

How Do We Experience Different Films?

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The objective of this research is to demonstrate that there are cognitive differences in the spectators' experience due to the temporal structure of films, that is, the technical organisation and development of the audio, visual, and linguistic events. Cognitive, in this sense, means the processes involved in the acquisition and use of knowledge, be it sensible, practical or propositional. This work is a reflection founded on Kant's aesthetics, along with the film theory of Gilles Deleuze; the analytical approach in aesthetics and the cognitive theory of fiction from Jean-Marie Schaeffer; the phenomenology of the consciousness of internal time of Edmund Husserl; and an integrated approach in cognitive sciences that presupposes the whole organism in relation to the environment, in a specific circumstance, within its own dynamics. To give empirical evidence to this theoretical thesis, it compares neuropsychological experiments about mainstream film reception² to some representative films of different styles, genres, countries, released on screen during the 2000s;³ with the support of experiments that are analogical to some extent to a film experience, such as looking at paintings, listening to music and reading. Besides its current relevance, this theoretical model for film analysis and critique will apply to cinema in its integrity.

The cinema of this new century seems to represent a tendency to radicalise the rhythm of the films, that is, the intensified rhythm of the continuity editing on the one hand, and "slow cinema" on the other. This tendency appears to be a historical development of the Deleuze paradigms movement-image and time-image. This study interprets these deleuzian concepts as two theoretical models conceived in relation to the differences in the temporal structure of films. The movement-image and the time-image are the manifestation of two intentional and constructive tem-

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² I am referring here to some important experiments carried out by James Cutting, Uri Hasson and Jeffrey Zacks, among others.

³ These films were selected based on the top 10 lists of the best films of the decade published by *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Cinequanon* and *Sight & Sound*.

poral principles, that distinguish the performance of any film in a scale of degrees, ranging from the extreme of physical time to the extreme of subjective time.

The film structure has a causal relation to the spectator's perception. Thus, this technical structure is the link between the film and the spectator. Nevertheless, this configuration does not represent a language. Each film creates its own system of signs, be it more or less well known by the public. The meaning of the audiovisual flux is constructed by the singular reception of each spectator, with her/his own feelings, desires, beliefs, knowledge, and so on, who re-activates these signs, since the film is the semiotic support of derived Intentional signs. So, the technical structure of the films is intentional as well. That is, the structure can be seen as the content of the author's intentionality, as every human artefact is constructed by a specific point of view, from a determined perspective, which represents certain functions and principles. Then, the film structure is the link between the author(s) and the spectator.

Films are cognitive structures as well, in the sense that the relationship with this representation involves the same mechanisms and affects of the cognitive relationship with the real world. So, the film structure has a relation to the modes of inflexion of our attention and, consequently, with the development of the cognitive processes correlated to comprehension and consciousness. Films are also an interaction between the diegetic world (fictional or not) and the spectator. For this reason, the film structure is also related to the modes of immersion and simulation of the spectators, configuring a specific characteristic of the narrative objects.

The most important property of the object film is time. To differentiate the perceptual temporality of a fixed and unchanged object from the temporality of music, Husserl uses the concept of time-object (*Zeitobjekte*): an object that lasts and changes within its unity and, thus, on this temporal relation of durations and changes, orients the perceptive acts of the subject. Therefore, the film is a time-object if (i) it has temporal properties, that is, events that last and change within their unity, in succession and/or in simultaneity; (ii) the temporal perception of the spectator is oriented by the temporal properties of the object; and (iii) it represents time by time, that is, it gives the perception of time and the representation of time since the time-objects are temporally extended (*Zeitextension*). Films are temporally extended and structured, as is our consciousness.

Our knowledge is also accomplished by its proper temporal structure. Temporal organisation is the key structure for both film and knowledge. If film is made by and perceived as a succession and/or simultaneity of single events, knowledge is constructed by mental schemas that are structured in sequence by the regularities and/or by the differences we experience in our relationship with the objects of the world, with the others and with ourselves.

In consequence of the role of time in the perception of films, how does the relation between the temporal properties of the film and attention work? Or, how does the interaction film/spectator take place? What about the aesthetic attention?

The subjective quality of this experience is the cause of its indetermination and then, the source of the richness of this affective and cognitive relationship.

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As it is a relation between an object and a subject, and following the assumptions of the perceptual realism, the analysis will be based objectively on the most fundamental level of every film: its temporal structure. This research will concentrate on the processes of the cinematographic reception, regardless of its result or final judgement. It will be carried out on the development of these three levels of experience – perception, attention and comprehension – in relation to the film's temporal properties. The aim is to search for the conditions of possibility of the aesthetic attention.

Despite the growing importance of the studies in film cognition, they also present a disparity either in their concepts of the cognitive processes, or in their knowledge about cinema. The purpose of this research is to present cinema as a worthy interdisciplinary scientific object, to demonstrate the cognitive differences in its reception and their implications. In brief, it is a question of the knowledge of people and of the meaning of Aesthetics.