The Address of the Eye

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF FILM EXPERIENCE

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TO RICHARD L. LANIGAN

FOR TEACHING ME WHAT I ALWAYS

ALREADY KNEW

CHAPTER ONE

Phenomenology and the Film Experience

> In a sense the whole of philosophy . . . consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language. And in a sense . . . language is everything, since it is the voice of no one, since it is the voice of the things, the waves, and the forests.[1]

WHAT ELSE IS A FILM if not "an expression of experience by experience"? And what else is the primary task of film theory if not to restore to us, through reflection upon that experience and its expression, the original power of the motion picture to signify? However, when Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote the above lines shortly before his death in 1961, it is unlikely that the cinema was in his thoughts. Rather, his overarching concern was with the living exchange of perception and expression, with the sensuous contours of language, with meaning and its signification born not abstractly but concretely from the surface contact, the fleshly dialogue, of human beings and the world together making sense sensible. Yet it is precisely this emphasis on the material and carnal foundations of language that makes the above fragment of *The Visible and the Invisible* particularly relevant to the semiotic and hermeneutic questions posed by the medium of cinema. The passage suggests not only the primordial and unprivate nature of language, but also the physically concrete "reversibility" of perception and expression that constitutes both the moving picture and our experience of it.

More than any other medium of human communication, the moving picture makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as the expression of experience by experience. A film is an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard, an act of physical and reflective movement that makes itself reflexively felt

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 155.

and understood. Objectively projected, visibly and audibly expressed before us, the film's activity of seeing, hearing, and moving signifies in a pervasive, primary, and embodied language that precedes and provides the grounds for the secondary significations of a more discrete, systematic, less "wild" communication. Cinema thus transposes, without completely transforming, those modes of being alive and consciously embodied in the world that count for each of us as *direct* experience: as experience "centered" in that particular, situated, and solely occupied existence sensed first as "Here, where the world touches" and then as "Here, where the world is sensible; here, where I am."[2]

In an unprecedented way, the cinema makes visible and audible the primordial origins of language in the reversibility of embodied and enworlded perception and expression. However, as Merleau-Ponty points out in a continuation of the passage quoted above, "What we have to understand is that there is no dialectical reversal from one of these views to the other; we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth."[3] That is, the reversibility of perception and expression is neither instantiated as a thought nor synthesized from discrete and separate acts of consciousness. It is *given* with existence, in the simultaneity of subjective embodiment and objective enworldedness. Using the term *chiasmus* to name this reversibility ("the ultimate truth"), Merleau-Ponty characterizes it as that "unique space which separates and reunites, which sustains every cohesion."[4] That unique space is both the lived-body and the experienced world.

Indeed, the cinema uses *modes of embodied existence* (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement) as the vehicle, the "stuff," the

[2] This manner of reference to the "centering" of embodied existence is used frequently within the context of phenomenological inquiry but has a slightly different emphasis than that currently used to discuss—and disparage—the notion of the "centered subject." For phenomenological usage, see particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of the Senses: A Vindication of Sensory Experience*, trans. Jacob Needleman (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, Collier-Macmillan, 1963); and Richard M. Zaner, *The Problem of Embodiment: Some Contributions to a Phenomenology of the Body*, 2d ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977).

[3] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 155.

[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 187.

substance of its language. It also uses the *structures of direct experience* (the "centering" and bodily situating of existence in relation to the world of objects and others) as the basis for the structures of its language. Thus, as a symbolic form of human communication, the cinema is like no other. At the end of his two-volume *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma* (and sounding very much like Merleau-Ponty), Jean Mitry articulates both the medium's privileged nature and the problem it poses for those who would discover the "rules" governing its expression and grounding its intelligibility:

> These [cinematic] forms are . . . as varied as life itself and, furthermore, as one hasn't the knowledge to regulate life, neither has one the knowledge to regulate an art of which life is at one and the same time the subject and object.
>
> Whereas the classical arts propose to signify movement with the immobile, life with the inanimate, the cinema must express life with life itself. It begins there where the others leave off. It escapes, therefore, all their rules as it does all their principles.[5]

In a search for rules and principles governing cinematic expression, most of the descriptions and reflections of classical and contemporary film theory have not fully addressed the cinema as life expressing life, as experience expressing experience. Nor have they explored the mutual possession of this experience of perception and its expression by filmmaker, film, and spectator—all *viewers viewing*, engaged as participants in dynamically and directionally reversible acts that reflexively and reflectively constitute the *perception of expression* and the *expression of perception*. Indeed, it is this mutual capacity for and possession of experience through common structures of embodied existence, through similar modes of being-in-the-world, that provide the *intersubjective* basis of objective cinematic communication.

Insofar as the embodied structure and modes of being of a film are

[5] Jean Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1965), pp. 453–454. My translation from the following: "Les formes . . . sont . . . aussi variées que la vie elle-même et, pas plus qu'on ne saurait réglementer la vie, on ne saurait réglementer un art dont elle est à las fois le sujet et l'objet.

Tandis que les arts classiques se proposent de signifier le mouvement avec de l'immobile, la vie avec du non-vivant, le cinéma, lui, se doit d'exprimer la vie avec la vie elle-même. Il commence là où les autres finissent. Il échappe donc à toutes leurs règles comme à tous leurs principes."

like those of filmmaker and spectator, the film has the capacity and competence to signify, to not only *have* sense but also to *make* sense through a unique and systemic form of communication. Indeed, to the extent that any film can and does signify in some fashion to a viewer who is communicatively competent (that is, already aware that perception is expressible), and that any film—however abstract or "structural-materialist"—presupposes that it will be understood *as* signification, as conveying meaning beyond the brute material presence of light and shadow on a plane surface, the cinema assumes and assures its own intelligibility (even if it assumes and assures no single interpretation).[6] That intelligibility is also assumed by filmmaker and spectator. The film experience, therefore, rests on the mutual presupposition of its intersubjective nature and function, based on the intelligibility of embodied vision. Its significance emerges from a shared belief and from shared evidence that the substance and structure of cinematic perception and expression (however historically and culturally qualified) are inherently able to "reflect the universality of specific scopes of experience."[7]

This presupposition remains to be explored in the following chapters. Yet, immediately, it indicates that any semiotics and hermeneutics of the cinema must return to radically reflect on the origins of cinematic communication in the structures and pragmatics of existential experience. Such a semiotics and hermeneutic enterprise, undertaking this radical turn toward existence and away from secondary and abstract formulations, becomes a *semiotic phenomenology*—taking, as it does, signification and significance as immanent, as given with

[6] What is suggested here is that even at its most abstract and materially reflexive, the cinema is not understood as *merely* its brute material unless it is *secondarily* coded as such. Thus, in "structural-materialist" films, the materiality of the film is, and must be, *signified* in order to be understood on a material basis. In sum, the young infant (not yet communicatively competent because only preconscious of its own production of vision as both a viewing view/moving image) sees the play of light and shadow and color of *any* film as only its brute materiality, whereas the communicatively competent, self-conscious viewer sees *no* film in that manner, unless it is secondarily coded as materially significant. That is, to the baby the film is not yet a film, but to the mature viewing subject, the film is always *more* than its material presence and play before it can be seen as anything *less*.

[7] Jürgen Habermas quoted in T.A. McCarthy, "A Theory of Communicative Competence," in *Critical Sociology*, ed. Paul Connerton (London: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 472. On "communicative competence," see also Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

existence.[8] Such a phenomenology of human meaning and its representation attempts to describe, thematize, and interpret the structures of communication as they radically emerge in the structures of being. This phenomenology's aim, however, is not to arrive at "essential" and proscriptive categories but to address the "thickness" of human experience and the rich and radical entailments of incarnate being and its representation. To accommodate itself to experience, its method is responsively dialectical and informed by no particular *telos*.

The aim of this simultaneously empirical and philosophical study, then, is to serve as a prolegomenon to a lived logic of signification in the cinema. The focus here will center on the radical origin of such a logic in lived-body experience, that is, in the activity of embodied consciousness realizing itself in the world and with others as both visual and visible, as both sense-making and sensible. The entailment of incarnate consciousness and the "flesh" of the world of which it is a part will be described as the basis for the origination of the general structures of cinematic signification, structures that are themselves produced in the performance of specific modes of existential and embodied communication in the film experience (that is, in the activity of vision intersubjectively connecting film and spectator with a world and each other).

In no way is the following effort meant to deny the extra-cinematic, empirical, and contingent conditions that limit and affect the specific shape of actual (not merely possible) cinematic communication, systematically distorting it either spontaneously or willfully for ideological, rhetorical, and poetic purpose. Indeed, as indicated in the Preface, this study itself is necessarily situated within and distorted by its own theoretical context; and, so situated, it must always and necessarily entail the ideological, rhetorical, and poetic in-formation of its own historicity. Nonetheless, what follows is not intended as remedial. This is no idealist attempt to "cure" cinema or to uncritically embrace the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt school in general (or

[8] This relation between existential phenomenology and semiotics is first made explicit and recognized as a "semiotic phenomenology" in Richard L. Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenological Theory of Existential Communication* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), pp. 51–96. This relation is summarized: "Existential phenomenology posits the *sign as given*, not as the synthetic product of a phenomenalism (or objective principium) or the synthetic product of an existentialism per se (or subjective principium)." (p. 75)

Habermas in particular).[9] It does not take as its focus the exposure of "distorted" cinematic communication and, in fact, refuses the idealism that yearns for communication (an *existential* phenomenon) made completely rational, somehow "purged" of historical and cultural prejudice or "distortion," somehow "cleansed" of the contingencies and specificity of biased existence that make communication not only necessary but also possible.[10] Similarly, although this study must be informed necessarily by rhetorical force and poetic linguistic praxis, it is not intended as a rhetoric or poetics of cinematic communication. Rather, its phenomenological project is to radically reflect upon the general structures that always emerge particularly and contingently as the entailment of the lived-body and the world in cinematic acts of perception and expression. These primary structures, founded in existence and constitutive of conscious experience, produce themselves in the world as a systemic "cinematic communicative competence," against which the secondary (but always present) notion of systematic "distortion" can be identified and, indeed, from which it can be constituted as ideology, rhetoric, and poetics.

The Embodied and Enworlded Eye: Perception and Expression

When we sit in a movie theater and perceive a film as sensible, as making sense, we (and the film before us) are immersed in a world and in an activity of visual being. The experience is as familiar as it is intense, and it is marked by the way in which significance and the act of signifying are *directly* felt, *sensuously* available to the viewer. The embodied activity of perception and expression—making sense and signifying it—are given to us as modalities of a single experience

[9] For a general yet thorough introduction to the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt school and Habermas, see David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980). Held summarizes my own reservations about critical theory and its utopian idealism when, in a closing section on critical theory's "unresolved problems," he asks: "How can the possibility of critique be sustained, if the historical contextuality of knowledge is recognized? Or, to put the question somewhat differently, how can critical theory at once acknowledge its historicality and yet be critical?" (p. 398)

[10] "Systematically distorted communication" is a concept used by Habermas and relates to his theory of communicative competence. See Jürgen Habermas, "Systematically Distorted Communication," in *Critical Sociology*, pp. 348–362.

of being in the presence of and producing meaning and diacritical value. What we look at projected on the screen—whether Merleau-Ponty's "the things, the waves, and the forests," or only abstract lines and colors—addresses us as the expressed perception of an anonymous, yet present, "other." And, as we watch this expressive projection of an "other's" experience, we, too, express our perceptive experience. Through the address of our own vision, we speak back to the cinematic expression before us, using a visual language that is also tactile, that takes hold of and actively grasps the perceptual expression, the seeing, the direct experience of that anonymously present, sensing and sentient "other."

Thus, the film experience is a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression. It entails the visible, audible, kinetic aspects of sensible experience to make sense visibly, audibly, and haptically. The film experience not only *represents* and reflects upon the prior direct perceptual experience of the filmmaker *by means of* the modes and structures of direct and reflective perceptual experience, but also *presents* the direct and reflective experience of a perceptual and expressive existence *as* the film. In its presence and activity of perception and expression, the film transcends the filmmaker to constitute and locate its own address, its own perceptual and expressive experience of being and becoming. As well, the film experience includes the perceptive and expressive viewer who must *interpret* and *signify* the film *as* experience, doing so through the very same structures and relations of perception and expression that inform the indirect representational address of the filmmaker and the direct presentational address of the film. As a communicative system, then, what is called the "film experience" uniquely opens up and exposes the inhabited space of direct experience as a condition of singular embodiment and makes it accessible and visible to more than the single consciousness who lives it. That is, direct experience and existential presence in the cinema belong to both the film and the viewer. (As noted, the filmmaker's presence in that experience is indirect and only re-presented.[11])

[11] The term *filmmaker* is used here and throughout (except where otherwise stipulated) as naming not a biographical person and his or her style or manner of being through cinematic representation (a focus found in Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*), but rather the concrete, situated, and synoptic presence of the many persons who realized the film as concretely visible for vision. Thus, the term is also not equivalent to the textual function identified as the

As perception-cum-expression that can be perceived by another, as a communication of the experience of existence that is publicly visible, the anonymous but centered "Here, where *eye (I) am*" of the film can be doubly occupied. "Decentered" as it is engaged by an other in the film experience, it becomes the "Here, where *we see*"—a *shared* space of being, of seeing, hearing, and bodily and reflective movement performed and experienced by both film and viewer. However, this "decentering," this double occupancy of cinematic space, does not conflate the film and viewer. The "Here, where eye (I) am" of the film retains its unique situation, even as it cannot maintain its perceptual privacy. Directly perceptible to the viewer as an anonymous "Here, where eye am" simultaneously available as "Here, where we see," the concretely embodied situation of the film's vision also stands *against* the viewer. It is also perceived by the viewer as a "There, where I am not," as the space consciously and bodily inhabited and lived by an "other" whose experience of being-in-the-world, however anonymous, is not precisely congruent with the viewer's own. Thus, while space and its significance are intimately shared and lived by both film and viewer, the viewer is always at some level aware of the double and reversible nature of cinematic perception, that is, of perception *as* expression, of perception as a process of *mediating* consciousness's relations with the world. The viewer, therefore, shares cinematic space with the film but must also negotiate it, contribute to and perform the constitution of its experiential significance.

Watching a film is both a direct and mediated experience of direct experience as mediation. We both perceive a world *within* the immediate experience of an "other" and *without* it, as immediate experience mediated by an "other." Watching a film, we can see the seeing as well as the seen, hear the hearing as well as the heard, and feel the movement as well as see the moved. As viewers, not only do we spontaneously and invisibly perform these existential acts directly for and as ourselves in relation *to* the film before us, but these same acts are coterminously given to us *as* the film, as mediating acts of perception-cum-expression we take up and *invisibly perform* by appropriating and incorporating them into our own existential performance; we

"implied author" in Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 71–76.

watch them as a *visible performance* distinguishable from, yet included in, our own.

The cinema thus transposes what would otherwise be the invisible, individual, and intrasubjective privacy of direct experience as it is embodied into the visible, public, and intersubjective sociality of a language of direct embodied experience—a language that not only refers to direct experience but also uses direct experience as its mode of reference. A film simultaneously has sense and makes sense both for us and before us. Perceptive, it has the capacity for experience; and expressive, it has the ability to signify. It gives birth to and actualizes signification, constituting and making manifest the primordial significance that Merleau-Ponty calls "wild meaning"—the pervasive and as yet undifferentiated significance of existence as it is lived rather than reflected upon. Direct experience thus serves double duty in the cinema. A film presents and represents acts of seeing, hearing, and moving as both the *original structures of existential being* and the *mediating structures of language*. As an "expression of experience by experience," a film both constitutes an original and primary significance in its continual perceptive and expressive "becoming" and evolves and regulates a more particular form of signification shaped by the specific trajectory of interests and intentions that its perceptive and expressive acts trace across the screen.

The spontaneous and constitutive significance, the "wild meaning" that grounds the specificity and intelligibility of cinematic communication is itself grounded in and borne by embodied existence in its relation to and within a world. Having the bodily capacity to perceive and express and move in a world that exists both for us and against us, we are, as Merleau-Ponty points out, "condemned to meaning."[12] From the first, we are engaged in a living dialogue with a world that sufficiently exceeds our grasp of it as we necessarily intend toward it, a world in which we are finitely situated as embodied beings and yet always informed by a decisive motility. Thus, the need and power to signify are synonymous with embodied existence in the world. As evoked by the passage that opens this chapter, that original need and power are first encountered everywhere and in everything, neither ascribable to a single source nor consciously differentiated in their range or application. Before the ascriptions, differences, and systems of exchange articulated in and by what we call

[12] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xix.

"natural language" (the discrete instrumentality and systematic objectification of experience abstracted from experience for general use), we are always first immersed in the more primordial language of embodied existence.

This primordial language is not systematic and regulative but systemic and constitutive, arising in the process of being-in-the-world and in the living reversibility of perception and expression exercised by the lived-body as it materially and finitely shares the "flesh" of the world it inhabits. That is, both the *material nature* and the *finite situation* of embodied existence always already constitute a *diacritical system* that primordially signifies through the lived-choices of existential movement and gesture. From the first, embodied existence inflects and reflects the world as always already significant. Thus, long before we consciously and voluntarily differentiate and abstract the world's significance for us into "ordinary language," long before we constrain "wild meaning" in discrete symbolic systems, we are immersed in language as an existential system. In the very movement of existence, in the very activity of perception and its bodily expression, we inaugurate language and communication.

The moving picture, too, perceives and expresses itself wildly and pervasively before it articulates its meanings more particularly and systematically as this or that kind of signification, that is, as a specific cinematic trope or figure, a specific set of generic configurations, a specific syntactical convention. Indeed, before it is fragmented and dissected in critical and theoretical analyses, before the reified shorthand of formalist, realist, semiotic, structuralist, neo-Marxist, and psychoanalytic terminology abstracts aspects of the cinema's "wild meaning" into discrete codes governed by montage, mise-en-scène, syntagmatic categories, binary and oppositional structures, and particular ideological and poetic pathologies, a film makes sense by virtue of its very ontology. That is, its existence emerges embodied and finitely situated. It comes into being (becomes) as an ongoing and unified (if always self-displacing) situation of perception and expression that *coheres* in relation to the world of which it is a material part, but in which it is also materially and diacritically differentiated. As a medium that articulates the unified, if ever-changing, experience of existence, that expresses the original synonymity of existence and language, of perception and its expression, the cinema is a privileged form of communication. A film is given to us and taken up by us as perception turned literally inside out and toward us as expression. It

presents and represents *to* us and *for* us and *through* us the very modes and structures of being as language, of being as a system of primary and secondary mediations through which we and the world and others significantly communicate, constituting and changing our meanings from the moment of our first lived gesture. Thus, in its modalities of having sense and making sense, the cinema quite concretely returns us, as viewers and theorists, to our senses.

What is suggested by this general, philosophically inflected, and preliminary description of the structure that is the film experience is that cinematic "language" is grounded in the more original pragmatic language of embodied existence whose general structures are common to filmmaker, film, and viewer. Even though the film differs from the other two in the material and mode of its embodiment, for each "the perceiving mind is an incarnated mind."[13] It is this mutuality of embodied existence and the dynamic movement of its perceptual and expressive relations with and in the world that provide the common denominator of cinematic communication. Situated, finite, and—by virtue of being a body—"centered" in a world, embodied existence is constituted as and marked by the intrasubjective and intersubjective exchange between perception and expression. In a film, as in our direct and immediate experience, perception functions as a modality of expression, and expression as a modality of perception, both aspects of a synoptic "reversibility" and lived "directionality" that is the movement of existence, both thus subject to directional reversals that allow them to appear as either spontaneously prereflective and "operational" or as reflective and reflexive.

As two modalities of significant and signifying existence, perception and expression are interwoven threads, the woof and warp that together form a seamless and supple fabric, the whole cloth of existential experience from which specific forms of signification can be fashioned to instrumentally suit specific functions. Thus, in a film as in life, perception and expression—having sense and making sense—

[13] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work," trans. Arleen B. Dallery, in Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 3. The use of the word *mind* here may seem problematic to the reader at this point, because the attribution of mind to a film (i.e., a consciousness) is yet to be demonstrated and seems at first highly unlikely. However, as shall be discussed at great length, insofar as the consciousness of another as well as of oneself is known in its manifest form as *embodied intentionality*, then a human and a film can both be said to articulate consciousness, or, in this instance, "mind."

do not originally oppose each other and are not separated or differentiated as distinctly binary constructs and practices. Rather, they are complementary modalities of an original and unified experience of existence that has long been fragmented and lost to those interested in the ontology of the cinema and its structures of signification.

Film Theory and the Objectification of Embodied Vision

The reversibility of cinematic perception and expression is the "enabling structure" of cinematic communication.[14] In semiotic terms, it constitutes what Umberto Eco calls an "s-code": the system-code that "makes a situation comprehensible and comparable to other situations, therefore preparing the way for a possible coding correlation."[15] Without such a systemic exchange of cinematic perception and expression (one comparable to and comprehensible as such an exchange in the human situation), other secondary and more systematic cinematic coding correlations would not be possible and comprehensible. There could be no narrative codes, no codes of subjective vision, no editorial codes, and their like. Nonetheless, the cinematic system-code constituted by the exchange and reversibility of perception and expression has been almost completely neglected by the respective analytic and synthetic emphases of classical and contemporary film theory.[16]

Three metaphors have dominated film theory: the *picture frame*, the *window*, and the *mirror*.[17] The first two, the frame and the window,

[14] The phrase "enabling structure" is borrowed from Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), p. 230. The reader is also directed to Iser's discussion of "negativity" (pp. 225–231), which parallels Merleau-Ponty's discussion of reversibility or the "chiasm" in *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 130–155.

[15] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 40, 43–44.

[16] In the following paragraphs, I thematize the work of traditional and contemporary film theorists too numerous to cite. The reader unfamiliar with the field who wishes to follow the arguments advanced here is urged to seek out specific theorists and their texts with the help, perhaps, of J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976) and *Concepts in Film Theory* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984). Andrew's two volumes are hardly exhaustive (and occasionally exclusive), but they do provide a place to begin.

[17] This formulation was first emphasized in Charles F. Altman, "Psychoanalysis and

represent the opposing poles of classical film theory, while the third, the mirror, represents the synthetic conflation of perception and expression that characterizes most contemporary film theory. What is interesting to note is that all three metaphors relate directly to the screen rectangle and to the film as a static *viewed object*, and only indirectly to the dynamic activity of viewing that is engaged in by both the film and the spectator, each as *viewing subjects*. The exchange and reversibility of perception and expression (both in and as the film and spectator) are suppressed, as are the intrasubjective and intersubjective foundations of cinematic communication.

Most often identified with the binary poetics of a sufficiently opposed but necessarily linked *formalism* and *realism*, classical film theory has argumentatively and analytically severed expression from perception in its inquiries into the "true nature" or ontology of the cinema. That is, cinematic "language" (here we might think of montage) and cinematic being (and here of mise-en-scène) have been contrasted categorically and set against each other as opposing poles of a single, digital, two-valued system—each, in opposing the other, affirming it by implication and dependent upon it by necessity. The formalists, seeking to transform and restructure the "brute" referentiality and "wild" meaning of cinematic images into personally determinate and expressive signification (hence the metaphor of the frame), acknowledge the camera's perceptive nature as they celebrate the artist's triumph over it. On the other side, the realists, seeking to reveal and discover the world's expression in all its "wild" meaning

Cinema: The Imaginary Discourse," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 2 (August 1977), pp. 260–264. Examples of other metaphors that have not had the same impact as the three mentioned here are the film as *dream* and the film as *consciousness*. The metaphor of dream tends to intertwine itself with the metaphor of the frame insofar as it is personal, subjective, autonomous, and connected with the artist/filmmaker; however, it is also connected with the metaphor of the mirror insofar as it is a deceptive structure needing disclosure and decoding or deconstruction in the psychoanalytic situation. See Janet Jenks Casebier and Allan Casebier, "Selective Bibliography on Dream and Film," *Dreamworks* 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 88–93, and John Michaels, "Film and Dream," *Journal of the University Film Association* 32 (Winter-Spring 1980), pp. 85–87. The metaphor of consciousness is to be distinguished from the thrust of the present study insofar as consciousness in this work is 1) not considered apart from its embodiment in a person and 2) not used as a metaphor but to denote an empirical function of being. Consciousness as a metaphor for film, however, can be found throughout George W. Linden, *Reflections on the Screen* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1970), and it provides a focal point for Bruce Kawin, *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, and First-Person Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

(hence the metaphor of the window), acknowledge the camera's expressive nature in its selective and shifting vision, even as they celebrate the medium's perceptual purity and openness. For the most part, however, this dependence on and suppression of one of the necessary conditions for the existence of a film has not been overtly articulated as the infrastructure that binds formalism and realism into a single theoretical system.[18] Instead, the emphasis has been on a dual poetics—one valorizing cinematic expression and the other, cinematic perception.

Opposing each other, both formalist and realist arguments converge in their assumption that meaning is located in the text as a significant object, and in their assumption of that text's transcendence of its origin and location either in the world or in persons. The metaphor of the frame is emblematic of the *transcendental idealism* that infuses classical formalism and its belief in the film object as *expression-in-itself*—subjectivity freed from worldly constraint. In contrast, the window as metaphor is emblematic of the *transcendental realism* that informs realist film theory and its belief in the film object as *perception-in-itself*—objectivity freed from entailment with the prejudicial investments of human being. The first belief leads to the formalist celebration of what phenomenology criticizes as "subjective psychologism," the second to the realist celebration of what it decries as "objective empiricism."[19]

In an attempt to correct this tidy theoretical opposition and its contradiction by actual cinematic practice, contemporary theorists have tended to synthesize perception and expression, categorically collapsing and confusing them in an analogue relation in which they are distinguishable only by degree, not by modality. The nature of film

[18] One of the earliest explicit statements of this systemic interdependence appears in Jean-Luc Godard, "Montage My Fine Care," in *Godard on Godard*, trans. Tom Milne (New York: Viking Press, 1972), pp. 39–41. It also pervades Mitry's many discussions of editing throughout both volumes of his *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*. Also of relevance here is a subtle and nuanced overview of the history and practice of literary theory (with references to film theory) found in Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1980), particularly her use of the term "expressive realism" to nominate the single theoretical system that opposes and differentiates itself as formalism and realism.

[19] For basic description and phenomenological critique of the limitations of "subjective psychologism" and "objective empiricism," see the preface to Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. vii–xxi. This preliminary discussion is deepened in Chapters 1–3, pp. 3–51.

is considered as neither perceptive nor expressive. Rather, both modalities of existential experience are conflated as a synthesis of the *refractive*, *reflexive*, and *reflective* (hence the metaphor of the mirror). Drawing primarily upon linguistically oriented psychoanalytic and neo-Marxist paradigms (the former already privileging the metaphor of the mirror for its own purposes), the resultant theories of cinematic communication have emerged not as a celebratory poetics, but as a critical rhetoric, charging cinematic communication with some equivalent to sophistry.

That is, contemporary theory (most of it feminist and/or neo-Marxist in approach) has focused on the essentially deceptive, illusionary, tautologically recursive, and coercive nature of the cinema, and on its psychopathological and/or ideological functions of distorting existential experience. Such theory elaborately accounts for cinematic representation but cannot account for the originary activity of cinematic signification. Thus, it is hardly surprising, if poignant, that, attempting to liberate female spectatorship and spectators of color from linguistically determined psychic structures and colonial discursive structures, psychoanalytically based feminist film theory and ideologically based film theory so often bemoan the impossibility of a "new" language to express the specificity of their excluded experience and the lack of an uncolonized "place" from which to speak. Articulated in various ways and amid a number of highly sophisticated arguments, what contemporary film theory stresses and decries in its variations on the metaphor of the mirror is the totalitarian transcendence of either psychic or ideological structures over the signifying freedom of individual viewers in their concrete, contingent, existential situation. As perception and expression are confused with each other in the deceptive processes of the cinematic apparatus and the seamless and conventional unfolding of a privileged (if reviled) "classical narrative cinema," the possibility of dialogic and dialectical communication is suppressed and the film experience is seen as grounded in a false and sophistic rhetoric that essentially distorts the possibility of any "real" communication.

Thus, the metaphor of the mirror entails a critical judgment of the cinema that is as damning as it is descriptive. It condemns the very ontological being of cinema as substitutive (rather than expansive) and deceptive (rather than disclosing). It reflects the viewer only to point to his or her subjection to signs and meanings produced by an always already dishonest and subjugating "other." Idealist in its uto-

pian longings for liberatory signification while losing itself in a labyrinth of representation, contemporary film theory is informed by a *transcendental determinism*—based on the belief in the film object as *mediation-in-itself*. In the one instance, signification and significance are seen as always predetermined by apparatus and ideology; the film object as it is experienced invisibly and rhetorically interpellates the spectator and speaks the culture, producing cinematic language and its norms of usage as a *given*. In the other instance, signification and significance are predetermined by psychic structures; the camera's and spectator's vision are confused and bound together in a false and distorted primary identification that cannot be denied, only disavowed. In sum, in most contemporary theory, viewing in the cinema leads to no good—or, at best, to the remedial practice of demystifying the cinema's material, structural, and ideological pathology and, at worst, to a pleasure that is guilty and must be adjudged "perverse."

In most of its classical and contemporary articulations, then, film theory has focused not on the *whole correlational structure* of the film experience, but has abstracted and privileged only one of its *parts* at a time: expression-in-itself, perception-in-itself, and mediation-in-itself, respectively. Although the next section of this chapter will introduce the reader to phenomenology as the philosophy and research procedure that informs the remainder of this study, film theory's abstraction and fragmentation of the correlational structure that is the film experience can be criticized against the main phenomenological theme of *intentionality*: the invariant, pervasive, and immanent correlational structure of consciousness. Intentionality is "the unique peculiarity of experiences 'to be the consciousness *of* something.' "[20] That is, the act of consciousness is never "empty" and "in-itself," but rather always intending toward and in relation to an object (even when that "object" is consciousness, reflexively intended). The invariant correlational structure of consciousness thus necessarily entails the *mediation* of an *activity* and an *object*. If we substitute the specificity of the film experience as a reversible structure correlating the activity of perception and expression and commuting one to the other, the whole of the structure could, and later will more elaborately, be mapped as follows: *the perception* (act of consciousness)

[20] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 223.

of (mediation) *expression* (object of consciousness) *and/as the expression* (act of consciousness) *of* (mediation) *perception* (object of consciousness). In relation to my previous thematization of classical and contemporary film theory, formalist theory can be linked to a focus on the cinematic *expression* (of perception)—perception here represented as the suppressed part of the entire relation; realist theory to a focus on the cinematic *perception* (of expression)—expression here represented as the suppressed part of the entire relation; and contemporary theory to a focus on the mediating copula (perception) *of* (expression)—with perception and expression represented as the suppressed part of the entire relation.

Whatever their respectively different foci, classical and contemporary film theory have pursued their inquiry into the nature of cinematic signification sharing three crucial and largely uninterrogated presuppositions. First, film theory has presupposed *the act of viewing*. Certainly, there have been some considerations of the anatomical, mechanical, and psychic aspects of vision that characterize and differentiate the human and camera eye.[21] As well, a major portion of contemporary film theory dwells on the psychoanalytic aspects of the spectator's visual engagement with the cinema. Nonetheless, film theory has generally assumed as given the act of viewing in its totality, that is, as *the constituting condition of the film experience* in each and all of its aspects and manifestations, and as the nexus of communication among the filmmaker, film, and spectator.

Second, film theory has presupposed the cinema's and spectator's *communicative competence*. Discussions of cinematic codes and their entailments are all based on the assumption that a film is intelligible as the imaging and expression of experience—something that "counts" and has a particular kind of significance above the random projection and play of brute light and shadow. That is, although film theory has attempted to describe and explain cinematic signification or "language" in great detail, it has assumed the cinema's power to signify and the spectator's power to see this signification as signifi-

[21] See, for example, Barbara Anderson, "Eye Movement and Cinematic Perception," *Journal of the University Film Association* 32 (Winter-Spring 1980), pp. 23–26. As well, most contemporary introductory aesthetics and histories contain mechanical and anatomical dissections of the camera and process of human vision and "perception." For a brief but comprehensive example, see the first two chapters in George Wead and George Lellis, *Film: Form and Function* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), pp. 3–53.

cant. It has assumed *the fundamental intelligibility of the film experience.* Whether fragmenting its analyses of cinematic semiosis into a syntactics (primarily revealed in the formalist emphasis on structuring), a semantics (primarily revealed in the realist emphasis on content), or a pragmatics (primarily revealed in the contemporary theorist's emphasis on relational functions), film theory has assumed rather than accounted for the film experience's intrasubjective and intersubjective nature and its transitive function or performance.

Third, film theory has presupposed that a film is a *viewed object.* Whether it has been considered the aesthetic and expressive object of the formalist; the empirical and perceptive object of the realist; or the cultural, rhetorical, and reflexive object of the contemporary theorist; the film has been regarded as merely, if complexly, a vehicle through which meaning can be represented, presented, or produced; a visible object in the manner of the frame, the window, and the mirror. That a film, as it is experienced, might be engaged as something *more* than just an object of consciousness is a possibility that has not been entertained.

These three presuppositions have informed almost all film theory and directed its fragmented course and conclusions. That the act of viewing constitutes cinematic communication, that communication occurs, and that the communication is effected by a viewed object on a viewing subject (despite contemporary theory's objectification of the viewing subject as the predicate of cinematic vision)—these are the givens of the film experience and the ground upon which various theories of film base themselves and from which they proceed.

However, these presuppositions are themselves open to investigation and, indeed, require it if we are to understand the original power of the cinema to signify, its genesis of meaning and ability to communicate, its "expression of experience by experience." In this regard, both classical and contemporary theory have provided us only partial descriptions and abstract formulations that have detached cinematic signification from its origin in concrete sense and significance. As Dudley Andrew points out:

> We can speak of codes and textual systems which are the results of signifying processes, yet we seem unable to discuss that mode of experience we call signification. More precisely, structuralism and academic film theory in general have been disinclined to deal with the "other-side" of signification, those realms of pre-formulation where sensory data congeals into "something that matters" and those realms of post-formulation where that "something" is experienced as mattering. Structuralism, even in its post-structural reach toward psychoanalysis and intertextuality, concerns itself only with that something and not with the process of its congealing nor with the event of its mattering.[22]

Previous discussion has introduced the exchange or reversibility of perception and expression in the film experience as the commutative basis for the emergence of cinematic signification and significance. Focus on this exchange is a focus on both the process that constitutes "something that matters" and the "event of its mattering." It points to and describes the radical and existential ground for both a theory of sign production and a theory of meaning as they are always entailed in the lived-body experience. Thus, relative to cinema, the *existential and embodied act of viewing* becomes the paradigm of this exchange of perception and expression. That is, the act of viewing provides both the necessary and sufficient conditions for the commutation of perception to expression and vice-versa. It also communicatively links filmmaker, film, and spectator by means of their respective, separate, and yet homeomorphic existential performance of a shared (and possibly universal) competence: the capacity to localize and unify (or "center") the invisible, intrasubjective commutation of perception and expression and make it visible and intersubjectively available to others.

Filmmaker, film, and spectator all concretely use the agency of visual, aural, and kinetic experience to express experience—not only to and for themselves, but also to and for others. Each engaged in the visible gesture of viewing, the filmmaker, film, and spectator are all able to commute the "language of being" into the "being of language," and back again. Dependent upon existence and embodiment in the world for its articulation as an activity, the act of viewing as the commutation of perception and expression is both an intrasubjective and intersubjective performance equally performable by filmmaker, film, and spectator.

This suggests, therefore, the possibility that a film may be considered as more than a merely visible object. That is, in terms of its performance, it is as much a *viewing subject* as it is also a *visible* and *viewed*

[22] J. Dudley Andrew, "The Neglected Tradition of Phenomenology in Film Theory," *Wide Angle* 2, No. 2 (1978), pp. 45–46.

object. Thus, in its existential function, it shares a privileged equivalence with its human counterparts in the film experience. This is certainly *not* to say that the film is a *human* subject. Rather, it is to consider the film a *viewing* subject—one that manifests a competence of perceptive and expressive performance *equivalent* in structure and function to that same competence performed by filmmaker and spectator. The film actualizes and realizes its ability to localize, unify (or "center") the "invisible" intrasubjective exchange or commutation between the perception of the camera and the expression of the projector. As well, it makes this exchange visible and intersubjectively available to others in the expression of its perception—in the visible commutation between the perceptive language of its expressive being (the prereflective *inflection* of its "viewing view" as the *experience of consciousness*) and the expressive being of its perceptive language (the *reflection* of its "viewed view" as the *consciousness of experience*).

In the act of vision, the film transcends its existence as a merely visible object reducible to its technology and mechanisms, much as in similar acts of vision, the filmmaker and spectator transcend their existence as merely visible objects reducible to their anatomy and physiology. All are not merely objects for vision, but also subjects of vision. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's description of the structured, centered, inherent "co/herence" of human experience in the world as not only for others, but also for itself, seems just as applicable to the *visual being* of the *visible film*:

> Just as . . . when I walk round an object, I am not presented with a succession of perspective views which I subsequently co-ordinate thanks to the idea of one single flat projection, . . . so I am not myself a succession of "psychic" acts, nor for that matter a nuclear *I* who brings them together into a synthetic unity, but one single experience inseparable from itself, one single "living cohesion," one single temporality which is engaged, from birth, in making itself progressively explicit, and in confirming that cohesion in each successive present. . . . The primary truth is indeed "I think," but only provided we understand thereby "I belong to myself" while belonging to the world. . . . Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself.[23]

The intrasubjective or implicit (what in phenomenological terms shall later be explored as the "introceptive") and the intersubjective or

[23] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 407.

explicit are thus modalities of a single experience of being-in-the-world. Similarly, the invisible activity of viewing and its visible productions are both modalities of the single experience of vision-in-the-world. Understood as a viewing subject that—by virtue of the particular nature of its embodied existence—can also be viewed, the film no longer merely contains sense, significance, meaning. Rather, it possesses sense by means of its senses, and it makes sense as a "living cohesion," as a *signifying subject*. It is as this signifying subject that it existentially *comes to matter* as a *significant object*, that is, can be understood in its *objective* status by others as sensible and intelligible.

The direct engagement, then, between spectator and film in the film experience cannot be considered a monologic one between a viewing subject and a viewed object. Rather, it is a dialogical and dialectical engagement of *two* viewing subjects who also exist as visible objects (if of different material and in different ways to be elaborated further). Both film and spectator are capable of viewing and of being viewed, both are embodied in the world as the subject of vision and object for vision. Zygmunt Bauman tells us, "All signification starts from the establishing of an affinity between its subject and object; or, rather, between two subjects, standing respectively at the beginning and the end of communication."[24] In the film experience, all signification and all communication start from the "affinity" that is the act of viewing, coterminously but uniquely performed by both film and spectator. This act of viewing, this "*address of the eye*," implicates both *embodied, situated* existence and a *material* world; for to see and be seen, the viewing subject must be a body and be materially in the world, sharing a similar manner and matter of existence with other viewing subjects, but living this existence discretely and autonomously, as the singular embodied situation that makes this existence also a unique matter that matters uniquely.

Most theoretical reflection abstracts the act of viewing, the "address of the eye," from its *double* embodiment and *double* situation in—and as—the specific relations of vision that constitute the film experience. The existential, embodied nature of vision and its signifying power are elided. So, too, is the lived sense that cinematic vision in the film experience is articulated by *both* the film *and* the spectator simultaneously engaged in *two* quite distinctly located visual acts that meet on shared ground but never identically occupy it. The

[24] Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 27–28.

theorist, abstracted from his own embodied experience in the movie theater, describes cinematic vision as the essential entailment of a *viewing subject* and a *viewed object* in what is thought of, rather than lived through, as a *single* and *disembodied* act of vision and signification.

Yet everything about my experience at the movies denies such description. The film for me is never merely a viewed "thing," that is, visible images that my vision sees, appropriates, and incorporates as "my own." No matter how I give myself up to the play of images I see and sounds I hear in the theater, those images and sounds are always to some degree resistant to my incorporation of—or by—them. Indeed, there would be no "play" were there not this mutual resilience and resistance I feel, this back-and-forth exchange I experience, in the encounter between myself and a film. Materially embodied, particularly situated, and informed by an intending consciousness that has its own "projects" in the world, I am never so vacuous as to be completely "in-formed" by even the most insinuating or overwhelming film. My experience at the movies is never lived as a monologic one, however easy and even often lazy my participation (or the film's) seems to be. There are always two embodied acts of vision at work in the theater, two embodied views constituting the intelligibility and significance of the film experience. The film's vision and my own do not conflate, but meet in the sharing of a world and constitute an experience that is not only intrasubjectively dialectical, but also intersubjectively dialogical. Although there are moments in which our views may become congruent in the convergence of our interest (never of our situation), there are also moments in which our views conflict; our values, interests, prospects, and projects differ; something is not understood or is denied even as it is visible and seen. Cinematic vision, then, is never monocular, is always doubled, is always the vision of *two viewing subjects* materially and consciously inhabiting, signifying, and sharing a world in a manner at once universal and particular, a world that is mutually visible but hermeneutically negotiable.

It is the embodied and enworlded "address of the eye" that structures and gives significance to the film experience for filmmaker, film, and spectator alike. The embodied eye materially presents and represents intending consciousness: the "I" affirmed as a subject of (and for) vision not abstractly, but concretely, in lived-space, *at* an address, *as* an address. Vision is an *act* that occurs from somewhere

in particular; its requisites are both a *body* and a *world*. Thus, *address*, as noun and verb, both denotes a location where one resides and the activity of transcending the body's location, originating from it to exceed beyond it as a projection bent on spanning the worldly space between one body-subject and another. The address of the eye also forces us to consider the *embodied* nature of vision, the body's radical contribution to the constitution of the film experience. If vision is not regarded as transcendental (even if its address toward objects in the world transcends its originating and permanent if mobile residence in a "home body"), then two bodies and two addresses must be acknowledged as the necessary condition of the film experience.

Resonant with the body's other senses (particularly those of touch and sound), the "address of the eye" in the film experience expresses both the *origin* and *destination* of viewing as an existential and transcendent activity. It names a *transitive relationship* between two or more objective body-subjects, each materially embodied and distinctly situated, yet each mutually enworlded. Constituted from this transitive relation is a third, *transcendent space*, that is, a space exceeding the individual body and its unique situation yet concretely inhabited and *intersubjective*.

When the object of the eye's address is not only visible but also capable of vision, visual activity and its intentional projects are doubled and describe a semiotic/hermeneutic field. The visual activity of this doubled "address of the eye" (objectively invisible) calls to mind those strip comics and cartoons in which the characters' gazes literally "dash" themselves across space as hyphenated lines of force, crisscrossing each other in a complex circumscription of the space they both share. Such a circumscription of mutually lived space, such an intersection and connection of visual activity (neither fully convergent nor fully separate) creates a shared address whose semiotic ambiguity and existential richness cannot be reduced to geometry.

We are thus called to a radical reflection upon those presuppositions that inform classical and contemporary film theory. Instead of going forward in an ungrounded investigation of cinematic signification as it secondarily emerges fragmented into a syntactics, semantics, or pragmatics, we must now turn back to the origins of cinematic signification as it originally emerges in the systemic act of viewing, the address of the eye. Merleau-Ponty suggests the concerns of such a journey: "It is at the same time true that the world is *what we see* and that, nevertheless, we must learn to see it—first in the sense that

we must watch this vision with knowledge, take possession of it, say what *we* and what *seeing* are, act therefore as if we knew nothing about it, as if here we still had everything to learn."[25]

Beginning again and radically reflecting on the origin of cinematic signification in the embodied act of viewing, in the "address of the eye," we ground this investigation, appropriately, in the philosophical context and method of existential—and semiotic—phenomenology.

Phenomenology and Film Theory

Given contemporary film theory's general neglect and particular ignorance of phenomenology, it is necessary to explicate briefly the philosophy and phenomenological method that shape this study as a series of increasingly radical reflections on the semiotic/hermeneutic entailments of seeing, being seen, and visual/visible embodiment in the film experience. First, it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of existential phenomenology as both a philosophy of science and a research procedure and its few entailments with film theory. Then a discussion of Edmund Husserl's *transcendental phenomenology* will be distinguished from *existential phenomenology*, the latter most fully developed in its exploration of the semiosis of being by Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

It is existential phenomenology that grounds this present study. Existential phenomenology realizes transcendental phenomenology's unfulfilled aim of not only deriving its data from, but also relocating those data, in their meaningfulness, in the *Lebenswelt*, "the world of our lived experience."[26] It locates the origin of theory in practice, and essence in existence. It attempts to empirically describe, thematize, and interpret the being of language in the language of being. That is, its aim is to make explicit the dynamic structures of the "living bias" that condemns us to the experience of meaning and yet allows us to alter our meanings, reflect upon our experience, change our position and our perspective in relation to the horizons that the world limit-

[25] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 4.

[26] Herbert Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 57 (January 1960), p. 64.

lessly provides us.[27] Meaning, for existential phenomenology, arises "in any given case" as "the synthesis of the subjective and objective experience" of phenomena.[28] Thus, the radical reflections of existential phenomenology do not retreat from the world of action and responsibility into the abstractions of bounded static essences or boundless dynamic relativities. Rather, reflection turns toward the world as it is lived, and toward a clear and insightful acceptance of the responsibility we have (whether we wish it or not) for the meanings that we choose, accept, and live. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that "phenomenological description is never an absolute process in the sense of arriving at a final definition of phenomena since our source of knowledge is still the perceiving subject whose experience itself is never a final attainment, but an ongoing process of synthesis."[29]

Existential phenomenology would suggest that we are as responsible for our epistemologies as we are for our methods and our ends. The practice of a semiotics and hermeneutics of the cinema cannot be abstracted from the theory of knowledge that grounds and justifies it. Thus, as Jean Mitry rightly recognized, "To wonder what is the cinema, that is to pose a question to philosophy, and to pose a question to philosophy is to begin to define the latter, that is to say a system."[30] As a *philosophy* of conscious experience, phenomenology systemically grounds the attempt of this study to make explicit the phenomenon of signification in the cinema as it is lived through and embodied in an enworlded subject of vision, that is, as it occurs ex-

[27] John Wild, "Existentialism as a Philosophy," *The Journal of Philosophy* 57 (January 1960), p. 50. This article also makes clear the distinction between the scientific world of facts and the *Lebenswelt*, the lived world of human facts.

[28] Richard L. Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 30.

[29] Ibid., p. 31.

[30] Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, Vol. 2, p. 457. My translation from the following: "Se demander ce qui est le cinéma, c'est poser une question à la philosophie, et poser une question à la philosophie, c'est commencer par définer celle-ci, c'est-à-dire un système." It is interesting to note Christian Metz's impatience with Mitry's "philosophizing" in "Current Problems of Film Theory: Christian Metz on Jean Mitry's *L'Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, Volume II," trans. Diana Matias, *Screen* 14 (Spring/Summer 1973), pp. 40–87. However, Metz also rightly criticizes a certain lack of effectiveness in Mitry's philosophical considerations because of their placement in the text and their lack of integration into his overall discussion of film form and structures. Nonetheless, Mitry is one of the very few film theorists who philosophically ground their theoretical discourse.

istentially and directly *for us* and *before us*, rather than abstracted from us or posited against us.[31] The *data* for phenomenology are not the preconceived constructs we accept as "given" and objective facts, but the *capta* of human and lived existence that are "taken up" and structured as objective fact in the *acta*, or practices, of human experience.[32]

As a *research procedure*, phenomenology calls us to a series of systematic reflections within which we question and clarify that which we intimately live, but which has been lost to our reflective knowledge through habituation and/or institutionalization. That is, the phenomena of existence are usually either lived as simply given and taken for granted, or they have been abstracted and reified objectively as the predicated constructs of what has come to be thought of as scientific inquiry. Through a process in which "one proceeds from phenomenological intuition, to analysis, and to description,"[33] the radical reflection of phenomenology attempts to *reanimate* the taken-for-granted and the institutionally sedimented. And, because it turns us toward the origins of our experience of phenomena and acknowledges both the objective enworldedness of phenomena and the subjective embodied experiencing of them, such radical reflection opens up not only fresh possibilities for reflective knowledge, but also fresh possibilities for living knowledge and experiencing phenomena, for seeing the world and ourselves in a critically aware way.[34]

[31] This central aim of investigating phenomena as they are engaged by consciousness and in the world so as to constitute the meaning that is experience can be found in the following texts, all of which have crucially informed the present study. See Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1976), *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (New York: Paragon Books, 1979), *Existential Technics* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1983), and *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. vii–xxi; Maurice Roche, *Phenomenology, Language, and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Calvin O. Schrag, *Experience and Being: Prolegomena to a Future Ontology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1969) and *Radical Reflection and the Origin of the Human Sciences* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Univ. Press, 1980); and Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965).

[32] For a succinct distinction of *data*, *capta*, and *acta*, see Richard L. Lanigan, "The Phenomenology of Human Communication," *Philosophy Today* 23 (1979), p. 8.

[33] Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 30. Note that "phenomenological intuition" is meant as a "strict adherence to knowledge as it is immediately given in experience."

[34] Practical experience of phenomenological method is given to the reader in Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction*. For a general consideration of radical reflection as a method, see Schrag, *Radical Reflection and the Origin of the Human Sciences*, pp. 97–130. For a lengthier explication of method, see Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 2d ed. Vol. 2, pp. 653–701.

The distinction between the existential phenomenology that informs this present work and the more well-known transcendental phenomenology associated with Edmund Husserl is of great importance in establishing the relevance of phenomenology to the study of cinematic communication. Of the small number of theoretical works that attempt to ground their investigation of film phenomenologically, the majority tend to do so within the context of transcendental phenomenology. Thus, they have faced the same problems and been subjected to the same charges of idealism and essentialism as has that philosophical project.[35] As well, most of these studies lack the systematic rigor emphasized by both transcendental and existential phenomenology and so appear—for want of an articulated method—at best metaphysically arcane, at worst metaphorically vague and mystically poetic.[36]

[35] Works on cinema that derive from transcendental phenomenology are Henri Agel, *Le Cinéma et le sacré* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961) and *Poétique du cinéma* (Paris: Edition du Signe, 1973); André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967); and Roger Munier, *Contre l'image* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963). Critiques of transcendental phenomenology in its application to cinema can be found throughout Mitry, *Esthéthique et psychologie du cinéma*, and in Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*, pp. 242–253. It should be mentioned here that Mitry's own quarrel with phenomenology is its transcendental turn—one that leads to a naive belief in the transcendent vision and revelation of the camera. (He is, himself, otherwise engaged in a phenomenology of cinema and is quite close to Merleau-Ponty in attitude and the development of his thought.) The reader is also directed to a brief article in English that calls for the application of Husserlian phenomenology to film: N. Patrick Peritore, "Descriptive Phenomenology and Film: An Introduction," *Journal of the Univ. Film Association* 29 (Winter 1977), pp. 3–6, and to a forthcoming article by Alan Casebier in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*.

[36] While Agel's works concern themselves with the mystical aspects of cinema, the books that seem most vague and lack a coherent method are several works that have been associated (even if, in Cavell's case, wrongly) with existential phenomenology: Linden, *Reflections on the Screen*; Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enl. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979); and Yvette Biró, *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of the Cinema*, trans. Imre Goldstein (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982). A similar kind of enthusiastic but methodless "feel" for existential phenomenology can be found in Mark Slade, *Language of Change: Moving Images of Man* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1970) and in the remarkable but neglected work by Parker Tyler, *The Shadow of an Airplane Climbs the Empire State Building: A World Theory of Film* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973).

There do exist a small number of works that counter both the essentialism and poetic mysticism found in most transcendental phenomenologies of the cinema, but they are relatively unknown (or unread) within the context of contemporary film theory.[37] Of them, Jean-Pierre Meunier's neglected *Les Structures de l'expérience filmique* should be singled out as a significant study of systematic clarity that explores the phenomenon of cinematic "identification" using the explicit framework of existential phenomenology and offering another (and more open) way to conceive of spectatorial engagement with cinematic images than the structure of "identification" defined by psychoanalysis.[38]

More recent has been the appearance of Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*.[39] Drawing primarily upon Henri Bergson's philosophy and C. S. Pierce's semiology, Deleuze's work bears some relation to this present study and stands, in many respects, as parallel to it. Nonetheless, although it has been generally identified as a phenomenology of cinema, Deleuze rejects

[37] Andrew discusses at some length the existentially oriented phenomenology of Amédée Ayfre, particularly his *Le Cinéma et sa vérité* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1969), in *The Major Film Theories*, pp. 249–253. Other works that are relatively unknown or isolated within the "mainstream" of contemporary film theory and that promote and/or practice existential phenomenology are Andrew, "The Neglected Tradition of Phenomenology in Film Theory," pp. 44–49; Alan B. Brinkley, "Toward a Phenomenological Aesthetic of Cinema," in *Aesthetics II*, Tulane Studies in Philosophy, Vol. 20 (New Orleans: Tulane Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 1–17; Bryan K. Crow, "Talking About Film: A Phenomenological Study of Film Signification," in *Phenomenological Research in Rhetoric, Language, and Communication*, ed. Stanley Deetz, Doctoral Honors Seminar Proceedings sponsored by the Speech Communication Association and the Department of Speech Communication, Southern Illinois Univ. at Carbondale, 1979, pp. 4–15; Bruce Jenkins, "Structures of Perceptual Engagement in Film: Toward a Technology of Embodiment," in *Film Reader 2* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 141–146; Brian Lewis, "The Question of Cinematic 'Essence': A Phenomenological Model of Representational Film Experiences," *Wide Angle*, 4, no. 4 (1981), pp. 50–54; and, of course, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Film and the New Psychology," in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 48–59.

[38] Jean-Pierre Meunier, *Les Structures de l'experience filmique: l'identification filmique* (Louvain: Librairie Universitaire, 1969). This work is mentioned briefly in Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*, p. 183.

[39] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989).

this characterization because, according to his reading, existential phenomenology privileges a "natural perception" at odds with cinematic signification. He sees the cinema as a problem for phenomenology because it "can, with impunity, bring us close to things or take us away from them and revolve around them, and it *suppresses* both the anchoring of the subject and the horizon of the world. Hence it *substitutes* an implicit knowledge and a second intentionality for the conditions of natural perception."[40] Thus, within the context of existential phenomenology, as Deleuze interprets it, "cinematographic movement is both condemned as unfaithful to the conditions of perception and also exalted as the new story capable of 'drawing close to' the perceived and the perceiver, the world and perception."[41] Yet rigorous phenomenological description need never argue that the "implicit knowledge" and "second intentionality" of the cinema necessarily suppress the spectator's embodied situation or substitute for "natural perception." (That, in fact, sounds more like the psychoanalytic argument against cinema.) Citing only a few early works, Deleuze misses the dialectical and dialogic character of Merleau-Ponty's later semiotic phenomenology while he moves on to assert (phenomenologically) the *direct* and *preverbal* significance of cinematic movement and images. In many respects, the first volume's project is similar to the project here—less systematic, perhaps, in its grounding of cinematic signification as immanent and more elaborative in its discussions of specific films and the style of particular filmmakers. Deleuze, however, neglects the *embodied situation* of the spectator and of the film. In *Matter and Memory*, Deleuze's philosophical mentor Henri Bergson asserts, "Questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than of space."[42] It is not time, but space—the significant space lived as and through the objective body-subject, the historical space of situation—that grounds the response to those questions and the question of cinematic signification in this present study. In this focus on embodiment and situation, existential, semiotic phenomenology is not out of step with the contemporary quest for an account of cinematic signification that grounds meaning as value-laden, committed, and socially active. Its aim is to locate the structure and

[40] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 57. (Emphasis mine)

[41] Ibid.

[42] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), p. 57.

meanings of phenomena in the contingency and openness of human existence.

Husserl and Transcendental Phenomenology

Both transcendental and existential phenomenology are philosophies that reflexively and reflectively turn on the objective "truisms" of science and its various epistemologies not so much to reject them *in toto*, as to seek their subjective grounding in the ontology of conscious experience from which all epistemes and science are generated. Responsive to conscious experience, phenomenology is also a research procedure that is rigorous without being rigid. That is, it adapts itself to the phenomena under investigation as the latter are "given" by the world and "taken up" in human consciousness through the human activity of experiencing. As both systemic philosophy and systematic procedure, phenomenological inquiry is less a set of steps to be applied programmatically to phenomena than it is a series of *critical commitments* made by the researcher to respond openly to the phenomena of consciousness and to her own consciousness of phenomena. This was as much the goal of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as it was of Merleau-Ponty's existential and semiotic phenomenology. However, some specific articulation of the major differences between the two should indicate the latter's pragmatic, qualified nature and its intersubjective, always already social, grounding not in the Husserlian "transcendental ego," but in enworlded and embodied persons.

For the sake of brevity, but with a reluctance that is shared here, Herbert Spiegelberg has offered elsewhere the "important constants" of Edmund Husserl's initially descriptive and eventually transcendental phenomenology. These "constants" are presented as a "minimum list of propositions" that define transcendental phenomenology as a science and then thematize it in regard to the matter and horizons of its inquiry, its method, and its project:

> 1) Phenomenology is a rigorous science in the sense of a coherent system of propositions; it goes even beyond positive science by aiming at *absolute certainty for its foundations* and at *freedom from presuppositions* that have not passed phenomenological scrutiny.
>
> 2) Its subject matter is the *general essences of the phenomena of consciousness;* among these phenomena, the phenomenologist distinguishes between the *intending acts* and the *intended objects* in strict parallel; he pays special attention to the modes of appearance in which the intended referents present themselves; he does not impose any limitations as to the content of these phenomena.
>
> 3) Phenomenology is based on the *intuitive exploration* and *faithful description* of the phenomena *within the context of the world of our lived experience* (*Lebenswelt*), anxious to avoid reductionist oversimplifications and overcomplications by preconceived theoretical patterns.
>
> 4) In order to secure the fullest possible range of phenomena and at the same time doubt-proof foundations it uses a special *method of reductions which suspends the beliefs associated with our naive or natural attitude* and shared even by science; it also *traces back the phenomena to the constituting acts in a pure subject,* which itself proves to be irreducible.
>
> 5) Its ultimate objective is the *examination and justification of all our beliefs, both ordinary and scientific, by the test of intuitive perception.*[43]

For Husserl, all knowledge of the world arises in experience and emerges as a *mediated* relation between consciousness and phenomena. European, or "traditional science," he charged, fragmented the absolute certainty of this mediated relation and thus was unable to satisfactorily explicate either the *phenomena of experience* or the *experience of phenomena*. Instead, our relations with the world were bifurcated into the Cartesian dualism represented in the sciences by *phenomenalism* on the one hand and by *psychologism* on the other. That is, the claims and procedures of phenomenalism or positivist science isolate phenomena from their appearance to consciousness, describing them as objects directly known only through physical perception (hence, phenomenalism's primary concern with "sensible" and material objects). In a similar manner, the claims and procedures of introspective psychologism isolate consciousness from its relation to sensible and material phenomena, describing the latter as constituted by and in consciousness and thus directly known only as mental perception (hence, psychologism's primary concern with states of "sensibility" or subjectivity).[44] Husserl's rigorous science of phenomenol-

[43] Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism," p. 64. (Emphasis mine) The reader should note in proposition 4 the use of the words *pure* and *irreducible*. Here, where the transcendental ego emerges, existential phenomenology parts ways with the idealism of transcendental phenomenology.

[44] Richard Schmitt, "Phenomenology," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1967), Vol. 6, pp. 135–151.

ogy arose in opposition to this bifurcated reduction of experience that dominated European science and burdened it with a stock of presupposed knowledge that obscured rather than illuminated the world of phenomena and our conscious relations with it.[45]

To counter this reductionism and dualism, Husserl emphasized the "fullness" of consciousness as it is experienced and nominated through the key phenomenological concept: *intentionality*. The term was used to designate the nature of consciousness as a "stream between two poles: subject and object," as "a *vector* that effects an *organized* synthesis."[46] Consciousness is not empty as it is given in experience. Consciousness as we live it and reflect upon it in experience is always mediated and mediating, is always *consciousness of something* (even when it is reflexive: consciousness of itself and its activity). For Husserl, then, *intentionality* was a term that described the invariant directedness of consciousness, its always correlational character or structure.[47] That is, the phenomena of our experience (the *noema*, or intentional objects of consciousness) are always correlated with the mode of our experience (the *noesis*, or intentional acts of consciousness). Intentionality is this invariant correlation that structures and directs our experience and, from the first, infuses it with meaning. As Merleau-Ponty points out in an explication of Husserl's use of the term:

> It is a question of recognizing consciousness itself as a project of the world, meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses, but towards which it is perpetually directed—and the world as this pre-objective individual whose imperious unity decrees what knowledge shall take as its goal. This is why Husserl distinguishes between *intentionality of act*, which is that of our judgements and of those occasions when we voluntarily take up a position . . . and *operative intentionality* . . . , that which produces the natural and antepredicative unity of the

[45] Ibid., pp. 135–139.

[46] Peter Koestenbaum, introduction to Edmund Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, trans. Peter Koestenbaum (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. xxvii.

[47] For various explications of *intentionality*, in addition to Peter Koestenbaum's introduction in Husserl's *The Paris Lectures*, see (in order of ascending complexity) David Stewart and Algis Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to the Field and its Literature* (Chicago, IL: The American Library Association, 1974), pp. 8–9; Roderick N. Chisholm, "Intentionality," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 4, pp. 201–204; Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, Vol. 2, pp. 107ff.; and Schrag, *Experience and Being: Prolegomena to a Future Ontology*, pp. 82–121.

> world and of our life, being apparent in our desires, our evaluations and in the language we see, more clearly than in objective knowledge, and furnishing the text which our knowledge tries to translate into precise language.[48]

For Husserl, as well as for all subsequent phenomenologists, the intentional structure of consciousness in no way denies the world an objective status—even as the world is always engaged by a subject of consciousness. Thus, while phenomenology is unlike positivism in its insistence that the world is not available to us except in its engagement through consciousness, phenomenology is also unlike psychologism in its insistence that the world is not constituted by consciousness. That is, the world is not *in* consciousness but rather is always already extant *for* consciousness that intends toward it. The world exists objectively, providing us the inexhaustible horizons of our conscious experience, whether we reflexively reflect upon that experience, or live it in what Husserl called the "natural attitude" (identified in his later works as the *Lebenswelt*, or lived-world). This natural attitude is the necessary store of habitual or sedimented presuppositions and beliefs that inform both our ordinary and scientific activity, that surround us as the "reality" seemingly "given" to us by the world. We forget in the natural attitude that what counts as "reality" was, at some point, both culturally and individually "taken up" by us, and then taken-for-granted.

Husserl's goal was to interrogate the conventional assumptions about the nature of phenomena taken-for-granted in the natural attitude informing not only everyday life, but also scientific inquiry. In order to describe and specify the invariant and essential features of phenomena possible in all the situations in which they might be experienced by consciousness (rather than merely an institutionalized or ordinarily lived few), Husserl engaged in a series of investigative *epoches* or *reductions* (that is, a controlled and rigorous bracketing of presuppositions). These constituted a method with three major phases: the phenomenological epoche, the eidetic reduction, and the transcendental reduction.[49] Husserl's system of reflection is particularly notable in that it works in what traditionally would be consid-

[48] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. xvii-xviii. (Emphasis mine)

[49] Koestenbaum in Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, pp. xix–xxvii, lvi–lx. See also Richard L. Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," in *Communication Yearbook III*, ed. Dan Nimmo (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1979), pp. 29–49.

ered a "backward" or reflexive movement. To get "to the things themselves,"[50] Husserl starts with a description of phenomena as they appear to consciousness in the natural attitude. Then, in the reductions, he proceeds to strip away the preconceptions and conventions that surround phenomena until their invariant features are discovered and their possibilities for existence are made as explicit as their actual existence. This movement is both reflective and reflexive. Indeed, it parallels the structure of our own "ordinary" movement in relation to the world. That is, the movement from our lived and unreflected-upon experience of phenomena (the *noema*) to our reflection on both the phenomena and our mode of experiencing it (the *noesis*) to the emergence in this process of the previously "absorbed" subject of the experience of the correlation of action and object (the *ego* or *I*).[51]

The first phase of the reduction is the *phenomenological epoche*, which involves the interrogation and "bracketing" of beliefs and presuppositions held in the natural attitude. It is thus the beginning of a process of critically distancing oneself not from the phenomena under investigation, but from the taken-for-granted judgments, beliefs, and presuppositions that ground our everyday existence as "reality" and limit the possibilities for understanding the phenomena. The aim of this first phase is to put the natural attitude "out of play." To achieve this goal, "bracketing" must occur at three levels of the epoche. First, epistemological prejudices are removed in a *philosophical reduction* that demands that the investigator's method of research respond to the phenomena as experienced, rather than to an imposed methodological bias. Second, logical presuppositions that contribute to the creation of particular scientific constructs and their constraints on the imaginative and playful variation of possible alternative logics are removed in a *scientific reduction*. Third, ontological presuppositions and beliefs about the nature of reality and existence (the most entrenched and transparent prejudices of all) are removed in a phenomenological reduction that makes us confront our natural attitude and leaves us open to the experience of the phenomena as they appear to consciousness in their original or open possibilities.[52]

[50] "To the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*) are the catchwords that characterize Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), pp. 12–13.

[51] Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction*, pp. 43–46.

[52] Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 37.

The second phase of the reduction is the *eidetic reduction*. Here, after the phenomenological epoche, those essential or invariant features of the phenomena "left" to consciousness are intuited, made explicit, and thematized (that is, individual phenomena are treated as an instance of the more general phenomena).[53] There are two stages to this analysis. The first calls for a focus on "the abstract and general properties of, ideas about, or forms of the phenomenon under investigation."[54] The second calls for restraint in the consideration and analysis of particular examples. That is, although the abstract and general aspects of phenomena are originally drawn from and located in *actual* experience, the investigator should be critically aware of the necessity to remain open and independent of the particularities of any actual experience so that the essential aspects of the phenomena can emerge in the fullness and potential of their *possibilities* for experience.

The third and final phase of Husserl's series of reductions is the *transcendental reduction*. It is in this phase that the essence or invariant "shape" of the phenomenon in conscious experience (both actual and virtual) is *universalized* through an attempted "total bracketing" of existence. First, the *Lebenswelt* or lived-world in which consciousness and experience are correlated "into a sense of reality in both a preconscious/prereflective and conscious/reflective modality" is examined and isolated.[55] Second, the constituents of that life-world (that is, the network of intentions and implications that are the self, the other, and the world) are described and bracketed. Third, what remains as the culmination of the reductions after the bracketing of existence is the correlation of intentionality: the structure of consciousness intending toward the specific phenomenon. Belonging to no particular existence, indeed bracketed *outside* particular existence, intentionality is thus located by Husserl in what is a *transcendental ego*, that is, in a subjectivity made universal and objectively available to *any* existence. In sum, for Husserl, the transcendental reduction attempts an essential description of the phenomena of consciousness in all their possibilities for any existence and thus, in its universal relevance to all possible experience, demonstrates that "subjectivity is intersubjectivity."[56]

Although this latter proposition becomes central to the phenome-

[53] Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 31.

[54] Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 38.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid. See also Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, p. 35.

nologists who follow Husserl, his transformation of subjectivity into an objective modality comes at too high a price and is in basic contradiction with the original aim of phenomenology to ground itself in the lived-world. As pointed out earlier, the subject of consciousness is known by means of its existence in the world and its active implication with phenomena. Implicit in acts of consciousness, the subject of consciousness is known reflectively and reflexively from the direct and active existential experience of phenomena. That is, direct experience is the invariant correlation of enworlded phenomena and embodied consciousness in an intentional structure that implicates and thus implies an intentional subject. The intentional subject therefore cannot be known transcendentally "bracketed" outside of existence and the correlational activity of intentionality. As well, such an abstraction as the transcendental subject could not logically escape its own inclusion in an intentional structure—itself intending toward, conscious of, the structure of intentionality as its own intentional object.[57]

Husserl's transcendental ego presents us with an unnecessary paradox. It is an abstraction from the *Lebenswelt* which cannot escape the *Lebenswelt*, suggesting only infinite regress. As a philosophy of consciousness and experience and a research method, phenomenology cannot avoid locating the subject of consciousness and experience as existence in the world. And, as existence in the world, the subject of consciousness and experience is *embodied*, *situated*, and *finite*. While accepting both Husserl's description of the intentional structure of consciousness and the basic direction and rigor of his method, existential phenomenology rejects his idealism, his essentialism, and his notion of the transcendental ego. It relocates "essence" as it is qualified in existence, in the *Lebenswelt* from which phenomena emerge and in which they have their only significance.

Merleau-Ponty and Existential (Semiotic) Phenomenology

The insistent focus of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology is on the correlation of the lived-body and the lived-world. This correlation he calls *être-au-monde*, a term that suggests both a being-present-to-the-world and a being-alive-in-the-world. Thus, Merleau-Ponty follows Husserl in emphasizing intentionality as the

[57] Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction*, pp. 45–46.

invariant correlative structure of acts of consciousness and their objects whose entailment generates meaning. However, Merleau-Ponty rejects the earlier philosopher's attempt to locate or situate intentionality in a disembodied and transcendental subject. And he rejects those of Husserl's reductions that "took phenomenology away from the empirical experience embodied in the person."[58]

Merleau-Ponty not only maintains that we cannot "bracket" a belief in existence as we explore the phenomena of consciousness and the latter's intentional structure, but he also insists that existence is the lived, situated, always in motion, always unfinished character that *is* intentionality. That is, intentionality is not merely a static correlational structure between *noesis* and *noema*. It is a dynamic structure creating temporality and spatiality as meaningful for embodied beings always in essential and existential motility. Intentionality as the basic structure of *être-au-monde* is not just a directionally reversible *vector of implication* between consciousness and its objects. It is a biased *trajectory of implication*, actively performed by an embodied consciousness correlated with enworlded objects in the context of an existentially significant project. As Merleau-Ponty tells us, "Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but of 'I can'."[59]

The "I can" of existential embodied consciousness is the primary *expression of perception* performed by the lived-body subject in the *Lebenswelt*, a performance radically entailed with a primary *perception of expression* that is not thought but is carnally lived as the prereflective experience of world, other, and self. Thus, the lived-body becomes central to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and investigation. It is the lived-body that actualizes intentionality in the very gesture of being alive in and present to the world and others. The lived-body articulates intentionality as "flesh"; that is, as dynamic, concrete, situated, and both materially and historically finite. My body is "my point of view upon the world."[60] I cannot refuse its situated and finite existence and thus its necessary and diacritical motility and self-displacements, and so I am "condemned to meaning."[61] I am always implicated and interested in the world and with it, always of its flesh,

[58] Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 38.
[59] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 137.
[60] Ibid., p. 70.
[61] Ibid., p. xix.

always in the process of completing and disclosing its meanings as my own. I cannot "be" otherwise.

Rejecting Husserl's transcendental ego and the transcendental reduction, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that, no matter how rigorous our procedure, we cannot ever stand "behind" existential meaning for we are immersed in it even in the midst of our most reflective and abstractive endeavors. The correlation, then, of an intentional act of consciousness and an intentional object of consciousness implicates and indicates not a transcendental ego, but an existentially embodied and situated subject of consciousness. Indeed, our understanding of both intentional acts and intentional objects and their correlation as the essential structure of consciousness is only meaningful *as* it is existential.

For Merleau-Ponty, the lived-body is not merely an object in the world, the flesh of its flesh; the body is also a subject in the world. It is both agent and agency of an engagement with the world that is lived in its *subjective* modality as *perception* and in its *objective* modality as *expression*, both modes constituting the *unity* of meaningful experience. We are told: "Every perception is a communication or a communion, the taking up or completion by us of some extraneous intention or, on the other hand, the complete expression outside ourselves of our perceptual powers and a coition, so to speak, of our body with things."[62]

Perception, then, is more than a mere mosaic of sensations on the body-object, more than a mere psychological phenomenon. Advancing from the Gestalt psychology that he admired but found still too dependent upon behaviorism, Merleau-Ponty describes perception as a dynamic ensemble that far exceeds the sum of its parts and, as well, confounds attempts to explain its dynamism solely in terms of psychic structures. Perception is the bodily access or agency for being-in-the-world, for having both a world and being. Perception is the bodily perspective or situation from which the world is present to us and constituted in an always particular and biased meaning.[63] Throughout Merleau-Ponty's writings, the lived-body is both a subject in the world and an object for the world and others. The lived-body's individual perception of the world is always also available for

[62] Ibid., p. 320.

[63] David Carr, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Incarnate Consciousness," in *Existential Philosophers: Kierkegaard to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. George Alfred Schrader, Jr. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 374–387.

the world and others as the lived-body's objective expression, that is, the material and active realization of intentionality. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's *primacy of perception* is always also a *primacy of expression*, the latter articulated as the visible gesture of the former.

The lived-body, then, does not merely provide a "place" for perception and expression but also performs the commutation of perception to expression and vice-versa. From its first breath, the lived-body constitutes both an *intrasubjective and intersubjective system* in which being is both understood and signified as significant—that is, as intentional. In that every lived-body is both the subject of perception and expression and an object for perception and expression, every lived-body lives the commutation of perception and expression in a *simultaneously subjective and objective modality*. And because intentionality (the invariant and universal correlation of consciousness and its objects) is articulated in existence through the agency and activity of the lived-body being-in-the-world, every conscious lived-body is semiotically and hermeneutically competent in its ability to commute perception to expression and back again. Thus, the primacy of perception *as* the primacy of expression, the commutability of one to the other, is synopsized in lived-body experience as the *primacy of communication*.

The lived-body being-in-the-world establishes the concrete ground (that is, the premises as well as the necessity) for all language. Through the diacritical movement of intentionality actualized and situated as being-in-the-world, being *gestures*. The lived-body projects and performs its perceptual perspective and situation and bears meaning into the world as the expression of that situation. The highest level of this performance is *speech* and its fixation as *writing*. But the genesis of speech and writing occurs at the radical level of the lived-body. Thus, in Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology, the lived-body "becomes an essential condition of language rather than the merely instrumental transmitter of pure thoughts."[64] Indeed, there are no such phenomena as "pure thoughts." There can be no consciousness of anything, no intentionality, if there is no body and no world. All perception and expression, all its structural modalities, emerge in embodied and enworlded existence and partake of it. As Richard Lanigan observes: "This correlation unites the felt experience of the body and the resulting structure of perception

[64] Ibid., p. 396.

with the possibility of expression in which 'what' one experiences is probably 'what' the Other experiences. There is a unity of process in perception and expression that is the sign as signification and the agency of that process is the body experience as lived."[65]

Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the lived-body experience of perception and expression in the *Lebenswelt* thus emerges as a phenomenology that is not only existential but also semiotic. It describes and articulates "the rediscovery of the subject in the act of speaking" in contrast "to a science of language which inevitably treats this subject as a thing."[66] A semiotic phenomenology, therefore, is not engaged in fragmenting the process and activity of existential speech into a syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics of the spoken. It is neither a linguistics nor an investigation of language as a system of codified symbols.[67]

In his introduction to Merleau-Ponty's *Signs*, Richard McCleary distinguishes these radically different approaches to language:

> Like the carnal intersubjectivity that is its ever-present source, speaking language is a moving equilibrium governed by the present and incarnate logic of existence. . . . The objective science of language turns toward the past of already established language and already acquired meanings. The phenomenology of language seeks to unveil the field of presence of the speaking subject and the "differentiation" and convergence of linguistic gestures he effects in his unending efforts to bring the implicit meaning-structures of experience to explicit expression. In their autonomy, science and philosophy mutually envelop one another within the dialectic of the constituted and the constituting.[68]

This mutual envelopment of science and philosophy, of the constituted and the constituting, is disclosed in Merleau-Ponty's advance upon Husserl's phenomenological method. Consisting of three progressive reflections, it refuses the transcendental reduction in favor of a *qualified essence*, one found in the finitude of existence and in the horizonal multiplicity of the world.[69] These three reflections form the

[65] Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 125.

[66] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), p. 104.

[67] Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, pp. 26–27.

[68] Richard C. McCleary, "Translator's Preface," in Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. xxi.

[69] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" trans. John F. Banner, *Cross*

process and method of phenomenological description, reduction, and interpretation.

The *phenomenological description* focuses attention on the conscious experience of phenomena as it is immediately given in the *Lebenswelt* and as it is accessible to us in a reflection that originates in immanent *prereflective perception*. Because it is our perception that sets the boundaries of what is immediately present to our consciousness and also in what manner it is present, perception—as it relates us to the world in the living expression of the prereflective "natural attitude"—becomes the focus of description. Thus, once identified, the natural attitude is bracketed. This is not meant to put it "out of play" so that it does not interfere with our investigation of phenomena, but rather to see its function in experience from a reflective distance, to "disrupt our familiarity with it" so that the habitual and sedimented presuppositions we hold about experience can be distinguished from experience as it is prereflectively lived.[70] What description of the natural attitude reveals to phenomenological reflection is that the world invariably exceeds our perceptive access to it and our prereflective and reflective expressions of it. The lesson of the phenomenological description is that description is never complete. Meaning as sense and significance can never be exhaustively articulated or signified. Thus, Merleau-Ponty rejects Husserl's transcendental reduction and tells us, "The greatest lesson of the reduction is the *impossibility* of a complete reduction."[71]

The phenomenological description of the natural attitude reveals that prereflective embodied existence in the world provides the primary ground for secondary reflection upon both existence and embodiment. The act of being-in-the-world (an act both perceptive and expressive) is not originally reflective and reflexive. "I can" precedes "I think that." Thus, in relation to language, phenomenological description reveals that "speech speaking" (Merleau-Ponty's *parole parlante*) prereflectively grounds "speech spoken" (*parole parlée*). Merleau-Ponty clarifies the meaning of these terms in a significant passage that locates the genesis of language in the prereflective *Lebenswelt*:

Currents 6 (Winter 1956), pp. 59–70; and Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, pp. 97–151, and "Communication Models in Philosophy," pp. 38–40.

[70] Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" p. 64.

[71] Ibid.

> It might be said, restating a celebrated distinction, that languages or constituted systems of vocabulary and syntax, empirically existing "means of expression," are both the repository and residue of acts of *speech*, in which unformulated significance not only finds the means of being conveyed outwardly, but moreover acquires existence for itself, and is genuinely created as significance. Or again one might draw a distinction between the *word in the speaking* and the *spoken word*. The former is the one in which the significant intention is at the stage of coming into being. Here existence is polarized into a certain "significance" which cannot be defined in terms of any natural object. It is somewhere at the point beyond being that it aims to catch up with itself again, and that is why it creates speech as an empirical support for its own not-being. Speech is the surplus of our existence over natural being. But the act of expression constitutes a linguistic world and a cultural world, and allows that to fall back into being which was striving to outstrip it. Hence the spoken word, which enjoys available significances as one might enjoy an acquired fortune. From these gains other acts of authentic expression—the writer's, artist's or philosopher's—are made possible. This ever-recreated opening in the plenitude of being is what conditions the child's first use of speech and the language of the writer, as it does the construction of the word and that of concepts. Such is the function which we intuit through language, which reiterates itself, which is its own foundation, or which, like a wave, gathers and poises itself to hurtle beyond its own limits.[72]

The process of phenomenological description forces us to confront conscious experience as the "perceptual logic" of the embodied subject.[73] It demands that we consider the embodied and enworlded subject as always already immersed in meaning, both supported and constrained by the inherited "fortune" of language. Phenomenological description returns us to the speaking subject who, from the first, is engaged in expressive acts that literally and figuratively "lend interest" to that "acquired fortune" by drawing upon it and investing it in a particular, personal existence. The embodied speaking subject speaks not to *substitute* for being or for a loss or lack of being, but rather to *extend* being and its projects, to embody being's excess beyond the discrete situation of its body. The expression of perception in existence as the consciousness of embodied and enworlded experience and the experience of embodied and enworlded consciousness thus constitutes "an existential semiotic capable of having all of human reality 'translated' into it."[74]

[72] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 196–197.

[73] Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 82.

The *phenomenological reduction* is the second phase of Merleau-Ponty's method of radical reflection.[75] As experience is reflected upon in the phenomenological description, so consciousness is reflected upon in the phenomenological reduction. Husserl's bracketing of epistemological and scientific constructs and constraints provides the first level of analysis. Second, a radical gestalt locates the "qualified" or *existential essence* of the phenomenon. The "qualified essence" of a phenomenon is qualified by the nature of its structural or essential existence in a particular embodied consciousness; the structure of the phenomenon is part of an existential ensemble and irreducible to any one of its correlates.

That structure is identified through a process known as *free imaginative variation*. Bracketing epistemological and scientific presuppositions and constraints, the researcher imagines as present or absent all features of the phenomenon as it is experienced. This rigorous imaginative play attempts to open up the possibilities of the phenomenon for experience, as well as allow the "qualified essence" of the phenomenon to emerge. Through this process, that which is invariant and essential for the existence of the phenomenon to consciousness is described. In this manner, the *theme* of the phenomenon is articulated. (To stress the qualified rather than transcendental nature of the phenomenological reduction, the latter is often referred to as a "thematization" of the phenomenon.)

A third phase of the phenomenological reduction leads to the location of the *prereflective source* of the "qualified essence" or invariant theme of the phenomenon in existence. That is, the location of essence here "is not the end but the means." It is "our effective engagement in the world which must be understood and conceptualized," an effective engagement that is prior to our reflective judgments and habitual expressions about it.[76] The lesson of the phenomenological reduction is that reflective judgments and their expression in sedimented, habitual, conventional language, in "speech

[74] Ibid.

[75] Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, Vol. 2, pp. 680–684.

[76] Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" p. 65. See also Lanigan, "The Phenomenology of Human Communication," *Philosophy Today* 23 (1979), p. 7, and "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 39.

spoken" (*parole parlée*), emerge from and in conscious experience that is prereflectively embodied in existential speaking, in "speech speaking" (*parole parlante*). Although in the natural attitude (and in the phenomenological attitude as well) we *borrow* upon the spoken word, the sign as a cultural inheritance we cannot exhaust, we also *produce* signs in and as the expression of our personal investment in prereflective experience. Thus, Merleau-Ponty says: "It is the function of language to make essences exist in a separation, which is actually only apparent since they still repose on the antepredicative life of consciousness. In the silence of the original consciousness there appear not only the meanings of words but also the meaning of things, that primary core of signification around which acts of denomination and expression are organized."[77]

The *phenomenological interpretation* is the third phase of Merleau-Ponty's radical reflection. It attempts to understand the "meaning" or intentional correlation that links the phenomenon under investigation with consciousness. It attempts to grasp the *value relationship* that constitutes the structural ensemble as conscious experience. The specification of such a value relationship unites understanding of the phenomenon and its meaning as an existential hermeneutic and semiotic.[78] The interpretation of sensible phenomena in perception is reversible with the signifying phenomena in expression, and that reversibility is constituted as both significance and signification, signified and signifier. To legitimate the phenomenological description and the phenomenological reduction (or thematization) of the first two phases of reflection, perception as experience and expression as consciousness are revealed by the phenomenological interpretation as the value of their connection and commutability. Thus, the phenomenological interpretation has four procedural "moments" in which the researcher attempts to "seize again the total intention" that forms and informs the unity of the conscious experience of the phenomenon and constitutes its original "wild meaning."[79]

The first interpretive moment finds in the ensemble of the radical gestalt of the phenomenological reduction a "reversibility" whereby self-other-world are revealed as a synergetic network of intentions that dynamically implicate each element of the ensemble as a manifest modality of the whole. Conscious experience is thus communicable. The commutation of perception and expression in the unity of the lived-body experience is both intrasubjective and intersubjective. It allows for both sense and signification, existential speaking and sedimented speech.

[77] Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" p. 65.
[78] Lanigan, "The Phenomenology of Human Communication," pp. 7–8.
[79] Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" p. 67.

The second moment of the interpretation discovers a *radical cogito* from this reversibility, an "ego" that is not first a transcendental and disembodied "I think," but rather an existential and embodied "I can."[80] The *cogito* is thus discovered by virtue of its *performance* in an existential situation, rather than by its transcendental claim of *competence*. The reversibility with the ensemble of the radical gestalt produces and locates a body-subject able to act prereflectively and able to reflect upon its prereflective actions.

The third moment of the phenomenological interpretation results in the emergence of *preconscious phenomena*, that is, phenomena *for* conscious experience.[81] In the world and available to, but as yet not intended by, reflective consciousness, such preconscious phenomena are rather like the submerged figures in a child's puzzle—there, but invisible because unintended. Initially, the picture presents itself in the natural attitude as, for example, foregrounding a tree in a garden. However, cued by the intentional directions that suggest there are animals to be found in the garden, the tree suddenly opens to reflective consciousness the figures of a squirrel, a deer, a bird, and an elephant configured in what before were merely its branches. These figures were preconsciously present to experience prior to reflection, but were not taken up or intended because of a conventional predisposition to look at the picture in a certain way. The third moment of the interpretation seeks to allow such phenomena to emerge in their presence to experience.

The fourth and final moment in the phenomenological interpretation is an *interpretation of the interpretation*. That is, the previous moments are synthesized and synopsized into a "hermeneutic judgment or specification of existential meaning, i.e., the meaning of the phenomenon as the person lived it."[82] The interpretation of the interpretation thus emphasizes the meaning of phenomena as contingent

[80] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 137, and *Signs*, pp. 88–89.
[81] Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 39; Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" pp. 63–64.
[82] Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 40.

upon their being ascribed value by embodied persons in concrete situations.

As laid out above, the process of phenomenological description, reduction, and interpretation may seem belabored or arcane—for, as Merleau-Ponty emphasizes, "Phenomenology is accessible only to a phenomenological method."[83] That is, phenomenology is understood in its *performance* of describing, thematizing, and interpreting the existential experience of a specific phenomenon. However, Don Ihde offers a useful series of "hermeneutic rules" that indicate the path followed in this present phenomenological study of the emergence of sense and signification in the film experience. By themselves, these rules seem commonplace and commonsensical. Nonetheless, within the context of the previous explication of phenomenology as philosophy and research procedure, they can be seen as a demand for critical rigor and for an interrogation of the very common places and common senses from which they emerge.

The rules that inform the act of *phenomenological description* are 1) Attend to the phenomena of experience as they appear and are immediately present and given to the experience; 2) Describe, don't explain; and 3) Horizontalize or equalize all immediate phenomena and do not assume an initial hierarchy of "realities." Thus, the phenomenological description opens the field of experience in its fullness and multiplicity in preparation for the *phenomenological reduction*. The rule that informs the reduction is 4) Seek out structural or invariant features of the phenomena. Through the use of free imaginative variation that contextualizes features of the phenomenon within the whole and that allows for comparison and contrast of the phenomenon with other phenomena like and unlike it, a pattern of experience emerges, and with it emerges also the shape of the phenomenon as it is intended in the experience. The meaning of the phenomenon as it is lived meaningfully, as it is intended, is specified in the *phenomenological interpretation*. The connection between experience as described and consciousness as experience reduced and thematized is made explicit by a focus on the intentional correlation between experience and consciousness in a body-subject as it is both particular in existence and universal in structure. The last hermeneutic rule emphasizes the relative distinctions that differentiate person and world within the unity of their correlation: 5) Every experiencing has its ref-

[83] Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology?" p. 60.

erence or direction toward what is experienced, and contrarily, every experienced phenomenon refers to or reflects a mode of experience to which it is present.[84]

Semiotic Phenomenology and the Address of the Eye

Existential and semiotic phenomenology as a philosophy and research procedure offers us a way of seeing the film experience freshly. It offers us, in fact, a new mode of seeing and reflecting upon our sight as the entailment of an *object of vision*, an *act of viewing*, and a *subject of vision* in a dynamic and transitive correlation. It is this correlation of cinematic vision *as a whole* that structures and informs what we call the "film experience" and gives it meaning as such. Being and seeing and being seen are, from the first, hermeneutic and semiotic acts.

As previously stated, a semiotic phenomenology attempts to describe, thematize, and interpret the structures of communication as they radically emerge in the structures of being. The object of inquiry is the rich and primary entailment of embodied existence and its significations and representations. As Richard Lanigan observes of Merleau-Ponty's work in this area: "The force of the semiology is a dialectic [of] perception and expression creating a meaning in the lived-experience. The perception of the phenomena brings forth the meaning that they have and expression causes them to have meaning. Such a synoptic perception is perception *as* expression—this is the lesson of the semiotic phenomenology."[85]

The relevance of semiotic phenomenology to an investigation of the nature of the film experience is clear. To ask the question, "What is it to see a film?" is to *doubly* entail the questions: What is it to see? How does seeing exist and mean? Who is seeing being and what is being seen? These questions refer not only to the spectator *of* the film but also to the film *as* spectator. Both are correlated in the structure that is the film experience and both are implicated in its meanings.

Given this project, semiotic phenomenology would take as its point of departure the *immanent act of viewing* as it engages an object and is performed by an embodied and enworlded subject sharing a world with other subjects who are also engaged in acts of vision. It

[84] Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction*, pp. 34–43.

[85] Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 125.

is this primary act of perception and its expression that enables cinematic intelligibility and communication and grounds secondary and conventional semiotic and hermeneutic "codes." Merleau-Ponty's "speech speaking" (*parole parlante*) and "speech spoken" (*parole parlée*) are thus equivalent in cinematic terms to the incarnate gestures of being that are a "viewing-view" and to its constituted images or "viewed-view."

A semiotic phenomenology, then, will not presuppose the nature of the "viewing-view" and "viewed-view" in the act(s) of vision that constitute the film experience as meaningful. It will also not presuppose the cinema's communicative competence, that is, the intrasubjective and intersubjective exchange of perception and expression that is located in both the spectator of the film and the film as spectator. Finally, it will not presuppose the film as merely an object of vision, a common theoretical presupposition that leads to an interpretation of the film experience as ultimately monologic. Indeed, all three of these presuppositions become, themselves, the focus of a phenomenological inquiry into the relations and meaning of "being seeing," "seeing being," and "being seen."

CHAPTER TWO

The Act of Being with One's Own Eyes

THE CONCERN of this chapter is with the constitution and location of the viewing subject in the act of viewing. Without an act of viewing and a subject who knows itself reflexively as the locus and origin of viewing *as* an act, there could be no film and no "film experience." Thus, a description of the film experience as an experience of signification and communication calls for a *reflexive turn* away from the film as "object" and toward the act of viewing and its existential implication of a body-subject: the viewer. This chapter, therefore, will attempt to explore and describe how the act of seeing is entwined intimately with the act of being, how seeing *incarnates* being and connects it with the visible world in a living engagement. The chapter will attempt also to describe the viewing subject who is borne into the world by the embodied act of seeing, but who must be born to itself as well, who must come to re-cognize the invisible presence and agency of its eyes as the "I" that the body is, and through which it possesses the visible world as conscious experience.

The existential act of seeing-in-the world grounds the existential act of seeing the world with one's own eyes. The former is an *anonymous* mode of being situated that discovers the world as the experience of consciousness, whereas the latter is a *situated* mode of being that discovers the *self* in the world and recognizes the activity of seeing as *mediated*, as the consciousness of experience. Seeing the world with eyes is a condition of incarnate being available to an animal or a newborn infant, but seeing the world with one's own eyes—as an I, a viewing subject—is a condition not only of incarnate being but also of reflexive and reflective consciousness, a consciousness aware of its embodiment and situation and its own activity of seeing. Neither the animal nor the newborn infant has consciously located the situation of its being in the world. Both see the world as visible but cannot situate themselves uniquely in it as the "Here, where I am," as the place and origin of access to the visible. They cannot see *that* they see. They merely see *what* they see.

As film viewers capable of recognizing and constituting the signif-