

Creating Creatures: Dumont and the Metaphysics of Evil

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s Bruno Dumont has produced six feature films, approximately one every three years. His cinema has been highly praised and is recognized by Martine Beugnet, in *Cinema and Sensation*, as exemplary of a new cinema that radically challenges the understanding of cinematic affect: a cinema of sensibility rather than sense. Dumont was himself a philosopher, now turned filmmaker, though this is not the particular axis or focus for this paper. Rather, what is particularly challenging in his cinema is a fundamental concern with evil, a concern that does not moralize, that does not condemn, that does not even ask for an account of or economy of evil. I want to explore this cinema that shows the human essentially as a be-coming 'longing', a be-longing to being as that which comes not to a particular time or a particular language, to an articulation of its existence, but rather shows a coming to temporality, to the possibility of being-in 'time' and to an opening to 'language', to the *word* as the becoming-it-self of the existent. In this I want to engage a reading of Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, and a particularly Heideggerian reading of this treatise as a "metaphysics of evil," wherein, for Schelling, evil in its actuality, in its existing, is necessary for human freedom.

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Man is not an object of observation placed before us which we then drape with little everyday feelings. Rather, man is experienced in the insight into the abysses and heights of Being, in regard to the terrible element of the godhead, the lifedread of all creatures, the sadness of all created creatures, the malice of evil and the will of love. Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, 164.

A Torch in a Dungeon

This wry description, "a torch in a dungeon," was made in 1786 by the philosopher and poet, Friedrich Schiller, as a comment on the enlightenment tradition of Kantian Reason, a Reason that could not find the grounds of its own possibility. It only found its own limitations.¹ The comment is peculiarly apt for us for two reasons. Firstly, it was Schiller's *theosophy* that would be most powerfully taken up by the philosopher Friedrich Schelling some twenty years later in the development of his *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), a philosophical work I want to engage in the context of the cinema of Bruno Dumont.² Secondly, one cannot be but struck by the very metaphor employed by Schiller, a metaphor that allows us to define a certain perspective on cinema itself. As we will come to see, Schelling's thinking gives up neither the torch nor the dungeon but rather re-inscribes them, in their unity as the essence of freedom. We aim to explore with Dumont's work how cinema can manifest a fundamental question of freedom. What, on a third register, brings Schelling into proximity with Dumont is that Schelling *Treatise* was considered to inaugurate a new understanding of Being, as a "metaphysics of evil."³ It is "evil" in its actuality that is the central concern for Schelling. It is evil in the mundanity of an everyday that preoccupies the cinema of Dumont. This paper aims to engage with cinema as a way of working with a deliberation on an understanding of evil. The paper does not aim to do the reverse. It does not aim to overlay philosophical categories onto a certain cinematic apparatus in order to render something calculable, verifiable, and hence correct.

Dumont, as is well known, was himself an academic philosopher, who has indicated in interviews that his teaching extended to the Classics, Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics, and German Idealism, particularly Kant and Hegel.⁴ One expects that Dumont would be quite familiar with the Schelling text and the significance it had for German Idealism, if not philosophy more generally, for the fundamental question of the human it broached in an original way, as a fundamental question of doing evil. Dumont's cinema explores this question closely, intimately, but does so, I suggest, in ways that equally intimately explore the structure of Schelling's work, none-more-so than in the manner whereby Schelling asks in a fundamental way who is this creature, the human, as the one who creates and who, in turn, is created as the creating creature by a God who is perfection. Dumont completed his fifth film at the end of 2009, with his sixth film currently in post-production. He seems to average one every three years: *The Life of Jesus* (1997), *L'Humanité* (1999), *Twenty Nine Palms* (2003), *Flanders* (2006), *Hadewijch* (2009) and *L'empire* (2011). I have seen three of the five completed films, *L'Humanité*, *Twenty Nine Palms* and *Flanders* and, hence, will be developing my understanding with respect to these, though from what I have read of *Hadewijch* in interviews and commentaries I would not expect this work to shatter my reading. Dumont, as is also well known, has been spectacularly 'successful' with this relatively small body of work, receiving two Cannes Grand Jury Prizes for *Flanders* and *L'Humanité*, as well as many other awards at festivals internationally. Prior to his 'auteur' cinema, Dumont learnt his 'trade' making industry films: "I filmed candies, tractors, ham, bricks, coal ... It is how I learnt cinema."⁵

I will say something briefly about each of the three films by way of introduction to our thematic. If we were classifying the three according to the most orthodox and banal genre identifications—where would I find it in Video-Ezy—*L'Humanité* we might find in 'Drama'. It is a detective movie. Dumont himself suggested he wanted to make a 'Horror' film in the Californian desert with *Twenty Nine Palms*. *Flanders* could make it to the 'War' section or possibly 'Action Drama'. All films would have the 'Adult Themes' warning: explicit sex, violence, and coarse language. But we don't find these films in Video-Ezy and they are not locatable in ready-made classifications. Nonetheless, each of the films is discussed in Martine Beugnet's *Cinema and Sensation* (2007), within her broader discussion of films she compellingly describes as "sensate cinema." Thus she suggests: "There is something particularly engaging in finding this kind of cinematic practice, with its emphasis on the corporeality of film ... It goes against the tradition of scenario and/or dialogue based cinema that dominates French production."⁶ With each film, in the transgressive and sensual dimensions of its unfolding, there is the haunt and terror of malicious evil. *L'Humanité's* unconscionable evil is the rape and murder of an eleven-year-old girl. It has already happened at the opening of the film. The camera fixes on the bloody and torn vagina of the child lying on a roadside, ants traversing the skin of her legs. The film's "detective," traumatized by this event, ineptly pursues the case. The film shows the encounter of his 'world', what opens or shows itself in the way that he is: his without words, how seeing and the seen find themselves with him, his being-with-others as a tactile longing, his seeming without-will. His 'world' is a provincial rural township; his locale brings near a neighbour and her lover. The film concerns how these three each comes to a self in the milieu of an infinite separation of being a self. That milieu opens a question as to how the actuality of being, the act of being, in its becoming itself is a question of a freedom for good and for evil. The act of sex as a creature's living creative act constitutes the essential terrain of this milieu: the detective's capability to be incapable, his neighbour's unspeaking and mechanical couplings with her lover, her without-will, releasement to what is; the lover's will for himself alone, his not-being-with as a being-with.

Twenty Nine Palms, though located in California and not rural France, though having a couple, man and woman, lovers on a location-scouting trip in the desert, constitutes the same essential terrain. The unconscionable evil happens at the film's conclusion. Dumont refers to it as a 'classic' horror movie bloodbath. It is triggered by the rape-bashing of the man while his lover is forced to look on. This film plays a similar economy of silences, beings coming to

themselves, the act of sex as the actuality of being-with, which also may mean missing being-with. Again, there is a strong concern with how seeing and the seen find themselves in a belonging, or cannot find that belonging. *Flanders* returns Dumont to a rural locale in northern France. We recognize across the three films how ‘nature’ is not savage and cruel. The farmlands and the desert are domesticated, worked over, occupied and adjusted. They don’t walk the desert terrain. They drive an air-conditioned Hummer. The fields are ploughed using a towering tractor. We occupy the insides of these adjusting and accommodating spaces as we occupy a film. With *Flanders*, there is again the act of sex as actuality for created creatures. The young men from the locale are conscripted to fight in what looks like Afghanistan. It is in this interlude, this desert setting of combat that the unconscionable evil happens: the rape of a woman soldier by the small squad of men from this northern French locale. The mood of the film, as with the other two, concerns more the silent opening to language than speaking itself, a longing opening to willing than an understanding of what one intends, a looking that searches not for something but for how seeing and the seen can possibly find their be-longing, their longing to be. These primordial concerns that open to something fundamental in a question of freedom, action, willing and becoming, become our concerns as well: we too are faced with a question of how our seeing and what we see find their belonging, with what opens our language, with what essentially is the temporality of our becoming a self, how we exist with evil.

Philosophy and Cinema

One final (if extended) preliminary comment needs to be made concerning the nature of our questioning. We speak of philosophy *and* cinema in the sense that we speak of two disciplines or two regions of engagement or enquiry and ask how they possibly or actually belong together. Did we, for example, choose Dumont precisely because he *embodies* both? He is a philosopher. He is a filmmaker. Philosophy, in its corner, is made up from works of philosophy by so-and-so; this one famous; this one not so well known. Cinema, likewise, is made up of works, themselves classified into ‘genres’ or categories, just as works of philosophy are classified. We ask, on the one hand, the “what is” of cinema through a historical consciousness.⁷ Thus Dumont has made six films; his precursors seem to have been Bresson, Kubrick and a number of others. His films remind one of Bergman, though not cinematically-speaking. But, on the other hand, we ask: “what is” cinema philosophically: not what is it as an existent with a history, a technology coincident with its historical being, but essentially, what is it. Hence, for example, a meditation on Plato’s Cave or, more originally, Heraclitus as the originary thinker of the cinematic as such. But what have we done here? We have resorted to thinking philosophy as so many works we can engage in an historical consciousness of philosophy on cinema. And what of the “essential” “what is” of philosophy as such? But this would be, historically speaking, the very task of philosophy: to ask the essential question of the essence of what is. We are in a circle here, a circle of interpretation that leads from the historical consciousness of a classification of works that are to a philosophical consciousness as the curiosity to ask more essentially as to the essence of these works. Hence we choose a filmmaker, say Dumont, and a philosopher, say Schelling, and ask how they belong together, which means, how an identity happens in the maintaining of the separating difference of a treatise on human freedom already two hundred years old and three films made during the past decade. Do we get anywhere in this apart from improving our skills at classification and satisfying our curiosity on the identity of a cinematic philosophizing? What, in fact, is our guiding question, and should we want to depart from the circle of interpretation that encloses us in the domains of an already known ... a “torch in a dungeon” ...?

We do want to work with Dumont and Schelling when all is said and done, but we need to ask what are these works apart from or beyond their occurrence in a world such that we can run into them and ask what they are? We find the Schelling treatise catalogued in such and such a place in the library such that we can find it. We buy Dumont’s films on Amazon

because no one in New Zealand would think to import them for distribution. Are films and treatises things we encounter, and essentially that which we encounter in this way? We say they are form and content. The films each tell a different “story,” located in different places, with different actors. Dumont changed his screen ratio for his fifth film. He chooses a particular camera lens for a particular effect. We think Dumont as an identity, a higher unity of the belonging together of what are essentially differences. We say he was more successful in this one than that. His thinking was clearer; he was more direct. This one was a shambles; that part of that one didn’t work so well. Schelling’s treatise tells us something. It is a “treatise” within a tradition of German Idealism, which means he attempts to build a “system.” Schelling also made a number of other works, wrote many other things. We say his “treatise” is the “acme” of German Idealism, the pinnacle.⁸ We find similarities in his other work but not the genuine originality. He, too, is that identity of the belonging together of his works in their differences. In finding an identity of Dumont and Schelling are we wanting to relate the ‘content’ of Dumont’s films to the ‘content’ of Schelling’s treatise; are we wanting to relate the forms, formalisms or morphology of Dumont’s films to the system-building of German Idealism’s philosophy of nature? What would we ‘interpret’ in each work if not one or other or both of these? But do we encounter a treatise or a film the way we encounter a table or door? In one sense we do. They are all things we run into, encounter. We hold a book with the same hand we use to open a door. We sit at a table, adjusting our self, as we would settle into a cinema seat. In fact, these days, multiplex cinemas positively encourage you to eat and drink while watching, providing little holders for consumables. But we need to read a book and ‘see’ a film. Each has a temporality essential to it. Each is ‘in time’ in a way a door or table are not. I do not just mean each of Dumont’s films has a particular duration and we watch them in ‘clock’ time; nor do I mean we surmise it will take so long to read this book; I am a ‘fast’ or a ‘slow’ reader and so on. Again I do not mean duration or the ‘clock’ time when we can snatch a moment to indulge in a bit of reading. In what way are films and books essentially in time?

Equally, we say both films and books *use* language. In fact it is not uncommon for films to be adaptations of books, or in some unusual circumstances books to be derived from films. Perhaps no philosophical treatise has been ‘turned’ into a film as an adaptation, though there are films with philosopher-personages both historical and fictional who allude to philosophemes. Is this what we mean when we say Schelling’s treatise uses language as does Dumont’s film? To be sure, a film has a ‘visual’ language, and an aural complexity for which the voice is one component. Dumont’s films are subtitled. Hence I “read” his dialogue in translation. I also read Schelling in translation. As ‘translations’ they share something about language in as much as it is translatable. But do films and books essentially ‘use’ language? What is the ‘word’ such that it happens in a philosophical treatise and in a contemporary film? *We have focused on a question of ‘temporality’ and a question of ‘language’.* One more consideration: both the treatise and the film are ‘creations’ by ‘creatures’. Are creations made using languages and temporality? Given time, we all could possibly do most things. But we don’t. The finitude of temporality and the finitude of language are not the instruments at our disposal in order to create. Rather, creations, in their creating, in their essential be-coming to existence, disclose temporality and the word in their finitude. Essentially, the relation of the existent, the creature, to its becoming opens something essential to an understanding of the temporality of the work and its ‘image’. It happens that this singular philosophical treatise by Schelling and this singular body of works by Dumont each essentially concerns itself with this existence of a creating creature, a temporality and ‘image’. *Each does so by posing the actuality of evil as the essence of human freedom.*

Becoming evil

We need a brief philosophical interlude, not too long, but sufficiently detailed. It was not the case that no one thought of evil prior to Schelling. All philosophy, from Plato’s *agathon*,

“highest good,” to Kant’s moral imperative thought of the “good” as existing, or with Plato, beyond Being.⁹ In Christian metaphysics, the highest Being, the *summum ens*, God, whether transcendent or immanent to beings, as the unconditioned cause of all beings, and ‘Himself’ perfection, necessitated that ‘evil’ was *not* a being. Rather, ‘evil’ was the possibility of a distance from God, from the good. Only the ‘good’ existed. Evil did not exist. It was not actual, living. The sheer radicality of Schelling is that he proposed that evil is a being, an existent, along with the good. Moreover, and this is radical, he demanded that the existence of evil is *necessary* for human freedom, which means evil is necessary for the giving that is God’s love. The difficulty that thwarted earlier philosophers was precisely the question as to how God could cause evil. How could eternal perfection be the cause of evil? It was readily accepted that God caused the good as the essence of beings in infinite degrees, which means degrees of perfection or imperfection, with evil being at an infinite distance from the highest good. Schelling’s thinking required something extremely original in maintaining God as perfection, yet allowing his creation to include evil as an existent. We will not go into details here, with respect, for instance, to his recourse to the immanence of Spinozism and structures essential to Spinoza’s system. We will cut to the chase and go to the heart of the matter.

The great innovation of Kant was that he renovated the Cartesian “I think” as a world picturing or re-presenting, *to* Reason understood as a faculty of the will, a faculty of desire, an “I will” where representations are re-presented to a transcendental subjectivity. Schelling emphasized that primal Being is the will. Following the tradition of metaphysics, Schelling thinks Being as the jointure, a higher unity of *essence* and the *existent*, the ground of being and the being’s existence as its image, the higher unity of subject as ground and object as existent being. His God was a *living* God, not so much a God of infinite potential but an actual existing God, whose existence as eternal perfection is the image of its ground. What is that ground? It is an existent’s coming to itself out of its primordial beginning and into the in-itself of its existence. It is the becoming of being. Again, the radicality of Schelling is that, on the one hand, God is eternal Being; on the other hand God is Himself becoming Himself, a temporal becoming of God! There is no ‘before’ or ‘after’ of ‘clock’ time. Rather, this is the very opening of temporality: the eternal and the moment. Schelling emphasizes that this eternal ‘becoming’ of God’s eternal existence *is* God’s creating. It is essentially God’s *nature* in all He creates. As the existent image of His creation, He creates humans as creatures who create. Those creating creatures, in their ground as beings, are a becoming-will. God is primal will. The jointure, higher unity, of His becoming and his Being is Spirit as love. Human beings in their becoming, which is to say, in their coming to self-hood, to the in-itself of itself as identity and, thereby, as freedom, are the becoming will of an existent, a will-to-what-is-willed. This coming to itself of a subject is a movement from a primordial willing that, as yet, had no name for what it wills. Schelling calls this ‘longing’.¹⁰ Longing is an opening to willing that has yet to find the *word*, a silent opening to language as the naming of things. The finality of becoming happens in the *understanding* of the existent as existing, as known to itself, ‘understanding’ that is the unity of will and what is willed, a self identity as free.

Where does freedom come into it? Freedom is ‘freedom for’ the existent, an openness to what is. The greatest freedom is openness to the universal will, to God, the greatest good, to what is most opposed to an in-itself for-itself.¹¹ In the movement from primordial longing, to the bestowal of the word to understanding, human beings are open not to the possibility of degrees of the good but to the actuality of evil, of closing off universal will for the sake of an exclusive maintenance of an in-itself for-itself, of being closed off to the being-with of what is different as the in-itself of another. Love is the jointure of an in-itself to what is opposed to it as an other. Becoming’s primordial longing was thought of as a withdrawing gravity and darkness. The understanding’s unity of will and willed was thought of as light. From the concealing of primordial longing is the showing of understanding as the revealed, in a Spirit that is the word and love. Love is that higher unity of two in-it-selves who maintain an identity in their separation. Spirit is the higher unity of ground and existence (Being). Human beings, in their freedom, are free to do good *and* to do evil. With respect to Schelling’s

dialectical thinking, good *is* evil and evil *is* good with respect to the higher unity that is their belonging together as the essence of freedom. Equally God *is* Man and Man *is* God. The 'is' in each instance does not establish a correspondence as identicalness, but rather the radical jointure of differences in their radical separation. Both are not only possible but, necessarily, actual. God's love is precisely the higher unity of the unbridgeable separation of the in-itself of good and the in-itself of evil, that 'good' *is* and that 'evil' *is*. Schelling's ontology is a theology. We encounter an onto-theology within a Christian tradition of metaphysics. What is radical, though, is that he approaches the question of the human from something other than an essential humanism. Human being is disclosed as that being who is most open to the question of being, the question of an opening to the word and an opening to temporality. Human freedom is not something innate and essential to the human, but rather something essential to being in its showing. How does being disclose?

Violence and Metaphysics

These human creatures are capable of the most terrible things, the worst of possible things, the least explainable, and the most savage and incomprehensible things. Schelling admits that human freedom is incomprehensible. Kant does as well.¹² Heidegger suggests that no animal is capable of evil (or the good for that matter). To sink below animal being is reserved for human evil.¹³ Cinema is no stranger to tragic drama, to the depiction of violence, to disgust, to moral enigma, to un-resolvable paradox, to strangulating double binds. Cinema shows these things, represents them as objectively present for a viewing 'subject' such that we can remember or forget them, confuse scenes or recount correctly what happened, appraise aesthetically or ethically concerning the film, film-maker, audience, industry and so on. There is so much culture building to do, and so much cinema, now DVD, now direct-internet download, in a public place, at home, on one of my many television sets, wide-screen, blue-ray, home-theatre surround-sound and so on. Is 'being' disclosed in this way, on blue-ray surround sound? What is our guiding question for Dumont's cinema? It too shows more than enough violence. Shall we describe some to get a taste for it or to set the scene, to pick out the thematic and point to evidence of evil, no doubt 'acted' but actual nonetheless? Is this disclosing 'being'? What else is 'cinema' than a representing-represented of or for an 'I' 'think' 'I will'? Let us consider the Dumont films in a number of ways. Dumont is a creating creature whose *finitude* means in actuality that his existence is not eternally in harmony with his becoming in-itself. He is not God. The temporality of his becoming *is* the un-concealing of his essential freedom to be in the letting be of beings that are or in a willing standing over and against. This temporality is the unconcealing of his being as freedom. He creates from a primordial longing-for, prior to its formation, prior to its saying or openness to language, to an understanding of himself in the image of his creation, in the identity of what he willed-to-be and his willing. He made films. But he made films for ... for what: *for some ones surely?* But more so, for the showing not of this character's love or violence, going here or there, living or dying, having this beginning or that ending, but rather for the showing of this very becoming existent creature of a self-creating in the actuality of committing good and evil and the absolute necessity of both as the necessity of freedom. The fundamental moods and understanding of his work are attunements to longing and rage, to silence as an opening to saying, to the moment of looking as an opening to touching, to the indifference of a polarized in-itself of sexed differences to the absolute malice of violent inhumanity, within each of the films *L'humanité*, *Twenty Nine Palms* and *Flanders*, encountered as violent rape: of a child, of a man, of a woman. There is no cinematic 'successful', 'idealized' or 'normal' sexual relations in Dumont's films. Sex is life's primordial longing, will's coming to existence, its birth to presence. Sex is in search of the word, Spirit, love, a higher unity of the good. Dumont's films traverse in their becoming film, becoming existent, the becoming existent of sexed being for which language is not an already 'there' wellspring of joyous sentiment or *bon mots*. Language, that the existent may come to itself in its image, is the most vicious, difficult, abyssal and dangerous emergence. No idle talk. No loud speakers: immense failures and small, almost

non-consequential disclosures; terrible things, the worst of worlds, with a small, very small, humanity that shines or shows itself. Yet it is this, the actuality of evil, the becoming indifference of an in-itself foregoing the genuine harmony of its coming to be that shows the implacability of the essence of freedom. That it is.¹⁴

Notes

1. See Esposito, 1977: 19. Schiller is making an obvious reference to Plato's Cave as a myth on the essence of freedom. Those in chains in the cave mistook shadow projections illuminated by a fire behind them for the reality of things. Freedom happens in three stages: release from the chains and thus recognition of the shadows as shadows; release from the cave to see the illuminating sun and what is illuminated; return to the cave to release those still enchained. We may easily recognize how the Platonic myth may be applied to the phenomenon of cinema.

2. While the aim with this paper is to read Schelling's treatise and Dumont's cinema in a belonging, the paper is fundamentally guided by a questioning essential to the thinking of Martin Heidegger. Hence, it is Heidegger's 1936 lecture course on Schelling's treatise that opens the most fundamental and relevant questioning (Heidegger, 1985). But it is also Heidegger's understanding of ontological difference that guides and grounds the paper's questioning of cinema as such and Dumont's work in its singularity. Clearly, the paper, in its brevity and introductory nature, cannot go into the genuine complexity of engaging Heidegger's fundamental ontology with respect to cinema.

3. Heidegger suggests that with his 1809 treatise, Schelling brought to unconcealing a new understanding of the question of Being: "A metaphysics of evil is the foundation of the question of Being as the ground of the system which is to be created as a system of freedom" (Heidegger, 1985: 104).

4. There are many interviews available on-line that reference aspects of Dumont's life. None are particularly engaging. Though I will note this reply by Dumont to a question concerning his philosophy teaching and his reason for moving on: "That's very easy to answer. Philosophy is an intellectual discipline. Its tools are concepts, whereas film is about movement, it's about capturing "being" onscreen. I find that when I'm shooting a stream in a field, for example, then I'm filming a being. It is far easier to understand, less complicated, less intellectual" (Smith, 2010: 2).

5. See Dumont, 2011. In another interview Dumont notes concerning these early films: "Those films were my training. They taught me how to look for elements of interest in things that were absolutely devoid of interest, to try to find ways of filming them that would be interesting, to find means of expression in the montage, in the narration that I gave them, to find ways of making a spectator be moved by a machine that had no emotion whatsoever" (Smith, 2010: 3).

6. See Beugnet, 2007: 15. Beugnet engages in a sustained discussion on a range of filmmakers over the past fifteen years whose work veers towards 'sensation' rather than 'sense', to 'corporeality' rather than 'idea'. She quotes Dumont on this: "I am interested in sensation, not sense" (ibid.: 59-60). She further quotes Matthieu Darras from an interview with Dumont on *Flanders*: "There is this sentence that Bruno Dumont keeps repeating in his interviews, as if he were brandishing a banner: 'Cinema is for bodies, cinema is for emotions'. ... Dumont's cinema is a cinema that shocks—a visceral cinema" (ibid.: 60). At times she emphasizes the qualification of the cinematic with Dumont's camera technique. On this she cites Kent Jones discussing *L'Humanité*: "Dumont does the typical shot/counter-shot move, but he stays on the object seen for an uncomfortable interval, and it never yields anything: unlike 99% of the movies you see, there's no mental or poetic correlative between the looker and the looked at. There's a terrific power to these moments, a basic, brutally elemental longing for the world to explain itself" (ibid.: 112).

7. The discussion that follows via a questioning of the categories of historical consciousness and philosophical consciousness, finds in common for both a process of classification and a curiosity, that points, more fundamentally to a questioning of what is it about things that matters such that we need to concern ourselves at all. This approach is taken from Heidegger's *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1999). Heidegger is leading his reader to recognize the limitations of the circular questioning of a *consciousness* of the beings that are, in order to introduce a more radical notion of a human existent as primordial openness to the Being of those beings. Hence Heidegger's ontological difference. Equally, in this paper I want to continually question what we take to be simply given as the being-ness of the beings of cinema and philosophy, how they are at hand for our analyses and ask, more fundamentally, a question of the Being of those beings. What discloses that they are such that they are available for our analyses? My reckoning is that Dumont's cinema does not approach its world from the viewpoint of disclosing the conscious intentions and manipulations of beings, but rather asks how there is something

that matters at all: how seeing comes to visibility, words to sayability, time to temporality, becoming to belonging.

8. This is something Heidegger emphasized on a number of occasions in his lectures on Schelling. While Absolute Spirit for Hegel is knowledge, Absolute Spirit for Schelling is love. The very centre of his system is freedom, showing, on the one hand, the compatibility of 'system' and 'freedom' as well as the compatibility of God and evil in its actual being. Schelling's will as primal Being, freedom as the necessity of will, led in Nietzsche's overturning of metaphysics to Will-to-Power in all things as the unconcealing of Being as nihilism, valuation and the eternal becoming of the same.

9. Thus Heidegger notes: "*Libertas est propensio in bonum,*" said Descartes, and thinkers before him, and again all modern Idealism after him—freedom is the capability of good. Freedom, says Schelling, is the capability for good and evil" (Heidegger, 1985: 97).

10. Again, the radicality of Schelling is that longing is the Nature of the Ground in God. Heidegger suggests: "eternal longing is striving which itself, however, never admits of a stable formation because it always wants to remain longing. As a striving without understanding, it has nothing which has been understood and is brought to stand and stability, nothing which could call something definite, unified. It is 'nameless'; it does not know any name; it is unable to name what it is striving for. It is lacking the *possibility of words*" (Heidegger, 1985: 125). I am suggesting that the profound attunement of Dumont's cinema is longing in this sense of a striving that has yet, in its primordiality, to come to the word.

11. Heidegger's approach to Schelling in the 1936 lecture course is curious. On the one hand it is an exposition, detailed and correct, of the zenith of German Idealism. On the other hand, Heidegger's own 'destruction' of metaphysics is hinted at, though in a veiled manner. Hence, primal Being as will, for Schelling, was still encountering an onto-theology of Being as the beingness of the beings that are; his metaphysics was derivative of a Cartesian subjectivity. Heidegger returns to Schelling in 1941-43 and more directly confronts him, from a stronger understanding of a turn from will to non-will, or releasement, the letting-be of beings in that they are. By 1945, Heidegger is prepared to put in writing that willing in itself is evil, that the subjectivity of the being for whom the world is objectively present as intentional consciousness, is primordially evil, a discordance in the be-longing of beings and Being.

12. Heidegger, 1985: 162. "But however far Schelling travels on a new path into the essence of human freedom, Kant's basic position in the question of freedom is not undermined, but only confirmed. Kant says that the fact of freedom is incomprehensible."

13. In a comment that might epitomize Dumont's cinema as distinctly different from a cinema that aims at picturing a world, Heidegger suggests: "Man is not an object of observation placed before us which we then drape with little everyday feelings. Rather, man is experienced in the insight into the abysses and heights of Being, in regard to the terrible element of the godhead, the lifedread of all creatures, the sadness of all created creatures, the malice of evil and the will of love." (Heidegger, 1985: 164).

14. In his engagement with Schelling, Heidegger is preoccupied with a question of the relation between will and freedom as an essential question of Being. In his later writing, Heidegger introduces the notion of *Gelassenheit*, as a fundamental turn in human existence to a non-willing. Though he does not engage this concept in his Schelling lectures, the Heidegger scholar, Bret Davis (Davis, 2007) does in his key study on Heidegger and willing, turning especially to the question of evil in Heidegger's analysis of Schelling. Dumont's cinema opens to an understanding of *gelassenheit*, or 'releasement' as a letting-be of what is in that it is, not in the agents or movements of 'characters' but in the cinematic interruptions to an understanding of those same agents and movements, to a letting-be of encounter, without understanding, but more so with a primordial attunement to the melancholy, longing, rapture, rage, boredom as the fundamental sensibilities that open horizons of disclosure to what is.

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