Spinoza and Cinematic Beatitude in Perrin and Cluzaud's *Les Saisons* (2015)

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Abstract

This article advances Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud's nature documentary *Les Saisons* (2015) as a film that, on account of its nuanced folding of what Gilles Deleuze calls movement- and time-images, presents an audio-visual scaffolding pointing beyond itself to the beatitude defined by Benedict Spinoza in terms of the third kind of intuitive knowledge. In this regard, the relationship between Spinoza's philosophy and the theorisations of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is elaborated upon, before the connections between Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge and Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, are thematised. Thereafter, it is argued that Perrin and Cluzaud's *Les Saisons* constitutes a film that both reflects creative variants of Deleuze's movement- and time-images, and folds them into each other in a way that points toward intuitions of Spinozan beatitude.

Keywords: *Les Saisons;* beatitude; cinema; imagination; reason; intuition; environmental film; movement-image; time-image

Introduction

In this article, the possibility of cinema precipitating an experience of beatitude—defined in terms of the third kind of knowledge advanced by Benedict Spinoza in his *Ethics* (1994)—will be explored through the lens of Gilles Deleuze's theorisation of movement- and time-images, and in relation to Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud's nature documentary film *Les Saisons* (2015). In this regard, firstly, the close relationship between Spinoza's philosophy of substance monism and Gilles Deleuze's collaborative work with Félix Guattari will be elaborated upon. Secondly, Spinoza's advancement of three kinds of knowledge—namely imaginative, rational and intuitive knowledge—along with the relationship between intuitive knowledge and his concept of beatitude, will be considered. Thirdly, against this backdrop, Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Deleuze 2005a) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Deleuze 2005b) will be engaged with through a Spinozan lens, and it will be argued that certain movement- and time-images, when creatively combined, can present a vision that points toward the intuitive insights of the third kind of knowledge spoken of by Spinoza. Finally, Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud's *Les Saisons* (2015) will be advanced as a case in point, and the extent to which its nuanced folding of movement-images into time-images provides audio-visual scaffolding that can precipitate an experience of beatitude, will be explored.

Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari

For Deleuze, Spinoza's advancement of substance monism against Cartesian dualism (Cimini 2016, n.p.), along with the thought-extension parallelism indissociable from this (Della Rocca 2008, n.p.),[1] comprised a veritable "war cry"; one succinctly expressed in the provocation "that we do not even know what a body can do" (Deleuze 1990, 255). That is, instead of relegating *res extensa* to the margins of consideration in deference to *res cogitans* in a manner akin to Descartes, Spinoza advanced an immanently-orientated philosophy involving emphasis on the innumerable variants of modal composition made possible by the thought-extension attributes of the one substance—*Deus, sive Natura*/God, or Nature—and the irrepressible difference this entails (Koistinen 2002, 64–65). Accordingly, the enigmatic body identified by Spinoza—and referred to above by Deleuze—is not simply that of a mode,[2]

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1 "Spinoza's radical break with Descartes came with his rejection of … mind/matter dualism"; instead, "Spinoza argued that there is only *one* thinking substance, and that it is identical with material substance" (Brenner 1989, 27).

2 It is helpful to remember that what Spinoza calls "'most simple bodies' [constitute] … the basic building blocks of [his] … system of physics" and that these "correspond roughly to atoms" (Parkinson 2000, 288).

such as a rock, whose inorganic extension includes thought at the level of molecular memory, or trees and human beings, whose organic extension is accompanied respectively by cellular memory and complex thought. In addition, the body in question is also that which emerges through the combination of modes: for example, the rock-tree-human hybrid body that occurs when a human uses stone and wood to build a house and then dwells therein. Or the city as a body, entailing a multiplicity of combinations between already complex hybrid formations, the creative interactions of which give birth in turn to new modal compositions hitherto unimagined, from food to living arrangements, art to technology, etcetera. The importance of Spinoza's philosophy to Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work has of course been thematised by many; indeed, it has been advanced that "Spinoza is the nearly absent, but thoroughly immanent, source of production in their ... *Anti-Oedipus*" or "the ghost in the machine" (Skott-Myhre 2015, n.p.) that informs their intersecting machinic conception of individuals, society, and technology.[3] In terms of Deleuze and Guattari's conception—which involves "social production (institutional and *supra*-individual) and the desiring-production of individuals": while "a machine produces a flow, another machine coupled to this interrupts the flow, draws it off, and in doing so produces a temporary halt [or] ... aggregate" (O'Sullivan 2006, 24). Their conception thus aligns with Spinoza's view of "existence ... [a]s horizontal" with "the infinite creative force of nature ... not separable from the infinitely many beings that exist" and with "humanity ... no[t] special" in terms of "metaphysical value" (Sharp 2011, 1). Further to this, in their later work *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari via their idea of the assemblage extend their above machinic conception to the natural world—both its *organic* and *inorganic* aspects—in ways that also accord with Spinoza's view of existence.

Firstly, with regard to the *organic*, in *A Thousand Plateaus* the "movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization"[4]—which occur for instance in the

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3 To clarify, "power, for Deleuze and Guattari is machinic. It operates via three types of machine, desiring-machines, social machines and technical machines"; while individuals comprise desiring machines, "social machines are effectively desiring machines built on a social scale, while technical machines are simply desiring-machines of a practical type" because "no technical machine can exist without the prior investment of desire" (Buchanan 2008c, 17). In short, what Deleuze and Guattari argue is that "the movement of microscopic entities combines to produce macroscopic entities which in turn re-act on those same microscopic entities, forcing them to adapt and change" (Buchanan 2008c, 18).

4 "In *A Thousand Plateaus*, deterritorialization is defined as the complex movement or process by which something escapes or departs from a given territory" which "can be a system of any kind, conceptual, linguistic, social, or affective" (Patton 2010, 52). However, "reterritorialization does not mean returning to the original territory but rather refers to the ways in which deterritorialized elements recombine and enter into new relations in the constitution of a new assemblage or the modification of the old" (Patton 2010, 52).

symbiotic relationship between "the orchid" and "the wasp"—are advanced as a mapping "entirely orientated toward ... experimentation" aimed at "foster[ing] ... connections between fields, [and] the removal of blockages" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 10–12). That is, wasps and orchids as separate organisms each constitute "the solution of a problem posed within the field of constitution of [each] organism" (Deleuze 2001, 211). However, while any "solution [which] ... fixes something in its place" is "an altogether bad thing" to the extent that it "stop[s] thinking" in its tracks (Buchanan 2008a, 152), in the relationship between the particular wasp and orchid referred to by Deleuze and Guattari, thinking does indeed occur. This is evinced by how "the orchid, displaying similar characteristics to female wasps, lures the male wasp to move from flower to flower, attempting copulation" while the wasp "inadvertently transfer[s pollen] between orchids"; accordingly, the new "wasp/orchid assemblage" sees "their respective bodies find new functions—the wasp as a vehicle for the pollination of the orchid and the orchid as facilitator of the sexual activity of the wasp" (Stark 2015, 189). For Deleuze and Guattari, it is thus not simply the case "that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion" because "something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code … a veritable … becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp" (2005, 10). Consequently, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that the "[w]asp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome" which, rather than operating in terms of "[e]volutionary schemas [that] … follow models of arborescent descent going from the least to the most differentiated … instead ... jump[s] from one already differentiated line to another" (2005, 10). In this way "rhizomatic connections constitute open systems" because "a rhizome is a milieu that opens and conjoins" to "include and overcome binary oppositions" (Mickey 2010, 336)—such as that between wasps and orchids—"through an assemblage of intensive processes" (Buchanan 2008a, 178); a new assemblage that amounts to the new modal composition spoken of by Spinoza.

Secondly, with regard to the *inorganic*, an analogous dynamic exists. That is, while in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari maintain that "[t]he body without organs is the immanent substance, in the most Spinozist sense of the word" (2000, 327), later in *A Thousand Plateaus* they advance that "the Earth—the Deterritorialized, the Glacial, the giant Molecule—is a body without organs" (2005, 40). Accordingly, such a "body without organs expresses what Spinoza called 'infinite substance'" which "is in a constant state of formation and reformation that occurs across and between a myriad of planes that express totality" (Cook 2009, 186). And "[f]or Spinoza, [such] expression amounts to a radical way of being,

whereby Substance, attributes and modes unfold or explicate their own existence in the world" (Del Río 2008, 9), with the infinite possibilities for variation neatly summed up in Spinoza's provocation, mentioned earlier, concerning how "we do not even know what a body can do" (Deleuze 1990, 255). Relatedly, for Deleuze and Guattari, "the body simultaneously figures as a normative structure regulated by binary power relations (on a *molar* plane of formed subjects and identities), and as an excessive, destabilizing intensity" that is "responsive to its own forces and capacities (on a *molecular* plane of impersonal and unformed becomings)" (Del Río 2008, 9). This much is clear from Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that while "[s]trata are acts of capture" that "operate by coding and territorialization upon the earth," with such "stratification" giving form to matter through "imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance," even as such stratification produces "upon the body of the earth" a series of "molar aggregates ... the earth ... flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized" through molecular lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 40).[5]

Moreover, for Spinoza, "infinite intellect and infinite motion and rest are caused *immediately* by the *absolute nature* of God's attributes [and] ... from each of these ... follows a *mediate* infinite mode"; or "what Spinoza calls 'the face of the whole universe' in Letter 64" which "'var[ies] in infinite ways, yet remain[s] always the same'" in its expression of *Deus, sive Natura* (Lord 2010, 39–40). Similarly, for Deleuze and Guattari, "a stratum always has a dimension of ... expression" so that "not only do plants and animals, orchids and wasps, sing or express themselves ... [b]ut so do rocks and even rivers, [along with] every stratified thing on earth" (2005, 43–44). And they argue that "to express is always to sing the glory of [Spinoza's] God" (2005, 43–44). Accordingly, it is no surprise that for Deleuze, Spinoza is the "purest of philosophers" or "the absolute philosopher, whose *Ethics* is the foremost book on concepts" insofar as it sweeps its readers "up into its wind, its fire" (1988, 140). Deleuze's use of metaphor here is important, communicating as it does a combination of elements that result in the enhancement of a volatile and unpredictable power, which then sweeps through the world connecting and transforming all that it touches, and giving birth constantly to new concepts—a process which Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* identify as "the

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5 Thus, the "molecular and molar do not form an opposition or a dialectic"; rather "[t]he molar is constructed *from* the molecular, literally enveloping it, and cannot exist without it" while "[t]he molecular is autonomous and constitutes itself even when it is in response to and in order to escape the molar" (Saldanha 2017, 102).

object of philosophy" (2003, 5). The influence of Spinoza's philosophy in their work is thus apparent.

In recent years, though, it is Deleuze and Guattari who have been popularly defined as "philosophers of difference" (Mercieca 2013, 24), and increasingly the relevance of their ideas to art, literature, music, politics, philosophy, culture, and so on, have been explored (Cremin 2016; Kaufman and Heller 1998; O'Sullivan and Zepke 2008). This is quite understandable, given the contemporariness of their thought and the demand for expediency in new theorisations which requires the philosophical buck to stop somewhere—preferably in the twentieth rather than in the seventeenth century. But such focus on Deleuze and Guattari's work has nevertheless been accompanied by some shortcomings: in particular, the tendency to eclipse or forget certain Spinozan themes that served as sources of deep inspiration for them, and which accordingly remain important contextualising ideas for understanding certain nuances of their work and their related aims. One of these themes is beatitude.

Beatitude and Spinoza's *Ethics*

For Spinoza, beatitude is indissociable from the third kind of intuitive knowledge available to us, which needs to be distinguished from the second kind of knowledge derived through reason, and the first kind of knowledge arising from the imagination.

The first kind of knowledge arises from the relations that the confused imagine to govern all our interactions with the world and other beings, and it can entail all manner of superstitions and irrational beliefs. For Spinoza, a particularly pernicious manifestation of the first kind of knowledge are the ideas that the world was created by an anthropomorphic God solely to satisfy human needs; that human dominion over the earth is correlatively divinely endorsed; and that individual humans can indeed profitably pray to a personal God to intercede on their behalf as they try to accord with this injunction. And Spinoza goes to significant lengths in the *Ethics* to disabuse his readers of such beliefs. He points out that, on the contrary, "Nature has no end set before it, and ... all final causes are nothing but human fictions" (IApp)—fictions that, moreover, serve a "human appetite" (IVPref) and inculcate sad passivity by attributing final power to an external and overarching force that demands our interminable worship. In addition, Spinoza shows how such teleology is incompatible with the perfection of *Deus, sive Natura*, understood as "the efficient cause of all things" or the

"absolutely ... first cause" (IP16) that "acts from the laws of his nature alone" (IP17)—because to work toward any end implies an imperfection that one is trying to overcome.[6]

In contrast, "Spinoza attributes specific therapeutic techniques to the second kind of knowledge" through which the above imagined final causality and related sad passivity of the first kind of knowledge can be overcome, as reason makes way for joyful activity; this is because "reason has the force to check the [sad] passions" as "its operations are joyful and produce active desire or striving that is rooted in human power" (DeBrabander 2008, 29). On account of this, parallels have been drawn between Spinoza's ideas of the second kind of knowledge and Stoic philosophy.[7] While in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries "the Stoics were seen as the Spinozists of their day, and Spinoza ... as a modern-day Stoic" (Sellars 2010, 147), in the nineteenth century "Stoic and Spinozan pantheism" was embraced by literati, such as William Wordsworth, in an "effort to offer a way past the skeptical and materialist tendencies of the Enlightenment" (Swift 2016, 316).[8] Pierre Hadot explains that a key appeal of Stoicism in this regard was its pursuit of "peace of mind (*ataraxia*) [and] ... inner freedom (*autarkeia*)" through developing the rational "power of the human self to free itself from everything ... alien to it" (1995, 265–266). That is, to liberate itself from the negative effects of poor judgement, from the instability of uncontrolled emotionality and desire, and from dependence on the capriciousness of circumstance for happiness. And this was achieved through, respectively, practising "objectivity of judgement, liv[ing] according to justice" and "becom[ing] aware of our situation as part of the universe" (Hadot 1995, 212). Thus for Hadot, what Spinoza defines as the second kind of knowledge is "nourished on ancient philosophy, [and] teaches man how to transform, radically and concretely, his own being" (1995, 271). Indeed, one of the passages in the *Ethics,* where Spinoza most saliently

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6 Spinoza's apparent reference to a male God here is not an oversight on his part, indicative of any internal contradiction in his philosophy, but rather the consequence of linguistic constraint. As Bennett explains, "English has pronouns which are always used for people and not freely used for anything else. We use 'he' for God, thinking of God as a person; if we came to think of God as impersonal, we should switch to 'it.' No such choice faced Spinoza, because … [i]n Latin … he had to use a masculine pronoun for God, to agree with the masculine noun *Deus*; but this masculinity is grammatical only, and implies nothing about the nature of its object" (Bennett 1984, 34).

7 In such thinking particular emphasis fell on the late Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius and Seneca. Of course, there are also significant differences between Spinoza and the Stoics, not least of which "is the strongly teleological nature of Stoic monism" and "the equally strongly anti-teleological nature of Spinoza's substance," along with the extent to which "the grounds of Stoic monism are fundamentally different from those of Spinozistic monism" (Miller 2015, 12). Nevertheless, parallels between the two philosophical views have been drawn at various historical moments.

8 In addition, while "the Stoic ideas of Spinoza" also strongly "influence[d] Goethe" (Schweitzer 1932, 196), Mathew Arnold's "lucid, regulative view of the world … represents a conflation of ideas … found in the philosophy of the Stoics and of Spinoza, and in the poetry of Goethe" (Strange 1967, 115).

articulates such possibility in terms of human freedom, is his description of the five ways in which "the mind" has "power ... over the affects" (VP20). Here he advances the importance of (i) "knowledge ... of the affects"; (ii) the separation of these "affects from the thought of an external cause" through accepting responsibility for them; and (iii) the appreciation of how, while we initially tend to "conceive [things] confusedly, *or* in a mutilated way," over time "the affections related to things we understand [retrospectively] surpass" such confusion (VP20). Spinoza also emphasises (iv) growing knowledge of "the multiplicity of causes by which affections related to common properties or to God are encouraged"; and (v) familiarity with how "the mind can order its affects" (VP20)—with the former concerning mediate and immediate infinite causes, and the latter concerning the ability of the mind to hierarchise them. This categorisation also needs to be read in conjunction with Part III of the *Ethics*, because there Spinoza details, in a deeply sensitive way, the sadly habitual passive affects which plague us through the "*vacillation of the mind*" (IIIP17S): from "hope and fear ... and ... gladness and remorse" (IIIP18S2), through "love ... and hate" (IIIP30S)—both personal (IIIP35S) and ethnic (IIIP46)—to "gluttony, drunkenness, lust, greed, and ambition" (IIIP56S). Spinoza also advances the converse of such sad passivity to be the joyful activity of "moderation, sobriety, presence of mind in danger, and so forth" as "species of tenacity" and "courtesy, mercy, and so forth" as "species of nobility" (IIIP59S).

Following on from this, though, in terms of the third kind of intuitive knowledge and the associated experience of beatitude, it must be remembered that "the Stoics and Descartes are criticized [by Spinoza] for holding that it is possible to overcome the passions completely" (James 2001, 126). And Spinoza's more modest view of our capacity in this regard manifests in his description of how "we are driven about in many ways by external causes ... like waves on the sea, driven by contrary winds, ... not knowing our outcome and fate" (IIIP59S). Consequently, only a tenuous link exists between the ancient concept of the sage and Spinoza's idea of beatitude, insofar as the latter is far more contingent upon a supportive socio-cultural environment. That is, the ancient concept of the sage, as evinced in the hagiographic representations of "Socrates evoked in the *Symposium*" entailed someone capable of permanent "immobility of the soul and the body" (Foucault 2005, 49). In other words, one whose "body [constantly] ... resists" both the excesses of desire and the duress of challenging circumstances, and one whose "soul ... does not move" but instead remains "fixed, as it were, on its own axis" so that "nothing can turn [it] away from itself" (Foucault 2005, 49). Admittedly, on the one hand, for the most part "ancient philosophers considered

the figure of the sage as an inaccessible role model, whom the *philo-sopher* ... [could only] strive ... to imitate, by means of an ever-renewed effort ... at each instant" (Hadot 1995, 261). But on the other hand, such individual striving remained imperative because of their idea that "it is [only] *within ourselves* that we can experience the coming-into-being of reality and the presence of being" (Hadot 1995, 260). In contrast, while Spinoza does advance the importance of aspiring to the second kind of rational knowledge as discussed above, he also intimates that to proceed beyond it to the third kind of intuitive knowledge requires the supportive context of the city. In his view, this is a place where sad passions and chance encounters can be limited, and where combinations of joyful activities can correlatively be organised to reach a sufficient intensity to precipitate accession to beatitude. The difference between his perspective and that of the ancients neatly emerges when comparing Spinoza's ideas to those of Cicero. That is, for Cicero, "the natural law of Antiquity ... defines a being's nature by its perfection" so that "the state of nature is not, for man, a state preceding society ... but rather a life in conformity with nature in a 'good' civil society"; a place where reason renders "primary and unconditional ... 'duties'" that "ground the authority of the wise man" who by definition carries them out faultlessly (Deleuze 1990, 258–259). In contrast, following the Hobbesian idea of the state of nature as a domain where the "life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1996, 89), for Spinoza the "only ... way of making the state of nature viable [is] ... by striving to *organize its encounters*" through the formation of a city (Deleuze 1990, 260–261). Thus, although "reason, strength and freedom are ... inseparable from a development, a formative process"—which is also "a culture"—it must be remembered that the Spinozan city "is ... in no way a reasonable association" because "the motive force of its formation is not an affection of reason" but rather "fear of the state of nature" (Deleuze 1990, 265). Moreover, the possibility always exists that the authority of reason in the city could be subverted—as in the case of totalitarianism—at which point, "if the citizens begin to fear the [c]ity ... they find themselves once more in a state of nature" (Deleuze 1990, 267). Yet, if the confused imaginings of the first kind of knowledge can, within the confines of the city, be persistently overcome by the reason of the second kind of knowledge to a significant degree, then the third kind of "intuitive knowledge," which is "greater, finer, [and] higher ... than the mere exercise of reason," becomes at least temporarily accessible (Bennett 1984, 369). In relation to this, Carl Gebhardt argues that although such "intuition ... is identical to ... ecstasy," it "is not 'supernatural'" but "rather 'super-rational'— over reason but not contrary to reason" (cited in Hart 1983, 4). Similarly, Hadot describes accession "to beatitude" as attaining "cosmic consciousness" involving "consciousness that

we are part of the cosmos, and the consequent dilation of our self throughout the infinity of universal nature"; something which entails "liberat[ing] oneself from one's individuality, in order to raise oneself up to universality" (1995, 210, 266, 271). Interestingly, and as will be discussed in what follows, this process also implies a necessary re-appraisal of one's connection to the state of nature from which humans previously fled into the relative organisation of the city; a reappraisal ironically only made possible by the relative organisation of the city, which grants one sufficient respite from fear to come to terms with one's origins in nature.

Cinema and the City: Deleuze and the Third Kind of Knowledge

As Holland advances, through the above third kind of intuitive knowledge, "Spinoza offers a kind of immanent objectivism" (1999, 110). However, "whether such objective knowability is ever subjectively realized in human thinking ... depends on humans overcoming through critical reflection the subjective limitations of what he calls 'imagination' (and Althusser, 'ideology')" before "knowledge [can] ... emerge that more closely approximates the 'objective' thought inherent in substance itself" (Holland 1999, 110). This requires humans "to distance themselves from the distortions of subject-centered thinking" (Holland 1999, 110), such as those reflected in anthropocentric prejudice against nature as a domain separate from and subordinate to humans. And it is in relation to the latter point in particular that the resonance between Spinoza's ideas and Deleuze's work on film becomes clear.

Cinema is unimaginable without the city, on account of the immense collective technical effort and financial investment required to realise production; requirements which set cinema apart from certain other aesthetic activities like painting or poetry, which can be pursued in relative solitude. But to the extent that cinema requires the organisation of the city for production, and indeed for distribution and consumption, the representations it provides tend toward expression of the collective rather than the idiosyncratic. For this reason, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, among others, saw mainstream cinema as a mirror which all too often reflects "the dominant ideology in pure and unadulterated form"; replete with all its contradictions and oversights (1969, 46). But beyond such un-interrogated images of the first kind of knowledge, as it were, for Deleuze the power of cinema lies precisely in its additional capacity to afford the viewer an "inhuman or super-human" vantage (2005a, 21), and beyond this, the vantage of a "seer and no longer of the agent" (2005b, 123). In other words, cinema can offer vantages which can function as contextualising frames that both liberate the viewer

from the parochial parameters of their anthropocentric world, and the self-interested subjective orientation it inculcates, and open them up to the durational Whole in which they exist, and of which they form a *mobile* and *transforming* part.

On the one hand, in terms of *mobility*, what Deleuze calls movement-images in *Cinema 1* render conspicuous how life is in ceaseless motion, and they achieve this through camera movement and recourse to montage arrangements. While camera movement can debunk the stabilising human perspectives generated by our habitual daily procedures around which subject-centred thinking tends to congeal, montage arrangements can link such variegated perspectives on these tiny worlds together into a vast matrix of interconnected and/or parallel movement. And it is the respective nonhuman and superhuman visions thereby afforded viewers that accordingly have the capacity to dissolve (albeit only temporarily) the usual subjective orientation of their thinking.

On the other hand, in terms of *transformation*, what Deleuze calls time-images in *Cinema 2* render conspicuous how thought is also in ceaseless motion between an actual passing present and a virtual past which co-exists or persists with the present, but which is always remembered differently within a present that never ceases to pass. Of key importance for Deleuze here is the work of Henri Bergson, for whom "the past is preserved under two distinct forms, namely, motor mechanisms and independent recollections" which facilitate, respectively, a helpful "automatic setting in motion of ... adaptive mechanism[s]" useful to existence or survival, and "an intellectual effort when we place ourselves directly in the past and contract elements of it to suit a present requirement" (Ansell Pearson and Mullarkey 2002, 17). However, the latter "contraction of past experience into the present" also entails "the expansion of consciousness into the past" (Massey 2015, 197), in what amounts to an inexorably creative process. And the implication of such creativity, in turn, is that "[w]e don't have one true self"; rather "we ... have many creative memories or durations of self" and in line with this "multiple psychic ... selves" which we (re-)create differently as time passes (Campbell 2007, 5).

For Deleuze, then, the importance of cinematic representations of the above—in which the virtual past and the actual present become indiscernible—is that they intimate to viewers a vision of their own temporal reality. That is, of how they too are not stable, integral, centred subjects possessed of complete rational agency, but rather a virtual-actual interface between

the persisting promptings of a kaleidoscopic past and the emergent demands of a changing present. Indeed, cinema offers them a vision of how they are constantly being born in time as a new mode, through the various compositions which they encounter, which they experience, and of which they are an expression—amounting to the vision of a seer rather than of a spectator.

Admittedly, on account of the prominent place of Bergson's theorisation of duration in Deleuze's *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*—the backbone of which consists of four commentaries on Bergson—Deleuze's work on film is not often read in relation to Spinoza's ideas. Yet, the presence of Spinoza's thought therein remains explicit on account of Deleuze's reference to spiritual automata, particularly in *Cinema 2*, and it is implied through the *folding* categories within Deleuze's taxonomy of cinematic signs, which aligns them with Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge.

That is, on the one hand, through his image "of the ... spiritual automaton" Spinoza advances that "the mind is always subject to necessary causal law" and that "a mind governed by the imagination, by external sensory stimulation, is not a self-directed automaton" but can be so "when directed by reason" (Marshall 2013, 4). And for Spinoza, it was precisely this that "was lacking in the Ancients," namely a "conception of the soul as a sort of ... thought ... determined by its own laws" (Deleuze 1990, 160). In keeping with Spinoza, "Deleuze adopt[ed] the term" spiritual automaton "initially to stress the involuntary nature of thought's response to the moving image," but later when dealing with "modern cinema and the time-image ... he uses the term to suggest as well that the thought aroused by the [film] image is like that of an alien [critical] thinker within" (Bogue 2003, 166). Thus, "our laughter or tears in response to a film are 'sad passions' because they are unaware of their own causes" (Buchanan 2008b, 11). However, "when cinema induces thought, when it yields an idea, suggested but not caused by what occurs on screen," then "we ... consider it to have produced a 'truth effect'" (Buchanan 2008b, 11–12). Correlatively, "Deleuze's entire 'natural history' of cinema can be understood ... as charting a passage from a cinema of 'sad passions' ... to a cinema of 'adequate ideas'" (Buchanan 2008b, 12).

On the other hand, it is also possible to identify parallels between Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge and Deleuze's taxonomy of cinematic signs, on account of the *folding* categories of the latter. In keeping with the implied folding that informs the principle of modal

composition in terms of Spinozan substance monism, for Deleuze "a fold is always folded within a fold" so that "unfolding is ... not the contrary of folding, but [rather] follows the fold up to the following fold" (1993, 6). Because of this, "the fold is a critique of typical accounts of subjectivity, that presume a simple interiority and exteriority" as "the fold announces that the inside is nothing more than a fold of the outside" (O'Sullivan 2010, 107).[9] Accordingly, "the fold expresses a conception of matter which is multiple *and* continuous" and in which "it is impossible to describe any particular portion ... of matter in terms of a hierarchical organisation" (Marks 1998, 76).

Both of the above two concepts—the spiritual automaton and folding—have an important place in Deleuze's theorisation of film. For Deleuze, the human perspective is the result of millennia of biological enfolding of perception, something later technically enfolded by the perspective of the stationary camera, which in turn was enfolded by the nonhuman and superhuman movement-image perspectives of, respectively, the moving camera and montage arrangements, and beyond this by the time-image perspective of the seer, as discussed above. Accordingly, one cannot dissociate the human perspective—exemplified in the first kind of imaginative knowledge identified by Spinoza, namely the Judeo-Christian conception of humans as holding a privileged place in the world and universe—from its technical enfolding by the stationary camera of primitive cinema. Rather, one must consider how the imagined "geocentric universe" which "endors[ed] the seat of the Church's power" (Padamsee 2003, 363) along with the pre-eminence of the faithful, became enfolded in the modern era by the perspective produced through the stationary camera of early or "'primitive' cinema"—a perspective which more or less corresponded to "the proscenium openings of metropolitan theatres" (Brewster and Jacobs 1997, 8). And while these given spectacles unfolded before an individual whose position was thereby privileged, it is also not possible to dissociate such privileging perspectives from their later enfolding by certain movement-images and montage arrangements which similarly privilege—rather than challenge—human-centred perception. For example, while the dicisign "or perception of perception ... implies a firm frame, and so constitutes a kind of solid state of perception" (Deleuze 2005b, 31) that often conveys the moving point-of-view of a human character, certain montage rules and techniques are the foundation of classic realism which is similarly deeply anthropocentric. To elaborate, the dicisigns of "a blurred chandelier as the groggy detective's view upon waking from a mickey-

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9   An interesting further parallel exists between Spinoza's explicit body/thought parallelism and Deleuze's implicit movement-image/time-image parallelism.

induced sleep, or an elongated hallway as the schizophrenic's vision of the passage to the electroshock therapy room" (Bogue 2003, 70), are far more dynamic than the stationary camera of primitive cinema in terms of their perspectives. Nevertheless, they still keep the narrative within human-centred terms, and may even encourage the viewer to identify with a protagonist through such means. Similarly, the montage techniques of classic realism include "continuity ... rules for matching shots on action" and "the direction of characters' eyelines" for "punctuating temporal ellipsis in the story" and for "constructing a dissected fictional space as intelligible to the spectator by staying on one side of 'the line' (the 180-degree rule) and by mapping changes in angle of view with the minimum confusion of narrative space (the 30-degree rule)" (Kuhn 1994, 107). Through such means as these, no formal challenge to the anthropocentric viewing procedure (and by implication the self-conception) of viewers is presented. Rather, they continue to be privileged insofar as spectacles are provided that unfurl faultlessly before them, in a more captivatingly dynamic way than in primitive cinema, but still in a highly human-centred fashion. It is thus quite unsurprising that such formal features are so often coupled with thematic features endorsing the socio-cultural and politico-economic status quo, with all its irrational beliefs and habitual prejudices so characteristic of the first kind of knowledge. In fact, what Spinoza terms the "*vacillation of the mind*" (IIIP17S) is the very stuff of popular cinema, as evinced by how gratuitous spectacles of "gluttony, drunkenness, lust, greed, and ambition" (IIIP56S) are the very fuel of the mainstream film industry. Moreover, while horror films play on "hope and fear" (IIIP18S2), and dramas draw on cycles of "gladness and remorse" (IIIP18S2), romance films and war films, respectively, thematise personal forms (IIIP35S) and ethnic forms (IIIP46) of "love ... and hate" (IIIP30S).

But while the above dicisigns and montage arrangements can fold into the first kind of imaginative knowledge, through generating the interiority of a human-centred perspective as alluded to above, such a perspective can only ever be the inside of a fold of the outside of nonhuman and/or disembodied superhuman perspectives. Perspectives which humans rationally know to exist, but which they may only be able to imagine in what Spinoza calls a "mutilated and confused" (VP28D) manner, until the advent of cinema capable of representing them with clarity and distinctness, so to speak. To clarify, while for Deleuze the "signs of composition for the perception-image are the dicisign and the reume," the related "genetic sign" is the "engramme" with each situated along a continuum ranging from a more restricted to a less restricted visual economy. Accordingly, a dicisign—in addition to

reflecting a more restricted human-centred viewpoint as described above—can also reflect a less restricted nonhuman (or animal) perspective. In the latter regard, and emerging against the backdrop of related endeavours by, among others, Jacques Cousteau, the crittercam developed in 1987 by marine biologist Greg Marshall has been of inestimable value (Graham Scott 2014, n.p.). In particular, this development of "a lightweight video camera in a harness that could be fitted on animals" has underpinned, among other initiatives, the "2003 ... National Geographic Channel ... new reality series ... entitled *Crittercam*" which explores the daily perspectives of a broad array of animals—both domestic and wild, of the land, sea and air (Silverblatt 2007, 21–22). But even less restricted than such nonhuman dicisigns, is the "reume" that "refers to a fluid or liquid perception which passes continuously through the frame" (Deleuze 2005b, 31). For Deleuze, "the French school of the 1920s and early 1930s, especially in Renoir, Grémillon, L'Herbier, and Vigo, with their affinity for images of water and the dynamics of fluid" (Bogue 2003, 75), exemplify recourse to the reume. But even less restricted still is the engramme, which refers to "the gaseous state of ... molecular perception, which the other two presuppose" (Deleuze 2005b, 31). As Ronald Bogue explains, "Deleuze's primary examples of the [en]gramme come from Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*" and its celebration in 1929 of "the documentary 'kino-eye'" involving "multiple material spatio-temporal events being interconnected through the film's juxtapositions" which "link ... [them] in varying montage rhythms that at times slow and at others accelerate toward a stroboscopic blur" (2003, 75). Representative of "a high point in early modernism's desire to wed art and the machine" through his film, Vertov tried "to show the world seen by the movie camera as the entire cinematic apparatus sees it (i.e. including the editing as well as the filming process)" (Feldman 2014, 19–20). And he achieved this through taking "images ... from every conceivable camera angle and distance" and through employing "numerous types of camera movement" (Feldman 2014, 20). Although his approach conflicted with the prosaic parameters of Socialist Realism,[10] his "Kino-Eye goal of catching 'life unawares'" (Lary 2012, 332) was nevertheless pursued under the auspices of the Marxist-Leninist "class struggle"[11] because for Vertov "the relatively new technology of the moving picture [had the] ... potential to record life"—specifically "the life of one [Soviet]

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10 As Gazetas elaborates, "[w]hen Stalin replaced Lenin in 1928, Vertov's documentary ideas collided with a new production style called 'social realism,' as decreed by the All-Party Congress on Film Questions" which "ruled that Soviet directors should avoid formalistic methods in film production, a directive aimed at both Vertov and Eisenstein" (2008, 64).

11 In 1925 Vertov "issued a comprehensive denunciation of the fiction film and its methods," calling "film drama … the opium of the people" and likening it to "religion" as "a fatal weapon in the hands of the capitalists" (Taylor 2006, 74).

city" (Nochimson 2010, 82). Consequently, what one encounters in his *Man with a Movie Camera* is "a kaleidoscopic vision of urban existence in the Soviet Union, organized according to the rituals of life from early dawn to dusk" (Gazetas 2008, 64). The end result is thus a visual chronicling of city life, as people awake, go to work, labour, relax, etcetera, but seen from the molecular perspective of a floating camera, instead of the molar perspective of an ethnographer.[12] To be sure, in the film Vertov's brother, Mikhail Kaufman does play the role of the "man with the movie camera" (LoBrutto 2012, 100) who journeys around the city in search of images of life. But for the most part, he is as much a spectacle within the film— captured by an additional disembodied lens—as the rest of the images. Moreover, even the footage thereby collected is focused upon intermittently as an object being collated and edited, in an array of highly self-reflexive sequences that, together with the dynamism of the remaining footage, fly free of any entrenched anthropocentric perspective. For Deleuze, the same ordering—from more restricted signs of composition to less restricted signs of genesis—is also true in principle for the other signs of the movement-image taxonomy, namely affection-, impulse-, action-, reflection-, and relation-images, as "between the perception-image and the others, there is no intermediary, because perception extends by itself into the other images" (2005b, 31).

Thus the value of cinema that tends toward genetic signs and the less restricted—or more general—visual economy indissociable from them, is its capacity to open up viewers to vistas that, although hitherto unimagined, remain rationally-intelligible, such that they comprise contextualising images of the second kind of knowledge which can have a transformative effect on those who view them. Indeed, within the contemporary global megacity of images, producing or thematising those cinematic signs which point outward to the second kind of knowledge, remains important in the same way as the pursuit of active joy and the correlative eschewal of passive sadness are important in Spinoza's concept of the city. After all, in the *Ethics* Spinoza himself advances that "imaginations" of the first kind of knowledge "do not disappear [simply] through the presence of the true" or concepts of the second kind of knowledge, but instead only dissolve when "there occur other [images] ... stronger than them": images "which exclude the present existence of the things we [otherwise] imagine" in an erroneous and debilitating fashion (IVP1S). For Deleuze, these stronger images are the

12 See note 5 above.

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above superhuman genetic cinematic signs, either alone or when they enfold the above nonhuman signs of composition.

However, what separates these movement-images that fold into the second kind of rational knowledge from other cinematic signs that fold into the third kind of intuitive knowledge, is the directness of the latter's representation of time. While movement-images provide an indirect image of time passing, through movement, time-images provide a direct image of time passing, through reflecting the indiscernibility of the actual present and virtual past. And in doing so, they make visible the very process of expression. As Deleuze clarifies, Spinoza's "expressionism presents us with a triad" that requires us to "distinguish substance, attributes and essence"; that is, "substance which expresses itself, the attribute which expresses, and the essence which is expressed" (1990, 27). But as Punday explains, this implies "that one's essence is bound up with what one finds in others" because "essence [does not] preexist ... its interactions" but is rather "partially created out of the conjunctions that it is able to enter into" (2003, 156). So, "one's possible conjunctions always form a system of virtual actions that defines one's essence" and "the entire process of 'expression' ... creates elements in order to complete the route of expression, elements that did not exist originally" (Punday 2003, 156).

In cinematic terms, Deleuze posits such time-images as being precipitated by a historical rupture, namely the crisis of the action-image after World War Two,[13] which "smash[ed] the whole system" of the movement-image that was epitomised in the meticulously-conceived relational mosaics of Alfred Hitchcock's films (2005a, 214–219). In the wake of this, a "mutation" of cinema took place, involving an "upsurge of the new thinking image" which proceeded "beyond movement" into time (Deleuze 2005a, 219), and within which the above process of virtual-actual expression assumed centre stage. In this regard, Deleuze distinguishes between "two kinds of chronosigns" or time-images: "the first are *aspects* (regions, layers), [and] the second *accents* (peaks of view)" (2005b, 98).

On the one hand, aspects of memory or "sheets of past" (Deleuze 2005b, 95) remain in states of relaxation until they are contracted into focus through some or other imperative or

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13 Deleuze describes this crisis as entailing "the dispersive situation ... deliberately weak [narrative] links, the [aimless] voyage form, the consciousness of clichés, [and] the condemnation of the plot" and he identifies its most acute manifestation in post-war Italian neo-realism (2005a, 214–219).

accident. But at this point—as discussed earlier in relation to the Bergsonian model of memory—they also tend to fold into and transform each other, such as when we remember the past differently on different occasions, colouring it with different emotional hues, and conflating things that are themselves already coagulations of different memories of the past. Accordingly, to explore such a process cinematically—for example, in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) where a reporter repeatedly investigates the past to decipher the meaning of Charles Foster Kane's final word—is to explore "what happens when we search for a recollection" only to find ourselves lost in the "paradoxical characteristics of a non-chronological time" (Deleuze 2005b, 96). A time which shows us, as Federico Fellini maintains, how "we are constructed in memory" where "we are simultaneously childhood, adolescence, old age and maturity" (cited in Deleuze 2005b, 96).

On the other hand, accents of memory or "peaks of present" entail a focus on an experimental series of presents rather than on "successive action" insofar as there occurs "the distribution of different presents to different characters, so that each forms a combination that is ... possible in itself, but where all of them together are 'incompossible'" (Deleuze 2005b, 97–98).[14] That is, the "implicated presents are constantly revived, contradicted, obliterated, substituted, re-created, fork and return," thereby negating the privileging of one stable, consecutive narrative in favour of considering an array of expressions of any one present—with a good example being Luis Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) which "shows less a cycle of interrupted meals than different versions of the same meal" (Deleuze 2005b, 98–99).

Importantly, neither *Citizen Kane* nor *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* can be said to be human-centred, because memorial centredness is precisely what is lacking in their respective narratives. That is, while in the former film, the complex sheets of past explored reveal Charles Kane—both before and after his death—to be only a fleeting memorial construct, in the latter film, the various peaks of present experimented with reveal bourgeois decorum to be a banal veneer, beneath which are seething forces of hypocrisy, desire, and fear that render the characters protean and unstable. Yet beyond these chronosigns (which it is helpful to see as the time-image equivalents of the nonhuman movement-image signs of composition discussed above), there also exist time-images of an even more general economy

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14 "The term 'incompossible' refers to an understanding of possibilities that are mutually exclusive" (Uhlmann 2009, 76).

(which would be more or less equivalent to the superhuman movement-image signs of genesis; for example, the engramme encountered in Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*).

For Deleuze, such time-images are found in the films of Jean-Marie Straub/Danièle Huillet, which comprise an immense "archaeological, stratigraphic [and] ... tectonic" conduit of expression, involving "the deserted layers of our time ... the lacunary layers" of "variable orientations and connections" (Deleuze 2005b, 234). In this regard, as Bogue explains, at certain times, while "Straub/Huillet offer long, slow pans of fields, pastures, deserts, and landscapes that have been the sites of massacres, battles, sacrifices, and executions," along with oblique verbal or textual allusions to the "buried histories" in question, "the landscapes remain insistently resistant to their histories, like archaeological digs awaiting excavation, or geological faults ... in need of explication" (Bogue 2003, 189). Through such means an even more disembodied variant of *aspects* or sheets of past is created via the immense competing, conflicting and congealing regions and layers of the past that swirl in the frame in defiance of any single narrative ordering. Correlatively, at other times, Straub/Huillet offer long takes and slow zooms through which they seek "not to arouse sensations in the viewer, but to materialize sensation in the landscape" (Bogue 2003, 189) that might otherwise remain unnoticed, on account of the habitual sensory-motor schemas that mediate our perception. And through such means an even more ephemeral variant of *accents* or peaks of present is encountered in the experimental focus on persistent tensions hitherto marginalised and/or undetected.

For Deleuze, the above comprise noosigns and these, along with the noosphere of which they form part,[15] have the potential to precipitate a vision of "a floating time unmoored from any tense, person, mood, or direction" (Bogue 2007, 56). In other words, "an essence of temporality that serves as a generative medium from which different specific temporal configurations may issue" (Bogue 2007, 56), and which, because it is commensurate with the beatitude of Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, makes possible what Deleuze calls "a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent" (2005b, 123). That is, insofar as such chronosigns "reveal to the human eye a visualization of its own perceptual processes [they] constitute the

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15 When "narration is reconstituted through bodies and environments … noosigns" are created, and these "inaugurate a new image of thought, positioning the spectator in a lectosignic [or reading] relationship with the opsigns and sonsigns of the film: the time-image [thus created] is … a noosphere" (Deamer 2012, 24), or sphere of thought in which the spectator is obliged to read the noosign as "an image which goes beyond itself towards something which can only be thought," namely time (Deleuze 2005b, 325).

cinematic as a domain of what Deleuze would call the noosign—an aesthetic embodiment of thought" (McNeill 2010, 44). And for Deleuze, such noosigns operate within the noosphere, or the zone of "convergences between biological systems and machines" which leads to the formation of "a collective human consciousness and intelligence" (Marks 2006, 197). This consciousness/intelligence, in turn, is marked—at least in the case of modern cinema—by the constant dynamic intrusion of the thought from the outside, which lays siege to any potential restrictive human-centred coagulation of thinking. Cinema is, therefore, a key part of the noosphere rather than a mere tool utilised therein for thinking, because "the screen itself is the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future, the inside and the outside ... independent of any fixed point" (Deleuze 2005b, 121). Indeed, "cinema both expresses and induces thought, as images at once move us and move in us" with the result that while "we think in moving images ... moving images on the cinema screen [also] share the mobile processes of thought" (Powell 2012, 174), such that "the film viewing encounter creates a cinematic assemblage" (Rizzo 2012, 70). What is thereby generated is a hybrid human-machine assemblage involving the combination of biological spectator and cinematic technology, not only into something capable of new thought, but also into something capable of awareness of the actual-virtual processes through which new thought is produced.

To be sure, the extent to which this spiritual automaton can approximate beatitude does rest on the care with which movement- and time-images are combined. As Patricia Pisters has argued, the distinction between movement- and time-images in "many contemporary Hollywood films, like *Fight Club* and *Pulp Fiction*" is problematic because they can also be understood as "time-images 'disguised' as action-images or action-images that take on characteristics of the time-image" (Pisters 2003, 78–79). Accordingly, the hybridity of such films might not stand to precipitate experience of beatitude, not least because of how their respective signs of composition (dicisigns and reumes) and genesis (engrammes), fold into the first kind of knowledge. After all, the various protagonists (Edward Norton's character in *Fight Club* (1999), and all the different characters in *Pulp Fiction* (1994)) can be understood as constantly (re-)imagining themselves and the world in relation to the exhaustively recycled

tropes of the mass media and advertising, which are themselves informed by the first kind of imaginative knowledge.[16]

But when the hybridity involved is far more nuanced, with dicisigns and reumes, along with engrammes, folding into the second kind of rational knowledge (by virtue of being respectively nonhuman and superhuman in orientation), and when such movement-image signs of composition and genesis then fold into chronosigns of sheets of past and peaks of present, before folding in turn into noosigns comparable to those found in Straub/Huillet's films, then an audio-visual scaffolding that can precipitate an experience of beatitude emerges. As will be discussed next, Perrin and Cluzaud's *Les Saisons* comprises just such a rare hybrid film.

Beatitude and Perrin and Cluzaud's *Les Saisons*

Thematically-speaking, and as indicated by its title, *Les Saisons* concerns the emergence of the seasons in the aftermath of the Quaternary glacial period, and the ensuing growth of a great European forest that prevailed for millennia, until its devastation through rapacious human encroachment in the few centuries leading up to and including modernity. Human civilisation, and more recently industrial society and its environmentally-devastating resource extraction and pollution, thus emerge as reflections of the first kind of knowledge—the anthropocentrism of which has underpinned such encroachment upon and destruction of the forest. However, the visual allusions to this only play out relatively late in the film, and hence these occur only against the immense durational backdrop of scenes from the twelve-millennia-long golden age of the forest, along with those of the preceding final years of the Quaternary ice age that itself comprised a cruel winter of some eighty-eight thousand years. In this way, reflections of the first kind of knowledge are not allowed to dominate the narrative, but rather remain only one small (although admittedly troubling) component of a far greater story that long preceded the emergence of human civilisation.

This is neatly underscored at a formal level through the perception images (dicisigns, reumes, and engrammes) of *Les Saisons*, all of which similarly counter the anthropocentric worldviews of the first kind of knowledge that Spinoza was so critical of, and which continue to inform aspects of mainstream cinema as already discussed. The film thereby problematises

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16 Admittedly, it is also possible to understand *Fight Club* and *Pulp Fiction* as critiquing such imaginative knowledge through tropes of personal and societal schizophrenia, respectively.

both the idea that nature was created solely to satisfy human needs, and its primitive cinematic counterpart involving the privileging of the human spectator. That is, in terms of its dicisigns, *Les Saisons* is hauntingly reminiscent of aspects of Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle for Algiers* (1966). In the latter film, many of the scenes of political unrest are shot not from the colonial French garrison's perspective, which would have obliged the viewer to identify with their position.[17] Rather, the film "fosters our complicity with the Algerians" through showing the world from their perspective: "it is through Algerian eyes, for example, that we witness a condemned Algerian's walk to execution" and "it is from *within* the casbah that we see and hear the French troops and helicopters" such that "this time it is the colonised who are encircled and menaced and with whom we identify" (Stam and Spence 1983, 243). Similarly, in *Les Saisons*, the first time that the animals encounter a human, is after the end of the ice age and subsequent to the maturation of the forest over several centuries, when singing birds half-hidden in the foliage of trees hear the approach of a stone age man playing a flute—in imitation of their melodies—before he partially emerges out of the brush below them.

Although seemingly innocuous, the actions of the stone age man are very significant insofar as they comprise a nomadic war machine that lays aesthetic siege to and deterritorialises birdsong; an act which, despite its quaintness, adumbrates the great process of deterritorialisation that the forest will undergo later at the hands of humans, as they progressively relinquish their nomadism to embody the dominating State Apparatus of civilised society.[18] To elaborate, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "bird calls are ... milieu components" that fulfil a "specific function," namely the deterritorialisation of a space within the vicissitudes of nature as the domain of the bird in question, while birdsongs deriving from them entail subsequent deterritorialisation of the "sonic components of milieus" which accordingly become "unfixed and reconfigured" into something more expressive than

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17 As Tom Engelhardt argues, the cinematography of the classic Western often obliges the viewer to identify with the cowboys/settlers when, through point-of-view shots, "the viewer is forced behind the barrel of a repeating rifle" aimed at the encircling Native American Indians, because "it is from that position, through its gun sights, that he receives a picture history of Western colonialism and imperialism" (1971, 481). Such conventions, Stam and Spence (1983, 243) contend, also continue to inform certain contemporary films about Africa, such as Andrew McLaglen's *The Wild Geese* (1978), and one might add, in more recent years Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* (2001) and Antoine Fuqua's *Tears of the Sun* (2003).

18 Deleuze and Guattari maintain that "[t]he nomads invented a war machine in opposition to the State Apparatus" (2005, 24), but "the war machine is not to be confused with any concrete social or military apparatus"; rather, "the term 'war machine' ... represent[s] assemblages of mutation and transformation ... revolutionary machines of ... change" (Patton 2000, 118–120) that move in far more dynamic ways than the elements of the State Apparatus, and that readily appropriate aspects of the State Apparatus for their own creative ends. In this regard, "the 'nomadic war machine' conquers without being noticed and moves on before the map can be adjusted" (Bey 2002, 118).

functional (Bogue 1999, 128). Admittedly, for Deleuze and Guattari, the works of contemporary composers like Olivier Messiaen constitute aesthetic nomadic war machines because they deterritorialise birdsong further, through incorporating its rhythms and inflections into musical scores. However, what initiatives such as Messiaen's lay siege to, are the constraints of classicism which reflect the State Apparatus's channelling of desire (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 300–320),[19] not the expressive and functional milieus of birds themselves. In contrast, the stone-age nomadic flute player in *Les Saisons* is faced not with the aesthetic constraints of classicism but rather with the expanse of the forest, within which he must carve out a functional milieu of his own. Yet he can only do so by besieging the functional milieus of the animals therein, which is adumbrated by his deterritorialising of the expressive milieu of the birds through his music.

Importantly, though, the movement of the camera in these scenes and all those that succeed them, remains primarily nonhuman through mirroring the respective animals' motions, heights and speeds to reveal the world as seen from their perspective. This technique obliges the spectator to adjust their viewing procedure in order to follow the narrative of the film. Moreover, when the various animals encounter more humans as the latter encroach further upon the forest, such humans appear not only as an invasive force from the outside as already indicated, but also as an *anonymous* force—achieved through a lack of focus on their faces. Arguably, this anonymity is important because through eschewing that all-important human capacity for facial recognition[20] for most of the film, the perceptions proffered to viewers remain those of animals. Correlatively, for these animals, humans comprise not individuals but rather a species of strange and curious creatures that soon becomes an increasingly powerful and deadly competitor in the struggle for survival.

Relatedly, throughout the film there is also significant recourse to reumes, within which the shifting and changing features of the natural world exceed the frame in their movement, scope, and seasonal ebb and flow. What this entails is a relinquishing of the tight and focused framing of contemporary nature documentaries that, under the auspices of human-centred

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19 Notably, the music of *Les Saisons*—composed by Bruno Coulais—functions in a manner akin to Messiaen's musical war machine in its eschewal of the constraints of classicism, especially insofar as its rhythms, timbres, and melodies mimic the movement, echoes and calls of the forest creatures and the sounds of the forest itself.

20 In this regard, "striking new findings from just the last few years have … demonstrat[ed] genetic influences on the face recognition system as well as impressive face discrimination abilities that are present [even] in newborn" humans (McKone, Crookes and Kanwisher 2009, 467).

interest in the environment, tends to fix and hold the objects under consideration with relative rigidity, for the purpose of detailed examination. For example, in *Les Saisons*, a particular spring comprises a key motif that is revisited repeatedly over the millennia, but on each occasion it is not only the water that continues to course over the stones with varying intensity. In addition, it is also the immediate surroundings of the spring which ceaselessly flow into new configurations, under the influence of organic growth, animal activity, and human encroachment. To begin with, the thawing of the remaining glacier which surrounds the rock is focused upon, as the melting ice proceeds from a trickle into a torrent. Thereafter, a small bird—a Eurasian blue tit—bathes in the recently revealed rocky pool of the spring, before the spring is rapidly surrounded by the shadows of trees as accelerated footage portrays the expansion of the forest over hundreds of years, until the spring is subsumed beneath a towering, dense canopy of foliage. Later, the same spring is visited by a deer, but by this time moss and ferns have grown around it, and a stone age human has attached a devotional artefact above it—an act of veneration which is then repeated at some point in the Renaissance when the spring, having been cleared of surrounding trees many centuries before, is incorporated into a beautifully-maintained church garden. At this point, another Eurasian blue tit visits the spring, in a manner akin to its stone-age avian predecessor, but in a world utterly transformed.

In turn, such nonhuman dicisigns and reumes are arranged in an engramme that, while mirroring the form of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* discussed earlier, far exceeds its parameters and scope, chronicling as it does not the rhythms of city life over the course of twenty-four hours, but rather the rhythms of nature over the course of some twelve thousand years. In this regard, a superhuman vantage is proffered through montage sequences of an array of animal experiences that are couched in the perennial rhythms of the emerging seasons: from the struggle for survival between predator and prey during winter, through the fierce competition for a mate, the pains of birth, and the inquisitive playfulness of the young in spring and summer, to the sickness and death of the weak and old as autumn is followed once more by winter. Moreover, as the various animals' experiences of the above play out over and over again in the great forest, the cyclical seasonal changes that the forest itself undergoes receive equivalent focus, as the context within which such animal life emerges, endures, diversifies, and ends.

Accordingly, just as Vertov's famous engramme concerns life in a city from morning to night, so too, the engramme of *Les Saisons* ranges from the dawn of the seasons and the forests they precipitated, through the heyday of the great European forest, to the dusk of the forest's long life due to the encroachment of humans and the ensuing dark night of its radical curtailment. To be sure, the latter process of deterritorialisation was initially very slow, and in the film this is reflected through the significant amount of time that elapses between the animals' first encounters with humans and their traces. To begin with, early in the film—toward the end of the glacial period—a small cairn in a frozen mountain pass receives momentary focus as evidence of human existence, but it is also nonchalantly used by an owl as a perch, indicating the infrequency of human presence, and correlatively the limited danger posed by them. Then, after the emergence of the forest and the birds' encounter with the stone age flute player discussed earlier, thousands of years pass before a lone horse—recently defeated in a contest over leadership of a herd—encounters through the foliage the inquisitive gaze of a child whose people have now made the forest their home. Subsequently, though, such encounters become both more frequent and more intense, with a pack of wolves finding themselves obliged to divert their nightly path around the campfires of newly-arrived humans, before a squirrel and a bird find themselves being hunted by an unseen stone-age archer. Next, a lone wolf on the border of a human settlement takes a step toward domestication when he returns the gaze of, and then accepts a bone from, a child, after which a watershed moment occurs when the drumming and drilling of woodpeckers is disturbed by the distant echo of axes biting into trees. This event signals the beginning of an immense process of deforestation to serve human ends—an opsign and sonsign which the creatures of the forest can neither comprehend nor respond to, and which comprises the prelude to the widespread domestication of animals, the emergence of Roman roads that divide up the forest into territories, and the clearing of vast swathes of forest for agriculture. After this, and in relatively quick succession, there follows the co-optation of horses into medieval warfare, the spread of Renaissance buildings and gardens, the seventeenth-century eradication of all wildlife deemed useless to farming endeavours, the chopping down of whole forests of oak in the eighteenth century to build naval fleets, the growth of industrial agriculture in the nineteenth century, and the use of gas in World War One, which inadvertently kills swathes of birds before the subsequent development of this technology into pesticides designed specifically to kill swathes of insects, all in pursuit of ever greater productivity.

What this powerful montage arrangement thus effectively provides, is a superhuman vision of the world in terms of the second kind of knowledge. That is, a critical vision which we rationally know exists but which we can only imagine with great difficulty, if indeed we dare to imagine it at all, on account of how such consideration problematises the anthropocentric worldviews of the first kind of knowledge to which we otherwise cling for psychic security. This critical vision is thus one from outside the circle of human influence and concerns; one from the other side of the mirror in which humans otherwise habitually encounter only the images of the first kind of knowledge. And it is a vision of the immense splendour and wonders of nature, and of the lives of animals unfolding on an immense scale and with a ferocious intensity, which we rarely if ever pause to consider. Also, importantly, it is a vision of such life as the animals and forest see it, which cannot readily be accommodated within the imaginings of the first kind of knowledge—either thematically or formally—given the prioritisation of human-centred needs and perspectives in such knowledge.

But beyond the above, the cinematic importance of *Les Saisons* derives, in addition, from its nuanced folding of such nonhuman/superhuman movement-images into time-images, to provide audio-visual scaffolding that can precipitate an experience of beatitude by pointing to intuitions of the third kind of knowledge. In terms of this, on account of the engramme described above, the final scene in the film—in which a contemporary young girl enters a forested area and stares into a clearing where her gaze is returned by a fawn—links the narrative to the present era. But her actions here also mirror those of the two other children in the film, described earlier, who although separated by thousands of years, similarly had their gazes returned by a lone horse and a lone wolf, respectively. That this is a temporal motif, is underscored by the fact that the faces of only these three children are clearly focused upon in the film. In each case, these enigmatic actual encounters between animals and children presuppose all the virtual or past events that make up the preceding narrative, such that their re-membering constitutes a time-image. This is necessarily so because, on the one hand, none of the children are asleep, with the consequence that in each case what has transpired in the preceding scenes cannot comprise a dream-image or onirosign; that is, a set of "virtual images ... actualized ... in [their] consciousness" (Deleuze 2005b, 77). But on the other hand, since up until each point, the superhuman/nonhuman movement-images of the film have entailed reflections of an immense past far exceeding the lifespan and human perspective of each child, what has appeared on screen prior to each encounter cannot constitute a recollection-image or mnemosign either. For that to be the case, they would need to be virtual

images of a past each child has experienced and which each recalls and thereby "actualize[s] in relation to a new present" (Deleuze 2005b, 77), which is not possible. Rather, at the hands of Perrin and Cluzaud, it is the *longue durée* of post-glacial-era life that has been creatively re-membered rather than recollected, in a way that underscores both how "the only subjectivity is ... non-chronological time" and how "it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round"; accordingly what *Les Saisons* reflects, is "time [a]s ... the interiority" in which the children and the animals who return their gazes "move, live and change" (Deleuze 2005b, 80).

On the one hand, the chronosign of *Les Saisons* is thus precipitated in much the same way as the chronosign of *Citizen Kane*, discussed earlier. That is, the narrative of *Citizen Kane* is animated by the desire to comprehend the meaning of Charles Kane's final word, which requires that his time be re-membered through the duration of others, upon whom he made an impression during the course of his life. Similarly, *Les Saisons* is animated by the desire to understand the meaning of the great forest as it dies due to human encroachment; the last vestiges of which—like Kane's enigmatic reference to "Rosebud"—disclose precious little but promise so much to the above-mentioned contemporary young girl who wanders through them. Thus, just as the reporter in *Citizen Kane* performs a catalytic function by prompting such re-membering of the sheets of past through his questions, so too, the three children's faces and their respective inquisitive gazes into the milieus of the horse, the wolf, and the fawn, all pose the same question concerning the nature of the forest, or at least what the great forest *was*.[21] In particular, what springs to mind is the question of what the forest *meant* to those animals for whom it was home rather than a domain from which to flee. Framed this way in the last instance, the preceding movement-images of the superhuman engramme consisting of nonhuman dicisigns and reumes, become folded into a time-image. And in terms of this chronosign, all the previous footage of the animals' lives amounts to their vestigial re-membering of the sheets of past of this great duration—in a manner akin to the various characters interviewed by the reporter in *Citizen Kane*—as they continue to live out their existence in scattered pockets of forest as they have for thousands of years. Indeed, through their genetic memory and related instinctual life-worlds, at once deeply ancient and

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21 A parallel exists here between Perrin and Cluzaud's *Les Saisons* and their previous film *Océans* (2009). In the latter, the question concerning the nature of the ocean was posed by a young boy, played by Lancelot Perrin, to his father, Jacques Perrin, and similarly served as the catalyst for the duo's ensuing contemplative exploration of the sea (Konik, A., and Konik, I. 2016, 25).

completely contemporary, we truly encounter in one of the most powerful ways the "paradoxical characteristics of a non-chronological time" (Deleuze 2005b, 96).

But while the three children in *Les Saisons* may pose catalytic questions like the reporter does in *Citizen Kane*, unlike him they do not record the responses. Instead, this task falls to the silent character of the camera that engages with the animals, and indeed the forest, on their own terms, and through such means there emerges a different chronosign involving peaks of present—one not unlike that of *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. As discussed earlier, such a chronosign entails "the distribution of different presents to different characters, so that each forms a combination that is … possible in itself, but where all of them together are 'incompossible'" (Deleuze 2005b, 97–99).[22] And in *Les Saisons*, such incompossibility derives from the advanced technology of the camera and the duration it re-members through the images it (re-)produces.

That is, in the film, the camera seeks not only to mirror the nonhuman perspectives of the animals in the manner already described, but also at times to encounter their lives in domains analogous to those of previous millennia: natural domains devoid of any trace of humans and which thus exist today as they have for millennia, such that to look at them in the present is to look at the past. Through such means, fragments of the past—albeit through filming in the few remaining pockets of pristine forest—are re-membered technologically in a way that is analogous to what "Bergson calls … 'pure recollection'" (Deleuze 2005b, 77). Admittedly, for Bergson, this involved the creative re-constitution of a virtual past that has never actually been present, in a memorial process that "goes on indefinitely without ever reaching its goal" (1962, 210), whereas Deleuze saw this creative memorial process mirrored in the technological possibilities opened up by cinema. This is not least because "the virtual image (pure recollection) is not a psychological state or a consciousness" but rather something that "exists outside of consciousness, in time" (Deleuze 2005b, 77); a fact which renders creative re-membering of the past through images such as those of *Les Saisons* analogous to the memorial images of Bergson's pure recollection. However, in terms of such Bergsonian pure recollection one can also re-member the past in mutually exclusive or incompossible ways; for example, in one instance recalling someone's victimisation, in another instance recalling them as the aggressor, and so on. Similarly, in films such as *The Discreet Charm of the*

22 See note 14 above.

Bourgeoisie, one encounters precisely such "implicated presents [that] are constantly revived, contradicted, obliterated, substituted, re-created, fork and return" (Deleuze 2005b, 97–99). But in the case of *Les Saisons*, the incompossibility is immanent in the use of advanced digital technology—a product of the city and the very development trajectory which has obliterated the forest—to re-member the forest. That is, the duration of the silent camera as a character is incompossible with the *longue durée* of the post-glacial-era life it creatively re-members, insofar as its own existence as technology necessarily excludes the continued existence of the forest it nevertheless struggles to recall. Indeed, much the same can be said for the humans in the film, including the three children whose gazes are returned by the animals. On the one hand, for all of them, the "different versions of the same" existence (Deleuze 2005b, 99) in the great forest—all marked by the brutal intensity and unpredictability of the state of nature—proved incompatible with their *conatus* or appetite for active joy rather than passive sadness. Yet, on the other hand, while this incompatibility precipitated the formation of the city, and the correlative destruction of the forest, it is precisely the loss of the forest that today so haunts humans within the city, and sees them take up their cameras to virtually re-member the majesty of what is actually now gone—an act which parallels the gaze of each of the three children featured in the film.

But far from being irrational, the above is quite intelligible in terms of our intuitions into time and memory; our longing for the very things we are running from; and our desire to re-create the very things we are demolishing. In many respects the voiceover in *Les Saisons*—sparing as it is—reflects such intuition through words that are descriptive rather than evaluative, and which thereby succeed in expressing the past at its various junctures, rather than offering an opinion of it as a whole from any one given present. In this, it arguably approximates the immense "archaeological, stratigraphic [and] ... tectonic" conduit of expression of Straub/Huillet's films, in which the "lacunary" and "deserted layers of our time" are recalled but in ways that remain sensitive to the "variable orientations and connections" that they have entailed (Deleuze 2005b, 234). But this amounts to neither fatalism nor quietude in the face of an implacable history. Rather, what emerges through *Les Saisons* is a noosign that points beyond itself, not only to a state beyond the centredness of worldviews couched in the first kind of knowledge, through immersion within perspectives of the second kind of knowledge, but also to a state beyond the stability of subjectivity, through increasing intuition of the fluidity of time and memory. That is, intuition of the creativity of all re-membering, the incompossibility of certain recollections, and the consequent interminable lack of any

position from which the past can be definitively evaluated. And the corollary of this is divine openness to the creative processes of Spinozan modal composition—to the forging of new modes hitherto unimaginable—which the appetite for active joy pursues without reserve through a composite of rational and intuitive rhizomatic experimentation. The final scene of *Les Saisons* underscores this, involving as it does not only a young girl's departure from the city and her playful exploration of a forested area, but also a fawn's returning of her gaze when the two encounter one another—in a moment adumbrating the birth of a new human-animal hybrid mode, or animal-human desiring machine. Such a genesis is echoed by the voiceover, in its poignant reference to the possible formation, at this historical juncture, of a *new* human alliance with the natural world.

Conclusion

The emancipatory power of the time-image, as Deleuze explains, derives from "the sensory-motor break" from our ordinary world that it provides; a break which "makes man a seer who finds himself struck by something intolerable in the world, and confronted by something unthinkable in thought"—an impasse that obliges him either to create "something" or "suffocate" (Deleuze 2005b, 164). In this regard, "the intolerable is no longer a serious injustice, but [rather] the permanent state of daily banality" in which a person "feels himself trapped" by the imaginative morass of the first kind of knowledge (Deleuze 2005b, 164). But at the same time "the spiritual automaton" also finds himself "in the psychic situation of the seer, who sees better and further than he can react" because even the frameworks of the second kind of rational knowledge do not provide the requisite means to do so (Deleuze 2005b, 164). For Deleuze, though, "the subtle way out" of this impasse is "to believe, not in a different world, but in a link between man and the world, in love or life" (2005b, 164), and it is here that the possibility of an experience of beatitude emerges. An experience which is indissociable from the creative processes to which the Spinozan "war cry" refers, namely "that we do not even know what a body can do" (Deleuze 1990, 255).

The allusion at the end of *Les Saisons* to the birth of a new body—a new human-animal hybrid mode or animal-human desiring machine—can be seen to be the result of precisely the kind of impasse described above by Deleuze, and it similarly challenges the viewer to begin thinking *differently*. After all, precipitated by intolerable boredom with the anthropocentric worldviews of the first kind of knowledge that inform the city's perspective on nature, the viewer throughout the film explores vantages informed by the second kind of knowledge,

namely nonhuman and superhuman movement-images, only to find these folding into time-images in the last instance. That is, sheets of past and peaks of present lead, in turn, to a noosign that—if read in earnest—not only problematises the centredness of the spectator's worldviews and the stability of their subjectivity, but also points beyond them to a state of decentredness in space and desubjectification in time. This is a state not of passive vacuity but rather of active modal composition, undertaken without reserve as part of the triadic expressionism presented by Spinoza, namely "substance which expresses itself, the attribute which expresses, and the essence which is expressed" through the formation of new modes (Deleuze 1990, 27).

The need for such an approach to life is becoming increasingly urgent, as the current environmental crisis poses difficult questions about the continued possibility of *both* city life as it is understood today, and life on earth. Despite their difficulty, these questions also cannot simply be answered by the dull indifference of those intent on pursuing a business-as-usual approach, because the survival of the city is as much at stake as that of the natural world in which it is embedded. Indeed, the city will exist in name only when it is faced with extreme food scarcity in a post-oil age without adequate renewable energy alternatives (Wright 2011), when its clean water becomes a rare commodity over which wars are readily fought (Shiva 2002), and when its streets overflow with desperate climate refugees (Wennersten and Robbins 2017). After all, as Spinoza indicates, when "the citizens begin to fear the [c]ity" or fear for their lives when in the city, they effectively "find themselves once more in a state of nature" (Deleuze 1990, 267). Considered in this light, there can perhaps be no more important activity than that of stepping out beyond the boundaries of thought established by the city, not to return to nature but rather—like the young girl at the end of *Les Saisons*—to forge a new conceptualisation of nature in relation to ourselves, from which a new and sustainable world might one day spring.

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