EDITORIAL:

CINEMA, RELIGION, AND THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

The fourth issue of *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* addresses philosophy of religion as a topic and its intersections with cinematic art. In the field of film studies, film and religion have been fruitfully combined as research subject matters. Scholars interested in this combination have focused on periods like that when the Motion Picture Production Code was in place in Hollywood, on films informed by specific religious traditions like Mohsen Makhmalbaf's Sufi-inspired *The Silence* (*Sokout*, 1998), on theoretical approaches such as feminism that problematize works like Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (1996), among other options open to researchers. Cinema and philosophy have also had a productive relationship in recent years. Different philosophical fields have addressed the moving image, from the philosophy of art to the philosophy of mind, yet philosophy of religion has been a field lacking in this discussion. This issue contributes to attenuate this absence.

Cinematic art and religion have been thought philosophically, either argumentatively or reflectively, even if not in tandem. This philosophical thinking calls for some distinctions, particularly within the realm of religion — but also within the sphere of art. For instance, it is worth differentiating between philosophy of religion and theology, in the same way that philosophy of art is differentiated from aesthetics, since they can be easily confused or conflated. In the words of Paul Tillich,

> Philosophy of religion is the theory of the religious function and its categories. Theology is the normative and systematic presentation of the concept of "religion." The cultural history of religion acts as a bridge between philosophy of religion and theology. It grasps critically the individual realizations of the concept of religion in history and thereby leads on to a special systematic solution of its own (which can be solution of a group, a "school," or a church). [...] The separation of philosophy of religion and theology is no better founded than the separation of philosophy of art and normative aesthetics, or moral philosophy and normative ethics. [...] And wherever theses separations are made, the mutual dependence of the elements persists, even if it is not recognized. Every theol-

ogy is dependent upon the presupposition of a concept of the essence of religion. Every philosophy of religion is dependent upon a concept of the norm of religion. And both are dependent upon the comprehension of the cultural-historical material.[1]

This inscribes religion in human history and culture, presenting a panorama in which essence and norm cannot be mistaken for essentialism and normativism. Different definitions of essence and norms co-exist in religion and also within the boundaries of a specific religion — because unity and uniformity are not synonyms. The same can be said about art and cinema, if we call to mind the contrasting ontological views on film and the diverse guiding principles of film movements. Theology as the systematic development of religious practices and articulations does not limit itself to a theistic conception of God (that is, of God conceived as a being that intervenes in the world, shaping its history, and responding to prayerful requests). Buddhism, for example, does not talk about God as such, even though it uses comparable concepts — enlightenment/salvation, for instance. Yet even within those that do use such a term, there have been various understandings of it which are non-theistic and may involve a dialogue with theologians like Tillich,[2] with mystic poets like Angelus Silesius,[3] or with Marxist philosophers like Ernst Bloch.[4]

These considerations about religion connect with cinema in two different ways in this issue. The first group of articles engage with five major religious traditions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, and Christianity. All of them tackle significant topics within the realm of philosophy of religion through film: identity, tradition, experience, emptiness and emptying, and love. Shai Biderman focuses on the Marx Brothers' Jewish cinema and discusses the hermeneutics and reasoning in Judaism as tending towards the absurd, bordering on the absurdist. Daniel Bradley juxtaposes *Up in the Air* (2009) and *Avatar* (2009) to unveil a contemporary need for the sacred considering it through Hossein Nasr's Muslim take on tradition. Anuradha Chandra uses *Khargosh* (2008) to exemplify the similarities between the concept of *dhvani* (suggestion, resonance) associated with Kasmir Saivism, a Hindu strand, and the phenomenology of film experience. Amir Vodka connects kung fu cinema with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's processes of becoming made of intensities and forces that forgo actualisation and Tao's concept of emptiness. Earl Valdez analyses how Ingmar Bergman's film trilogy of faith — *Through a Glass Darkly* (*Såsom i en spegel*, 1961), *Winter Light* (*Natt-*

vardsgästerna, 1962), and *Silence* (*Tystnaden*, 1963) — addresses divine silence and God as experienced through love, in the vein of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological theology.

The second set of articles tackle particular topics within a philosophical approach to film where religion is crucial. Catarina Maia leans on George Bataille to discuss sacrificial rituals and the possibility of the sacred in João César Monteiro's cinema, through the humorous, the erotic, and the poetic. Emmanuel Levinas and Amédé Ayfre provide Inês Gil with a framework to inquire into a spiritual film style that eschews explicitly religious themes, as Sergei Loznitsa's *In the Fog* (*V tumane*, 2012) shows. Warwick Mules relies on Friedrich Schleiermacher to make a claim for Terrence Malick's film *The Tree of Life* (2011) as a post-religious film that breaks with the conventions of melodrama. Frédéric Marteau and Christophe Becker examine how cinema rethinks otherness and sameness, humanism and barbarism, centring on cannibalism and its symbolic link with the Thomist understanding of transubstantiation. Aaron Taylor meditates on Hannibal Lecter as a film character and the sympathy it provokes, using Friedrich Nietzsche's writings to see how his cruelty is connected with kindness, fostering moral revaluation.

My conversation with P. Adams Sitney is a fitting complement to these texts. It reiterates two thoughts that the articles, together as well as separately, elicit: that there are many open doors in the meeting between the moving image and philosophy of religion, but also that there are countless doors that remain shut. In this sense, what follows is simultaneously a developed exploration of this interaction in different directions and a mere glimpse. Film and religion scholars and philosophers should take this inviting issue as an invitation.

THIS ISSUE'S EDITOR

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1. Paul Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, trans. James Luther Adams (1969; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), p. 33.

2. See, e.g., Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

3. See, e.g., Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubinic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shrady (1657; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986).

4. See, e.g., Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, trans. J. T. Swann, 2nd edn. (1968; London: Verso, 2009).