

Liquid Cinema and the Re-Creation of Thought:
Towards a Philosophy of Filmind

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ABSTRACT

This research is towards the advancement of filmosophy as a progressive new approach to how we think about, and through, film. This explorative research aims to introduce, contextualise, and expand upon the thoughts and writings of Daniel Frampton, as found in his 2006 manifesto: *Filmosophy*.

In order to provide a suitable platform from which to introduce Frampton's contemporary concepts (i.e. 'filmind' and 'fluid film-thinking'), this paper first outlines and discusses the various ways in which philosophy and film are said to overlap, culminating in a critical discussion of 'film-as-philosophy' in terms of the implications it posits for providing innovative philosophical contributions through uniquely cinematic means (the 'problem of paraphrase'). This literature review concludes by presenting and discussing filmosophy and its major tenets as both an appropriate extension of the current canon, and as a potentially productive new paradigm through which both film and philosophy can be critically considered and advanced.

Due to filmosophy's unique and relatively new inclusion as a contemporary approach to cinema, Chapter 2 is dedicated to presenting various criticisms aimed against Frampton's 'radical manifesto'. Similarly, Chapter 3 explores a methodological, ontological and epistemological framework derived from filmosophical inferences; orientations that specifically draw from the works of Slavoj Žižek's *The Parallax View* (2006), Edward O. Wilson's *Consilience: the Unity of Knowledge* (1999), and concludes by fitting filmosophical activity within Gillian Rose's critical visual methodology.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to expanding and exploring filmosophy's key concepts, and then applies them in an analysis of selected scenes and features found in two contemporary films—Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* (2011) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013); two award-winning, curiously creative films, whose cinematic innovations and atypical expressions challenge the mutual exclusivity of film and philosophy. By offering various interpretations on selected features from these progressive pictures, this research argues that the ideas and worldview filmosophy describes are both productive and appropriate when considered through such neoteric, at times seemingly enigmatic, productions—in doing so attesting to the salient and exciting synthesis of film and philosophy.

This work concludes by defending filmosophy as a valid and insightful mode of philosophical enquiry, arguing that this new approach to cine-thinking is an inclusive and exciting new philosophical approach that calls to further critical consideration and research into the borderlands between film and philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

“We must be better connoisseurs of film if we are not to be as much at the mercy of perhaps the greatest intellectual and spiritual influence of our age as to some blind and irresistible elemental force”
- Béla Balázs (1945:17)

“If those committed to the quest fail, they will be forgiven. When lost, they will find another way...Let us see how high we can fly before the sun melts the wax in our wings”
- Edward O. Wilson (1998:7)

This dissertation is towards the advancement of filmsophy as an inclusive, enriching, and adaptive new approach to philosophical thinking and understanding film. What follows is an explorative investigation into filmsophy’s key neologisms and core concepts (namely the ‘filmind’ and its two constituting concepts: ‘film-world creation’ and ‘film-thinking’), as outlined and presented by Daniel Frampton in *Filmosophy*—“a manifesto for a radically new way of understanding cinema” (Frampton, 2006).

Specifically, filmsophy’s progressive and core concept of ‘fluid film-thinking’ is examined and then applied to two contemporary films: Terrence Malick’s *The Tree of Life* (2011) and Alfonso Cuarón’s *Gravity* (2013). Notable cinematic utterances from each film are identified and discussed and shown to benefit from the type of filmsosophical interpretation Frampton’s manifesto posits. It is argued that these particular films encapsulate and contain valid and reliable examples of both filmsophy’s theoretical underpinnings and, specifically, stand as suitable sources of Frampton’s fluid film-thinking at play in modern film-going.

This study begins by examining the current overlap of philosophy and film that stems from a critical review of Goodenough (2005) and Livingstone’s (2006) current thinkings on the philosophical nature of film-being. After which, Frampton’s own filmsosophical approach is presented and discussed as it naturally emerges from the topical ‘film-as-philosophy’ debate. Filmsophy is a fledging form of cine-thinking that has received heavy criticisms and resistance, objections and charges that are first critically considered and critiqued before moving to propose theoretical and

methodological orientations around Frampton's progressive synthesis of film and philosophy.

This research aims to give filmsophy a workable methodological orientation by considering three contemporary approaches to ontology (through the Slavoj Žižek's work in *The Parallax View*, 2006), epistemology (by promoting Edward O. Wilson's (1998) thoughts on consilience—calling to a type of 'vertical consilience'), and then seeks analytical asylum/placement within Gillian Rose's (2012) critical visual methodology (in order to ground filmsophy's progressive, arguably at times obscure, thinkings within contemporary methodological paradigms). By invoking the theories and ideas from Žižek, Wilson, Rose and other innovative thinkers, this research attempts to actively engage filmsophy's progressive propositions by drafting a response to Frampton's open-invitation to the future of cine-thinking.

“We have entered a new era of vision”
- Daniel Frampton (2006:211)

SYNOPSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIMARY WORKS

This study draws compelling case studies from Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* (2011) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013), as two contemporary, and award-winning films, that will be shown to contain unique cinematic characteristics (utterances) that benefit from the type of interpretation filmosophy posits. Both films have been identified by the film-going community as being philosophical, technically innovative, poetic, and possess unique narrative structures that have challenged the way we currently discuss and interpret film. It will be shown that these two films are fitting examples of the type of progressive cinema filmosophy wishes to engage and explore; they are critically acclaimed, innovative, and historically significant works that will be used to explore Frampton's cutting-edge thinkings on the immediate future of cinematic engagement.

The Tree of Life

The Cannes Film Festival is considered to be one of, if not *the*, most prestigious film award competitions held each year. This invitation-only event celebrates outstanding cinematic achievements and, in 2011—Žižek's own "year of dreaming dangerously"—it bestowed its highest honour, the *Palme d'Or* (or 'Golden Palm'), to Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*. This, the American auteur's fifth feature, has been described as "maddeningly Delphic as its maker" (Corliss, 2011) as critics and viewers alike were both enchanted and befuddled by Malick's resplendent cinematic dreamscape and spirited poetic presentations. Despite the film's critical accolades and popularity, *The Tree of Life* has also been repeatedly labelled as pretentious as Malick's "new hyper reverie", in the words of the American film critic Michael Atkinson (2011), presents the "spectacle of a man gone deep-sea diving in his own navel". Barsanti (2011) agrees, succinctly stating that Malick's film is "possibly his most abstract" and is "as awe-inspiring as it is irksome".

The Tree of Life's enigmatic veneer, lyrical qualia as well as its critical and social acclaim presents itself as a suitable case study from which to attempt to apply

Frampton's poetic meditations of film-thinking. It is also a film that is rarely discussed outside of its own authorship (i.e. as a 'Malick' feature), and is largely described and discussed as a deeply personal feature that requires outside resources (e.g. knowledge/insight into Malick's own life and philosophy pursuits⁴⁶) to be fully illuminated or even understood. Interestingly, like Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013), the film has also been cited by Christian groups as some form of spiritually significant event: "*The Tree of Life* is cosmic in scope, but fragmentary, deeply inward and subjective, a meditation on grief in light of the possibility of the existence of God" (Creegan, 2012:46). However moments (such as the film's epic, and much debated, 'creational sequence') seem to run counter to such claims; and while the film does, quite obviously, contain specific references to Christian theology, spirituality, and philosophy, such descriptions fail to appropriately consider film in its entirety. Critics and scholars have focused on specific, seemingly 'overt' (e.g. the film's opening biblical quote, or Malick's own philosophy pursuits and interests), themes and influences that are then extrapolated beyond what is phenomenological evident—beyond the artfulness and immediacy of the cinematic event itself.

In *The Tree of Life* we are introduced to Jack O' Brien, a middle-aged modern man who is deeply affected by the personal emotions the anniversary of the death of his brother elicits. The story takes place in Jack's current life (as a married and successful architect—epitomising the modern career man in crisis), but the majority of the film is considered rather to be a type of lucid daydream—a personal journey back through Jack's childhood that articulates key conflicts from his past that, through their remembering, assists Jack to find peace (his own, as Carl G. Jung might have observed, 'individuation'). The film is constantly musing over the nature of life itself, its founding relationships, and one's own wills against the cosmic powers that be. Ladders, trees, sun, water and the other *prima materia* are supposed over throughout as essentials to Jack's dreamy return to the site of past trauma and social antagonisms.

Operatic score and hushed narrations compliment the film's visuals to produce a remarkably captivating and grandiloquent event that, quite simply, demands a new approach—a new language—as to how we receive and understanding such rhapsodic thoughtfulness. *The Tree of Life* was selected for this study due to its award-winning

⁴⁶ Malick graduated, for example, *summa cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa* from Harvard University in 1965 where he studied (specifically Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein) under the American philosopher Stanley Cavell (Tucker & Kendall, 2011:5).

and critical acclaim, its socially noted authorial origin, enigmatic and unique narrative structure and splendid poetic visuals, and, in general, its contemporary existential concerns as it depicts the ‘modern man in peril’—features and contemporary considerations that filmsophy addresses and seeks to flag as a progressive piece of modern cinema.

Gravity

Alfonso Cuarón’s space thriller *Gravity* follows the medical engineer Dr Ryan Stone on her first space mission aboard fictitious Shuttle Explorer's STS-157. A small team, most notable of which is the veteran astronaut Matt Kowalski, accompanies her, but their mission is soon devastated when a Russian missile destroys a defunct satellite that causes a chain reaction of destructive debris. This leaves Dr Stone and Kowalski floating in space, disconnected from the Earth and with little chance of survival. The film follows the two as they struggle to make their way to other space stations in the hope that they will be able to make their way back to Earth by using one of their space capsules.

Gravity was praised by commercial filmmaker James Cameron as “the best space film ever done” (quoted in Hill, 2013), and has already been flagged as a promising contender for the 2014 Academy Awards in multiple categories—specifically for its ground-breaking and innovative visual effects, cinematography, and Cuarón’s own directing (which won him the Best Director award at the 2014 Golden Globes and at the Director’s Guild of America awards). The film has already been honoured at the 2013 Venice Film Festival, where it won the Future Film Digital Award and since grossed over six-hundred-and-seventy million dollars worldwide⁴⁷. The film boasts top Hollywood talents (in the form of its lead actress Sandra Bullock and co-star George Clooney), award-winning and innovative special effects, and has managed to amass more than six times its production costs. However *Gravity*, like *The Tree of Life*, has remained somewhat of a mystery, and its barebones structure and innovative camerabatics and worldview invites philosophical contemplation and interpretation beyond what critics and theorist are currently able to fully articulate or express. Such new technologies require a new way of thinking about their effects, not merely ‘demystifying’ their behind-the-scenes workings—beyond artfulness and aesthetics.

⁴⁷ As of 15 January 2014, according to Box Office Mojo, Alfonso Cuarón’s *Gravity* has grossed \$675,114,185 worldwide (Source: www.boxofficemojo.com).

Kristin Thompson (2013), in her lengthy dissection of the film, stated that: “[I]t is hard to think of another mass-audience film in recent years that has so thoroughly departed from the current technological and stylistic conventions of mainstream filmmaking”, calling it an “experimental blockbuster” that contains “unconventional aspects” (Thompson, 2013). Hoberman (2013) agrees, saying that *Gravity* is “[g]enuinely experimental” and is “blatantly predicated on the formal possibilities of film”. The film’s various unconventional and experimental facets have led many critics to label *Gravity*, as Richard Corliss (2013) did, as the “glorious future of cinema” that showcases “groundbreaking technical ingenuity”—an achievement that has subsequently earned the film, in addition to nine other categories, an Oscar nomination for Best Visual Effects and Best Cinematography. The film’s “vertiginous” imaginings, in the words of *Rolling Stone*’s Logan Hill (2013), warrants the film’s selection in this research as Frampton’s filmosophy calls directly to such neoteric and progressive cinematic events.

The film’s unprecedented technical wizardry produced pictures that exposed the limits of our current, more technical, cine-vocabulary, and the commentaries thus far have failed to submit any meaningful elucidation (beyond the artful objectification of the image and ‘real world’ causal conditions) on the nature and consequences of these original works *as experienced*.

While many film writers have consistently commented on the film’s experimental qualities—*Variety*’s Scott Foundas (2013) avant-garde—few journalists/critics have attempted to, or convincingly, described the actual emotive effect/philosophical significance of these creative cinematic utterances. Surprisingly, the overwhelming tendency was to, instead, demystify the new technology (rather than describe the drama effect these new ‘thoughts’ produce) by ‘revealing’ the behind-the-scenes workings of Cuarón’s camerabatics, or to debate how accurate it was to real life by crude and unfitting comparisons. Mike Seymour (2013), for example, produces an impressively detailed and exhausting account of the film’s technological construction for *fxguide* that reportedly blows *Gravity*’s back door⁴⁸ off its new-age hinges. Other articles seek ‘extra-textual’⁴⁹ comfort in the form of probing

⁴⁸ Frampton writes that “[w]here technician writing opens a back-door to the film, conceptual-ising the film as thinking opens the front-door” (Frampton, 2006:175).

⁴⁹ ‘Extra-textual’ is term coined here to describe all indirect and invasive forces that may inhibit access to a film’s experiential qualities and its unique philosophical potential; to information that exists *outside* the cinematic event itself—knowledge that may be interesting in its own right, but invades and

the film's 'all-knowing' director who is able to comfortingly "Answer All Your Questions" (Lee, 2013); Christian critics have, once again, gone one holier, claiming that *Gravity* clearly "celebrates the presence of God in the universe" (Child, 2013); while others theorist and writers seem content to persist in exclusive narrative deconstructions—all of which orbit the film's poetic particularities, but also managed to circumnavigate, and avoid articulating, the consequences of those sublime scenes on thought itself.

Frampton reminds us that descriptions "should not wound the film, should not cut the film's surface to reveal its technological workings, but should open-up the image to reveal its thinkings, *its belief about the people and objects it has gained*⁵⁰" (Frampton, 2006:175). Critics and writers who are able to acknowledge *Gravity*'s awe-inspiring sound-images, but who remain steadfast in retardant readings of such unique enunciations, risk associating the innovation on display as simply a social success, rather than pillars to a possible future: an, obviously popular, sign of thoughts to come. Instead of dutiful deconstructions, which Frampton lobbies against, we should, instead, "attempt to reflect the film in power and passion – listening to a film's thinkings, and *pointing* to the power that it has" (Frampton, 2006:181).

This research values those specific moments and philosophical ideas in both films that have caused them to be identified as acclaimed and curious features, and will seek to identify those distinct and progressive cinematic utterances for the purpose of exploring them as emergent and 'fluid film-thoughts'. These films are explored and considered through filmosophy's mandate towards an "organic philosophy of film", one that "allows the filmgoer to experience the film as a drama issuing from itself, rather than taking them further outside the experience to the actions of authors, directors or invisible narrators" (Frampton, 2006:7). Therefore, while *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* have been identified as socially, technically, and artistically significant and innovative, what this research prompts are interpretations and understandings of the films themselves by philosophical considering them as 'cinematic experiences'—as film lives lived, felt, and *thought of/through* rather than over-valuing secondary

detracts from the pure audio-visual utterances of the artwork in question (e.g. the actual technology used, authorial influences, actor acknowledgements, etc.).

⁵⁰ Frampton frequently italicizes key words and sentences in his manifesto. In all instances where Frampton and others are quoted the italics are the respected author's emphases.

sources and fuelling fantasies of authorship and deconstruction that, filmsophy argues, detracts from and displaces the very film-going experience in question.

LITERATURE REVIEW:
Philosophy of Film and Filmosophy

Philosopher Jerry Goodenough (2005:1) notes four excuses a “philosopher *qua* philosopher” might employ to explain their trips to the cinema. First, the film-thinker might wilfully engage with the “Cinematic Experience”—an umbrella term used to bracket the social, technological, and phenomenological processes and aspects involved in film-going (Goodenough, 2005:1-2). The intellectually curious mind would invest their attention towards the ‘film phenomena’—as the nexus between sociological and technological film features—as well as attempt to understand the perceptual and cognitive activities at play both during and after the event.

Goodenough (2005:1-2) elicits Plato’s classic ‘cave’ thought experiment to illustrate how philosophy and film might intersect; suggesting that philosophers may seek the analogy between “the masses [filmgoers] immersed in the darkness [theatre]” and the “chained inhabitants of Plato’s cave”, or attempt to problematise the “whole concept of motion pictures” (cinema’s very constituting characteristics)—as seen by, for example, with Derek Jarman’s homochromatic *Blue* (1993).

Goodenough’s proposed first order of philosophical film-being is broad and inclusive, and functions as an ‘outside-in’ mode of inquiry. However Rybin (2009:45), in his summation of Goodenough’s approach, adds that “ontology” has always been a pivotal consideration of the philosophically-minded filmgoer, and that Goodenough does not go far enough in distinguishing theories of cinematic being (derived from the experience) from the accompanying epistemological paradigms. Rybin subsequently splits Goodenough’s first order into two logical tensions found within the “Cinematic Experience”, including both critical paradigmatic epistemologies (the ‘sociology’ axiom) *and* the medium’s unorthodox problematising of ‘film-being’. Rybin (2009:47) suggests that this ontological node “grows naturally” from Goodenough’s opening descriptors, and is less a complete revision than a nuanced extrapolation along both

the epistemological and ontological axis of philosophical film being (i.e. to represent both film's unique mode of being and its critical reception within a given sociological space).

Goodenough's second and third reasons for why a philosopher might explore cinema depends on a given feature's appropriateness for philosophical interpretation (its 'goodness of fit'); prompting essential questions regarding being and consciousness through either *explicit* (as subject matter) or *implicit* (as theme or subtext) means. Films, according to Goodenough (2005:2-3), have the capacity to contain implicit philosophical cues that "may illustrate philosophical themes or issues" [e.g. *The Matrix* (1999), *Avatar* (2009), *Blade Runner* (1982)] or make their philosophical interests explicitly known by incorporating philosophical themes "into the action" and discussing them openly [e.g. *Waking Life* (2001), *Wittgenstein* (1993), *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2013), *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?* (2013)].

Implicit content in films are often cited by philosopher to illustrate a particular philosophical issue or question; they aim to help teach core principles to students by exposing them to the notion that films come to us with *a priori* knowledge that is 'accessed' through a sort of philosophical archaeology. Many theorists have, for example, demonstrate that *The Matrix* illustrates various philosophical concepts such as Jean Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulation", Descartes's "Evil Demon", and other philosophical inquiries into the realms of metaphysics, ethics, freewill, existentialism, and so on⁵¹.

Extracting information from films for philosophical dissection is common practice and is increasingly becoming part of the discourse for contemporary cinematic consumption. *The Matrix* (1999) is a particularly popular and obvious choice for modern philosophers and cinephiles⁵², and the film's success and cinematic importance has resulted in it being regarded as contemporary "cultural currency" (Goodenough, 2005:2). Given the film's prevalence and commercial success philosophers have been able to faithfully call upon film's unique audio-visual utterances (e.g. the film's innovative use of technology to create, what has come to be called, 'bullet time') to explore philosophical perspectives on the nature of our world and its sensations (the 'simulated reality' hypothesis, for example, and the 'brain in a

⁵¹ See, for example, *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (Irwin, 2002).

⁵² The term "cinephile" is used here to describe someone who is passionate and enthusiastic about cinema and its surrounding culture.

vat' thought experiment). Seen in this manner—and given the importance of visual media in modern society, as arguably the “greatest intellectual and spiritual influence of our age” (Balázs, 1945:17)—films act as approachable points of access that provide contemporary thinkers with, what Wittgenstein might call, an ‘adequate diet of examples’ from which to launch philosophical discussions and debate.

Films that can be considered implicit in their philosophical orientation, those that take the topic in a “serious or central way” (Goodenough, 2005:2), are far less common. These films deal with philosophical content openly and are explicit in their aims and course, they unambiguously present an experience that consciously attends to whatever philosophical assertion is being described or argued. Derek Jarman’s avant-garde drama *Blue* (1993), for example, unequivocally posits that the filmgoer contemplate the socio-political context of Jarman’s hardships through memory—as a type of philosophical ‘shock tactic’, a type of aesthetic anarchy, that explicitly endows its cinematic utterances with meditations on an ostracised being-in-a-world. *Blue* is an extreme case that is perilously positioned on the cusp of cinema’s event horizon; it contains a jarring homochromatic blue abyss that dreamily transfigures filmic reality almost beyond what can be recognised as ‘film’ (as containing *both* substantial audio and visual components). But other examples exist that are less revolutionary. Michel Gondry’s conversations with Noam Chomsky in the animated documentary *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?* (2013) and Slavoj Žižek’s thoughts in *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012), for example, are both explicitly philosophical and naturally less threatening in terms of the pressure they place on the medium’s primary mode of cinematic identification.

Goodenough’s final category argues that film can function “*as philosophy*” itself, and is somehow “*doing philosophy*” (Goodenough, 2005:3); films can operate on a level that “functions as something more than an index of already articulated philosophical concerns” (Rybin, 2009:47). The cinematic experience is an *active* event that problematises, questions, and advances philosophical thought through means *exclusive* to the medium: “philosophy accompanies both the post-filmic reflection upon film experience [as expressed by three approaches already discussed] but is also involved with the actual viewing of the film” (Rybin, 2009:68).

This final category is the ‘hard problem’ facing film-philosophy, and one that Frampton’s filmsophy seeks to satisfy. However, before arriving at filmsophy’s

radical neo-mindings on this important ‘film-as-philosophy’ discussion, it is necessary to further critique and explore the correlation to include a more nuanced cartography of the borderlands between philosophy—as meaningful intellectual activity—and the cinematic event as experienced.

The Bold Thesis

Thus this research moves towards, what Paisley Livingston describes as, the “bold thesis”; the argument that before film can be said to be *doing* philosophy, its philosophical output (i.e. the knowledge or insight it would potentially yield—its ‘philosophical significance’) should be evaluated in terms of whether or not those emergent propositions came *exclusively* from cinematic means⁵³ (Livingston, 2006:11).

Livingston does, through his argument, ultimately support to a more modest stance between the relationship between philosophy and film, observing that:

Films can provide vivid and emotionally engaging illustrations of philosophical issues, and when sufficient background knowledge is in place, reflections about films can contribute to the exploration of specific theses and arguments, sometimes yielding enhanced philosophical understanding.

Smuts (2009:409) concurs, saying “some films can make innovative, independent philosophical contributions by cinematic means”. Smuts succinctly paraphrases Livingston’s argument and then proceeds to evaluate the thesis regarding its ‘artistic’ and ‘epistemological’ criterion. The former addresses the “*exclusive* capacity of the cinematic medium⁵⁴” (Livingston, 2006:11), while a film’s ability to create new knowledge (epistemology) involves assessing to what degree it produce “innovative” and “independent” contributions to the field of philosophy (Smuts, 2009:411).

It is along these axes (epistemological and ontological) that both Smuts and Livingston argue that the validity of film *as* philosophy must be appropriately

⁵³ ‘Exclusive cinematic means’ addresses “the cinematic medium’s exclusive capacities involves the possibility of providing an internally articulated, non-linguistic, visual expression of content...Only the cinema can provide moving images of past events, and such images can be informative in ways other representations cannot” (Livingston, 2006:12).

⁵⁴ Smuts (2009:410) does note that “exclusive to cinema” is ambiguous, and may refer to claims regarding the “putative philosophical contributions or merely about the means” and that this distinction “requires careful elaboration, since it marks the distinction between a super bold and a merely bold thesis”.

considered. Livingston's 'bold thesis' is a medium-specific argument that remains largely sceptical of film's capacity to develop *unique* philosophical insight—a stance that Smuts attempts to defuse by arguing that film can make philosophical contributions through “paradigmatic cinematic means” rather than questioning if “film as a medium has some unique abilities, unavailable to other media, whereby it can do philosophy” (Smuts, 2009:410).

Like Goodenough, Smuts is largely interesting in, broadly speaking, “narrative artworks” (Smuts, 2009:410), and does not attempt to examine how cinema might possess unique characteristics that can be said to be *doing* philosophical work. While deviating somewhat from Livingston's original claims, Smuts argues that, in the strictest sense, the “*unique* philosophical abilities of the cinematic art form” would constitute a type of “*super bold thesis*”; that holds that “films are able to make philosophical contributions that cannot be roughly approximated in other media” (Smuts, 2009:410). Smuts' “super bold thesis” is assumed under Frampton's neologisms of the filmind and fluid film-thinking, but what is important to note here is that both Goodenough and Smuts recognise how problematic, perhaps largely unnecessary, it is to attempt to reduce the ‘reliability’ of philosophical enquiry to specific linguistic qualifiers and cognitive mode of contemplation.

Less contention can be found along Smuts' “epistemological criterion”, the axis of cinematic experience that seeks qualification of philosophical output against its innovative thinkings, as well as the degree to which those thoughts are independent of some “interpretation or imported, pre-existing philosophical context” (Smuts, 2009:411). The first tenet, innovation, simply states that philosophical output of a given investigation helps “distinguish between the mere illustration of a pre-existing philosophical concept and the presentation of a new idea”—a point that the American philosopher Noël Carroll agrees with as we attempt to evaluate the extent to which a film is able to contribute towards philosophy (Smuts, 2009:411). Smuts reminds us that few, uniquely philosophical, claims would be able to defend against the innovation criterion, and that the bold thesis should, thus, not set a “minimal standard” of philosophising and be viewed rather as “a claim about the philosophical potential of film” (Smuts, 2009: 411).

Innovation is closely tied to Livingston's second consideration, that of independence, in that a film can "provide a historically innovative⁵⁵ contribution to knowledge regarding some philosophical topic, doing so in a significantly independent or autonomous manner" and "would not be dependent on a subsequent paraphrase" (Livingston, 2006:11). However Smuts (2009:411) indicates that "[a]ll philosophical work that the cinematic dramatization could perform would be dependent on the un-cinematic, linguistic elements" and reformulates this epistemological criterion to attend to paradigmatic cinematic means (e.g. montage, editing, framing, etc.).

One such area might include new cinematic technologies, advances in production technologies (e.g. *Gravity*'s 'lightbox' and 'Iris'⁵⁶) and reception (*The X*'s multi-screen 'ScreenX'⁵⁷). These types of "medium-specific" innovations advance the cinema's "ability to produce paradigms powerful enough to conceptualize the technological present and future" (Gaines, 2013:77). We should, therefore, take caution when considering Livingston's 'independent means' in the strictest sense, or risk a reductionism that encourages theoretical sterility by confining philosophical contributions to 'within' the cinematic event.

The Problem of Paraphrase

In *What happened to the Philosophy of Film History?* (2013) Gaines claims that "[t]he question as to whether there once was, never was, always has been, or can be a philosophy of film history depends on what we now want to see as having happened or not having happened in our field". This approach to "media-specific" histories is considered under Frampton's filmsophical approach, and concurs with Don Crafton's claim that "there is no boundary between history and theory" (Gaines, 2013:71). Gaines's comments on the philosophy of film history addresses what Livingston calls the two 'horns of dilemma'—the "insoluble problem of paraphrase" (Livingston, 2006:12).

⁵⁵ "An achievement is historically innovative only if it is new relative to the history of the relevant tradition" (Livingston, 2006:11).

⁵⁶ To create the innovative and fluid camera movements found in Alfonso Cuarón *Gravity*, a special "lightbox" was constructed which contained "a large array of LEDs—essentially like an inward facing screens of giant television screens" while the actors were shot by a unique robotic camera rig called "Iris" (Seymour, 2013).

⁵⁷ "ScreenX" is a new technology that was showcased at the 18th Busan International Film Festival through Kim Ji-woon's short action film *The X*. It incorporates three screens to produce a uniquely 270-degree vision to further enhance the immersive qualities of the medium.

Simply put, the problem of paraphrase⁵⁸ logically arises when the criteria (i.e. artistic and epistemological) of the bold thesis are met, and thus brings into question both the reliability and validity of the philosophical contribution being claimed. In other words, if we submit to the hypothesis that film can *do* philosophy (i.e. make philosophical contributions through exclusive cinematic means) then the resultant philosophical knowledge should be able to be stated (Smuts, 2009:411). If we are unable to articulate a film's philosophical insight, then the validity of the bold thesis comes critically into question (i.e. that film can actually *do* philosophy) and, conversely, if that insight can in fact be stated, further reasons are then required in order to fortify the reliability of those statements to determine whether the knowledge is exclusively dependant on the medium's linguistic parameters (Smuts, 2009:411).

Both Smuts and Livingston are cognisant of the challenges of paraphrase imposes, and attempt to re-address different aspects of their bold thesis in order to prevent cinema's potential to philosophise from being trivialised, dismantled or dismissed entirely. Livingston (2006:15) ultimately⁵⁹ endorses "giving up on both the exclusivity and strong epistemic constraints", arguing that:

[I]t is more plausible to recognize film's remarkable capacity to quote, re-present, or "nest" a wide range of other media and expressive devices, including verbal discourse, pictures, bodily gestures, theatrical decors, the expressivity of the human face, music, various cultures' communicative codes or symbol systems, and so on.

In attempting to soften some of theoretical rigidity that comes directly, and logically, attached to the bold thesis, Livingston moves to reinstate cinema's intrinsic and artistic capacity for influence (as the 'nest' in which multiple language signifies inhabit to produce and convey philosophical meaning), and affirms the agency and responsibility on the philosophical expositor:

The burden of proof rests on the shoulders of anyone who comes to suspect that there exists a new and controversial source of philosophical knowledge...[A] philosophically-oriented interpreter of a film must take up the task of importing a well-defined 'problematique' if aspects of the film's thematic and narrative design

⁵⁸ Livingston (2006:13) notes his use of the term 'paraphrase' as "the result of an attempt to provide an interpretative statement or thinking through of that item's meanings. To convey an interpretation of some item's philosophically relevant meanings one must employ linguistically mediated philosophical back-ground assumptions and arguments".

⁵⁹ Livingston's two other rejected lines of thought were: "(1) giving up on exclusivity while maintaining strong epistemic requirements" and "(2) maintaining exclusivity while giving up on strong epistemic requirements" (Livingston, 2006:15).

are to resonate with sufficiently sophisticated and well-articulated theses or arguments (Livingston, 2006:13,15).

Smuts, however, is more concerned with redefining the claim of innovation; the bold thesis' condition that a film must produce a "new idea or argument" and the constriction it places on what constitutes "philosophical knowledge" (Smuts, 2009:412). Here a philosophical contribution is rearticulated to include "innovative reasoning" rather than "merely counting a 'new idea' or argument" (Smuts, 2009:412). Smuts (2009:412) substitutes "argument" for "reasons to believe", a semantic seclusion that, Smuts claims, diffuses the problem of paraphrase by accepting the medium's communicative parameters (as existing within certain medium-specific linguistic qualifiers), and by examining what it is exactly philosophers *do* and how.

Thought experiments are one such mental tool philosophers (as well scientists and filmmakers) summon when critically considering a particular phenomenon or idea, and act as essential simulations of the variables and ideas being questioned. They are the intellectual and creative tools used as either "intuition pumps" or, by enacting appropriate analogies⁶⁰, a tool recently employed by Nathan Andersen in *Shadow Philosophy: Plato's Cave and Cinema* (2014) that states that "to take film seriously is also to engage with the fundamental question of philosophy". By re-examining the bold thesis in this manner (as a type of 'metaphilosophy'), Smuts argues for a more liberal approach that largely avoids the issue of paraphrase by acknowledging the medium's specific nature and being, including the intellectual tools and trademarks used by philosopher's themselves.

Filmosophy

In the previous section Goodenough (through Rybin) and Livingston's (supported by Smuts) approaches to film *as* philosophy were reviewed in order to establish a theoretical territory, as a brief overview of two contemporary meditations on the overlap between philosophy and cinema. It was shown that there are at least four ways a philosopher might engage or immerse themselves in the "Cinematic Experience", leading to a final mode (film *as* philosophy) that was then linked to a discussion on Livingston's 'bold thesis'. Both approaches engage the seemingly natural 'mixing' of cinema and philosophy, and argue that it is indeed possible and

⁶⁰ "A standard analogical argument suggests that because two things are alike in some ways they are probably alike in other important ways." (Smuts, 2009:415)

enriching to critically question philosophy's attraction to the screen and the medium's intrinsic lobbying for philosophical constitution.

The following section moves towards, what Daniel Frampton (2006:183) introduces as, 'filmosophy': the study of "film as thinking". Filmosophy is interested in "the philosophical question of how film creates the meaning filmgoers feel, beyond mechanics and creative intention"; the filmgoer begins with the authentic "sound-image experience" to reveal the "pure poetry of cinema" before the encounter is "mangled by contextual knowledge" (Frampton, 2006:75). Filmosophy argues that films "can philosophize, and can do so with their own means of expression which extend beyond philosophy as a linguistic activity" (Schmerheim, 2008:111); thus, filmosophy can be said to be a natural extension of both Goodenough's final mode of philosophical film being, Livingston's 'bold thesis', and Smuts' super bold thesis as Frampton (2006:213) does claim, rather radically at the end of his manifesto, film to be "the beginning *and the future* of our thought".

Central to Frampton's thesis is the 'filmind', a neologism that provides a "conceptual understanding of the origin of film's actions and event" that "wishes to place the origin of film-thinking 'in' the film itself" (Frampton, 2006:73). When considered under Livingston's bold thesis, filmosophy declares that film inherently engages in 'doing' or 'thinking' about philosophy; that film's unique and formal constitutions are able to generate *innovative* philosophical insights that are *independently* realised. Whereas Smuts and Livingston discuss and problematise a 'soft' or modest bold thesis, Frampton's approach stresses the "unique philosophical abilities of the cinematic art form" (Smuts, 2009:410) and that "at the 'end' of philosophy lies film" (Frampton, 2006:183). Contemporary philosophers such as Noam Chomsky (*Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?*) and Slavoj Žižek (*The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*) have also shared and presented their thinkings via audio-visual means; while modern filmmakers (e.g. Terrence Malick, Alfonso Cuarón, Béla Tarr, Derek Jarman) continue to explore the medium's unique means—its poetic and innovative production potential—to affect philosophical contemplations:

In the last century it might be said that philosophy became filmic and film became philosophical...Filmosophy is the study of film as thinking, and thus extends into the study of 'philosophical' film-thinking, as well as the philosophy of the filmind and film-thinking. (Frampton, 2006:183)

Filmosophy's filmind is "another kind of mind, its own mind, a new mind" (Frampton, 2006: 73), one that has been 'designed' with the present cinematic climate *and* future in mind. According to Frampton (2006:76), film's new organ contains two aspects, or, constituting dimensions to consider: "the film-being that creates the basic film-world of recognisable people and objects" (film-world creation) and "the film-being that designs and refigures this film-world" (film-thinking). These two hemispheres will be presented and discussed to work towards Frampton's ambitious and progressive submission of 'fluid film-thinking'—those 'state-of-the-art' philosophical and poetic utterances that remind us that film can, and continually, *think* anything.

Film-world Creation

Filmosophy is the study of film *as* thinking, however before we can begin to discuss what *kinds* of thinking film can be said to be doing, it is necessary to theoretically account for the worlds (or 'spaces') that informs film-being. Frampton (2006:77) states the filmind "creates everything we see and hear in a film", it is responsible for the audio-visual sensations and cues that we acknowledge as forming part of the film-going experience. These auditory and visual phenomena coalesce and constitute a kind of 'filmind's eye', conscious cues that bring about a clockwork universe of dramatic and intellectual interest.

In *Towards A Theory of Film Worlds* (2008) film theorist Daniel Yacavone claims film worlds are "complex object-experiences with both symbolic/cognitive and affective dimensions" (2008:83) and that such spaces are "immersive and transformational" by nature (2008:105). These complex cinematic worlds are unique, incommensurable, and organic as the filmgoer's essential 'being-in-a-world' is steered by the spatial and temporal arrangement of filmic elements. Similarly, cinema, according to Plate (2008:5), forms part of the "symbol-creating apparatus of culture, yet it can also aspire to more, to world-encompassing visions of the nomos and cosmos". To Plate, arguing towards a critical religious film theory, film brings new worlds into existence, and that the act of 'worldmaking' harnesses the "spaces and times that are available in the psychical world" (Plate, 2008:6).

These new worlds, once created/presented, are not static stills of a lifeless universe, but instead new filmic realities that are "constantly being maintained

through rebuilding, reconstruction, recombining” (Plate, 2008:8). This constant ‘re-creation’ is what Frampton (2006:80) describes when he suggests that the filmind “simultaneously creates and *refigures* the film-world”; Frampton (2006:82) takes Plate’s descriptors further by attributing this continual reconstitution to film-thinking:

[T]he filmind creates a world which it then re-thinks (or sometimes fluidly re-recreates), that the film-world contains ostensible objects for the filmgoer, and that film-thinking is enacted through the filmind's intention towards those objects.

Yacavone (2008:83) contends that a theory of film-worlds must “address both their creation and objective existence and their subjective experience by viewers” beyond its “its represented content or setting, or whatever formal and thematic aspects”. To this filmosophy views the film-world as being constituted *through* the filmind’s thinkings, and not simply the cinematic ‘space’ in which characters and objects exists: “Thinking is the ground of the world of film, and the ground of the life of filmosophy” (Frampton, 2006:193). Plate and Frampton emphasis the creational (and re-creational) potential of film-worlds⁶¹, and in filmosophy world-making arrives at our senses through film-thinking (Frampton, 2006:80). A photograph is not able to ‘re-think’ its worldview, the angle, colour, characters, objects, lighting, etc. are frozen in a time and space. Film, on the other hand, is constantly re-thinking its world through spatial/temporal movements: it may show a new angle on a scene, bring characters in and out of the frame, jump to a new perspective instantly, emphasis action with sounds or silence, and so on. Frampton (2006:80), however, notes that the “concept of film-world creation is simply there as a background idea, available for when fluid film-thinking films arrive at our senses”. Film-world creation describes the conditions of film-being, and not necessarily the evolution or arrangement of those conditions for effect.

Basic Film-thinking

Having arrived in some version of space-time (through film-world creation), filmosophy puts forth three intermingling modes of film-thinking that correspond to a film’s ‘mindfulness’—its conscious regard of characters and events. These three categories (basic, formal, and fluid) are, to varying degrees, active processes of the

⁶¹ “The filmind and the film-world may be strictly one and the same thing, but film-thinking is (most often) realized, correctly, as an intention towards recognisable objects (characters, sunsets, guns)” (Frampton, 2006:78).

filmind that never stop thinking, never stops *being*, and “thinks with its beginning and end ‘in mind’” (Frampton, 2006:84). Basic film-thinking is the “unique base design to the structure and appearance of the film-world” as “composing, ordering, 'choosing' images and sounds” (Frampton, 2006:82-83). Here, rudimentary elements (e.g. aspect-ratio, colour, selection) of film-being are isolated to account for the filmind’s ability to stabilise its creations within the most fundamental conditions of cinematic existence.

This level of cinematic cognition, like film-world creation, describes the essential nature of the image and its arrangement. It is the “coherent design of the base film-world”, the “default *attitude* the filmind has about its world and characters” (Frampton, 2006: 82). It is not the order *per se*, but the act of *ordering*, not the type of shot, but the shot’s existence itself that basic film-thinking describes: the unobtrusive “composing, ordering, 'choosing' images and sounds” that creatively structures the event through “almost neutral decision-making” (Frampton, 2006:83).

When considered under the bold thesis’ ‘exclusive’ conditions, basic film-thinking is the primary point of departure from which cinema can be said to possess medium-specific traits. It is our entry into critically considering the creator’s presence in the pictures and the conscious baseline from which more formal (potentially fluid) utterances arise. Basic film-thinking structures and creates a “united space-time film-world that is really very dissimilar to the real world” (Frampton, 2006:83); but since the film-world is dynamic and malleable, basic film-thinking is seen as simply the raw and unrefined presentational dimensions of a constantly shifting and morphing film-world. The canvased ‘worldview’ basic film-thinking describes arrives at our cinematic senses *through* formal and fluid film-thinking, and is so retrospectively considered, or else remains quintessentially surreal.

Formal Film-thinking

Frampton’s formal film-thinking, the second level, is best understood as an extension to more classic schools of stylistic analysis, specifically discussions around film form and *mise en scène*⁶². Frampton associates this type of thinking to traditional

⁶² Gibbs (2002:5), in his discussion of visual style, defines ‘*mise en scène*’ as “the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised” and it “encompasses both what the audience can see, and the way in which we are invited to see it”. Here Gibbs is addresses the aesthetic, or pictorial, value and function of filmic images; artful elements formally arranged.

elements in formal film production (lighting, camera angles and framing, actors and objects, colour, sound, cinematography, and so on); as that which “surrounds’ recognisable people and objects”. Frampton does present six basic “fields of film composition” (image, colour, sound, frame, movement and edit-shifts—essentially *adjuncts* to *mise en scène*) that are used to show how “general film form is thinking”; from here though, Frampton’s more progressive thesis of fluid film-thinking emerges as a fascinating re-creational force, one that dramatically “tears and rips into it [the film-world], morphing it from within” (2006:116, 88).

Formal film-thinking differs from, although is intrinsically tied to, fluid film-thinking. The former is the process by which the film-world is constantly re-created (from the outside in as it ‘surrounds’ visual elements); whereas with the fluid change emerges from *within* to dramatically transfigure those formal elements in service of, potentially, more “poetic and transcendent functions” (Frampton, 2006:90).

Fluid Film-thinking

Fluid film-thinking represents filmosophy’s ‘highest’ level of conceptualised cognition, a dynamic thoughtfulness that “alters the basic film-world from the inside out”; this, according to Frampton (2006:88), is “re-creative film-thinking”.

Fluid film-thinking arrives at our senses when the images and sounds (Frampton’s ‘sound-images’) ‘shift’, or re-imagine, the film’s own and immediate regard. Moment to moment the filmgoer may not be fully aware that the filmind has thought a fork in the narrative road (overlooked, perhaps, by falsely attributing the causal conditions of cinematic progression to ‘intertextuals’, whereby character conflict and drama are considered the ‘active agents’), for example. And if perceived, that change may then result in a type of cognitive dissonance in the filmgoer, one that strains the suspension of disbelief for effective entertainment. This type of film-thinking is adaptive, sometimes reticent, and describes the synthesis of the film’s formal arrangement and its perpetual potential.

There is a moment in *Gravity*, to briefly illustrate, when mission specialist Dr Ryan Stone is drifting helplessly away from the filmgoer; the camera no longer follows her closely and remains ‘stationary’ in a point in space. Formal film-thinking would have the filmgoer expect the camera to move back towards her through space, or perhaps cutaway to re-frame, so that she could, once again, occupy the majority of

the film's regard. Instead, Dr Stone's estranged body slows down and then, unexpectedly, steadily starts to move/spin back towards the camera. Such unpredictable and surreal distortions are, filmsophically considered, revolutionary re-creations of the film-world; they are serendipitous shifts of a shared consciousness, recognisable only through dialectic consideration of cinema's own essential possibilities and the filmgoer's engagement.

Such surreal distortions would not have been 'formally' possible when considered under more traditional modes of film formalism. Dr Stone was moving away along the z-axis, and then— absent an explicit explanation and any pictorial force intervening—moves back 'towards' the camera. The film's spatial thinkings here are morph, distorted in such a way as to 're-create', or re-think, the normative cinematic principles of coherence and form. In this example, Dr Stone's motion seemingly defies Newton's laws, an ironic occurrence given the film's 'scientified' film-world and view. However this is not a creative error, nor is it an attempt to confuse the filmgoer into entertaining some form cognitive dissonance. Instead, filmsophy suggests the filmind is fluidly *re-thinking* Dr Stone's condition by transfiguring its 'worldview'. Such filmic utterances only make sense when we employ the type of filmsophising that Frampton posits, when we realise that the film is *thinking something new* via new technologies and techniques, changing and adapting to contemporary creativity and the medium's celebrated capacity for innovative thought.

Filosophy's conceptualisation of fluid thought will be explored in detail in the coming sections, and the above briefly example illustrates how filmic utterances might be considered 'fluid', organic, and even forward thinking. This is the most controversial and contested part of the filmsophy, the progressive notion that "[o]nce there were objects and cameras, now there is just film-thinking". Frampton is cautious, however, not to suggest that fluid thinking dominates the event: "[M]ost film-thinking is not as radically film-world-morphing as fluid film-thinking. Most film-thinking is formally layered over recognisably normal-looking characters and settings" (Frampton, 2006: 90- 91). Thus when considering a film's 'thinkings' we should must be aware that it is the filmind itself that we are describing, not simply flashes of liquid thought, formal prose, or the basic building blocks of film-world creation and re-creation. We must adopt a type of hermetic holism, a filmic world-

view that is as dynamic and as malleable as the society from which it arises and is received.

FILMOSOPHY CRITICISMS

Most reviewers of Frampton's *Filmosophy* immediately draw attention to its cover's claim of being "a manifesto for a radically new way of understanding cinema". Frampton's "maverick manifesto", in the words of *Screen*'s Richard Rushton, embodies "bold attempts to rescue some territory for those film scholars who like to speculate on the far-flung possibilities of cinema" (2007: 222). Frampton's Deleuzed arguments are contemporary, controversial, and have drawn fair criticism from established canons and classicists; but while filmosophy's propositions are, indeed, 'radical', they are also adaptive, inclusive and provide a compelling conceptual framework for doing philosophy.

Goodenough and Smuts tackled the problem of 'film-as-philosophy' in a pragmatic and conscientious manner. They attempted to assert philosophy's merger with cinema 'hypodermically' by pre-empting resistance and seeking an alternative entry into this new philosophical surface of cinematic enquiry. The 'bold thesis' they posit and problematise is largely a reactionary reconciliation to the intersection between the cinematic experience and philosophy. Filmosophy, however, has no desire to entertain any form of 'soft' bold thesis: "Rather it [film] must see, must seek, its own natural philosophicalness – that of revealing a new thinking, a new point of view about the world" (Frampton, 2006: 212).

Filmosophy's claims are, indeed, bold. And despite Frampton's clear and concise structuring and argumentative style, many reviewers of *Filmosophy* are skeptical as to how, exactly, filmosophy might wholly and philosophically enrich the field and our cinematic experiences. The following section seeks to present a number of consistent criticisms set against Frampton's radical manifesto in order to account, rebut, and assert some of the areas in which filmosophy has been considered theoretically and practically problematic.

Against Technicist Terms

Tony McKibbin (2007), writing for *Sense of Cinema*, notes that although filmosophy could “quite fruitfully suggest tomorrow’s world *utilising* yesterday’s news” he is hesitant to dismiss, what Frampton continually refers to as, ‘technicist’ language and descriptors. Frampton (2006: 173) argues: “Technicist descriptive terms for moving sound-images forms obstruct the possible. They ground (limit) the meaning of forms in their technical make-up – the technical term pushes a certain understanding of the meaning of that particular form” and that these terms “are empty compared to suitable concepts of poetry and form”; technological terms “*obscure[s] the possible poetic experience of film*” (Frampton, 2006: 172). Throughout Frampton’s writings he argues that in order to advance cinema towards a more poetic understanding of the filmgoing experience—and thus a greater awareness of its philosophical potential—we must explore “more suitable and poetic reference terms for moving sound-image actions of form, and that these terms can come from understanding film as a new mode of thought” (Frampton, 2006: 171).

However, Schmerheim argues that technical terms inform our background knowledge regarding film form. These descriptors “help identify precisely by which means a certain ‘film-thought’ has been achieved” and that Frampton “conflates post-viewing film analyses with accounts of a film viewing experience” (Schmerheim, 2008: 118). Schmerheim is not alone in his hesitancy to eject formal descriptions from discussions of film form and function (if it was at all possible). McKibbin (2007) continues in this vein, stating that Frampton “takes the argument too far” and proposes that such terms may still be salvaged, that film writers could “break it down in such a way that we can allow technical language not just to describe the film’s making, but also, very specifically, viewer perceptions”.

This is a valid and common criticism of filmosophy, because although Frampton justifiably indicates that certain films and moments are obviously ill-served by technical descriptions, his writings fail to convincingly produce accounts of how, exactly, one might avoid the pitfalls of technological language. Frampton himself often slips back into technical descriptors but maintains that the filmgoer should ultimately be encouraged to “*see thinking (thoughtful intention) rather than technique*” (Frampton, 2006: 175).

This research acknowledges the current, arguably unavoidable, value of technical descriptions, but shares Frampton's concern over how these descriptions struggle to adequately articulate the more expressive, and technologically progressive, aspects of modern cinema. If we are to accept and explore Frampton's manifesto on any level, academics and writers must view filmsophy's ideas as a *movement towards*⁶³ the future of film, one that does not simply abandon cinema's historical accumulation of ideas and linguistically signifiers, but registers them and part of filmsophy's inclusive foundations.

Film Interpretation

Parallel to the Framptonic 'anti-technicist' appeal is the extended criticism of filmsophical interpretation. This area of criticism suggests that Frampton is unable to successfully distinguish between the act of film going and that of interpretation. Schmerheim (2008:120) reminds us that:

Talk about film experiences is always talk post facto. Writing in film studies is an attempt to make sense of the things we experience while watching a film, in some ways also an attempt to communicate what we have experienced, what film is doing with us.

Schmerheim continues to say that Frampton "fails to see, or refuses to see, a distinction between film experience and film analysis". Schmerheim's statements suggest that the filmsophical approach to filmgoing is separated into one's prior, immediate, and post film-viewing experiences. Indeed, there is a fundamental distinction to be made between the time we spend in the cinematic cave of consciousness, and our reflections on this hermetic enslavement. The freed slave who returns to the cave to, once again, gaze upon shadows will undoubtedly be encourage to employ his new found knowledge onto the flickering forms. But does their enlightenment enrich or detract from the enchantment and totality of the images being projected? Frampton (2006:151) is worth quoting at length here as he alludes to this conundrum:

⁶³ It is worth noting that Frampton is also cautious of his own neologisms and their limitations. Throughout *Filmosophy* he encourages the reader to departure from, even re-work, filmsophy's neologisms. Suggesting, for example, that the filmind is purely conceptual and *is* strictly just the film; that 'fluid' is a description of cinematic thoughtfulness and not itself rigid or dogmatic in appearance; and even posits filmsophy as a framework—a 'conceptual ladder'—to be used then discarded accordingly. His moves away from technical language (and his calls to invite more 'poetic' interpretations with appropriate articulation) are in service to cinema's greater future and our understanding of it creative capacity.

[I]t seems somehow wrong to try and always equate film with real-life experience – the film experience is not strictly analogous to real-world audio-visual experience, and films are most certainly creating new ways of thinking and ‘perceiving’ above and beyond those of our real-life experiences. We understand film fully, not by ‘likeness to real life’, but by our adaption to a new kind of thinking.

A new kind of thinking requires new methods and approaches, a willingness to ‘re-shackle’ ourselves within the ‘cine-cave’ despite having been exposed to the technical reality of the shadowy scratches, a ‘film-worldview’ that truly values film’s artistic intentions and thinkings. To suggest Frampton is somehow subverting the spatial and temporal sites of film reception and reflection is to, quite simply, miss the point of filmosophy. Frampton *encourages* individual, personal, meditations on any given feature, but cautions against, and challenges the importance of ‘extra-textual’ intrusions (e.g. ‘real-world’ actors and auteurs, the technology used to create an effect, or even one’s own cognitive biases) when evaluating and, philosophically, interpreting a film: “Thoughtlessness is an ‘uncanny visitor’: ‘nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly, instantly...man today is in *flight from thinking*’” (Heidegger in Frampton, 2006:190). Frampton (2006:193) invokes Heidegger here as he moves towards “meditative film-thinking” that “enacts a fluidity of instincts that dwells on moments, actions, scenes, or other aspects of the film-world”.

In filmosophy meaning has a “beginning (immediately in the experience), a middle (though reflection and interpretation during and after the film), and seemingly never an end” (Frampton, 2006:167). The filmgoer is understood as an active part of the ‘mixing of consciousness’ that occurs during the cinematic event—a fusion of minds that *requires* reflection less the filmgoer be alienated, or reject the distinguishing differences between the film-world and the desired ‘real’. In this regard Frampton (2006:164) discusses “affective film-thinking” as the cognitive process that “communicates directly with a non-linguistic (perhaps subconscious) part of our minds”. To meditate on, and subsequently attach meaning to a film, is to open up the possibility of becoming fully immersed in its thinkings—to seemingly surrender pre-filmic obstructions to existing, if at all, outside the sealed theatre of cinematic experience. Film interpretation may strictly be “post facto”, but those facts must, filmosophically, be addressed *as experienced*.

To quote one of Frampton's more poetic points: "Film bleeds ideas. The rupturing of complex film-thinking creates spaces for ideas to appear" (Frampton, 2006: 165). To enlist the comforting simplicities of extra-textual interpretation (e.g. invasive authorship inferences, revealing the technical mechanics of 'the shot', hyper-contextualised ideological inferences, seeing actors over the characters they play, and so on) is to risk producing a damagingly tight tourniquet that pressures the very creativity and thought filmosophy wishes to see bleed out. We, as filmgoers, must accept the suicidal wills of the event itself and take pleasure in watching it die, in time; like the distance star we know not truly to be alive or dead, we must be dissuaded to speculate on the fantasy of a burning 'source' and the seduction of 'after-the-fact' influences. Thus to speak of film-going and film-being is to put forward a type of Heideggerian 'film-being-in-the-world' that is first 'unconditionally' experienced, then—filmosophically—meditated on.

Film-beings

Filmosophy describes film-being as "a general term for what we understand to be the origin(ator) of the images and sounds we experience" (Frampton, 2006: 27). Frampton dedicates the first half of his manifesto to exploring how films create and re-create meaning, and in the process "ultimately dismisses several traditional ways of understanding film as a being" (Schmerheim, 2008:113). These include "film as camera 'I' or virtual creator, as ghostly or absent author, or as some kind of narratological or post-narratological being" (Frampton, 2006:27); all of which wish somehow to 'locate' a film's meaning *outside* the text itself, beyond the confines of the theatre and the experiences as it were. Filmosophy rejects such approaches that infer a direct correlation between human cognition and those thoughts found in the filmind (i.e. as it moves towards film as a new form of thinking, as having *its own* 'mind').

Rushton (2008:226) is skeptical of filmosophy's eagerness to "divorce human thought from the thinking of films"; idiomatically stating that it is "akin to throwing out the baby with the bathwater". The perspective here is that Frampton's unduly rejection of these various, historically appreciated, and still supported (especially for the social consumption of filmic fodder) approaches to filmgoing undermines the very shoulders on which his filmosophy stands. Rushton (2008:226) continues: "[F]or

films may indeed ‘think better than us’, but the only thoughts they can produce which will matter to us are those that pertain to human subjects”. Rushton’s criticisms are twofold: Firstly, that by rejecting the notion that the filmind can be likened to that of the human mind, filmosophy risks alienating any meaningful interpretation that may result from filmsosophical enquiry. This is aligned with Livingston’s “problem of paraphrase”, but here Rushton is referring to filmosophy’s hyper-hermetic holism and its theoretical inability to return to the linguistic signifiers that make meaningful interpretation possible or even fruitful. Secondly, he is suspicious of Frampton’s propositions that the filmind is able to transcend human cognition, suggesting that if such a claim were true, filmosophy’s exclusiveness and rigid independence renders the concept moot in terms of how such ‘film-thinkings’ might then arrive at our senses.

This nexus is considered by Frampton as the conscious encounter between the film and the filmgoer. Because the filmind is seemingly constituted in this engagement, this ‘mixing’ of conscious intent, the debate over whether or not the filmind’s thinkings differ, or are similar, to that of human cognition is somewhat nullified. Neither the filmind nor the actual filmgoers are mutually exclusive, and it is important to remember filmosophy’s emphasis on transsubjectivity and the “unique third thought” that emerges as a product of this ‘mixing’. So while filmosophy does not dispute its hermetic heuristics, it does not recognise such observations as valid critique; and while the thoughts of the filmind may perhaps only be meaningfully understood via human cognition, Frampton, like Livingston⁶⁴, thus designates a certain degree of responsibility to the knowledgeable filmsosophical filmgoer.

Authorship

Frampton’s discussions promote a hermetic system of enquiry that campaigns for exclusivity, independence, and an unwillingness to entertain any theological or scientified quests to deconstruct its worlds beyond the pure audio-visual experience. Filmsosophical interpretation does not wish to devalue ‘extra-textual’ or transcendent influences, only to have film discussions depart from, and return to, the actual

⁶⁴ Livingston, like many others in favour of any form of cinematic connoisseurship, writes that the “philosophically-oriented interpreter of a film must take up the task of importing a well-defined problematique if aspects of the film’s thematic and narrative design are to resonate with sufficiently sophisticated and well-articulated theses or arguments” (2006:15). (See Compositional Modality on page 45 for further discussions).

cinematic event. Issues of authorship, for example, are not over-valued in filmosophy in so far as authorial signatures and other creative presences/signatures are not necessarily required, or even experientially beneficial, to film-viewing, and thus the filmosophical interpretation of a film. We do not need to know of Derek Jarman's life story to be able to appreciate dissatisfaction and challenging of social order in *Blue*—the film *itself* informs us of it by hijacking the visual spectacle and promoting the medium's auditory components. In fact, filmosophy argues that such references often detract or mislead us from meaningful meditations, a point Frampton argues here *reductico ad absurdum*: “When film events end up as assertions of author control whole stretches of film can be consigned to stylistic megalomania without the need of creative explanations” (Frampton, 2006:29).

What filmosophy attempts is to reassign the importance, or potency, of ‘real world’ creative forces (i.e. the actual filmmakers, the technologies and techniques employed, as well as the sociological site of the spectacle) to *within* the actual film, as ‘thought of’ by the filmind. Thus filmosophy dissuades convenient author-attribution biases as the source of some mythical monist interpretation of the cinematic event (e.g. claiming a director's comments, intentions, and personal histories as absolute cinematic truths. This is why, despite Luis Buñuel's proclamation that the images in *Un Chien Andalou* are random and without purpose, we can still discuss the film as being, in this case psychoanalytically, significant/meaningful). Whether it be Orson Welles' self-referential egotism as the director-actor in *A Touch of Evil* (1958) or Derek Jarman's own socio-political experiences/philosophy outside of the poetics in *Blue*, what filmosophy achieves by protecting itself from the sociological lure of authorial fantasies is a purity of film-thought. It is a non-intrusive model from which such filmmaking intentions/influences are limited to the cinematic utterances those artists create. Their effects are, instead, *felt* and *experienced* rather than attributed through non-cinematic means.

As far as filmosophy is concerned, god (i.e. the filmmaker and/or other ‘technical talents’) is indeed ‘dead’ or dying, atomised by Laplace's demon⁶⁵ and their creative life forces dispersed within the lurid film-world the filmgoer is now adrift in. Just as we do not need (or want) to *see* the technical scaffolding to interpret its effect, so then are authorial influences appropriately rendered as extra-textual; and when

⁶⁵ See The Demonic Filmind's Eye-view on page 50.

these forces do interrupt the event, it must be acknowledged that the filmgoer has drifted into a falsified cinematic fantasy. For it is not the ‘real’ filmmaker we are inferring, but the ghostly residue of an absent (or apathetic) God who no longer exerts influence or is able to hold sermon—a cinematic clockwork universe that ticks on without its long-lost maker.

Therefore film-beings in filmosophy are not in service to some seemingly estranged ‘authorial consciousness’, an off-screen or ‘invisible’ being, Booth’s ‘implied author’, or any other omnipotent grandmaster or post-narratorial omnipotent entity. Instead, filmosophy wishes, demands, “*to bring the conceptualization of film-beings back ‘into’ the film, and not suggest an external perspective*” (Frampton 2006: 38). Again, this does not mean that the filmosophical filmgoer is not interested in attributing praise or credit to the creative efforts that brought the film into being, but instead wishes “to bring creative intention back into the film, not take the filmgoer out of the film to some external invisible puppeteer” (Frampton, 2006:99). It is the view of filmosophy that valuing creativity and artistry *starts and ends* with the artwork itself; that a work of art is valued/admired through the very act of philosophical interpretation and discussion. Filmosophy thus differentiates between the sociological, technological, and philosophical spheres of cinematic influence, and embeds its efforts within the ‘site of the image’⁶⁶.

Narrative

For film critics and scholars such as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, one of most important approaches to film analysis occurs via discussions on narration—the structuring dimension of cinema that allows for stories to be conveyed in a meaningful manner. In filmosophy, however, narration is seen simply as evidence that the film *is ordered*, that it has been formed with story-telling intent and purpose. Schmerheim (2008:117) lampoons Frampton here, wryly voicing that “there do not seem to be many studies out there which specifically focus on the philosophical potential of cinematic means of expression which bypass narratological aspects”—but that is what filmosophy sets out to achieve, and does so without remorse or anxiety about its implications. Frampton argues that narrative “is not ‘suited’ to the more imagistic, poetic, sublime moments of cinema” that it “struggles

⁶⁶ See The Site of the Image on page 43.

to handle these moments” (2006:112). Similar to filmosophy’s approach to technicist terms, filmosophy views narrative as containing the potential to enact order and structure to the filmind, but that it does not inherently invoke it as the sole origin of film meaning.

Schmerheim holds the view that filmosophy is problematically ‘anti-narrative’, and that the “hidden enemy” in Frampton’s work is the centred around the crowded “Bordwell-camp” (2008:115). Frampton does view Bordwell’s structuralist approach as, like various extra-textuals discussed previously, “somewhat cold and calculating” (Frampton, 2006:106); but maintains that the filmind is “not simply concerned with articulating stories” (Frampton, 2006:112). Because filmosophy wishes to encompass cinema in its entirety, not simply narrative cinema, the theory restricts (not wholly abandons) discussions on narrative to the *functions* of the filmind. The filmind, quite clearly, “can tell stories if they so wish” and thus narration is “one result of film-thinking, a certain type of thinking, one which lines-up plot and characters to tell a story” (Frampton, 2006:113).

Just as a film might ‘choose’ to think about its technical construction (i.e. self-reflexive and self-referential features), the filmind may also engage in specific thinkings of narrative—“Cinema always narrates what the image’s movements and times make it narrate” (Deleuze quoted in Frampton, 2006:103). Filmosophy is an inclusive approach that favours theoretical breadth and depth, rather than over-valuing the sociological and technical strictures narratology promotes. Appropriate interpretations may arise from narrative, but their meaningfulness is attributed in filmosophy to the filmind itself—within its *thinkings* of filmic characters and events. Just as issues of authorship are seen as largely a sociological, extra-textual, concern, so filmosophy “wishes to reveal the complexity of film, not attempt to reduce it to norms and non-norms” (Frampton, 2006:108, 114).

This is an important distinction to make in general with regards to the criticisms against filmosophy, because while filmosophy may be skeptically treated as being a theoretically sterile approach, its scaffolding actually allows for, but also regulates, the extent and claim such invasive templates have on film interpretation. In psychoanalytical film theory, for example, film is argued to resemble, or at least made analogous to, dreams. And while filmosophy rejects this all-inclusive oneiric meta-theory of cinema, it does still allow for such insight when the filmind in question

*chooses to think like a dream*⁶⁷. Similarly, one may even argue that non-fiction forms of film (e.g. documentaries) may, perhaps, be more akin to human cognition than its fictional brethren. The point to be made here is one of intention, that the filmind has the capacity to enact various forms of thinking, of which narrative, dream, authorship, and so on are included. The question, philosophically, is not whether or not a given feature is narratively structure or not, but rather that there *is* structure and how the film is thinking about its own ordering and presentation.

Application and Examples

Generally speaking, despite the heavy criticisms against Frampton's *Filmosophy* most reviewers of his work are cautiously optimistic about its future course, but remain largely unconvinced due to lack of engaging and detailed examples and case studies. Rushton, who perhaps presents one of the more balanced critiques of Frampton's effort, concludes his review of *Filmosophy* for *Screen* by saying that one of most disappointing areas is Frampton's actual analysis of films (Rushton, 2007:223). Similarly, Schmerheim (2008:119) admits his own "inability to get Frampton's point in his film examples". Frampton does, however, in his discussion of film-thinking, dedicate a fair word count to presenting and discussing a healthy batch of films by such notably directors as Bela Tarr, Michael Haneke, and brothers Jean Pierre and Luc Dardenne, but critics have remained unmoved and largely left wanting.

Schmerheim (2008:122), in one of the more damning and dismissive reviews, rounds out his berating of Frampton's *Filmosophy* by contemptuously adding: "I'd rather go to the next fine movie around the corner than to witness the next round of this intellectual war". Again, if Frampton was able to elicit any excitement in the minds of film writers and philosophers, such energy was diffused by, what many perceive as, a skimpy diet of examples that failed to persuade. However to say that Frampton is engaged in some form of "intellectual war" is sharp, a snappy hook on which Schmerheim hangs his own reluctance to evaluate Frampton's ideas and explore their potential. Filmosophy, on the contrary, is an openly unifying movement, one that is more aligned to Wilson's thinkings in *Consilience: The Unity of*

⁶⁷ See Dream-Shifts Big and Small on page 68.

Knowledge (1998) than that of some authoritarian manifesto promoting rigidity and submission:

Of course the regular description and the filmsosophical one may be revolving around similar meanings, but the filmsosophical one, with its unifying of form and intention, leads to further possible interpretations. *The unifying of form and content using the concept of film-thinking creates an integral whole for the filmgoer.* (Frampton, 2006:101)

This “integral whole” that is being created for the filmgoer is not phenomenological world altering, it is *world revealing*, the conceptual planchette that is already in play exerting and absorbing conscious forces that came before its placement on the field. And if filmsosophy has but one truly uncontested ‘founding principles’, it is that going to fine features (around whatever corner) with the intent to enjoy means you are on the right track—whether you believe in thinking or not. But perhaps Schermerheim is ahead of the game here, for Frampton’s open invitation also comes with, like all secret messages with a specific reader in mind, a ‘self-destruct’ button of sorts:

[Filmosophy is a] conceptual ladder, to be climbed then kicked away. Film does not technically need a filmind – filmsosophy is not an empirical investigation – it is a decision by filmgoers whether to use this concept when experiencing a film. (Frampton, 2006:99)

This research is encouraged by ‘Frampton’s ladder’⁶⁸ and aims to explore both its current reach and its potential to invite new and exciting interpretations in modern moviemaking. However this research does acknowledge filmsosophy’s infancy, and the following section therefore aims to present a methodological orientation from which Frampton’s ladder can gain some theoretical footing—as a proposed launch pad from which Frampton’s maverick musings can be entertained and explored.

⁶⁸ A term coined here to describe Frampton’s theory as a disposable, compostable, conceptual tool used to arrive at meaningful philosophical propositions; a type of ‘throw-away’ theory of cinema—a sacrificial surrogate towards greater filmic interpretations and understanding.

METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

In this section filmosophy's stance towards its subject matter will be abstracted and discussed along three axioms: the filmind ontological orientations; its philosophical approach to knowledge and interpretation (epistemology); and how such an approach could be appropriated into any accountable approach to modern cinema (critical visual methodology). The challenge of this is laid out in one of Frampton's final remarks in *Filmosophy*:

Filmosophy is a product of our current age of plastic malleable cinema. It is also a product of our current age of knowledge about cinema conventions: an unlearning, a more 'suitable', more cinematic reconceptualisation. (Frampton, 2006:212)

The filmosophical filmind spearheads this move towards reconceptualising today's shapable cinema along 'postmetaphysical', 'postphenomenological', and 'transsubjective' lines of inquiry. Towards deconstructing and contextualising these grandiose terms, the filmind will first be ascribed an ontological bearing through Slavoj Žižek's discussions on 'ontological difference'—the "ultimate parallax which conditions our very access to reality" (Žižek, 2006:10); then Edward O. Wilson's unifying theory of knowledge (consilience) will be presented to support filmosophical interpretation; and, lastly, this research will seek analytical asylum within the "site of the image" found in Gillian Rose's 'critical visual methodology'.

Frampton clearly states that filmosophy "offers a practice, a skill to do something; a strategy for being philosophical about film and seeing the philosophy in film" (2006:212); therefore by presenting and consolidating these contemporary theories (i.e. Žižek's "Parallax View", Wilson's "Consilience", and Rose's "Critical Visual Methodology") along filmosophy's own axiomatic dimensions, this research aims to construct a clearer orientation of filmosophy's 'film-worldview' for the purpose of airing/honing the conceptual tools needed to catch film in the act of *doing* philosophy.

Ontological Assumptions

In his dissection of Goodenough's philosophical film-being, Rybin extracted an ontological dimension in order to account for films' unique and constituting essences. Classically, there have been two tensions: formalism and realism; the former is attributed to the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, while the latter to French film theorist/critic André Bazin (Rybin, 2009:56). Rybin writes that cinema's historiography provides a "fecund resource for filmmakers and critics seeking to harness and reflect upon the stylistic possibilities of film in particular ways and for particular purposes" (Rybin, 2009:61). Filmosophy argues that this 'purpose' is of ultimate philosophical concern, one that can be historically sourced, but is uniquely transfigured in the light of cinema's contemporary mindings and social influences. Recent advancements in digital morphing and animation have given us unprecedented cause to reconceptualise our understanding of the nature and being of film, and this is exactly what Frampton arrives at with the 'filmind' and 'film-thinking'.

Film-thinking in filmosophy is 'transsubjective' in nature because the "film's perspective is [of] the whole film", and that the filmind intends from a "non-place or realm"⁶⁹ (Frampton, 2006:86). Frampton is drawing attention to the natural contradiction stemming from 'subjective' and 'objective' simplifications prominent in our current film-thinkings (i.e. that the audience is subjected to the cinema's essential objectifications, its socio-politically, and so ideological, regard). However, filmosophy maintains that extracted impressions of subject/object are, quite simply, "*just the film thinking*" (Frampton, 2006:85).

Similarly, Žižek's interpretation of the cinematic 'gaze' accuses the 'politically-minded' object of 'tickling'⁷⁰ the touchy subject, and so the gaze in filmosophy "refers to the way that film's objects regards the filmgoer" (Frampton, 2006:85). But where does Žižek's supposed 'tickling' take place in filmosophy? What 'realm' can the filmind said to rule or engage us? These questions reverberate within Žižek's progressive theory of the "parallax view": the "constantly shifting perspective between two points which no synthesis or mediation is possible" (Žižek, 2006:4).

⁶⁹ See The Demonic Filmind's Eye-view on page 50.

⁷⁰ Žižek writes that: "Thus the paradox is that the roles are reversed (in terms of the standard notion of the active subject working on the passive object): the subject is defined by a fundamental passivity, and it is the object from which movement comes—which does the tickling" (2006:17).

Ontological Difference—The Ultimate Parallax

In *The Parallax View*, arguably the Slovenian's thinker's greatest work, Žižek (2006:10) introduces three main modes of his 'parallax gap': the philosophical (Universal), scientific (Particular) and the political (Singular). While all modes can be meaningfully described through cinema (a fluidity of thought that Žižek himself often indulges in as he continues to carve up his own continental diet of examples), for the purpose of this research only the first, the ultimate or "ontological difference", will be discussed as it correlates with filmosophy's immediate ontological orientation.

According to Žižek, the parallax of ontological difference arises out of the "discord between the ontic and the transcendental-ontological" and that "we cannot reduce the ontological horizon to its ontic 'roots,' but neither can we deduce the ontic domain from the ontological horizon; that is to say, transcendental constitution is not creation⁷¹" (2006:7). This "transcendental constitution" suggests a 'dual-aspect' monistic⁷² approach towards the subject/object dilemma in film (as an integral part of the 'mind-body' dilemma), assimilated logically via paraconsistent means⁷³ to dissuade entropy and deconstructionists' decanting. So while we can, sociologically speaking, identify a subject (the 'flesh-and-blood' viewer or spectator) and the object (as the product and presentation of creative intent), they are, when divorced or even re-married, inadequate as concepts for explaining or advancing our understanding of cinema's rapidly expanding neo-mindings and metaphors. But, as Frampton's 'throwaway' and compostable ladder fatalistically understands, this gap is ultimately "irreducible and insurmountable", a permanent non-feature of film-being which Žižek calls the "ultimate parallax"—the 'pure difference' between the "ontological horizon and 'objective' ontic reality" (Žižek, 2006:10).

The filmind's 'non-place' of address is understood through Žižek's philosophical parallax in order to conceptually move beyond the dualist, and monist,

⁷¹ This "transcendental constitution" is may appear to contradict Frampton's film-world (i.e. its creational/re-creational function), but it is important to remember that the film-world is but one dimension of filmosophy's filmind and not itself a descriptor of film-being.

⁷² That "certain substances [cinema]...that are intrinsically neither material nor mental. Nevertheless these substances can present themselves under the aspect of the mental and the aspect of the physical." (Stubenberg, 2013)

⁷³ Paraconsistent logic "accommodates inconsistency in a sensible manner that treats inconsistent information as informative" (Priest, Tanaka & Weber, 2012).

models of consciousness and their own problematic inconsistencies⁷⁴. Film is inherently, and constantly, mediating this relationship (*cogito ergo sum/sum ergo cogito*—“I think, therefore I am”/“I am, therefore I think”); it is the “philosophical twist” (Žižek, 2006:17) in Žižek’s parallax that says that it is not just a change in subjective position that displaces the object ‘out there’, but that both are ‘contained’ or considered through their mutual transcendental constitution. Therefore an “‘epistemological’ shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an ‘ontological’ shift in the object itself” (Žižek, 2006:17). Filmosophy views such shifts as ‘fluid-thoughts’ that registers the “minimal”, or “pure”, difference the conceptualisation filmind and the filmgoer, as that which “cannot be grounded in positive substantial properties” (Žižek, 2006:18).

Such contemplation leads Frampton to forcefully articulate filmosophy’s as being ‘postmetaphysical’ as well as ‘postphenomenological’. It is ‘postmetaphysical’ because film-thinking is “beyond our thinking (and helps us understand our thinking)”; and, similarly, it is ‘post phenomenological’ as it attends to itself in a unique phenomenological light (Frampton, 2006:91-92). In both cases Frampton prefixing “post-“ emphasises that both axioms are, through their transcendental engagement, able to provide a theoretical perspective into our own thinkings (i.e. a perspective on *metacognition*), as we *attend* to thoughtfulness itself. This is why filmosophy claims an “affective film-mind” and persists in describing cinema’s ‘mixing’ of consciousness: “Film operates beyond the objective and subjective thought, and in fact slides them together” (Frampton, 2006:201-202). Such tectonic collisions are transfiguring forces in filmosophy, the ‘minimal difference’ of which is fluidly enacted and atomised, rather than simply displaced—a Laplacian worldview that sees cinema’s unique, pure audio-visual, essences call wantonly to the filmosopher’s sapiosexual afflictions.

Epistemological Assumptions

Frampton (2006:176) states that, ontologically, “film contains no language, but the filmgoer constructs the meaning from the moving sound-images (the utterable itself)”. Filmgoers are not the inactive subjects of objective creative activity; nor are

⁷⁴ “We should take a step further and reach beneath this dualism itself, into a “minimal difference” (the noncoincidence of the One with itself) that generates it.” (Žižek, 2006:10)—a theoretical reach that this research maintains filmosophy calls to.

they completely active interpreters of the filmind's passive presentations. Instead, the filmind and the filmgoer are orbiting Žižek primary parallax and acquiring meaningfulness—they are two distinct, yet synchronised, soliloquies that are constantly dead reckoning their own 'pure differences'. Frampton (2006:156) tells us that the "filmgoer that is active in thinking with and against the film, but who is also open to the film, [is] ready (conceptually) to receive its subtle thinkings in their subconscious". The filmgoer "does not so much 'identify' with the film as 'join' it in the creation of a third thinking"; an event that is intellectually enriched through our "recognition of film's capabilities of thinking"—and there we discover "a new way of encountering film" (Frampton, 2006:162-3).

Filosofy's encounter with this kind of 'third thinking' is, again, not sustained by passive submission, or by simply 'opening' oneself to a given film's mindings. The filmind's transsubjective omniscience is made available via the filmgoer's own individuated unconscious reservoir that consciously informs film-being and interpretation; or, in Frampton's own words, it is the "film plus the filmgoer's environment of experience, cultural inclinations, historical position and general needs and desires" (Frampton, 2006:164).

Filosofy and Consilience

In arriving at filosofy's transcendentally constituted and thoughtful worldview, this research argues that Frampton's *Filosofy* makes progress towards consilience: the unity of knowledge that seeks "the means by which the single mind can travel most swiftly and surely from one part of the communal mind to the other" (Wilson, 1998:13). In filosofy, the "communal mind" (i.e. the film) is made analogous to the filmgoer's ("single mind") engagement with the filmind. Therefore it is submitted that filosofy's fluid film-thinking *is* the very means-by-which the filmind can be said to 'think' Wilson's displacing—or 'parallaxing'—mind; a recreational 'essencing' from pure difference, transcendentally constituted, that is not itself a creation, but a neo-thought *qua* thought. Frampton's filosofy is, therefore, more akin to the creative and conscientious curator than a 'professional' filmgoer—to Maxwell's Demon⁷⁵—selecting and ushering in faster and heavier 'thinkings'—rather than that of Laplace's 'Intellect' (the filmind) and its monopoly on omniscience.

⁷⁵ See *Filmbeing Possessed: The Demonic Gatekeeper* on page 52.

In *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edward O. Wilson (1999:9) writes that “[t]he strongest appeal of consilience is in the prospect of intellectual adventure” and it is a “*metaphysical world view, and a minority one at that, shared by only a few scientists and philosophers*”. This research argues that Frampton is part of this minority, and that not only is filmsophy itself a product of this quest, but that its claims and consequences call, through filmsophical interpretation, to a type of epistemological unity moving forward.

Frampton’s ladder can be considered a form of ‘vertical consilience’, one that inductively defers cross-theoretical accounts of film phenomena towards a critically unified meta-film theory. If a film can, like filmsophy posits, “show anything, be anything, go anywhere, think anything” (Frampton, 2006:205), then it is (as Livingston concurs) enlightening, challenging, and indeed necessary to attempt to tinker with/through Wilson’s theoretical clockwork universe in a more serious and searching light.

Both Frampton and Wilson have to consequentially ‘convince’ philosophers themselves about their new approach to knowledge. Filmsophy claims an unequivocal “bold thesis” that posits: “film is the beginning *and the future* of our thought” (Frampton, 2006:213); Wilson also clearly stresses the importance, saying that philosophy “peers into the future to give shape to the unknown—and that has always been its vocation of choice” (Wilson, 1998:11). Similarly, while Frampton marches against technical descriptors and the like, Wilson notes that “[t]he unification agenda does not sit well with a few professional philosophers. The subject I address they consider their own, to be expressed in their language, their framework of formal thought” (Wilson, 1998:11). The advantage Frampton has over Wilson in getting traction for the ‘unification agenda’ is that filmsophy is itself already a philosophical mode of enquiry, one that Goodenough, Livingston, Rybin, Smuts and the like, are already trying to promote and problematise.

Vertical Consilience and Interpretation

Wilson (1998:216) believes interpretation has “multiple dimensions, namely history, biography, linguistics, and aesthetic judgement. At the foundation of them all lie the material processes of the human mind”. Frampton (2006:178-180) tells us that filmsophy “encourages an opinionated and personal form of film interpretation” and

that “[t]he concepts and attentions of filmsophy are not intended to provide complete interpretations, but can be used as a first step, a route to larger interpretations”. To interpret a film filmsophically, in the light of consilience, is to hold open the door for various branches/traditions of film-thinking—to invite different schools and disciplines to add their ‘energies’, language, insight, and viewpoints *into* this new philosophy of filmind. Not simply to ‘square the circle’ of critical film-thinking, but, and perhaps more importantly, to reveal and advance philosophy itself as it “affects our way of understanding life, because it affects our ways of perceiving our lives” (Frampton, 2006:209).

Filmsophy assumes, to some degree, a type of ‘horizontal’ consilience through its hermetic understanding of the filmind (i.e. its “ontological difference”), and promotes investigation into ‘vertical’ consilience through the filmsophical filmgoer’s ‘heterophenomenological’ responsibility. This ‘vertical’ consilience is not achieved simply through some “lone-wolf autophenomenology”, but rather through a “third-person methodology” that takes “phenomenology of another not oneself” (i.e. ‘postphenomenology’). Daniel Dennett (2003:1) claims this is the way “to take the first person point of view as seriously as it can be taken”, and while he is referring specifically to the scientific method, this ‘third-person methodology’ is still both appropriate and useful in addressing and conceptualising Frampton’s ‘third-thought/mind’. For the heterophenomenologist, like the filmsopher, the “primary data are the utterances, the raw, uninterpreted data” (Dennett, 2003:3). Utterances of the filmind (fluid or otherwise) are found in Frampton’s ‘pure audio-visual’ spectrum of filmic awareness that the filmsophical filmgoer provides insight and meaning into by taking such utterances *as seriously as possible*.

Dennett concludes his defence of the “neutrality of heterophenomenology” with words that strongly resonates with filmsophical concerns as it “accepts the challenge of demonstrating, empirically, in its terms, that there are marvels of consciousness that cannot be captured by conservative theories” (Dennett, 2003:12). Again, in filmsophy theoretical conservatism arrives when the filmgoer over-values and misplaces the interpretations found through approaches like narratology, auteur theory, and other technicist deconstructions and socio-political inferences.

This research aims to explore filmsophy’s concepts and intuitions about the nature of film-being and its potential to yield intriguing, meaningful, and progressive

interpretations of those more poetic and lucid utterances found in popular modern cinema. It is not within this research's scope to assert Wilson's consilience in its totality (i.e. biological accounts of film-being or map vertical integration to its fullest potential) but instead demonstrate filmosophy's own internal validity and reliability through the vertical integration of theoretical approaches to specific, and modern, cinematic utterances. Filmosophy does not, as mentioned, abandon narrative, auteur theory, mise en scène analysis, ideological readings, and so on; but instead seeks inductively to extract and assign a greater purpose and placement to these areas through a philosophy of filmind. To this end, this research will employ, discern, and enact tenets of psychoanalytical film theory alongside filmosophy to help articulate the enigmatic and fluid film-thoughts identified within the two films presented. And in doing so demonstrate how comparative film theory coalesces within filmosophy to arrive at meaning interpretations of progressive pictures.

Filmosophy and Psychoanalysis

Jerome Applebaum (2013:117) purposes a “nurturing dialogue as psychoanalysis and philosophy move forward” (an approach that Žižek has long employed himself through with his psychoanalytical and philosophical breadth and influences) and, like filmosophy, believes that “[b]racketing the past is not forgetting the past”. This nurturing dialogue can be ‘consilient’ in nature as it “entails and is rooted in a consideration of the commonality of their principal concerns” (Applebaum, 2013:118). Applebaum's brief thoughts appear in a special edition of the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* and “recognizes and affirms that both psychoanalysis and philosophy are wellsprings of mutual inspiration” (Applebaum, 2013:119); a view that this research shares as it openly employs psychoanalytical insights through filmosophy's epistemological call to its proposed vertical consilience.

Like narratology and mise en scène analysis, this research does not wish to embark on a psychoanalytical reading *ad libitum*, but rather call upon it as *a posteriori* knowledge that can assist in arriving at meaningful and informative filmosophical interpretations; especially, as it will be shown, when psychoanalysis is applied to cinema's more dreamy and fluid poetics. Psychoanalysis does not claim a “ponderous and parasitic dependence” (Quigley, 2011:13) to filmosophy, but instead

represents a valuable ‘searchlight’ sub-theory that moves to discover modern cinema’s own ‘plastic malleability’.

Critical Visual Methodology

Having presented and outlined an ontological and epistemological orientation for filmsophical thought to engage, the following aims to claim analytical asylum within Gillian Rose’s ‘critical visual methodology’. Rose’s visual methodologies are, like filmsophy, a product of our current age of ocularcentrism⁷⁶ and outlines visual research methods that use “various kinds of images as ways of answering research questions, not by examining images—as do visual culture studies—but by *making* them” (Rose, 2012:10).

Before presenting her modalities and methods for addressing visual materials, Rose puts forth three ‘criteria’ for her proposed critical visual methodology: the research must “take images seriously” (a stance mirroring that of Dennett’s heterophenomenology), consider the “social conditions and effects of visual objects”, and engage the researcher’s “own way of looking at images⁷⁷” (Roses, 2012:17). These three criteria have been shown to be inherent in the act of filmsophising (with arguably a softer stance on the ‘social conditions’ in so far as it *informs* the research’s heterophenomenological validity), and when transposed into Rose’s critical visual methodology, filmsophy’s focus and nuanced call to consilience can be specifically placed in order to defend Frampton’s *Filmosophy* from its own continental drift towards methodological obscurantism.

The Site of the Image

Gillian Rose (2012:19) states the interpretation of visual images falls broadly under three sites: “the site(s) of the *production* of an image, the site(s) of the *image* itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by *audiences*”. In addition to these three sites, Rose produces three further categories, or ‘modalities’, that may affect the critical interpretation of visual materials: technological, compositional, and social modalities (Rose, 2012:19-20). Her model is represented and labelled in her book as follows:

⁷⁶ Martin Jay’s term used to “describes the apparent centrality of the visual to contemporary Western life.” (quoted in Rose, 2012:7)

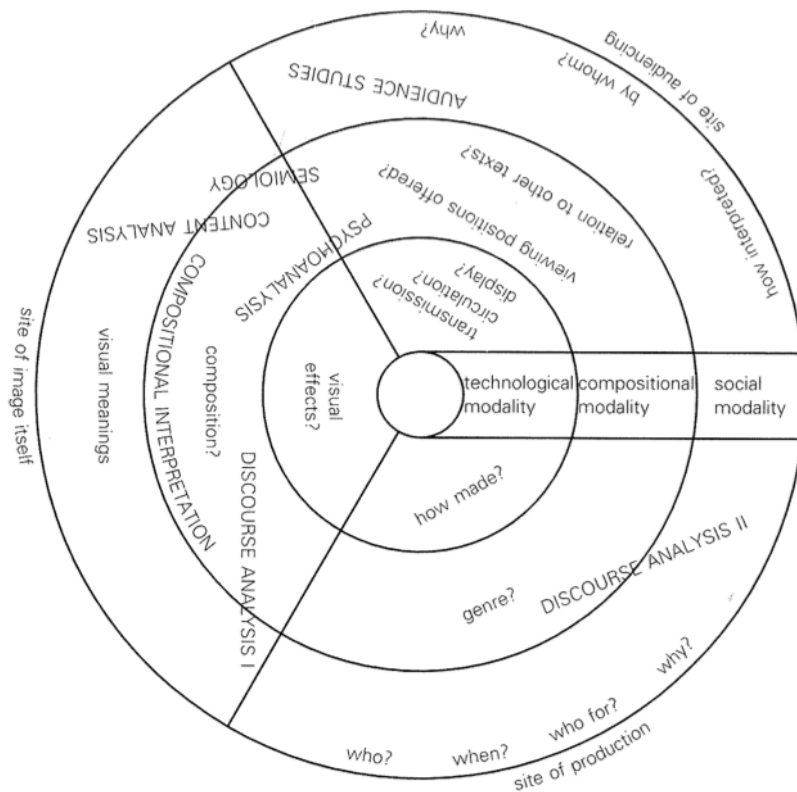


Fig. 1. The sites, modalities and methods for interpreting found visual material (Rose, 2012:43).

Frampton’s ladder finds footing in both Rose’s proposed “site of the image” and its compositional modality. The “site of image” is primarily concerned with the importance of the image’s own effects and holds that “an image may have its own effects that exceed the constraints of its production (and reception)” (Rose, 2012:27-28). Discussions and interpretations of visual culture (e.g. films, paintings, digital images) often over-value the cultural context in which those images are produced, and as a result visual researchers do not pay enough attention to the “specificities” of particular images (Rose, 2012:28).

The American historian Michael Ann Holly (quoted in Cheetham *et al.*, 2005:88) argues that researchers “have sacrificed a sense of awe at the power of an overwhelming visual experience, wherever it might be found, in favour of the ‘political’ connections that lie beneath the surface of this research is to devalue the image under question”. Further stating that she yearns for something that is “in excess of research”:

How do we generate the very conditions for ‘wonder’ to take place – whether it’s a more philosophical or a critical ‘wonder’ at the character of archives, art objects, artefacts, whatever, in their specificity and

singularity, how they work, mean, fail to be intelligible, etc? (Holly quoted in Cheetham, *et al.*, 2005:88)

Filmosophy aims to reinstate this cinematic wonder by re-addressing the conceptual tools we use to evaluate, interpret, and assign philosophical significance to contemporary features. Rose (2012:29) also notes that “[s]cholars such as Laura Marks and Mark Hansen emphasise the embodied and the experiential as what lies in excess of representation”. This research is thus firmly placed within Rose’s “site of image” as it explores the representational *and* the more elusive latent, awe-inspiring, essences and poetics—those cinematic utterances that are considered, filmosophically, as pertaining directly to Frampton’s fluid film-thinking.

Compositional Modality

Rose’s “compositional modality” refers to the “specific material qualities of an image or visual object” that “draws on a number of formal strategies” (Rose, 2012:20). These formal strategies are related to Frampton’s formal film-thinking, as unique and recognisable cinematic elements that inform our conception of fluid film-thinking but also areas of basic film composition (their aspiring aesthetic qualia). In this modality the research “involves an act of interpretation⁷⁸” (Hansen, 1998:131), and it is therefore neither methodologically nor theoretically explicit (Rose, 2012:52).

However, Rose (2012:58-74) does identify a number of “schematic device[s]” that may guide such an approach, but notes that compositional analysis does ultimately refer to their *combined* effect. These devices or strategies include: content, colour, spatial organisation, montage, light, and the image’s expressive content. The “expressive content” is the “‘mood’ or ‘atmosphere’ of an image” (Rose, 2012:74) and describes the combined effect of images’ “subject matter and visual form” (Taylor quoted in Rose, 2012:74)—the filmic aerosphere in which philosophically significant and unique knowledge gathers ready for meaningful interpretation and discussion.

Rose’s “schematic devices” are therefore akin to *mise en scène* analysis, and their concerns do overlap to a large degree. John Gibbs defines *mise-en-scène* as

⁷⁸ Rogoff (quote in Rose, 2012:52) notes that such an approach constitutes “the good-eye”, a kind of “visual connoisseurship” that involves a “detailed vocabulary for expressing the appearance of an image” and judging them according to specific knowledge regarding the *type* of images in question” (Rose, 2012:51-52).

simply “the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised” (Gibbs, 2002:5) and identifies ten elements for analysing the moving image: lighting, costume, colour, props, décor, action and performance, space, position of the camera, framing, and the interaction of elements (Gibbs, 2002:8-26). Both Rose’s schematic devices and Gibbs’ elements help to identify important utterances with the film, but they are, like Goodenough’s modes of filmosophical being, critically bracketed within filmosophy.

This research acknowledges the value of such *mise en scène* cues, but defers to Frampton’s own “basic fields of film composition” (Frampton, 2006:116)—image, colour, sound, focus, speed, frame, movement and edit-shifts—as the primary points of departure for its analysis towards illustrating filmosophy’s fluid film-thinking at play. That said, Gibbs’ discussion on “coherence” should be noted as he also accounts for film’s “recurrent strategies” (Gibbs, 2002:39). Gibbs’ discussion on coherence highlights the importance of motifs and visual patterns when considering a film’s organisation:

This paradigm [coherent relationships] has sometimes been described as organicism, because of its emphasis on an ‘organic’ relationship between the parts and the whole—that is, the relationship between elements in the admired artwork seems natural and mutually beneficial rather than being too obviously constructed or nugatory. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. (Gibbs, 2002,40)

In his discussion, Gibbs mentions two ways in which coherence can be addressed in film. Firstly, that coherence describes the function of motif: “an element with acquires significance through repetition...[and includes]...consistency of tone and viewpoint, and the qualification that the individual elements receives from its context” (Gibbs, 2002:40). Secondly, we can take note of how different elements within a single moment “interact to achieve a significant effect” (Gibbs, 2002:40-41). The ‘synthesis’ of constituting elements within the frame can thus help articulate the image’s “expressive content”—a goal shared by filmosophy as it engages with exclusively with film’s pure audio-visual mode of engagement.

Rose (2012:55) indicates that because compositional interpretation “neglects both socially specific ways of seeing and the representations of the social” (similar to filmosophy), many who employ this approach are usually accompanied by other methods such as psychoanalysis and semiotics. Furthermore, compositional

interpretation “does seem to be the method of choice for some of those theorists of visual culture concerned to emphasise the nonrepresentational” (Rose, 2012:55). This is filmsophy’s ultimate goal as the filmgoer “might not just begin to understand their environment cinematically, but may begin to look for difference ‘information’ in the world” (Frampton, 2006:209).

Filososophical Interpretation

This research offers a filmsosophical interpretation of two unique, contemporary, and topical films—Terrence Malick’s award-winning and enigmatic *The Tree of Life* (2011) and Alfonso Cuarón’s spacey new-age thriller *Gravity* (2013)—through which filmsophy’s core concepts will be explored and expanded. It will be shown that these two innovative features stand as, and contain, exemplary examples of filmsophy’s core concepts of the filmind, film-world creation, and film-thinking. It will be demonstrated that *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* contain clear and creative accounts of fluid film-thinking at play in modern moviemaking, and specific filmic utterances and sequences will be identified and discussed (along Frampton’s six proposed forms of composition) in order to explore the validity of, and criticisms against, filmsophy. However before such interpretations it is necessary to discuss filmsophy’s approach to writing as it pertains directly to the type of interpretation that follows.

Filososophical Language

The follow filmsosophical interpretation involves examining specific filmic utterances as philosophically relevant spaces in film-time, and it is through valuing the dramatic intent of specific audio-visual moments (in light of filmind’s eye-view) that we gain access to filmsophy’s potential. When considering a filmind’s thoughts philosophically one may ask: “What are *we thinking now*? Or, post-viewing, “What were *we thinking then*?” These questions directly address and describe the collision of consciousness (the ‘ultimate parallax’) that constitutes the cinematic experience. Such an approach ensures that precedence is given to the film moments in question, their unique experiential quality that is then paraphrased and expressed through filmsosophical writing. Frampton dedicates an entire chapter in *Filmsophy* to film writing, and so towards addressing both *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life*—as “intuitive, affective philosophical event[s]” (Frampton, 2006:183-184)—it is necessary to briefly

outline Frampton's notes of filmsophical writing as he moves towards a "humanistic thoughtful poetics" of filmsophical interpretation (Frampton, 2006:178).

Frampton (2006:177) argues that "[n]ew films demand new vocabularies" and that by liberating ourselves from the strictures of, for example, technicist language we may hope to "intuitively welcomes the affective meaning of the film" (Frampton, 2006:178). Filmsophy's approach to writing is as progressively pressing as it is liberating. Metaphors, analogies, neologisms and poetic verse are valued insofar as they produce and/or enhance the possible interpretative meaning/insight the filmind-goer in question generates. Filmsophical interpretation starts and ends with the filmgoer and "*[w]hat we feel on initial encounter becomes the path of suitable interpretation*" (Frampton, 2006:178). Therefore the language we use must embody this unique mixing towards producing insightful and fitting interpretations.

When the filmgoer asks, "What are *we thinking now?*" we are observing the stirring the filmind's thinkings with our own and, therefore, "*how suitable our thinking is depends on our knowledge and language*" (Frampton, 2006:176). The filmsopher is not simply the erudite filmgoer, but also a logophile, poet, and enacter of personal knowledge set on enhancing the film's mindings (filmind) through the meditative meeting of that knowledge and the utterances being experienced—a oneiric wordsmith who is constantly seeking to express the medium's own unique and artistic intent in the most appropriate, insightful, and meaningful manner possible.

Metaphors, Thought-Experiments and Intuitions

Philosophers have long since employed the imaginative capacity of thought-experiments and the power of metaphor to assist them in conveying complex conceptual ideas and testing theories. Lucretius throw a spear at the edge of the universe, Plato imagined slaves in caves, Schrödinger put a cat in box, Chalmers contemplated the p-zombie, and Galileo even proved the objects of different mass fall at the same rate simply by thinking about it. Thought-experiments are potent philosophical tools that describe "a nonactual situation, and [they invite] the reader to make a judgment about an aspect of this situation" (Machery, 2011:194); they are imaginative metaphors that problematise specific phenomena or situations with the intent of enhancing our understanding, or the implications of, the experiments constituting criterion.

Machery (2011:191) reminds us that thought-experiments have “an important role to play in the growth of philosophical knowledge”; however Smuts (2009:414) writes that:

The problem with the thought experiment argument for film as philosophy is that it does not show how films could do philosophy, much less innovative philosophy, only how we could do philosophy with a film.

Smuts claims that arguments by analogy can, however, be fashioned from uniquely cinematic means to alleviate the issue of paraphrase (Smuts, 2009:414); as with those comparisons that “suggests that because two things are alike in some ways they are probably alike in other important ways” (Smuts, 2009:415). Comparisons are useful and philosophically significant and create new arches from which new ideas and thinkings can resonant. Frampton endorses these creative and cognitive tools in shaping new film-thoughts, believing that “images and analogies, metaphors seem to create an immediate connection with the reader, and within philosophical writing they further work to invite appraisal, in pushing different lines of enquiry for us to actively realise and construct” (Frampton, 2006:187).

FILMOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION

The previous sections outlined and problematised filmsophy as a contemporary approach to film-going, as well as outlined a methodological orientation from which new and progressive interpretations may arise. What follows is a filmsophical interpretation of two contemporary features that aims to detail how filmsophy can be further conceptualised and illustrated. It begins by returning to Frampton's key concepts of the filmind and filmgoer, and offers extended descriptors of these terms so that we might arrive at a clearer understanding of their philosophical significance. The filmind's two constituting components (film-world creation/re-creation and film-thinking) will be contextualised through *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* with the intention of then identifying and discussing specific utterances within each that are argued to be exemplary cases of fluid film-thinking in motion.

The Demonic Filmind's Eye-view

Filmsophy's filmind is a transsubjective and omniscience entity of demonic descent whose "perspective is the whole film" and rules from an unknowable "realm of perspective" (Frampton, 2006:86). Such is the nature of the filmind's potentiality to be all knowing, individuated, and, in principle, self-aware. Understanding the filmind in this manner is crucial to grasping the filmsophical concepts that stem. To this end, this research submits the following abstracted image of *The Tree of Life* in order to assist with the understanding and conceptualisation of Frampton's thesis term:



Fig. 2. The filmind's eye view of *The Tree of Life* (2011).

The above image is the result of digital manipulation and shows the whole film compressed (through 'lossy' compression) into a single image⁷⁹. It is a type of phrenological mapping of *The Tree of Life's* filmind—a kind of 'filmind's eye-view' of the world it itself has complete knowledge of. This unnatural perspective is, by itself, relatively meaningless (being seemingly abstract, emotive, even surreal), but grants an otherwise impossible view of Malick's work that serves to accompany Frampton's claim that the filmind "thinks with its beginning and end 'in mind'" (Frampton, 2006:84). It is akin to the film's 'life review' flashing before our eyes (but not always as *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012) has shown) at 24fps and supplies us with a unique visualisation of the filmind's "non-place" from which it intends. The image provides an anomalous articulation of filmind's thoughtfulness, its hermetic totality from which no further reductions may occur—the ultimate universal vantage from which Laplace's Demon resides:

"We ought then to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its anterior state and as the cause of the one which is to follow. Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective situation of the beings who compose it — an intelligence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis — it would embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the lightest atom; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its eyes" (Laplace, 1951:4)

Pierre-Simon Laplace, writing in *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, is describing a hypothetical position from which 'the Intellect' (quoted in the above translation as simply "an intelligence") obtains its omnipotent and thus able to

⁷⁹ See <http://moviebarcode.tumblr.com> for further examples.

comprehend “past and future states of the system of the world” (Laplace, 1951:4). Laplace’s descriptions here are comparable to filmsophy’s filmind, as an appropriate thought experiment that can also be used to describe one of filmsophy’s key conceptual underpinnings. Laplace’s Intellect also serves Frampton’s claim that “film-thinking is not analogous with human thinking” (Frampton, 2006:92), as we are unable, in our limited *phenomenological* capacity, to fully attend to the cinematic event in its entirety from its entirety; or, as Laplace continues, “The human mind offers...a feeble idea of this intelligence” (Laplace, 1952:4). The filmind thinks the present with its future in mind; we (the viewer) are only privy to particular points in time and space, moments strung together through causal agents and informed by the forthcoming frames.

Filmbeing Possessed: The Demonic Gatekeeper

The Tree of Life was described by Corliss (2011) as being as “maddeningly Delphic as its maker”, referring to Greek mythology’s most prophetic and magisterial intellect, the Delphic Oracle. Filmsophy alleviates such cognitive dissonance by empowering the filmgoer with knowledge of the above-mentioned filmind’s ‘self-awareness’. When the filmgoer “enters the chaos” (Frampton, 2006:178) they become ‘demonically engaged’ as their own consciousness mixes with that of the filmind. This seizing is comparable to physicist James Clerk Maxwell’s ‘entropy-reducing’ demon, used here to describe aspects of the filmgoer’s existence with the filmind (i.e. their interpenetration).

In questioning the certainty of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, Maxwell imagined a demon watching over a sealed container of gas molecules that could “produce a difference in pressure as well as temperature by merely allowing all particles going in one direction while stopping all those going the other way” (Knott, 1911:215), thereby decreasing entropy within this closed system. Similarly, in filmsophy, the “filmgoing experience is one of constrained freedom—an endless push-pull mix of thinkings”. Like Maxwell’s demon, the filmsophical filmgoer is “always selecting and choosing” (Frampton, 2006: 162-163) as we consciously create order out of cinematic chaos.

The filmgoer enters this cinematic chaos, as described by Frampton, and meditatively ‘channels’, or ushers in, purposeful utterances (Maxwell’s ‘faster’

molecules) to arrive at an equally unique interpretation as a product of heterophenomenological sense-making. The resultant interpretation is derived from the filmgoer's own cine-registry and meditations on the Laplace's Intellect. The filmind (as a type of translucent, hermetic, 'cine-capsule') is experienced in its totality and remains unspoiled by invading particles (extra-textuals), but its chaotic composition is transfigured in filmsophy, metaphysically, into meaningful interpretation when the filmgoer applies their own conscious 'energies' and to the event.

This research has thus far made the analogy that filmsophy's filmind can, conceptually, and for the purposes of application, be likened to Laplace's Demon (the Intellect) and the filmgoer to that of Maxwell's Demon. It is argued that the comparison is particularly apt when considered both the filmind's transsubjectivity (its omniscience and abyssal realm of address) and the filmsophical filmgoer's pickings when confronted by such a manipulative Intellect. The result of this demonic marriage is filmsophy's 'third' mind, and it is this union that brings with it "a new way of encountering film" (Frampton, 2006:162-3).

The Beginning and End of the World

Like Maxwell's Demon and filmsophy's 'mixing' of conscious intent, Plate (2008:1)—writing towards a critical religious theory of film in *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World*—notes that in film "worlds begin to collide, leaking ideas and images across the semi-permeable boundaries between world-on-screen and world-on-the-streets". Plate describes this process as that of 'world-making', and in filmsophy it is theoretically accounted for, firstly, through the filmmaking practices of film-being that presents us with "everything we see and hear" and, secondly, as a background concept informing the filmgoer that the filmind can, like Plate's 're-creation', be "re-thought" (Frampton, 2006:77, 79). Filmsophy maintains that film-world creation is the "unstudied 'intention' of the filmind" as the filmind's basic "*Ur-doxa* or *world belief*" (Frampton, 2006:77). In this vein, the following offers an interpretation *The Tree of Life* and *Gravity* and their notions of worldmaking with the purpose of accounting for their creational conditions as the backdrop for philosophical enquiry.

Source bound: Up the axis mundi

After a biblical quote from the book of Job⁸⁰, the first thought-image in *The Tree of Life* is a mysterious warm light⁸¹ that pulsates within in the black abyss of the screen's frame. Zinman (2011) notes how the cryptic flame-image has confounded critics, but that the mysterious "yolk-coloured blob" (in the words of *Variety*'s Robert Koehler, quoted in Zinman) is part of Thomas Wilfred's *Opus 161* (1965-1966)—a "lumia composition" that creates art from various manipulations of light.

Although Wilfred's *Opus 161* continues for almost two years⁸² it is used sparingly within Malick's dreamscape to bracket specific sections of the film (as well as the film at large); ultimately marking both our induction and ejection from this "cosmically tinged" (Zinman, 2011) film-world. This lumia is not itself 'a world', as a place thought of that characters and events may inhabit; instead, it is both a pre-text and a recurrent philosophical point in the film's thinkings—a "world belief" that primes film-thinking as a re-creational presence that the filmind establishes earlier on, and then returns to at various spaces in time. This is Gibbs's "recurrent strategies", or simply motif, which, while initially abstract and incoherent, gathers philosophical moss as the filmgoer gains insight into the demonic filminds greater knowledge of its world—its reasons for thinking this audacious and awe-inspiring abstraction of movement and light.

Consider the second moment the lumia is 'thought of' as it precedes the film's epic, and topical, 'creational/cosmos sequence'. Before the film thinks Jack's regression, there is an expansive and lengthy sequence of splendid impressions that, like the lumia that precedes it, is *thinking change and becoming*. The sequence has been ascribed various interpretations (e.g. as depicting the birth of consciousness, the universe's own cosmic and eternal ebbing, as well as the evolution of life on Earth) but the constant between them is that of resplendent metamorphosis—a re-creational philosophy that is rooted in the lumia and persists in the film's narrative ratiocinations on Jack's own individuation.

⁸⁰ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" from Job 38: 4,7.

⁸¹ See Appendix A.1 for examples of the lumia in *The Tree of Life*.

⁸² Wilfred's lumia runs for one year, three hundred and fifteen days, and twelve hours (Zinman, 2011).

The lumia⁸³ is *The Tree of Life*'s founding philosophy, its *prima philosophia*—a divine and future light from which all utterances emerges and must eventually return. It shares the frame with no characters, and no events intrude on its memorising expulsion of the film's raw and untethered thoughts on *being-in-a-world*. This 'pure' thought humbles the filmgoer insofar as the filmind is constantly *thinking about change* from its very beginning through Wilson's lumia composition. The aesthetic philosophy of which, like the film and Jack's own individuated quest, explores themes of movement "unfolding", "advancing", and "rising"—"forms of ascending in space and unfolding in color over a restless angular accompaniment" (Stein quoted in Eskilson, 2003:65). In this vein, the lumia's usage can be understood/interpreted as a recurring thought (or motif) within this philosophically minding film; 'reminders' of *The Tree of Life*'s own recurrent spiritual musings on life and the constant re-creation of our individuating being.

Source bound: Down to Earth

As *The Tree of Life* contemplates Jack's own spiritual progression towards transcendence (as the modern man in peril), so then *Gravity* can be said to be thinking the feminine counter through Dr Stone's peregrination back to Earth—the past place from which her will was worn. While *The Tree of Life* is continually arriving and departing from its principle luminescence, *Gravity* (still narratological concerned with Dr Stone's individuation) subtracts our heroine from her source (i.e. the Earth itself) and *thinks* her adrift above and beyond its life-sustaining atmospheres.

Gravity opens its world-view by, rather literally, regarding the Milky Way's only life-giving place against life-taking space—it is the distance Earth Mother to *The Tree of Life*'s sun-kissed Sky Father, and the place to which this particular Stone must ultimately fall. The lumia is only thought of for a few seconds, but *Gravity* fixedly thinks its opening world-view through a seventeen-minute rumination. The film's undisturbed opening thought⁸⁴ sees our inhabited orb slowly squeeze the character's shuttle out from its vertical horizons, fluidly re-thinking this 'out-of-this-world' perspective into an actual place of being and narratological activity. Frampton writes

⁸³ Sheldon Cheney (quoted in Eskilson, 2003:66) once wrote that Wilson's lumia is perhaps: "[T]he beginning of the greatest, the most spiritual and radiant art of all"; and, along with the art critic Willard Huntington Wright, "proselytised for mobile color as the art of the future"—the same future filmsophy itself aims to address and Malick's own opus promotes.

⁸⁴ See Appendix B.1 for the first and last images in *Gravity*'s opening shot.

that the “moving frame of cinema, the thinking of movement, can be both kinetic and conceptual; giving life to film and tracing lines of life in film” (Frampton, 2006:131), such is the case here as this prolonged pondering shifts from a cosmic vista to the backdrop for narrative intent—a re-creational event that takes us from ‘life’ itself (terrestrial beings), to life removed from its source (alienated beings).

The *Opus 161* is both the alpha and omega of *The Tree of Life*’s film-life, and in *Gravity* Laplace’s Demon ultimately aspires to see Dr Stone answer the Earth’s gravitational calling—to have Stone walk upon its surface anew having ejected her own baggage to the orbiting space junk that devastated her mission. The film ends, like most of Hollywood’s mass-mindings, on a re-creational high with Stone struggling with her atrophic muscles as she emerges from the waters to, once again, stand upon the Earth’s surface; her resolve now renewed and her alienation and melancholia managed. Stone’s world (or, more appropriately, the world that mirrors Stone’s struggles and suffering) has been, macroscopically considered, re-created for our enjoyment and cathartic pleasure.

Fluid Film-thinking

In filmosophy fluid film-thinking alters the basic film-world from the “inside out”, as “re-creative” film-thinkings that “tears and rips into it, morphing it from within” (Frampton, 2006:88). The previous section presented film-thinking on macro levels (which are also often referred to singularly through narrative via ‘plot twists’, the ‘climax’, or their resolute ‘dénouements’—when we know a world has no long any capacity for significant ‘change’ we often want out, to be ejected, as it were, as quickly as possible), but fluid film-thinking is more interestingly discussed through those devilling details, subtle philosophical flecks of thought that act as enterprising waypoints through the transformative worldmaking at large. To this end, the follow interpretations draws from Frampton’s six basic modes of film composition to provide evidence of philosophical fluidity from selected utterances/features from *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life*; and in so doing demonstrating how these contemporary filminds are explicatory cases of filmosophy’s progressive postulations.

Re-imaging

The filmind is the demonic lovechild of creative and cinematic intention. Each audio-visual “granule is composed to form the image that the filmind intends” (Frampton, 2006:117) as the filmmakers and their collective co-creators consciously construct as they present a particular film-world with specific emotive and dramatic intentions in mind. The ‘image’ is, as Frampton reminds us, “not so basic” as “[m]odern computer-generated imagery demands of us a greater re-thinking of the cinematic image” (Frampton, 2006:117). Both *The Tree of Life* and *Gravity* present worlds that have incorporated modern filmmaking methods—or rather, and more precisely, ways of thinking about cinema—that purposefully intend a world that is reflective of our current age of ‘plastic malleability’.

The Tree of Life thinks in a contemporary fashion when it shows us images of Wilfred’s *Opus 161*, the Horsehead Nebula, digitally reconstructions of prehistoric life, cell divisions, Saturn’s rings, and so on⁸⁵. These thought-images are thought of in a new light and subsequently serve the filmind’s own poetic and creative ends (and not their extra-textual ‘signifiers’). They go beyond referential pastiche by virtue of their arrangement and occupation within the filmind, their ‘basic’ meanings morphed through the film’s reconceptualisation of them in sight of the film’s unique omniscience.

Such are the affective properties and fluid film-thoughts that filmsophy argues “proposes new knowledge” (Frampton, 2006:117), fresh and innovative manipulations of collectively sourced visions of being greater than we currently contemplate. The *Opus 161* has become more than manipulations of light that extends for days on end; Barnard 33 in emission nebula IC 434 (i.e. the Horsehead Nebula) has been ripped from its scientific chains and been allowed to possess alternative interpretations and a dramatic new, even poetic, significance; dinosaurs have been unearthed and digitally re-presented to suggest compassion, curiosity, even cruelty; arbitrary and abstracted micro-visions of cell-life in motion carries an expressive component that its biological discoverers did not document, nor likely intend; and a gas giant’s rocky rings now cast in shadow has perhaps returned to its romantic appropriation of the God of this new generation, of progressive liberation and dissolutions.

⁸⁵ See Appendix A.2 for examples from *The Tree of Life*’s creational sequence.

These not-so-simple thought-images have been poetically re-imagined, removed, and re-contextualised into the mixing of consciousness filmosophy wishes to reveal and call attention to. A philosophy comprised of neo-thoughts and curating beings that morph meaningfulness by fluidly thinking new intentions, new contexts, and are then nominated by the demonically possessed filmgoer when they allow their own knowledge and the filmind's innovative thoughtfulness to coalesce. These images represent new creative intentions swirled into purpose by cinema's transcendental emulsification of sound-images and their creative transfiguration.

Voiding Colourism

The filmind can “feel the drama to be a certain colour” (Frampton, 2006:118); it can contemplate hues, saturate moments, manipulate wavelengths, and violently spin the colour wheel to intend *specific* references, emotions, and ideas. Just as different cultures attribute different associations and meaning to various colours in our spectrum, so to can different filmind re-invent these associations to tint and serve its own rationalities and intentions—“Filmosophy is less concerned with the meaning of colour than with the way in which film *has* colour, *uses* colour, and how we should *approach* that use in talk about film” (Frampton, 2006:118). How does *Gravity* think this “metaphysical dread” Hoberman (2013) describes? Remind us “human life cannot thrive in the vast emptiness of space” (Tan, 2013)? Or maintain a grip on realism while still pursuing effectual “chromatic aberration[s]” (Seymour, 2013)?

Colour in *Gravity* is thought of as it exists in the presence of light—what it *reveals* to us against the abyssal canvas of the frame's regard. Cold, lifeless chromes and blazing whites against space's pure absence of light⁸⁶ are the primordial *tabula rasa* Dr Stone is thought in—the womb she seeks to crawl back into as she dutifully quests towards her own re-birth. She has apathetically pursued the darkness of existence, this “metaphysical dread”, and does not wish to “thrive”; she has volunteered for her own abortion from the rich viability of the aqueous and earthly hues that have drained her life-force (Stone is single mother who lost her daughter; her child—along with her ‘biological responsibility’ as a mother—was cruelly seized by death at great existential cost). The filmind may “dramatically think events thought light” (Frampton, 2006:119) and in *Gravity* that light is dramatically sourced from the

⁸⁶ See Appendix B.2

only life-giving star we can *feel*, its warmth abstracted from its photosynthesising processes, reduced in the void to meditations on what is (the lively Earth), what is barely (Stone's current existential worth), and what is not (her active and individuated place in world). *Gravity*'s colourism is thought beyond its presentational differentiation to pick away at the basic film-world, morphing its 'realistic' intentions to deliberate the conflict of basking in being, and the abyssal blanket that comforts Stone's existential detachment.

Synthesised Sound

The filmind "steers the sound" towards a particular thinking of its characters and events (Frampton, 2006:120) and, as Sobchack (2005:2) notes, new digital sound technologies and computer-generate imagery have given modern cinema forms of "ultra-hearing" and "ultra-seeing". One of the technical criticisms against *Gravity* was that in space there is no air for sound to travel through: "[t]here's no sound in space...but we use music to convey the story" (Cuarón quoted in Roper, 2013). In film, realism is always mattered in matters of relativity, and in *Gravity* sound is constantly being fluidly re-thought in suspenseful snippets and scores that may well 'defy' the actuality of our phenomenal account of cosmic vibrations (i.e. the 'science' of sound in space); however when we understand Frampton's conceptualising of the filmind, such unforgiving extra-textual comparisons fall away in the light of poetic expression and innovative story-telling.

Commenting on the film's use of sound, Steven Price (quoted in Watercutter, 2013), *Gravity*'s composer, said: "Ordinarily in an action film you're often competing with explosions and god knows what else, whereas with this [movie] music could do things a different way. With everything we did we would try and look beyond the normal way of doing things". When Dr Stone is battling with the one of Soyuz modules' prematurely deployed parachute (the only object to contains the aerospace industry's eye-catching 'international orange'), her efforts are compounded as the space debris comes around again for another test of this heroine's resolve. Streaming shards of space junk bombard the ISS, adding more fragments to the perpetual torrent of trash circling earth. This destructive occurrence is not granted the sounds of epic collisions⁸⁷ the viewer would perhaps expect; the impacts are soundless, their

⁸⁷ See Appendix B.3

dynamiting devastations, instead, are metrically scored to match the images kinetic and intense thinkings through its unhackneyed orchestration of the destruction.

Frampton (2006:121) writes that “[s]ilence is the darkness of sound” and while this moment is far from tranquil, there is a lyrical vacuum—a philosophical ‘third noise’—within this particular sound-image. Where are the sounds of these impacts? How is Dr Stone surviving this brutal bombardment with such odds? These are technical/narratological thinkings of old, and, instead, *Gravity* produces a new notion of survival through the sound-image that drifts counter to our auditory expectation of the explosions and clashes of the debris. (There is a fundamental difference between what we expect to hear on Earth, what *we are told* space sounds like, and what the filmind’s own presentational thoughts are on the matter). Thoughts of Stone’s probable death then migrate to thoughts of the improbability of (her) life in the cosmos, as something of value and significance struggling to continue to *be so*—a poetic third-eyed *Eros* (life instinct) *qua* brazen *Thanatos* (death drive).

Focus: To Infinity, and Beyond!

The filmind may choose to focus the filmgoer’s attention by rendering parts of the images in various degrees of sharpness. Stereoscopic cinema, as contained in *Gravity*’s 3D variant, “forces a depth of field where we may have chosen a different one” (Frampton, 2006:123) and the film’s unobtrusive background (i.e. the abyssal inkiness of space) has contributed to filmgoers hailing the experience as the “most significant achievement in 3D cinema” (Romney, 2013)—as one that has been able to “pondered the nature of stereo filmmaking rather than its effects” (Hoberman, 2013).

In *Gravity*, the depth of its thinkings is ‘limited’ in so far as the infinitude of space imposes an inconceivable depth, but, paradoxically, that vastness collapses in the light of its own ‘uncluttered’ attentions⁸⁸ (i.e. the characters and events themselves, as occurring *in* that screened space). ‘Space’ itself can be neither in nor out of focus; it contains no reference point from which to draw thoughts of depth—it is *absolute* depth. Therefore, when the filmind does draw out attention to objects (as it chooses what objects to grant a third-dimension to) the effect appears, not only praise-stakingly appropriate, but that those ‘emergent’ objects are themselves aggrandised by the lack of intra-frame references (i.e. the filmind’s tranquil and uncomplicated

⁸⁸ See Appendix B.2

compaction). It is arguably the closest cinema has become to producing a holographic narrative; Jonathan Romney (2013) alludes to this uncanny effect when he writes: “[I]n *Gravity*, you might say, the viewer is thrown at things”.

The Tree of Life's thinkings are less techno-centric, but a similar philosophical infinitude can be made comparable through the film's constant 'sun-thoughts' (or sun motifs). Just as *Gravity*'s space-world problematises the film's favouring of long, deep takes relative to limited objects, so *The Tree of Life* exposes the impossibility of thinking the sun's 'sharpness'—as possessing an unknowable and unobtainable detail or 'essence'. Throughout *The Tree of Life* the film continually returns to musings over our galaxy's star. Its rays permeate much of Malick's mullings on the nature—or rather inherent struggles—of being in our modern world. It is a constant reminder that even when attention is directed with the fullest intent/willingness to know, our phenomenological (and cognitive) capabilities impede that desire and we displace ultimate knowledge for philosophical wonder.

This constantly occurring God-image is, like the blackness of space, as 'out-of-focus' as the philosophical conflicts Jack is seeking to balance. The film's heliocentric thoughts encapsulate the film's philosophical position that individuation does not arise from 'knowing all', but rather a softer, more humane, realisation that there are, indeed, forces outside of our understanding that influence us. By the end of the film Jack is not the all-enlightened modern man who now possesses some complete mystical understanding of the cosmos, but rather a contemporary soul who has become aware of something much greater than himself. A *prima* force that does not require total dissection in order to be spiritually absorbed, only its rays be felt and allowed to warm and comfort—a newly found faith in fate.

The impossibility of putting such a distance and celestial object 'in focus' is a very obvious technical limitation, but not one that should, in turn, limit interpretations of the film's philosophical mindedness. Jack is clearly in distress, his life is unbalanced and he is suffering because of it. He is also in constant conflict with his father as the powerful head of the family whose fire burns more than it warms. In *The Tree of Life* these 'sun-thoughts'⁸⁹ are archetypal in nature, symbolic of the eternal 'father', the universal motif or *Imago Dei*, with which Jack is in conflict with

⁸⁹ See Appendix A.3

throughout; he does not yet truly know of this spiritual big Other, and is so blinded when he confronts it directly.

When contemplating Jack's conflict with this 'higher power' (and subsequently his own father), consider the moment when Jack is out in woods with his brother shooting his pellet gun⁹⁰. Before Jack shoots his own brother's finger—by pressuring him to place his finger over the barrel—he sees the sun being reflected in the river. At this moment Jack appears empowered and emboldened. This transcendental force that is plaguing him is no longer some distance celestial phenomena, but a now mere reflection in the stream that is with range of his rage—what was infinitely above is now submissively reflected below. Jack considers, and then shoots the reflection; causing its glow to be dispersed and mangled within the watery mirror he has now so violent disturbed. It is this displaced frustration that he finds comfort in, the symbolic destruction of something ultimately unknowable (like the camera's depth of field) and that cannot be directly addressed or confronted.

Both *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* contain interesting uses of focus and depth that address a greater philosophical concern regarding their characters' progression towards individuation. In *Gravity* space embodies life's 'unknowableness', while in *The Tree of Life* it is the persistent sun-images. Absolute light and absolute darkness are the existential extremes that these films philosophical orbit as their characters' quests toward wholeness and salvation.

Varying Speeds to Affect

Frampton loosely defines speed as the “thoughtful intensification of time” that is “usually used either for phenomenological or poetic effect” (Frampton, 2006:124). *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* are, generally, ‘slow-minded’ features, meditative and thoughtful. They take their time and hold onto thoughts as if they were our last. However what Frampton means when he writes about speed is, rather, the manipulation of it, images that have simply been either sped up or down. But discussions on speed need not be limited to time-lapsed manipulations along a continuum because—as with most of compositional interpretations—it is, as Rose again reminds us, the “expressive content” that completes filmic thought. In this vein the following discussion does not limit itself to one type of speed (i.e. that of camera,

⁹⁰ See Appendix A.4

the characters/objects themselves, or the framed action events), and instead views speed as general point of philosophical inquiry.

Gravity contains a general slowness as its characters drift perilously in space, and its drama is heightened/accelerated when those baseline drift speeds are disturbed (i.e. when the space rubble comes around and smashes into the shuttles and modules, or when Dr Stone becomes detached and spins out of control). Filmosophy views speed as the “heart of the filmind” as it allows us “into perceptions we can never reproduce ourselves” (Frampton, 2006:124). *Gravity* intensifies time *in/through* space, holding onto its utterances, through long takes, for example, while blurring and morphing the divisions between events through variations in speed and, naturally, through its characters’ weightlessness. Its stretched-out opening shot establishes and introduces the film’s poetic personality (as forming part of its world-view) for the filmgoer, refusing to suture utterances ‘technically’ (i.e. under the editor’s knife) in favour of organic, and sped streams of consciousness.

Frampton writes that by recognising “slowedness” as the thoughtful dramatisation opens the mind to fluid interpretations (Frampton, 2006:124). *Gravity*’s opening image of the slow turning of the Earth gives way to the placid approach of the shuttle, to the crew serenely working around it, Dr Stone’s violent detachment, and then slowly drifts into Dr Stone’s helmet and starts *thinking* her point of view⁹¹. This is progressive thoughtfulness of speed illustrates the film’s ability to poetically morph from one ‘type’ shot to the next—a seamless event that not only washes from one corner of thought to the next, but one comprised of intra-thinkings of speed as well. (The images of Earth that open the film are gentle and undemanding compared to the frantic celerity of Dr Stone’s detachment as she spins uncontrollable from the shuttle, but are encased within a single thought or the ‘shot’) This poetic telling of events demonstrates how slow and accelerated moments in film can exist within a single, fluid, re-creational utterance that transfigures its world with varying degrees of poetic urgency; a speed-theme that runs throughout *Gravity* as sedate speeds are intermingled with thrilling accelerations—as the stammering ‘heartbeat’ of this intense cinematic fable.

Frampton’s discussions on speed are, unfortunately, brief and would benefit from descriptions and examples. And while his writings on speed are largely aimed at

⁹¹ See Appendix B.4

slowness, he does touch on the “accelerated image” as “thinking a certain urgency or madness” (Frampton, 2006:124). In *Gravity* this exigency is most evident in the collisions, fluid torrents that comes around like clockwork⁹² and function like scheduled shots of adrenaline to *Gravity*’s core.

In *The Tree of Life*’s general gentle thinkings there is one particular, albeit brief, moment where speed becomes particularly apparent. When Jack enters his office’s building, the camera rushes towards him at a rate unusual given the rest of the feature’s pacing⁹³. But we cannot simply leave descriptions of this moment as ‘the camera rushing,’ again such technical descriptions fail to add anything meaningful, let alone poetic, to its inclusion and function in the film. What, exactly, is rushing towards Jack? Certainly not the camera (for Jack, as a character in a world, is ‘unaware’ of how he is being thought and, obviously, of the camera itself); instead we must be more nuanced in our interpretations of this moment. The rest of the film does not exhibit such unnerving speeds, yet it appears when Jack enters his place of work—the site from which he is able to function, the cold workplace that demands a certain level of personal detachment that Jack (given his suffering) is simply unable to do at this point. Jack is the modern man in peril⁹⁴ and this workspace is a threatening one, a pressure in itself that charges at him unsympathetically (without a willingness to know of his, and the filmind’s, more immediately regards and future contemplative progression). The speed is something we *feel* when Jack enters, an approaching rapid of, as Frampton suggest, maddening urgency that judges/threatens him with impotency in the light of his personal suffering.

Framing New Knowledge Potentials

Gravity is not a film that we are encouraged “to watch on [our] iPhone on the bus. You need to sit as close as you can to the biggest screen you can find—maybe a

⁹² We are told in the film that the debris is said to take ninety minutes to orbit the Earth, and the film itself is also, suspiciously, ninety minutes long. Dr Stone experiences three bombardments during her mission, suggesting yet another dimension of speed as the viewer, experientially, does not feel or think about the film’s implied acceleration (i.e. film-time versus real-time). The film did not ‘cut-away’ to another story line in order to suggest this acceleration, and *Gravity*’s lengthy shots dissuade us from considering that we ‘missed’ something. Such a comparisons (between film-time and real-time) are extra-textual in nature despite the convenient comparison of time between the two.

⁹³ See Appendix A.5

⁹⁴ There is interesting comparison to be made here between Jack’s inability to function at work (as a modern man) and Dr Stone’s over-investment in hers (as a modern woman). While Jack cannot ‘function’ at work due to his melancholia, Stone is portrayed as burying herself in her work (choosing to spend months of training to undertaken the mission) as she escapes her, more traditional, role as mother.

gargantuan IMAX screen” (Edelstein, 2013); the actual frame itself can *affect meaning* before anything even comes to light. We expect less grandeur, less cinematic—in the purest sense—thinkings from a YouTube video than we do with IMAX, from a 3D feature than from the back of a car seat. And aren’t films like *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) not better suited to our home’s smaller, more intimate frames than that of *Avatar* (2009), *Hugo* (2011), or *Transformers* (2007)? Films such as *Gravity*, in particular, exist on the technological cuff that other variants (e.g. mobile viewing, home television, car seats screens, etc.), or framings, of filmgoing are not able to, at least not yet, fully *think* in terms of scale and scope. The acclaim *Gravity* has received for its 3D effects represent a massive technical achievement, but it also represents a new genesis of philosophical contemplation regarding cinematic utterances and how they are technically constituted.

In filmosophy, the frame is a “position of knowledge” that results from “the knowledge the film has of its whole” and, viewed as such, “opens up the possibilities of meaning produced by even the slight inflections of the frame” (Frampton, 2006:125). *Gravity*’s successful exhibiting of a third dimension is not, simply, a technical one. For when we acknowledge a new technology we are also accepting and exploring the existence of a new effect⁹⁵. Technology itself is always value free⁹⁶ and serves a particular creative desire or innovative effect (an seemingly obvious notion that often gets over-shadowed in the ‘light’ of technology itself).

In cinema stereoscopic inclusions further subvert the phenomenological barrier between the filmind and our own (i.e. its immersive capacity), reinforcing the fantasy of our suspension of disbelief that allows for a more convincing and compelling fusion of minds. What 3D framing represents, philosophically, is a more fluid blending of consciousness, a heightened sense of believability of knowledge about a world. The filmind *thinks* specific objects in 3D (if the whole feature were in

⁹⁵ The trend of re-releasing films in 3D, for example, is also not simply to ‘relive’ the experience but, as Chang (2012:4) notes in his write-up of *Titanic 3D* (2012), it “brings out a [new] startling visual and emotional dimension” and is not simply cinema’s “way of surviving as a medium of attraction” (Eivind Røssaak quoted in Belisle, 2013:130). The experience is heightened and this does have obvious box office draw, but further immersion should not be seen as pure gimmickry and technology for technology’s sake. As stereoscopic cinema becomes viewed as more ‘acceptable’ (e.g. as was the case with synchronised sound)—perhaps more ‘invisible’ to us—so in turn will its awe-invoking effects become paired discussions on its philosophical and storytelling potentialities.

⁹⁶ 3D printing has been used to create human organs and limbs to enrich people’s lives, but also to print weapons that may require people to seek new limbs and organs. Whether or not 3D effects in film are necessary or enriching is dependent on how the film in question utilises the technology. That is to say, its utility is not ‘amoral’ or passively inclusive.

‘3D’ we then enter the realm of the holographic image rather than the cinematic in the classic sense) and therefore renders them phenomenological as specific affecting utterances that transfigure the filminds reality.

Therefore the screen *itself* is a type of thinking—the frame is “steering our thinking before we realise it” (Frampton, 2006:125). In 2013 South Korean director Kim Ji-woon’s short film *The X* (2013) was premiered at the Busan International Film Festival; a revolutionary cinematic event that utilised a unique screen (i.e. a new “position of thinking”) that stretched 270-degrees around the filmgoer (called ‘ScreenX’ technology). Filmgoers who attended the premiere simply must not have known what to think; but were still somehow anticipating the film’s bizarre new thoughtfulness before the action-packed filmind was even shown itself—they were *thinking technological revolution* before its life-giving torch was even lit. Such is the case with *Gravity* and its remarkable use of the third dimension as objects and space junk make phenomenological and poetic demands of our consciousness, and in doing so inviting us to think differently with its new cinematic imaginings.

Another way framing is addressed in filmsophy is through its ability to “think any vantage point in a single room” (Frampton, 2006:126), as some cinematically enabled ‘fly-on-the-wall’. Filmsophy lauds the film’s capacity to occupy that fly’s fragment visions, to think slowly a bullet in flight, be able witness the re-creation of cosmic structures, to muse over prehistoric life, or occupy Dr Stone’s visor and share her ‘point of view’. There are a number of moments in both *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* that challenges the formal understanding held by technicians of the ‘point of view’ shot. When Dr Stone, for example, finally emerges from the wreckage of her capsule, now exhausted, she lets her body float atop the water as she watches the rest of the module burn across the sky⁹⁷. Her body drifts so that we regard the back of her head, and then the camera assumes to *think* her view of capsules disintegration above. The burning fragments are then ‘seen’ along with flies buzzing around and, most telling, now the water-borne grass has entered ‘our’ vision. Before, when Stone first emerged, there was no such grass, but after the film ‘withdraws’ from its ‘sky-thinkings’ (Dr Stone’s view while she is floating) she is then shown in close proximity to this waterborne flora. The camera has managed to ‘possess’ her character’s view (i.e. dynamically shifting from ‘objectively’ regarding

⁹⁷ See Appendix B.4

Stone in the water to the ‘subjectivity’ of a P.O.V—a fluid transition between objective and subjective thinkings) and, in doing so, has traversed and assimilated subject-object relations into its own thinkings and back *fluidly* without interference (such as a cut). Like the film’s opening shot (whereby the filmind morphed into Dr Stone’s suit to suggest her disorientating point of view as she tumbled through space), here the frame is being used in such a way that must be considered philosophically significant, as problematizing the mind-body conflict through cinema’s unique capacities for neo-thoughts.

Such transfiguring is a feature of *Gravity*’s subtly collapsing of the filmgoers assumptions of subjectivity and objectivity; producing a third thought that cannot be described or differentiate from the film’s wholesome regard, but is also no less philosophically significant as it illustrates a double-aspect solution to the mind-body problem. As mentioned, in filmosophy framing is a ‘position of knowledge’ and so when we can safely say that technology (such is the case with *Gravity*) has influenced the frame in some way, we must then explore the effective knowledge it brings about, and not simply seek to only deconstruct its technical workings, or else risk subverting the cinematic effect in favour of extra-textual technological fantasies. In short, we must ask more seriously what is so special about this new effect, and not substitute the cinematic experience for extra-textual wonderment.

Movement and Re-birth

Filmosophy tells that: “The moving frame of cinema, the thinking of movement, can be both kinetic and conceptual; giving life to film and tracing lines of life in film” (Frampton, 2006:131). The revolutionary and innovative effect of *Gravity*’s Iris is evidence of the medium’s new technology thrust, as the thoughtful reconceptualising of the camera’s movements that requires a new language outside the “technicist rhetoric” (Frampton, 2006:130). Other than Iris’s “kinetic” innovations (e.g. thinking its characters as weightless), there is one particularly enchanting movement in *Gravity* that illustrates the filmind’s potential for “conceptual” movements.

After Kowalski detaches himself from Dr Stone the mission specialist enters the ISS, removes her spacesuit and, in one of films rare ‘static’ camera moments, she relaxes her body and mind to escape the immediacy of her existential dilemma.

Having let go mentally and physically, her body slowly contracts within the circular confines of the space capsule, allowing her body to will its own form⁹⁸. What comes next is perhaps the film's most engaging moment of the entire film: Dr Stone's body steadily contracts to the safety of the fetal position. This movement is a microcosm for Stone's desire to escape and regress towards a simpler state of being, a return to an earlier stage in her development, as she becomes, at this mid-point, "a child waiting to be born or die" (Corliss, 2013).

There is no gravity to impede this movement, no Earthly complications to hinder her mind-body's desire to pull into itself—it is a solitary centripetal contemplation within the vacuum of alienating space; one that many critics and viewers have exclaimed as one of film's most compelling utterances. Her 'fetal drift' is a conceptualisation of her existential anxiety; a lucid thought that also disentangles itself from the camerabatics the filmgoer has engaged with up to now—this is fluid film-thinking's re-creational power and promise at play.

Dream-Shifts Big and Small

In 1930 the American poet H.D. wrote: "The film is the art of dream portrayal" (quoted in Lebeau, 2001:3). Cinema's plethora of phantasmagoria and dream-inducing perceptions and have long placed the film spectator at the imagined vanishing point of filmic address, one that straddles the conscious divide between illusion and reality, of waking life and the dream images that shadow it. The French poet and playwright Antonin Artaud went as far with the film-dream analogy to state that: "If the cinema is not made to translate dreams or all that which, in conscious life, resembles dreams, then cinema does not exist" (quoted in Lebeau, 2001:32).

Christian Metz strongly questioned the romantic 'film-as-dream' analogy in his seminal text *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (1977). Nader (1984:125) summarises Metz's three main reasons why such a comparison is problematic as follows: "the perception of film is real perception, not an internal psychic event; films are more structured than dreams; and they are not as absurd". Metz's criticisms did, however, leave the essential key tenets of the analogy intact, ultimately suggesting that the film-viewing process is perhaps more akin to that of a daydream:

⁹⁸ See Appendix B.5

The research on cognitive states, whether that state is hypnosis, dream, daydream, or virtual life experience, brings with it a conviction that an intense kind of cognitive experience is undergone during film viewing. (Nadaner, 1984:125).

This has deeply fascinated film theorists, and there have been various approaches to exploring the mental processes in operation both while dreaming and while watching a film. Lebeau (2001:3) notes that cinema “has a special tie to the life of the mind: approximate, imitative, it is a type of mime of both mind and world”. Filmosophy does not emphatically concur *en masse* psychoanalytical film theory’s romanticised film-as-dream analogy, but it does value the insight and the possible interpretations that psychoanalysis can supply the interpreter. Frampton comments on such interpretations as follows:

The film writer can use filmsosophical concepts of meaning creation and add a psychoanalytical reading, or related the film to its context or environment, or propose how the film creates a space for ideological critique. (Frampton, 2006:181)

In this vein, *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* both contain utterances and sequences that are explicitly comparable to that of dreams, and filmsosophy encourages that such fluid film-thinkings be addressed accordingly as ‘psychoanalytically minded’ moments and sequences.

After Dr Stone enters the ISS via an airlock, she evades a firestorm and moves into the Russian Soyuz module only to discover that the pod has no fuel. Dr Stone resigns herself to death by switching off the oxygen supply and hopes for a peaceful end while she listens to a Greenlandic Inuit fisherman over the intercom⁹⁹. However before her suicide is complete, veteran astronaut Matt Kowalski suddenly appears at the airlock’s window (even though Kowalski sacrificed himself earlier) and proceeds to join her in the Soyuz by compromising the airlock¹⁰⁰ (which ‘should have’ killed

⁹⁹ Interestingly, Jonás Cuarón (who co-wrote the script for *Gravity*) also released the seven-minute short film *Aningaaq* (2013) that shows the Inuit fisherman’s ‘side’ of this radio encounter. It is tempting to, as Christopher Rosen (2013) did writing for the Huffington Post, view this short feature as ‘revealing’ the “Other Half Of Key Scene”, but the film is only a spin-off and is not required to understand the events of the film (like it would with, for example, transmedia storytelling). The cinematic experience of *Gravity* does not concern itself with *Aningaaq*, and the short feature is its own event. A whole other film could be made regarding the politics and panic experience by mission command as they search for their lost astronauts, of the Russians trying to cover up their missile strike, or any other imaginable event in *Gravity*’s world. The point is that the film itself is complete, and has no ‘gaps’ in its tale to fill. *Aningaaq* does not add to the cinematic experience of *Gravity*, only the social experience.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix B.6

Stone). With the same charm and charisma as before, Kowalski reminds Stone that the Soyuz's landing rockets will be able to get her to the Chinese Space Station Tiangong. Stone then 'awakens' from her near-death experience/lucid dream, turns the oxygen back on, and successfully navigates herself, alone, to salvation.

This is a prime example of how a film might fluidly *think* in/through dream. The filmgoer is 'aware' that Kowalski is actually dead, as film-world's own narratological logic dictates. However despite all these seemingly illogical happenings, the film is still able to *think* his return (as the filmind is indeed capable of via the demonic *deus ex machina*), an event made possible as the film fluidly re-thinks its film-world (not narrative) and shifts from Stone's current predicament to the hallucinatory visions of her deceased mentor and back again.

Frampton (2006:131) notes that such "shifts" are a kind a movement, "a decision to go somewhere else, to show a different view of an event in progress" that can "mark a move into memory, fantasy, dream or hallucination". This particular shift is considered fluid as the filmind is thinking the re-creation of its film-world via recognisable dream-logic (it is *thinking* hallucination), a dynamic conveyance that is not contemplated by "the blurred, warped or watery image that usually signals the transition" (Frampton, 2006:131), but seamlessly integrated into the film.

Dr Stone is not herself 'dreaming' of Kowalski's return (and so directly receiving his life-saving knowledge), but instead the film is *thinking salvation through* a type of dreamwork. During this oneiric utterance, the Kowalski figure reminds Stone that the information he passes to her she already knows from training (as existing within her own memory). Thus, the knowledge is not 'new' in the sense that it does not originate from his own, narratological, being, but rather he is a transfigured messenger that *resembles* Kowalski—the trustworthy figure/vessel conveying information that was previously latent or, perhaps, 'subconscious'.

Shelborne (1983:64) writes that dreamwork is "one method by which the unconscious could be explored" and by examining dreams "the person pursuing individuation comes to learn of different aspects of himself of which he was formerly unaware" (Shelburne, 1983:64). In the case of Dr Stone and her quest towards individuation, this moment reveals *a priori* knowledge (received from her training) in the form of Kowalski's 'supernatural' return, uttered as part of the filmind's fluid thoughts towards Stone's personal salvation.

Similarly, but on a larger film-time scale, *The Tree of Life* contains a number of oneiric musings that, when acknowledged as such, illuminates some of film's confusing sound-images. In *The Tree of Life* the filmind's thoughts of Jack's childhood are, narratively considered, a type of daydream. Jack himself remains at work, but is deeply troubled by the psychological weight his brother's death bears. Jack is not asleep (in fact he is first shown waking up in his house with his wife, and this is not a type of Jungian 'false-awakening') but the film's own space-time inferences inform that the sound-images of his childhood are rather memories being dreamily recalled (like *Gravity*'s hallucinatory thinkings of Kowalski); a self-induced psychotherapy, or 'thinking cure', to his modern neurosis. While *Gravity* fluidly thinks it shifts into hallucination within a single thought-image (i.e. an uninterrupted take), Jack's regression is produced progressively through a series of shifts.

Frampton writes that shifts "expand and collapse a sense of space for the filmgoer" (2006:135) and it is through such undulations that *The Tree of Life* transitions into meditations on Jack's past. The filmind *thinks* Jack in the room with his parents in the aftermath of the family's loss, and also via a P.O.V, towards shifting its thinkings into Jack's past. Unlike *Gravity*, *The Tree of Life* holds its oneiric meditations for the majority of the film and mulls over moments in Jack's childhood that are cued as pivotal points of psychological conflict (as obstacles to individuation). These image-thoughts are not 'exact' memories revealing themselves to Jack *qua* Jack's conscious recollection, but lucid manifestations of the filmind's thoughts on the psychoanalytical significance of his trauma and, subsequently, his own individuation.

To further illustrate how *The Tree of Life*'s filmind can be said to be thinking psychoanalytically, this research submits two scenes that explicitly *thinks* the classic Oedipus conflict—the "incestuous and parricidal dream" that embodies the "drama of sex and murder in the family supposed to preoccupy us all" (Lebeau, 2001:6). In these moments¹⁰¹ the film erotically regards Jack's relationship with his mother, and ponders his 'childlike' desire to eliminate his father. In the first series of thoughts the filmind objectifies Jack's mother by sexualising her, otherwise mundane, actions (e.g. fetishising of the feet, phallic suggestions via the hose as Jack drinks deep from it,

¹⁰¹ See Appendix A.6

voyeuristically regarding Mrs O' Brien as she hangs her wash load, and as Jack gazes up at her in the window).

Comparably, Jack's conflict with his father takes on Freudian taint when Mr. O' Brien is working on the undercarriage of the family car. Mr. O' Brien position, like his wife's activities, do not inherently invite parricidal thoughts, but the filmind *thinks* him vulnerable through the filmind's "position of thinking" (Frampton, 2006:125), or 'framing' as the manner in which the filmind intends the event. The carjack (the only object preventing the car from succumbing to gravity) is part of this thought, and, like Jack's sexualised gaze towards his mother, the converse of the complex is found here as the filmind muses over the ease at which the carjack might be disturbed (which would likely kill Mr. O' Brien); suggested by Jack himself as he regards both the carjack (as the means to his father's end) and their environment (to avoid witnesses that might shame him).

If we consider psychoanalytical film theory's film-as-dream analogy as absolute, such moments would then be considered a type of *mise-en-abyme* (i.e. dream-within-a-dream, or double-dream), a self-reflexive utterance that has the filmgoer tumbling down a, theoretically never-ending, 'wonderlandic' void. Although such a comparison can be made (e.g. *Inception*, *The Matrix*, *Alice in Wonderland*, etc.) this is the point where filmosophy and psychoanalysis differ. The filmind *is* capable of dream-like thoughts, but is not itself a type of 'meta-dream' (as such a comparison *reductio ad absurdum* concludes). Instead, it is simply a narratological feature providing evidence of the filmind's chosen structure—its own dreamy desires and fantasies.

CONCLUSION

“The spiritual adventure of our time is the exposure of human consciousness to the
 undefined and indefinable”
 - C. G. Jung (quoted in Jaffé 1984:61)

This research has been towards the advancement of filmosophy as a rich and fertile new mode of cinematic inquiry. Seeking philosophical significance in film is not, however, a new endeavour, and the array of writings on the subject is vast and increasing; but most research has become overly invested in documenting the philosophy in/through film (e.g. a Nietzschean ‘reading’ of Béla Tarr, or studying Heidegger through/in the films of Terrence Malick)—in general attempting to redefine *auteur* theories into historical accounts of philosophical thought. These are linguistic and literary approaches that aim to prescribe philosophical significance through inadequate abstractions of cinematic experiences *into* another language, and in doing so we risk truncating the potential growth of the medium-specific contributions to philosophy. If we truly are living in/progressing deeper into an ocular centric age, then we must re-evaluate our tendency to simplify the philosophical output our era is producing via its images.

Livingston’s ‘problem of paraphrase’ is the direct result of our tendency to transpose/interpret notably philosophical cinematic utterances into the written word, literary texts that appear more manageable and appropriate when discerning and judging philosophical significance and a work’s value. Problematising the ‘film-as-philosophy’ debate in this way has proven inadequate and clumsy, and involves a culling of cinema’s uniqueness and philosophical potential. Both Livingston and Smuts understand the problem (i.e. the ‘bold thesis’ film theorists appease), and both offer interesting workarounds as they make compromises on cinema’s uniqueness and

epistemic constraints. Indeed, to ‘paraphrase’ a film’s philosophical statements does involve compromise, but if we are to truly embrace film’s philosophical potential and indeed future (as well as honestly judge and value their artistic and social significance) we need to release ourselves from the rigidity of this self-imposed, historically informed, restriction.

Livingston feels this issue when he says the “burden” of the “philosophically-oriented interpreter” to develop and employ a well-defined “problematique” (2006:13); what Smuts suggest when he promotes cinema’s ‘paradigmatic’ means (2009:410); it is what Rose moves towards in promoting a type of “visual connoisseurship” (2012:52) as we start to “take images seriously” (2012:17); Virginia Woolf (quoted in Frampton, 2006:26) words when she asks: “Is there any characteristic which thought possesses that can be rendered visible without the help of words?”; Holly yearns for the awe and ‘wonder’ that is “in excess of research” (Holly quoted in Cheetham, et al., 2005:88); it is what Stanley Kubrick notes as film “avoids intellectual verbalisation” (quoted in Frampton, 2006:26); a ‘gap’ that Žižek describes through his parallaxes; and a frustration that Frampton’s seeks to address with his philosophy of filmind—the new study of “film as thinking” (2006:6). Indeed “[w]e must be better connoisseurs of film if we are not to be as much at the mercy of perhaps the greatest intellectual and spiritual influence of our age as to some blind and irresistible elemental force” (Béla Balázs, 1945:17).

Frampton’s filmsophy cannot simply be dismissed as a new-age neologism; it is a progressive—yes radical—and much-needed portmanteau that synthesises the troubling hyphenation that film and philosophy continues to try bridge both linguistically and theoretically; it is a fruitful cine-sniglet¹⁰² that describes the terrain from which and to which the future of the medium and our thinkings are emerging.

Frampton’s filmsophy is a new concept in film theory (and inherently consilient in nature) and there are few writings that directly incorporate its propositions. To that end this research has explored filmsophy’s key concepts and terms and sort to: present filmsophy as naturally arising from our current understanding on film and philosophy; discuss and diffuse the teething criticism against as a new approach to thinking about the relationship between film philosophy; explore a suitable theoretical framework (ontological, epistemological, and

¹⁰² A ‘sniglet’ is a term coined by comedian/actor Rich Hall designated to words that aren’t, but indeed should be, in the dictionary.

methodological) to ‘ground’ its radicalness within appropriate contemporary theories and approaches; expand descriptions of filmosophy’s key terms (i.e. filmind and filmgoer as ‘demonic’ beings, and ‘film-world re-creation”); and present and discuss suitable examples of its ‘fluid film-thinkings’ through two contemporary, forward-thinking, and fascinating features. This research has also aimed to provide interpretations that are aligned with Frampton’s notes on filmosophical writing and interpretation by avoiding technicist terms, incorporating suitable metaphors and analogies, and by addressing the film drama itself rather than indulging in ‘extra-textual’ comforts.

Squaring the Circle

Cinema is the fluid future of our thought, and filmosophy’s fluid film-thinking is the exciting elixir—the filmosopher’s cine-stone or *aurea apprehension* (‘golden understanding’)—that begins, like the proverbial ‘fade to/from black’ and the alchemists opening ‘negredo’, with a visible blackening that thickens and enriches our mind’s eye. Cinema’s abyssal blisses, those aqueous re-creations, are constantly appearing and disappearing in the stream of consciousness that constitutes filmosophy’s mixing of minds; illusive truths that flicker forth into being then fade to a pure and enlightened darkness form which they came; they are prophetic swirls that point at a philosophical future that is becoming of the medium. The screen itself is the neo-chemist’s ‘black sun’, the *sol niger* that “holds a transformative possibility and an experience that opens the dark eye of the soul” (Marlan, 2005:23)—the mystical and philosophical quest to “penetrate the mystery of life” (Read, 1933:251)—and is the contemporary caldron from/in to which future demons toil to dead reckon this coming change:

The highest experience of mind, such as poetry and metaphysics [where] only a psychology of expanded states of mind will bring out all the possibilities of a cinema whose functions is the visual representation changing forms of the mind. (Gilbert-Lecomte quoted in Frampton, 2006:24-25)

Change, as a philosophy, is the only consilient constant we need now explore and, like the alchemists of old, we must become aware that the “quest is more important than the reward...the quest is the reward” (Schwarz, 1980:58); that the future of

cinema lies not in theoretical exposition or in our technological tenaciousness, but, rather, in the poetic and fluid excesses of progressive cinematic engagements.

Filosofy encapsulates this process of individuation—of cinema’s fluid becoming and this constant evolution of thought—and describes a tantalising ladder from which theorist and filmgoers may aim towards the fluid future of cinema and, indeed, mankind’s philosophical due course. To speak of the filmind is to imagine a future of film that knows no limits, because there are none. Its future is a brewing torrent, innovative visions to which this research has hope to explore and make known by discussing and expanding Frampton’s own ‘radical’ ruminations. By unpacking specific utterances found within *The Tree of Life* and *Gravity*, this paper submits that they are future signs of a coming significance that, while we have the language to describe their technical existence, require a more prudent experiential understanding of their philosophical potency and capacity for enlightenment. Biro (quoted in Frampton, 2006:26) writes that “[i]f the camera is an extension of our eyes, the broadening of our vision, then it is also an extension of our intellect”, an augmentation of current minds that demands meditation in order to see what is already before us—the liquid future that is lapping at our present heels.

Filosofical language, interpretation, and meditation are inclusive endeavours that wish to break the illusion of chains of cinematic realities, not to escape the ‘cine-cave’, but to empower and encourage free-thinking when we willing open our minds to the wonderful future of film and our own collective consciousness. This is how philosophy gets *through* film, how it can be said to be philosophising and birth new knowledge.

By presenting and exploring the progressive fluid-thoughts in the two films submitted, this research arrives at the over-arching philosophy of constant becoming, of re-creationism and our never-ending thrust towards individuation. *Gravity* and *The Tree of Life* believe in the philosophy of change, not simply in narrative terms as Jack and Dr Stone as modern man and woman personally progressing, but as a deep-seated contention that progression *is* the fundamental human condition, as the ‘strange attractor’ that drives our advancement through these chaotic and unstable worlds. And cinema *is* that philosophy of constant becoming: “Film-thinking transforms the recognisable (in a small or large way), and this immediate transfiguration by film provokes the idea that our thinking can transform our world” (Frampton, 2006:209).

The philosophy behind this mythical transformation is not new, the alchemists sought to “transform the world to change life, and hence liberate man to transform the world” (Schwarz, 1980:58) and it is the individuation process that they called the ‘golden awareness’. Alchemy, like filmsophy, aims to “open the way toward total liberation” (Schwarz, 1980:58), to open the ‘window into eternity’ (Dourley, 2011:515). Frampton’s research itself was inspired by such thinkings, citing Roger Gilbert-Lecomte’s 1933 essay “The Alchemy of the Eye” in his pretext to his thesis thoughts:

This is the only, but immense *raison d'être* of the cinema: it is the mediator between the mind and nature, and can express in movement and visible forms the development of the forms of mind. If man decides that this is the role of film, it could become the means of expression whose ‘invention’ would be almost as important as that of language and writing; indeed it would become a plastic language. Thus film, a tool of research and experience, would become a mode of knowledge, a form of the mind. (Gilbert-Lecomte quoted in Frampton, 2006:24)

Thoughts to which Frampton returns to in his conclusion:

Filmosophy is a product of our current age of plastic malleable cinema. It is also a product of our current age of knowledge about cinema conventions: an unlearning, a more ‘suitable’, more cinematic reconceptualisation. (Frampton, 2006:212)

Gilbert-Lecomte’s ‘plastic language’ and Frampton’s ‘plastic cinema’ are descriptions of change worded to describe cinema’s essential dynamism. The alchemic analogy is attached here to filmsophy in so far as the philosophical natures of their endeavours are akin. Alchemists, like film-beings and goers, project themselves onto matter to “bring about unity from the disparate parts of the psyche, creating a ‘chemical wedding’ [a mixing]... and attempts to bring about the mysterious ‘unification’ he calls Wholeness” (Marlan, 2005:10). Filmsophy’s ‘mixing’ of minds is therefore alchemic in nature, and alchemy, like filmsophy, is:

[A]n earnest search after truth, in the light of that principle of the unity of matter which has been rediscovered by modern science. Is it too much to hope that time by degrees will bring forth a corresponding unity of heart which will act as an elixir of life in the regeneration of the nations? (Read, 1933:278).

Read’s writings echo Wilson’s call to consilience, his ‘unity of knowledge’, that film, with its futurist thinkings, is able to embody the hope that such calls can be answered; for it is in the cinema that so often technologies are first imagined, socio-

political dissatisfactions documented, love confessed, fears imagined, and inspirations immortalised for future generations to heed and possibly enact. Philosophically, cinema has always been 'ahead of its time', the screen is our Ouija board, its neo-thinkings birthed from the philosophical planchette we energise when we make and merge with these nigh realities as we progress towards a belief of a future world:

The filmsopher is the person of tomorrow and the days after tomorrow. The filmsopher engages in a thinking of and for the future (where film 'tells' us new things). In filmsophy film is the beginning *and the future* of our thought. We thought we needed to calculate our beliefs about the world, but the of philosophy, with its metaphorical pictures of that belief, might lead us to realise that we can understand the world in like manner – that we can 'film' our beliefs. (Frampton, 2006: 212-213)

These are Frampton's final words in *Filmosophy*: the study of film-as-thinking.

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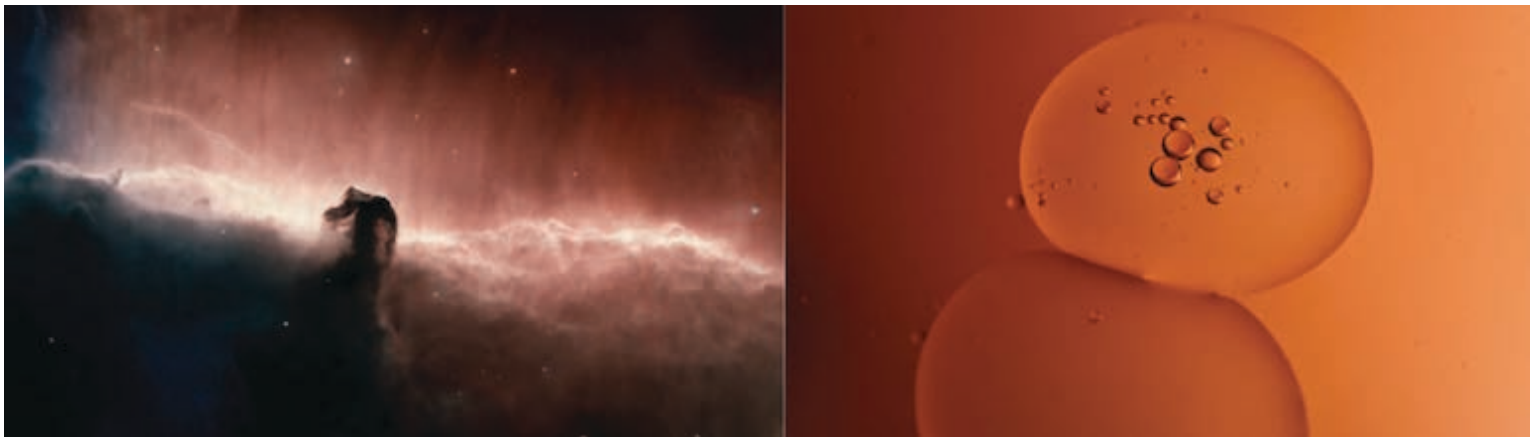
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- Avatar*. Dir. James Cameron. 20th Century Fox, 2009.
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APPENDIX A: *The Tree of Life*

1. Lumia compositions in *The Tree of Life*:



2. The Horsehead Nebula (left) and cell division (right) in *The Tree of Life*'s creational sequence:



3. Sun-image's from *The Tree of Life*:



APPENDIX A: *The Tree of Life*

4. Jack shooting his brother (left) and the sun's reflection (right):



5. Jack arriving at work (left) and the 'rush' of the camera (right) as he enters:



6. Oedipal conflict in *The Tree of Life*—phallic suggestions towards his mother (left) and fantasies of killing his father (right):

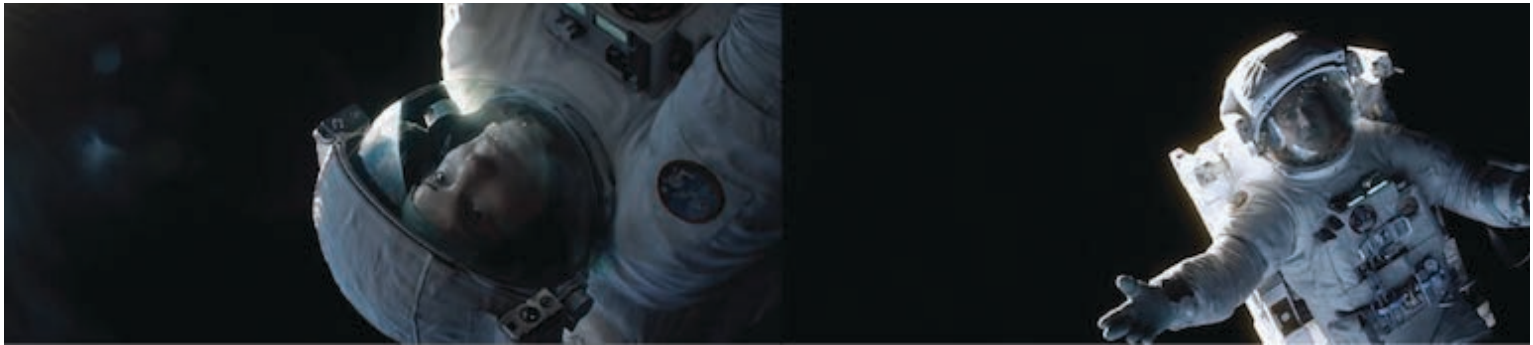


APPENDIX B: *Gravity*

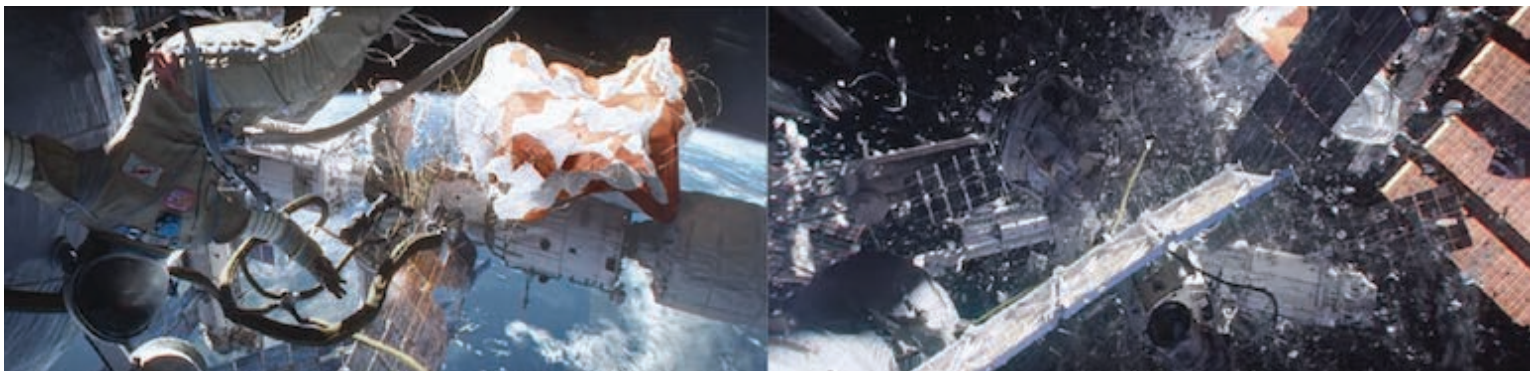
1. *Gravity*'s opening shot (first and last images—left to right):



2. *Gravity*'s abyssal canvas:

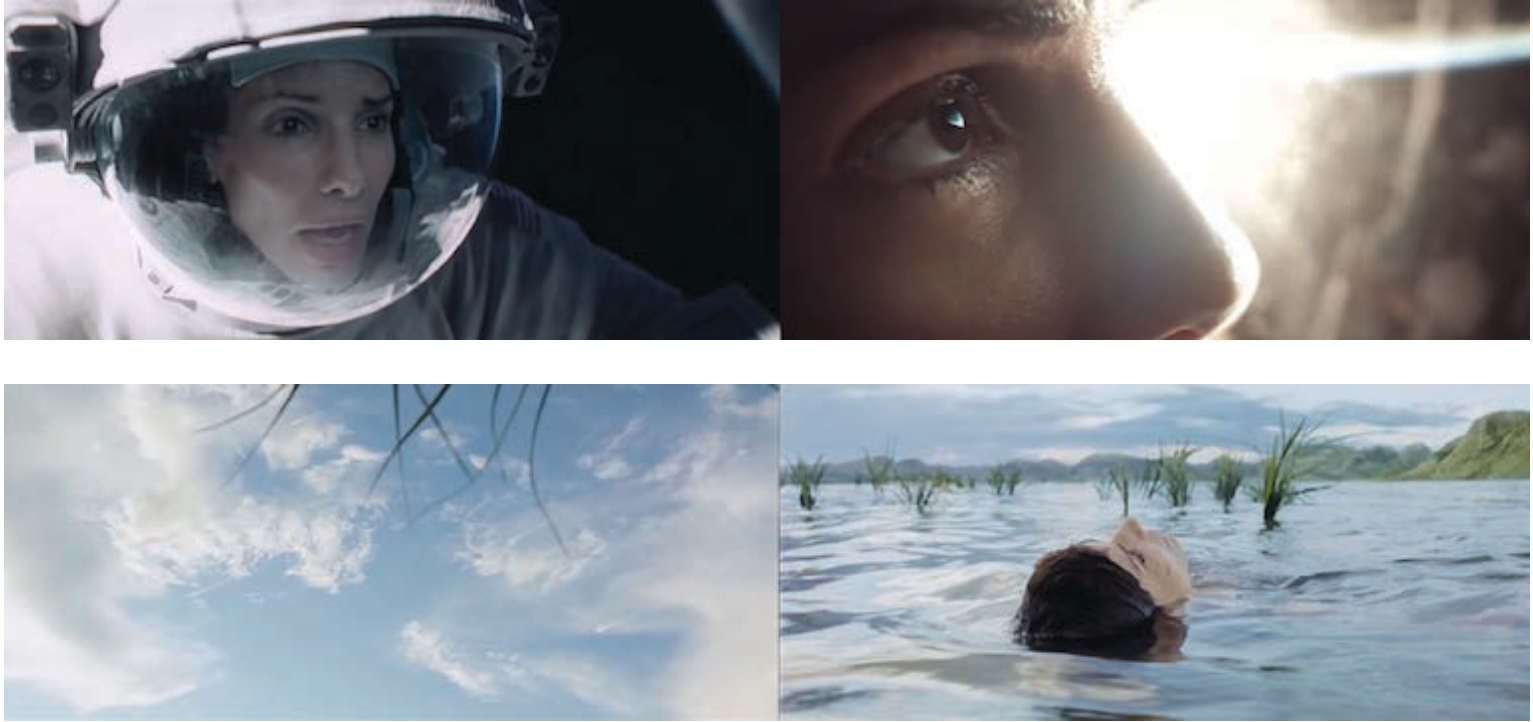


3. Collisions and sound in *Gravity*:



APPENDIX B: *Gravity*

4. Fluid shifts from third-person to first-person in *Gravity*:



5. Dr Stone's metaphorical regression:



6. Kowalski's dreamy return:

