience and is thing-aware of the object, they do not apperceive or have the conscious awareness of the facts and representations of the object. Therefore, in cinematic experience, while the spectator has a conscious experience, not all things or aspects of things are perceived above the threshold of consciousness and become an awareness. For a spectator who is thing-aware of an object to also become fact-aware, the unconscious perception and the repression must be processed and become a thought in consciousness. In other words, the spectator apperceives and becomes fact-aware of the object through the transformation and movement of the unconscious phenomena to consciousness. If the spectator's apperception and fact-awareness occur after the transformation, how do they experience and understand film in its totality in cinematic experience? Does the unconscious mind act and influence the spectator's conscious experience of the film?

### **3. Spectator's Unconscious Mind**

In "Consciousness, States of Consciousness, Unconscious Psychological Processes, and Psychological States," Howard Shevrin investigates how something becomes conscious awareness and reflects on the relationship between unconscious and consciousness in this process. Shevrin summarizes his findings by stating "...the initial cognitive stage for all stimuli occurs outside of consciousness...this initial cognitive stage outside of consciousness is psychological in nature, active in its effects on consciousness, and can be different from conscious cognition in its principles of operation...consciousness of a stimulus is a later and

optional stage in cognition.”<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, the stimulations that the film presents have their first cognitive stage in the spectator’s unconscious mind. Furthermore, while the stimuli can influence the consciousness, it can be processed and become conscious in a state of latency. Although the spectator is not aware of the perceptions that the mind receives below the threshold of consciousness, they continue to influence the spectator’s conscious cinematic experience.

Shevrin’s discourse and findings have their origins in the concept of the dynamic unconscious, which Sigmund Freud first introduced. In “A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis,” Freud reflects on the unconscious and describes the concept as he states, “The term *unconscious*, which was used in the purely descriptive sense before, now comes to imply something more. It designates not only latent ideas in general, but especially ideas with a certain dynamic character, ideas keeping apart from consciousness in spite of their intensity and activity.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, the dynamic unconscious is not only active in the initial cognitive stage of stimuli but also in repressing the phenomena. The dynamic unconscious plays an integral role in forming the repression and restricting its access to the consciousness while still allowing its influence on the individual’s behavior and conscious mind. Accordingly, the unconscious mind works as a dynamic system which is constantly active in that it can continue to be influenced by life, and it can as well influence the consciousness.

Correspondingly, the dynamic unconscious is active in influencing the behavior and consciousness of the spectator without their awareness within cinematic experience. When the spectator is thing-aware of an object but lacks fact awareness in perceiving the signification of the object unconsciously, the dynamic unconscious influences the spectator’s conscious cinematic experience without their awareness. That is, although the spectator is not consciously fact-aware of the signification of the star symbol as the Star of Ishtar, the dynamic unconscious is active and influences their conscious experience to implicate the connotation of the object. Thus, by allowing the influence of complex and unconscious perceptions over the consciousness, the dynamic unconscious enables the spectator to experience the film in its totality.

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<sup>50</sup> Howard Shevrin, “Consciousness, States of Consciousness, Unconscious Psychological Processes, and Psychological States,” in *Sensory Perception: Mind and Matter*, eds. Friedrich G. Barth, Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, and Hans-Dieter Klein (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 269.

<sup>51</sup> Sigmund Freud, “A Note in the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis (1912),” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 292.

The concepts of thing awareness, fact awareness, and dynamic unconscious demonstrate how the spectator can have unconscious experiences and processes within the conscious cinematic experience. The initial cognitive stage of stimuli occurs in the dynamic unconscious; furthermore, as I have argued previously, the perception begins to be processed conjointly with the repression it relates to and stimulates. So, how are the spectator's pre-existing repressions formed, and what is their role in the spectator's cinematic experience?

### 3.1. Repression

The dynamic unconscious forms the repression to adapt to the traumas the mind cannot process or discharge.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, the concept of 'trauma' in the formation of the unconscious repression refers to the external things and events that are not compatible with the consciousness of the individual. In my view, unconscious repressions represent and play a crucial part in the compatibility of things with the spectator's consciousness. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, through subtractive perception, the spectator has the conscious experience of the things that are compatible with their consciousness, in which what is incompatible is experienced unconsciously. Since some unconscious perceptions are incompatible with the spectator's consciousness as well as repressions, both the phenomena potentially relate to and stimulate each other.<sup>53</sup> Thus, unconscious perceptions acquired due to the spectator's subtractive perception can be regarded in association with the repression and can be said to be processed together. Nevertheless, what plays a decisive factor in the compatibility of external things and events with the spectator's consciousness and hence the formation of repressions?

### 3.2. The Pleasure Principle

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud describes the pleasure principle as that the individual's behavior is driven by seeking pleasure and abstaining from unpleasure.<sup>54</sup> According

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<sup>52</sup> Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, 'Perception, Conscious and Unconscious Processes,' in *Sensory Perception: Mind and Matter*, eds. Friedrich G. Barth, Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, and Hans-Dieter Klein (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 246-47.

<sup>53</sup> Some of the unconscious phenomena because although some perceptions were supposed to be perceived consciously, as I mentioned before, when the film presents them with emotionally charged perceptions or quantities of perceptions, they are unnoticed and perceived unconsciously. Thus in the case of these exceptions, some perceptions that are compatible with consciousness can as well be perceived unconsciously.

<sup>54</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920),' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 7.

to Freud, the individual experiences most of the psycho-physical motions that are above the threshold of consciousness with pleasure.<sup>55</sup> As stated earlier, in cinematic experience, the spectator consciously experiences things compatible with their consciousness. Since the pleasure principle suggests that the experience above the threshold of consciousness is with pleasure, then in cinematic experience, the spectator has the conscious experience of the things that are compatible with their consciousness and consequently are pleasurable. On the other hand, the spectator's unconscious experience that is incompatible with their consciousness may be unpleasurable. Furthermore, the mind can associate the incompatible and hence unpleasurable perception with the repression that is related to the same kind of unpleasure.<sup>56</sup> That is, the perception and repression incompatible with the spectator's consciousness may unite in the unconscious and stimulate each other.

According to the pleasure principle, although the perception may be pleasurable for the spectator when the urge to avoid unpleasure outweighs the benefits of pleasure, the phenomenon becomes repressed by the mind.<sup>57</sup> In other words, if the perception has pleasurable and unpleasurable aspects, the mind may choose not to receive any amount of pleasure. Instead of experiencing unpleasure, the mind represses the phenomenon. In this case, in order to avoid unpleasure, the dynamic unconscious restricts the access of unpleasurable perception and repression to consciousness. Although perception and repression can continue to influence consciousness as they cannot access it, a strict separation between the unconscious and conscious mind occurs. Through this separation, while the unconscious mind accommodates the perception and repression in their potential forms, the consciousness becomes the base where the phenomena actualize their potentialities in the form of thought. If the dynamic unconscious restricts the perception and repression's access to the consciousness, what leads to their transformation and begin their movement to consciousness?

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<sup>55</sup> Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)," 8.

<sup>56</sup> By unpleasure, I aim to imply something similar to the concept of trauma. In which I refer to unpleasure as something incompatible with an individual's consciousness. Thus, unpleasure here must be regarded particular to the individual and not through the general and common notions of pleasure and pain.

<sup>57</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Repression (1915)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 147.

### 3.2.1. Repression's Access to Consciousness

In taking a closer look at repression and its characteristics, Freud reflects on how repression can lift in *repression*, and he states:

The same result as follows from an increase or decrease in the degree of distortion may also be achieved at the other end of the apparatus, so to speak, by a modification in the condition for the production of pleasure and unpleasure. Special techniques have been evolved, with the purpose of bringing about such changes in the play of mental forces that what would otherwise give rise to unpleasure may on this occasion result in pleasure; and, whenever a technical device of this sort comes into operation, the repression of an instinctual representative which would otherwise be repudiated is removed...As a rule the repression is only temporarily removed and is promptly reinstated.<sup>58</sup>

According to Freud, repression can be lifted through the modification of the psychic forces by leading a phenomenon that brings unpleasure to result in pleasure instead.<sup>59</sup> However, the repression is only lifted temporarily through this process. In my view, the film is an apparatus that modifies the spectator's psychic forces of pleasure and unpleasure and enables the repression to access consciousness temporarily. In cinematic experience, the film may present a perception that the spectator relates to unpleasure. If it were the case for the spectator to experience the unpleasurable thing in their lives by themselves, they would abstain or repress it. Nonetheless, in cinematic experience, the spectator encounters the unpleasurable thing through the experience of the characters and events they identify with in the film. As the film is a medium that is intended to be entertaining and hence to be pleasurable to its spectator, consequently, the spectator encounters the unpleasurable phenomenon within the pleasurable context of cinematic experience. The film modifies the psychic forces of pleasure by presenting an unpleasurable phenomenon within an entertaining and pleasurable experience to its spectator.

Although the film enables its spectator to experience unpleasure in a pleasurable context, the repression only gains temporary access to the consciousness. In order to gain permanent access to the consciousness, the repression must transform and be actualized. Since the film stimulates the spectator's unconscious mind and triggers the movement for the perception and repression to transform, it also initiates the repression's permanent access to consciousness. Hence, as the film can modify the psychic forces and temporarily lift the

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<sup>58</sup> Freud, "Repression (1915)," 150-151.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

repression; furthermore, it can initiate the process for the repression to lift permanently. As for the spectator to transform and acquire thoughts in cinematic experience, the repression must gain permanent access to the consciousness; how does the mind transform the repression?

#### **4. The Dynamics Between the Unconscious and Consciousness: The Mind's Psychic Investment**

In *The Unconscious*, Freud claims thought processes and ideas to be acts of investment by the mind. Moreover, the mind must invest psychic energy in the thought processes, ideas, and movement from the unconscious to consciousness to occur. Specifically, the phenomena's movement from the unconscious to the consciousness occurs due to a change of state or transformation in the mind's psychic investment.<sup>60</sup> For the repression to transform and gain permanent access to the consciousness, the film's stimulation must initiate the mind to invest energy in the repression. Consequently, if the mind does not invest enough psychic energy in an idea or a phenomenon, it remains in a state of repression in the unconscious mind.<sup>61</sup> That is, the movement from the unconscious to consciousness does not occur through the mere process of perception, but it requires an overinvestment of energy by the mind.<sup>62</sup> If the movement were to occur through a mere process of perception, then the same transformation would be experienced with every perceptible thing. Therefore, in cinematic experience, the spectator not only perceives things, but the film stimulates the unconscious and initiates the mind to invest energy and consequently transform the state and form of repression.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In the conscious cinematic experience, the spectator both has conscious and unconscious experiences, perceptions, and processes. While the spectator can be thing-aware of the presence of an object the film presents and have its conscious experience, they may not be fact-aware and hence perceive the significance of the object unconsciously. For the spectator to apperceive and be fact-aware of the object, the phenomenon must transform and take the form of thought in consciousness.

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<sup>60</sup> Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious (1915)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 180.

<sup>61</sup> Freud, "The Unconscious (1915)," 202.

<sup>62</sup> Freud, "The Unconscious (1915)," 194.

According to Freud and Shevrin, while the dynamic unconscious restricts the perception and the repression's access to the consciousness, it allows them to influence the consciousness, consequently enabling the spectator to experience the film in its totality. Furthermore, the dynamic unconscious is active in forming repressions to adapt to things incompatible with the spectator's consciousness. In cinematic experience, most unconscious perceptions relate to things incompatible with the spectator's consciousness. If it is the case that both the repression and perception in the unconscious are related to the same incompatibility, then they can stimulate and be associated with each other.

Based on the pleasure principle, the spectator's behavior is driven by pursuing pleasure and avoiding unpleasure. As most conscious experiences are with pleasure, and since the spectator has the conscious experience of things that are compatible with their consciousness, it is plausible for what is compatible with one's consciousness to be pleasurable. In other words, in cinematic experience, the spectator has the conscious experience of things that are compatible with their consciousness and thus pleasurable. In this case, the unconscious perceptions that are incompatible with the spectator's consciousness are unpleasurable. Similar to the case of being related to the same incompatibility, the perception and the repression that is related to the same unpleasure may be united in the unconscious and stimulate one another.

In cinematic experience, the film lifts the repression and enables it to gain temporary access to consciousness by modifying the psychic forces of pleasure and unpleasure. As the film provides the necessary conditions for the repression to gain access to consciousness temporarily, it also stimulates the mind to initiate the transformation of the repression to gain permanent access to consciousness. The cinematic apparatus plays an integral role in inciting the mind to invest psychic energy to transform phenomena into conscious thoughts.



## Conclusion

In their lifetime, every spectator has a cinematic experience they can define as 'life-changing' or one that leads them to acquire new thoughts. That is because film can serve as a platform for the spectator to process trauma and repression and thus transform through cinematic experience. There have been many different theories concerning cinematic apparatus and spectatorship. While some attributed film as an apparatus of ideological capture and assumed a passive spectator, others claimed an active spectator that transforms in cinematic experience. Nevertheless, they all are preoccupied with the implications, components, and technicalities of the cinematic image rather than the spectator and their process of change. In my view, thinking of cinematic apparatus and cinematic affect without the spectator's experience and active participation would be misleading. In my introduction, I have raised the following questions: How does the spectator transform or acquire thoughts through cinematic experience and what are the physical and psychological processes that lead to this transformation?

To answer this question, I have proposed the *psychophysics of cinematic experience*. With this, I mean that the spectator's cinematic experience is a combination of the physical and psychological processes that produce a movement of change in the mind. In this thesis, I have proposed to reflect on this question by turning to a series of classical theoretical texts. I have taken an outside-in approach by examining film, the film-spectator relationship, and the spectator's mind. In chapter I, I have discussed the process of subjectification, the spectator's primary and secondary identification, and filmic state and examined the characteristics of cinematic apparatus to distinguish it from other types of apparatuses. In chapter II, I have analyzed the concepts of perception, change, and potentiality-actuality to clarify the physical and perceptive interaction between film and spectator. In chapter III, I have discussed the spectator's conscious cinematic experience, unconscious perceptions and repressions, pleasure principle, and mind's psychic investment to examine the psychological process following the physical interaction between film and spectator. In this thesis, I have aimed to inquire three issues: the spectator's transformation and acquirement of thoughts in cinematic experience, the physical and psychological processes of the spectator that lead to the transformation, and the reason why some spectators do not transform in cinematic experience.

## **1. Arguments for Cinematic Apparatus: Processing Repression, Naturalness of Change, Filmic State and Subjectification-Identification**

As claimed by Giorgio Agamben, the apparatus captures, controls and separates the individuals from their environments through subjectification.<sup>63</sup> Against this notion of an apparatus, I have argued for four things regarding the cinematic apparatus. First, I believe that the cinematic apparatus does not separate the spectator from their environment. Instead, it unites what is already separated by enabling repression to be processed and take the form of thought. I mean, in forming the repression against the thing that is incompatible with their consciousness, the spectator separates themselves from the thing in the external world. By processing and apperceiving the repression, the spectator can reconnect with their environment.

In chapter II, I have argued that the cinematic apparatus does not capture or change its spectator forcibly. In my view, the film is an audiovisual medium that presents universally perceptible codes and signs in an experiential context and stimulates the spectator's mind without their intentional analysis or interpretation of the cinematic codes. That is, the film alters the sensory perception of its spectator and stimulates the mind through its perceptive qualities. Furthermore, since both film and spectator actualize a potentiality through cinematic experience, the spectator's change is not forced; rather, it is a natural change.

According to Christian Metz, in cinematic experience, the spectator is in a filmic state and has an intense emotional and perceptual experience.<sup>64</sup> The experiential context of the film enables the stimulation of the unconscious mind and the spectator to interact with it on an emotional level. However, the spectator can break the filmic state if the film's unconscious and conscious stimulation becomes too disturbing. Therefore, in chapter I, I have argued that as the spectator has the ability to break the filmic state and end cinematic experience, they are autonomous and have control over their interaction with the cinematic apparatus.

In accordance with Agamben's discourse of apparatus, the film displays one of the most prominent features of an apparatus, that is, the process of subjectification. In my view, in the cinematic apparatus's process of subjectification, instead of being de-subjectified, the spectator forms filmic identification. In questioning the spectator's identification with film, I have used Metz's concept of primary identification. In relating and comparing the spectator-screen relationship to the process of mirror identification, in cinematic experience, the spectator exists

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<sup>63</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 14-21.

<sup>64</sup> Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 103.

as the all-perceiving being and primarily identifies with their gaze. Therefore, in the process of subjectification, the cinematic apparatus does not de-subjectify the spectator but enables them to form identification with the film and their perceptive gaze.

## **2. Spectator's Secondary Identification and Subtractive Perception**

In my view, the spectator forms a secondary identification and identifies with the characters and events within the film after forming the primary identification. As Agamben claims that there is no definitive process of subjectification, I understand that each spectator's primary and secondary identification occurs differently.<sup>65</sup> In forming secondary identification, the spectator subtracts and subjectifies the perceptions the film presents. First, as Gilles Deleuze points out, the spectator subtracts the subjective perceptions out of the total objective perceptions the film presents.<sup>66</sup> In my view, in secondary identification, the mind subtracts the perceptions according to their compatibility with the spectator's consciousness. While the spectator has the conscious experience of perceptions that are compatible with their consciousness and interest them, the incompatible ones are perceived unconsciously. Second, they subjectify the film by associating the perceptions with their memory and hence by forming sensations. By subjectifying the perceptions, the spectator becomes emotionally invested in the characters and events and acquires emotionally charged perceptions.

Therefore, secondary identification and the process of subtraction play a decisive role in whether the spectator will perceive the perception above or below the threshold of consciousness. To question how the spectator has unconscious perceptions and processes during the conscious cinematic experience and associates them with their pre-existing repression, I have used Freud's concept of the pleasure principle. According to Freud, while most conscious experience is pleasurable, the mind mostly experiences unpleasure unconsciously.<sup>67</sup> In my view, the spectator's unconscious perceptions in cinematic experience are unpleasurable in the sense that they are incompatible with their consciousness. Similar to the spectator's unconscious perceptions, the mind forms repression to adapt to traumas that are

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<sup>65</sup> Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?*, 21.

<sup>66</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 64.

<sup>67</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920),' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 8.

incompatible with the individual's consciousness.<sup>68</sup> I believe that the spectator brings to cinematic experience the repression that has the potential to become a conscious thought. The spectator's unconscious perceptions from the film and the pre-existing repression may relate to the same unpleasure or incompatibility and become associated by the mind and stimulate each other. As a result, through cinematic experience, the repression can find a representation and be stimulated by unconscious perceptions.

When the spectator encounters a perception that is incompatible with their consciousness, as the film is a medium that entertains and is pleasurable, they experience it in this pleasurable context. That is, the film can present an incompatible or unpleasurable thing in a pleasurable experience and modify the psychic forces. Through the modification of the psychic forces of pleasure and unpleasure in cinematic experience, unconscious perception and repression can be lifted temporarily and gain access to consciousness.

### **3. Unconscious and Conscious Perceptions in Cinematic Experience**

In cinematic experience, the spectator's mind receives each perception; however, not all are noticed or perceived above the threshold of conscious experience. The film presents the all-perceiving spectator with numerous *petites perceptions* simultaneously.<sup>69</sup> Besides the *petites perceptions* and incompatible or unpleasurable perceptions, the mind may receive pleasurable and predominant perceptions below the threshold of conscious experience in three cases: the spectator is exposed to the image frequently and becomes habituated; the film is drowning in emotionally charged perceptions that outweigh other predominant perceptions; the film presents quantities of perceptions at the same time.

Most perception received in cinematic experience have their first cognitive stage in the unconscious, and as an option, they may become conscious in a state of latency. To understand how the spectator can perceive some things unconsciously but still experience the film in its totality, I have used Fred Dretske's concepts of thing awareness and fact awareness. As I see it, while the spectator can be thing-aware and conscious of the object's immediate appearance, they may unconsciously perceive its meaning and symbolization. Furthermore, the spectator may apperceive the object consciously and become fact-aware in a state of latency given that

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<sup>68</sup> Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, "Perception, Conscious and Unconscious Processes," in *Sensory Perception: Mind and Matter*, eds. Friedrich G. Barth, Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, and Hans-Dieter Klein (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 246-47.

<sup>69</sup> *Petites perceptions* are lower in strength compared to the predominant and conscious perceptions and received below the threshold of conscious experience by the spectator.

the perception and repression become processed into conscious thought. For instance, the spectator is thing-aware and has the conscious experience of the complex perceptions and cinematic codes; however, for the spectator to become fact-aware of the cinematic codes and apperceive their complex perception, they must transform and become a conscious thought. Although the spectator may not be fact-aware and apperceive the object consciously, since the dynamic unconscious continues to influence the consciousness, they get to experience the film in its totality. That is, while the spectator is not conscious of the object's significance, the dynamic unconscious implicates it over the consciousness, which enables the spectator to have cinematic experience in its entirety.

The unconscious perception and repression must become conscious for the spectator to become fact-aware. Both perception and repression in the unconscious are in an initial state and have the potential to move to consciousness and actualize themselves in the form of thought. The perception and repression that are associated by the mind in the unconscious stimulate each other and move to the consciousness as a united phenomenon. Nonetheless, during their transformation, the repression and perception do not cease to exist; instead, their forms change to their finalized state as conscious thought. Since the repression and perception cannot access consciousness without the modification of psychic forces and transformation, the unconscious mind and consciousness become strictly separated as the initial/potential and final/actual centers of the movement of change, respectively.

#### **4. Spectator's Transformative Cinematic Experience**

In modifying the psychic forces of pleasure and unpleasure, the film is active in initiating the movement of change for the repression and perception. However, for the repression and perception to gain permanent access to consciousness and become a conscious thought, they must transform and become actualized. Furthermore, the pre-existing repression must transform and experience stimulation to move from unconscious to consciousness. That is, the repression cannot move to the consciousness as a result of mere perception, but the mind must invest psychic energy to transform and change its state. Film stimulates the mind to change its psychic investments and overinvest energy for the repression and perception to transform and move from unconscious to consciousness. Therefore, the film is active in repression and perception to gain temporary and permanent access to consciousness by modifying the psychic forces and stimulating the mind's psychic investment.

In the inquiry of the concept of change and film and spectator's roles and processes during transformation, I have used Aristotle's concepts of change and potentiality-actuality. In

my judgment, the film stimulates the mind to invest psychic energy through the intermediacy of alteration of organs of perception. Since an object can only be altered by something perceptible to the senses, in cinematic experience, the film is the agent of change that cause alteration in the spectator's perception and mind. In altering the perception and mind of the spectator to initiate the mind's psychic investment, the spectator experiences a change of quality in their mind by an agent of change that causes alteration. I mean, while the film alters the mind, the spectator experiences a change of quality in their mind as the repression and perception transform and take the form of thought.

Cinematic experience brings together the two necessary participants for a change to occur: the film that is capable of affecting and altering the perception and mind and the spectator that is capable of being affected through alteration of perception and mind. When the film and the spectator come together in cinematic experience, they always actualize their potentialities. However, it is also apparent that not every spectator experiences a transformation in cinematic experience or has this experience with every film. To explain this variance in the transformative cinematic experience, I have used Metz's concept of filmic state and Aristotle's concept of change and state of ignorance. According to Aristotle, for the change to occur, the agent of change and object of change must remain in contact.<sup>70</sup> As I see it, for the spectator to transform in cinematic experience, the film must continue to affect, and the spectator must remain in the filmic state, fully invested in the experience. If the spectator breaks the filmic state, they go into a state of ignorance which disturbs the movement of change. In the state of ignorance, the repression and perception become re-repressed, and the spectator remains unaware of the process of transformation. In other words, in a state of ignorance, the repression and perception's movement of change ends, and the spectator stays unaware of being changed in cinematic experience since they could not actualize the repression and perception and acquire conscious thoughts.

In breaking the filmic state, the spectator continues to have the potentiality and capacity to transform in cinematic experience; however, the spectator fails to actualize them. The spectator's capacity and potentiality to transform do not correlate with their spectatorship and their presence in cinematic experience. Since capacity and actuality are different concepts, the spectator may have the capacity but not actualize the potential. Similar to the spectator's potentiality, the film has the potential to initiate a change in its spectator. While the film has an

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<sup>70</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7, 243a32-36.

active potentiality to transform the spectator, the spectator has a passive potentiality to be transformed by the film. Therefore, if the spectator is not in a state of ignorance and remains in the filmic state, both the film and the spectator actualize potentialities through cinematic experience.

I want to conclude by stating that investigating and understanding the *psychophysics of cinematic experience* will enhance our conception of cinematic apparatus and spectatorship. Thereby, I propose a new understanding which comprehends cinematic experience to transform the spectator leading to their psychic processing and fulfilment.

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