

This enrichment of the self is, in my opinion, the most interesting feature of cinema, and the reason for its universal success as a form of art.

ABSTRACT

I sketch an analysis of observing as a particular attitude one can take regarding the surrounding world. I stress some particular features of observation, like the cancelling of the vital engagement in the world, and the delight that pure observation involves. Then I move to a description of figurative consciousness and its image-world. In the final part, I try to show how watching movies displays a new type of observation, based on the empathic connection with the characters, the emergence of a virtual body, and a self-decentered life, where the ego is not an onlooker, but something like an "in-looker".

THE WORLDWOOD OF THE CINEMATIC IMAGE

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Let us begin by allowing the film to do for us its own philosophy, while considering how it compares to ours. The film-philosopher is, for once, the filmmaker, Akira Kurosawa; and the film – indeed, one of its episodes, 'Crows' (in *Dreams*¹) – philosophizes in its own terms through forcefully performing a reflective act of phenomenological *description* that nonetheless coalesces with the very *situation* thus described². That is to say: in order to show what cinema consists in (as the complex relation between filming, the cinematic image, and spectator), the film emphatically makes its own pure cinematic phenomenon happen.

Recoiling itself in the silence of pure, detached vision, the first shot masterfully displays in the briefest and most banal, inconspicuous way the structure of *natural perception* as a complete system of presentation of the world that ultimately implies some gaze located at the zero point of observation (probably ours), sufficiently receded as to obtain a sort of 'flyover vision' of the world (or of any object within it) from the outside, according to the Cartesian logic (and geometry) of ex-tensive space, the logic of the *partes extra partes*³: within the objective space of a museum room containing

¹ Akira Kurosawa, *Dreams (Yume)* [film], 1990

² A descriptive turn through purely cinematic means similar to, and far more satisfying than, Merleau-Ponty's account of how sensation and sentient mingle, like in falling asleep: 'falling' from *intention* to *situation* and inviting the Phenomenologist himself to attune the description of passivity to a sort of passive description. (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945, p. 245 – henceforth *PP*)

³ Thus repeating a typical phenomenological (double) procedure: (I) first, presenting Cartesian 'survol' occularcentrism, in order to then didactically overcome it through a 'being-in-the-world' approach, which indeed emphatically ensues in the movie as at the same time (II)