



Cinema and/as Ethics

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Mathew Abbott (University of Ballarat), 'Ethics, Qualia, and Knowledge: On Kiarostami's *Ten*'

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In his 1929 "Lecture on Ethics" Ludwig Wittgenstein proposed a thought experiment: imagine an omniscient person – someone who knows every fact about the world since the beginning of time – decided to write a book containing all his knowledge. Such a book would be perfectly encyclopaedic; it "would contain the whole description of the world" (*Philosophical Occasions*, 39). Yet such a book, Wittgenstein argued, "would contain nothing that we would call an *ethical* judgment or anything that would logically imply such a judgment" (ibid). This is not to say that Wittgenstein rejected ethics; rather, he appears to have thought that the ethical has a different relation to the facts than we are in the habit of thinking. But what is the nature of this relation? Is Wittgenstein right to imply that facts are insufficient? What is this excess of the ethical over the factual?

After finishing *The Wind Will Carry Us*, Abbas Kiarostami made two feature-length films with the (for him) new medium of video: *ABC Africa* in 2000, and *Ten* in 2001. The films stand out from Kiarostami's *oeuvre* because of their powerful political claims – while Kiarostami's cinema has always been concerned with social issues, here it is central to the final products. At the same time, these films are marked by a idiosyncratic blend of the factual and the artificial, documentation and experimentation: they are neither 'mockumentaries' nor 'docudramas', yet they are far from being traditional documentaries. In this paper, I want to show how *Ten* in particular can shed light on meta-ethical debates between moral realism (the view that moral statements are statements of fact) and antirealism (the view that moral statements have not to do with facts). *Ten*, which works through the political complexities of contemporary Iranian society via stunning performances from actors playing themselves, is interested in the moral claims that emerge when the grounds for making such distinctions start to disappear. It achieves its moral power not just in spite but also partly because of how it foregrounds artifice. Invoking Wittgenstein's "Lecture on Ethics" in relation to the problem of qualia in contemporary philosophy, this paper asks how and why.

Daniel Brennan (Bond University), 'The Epicurean Politics of Jiri Menzel's Films'

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The Czech new wave film maker Jiri Menzel advances in his films an Epicurean argument for avoiding politics as much as is possible. Against prevailing views of martyrdom and dissident sacrifice in Czechoslovakia which traditionally reject the importance of everyday concerns for some higher ideal, Menzel's films present a compelling case for taking sexuality and the mundane seriously. The argument is only discernible through cinematic thinking. That is, the dialogue itself, or some other singular aspect of a Menzel film, analysed against some ready-at-hand framework, would yield little about Menzel's argument. Instead Menzel promotes, through a complicated interplay of character development and montage, a political abstinence which encourages citizens to focus on satisfying mundane pleasures such as the (natural) fulfilment of sexual desire. The depth of Menzel's characters is so vivid that when placed inside the life of the film they can engage politically and socially in a way that invites contemplation in the film. When engaging with the political, the antagonist of the film is usually diminished by the experience. Hence an engaged viewer of Menzel's films delight in the pleasure of social life, and are bequeathed an interesting meditation on the power (or lack of power) of politics to enter the private sphere. Menzel's characters must invite the political into the private, otherwise the political is powerless to interfere. Hence Menzel is not so much an illustrator of Epicurean ideas. He is, rather, an engaged thinker on the role of the dissident, or on the importance of sacrifice in politics, or on the relationship between the political and the private who seems to endorse a view which an Epicurean thinker on politics would have no trouble agreeing with. That his cinematic arguments are Epicurean only in so far as that label allows us an entrance into the film's philosophical content. This paper will explore cinematic thinking on politics in three of Menzel's films, *Closely Observed Trains*, *Larks on a String* and *Capricious Summer*. These films demonstrate the distanced view of politics that Menzel encourages. Even when politically engaged, it is the worldly desires of the characters that is more closely pursued by the film's eye. Menzel's films span the artistic freedom of pre-1968 and the post 1968 period of "nor-

malization" where censorship was tightened to hyper-oppressive levels. Despite this time span and changing political conditions, Menzel continued to use film to argue for the same Epicurean approach to politics and thereby dissent.

Damian Cox (Bond University), 'The Dardenne Brothers and the Calamity of Philosophical Ethics'

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What are the grounds of normativity? The question has metaphysical and epistemological aspects. What (if anything) grounds normativity in the sense of furnishing truth-makers for normative judgments? What (if anything) grounds it in the sense of constituting evidence in favour of one normative judgment over another? The answer to this latter question characteristically involves various sorts of appeal to intuition. However, appeals to intuition share fundamental epistemological weaknesses. The way philosophers characteristically evoke intuitions in ethics goes a long way towards explaining why so much philosophical ethics is unconvincing and bogged down in interminable disagreement. I argue that the basic evidentiary work of philosophical ethics – the work that must come before theory building – is the perspicuous representation of the ethical. Philosophers have done very little of this work: thus the calamity of philosophical ethics.

The paper takes off from this set of ideas and has three parts. In the first part I set out the basic requirements of the perspicuous representation of the ethical. In the second part, I show how particular films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne meet these requirements. In the third part, I compare the philosophical-ethical potential of cinema with literature. I argue, with particular reference to *The Son* (2002), that the Dardennes' "non-subjectivity" gives them a philosophical-ethical advantage over many forms of literature.

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Lisabeth During (Pratt Institute), 'Goodness, Sacrifice and the World to Come: Simone Weil works in a factory and Ingrid Bergman follows her there'

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At the center of Rossellini's *Europa '51* is the suicide of a child and the despair of a mother. Cast in the role of the stranger, the awkward foreigner who travels from traumatic ignorance to painful enlightenment, Ingrid Bergman follows in the path of the French philosopher and militant Simone Weil. Both leisure and work have become unbearable in the Europe of 1951: slavery to the machine makes the factory a living hell; vanity and triviality blight the world of the bourgeoisie, mortgaged to its absent landlord, the American empire. To find the truth of her own failure, the mother (who is an American expatriate in Rome) wanders from secular love to sacred love, or as Weil would put it, from the personal to the impersonal. She chooses the stranger and the outcast over the family and the city. Hers is the path of the saint but it is also the path of madness. Is sainthood the only ethical option in Rossellini's world? Can justice be demanded of a social system that creates poverty, oppression and exile? Rossellini's film says explicitly that neither the Church nor the Communist Party manages to locate this criminality properly, nor can they provide resources to combat it. My paper reads *Europa '51* with the help of Simone Weil, Jacques Rancière and recent moral philosophers dissatisfied with how we have been thinking about good and evil, needs and entitlements, labour and action. If the film depicts the making of a saint, it admits that the language of sainthood is unintelligible. But any other ethical language seems too weak to do the job. Just as Simone Weil, in seeking the roots of oppression, liberty and justice, rejected the notions of rights and respect for the person (moral philosophy's best offerings), so the film seems to side with her, rejecting collective action and political critique alike, approving Weil's demand for a goodness beyond virtue, a love beyond recognition and mutuality.

Lisabeth During studied theology at Cambridge University, taught for many years in the Philosophy Department at the University of New South Wales, and now works at Pratt Institute of Art and Design in Brooklyn. She has published on Hegel, Artaud, George Eliot, Surrealism and André Bazin. Most recently, she co-edited with Lisa Trahair a special issue of *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* on *Belief in Cinema* which revisits themes from André Bazin (17.4, December 2012). Her "The Book of Chastity: Studies in an Ascetic Ideal" will be out soon.

Chris Falzon (University of Newcastle), 'Dirty Harry Ethics'

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The accusation of 'Dirty Harry ethics', used by some to criticise excesses in US state responses to terrorism, suggests that the 1971 film itself endorses a certain ethical stance: the brutal utilitarian logic in which ends justify any means, however shocking. I argue that on closer examination the film in fact brings such a logic into question, calling attention to the limitations of this way of thinking. This reflective questioning is a structuring principle of the film's narrative, and is enacted through it. Moreover, a case can be made that the central character, Dirty Harry himself, does not embrace this logic either. Far from being the one-dimensional character he is usually taken to be, he embodies an inner conflict that gives existential expression to the film's critical stance.

Gregory Flaxman (University of North Carolina), 'The Bressonian Touch'

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One could argue that Robert Bresson has enjoyed more acclaim and exerted greater influence after his death, in 1983, than he did in life. While Bresson was revered by filmmakers and other critics during his lifetime, his reputation has been burnished in recent years by the endorsements of a striking number of "global auteurs." Among others, Michael Haneke, Abbas Kiarostami, Aki Kaurismäki, Jim Jarmusch, and the Dardennes Brothers have confessed their awe before the Bresson slender corpus (12 films over roughly forty years), citing the French filmmaker as a formative influence (Haneke's names his top two favorite films are *Au Hasard Balthazar* and *Lancelat du Lac*). At the same time, and in part as a result, Bresson has begun to generate a kind of scholarly interest that is long overdue. We seem, then, to be in an auspicious position to engage Bresson's cinema, and I want to suggest that this return means, principally, a reckoning with his remarkable style, or what my title refers to as "The Bressonian Touch."

The reference, of course, is to Ernst Lubitsch, but in appropriating this touch on behalf of Bresson, though, my aim is to suggest an operation at once concrete and abstract, literal and elliptical, that belongs uniquely to Bresson. While his style has been widely admired, it remains by consensus inimitable and, to a striking degree, critically undefined. Still the most widely disseminated description of Bresson's style—Paul Schrader's "transcendental"—is perhaps the most dangerously vague, reaching as it does for a kind of theological description where an aesthetic one is wanting. In this respect, Schrader unwittingly outlines the problem posed by Bresson's cinema, namely, how does the filmmaker devise an aesthetics that immanently expresses ideas?

It's in this context that I want to take up Gilles Deleuze's suggestion that Bresson, as well as Dreyer and Rohmer, produce a cinema of "Christian inspiration" that ought to be grasped in light of Pascal or Kierkegaard. In fact, this paper argues that Bresson's three films of the 1950s—*Diary of a Country Priest* (1950), *A Man Escaped* (1956), and *Pickpocket* (1959)—constitute a kind of inverted Kierkegaardianism: where the latter's philosophy moves dialectically, along the stages in life's way, Bresson's "trilogy" passes from the priest to the resistance fighter and finally to the pickpocket. Far from suggesting that this passage represents a descent or recrudescence, I think we can understand these films in light of two series of signs—hands and faces—whose complex relations finally envision faith in the most challenging of circumstances, namely, in the midst of petty thievery, rank deception, and narcissism. Pickpocketing distributes a pathological relation between these two expressive surfaces (the face impassive, the hands already at work), but I argue that it's precisely at this disjuncture that the film's eponymous character discovers the means—the touch—to synchronize these series.

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David H. Fleming (University of Nottingham Ningbo China), 'Rescuing suicide via ethico-aesthetic documentary and Deleuze'

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Simon Critchley begins his *Book of Dead Philosophers* (2009) by reminding us that for thinkers such as Montaigne, only those who learned to die could unlearn how to be a slave; that for Socrates, all true philosophers must make dying their profession; and for Cicero, "to learn to philosophise is to learn how to die." Critchley also argues that it is only in relation to the "reality of death that one's existence should be structured," but somewhat tragically, "the most pernicious feature of contemporary society is the unwillingness to accept this reality and to flee the fact of death." The final suicidal act of Gilles Deleuze could not escape an inevitable encounter with the Deleuzian philosophical persona(e), nor being evaluated in light of his ethical philosophy of Life. That is to say, as an event, Deleuze's mentally willed or corporeally compelled bodily actions of November 4th 1995 were always-already destined to become sublated and deterritorialized by the preponderant force of Deleuze's eventual life-affirming philosophy. This process proved capable of transforming his final actions, and endowing them with a positive attitude. Such encounters allowed André Pierre Colobat to think positively about Life through Deleuze's death, or Paul Veyne to see his "voluntary" and "reasonable" death (in the Stoic sense of the word) realising a "truly philosophical destiny," whilst Eric Alliez conceived of his suicidal leap as "the last act of an exemplary philosophical life." Deleuze's philosophical concepts here seem capable of destroying and recreating his suicide as a Life affirming force or object of thought. Deleuze saw philosophy and art sharing in certain abilities, with each being capable of forcing an encounter with the unknown or unthought. Following Deleuze, we may ask, if art and philosophy are able to (re)think this culturally unacceptable act, what of a documentary film (which some argue is the most non-abstracting and non-artistic mode of film)? In this paper I explore different aspects of Eric Steel's haunting documentary *The Bridge* (2006), a film that captures or documents 23 images of real suicide. I ultimately argue that the film functions as an ethico-aesthetic documentary-artwork that invites viewers to think 'philosophically' about this uncomfortable social taboo. Arguing for a need to separate the thoughts and desires of the filmmaker and film, I argue that while the filmmaker may be considered (somewhat problematically) acting immorally in the making of his film, his praxis, or ethics with dirty hands, does not sully the thinking film itself, which surfaces as a positive life affirming event that forces viewers to confront death, (re)evaluate the act of suicide, and problematise notions of pathological mental illness with a gradually unfolding concept of death from 'the outside.'

Hamish Ford (University of Newcastle), 'Ethical Dissatisfaction, Virtual Utopia and Despair: Imag(in)ing Revolution with Cinema and Lefebvre'

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If revolution has enjoyed something of a 'return' in recent times both as media buzzword and invoking a more substantial investment by new-generation radical activists seeking to respond to the ethical degradation of the world they inherit, it has always been an important concept in charting the relationship between cinema, history and philosophy. This paper examines the filmic staging of revolutionary moments as a consistently energising force within the medium's own aesthetic and conceptual development in response to 'real' and cinematic history, born of ethical dissatisfaction with the way things are. Utilising philosophical and historical cues from Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and other work, the argument here – part of a larger collaborative project with an architecture scholar – will focus on images that play out as material-historical, virtual, mythic, theatrical, and multiply reflexive in a range of films. Through this, revolution in cinema will be addressed as from the start inherently dialectical: concurrently real and fantastical, perennially seductive while always destined to slip away at least in part due to wavering belief in its real possibility despite the continuation of ethical impulses driving desire for often radical change. Starting from the utopi-

an-yet-tragic but also heavily abstract vision we see in the iconic 'Urtext' of this particular 'histoire' – the already modernist breakdown of space and time in *The Battleship Potemkin's* Odessa steps sequence – then through diverse post-World War II and more recent iterations, I will explore how such cinematic renderings of often failed or very short-lived revolutionary histories are exponentially intertextual, trans-historical and palimpsestic in their force and meaning. In light of Lefebvre's philosophical understanding of 20th-Century European modernity being fuelled by an ultimately irreconcilable twin narrative provided by Marx and Nietzsche, the result may be that a viable sense of revolutionary possibility is in the process both retained as a motivating ethical dream of communal resonance while also, as handed down for us by a now endless virtual history forged by the perennially doubt-inducing moving image, one we can never fully believe in.

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Angelos Koutsourakis (University of New South Wales), 'The Ethics and Politics of Negation: Postdramatic Elements in Three German Films'

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Hans-Thies Lehmann's ground-breaking study of postdramatic theatre has become a reference point in the discipline of theatre studies. Lehmann understands postdramatic theatre to be a theatre of negation in which the mainstays of dramatic representation, that is character, plot and language, are questioned, interrogated and destabilized. An unexplored area, however, remains the influence of the postdramatic on cinema. Filmmakers with a background in theatre, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Jean-Marie Straub/Danièle Huillet and Christoph Schlingensiefel and scriptwriters, e.g. Peter Handke, have all staged productions or written texts which have been critically received and discussed under the banner of the postdramatic. This paper proceeds from the conviction that a study of certain films through the postdramatic lens can help us understand their aesthetics of negation and explore the ethics and politics of their representational practices in more complex ways. I use the following films as case studies: i) Jean-Marie Straub's/ Danièle Huillet's *The Bridegroom, the Comedian and the Pimp* [*Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter*] (1968), the film also includes material from the filmmakers' theatre production *Krankheit der Jugend*; ii) Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Katzelmacher* (1969) which was previously put on stage by Fassbinder's Antitheater; and iii) Christoph Schlingensiefel's *Das deutsche Kettensägenmassaker* [*The German Chainsaw Massacre* 1990]. The paper's role is twofold: it aspires to reveal the postdramatic aspect of these objects as well as to develop the ethics and politics of negation as articulated by the films' postdramatic representational strategies.

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Marguerite LaCaze (University of Queensland), 'Ethics in an unethical world: 'Nader and Simin, a separation''

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Asghar Farhadi's film, *A separation* (2011) addresses the problem of how to live ethically in an unethical society, and two protagonists take different directions in facing the problem. One, Nader, struggles to maintain personal standards, in spite of some of the consequences, although ultimately with some compromise. The other, Simin, proposes to act pragmatically and ultimately to withdraw in search of a more ethically congenial society. 'A separation' also evokes the moral emotions felt in responses to these predicaments. In the film, ethics, religion, and social and political context collide to entangle the characters in a web of both

perceived and felt shame and guilt. Shame is invoked as pressure to capitulate to the external norms and rejected, yet guilt is felt for small breaches of internal ethical standards. The different paths lead to an even further separation, suggesting that the two ethical approaches cannot be reconciled.

David Macarthur (University of Sydney), 'Film and the Question of Acknowledgement'

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For Cavell the term "theatricality" is used to signal an unnaturalness in the relation between oneself and another (or others). To theatricalize another is to treat them as if they were an actor on a stage performing for a self that has withdrawn into a condition of hiddenness, fixity and isolation. To theatricalize oneself is to play a role, to put on a show or exhibition but without recognizing or responding to any specific other(s). Theatricality thus threatens acknowledgement: of another by oneself; and of oneself by another. In the theatre the demand for one's acknowledgment of the unfolding human drama and suffering of the actors requires that I reveal "my separateness from what is happening to them" (MW 338). The ethical import of this situation is the importance of one's acknowledgment of the *otherness* of the other, the separateness of human existence.

In light of these reflections here I'd like to raise a question about the ethical import of film: not of the content or characters of this or that film, but of film *as such*. On Cavell's view the automatism of film overcomes theatricality since "movies... do not deny or confront their audiences" (WV 118) but screen them from a world that is past. If that is so then what is the relation between the audience and the "human *something*" (WV 26) that we witness on the screen? The question is all the more urgent if we note how close the condition of the audience of film is to that of theatre. They, too, are hidden, fixed and isolated. Can temporal displacement alone wholly suspend any question of our acknowledging the vicissitudes, trials and tribulations of the characters we witness? How we answer this question will determine the ethical import of film.

James Phillips (University of New South Wales), 'Jacques Tati and the Unbound Gag: Notes for a Cinematic Phenomenology of Judgement'

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This paper examines Jacques Tati's treatment of gags as a contribution to phenomenology. Following Freud's exposition of the comical in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, a gag involves a discrepancy between a norm and what happens to be the case: laughter is the energy released by the mismatch between what an onlooker perceives and the template against which he or she judges what is perceived. In Tati's cinema, however, the environments in which characters have to operate assert themselves in their freshness, novelty and unpredictability, thereby problematising the application of existing norms: it is a world in which it is easier to get it wrong. Such a step back to the rawness of the immediate data of perception is, as is well known, phenomenology's opening gambit. What Tati traces is the genesis of norms within the milieu he depicts. Starting from scratch in an alien environment, characters struggle to make sense of the signs around them. In these films the decision between the positive and the normative is still in the process of being made. As such they do not lend themselves to being viewed with that bifocal vision of socialised human beings which shuttles between the positivity of what is and the normativity of what should be. If these films are nonetheless received as comedies, it is arguably because their worlds as such (rather than a given action within them) appear odd to us from the vantage point of our own.

James Phillips is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of New South Wales. He is the author of *Heidegger's Volk: Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford UP, 2005) and *The Equivocation of Reason: Kleist Reading Kant* (Stanford UP, 2007) and the editor of *Cinematic Thinking: Philosophical Approaches to the New Cinema* (Stanford UP, 2008).

Teresa Rizzo (University of Sydney), 'Without Judgment: A Feminist Reading of the Immanent Ethics and Aesthetics in *Morvern Callar*'

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Using the work of Gilles Deleuze this paper performs a feminist reading of *Morvern Callar* by bringing together issues of ethics and aesthetics. The examination of ethics is influenced by Deleuze's essay 'To Have Done with Judgment' as it articulates an immanent mode of existence based on openness and experimentation rather than fixed codes and moral rules. His 'cinema books' are used as a guide for the exploration of film style and narrative structure as they link different types of images with different modes of thought.

Morvern Callar (Lynne Ramsey, 2002) is a particularly interesting film from a feminist perspective, not simply because it is directed and written by women and has two female protagonists, but more so, because it poses a challenge to conventional narrative films where women are judged and punished for transgressing moral boundaries. When Morvern discovers the body of her boyfriend on the living room floor, rather than reporting the suicide she deals with her grief by replacing the name on the manuscript to his novel with her name before sending it to a publisher. She then cuts up his body, carries the pieces in a rucksack to the woods and buries them. When she is offered £100,000 to publish *her* book, she takes the money without hesitation or guilt. It is easy to imagine that such a scenario would bring a system of legal and moral judgments into play. However, *Morvern Callar* is an unusually non-judgmental film as there is never any sense that Morvern is in danger of being discovered or punished. This non-judgmental ethics emerges from the film's formal and stylistic elements, particularly the development of a non-teleological narrative structure that favors affective and sensory images. *Morvern Callar* disrupts an ordered and progressive sense of the world based on fixed transcendent moral codes and rules through the frequent use of close ups, which detach images from their spatio-temporal coordinates, a shallow depth of field that decompose and re-compose the image, tactile images that are sensory rather than action oriented and a hypnotic sound design. It favors a disoriented world full of random pieces that can be put together in a number of interesting ways and in doing so expresses an idea of life as experimental and open to the new and introduces us to an immanent ethics and aesthetics.

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Robert Sinnerbrink (Macquarie University), 'Cinematic Ethics: Film as a Medium of Ethical Experience'

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Although recent philosophy of film has begun exploring the question of ethics, there is surprisingly little consensus on what this means. How do movies express ethical ideas? How can they reveal the complexities of a moral or political situation? What kind of ethical experience can cinema evoke? These questions have gained a renewed urgency with the shift to digital cinema, and with the globalisation of cinema across diverse cultural and technological contexts.

To explore the idea of cinematic ethics, I map conceptually some of the ways in cinema and ethics have been related. There are three challenges to thinking about cinema and ethics: the ideas of cinema as *illusion*, as artistically *trivial*, and as expressing *ideology*. These ideas reflect deeper philosophical and cultural concerns about the relationship between the image, morality, and truth. We can describe these as the contrasting traditions of *iconophobia* and *iconophilia*, opposing views about the capacity of images to communicate moral truths in visual form. Reflecting this dichotomy, traditional film theory has long been sceptical about cinema's ethical potential, focusing instead on the ideological aspects of narrative, spectatorship, and the cinematic apparatus. Contemporary film theory, by contrast, has responded by turning towards the idea

of cinema as *moral pedagogy*: exploring film's capacity to screen ethical themes and moral issues typically interpreted with the help of philosophical theories (Deleuzian, Cavellian, cognitivist, phenomenological, and so on).

Ethical approaches to cinema tend to focus on one of three aspects of the relationship between film, spectator, and context: 1) ethics *in* cinema (narrative content); 2) the ethics *of* cinematic representation (in film production and/or audience reception); and 3) the ethics of cinema as cultural medium expressing moral beliefs, social values, and ideological discourse. The most common approach in philosophy of film is 1) to focus on ethics *within* cinematic representation (themes, problems, ideas, scenarios, film as moral 'thought experiment'). Film theorists have often focused on 2) the ethics *of* cinematic representation, whether from the filmmaker perspective (production) or from the spectator perspective (reception). Finally, theorists have long emphasised 3) the ethics of cinema as a medium symptomatic of broader cultural-historical or ideological perspectives (feminist analyses of gender, sexuality, Marxist analyses of ideology, etc.). All three aspects of the cinema-ethics relationship are important, but the challenge is to think them together in their mutually overlapping relationships.

The idea of cinema as a *medium of ethical experience* links content, creation and reception, context and interpretation in ways that enable us to explore cinema's ethical potential. Cinema is a medium with the power to project and disclose virtual worlds and to engage spectators emotionally and intellectually. It has the potential to evoke forms of ethical experience that prompt critical reflection and a questioning of our beliefs, a medium with the capacity to engage our emotions, exercise our moral imaginations, and transform our ethical horizons.

Robert Sinnerbrink is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Macquarie University, Sydney. He is the author of *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images* (Continuum, 2011), *Understanding Hegelianism* (Acumen, 2007), co-editor of *Critique Today* (Brill, 2006), and is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Film-Philosophy*. He has published numerous articles on film and philosophy, critical theory, and cinema aesthetics, including essays on the work of David Lynch, Terrence Malick, Michael Haneke, and Lars von Trier, in journals such as *Angelaki*, *Film-Philosophy*, *Screen*, and *Screening the Past*.

Lisa Trahair (University of New South Wales), 'Belief in this world: the Dardenne brothers' *The Son* and Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*'

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While a number of Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne's fiction films are preoccupied with the impact of parental indifference to their children and hence their neglect of their filial responsibilities, *The Son* (2002) by contrast focuses on a man's attempt to come to terms with the tragic loss of his son because of another child's indifference to the sanctity of life. Following his son's death, the carpenter Olivier (Olivier Gourmet) quits working with his brother at their wood mill to take up employment teaching his trade to boys who have recently been released from remand. The story commences when Olivier is requested to take on Francis (Morgan Morinne), the boy who murdered his son, as an additional student in his workshop. Like other films made by the Dardennes, this film establishes a dialogue with the story of Abraham and Isaac, the founding parable of faith for Judaic, Christian and Islamic religions. Writing on *The Son* in his book on the Dardenne brothers' work, Joseph Mai compares the highly charged atmosphere of Olivier and Francis' long drive to the lumberyard to Abraham leading Isaac to the top of the mountain in the land of Moriah to sacrifice him to God. Like other commentators, Mai argues that the film's achievement lies in its demonstration of an ethical overcoming of the desire for vengeance, of its acknowledgement of the human face of the other, and of a commitment to the universal by relinquishing the absolute relation to the absolute that Søren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* argues characterises Abraham's relation to God. In this paper, I return to Kierkegaard's nuanced meditation on the biblical myth to consider the meta-ethics at work in this film and its implications for our contemporary secular disengagement from thinking about the passions that religious thinking has sought to understand.

Lisa Trahair is Senior Lecturer in the School of the Arts and Media at the University of New South Wales. She is author of *The Comedy of Philosophy: Sense and Nonsense in Early Cinematic Slapstick* (SUNY, 2007). She has published essays on film in numerous journals, including *Screen*, *New Formations*, *Senses*

of *Cinema, Film-Philosophy* and *South Atlantic Quarterly*. She is currently working on an ARC funded project entitled "Film as Philosophy: What is Cinematic Thinking?" with Robert Sinnerbrink and Gregory Flaxman. Essays relating to this project have been published in *The Philosophy of Radical Equality: Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Alison Ross and Jean-Philippe Deranty and *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers*, edited by Felicity Colman. In 2012 she co-edited with Lisabeth During a special issue of *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* on *Belief in Cinema* which revisits themes from André Bazin (17.4, December 2012). Most recently she has co-edited with Robert Sinnerbrink a collection of essays on 'Thinking Cinematically before Deleuze' for *Screening the Past* (forthcoming December 2013). The title of her contribution to the collection is 'Serious Film: Cavell, Automatism and Michael Haneke's *Caché*'. Another essay on Stanley Cavell will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Film-Philosophy*.

Seung-hoon Jeong (NYU Abu Dhabi), 'Ethics of Community, Cinema of Catastrophe'

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The global community as a system of inclusion inevitably generates symptoms of exclusion that often return to it as terror, so globality remains impossible with its utopianism only lingering as negativity. Some thinkers on community then keep critical distance from the essentialist view of community as immanent humanity that actualizes a social system of totality. What is proposed as alternative is a relationship of individuals or singularities shared but not bonded, an "inoperative" or "unavowable" community which may work on the ethical below the political (Bataille, Blanchot, Nancy) and whose advent may be a revelatory or revolutionary "event" of ecstatic or catastrophic "coming" (Badiou, Agamben, Žižek). The imagination of this radical externality, however, betrays the limit of imagination itself, as the concept remains an empty form of sublimity whose content is unimaginable.

Likewise, catastrophes on screen often occur at the dead end of imagining a new community, whether in European art cinema (Trier, Haneke), Hollywood superhero movies (Nolan, Liman), or Asian genre films (Bong, Kurosawa), while suggesting various directions from there. Then, is there one in which an ethical community is still envisioned without resorting to what Rancière calls "hard" ethics, the convolution of terror and war on terror, the sublime drive to fatal resolution or resignation? Is a "soft" ethics possible that is not reduced to dubious multiculturalism or ecologic morality trapped in the logic of global capitalism?

This paper attempts to answer these questions by mapping out global cinema, particularly looking at cinematic "abject" figures and their potential to become a vigilant or a terrorist of a society, a "dog" or a "thief" of capital, or a sort of Derridean "gift." The last case especially opens room for a rare relationship among the abject on the edge of global community without getting "hard," while remaining precarious on the individual level of Lévinasian faciality. More rare is its expansion to a collective community, whether a small-scale "idiorhythmic" one (Barthes) or a world-wide network of chain reactions to such events as Arab Spring or the Occupy movement, which both reveal and rigidify some revolutionary power against the world order. Facing the difficulty of imagination, however, the paper suggests an "atopian" view of the current global community and its immanent potential to change rather than any utopian vision or illusion.

Seung-hoon Jeong is Assistant Professor of Cinema Studies at NYU Abu Dhabi. He specializes in film theory in relation to diverse modes, areas, and periods of cinema. His current research on global cinema explores a variety of global phenomena around cosmopolitanism, terrorism, network, and ecology in their cinematic representation and critical theory. Jeong received the Society for Cinema & Media Studies Dissertation Award (2012), wrote *Cinematic Interfaces: Film Theory After New Media* (Routledge, 2013), and co-translated Jacques Derrida's *Acts of Literature* in Korean (Moonji, 2013). He has published and presented on various filmmakers and theorists including Werner Herzog, Peter Greenaway, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, André Bazin, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Rancière, and on cinematic issues related to the animal/ghost/machine, memory/mind/media, and catastrophe.

Thomas E. Wartenberg (Mt Holyoke College), "Not Time's Fool": Marriage as an Ethical Relationship in Michael Haneke's *Amour*'

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Through an in-depth analysis of *Amour*, I explore the possibility of films making a contribution to ethics. In particular, I show how *Amour* enlarges our understanding of euthanasia and the question of its morality. In addition, I discuss different ways in which films can make a contribution to ethics in order to see what the distinctive character of *Amour's* contribution is.

Thomas E. Wartenberg is Professor of Philosophy at Mount Holyoke College. His main areas of focus are aesthetics, the philosophy of film, and philosophy for children. He has published two monographs on the philosophy of film and edited or co-edited four anthologies as well as written numerous articles in this area. Among his publications are *Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy*, *Unlikely Couples: Movie Romance and Social Criticism*, and *Fight Club*. He is also active in philosophy for children, having published two books: *Big Ideas for Little Kids: Teaching Philosophy Through Children's Literature*, and *A Sneetch is a Sneetch and Other Philosophical Discoveries: Finding Wisdom in Children's Literature*. His website, teachingchildrenphilosophy.org was awarded the 2011 APA/PDC Prize for Excellence and Innovations in Philosophy Programs. He received the 2013 Merritt Prize for his contributions to the philosophy of education.