

**A STUDY OF BÉLA TARR'S FILM AESTHETICS BASED  
ON HEIDEGGER'S PHENOMENOLOGY**

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## ABSTRACT

Béla Tarr is one of the most renowned filmmaker today who is famous for his long take aesthetics. All of his films display acute sense of societal alienation, bleak landscapes and temporal oppression. This dissertation analyzes Tarr's later films [comprising from *Damnation* (1988), *Sátántangó* (1994), *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), *The Man from London* (2007) and *A Turin Horse* (2011)] according to Heideggerian phenomenology. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a German philosopher, is famed for his study of the ontology of Being (*Sein*) in *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927/1962). His ideas on *Dasein* (Being-there), is considered as a groundbreaking contribution in hermeneutic phenomenology. This dissertation elaborate on Béla Tarr's aesthetics from the analysis of Heidegger's later works; interrogating the phenomenology of lingering shot, art and truth in film, the mode of nothingness, cinematic boredom, dwelling in cinema, metaphysics of nihilism and essence of Being. This dissertation argue that Béla Tarr's long take discloses the essence of Being, which runs parallel to Heidegger's quest in understanding the essence of Being in his philosophy, which asks for a thoughtful retrospection of the meaning of existence. The dissertation conclude that Béla Tarr's long take films offer distinctive ways to thinking and contemplating Being.

**Keywords:** Béla Tarr, Martin Heidegger, phenomenology, long take, film, aesthetics, Being

## ABSTRAK

Béla Tarr merupakan salah seorang pembikin filem kontemporari yang terkenal dengan estetika *long take*. Kesemua filemnya tajam mempamerkan manusia terpinggir, lanskap yang resah dan opresi masa. Disertasi ini akan menganalisis filem-filem akhir Tarr [terdiri daripada *Damnation* (1988), *Sátántangó* (1994), *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), *The Man from London* (2007) dan *The Turin Horse* (2011)] melalui fenomenologi Heideggerian. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), seorang ahli falsafah Jerman, amat tersohor menerusi kajian ontologi Keberadaan (*Sein*) dalam *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927/ 1962). Idea-ideanya tentang Dasein (*Ada-sana*) dianggap sebagai pencerah bagi kajian fenomenologi hermeneutik. Disertasi ini memanjangkan estetika Béla Tarr melalui analisis Heidegger (terutama karyanya yang kemudian), dengan memberi penekanan terhadap fenomenologi syot yang berlegaran, sinema kebosanan, seni dan kebenaran di dalam filem, mod ketiadaan, penetapan di dalam filem, metafizik nihilisme dan zat Keberadaan. Disertasi menghujahkan bahawa *long take* Béla Tarr membuka-pekung zat Keberadaan, dan ini mempunyai kesamaan dengan pencarian Heidegger dalam memahami intipati Keberadaan sepanjang falsafahnya, yang penuh dengan pertanyaan fikrah dan maksud kewujudan. Disertasi ini menyimpulkan bahawa *long take* olahan Béla Tarr mengajukan gaya yang unik dalam berfikir dan bermeditasi terhadap Ada.

**Kata kunci:** Béla Tarr, Martin Heidegger, fenomenologi, *long take*, filem, estetika, Keberadaan

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout the dissertation, I have employed abbreviations for Heidegger's books and a few others for easier citations. Below is the list.

- BP     *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, rev. ed.,  
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- BT     *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson,  
Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- GA     *Gesamtausgabe* (Heidegger's Collected Works in German) Frankfurt:  
Klosterman, 1975 – ongoing.
- IM     *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, New  
Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- N1     *Nietzsche Vol. I: The will to power as art* (D. F. Krell, Ed.). New York:  
HarperCollins, 1991.
- N3     *Nietzsche Vol. III: The will to power as knowledge and as metaphysics* (D.  
F. Krell, Ed.). New York: Harper & Row, 1987.
- N4     *Nietzsche Vol. IV: Nihilism* (D. F. Krell, Ed.). New York: Harper & Row,  
1982.
- P     *Pathmarks*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi *et al.*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- PLT   *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper &  
Row, 1971.
- QCT   *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William  
Lovitt, New York, NY, Harper & Row, 1977.

Other works than Heidegger:

Meta Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs, Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2002.

WP *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Vintage Books, 1968.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

This dissertation attempts to read the aesthetics of Béla Tarr's filmmaking according to Martin Heidegger's phenomenology. I will start my examination by sketching out first Heidegger's philosophy on the essence of *Being*, which is something like a combination of phenomenological-ontological-hermeneutical methodology. From there, I will note its pertinence to aesthetics by reviewing his metaphysics on western thinking, art and nihilism. The rationale for doing a Heideggerian analysis for PhD in Film Studies come from an initial impression of the originality and radicalism of Heidegger's thinking. In thinking about art, truth, space or any other entities, what interests Heidegger in the first place is always its essence, its ways of *being*, which is buried in its appearance and concealed to our experience. Borrowing early Greek's thought (Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle) he analyzes our mode of living and thinking through strange and mesmerizing *destruktion* of words and meanings. His writings have huge impacts on continental philosophy, technological discourse, eco-criticism, existentialist psychology and aesthetics. I am not the only one moved by Heidegger's essays; Karsten Harries, for example, dedicated a whole book (*Art Matters*, 2009) to critically engage the essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. He states how "no other work by Heidegger has had as profound and enduring an impact on my own philosophical development" (2009, p. 5). For Günter Figal, Heidegger has become "for the twentieth and the beginning twenty-first centuries what Hegel was for the nineteenth" (Heidegger, 2009, p. 2). "Heidegger's prodigious purgation (*katharsis*)," writes George Steiner, "is among the major acts in the history of thought and of language" (1989, p. xix).

Heidegger has much to say on the state of *beings* from human to animal, from modern technology to van Gogh's art, yet there is very little he says regarding cinema. It is as if the cinema is relegated aside in preference to discussing sculpture, temple, bridge, hydroelectric plant and jug. This makes an observation on cinema from Heidegger's perspective a challenging and prospective subject to research; making my dissertation a vital contribution to Heidegger's scholarship and film philosophy in general. It is my belief that there exist close connection between Béla Tarr's narrative cinematography and the existential angst as argued by Heidegger in *Being and Time* and his later works. Five of Béla Tarr's later films are chosen here to illustrate and augment my argument; *Kárhozat/ Damnation* (1988), *Sátántangó* (1994), *Werckmeister Harmóniák/ Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), *A Londoni férfi/ The Man from London* (2007) and *A torinói ló/ The Turin Horse* (2011). Each of these films selected represent the essence of Tarr's auteurism: black and white visual, extreme long take, minimalist dialogue, monotonous repetition and bleak landscapes.

In the history of art-house cinema, Béla Tarr is famous for his usage of 'long take.' Long take is a technical term in film grammar which stands for an extended shot; a prolonged duration of time taken between a cut and the next one. In the context of film stylistics, the method offers an alternative to fast-cutting or rapid-fire editing which is commonly found in mainstream Hollywood production. While Béla Tarr's vision is exceptional in his relentless pursuit of black and white images composed in drawn-out time, he is not the only arthouse directors working in this small field. Other renowned long take directors include Andrei Tarkovsky, Aleksandr Sokurov, Miklós Jancsó, Tsai Ming-liang, Sharunas Bartas, Lav Diaz, Theodoros Angelopoulos, Carlos Reygadas, Apichatpong

Weerasethakul, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Michelangelo Antonioni, Lisandro Alonso and Kenji Mizoguchi among others. To see Tarr's placement among the directors cited here, a tabula of the list can be seen in Appendices C at the end of dissertation. Each of these listed directors treat long takes with different approach yet with a sense of unified vision of a personal cinematic aesthetics. Ideologically, by utilizing long take, the directors move to 'go against' the mainstream cinema.

As an extended timespan, long take can task substantial demands on viewer's experience, creating further sense of awkwardness and exhaustion to the point of alienation. For example, Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) exhibits numerous long take in static camera-works of a devoted mother doing her daily household tasks. Here, long take becomes a tour de force of woman's oppression by the cultural system she is in, just as much as we too get caught up in her mundane, daily chores. The long take apparatus suddenly becomes a prison for both her and the audience. David Bordwell sums up the long take phenomenon well: "With causal connections often only hinted at, with character motivations kept mysterious, the gradually unfolding image gained extraordinary weight" (2005, p. 150). Long take enhances the mystery of the narrative.

I find that the method of long take is just as fascinating as it is time-consuming. In the extremely longer duration like Aleksandr Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002), a 96-minute of non-stop Steadicam sequence, it becomes even more impossible to take my eyes away from the light that is presented to and inside me. I am – enraptured. Or at worse, the long take can lull one to sleep, for example, the shots found in Kiarostami's *Five Dedicated to Ozu* (2003), which simply captures nature taking its slow course by being simply that; a nature.

The character of long take can range from the moving-camerawork like *Russian Ark* to the static shots attained in Tsai Ming-liang's films. Patience, it seems, is a *must* (a required taste, even) when confronting extended cuts, especially when the images that appear in the sequence do not offer straight-forward narratives (or perhaps, of too much straight-forwardness!). There are the 'breathhtaking' *issues* that are at stake in experiencing long take: 1) The awe-inspiring feeling of watching *beauty* captured in prolonged time, 2) The curious awareness of the framed shots and, 3) the immediate understanding of hardships that foreshadows the shots. Not all long take is a thing of beauty of course, but in the hands of master filmmakers like Andrei Tarkovsky or Miklós Jancsó, it becomes what the French critic Alexandre Astruc says as, "a landscape through which an esthetic will has passed, irreducible to themes as well as to the secret motivations of the artist, upon which it may nourish itself, but which will never wear it out" (McDonald, 1993, p. 133).

Clearly the performance of long take is configured as poetic act. The nature of film aesthetics is the matter of how we perceive its nature and the way we respond to its request and its calling. In the spherical dialogue of the perceiver and the film, therein lies the mood of contemplation that is necessary, without which we cannot *be* in dialogue at all. Le Fanu argues how long take "draws us into the scene in question with a particular dramatic force and intimacy" (2005, p. 3). While he might be right, I experience long take more in the sense of *foreboding* to the way characters are being used in a shot, as their bodies are drained and emptied into different staging according to the camera's composition. Perhaps, the effect of real-time in cinema emanates and project doubly of my own anxiety in real-time life.

Béla Tarr's film can be grouped under a pretext of *slow cinema*. It is the type of *slowness* that challenges our patience since the shots and the narratives take a very long time to manifest their apparent-ness. Slow cinema, what Jonathan Romney calls as a "cinema that downplays event in favour of mood, evocativeness and an intensified sense of temporality" (2010, p. 43), is not to be misunderstood as slo-mo cinema, like when Keanu Reeves' character slowly evades his enemy's bullets on the rooftop of a building in *The Matrix*. It is a form of cinema which mainly employs long takes, minimal words and plotless narrative as its main aesthetics. Slow cinema denotes a film-work which celebrates plotless narration, utilizes lots of long takes and long shots, preponderously silent, plenty of 'dead space', austere reality and filled with estranged characters leading a life in *profound* boredom. What these things unify into is certain latitude of slowness, the kind that audiences who are grown up with Hollywood or Bollywood films especially detest. This is since their idea of cinema as entertainment is thwarted. The publicness of the mainstream cinemas is exactly what Heidegger lucidly states in *Being and Time*: "the light of publicity darkens everything" [*die Öffentlichkeit verdunkelt alles*] (1962, p. 165). In slow cinemas, there is no explosion, no cackling robots, no dramatic scene and no people talking incessantly either. Slow cinema is not under pressure to hurry up a shot, or to spend unnecessary time explaining character's motivation – it simply *describes*. The excess baggage of sadness and happiness are not essential in the making of slow cinema; in fact, the excess is cut down by the reflective exhibition of dullness in life. The *dull* is not something which slow cinema runs against; it is what stands in the core of its reality. It is what soothes its reality. It is what transforms our mood to restrained contemplation. To note some of the powerful examples of slow cinemas: Sergei Loznitsa's *V tumanе* (2012), Pedro Costa's *O Sangue* (1989), Aleksandr Sokurov's *Tikhiye stranitsy* (1994), Abbas Kiarostami's *Where is the Friend's Home* (1987), Christian Petzold's *Barbara* (2012),

Jean-Claude Rousseau's *La vallee close* (1995), Michelangelo Frammartino's *Le Quattro Volte* (2010), Darezhan Omirbayev's *Kairat* (1992), Lucrecia Martel's *The Headless Woman* (2008), Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), Michael Haneke's *Amour* (2013), Carlos Reygadas's *Japón* (2002), Denis Côté's *Bestiaire* (2012), Jaime Rosales's *Sueno y silencio* (2012), Cristian Mungiu's *4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile* (2007), Chantal Akerman's *23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), Béla Tarr's *A torinói ló* (2011), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011), Tsai Ming-liang's *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006), Semih Kaplanoğlu's *Bal* (2010), Bruno Dumont's *Hors Satan* (2011), Lisandro Alonso's *Los Muertos* (2004), Lav Diaz's *Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino* (2004), and some others. What these films have in common – other than exhibiting ecstatic anti-mainstream attitude – are the way they celebrate life for *what it is*, the joy of being human in the melancholy of every day beings. These films are existentialist art, yes, but in the abyss of their pessimism one can find Sartre's optimistic sternness; “man is nothing other than what he makes of himself” (2007, p. 22). Slow cinema offers a kind of realism that life's realism can only dreamt of. Under the oppression of the camera's framing and the pressure of long take, slow cinema's realism brackets the way we live our life, put up walls of its own kind, and enclose human consciousness to that artful and silent concern necessary to meditate on life. In *Poetic of Space*, Bachelard states:

There is nothing like silence to suggest a sense of unlimited space. Sounds lend color to space, and confer a sort of sound body upon it. But absence of sound leaves it quite pure and, in the silence, we are seized with the sensation of something vast and deep and boundless. It took complete hold of me and, for several moments, I was overwhelmed by the grandeur of this shadowy peace (1994, p. 43).

This is why slow cinemas are tinged and framed by silence. In the quietude of the moment, the realism of life is made even stranger. Things change their opaqueness, their denseness. Sometimes, the atmosphere becomes thick with a sense of dread. The sense of impending doom in Tarr's *Damnation*, in the silence of its sound, is also Bachelard's grandeur of shadowy peace. In the scene where a man is fishing in a decrepit building, alone, at night, in Tsai's *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*, or even in the scene where Janos is preparing his meal in his house in Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* – these silences constitute as a personal space that I am in awe of trespassing.

I know Harry Tuttle in his resourceful *Unspokencinema.blogspot* prefers to speak of slow cinema as Contemporary Contemplative Cinema (CCC), to escape from the negative image the phrase 'slow' might conjure or the ambiguity it confers. However, it is this same negativity and ambiguity which lend the term 'slow cinema' its special power – a dulling, long-winded, 'boring,' pervasive quality. This is since, no matter how much metaphysical strength I have borrowed from films like Michelangelo Frammartino's *Le Quattro Volte* or Denis Côté's *Bestiary* or Miklós Jancsó's *The Round-Up*, they are still what they inescapably are – *slow art*. The camera moves slowly, the people moves slowly, even the story languishes slowly. But: What beauty! That these films exist as they are – moves my soul so! The 360 degree movement of Tarkovsky's deliberate camera in *Andrey Rublev* – the scene where the monks took a respite from the rain – is so much powerful than the whole repertoire of Michael Bay's or Oliver Stone's movies. The quietness of the scene, the languorous attitude of the people, the staging of the cinematography – they provoke a different kind of soil in my depth! And this appreciation of beauty does not come suddenly like a thunderstruck; it blooms slowly like a purple rose in the darkest of night.



## 1.2. Argument and Object of Studies

Béla Tarr's films, in their unique ways to prolong time and space, give the audience a way – a chance, a path – to a certain mood of thinking. The extended time – as the camera moves slowly, taking in the bleak reality (that oppressive atmosphere Tarr seems fond at capturing) – bids the receptive audience moments of reflections, an *un-hurried* position by which we can take into accounts the objects and the settings that are presented. Our eyes linger more on the image, as details that are banal is brought up to light, and make realize the everyday-ness of the minutiae in different concern. Using Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, I will analyze Béla Tarr's filmmaking, so as to extend our appreciation to the distinct kind of moods – that is experienced (or observable) as Dasein (Human as *Being-There*). At the same time, I discuss also, "What does it mean to dwell in the landscape of Tarr?" I argue that Béla Tarr's spectacle is a manner, in which, offers the trail to the essence of Being. The title of this dissertation, 'A Study of Béla Tarr's Film Aesthetics based on Heidegger's Phenomenology,' means that a bulk of this dissertation will cover the question of cinematic aesthetics and philosophy of art in general.

Cinematic aesthetics is defined by Jacques Aumont, Alain Berbergala, Michel Marie and Marc Verne as:

....reflection upon the phenomena of signification considered as artistic phenomena. The aesthetics of cinema is therefore the study of the cinema as an art and the study of films as artistic messages. It implies the conception of "beauty" and thus of the taste and pleasure of the spectator as well as theoretician. Film aesthetics thereby depends upon general aesthetics, a philosophical discipline concerned with all arts (1992, p. 6).

It is not to the cinematic apparatus or its mode of production which I am interested here, but the phenomena of visual which I experienced to and *in* my senses. For instance, in the penultimate scene in Tarr's *Damnation*, we find the main character Janos running away from something that scares him, however the manner his flee is shown in an open landscape. It is to this type of phenomena that I focus my attention and my analysis to; not the Tarr's autobiography or the historical condition which brought the film to my perception. Further elaboration of definition for the term aesthetics and its short history will be elaborated in Chapter 3, along with Heidegger's conception of art and ontology.

*This dissertation chiefly reads Béla Tarr's film aesthetics through Martin Heidegger's thinking on phenomenology.* The Hungarian filmmaker Bela Tarr captures reality in a soothing but slow cinema, arresting the simplicity of existence under the duration of time. The German Philosopher Heidegger highly regards hermeneutics – the art of interpretation – as the essential element in his phenomenology without which ontology – the *whatness* of phenomena – is possible. What he searches for is always to uncover the fleeting *Sein/ Being* and this is why his challenging texts are littered with thoughtful findings – from disclosing the essence of Being to researching the forgetful history of Being.

*I argue in this dissertation that there exist parallel existential interrogation between Heidegger and Béla Tarr.* Their works seek to understand and to capture existence as it *is*. Even though the first employs wordings and the latter employs austere filmic imaginings, both believe in the power of poetic images to disclose the concreteness of human life. Both

ask the *deepening of thought* from their readers and audiences. To that, there are four main objects of studies that have to be given thoughtful elaborations.

- a) To set up a critical literature on slow cinema.
- b) To observe Béla Tarr's long take in the form of phenomenology of lingering shot.
- c) To find the connection between Béla Tarr and Heidegger through nihilism.
- d) That deep down, Béla Tarr pursues the essence of Being, and by going through Heidegger's thinking, this can be made more apparent.

This dissertation establishes Bela Tarr film for phenomenological thinking. To this, it is important to create groundwork for slow cinema as contemplative cinema, a genre which Bela Tarr is always affiliated to. The forms and analytics of slow cinema are given treatment in Chapter 4. Tarr's methodology of long take, his personal arsenal in investigating existence in its simplicity, is named by me as lingering shot. By pursuing his long take as phenomenology of lingering shot, I put forward several questions: How does Tarr's cinematography *move*? What are the physical aspects of Tarr's long take? How can we see Tarr's long take with Heidegger's conception of Dasein? Clearly there is rich well of boredom in experiencing Tarr's lingering shot but how does the movement of the 'lingering takes' is connected with *profound* boredom? Do Heidegger and Tarr believe in the same thing regarding the existential nature of boredom in human abyss? If the camera is what-encircles-beings, how do we phenomenologically understand its mode of capturing? Both Heidegger and Tarr try to understand the truthfulness of the world according to their unique ways of investigating: can we review Tarr's bleak landscape from Heidegger's understanding on art? What inner essence can be unconcealed in Tarr's cinemas when looked *from* Heidegger's notion of art "as the striving between the earth and the world"?

What does it mean to dwell in film image? How does it come to be that human Dasein *able* to do so? What kind of manner – equipped as so in our existential being – that enable us to dwell in film image? The answers for the questions posed here can be found in Chapter 5.

All these interrogations so far are vital before going into the nihilistic aspect of Tarr's cinema. Tarr's narratives exhibit a high intensity of angst and timelessness. There is a major force of oppression and depression that is at work here. Is Béla Tarr's cinema nihilist? What are the forms and ways of nihilist cinema? What type of nihilism is at work in Tarr's cinematic grounds? How do we reconcile Tarr's nihilist art – if it is what it is – with Heidegger's philosophy? To answer these inquiries, we must review not only Heidegger's metaphysics of nihilism, but his earlier influence, which is Nietzsche's thinking on Western nihilism. Chapter 6 is dedicated to nihilist theme found in Tarr's artistic ground. Chapter 7, the penultimate chapter in this dissertation, argues that there is a metaphysical link between Heidegger and Bela Tarr, and that Tarr's cinema, through extensive lingering shot and monochromatic imageries, probes the question of Being and disclose Being. This dissertation chiefly reads Béla Tarr's film aesthetics through Martin Heidegger's thinking on phenomenology. In other words, *Heidegger's philosophy is the lens*, while *Tarr's cinemas are the phenomena*. However, this being a philosophical dissertation, things are not usually what they seem. In understanding Tarr's cinemas from a Heideggerian perspective, Tarr's bleak and monochromatic images too help us to guide the way in heightening our knowledge of Heidegger's dense and strange forest that is full of game between beings and Being.

### 1.3. Approach to Method: Heidegger's Phenomenology

To understand deeper the camera and the narrative of Tarr, we must understand that in interpreting, we too are doing violence to the works we're interpreting. This 'doing violence' has the character of *destruktion*. The Heidegger German word for this is *Abbau* or *Auseinandersetzung*.<sup>1</sup> The Greek term for this expression is *polemos*, which means 'war' or 'strife.' As being-in-the-world, Dasein interpret not only the text and thing which confronts him but his comportment towards his existence. This doing violence is itself an existential analysis; a perspective whereby our existence is brought to our being to be investigated and understood. To quote Heidegger: "Existential analysis, therefore, constantly has the character of 'doing violence' (*Gewaltsamkeit*), whether to the claims of the everyday interpretation, or to its complacency and its tranquillized obviousness" (BT, p. 359).

A different way to put it in post-modernist context is the expression *deconstruction* made famous by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the sixties and seventies. Derrida's deconstruction is actually influenced by Heidegger's *destruktion*. Deconstructionist sees text as a site for transformation of meaning by locating the *undecidability* aspect in the text. Meaning as originally intended by the author becomes secondary to the active participation of the reader in renovating the meaning (and its function) in the course of interpreting the differences which exist in interplay of words and language-structures.

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<sup>1</sup> *Auseinandersetzung* can also mean 'the ending of strife.' For further discussion of *Auseinandersetzung* please see G. Fried, (2000), *Heidegger's polemos: From being to politics*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, p.15.

To see a sample of Heidegger's *violent interpretation* we can take a look at the lecture 'Was ist das- die Philosophie?' originally given at Cerisy-la-Salle, Normandy, August 1955. Here, Heidegger attempts to do a historical reading of *what* the term 'philosophy' *actually* means by going back to Heraclitus of Ephesus, a pre-Socratic Greek. Take note that Heraclitus lives between c. 535 – c. 475 BCE. He is renowned for his ideas that things stay always in flux: "Everything is and is not." Heraclitus's fragmented writing thrives in the space of contradiction. According to Heidegger, the term 'philosophy' can be broken into two fragments: φιλεῖν (*philein*) and σοφόν (*sophon*), each respectively carries the meaning of 'he-who-loves' and 'wisdom.' In Fragment 50, Heraclitus says something along the side of σοφόν ἔστιν ἐν πάντα εἶναι (*sophon estin en panta einai*). The common translations are: "It is wise to hearken, not to me, but to my Word, and to confess that all things are one." Heidegger develops further the idea of *sophon* and interprets ἐν πάντα (*hen panta*) as "One (is) all" (1956, p. 47). Here, Heidegger assigns Heraclitus's "One (is) all" as not regarding what Heraclitus *might* actually said, but as an original statement of one of the earliest question of beingness. This creates an impression that early Greek thinkers *first* think of beings. By reconstructing – and thus, 'doing violence' – modes of definition in intellectual Greek tradition, Heidegger is able to survey the history of Western metaphysics from the perspective *Seinsfrage* (question of Being). Meaning here is transformed through radical understanding of text to suit the purpose of writer's hermeneutics. Heidegger's phenomenology is exceedingly interpretative, existentialist, and in its wake, destructive.

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1988), which is an extended critique from the unfinished *Being and Time*, Heidegger briefly outlines three components of phenomenological method; reduction, construction and *destruktion* (see Heidegger, 1988, pp. 19-23). A thematic graph for this method can be seen in Figure 3.8 in Chapter 3. The

idea of ontology is brought to the analytics of Dasein since it is its most fundamental discipline. Thus phenomenology is tasked as the methodology of ontology, which is also a mode of scientific philosophy. “In ontology,” Heidegger argues, “being is supposed to be grasped and comprehended conceptually by way of the phenomenological method...” (BP, p. 21). More importantly, in the grasping of concepts, “Being is to be laid hold of and made our theme” (BP, p. 21). Being is always the main issue in Heidegger’s investigation of phenomena. In contrast with Husserl’s phenomenological reduction which associates object perceived within a bracketing transcendental consciousness, Heidegger sees phenomenological reduction as envisioning and apprehending beings back to Being. Things are reduced to their essence. But, “Being does not become accessible like a being. We do not simply find it in front of us” (BP, p. 21). The process of reductionism is incomplete unless we can find a way to construct our view, so as to project being. The projection takes into its breadth the possibilities and historical context of beings in the world. The reduction and construction of phenomena happens simultaneously, and must come in the manner of destruction; “a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn” (BP, p. 23). This destruction – or *polemos* – is necessary so that concepts can be read and constructed authentically. It is only when ontology is foregrounded with the combinative process of reduction, construction and destruction, can phenomenological investigations be made proper.

We have to take note that phenomenological approach privileges the *experience* of the researcher. Phenomenology, writes the American philosopher Taylor Carman, “describes the basic structures of human experience and understanding from a first person point of view, in contrast to the reflective, third person perspective that tends to dominate

scientific knowledge and common science” (cited in Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. viii). Here the first-person “I” is much more celebrated than the third-person “he”, “she” or “the author.” This is why phenomenologist gives unique perspective to his or her research since there cannot be the same findings or results if the same research is repeated using different people. The phenomenologist and historian Herbert Spiegelberg describes in *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* (1982) how there are several steps in the process of phenomenological reading:

1. Investigating particular phenomena.
  - a. Phenomenological intuiting
  - b. Phenomenological analyzing
  - c. Phenomenological describing
2. Investigating general essences.
3. Apprehending essential relationships among essences.
4. Watching modes of appearing.
5. Watching the constitution of phenomena in consciousness.
6. Suspending belief in the existence of the phenomena.
7. Interpreting the meaning of phenomena.

The seven steps above do not necessarily have to be in the exact order, though the first three is very important since they are practiced “by all those who have aligned themselves with the Phenomenological Movement” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 682). The phenomenological intuition, analyzing and describing can be done without any hierarchical preferences. The process above clearly takes after Husserl’s phenomenological consideration. Spiegelberg even admits of having heavy reservation to the final step, which



is ‘interpreting the meaning of phenomena’ or *hermeneutics*. While acknowledging the interpretative/ hermeneutical procedure (which is celebrated by Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer and Ricœur), he is skeptical to its method, and like Husserl, believes that it goes *against* the descriptive element which is essential to the phenomenological investigation. We must take note that the interpretive qualities in phenomenological procedure are very crucial in Heidegger’s writings. It is because of our mode of projecting concern that we interpret first and understand later. ‘Phenomenological-ontology’ is Heidegger’s hermeneutics of doing phenomenology; the science of Being of entities (BT, p. 61). Man is termed as *Dasein*, the one who makes the question of being as its main issue. Accordingly, man is not above the ‘where’ he is from as he is in the world with the things around him; he is *being-in-the-world*. *Dasein*’s life in the world is not a closed loop but exist meaningfully with other meaningful objects.

Consequently, my dissertation takes this cue and celebrates the interpretive merits. The method of my dissertation is to give close phenomenological analysis to Tarr’s films stated above in accordance to the themes given. For that, I will watch the films, observe pattern and ideas from (selective) Heideggerian lens, write down pattern and repeat the process until a certain essence can be properly (or sufficiently) understood. A brief diagrammatic outline of my methodology can be seen in Appendices B at the end of this dissertation. The hermeneutic phenomenology strives beyond than mere description and aims at something distinctive and bold: “its goal is the discovery of meanings which are not immediately manifest to our intuiting, analyzing, and describing” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 712).

The interpretation has to go beyond than the appearance of phenomena and to tap into the *logos* of *alétheia* as ‘unconcealing.’ *Logos* here generally means ‘discourse’ or ‘saying’ while *alétheia* means ‘truthfulness’ (both Greek words are given fuller elaboration in chapter three under section ‘Reading Heidegger’s ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’). Mere descriptive phenomenology is not enough to radicalize phenomena under examination. For example, in an essay entitled ‘*The Thing*’ (originally a lecture given on 1950 to *Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste*), Heidegger gives us a remarkable reading of a ‘jug.’ Formal Husserlian description of jug will give a rich account of the *jugness* of the jug – texture, color, shape, horizon – but no more than that. On the other hand, through hermeneutical-ontological dimension, Heidegger imaginatively interprets jug as a presence-thing which gathers into its Being that unites the fourfold (mortal, divinities, earth, sky) and stays with the gathering – which is the *thingly* jug. Jug as thing brings us the remoteness of the fourfold to the nearness of our concern. Jug as thing is that which *preserve* the nearness. This kind of reading is baffling, true, but in every way, an impressive display of the faculty of man to *hermeneut* ingeniously.

#### **1.4. Significance of Studies**

There is yet a dedicated book that employs Heidegger’s philosophy in understanding slow cinema, much less a specific film director like Béla Tarr. Regarding the literature on Tarr, It is very important at this stage of film appreciation, worldwide or local context, for an extended analysis to be done for Béla Tarr’s films. So far, there are only two major books written specifically on Béla Tarr to be found in English language; Jacques Rancière, *Béla Tarr, The Time After* (Univocal Publishing, 2013) and András Bálint Kovács, *The Cinema of Béla Tarr: The Circle Closes* (Columbia University Press, 2013), but they are still not

enough. It is my belief that a major filmmaker like Tarr deserves critical and philosophical treatment in exposing his filmmaking, especially so, since Béla Tarr has announced to the world that he has quit shooting films. In an interview, he says:

In my first film I started from my social sensibility and I just wanted to change the world. Then I had to understand that problems are more complicated. Now I can just say it's quite heavy and I don't know what is coming, but I can see something that is very close – the end. Before the shooting I knew this would be my last film (Petkovic, 2011).

His last film is *The Turin Horse*, produced in 2011. No doubt this is sad news for fans of Tarr and the arthouse cinemas. This makes a critical overview of Tarr's films even more imperative and urgent. For my dissertation, it is my aim to furnish Béla Tarr's filmmaking with Heidegger's philosophy, especially from Heidegger's later turn. The black & white bleakness of Tarr's atmosphere gives us a sense of despair and anxiety that I believe, Heidegger's thought can help to assimilate, disseminate and problematize. The phenomenological analysis via Heidegger will give an interesting and challenging observation on the nature of film; of how the essence of long takes appear to us, of how modern man lives in an oppressive, technological society. Generally, it is hoped that this dissertation will help to expand the comprehensive route to the general theory of aesthetics on cinema.

## **1.5. Planning of Chapters**

This dissertation is broken down into eight chapters. Each of the chapters carry forward the theme for which we can understand and read better Béla Tarr's phenomenological cinema:

The first chapter introduces the argument, the subject matter and the method; chapter two to four offers background studies for the topic at hand, which include an analysis on slow cinema; proper phenomenological readings will start from chapter five to seven. The first chapter starts with the introduction of the title, the rationale of my PhD dissertation and the argument on how to approach the dissertation. Here, I introduce what ‘long take’ is and why I am interested in researching its polemics and aesthetics. Since Tarr’s filmmaking can be constituted as slow art, I introduce the question of slow cinema; a theme that will be given fuller treatment in the section ‘Slow Cinema’ as Contemplative Cinema’ in chapter three. Here, I introduce and set up the Heideggerian phenomenological method that will be carried out throughout my PhD research.

In Chapter 2, ‘Heidegger and Phenomenology,’ I establish Martin Heidegger’s background, his basic concepts of phenomenology and his way of doing ontology and hermeneutics. I highlight the question of *Sein/ Being* that continues to haunt his controversial career as a continental philosopher. In the section of the history of phenomenology, I present some basic ideas by Heidegger’s teacher, Edmund Husserl, and the historical definition of phenomenology as conceived by Heidegger. This chapter is the fundamental background from which we can further mine his writings, to see what he has to say on technology and aesthetics for the next chapter.

The elaboration of Heidegger’s philosophy can be found in Chapter 3, which starts from Heidegger’s thinking such as from his lectures, ‘*The Origin of the Work of Art*,’ ‘*The Question Concerning Technology*’ and ‘*Building Dwelling Thinking*.’ Chapter 3 offers groundworks for further analysis in subsequent chapters on art, technology and nihilism. Here, I will expound some brief ideas on aesthetics, its definition and its history. I will

define and describe the affliction of modernity which prevails on human and how Heidegger gives his interpretation on the essence of modern technology. Several key ideas from Heidegger such as the 'fourfold' (*das Geviert*) and nihilism will be explored. I will also expand on his idea of 'nothingness' from his essay '*What is Metaphysics?*' By the end of the chapter, I formulate a diagram for a concise overview of Heidegger's themes discussed in chapter two and three.

Chapter 4 is divided into two main sections; the first reviews the theoretical relationship between film and phenomenology while the second extends the notions of 'slow cinema.' The first section starts with the definition of cinema and proceeds with why it matters as a philosophical thinking. I will also examine several essays pertinent to my dissertation such as Wilhelm S. Wurzer and Hugh J. Silverman's *Filming: Inscriptions of Denken* (1990), John B. Brough's *Showing and Seeing: Film as Phenomenology* (2011) and a few others. In the second section, I elaborate the definition of slow cinema. What is slow cinema? Why is it called slow cinema? Who are its main proponents? I end this chapter with a note toward boredom (which will be further developed later in chapter five) and a summary of the chapter.

The phenomenological-ontology analysis on Tarr's cinemas begins at Chapter 5. This chapter starts with a brief introduction to Bela Tarr and his filmography. I note down some of the main themes in his cinematic aesthetics. Right after, I go into a phenomenological analysis of his long take, the 'lingering shot', and interpret the lingering shot as worldly movement that encircle beings. Key ideas that are developed here include the lingering shot's elasticity, its association with Dasein as stretched being and how the camera's movement represents Dasein's inner being and Heidegger's profound boredom. A

fundamental idea here is to seek *existential kinship* between Tarr and Heidegger and how each understands the *boredom as fundamental attunement of existence*. Chapter five ends with two final divisions pertaining to Heidegger's essays, '*The Origin of the Work of Art*' and '*Building Dwelling Thinking*,' which have been earlier reviewed in chapter three. How does one understand the Open in Tarr's composition of shots? How can we relate the Open with the ever-striving earth and world in artwork? How do we dwell in cinematic grounds? The humble answers to these questions can be found the final divisions in this chapter.

Chapter 6 goes into the metaphysic of nihilism. Is it possible to see Tarr's cinema as a modification of nihilism? Does Tarr's cinema is a phenomenology of nihilism? The chapter starts with a brief analysis on Nietzsche's and Heidegger's notion of Western nihilism. For the understanding of nihilism, the bulk of my writings refer to Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* (1968) and Heidegger's Nietzsche *Nietzsche vol. IV: Nihilism* (1982) and *Nietzsche vol. III: The will to power as knowledge and as metaphysics* (1987). Both Nietzsche and Heidegger think that modern history of man is the pervasion of nihilism. I conclude in this chapter that Bela Tarr's filmmaking shows the condition of human inner self, but the range is essentially, contemplative nihilism.

The question regarding Tarr's metaphysical imageries in the manner of contemplative nihilism sets us to another direction. Tarr's camera frames the entities' mode of appearing, and consequently transforms the way they are presented to our consciousness. Tarr is interested in interrogating the Being that lays concealed in phenomena but what are the ways of Tarr's cinematic techniques in making bare the essence of Being? Chapter 7 proceeds to answer this inquiry by introducing first Heidegger's *Seinsfrage* (The question of Being), and then, to show that Tarr's cinema *is* the artistic equivalent of metaphysic of

Being. Throughout the chapter, Tarr's last film, *The Turin Horse*, will serve as the case studies. The last section of this chapter looks into the anxiety of in the face of nothingness. For instance, the house which keeps and shelters the main protagonists in *The Turin Horse* is shown in its loneliness amidst the vast landscape. In the midst of silence and loneliness, the nothingness sparks and tingles as something unsayable. Our anxiety rise up to meets and greets the nothingness. The chapter concludes that the composition of Tarr's *The Turin Horse* is a phenomenological reading into the essence and depth of Being.

Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, summarizes the whole dissertation; process and analysis. Strength and weakness will be noted and elaborated.

## CHAPTER 2:

### HEIDEGGER AND PHENOMENOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the definition and phenomenological methods of Martin Heidegger. Key terms of Heidegger's philosophy are explained. A brief introductory history of phenomenology is discussed, which include other key phenomenologists such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer and others. I elaborate on Heidegger's radical ideas on phenomenology as ontology and hermeneutics. The question of Being and beings are reviewed. I also include a note about the difficulty of translating Heidegger's German and his style of doing philosophy. A brief summary of the discussions can be found at the end of this chapter.

#### 2.2 Heidegger: Background and Reception

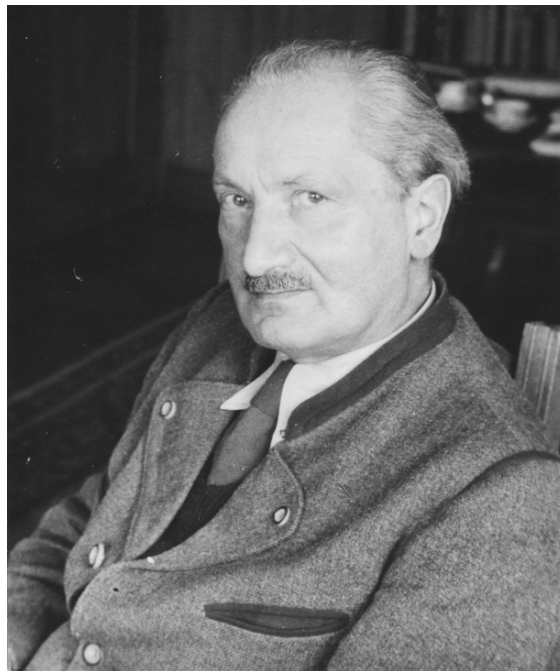
In Baruch Poll (1999) of the great philosophy books in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Original German: *Sein und Zeit*) earns a second place out of the twenty-five shortlisted books.<sup>2</sup> The first place is delegated to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. The placement of Heidegger's here speaks volume of the influence Heidegger's exert in the Western philosophy. *Being and Time* was first published in the spring of 1927 in German just when Heidegger was only 37 years old. Politically, the publication of the book would ensure young Heidegger a promotion to Paul Natorp's chair

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<sup>2</sup> The polls were scattered only to philosophy teachers in North American. Please see D. P. Lackey, (1999, Dec), What are the modern Classics? The Baruch Poll of Great Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, *Philosophical Forums* Vol. XXX, No.4.



in philosophy at Marburg. As fate would have it, he went on to fill in the vacant chair of his mentor Edmund Husserl, at the University of Freiburg instead. Over time, the book soon grew into a monumental (and controversial) authority and many influential thinkers put *Being and Time* as the greatest philosophical book ever to come out after World War 1. Michel Foucault: “For me Heidegger has always been the essential philosopher. My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger” (cited in Dreyfus, 1991, p. 9). Damon Linker, of *The New Republic*, even went on saying how Heidegger possessed “the most powerful mind of the twentieth century.” He continued: “If he had written nothing besides *Being and Time* (1927), he would deserve to be recognized as Europe's greatest philosopher since the death of G.W.F. Hegel in 1831” (2009). This is a high praise indeed.



**Figure 2.1:** Portrait of Martin Heidegger (September 26, 1889 – May 26, 1976).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Image is taken from <http://faculty.cua.edu/zaborowski/Heidegger2011.htm>.

Michael Gelven, in writing the commentaries to *Being and Time*, remarks that “Heidegger’s fame and reputation have developed to such an extent that he is now recognized as the single most important thinker in the twentieth century” (1989, p. xi). Even prior to the publication of the book, Heidegger has already received acclaim for his lectures in University of Marburg. One of his students, Hans- Georg Gadamer (who later went on to become an influential philosopher of his own with his research on hermeneutics in *Truth and Method*), depicted Heidegger’s classes as an “elemental event” in which “the boldness and radicality of [Heidegger’s] questioning took one’s breath away” (cited in Heidegger, 2010, p. xv).

Not everyone praises Heidegger’s outstanding output, of course. Some of the harsh critics leveled against Heidegger – other than the difficult prose – came from the fact that he was a supporter of Nazi, before and after his term as Rector of Freiburg University from 1933 to 1934. His earlier endorsement of National Socialist German Workers Party creates serious, life-long ramifications to his well-being, his friends and his students. After the World War II was over, with the Allied Powers won, the State Committee for Political Purification declared Heidegger a Nazi ‘fellow traveler’ and prohibited him from teaching in the university. However, with the support of Freiburg University in 1951, he was granted emeritus status and was permitted to give lecture again until his death in 1976. Simply put, Nazi Party’s anti-modernism attracted Heidegger’s ideology, which he had hoped to realize as a non-technological style for shaping up *concernful*, everyday life. Heidegger supported Nazism for being able to do away with Marxism, and thus, helped to develop ultraconservatism “in the spirit and traditions of Wilhelmian Germany” (Sheehan, 1993, p. 86). Heidegger’s political side was attacked viciously by many commentators with Victor Farias’ *Heidegger et le Nazisme (Heidegger and Nazism, 1991)* giving its harshest

condemnation. Even the philosopher Karl Popper implored for the disconnection of Heidegger's thought from the academics:

I appeal to the philosophers of all countries to unite and never again mention Heidegger or talk to another philosopher who defends Heidegger. This man was a devil. I mean, he behaved like a devil to his beloved teacher [Husserl], and he has a devilish influence on Germany (cited in Ho, 1992).

The literature of Heidegger and Nazism are immense, and is continually growing even as I write this, which can constitute as a small genre unto itself. My comment here regarding the relationship between Heidegger and Nazi is just a mere footnote to the man that he was. For my dissertation, it is not necessary to bring out the political sides of Heidegger's affiliation with Nazi. The story behind his association with National Socialist German has no currency here. It is his philosophy and his sense of aesthetics that I am more interested of. "The task, for those who care to take something from Heidegger," says Thomas Sheehan, "is to learn how to read him critically, both his life and his works, not to swallow his philosophy whole but to sift it for what is still of value and what not" (Sheehan, 1993, p. 92). This is an accurate statement, but I would like to posit further that I do not believe Heidegger's *Being and Time* exposes real Nazi politics, unlike some commentators who link his writings to Nazism.<sup>4</sup> In the operative of Heidegger's thinking, it is my belief, having read and finished about 10 of his books so far (which is, admittedly, still a small number in the magnitude of his works), that his Nazi politics and his phenomenological-ontology sit distinctively apart. To me, it is Heidegger's ideas, his

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<sup>4</sup> One can see the vehemence for Heidegger's connection to Nazism for example, in Carlin Romano, (2009, Oct 18), Heil Heidegger, *The Chronicle Review*, retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Heil-Heidegger-/48806/>.

profound thoughts, and his *approach* to the analytic Dasein that makes him especially intriguing and illuminating and not his unfortunate politics.

### 2.3. Being and Time as Philosophical Inquiry

In the whole of Heidegger's life as a thinker, he has only one pursuit: The question of Being (*Seinsfrage*). The German word that he employs for Being is *Sein*. Being here translates the idea of "what it is to be?" For the rest of my dissertation, I will use Being with capitalized 'B' just like Heidegger's commentators such as John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson so as to differentiate between 'to be' (*sein*) and 'entities' (*das seiende*). Such is Heidegger's commitment to Being that his writings on previous thinkers before him – Parmenides, Heraclitus, Anaximander, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche – are mined to excavate the history and meanings of Being. Being, he argues, is the "proper and sole theme of philosophy" (1982, p. 11). Heidegger is not the first thinker who asks the nature of beingness. Aristotle probes the same question more than two thousand years ago - τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (*to ti en einai*): "What does it mean to be?" (Meta. Z4, 1029b22-1030a6). What makes a pen in front of me *be* and continues it being? Is there something at work here, which stays hidden to my bodily resources, which moves and reverberate the pen to *be* as it is? In philosophy, these questions on the nature of being are grouped under the term *ontology*. More on this later.

In *Was ist das- die Philosophie?* (1956) Heidegger argues that the asking of 'what is philosophy' implies 'what is *is*?' This question can be followed through in Greek which means τί ἐστί (*ti estin*) or 'what is?' (1956, p. 34). The 'what-is' question is not new; it has been with us since long ago, from Nietzsche and Hegel to Aristotle and Plato. It is the

question that has no rest and will continue to reverberate eternally. What Heidegger wants to attest here is that the asking of the essence of philosophy makes us near to the what-ness that makes up the philosophy, the Being. Aristotle writes of *ousia* (which is translated as beingness or thing) as the unifying sense of being. Being, Aristotle argues, is the presentness of the being; the primordial meaning of beingness of being. Heidegger follows this argument further that what is concealed in the beingness of being is *time*. The elaboration of time (along with death and authentic existence) is discussed in the second division of *Being and Time* even though it is not finished in its entirety. Time is seen as the ontological perspective where Dasein moves its Being.

Being as it is, is manifested in Greek term as φύσις (*phusis*). A direct translation of *phusis* means ‘birth,’ ‘life’ or ‘nature.’<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, on the other hand, is not interested in the usual rendition of Greek. Rather, he sees *phusis* from the root word of φύω (*phuō*) – which means ‘grows’ or ‘blossoming.’ As *phuō*, being is akin to *das aufgehende Walten* or the *emerging-abiding-sway*. Greek *phusis* here means emerging sway, the kind of emergence which is enduring in its presence (2000, pp. 15-16). *Phusis* is a fundamental term to the idea of Being. Heidegger argues that the essence of Being is like a flower blossoming. When it is expanding, it expands according to its swaying to bloom.

Now why would the question of ‘what-is’ is important to Heidegger? The answer to this question is two-fold. First, Heidegger argues sufficiently in his magnum opus *Being and Time* that this question got passed over in the millennia of philosophical problems. In the history of Western and European metaphysics, from Plato to Hegel, it is not the Being

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<sup>5</sup> The meanings cited here are referred from <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/φύσις>.

which is being enumerated but of the categorical forms. Take note of Heidegger's pessimistic conception of Western metaphysics, which he defines as below:

Metaphysics is history's open space wherein it becomes a destining that the suprasensory world, the Ideas, God, the moral law, the authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the greatest number, culture civilization, suffer the loss of their constructive force and become void (QCT, p. 65).

Western metaphysics cannot properly observe the oscillation of Being of beings without either it getting lost in the scientific progression of logic and reason or delegated aside in the quest for religious piety. The Being of beings is an essential issue and yet it is neglected in the discourse of Western metaphysics. Just because it stays hidden to our thinking (and in the history of Western thinking) does not mean it is not important. The excavation of Being from Western thought becomes Heidegger's main task throughout his philosophy until his death. Secondly, by asking the question of Being, Heidegger can make manifest the essence of things in phenomenon. The essence, which stays hidden and out of sight, must be unearthed to its essencing and to this, phenomenology becomes its foremost task to the excavation of phenomenon.

We must be aware that the translation of Heidegger's German *Sein* into the English *Being* is not without its problems. According to Hubert Dreyfus, when Heidegger uses *Sein*, he does not mean it as a substance, a process or an event, but as a fundamental, intelligible conception of entities which has the mode of *availableness* and *occurentness* (Dreyfus, 1991, p. xi). Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly states that *Sein* can also mean "activity, dynamism, motion, possibility, unfolding, refusal, disquietude, and tranquility" (cited in Heidegger, 1997, xiv). The clumsiness of English translation can be observed in the

German term *Das Sein*, which literally means, “the *to be*.” The common translation for *Das Sein* is either with capital ‘Being’ or lowercase ‘being.’

The question of time is very significant in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* to the point where he asserts that “our treatment of the question of the meaning of Being must enable us to show that *the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time*” (BT, 40). Dasein as ‘being-there’ is temporal being. We are born into this world and thrive in the world that makes us who we are. As being-in-the-world, we *encounter* things, and we encounter them by interpreting them in temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*). Time is not the measure of the watch we are wearing but as a being-in-the-world rooted to the dependence of things encountered everyday, we cannot help but to see time as incremental movement of certain units such as the way the sun rise, the elongation of the shadows of the building, the appearance of the moon, the using of punch card in the office and so on. As temporal Dasein, time is “the transcendental horizon [or context] for the question of Being” (BT, p. 63).

Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that Dasein has two principal existential structures; understanding and state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit* or disposition, being in a mood). We understand ourselves and our world in our comportment – our attitude and bearing – to the world. Thus, in understanding, we are ahead of ourselves. The reason why we are comported is because we *care* (*Sorge*). We care enough about the project we are undertaking that we make sure we do not fail the project. We create dispute with other human in the world when he or she hits our head since we care about our image and bodily health. Heidegger defines *care* as “ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the world)-as Being-alongside-(entities encountered within the world)” [BT, 237]. *Care* as our inherent

existential structure can be divided into three dimensions: the future (ahead of itself), the past (facticity), and the present (fallenness). Dasein as Being-there is either inauthentic or authentic. As inauthentic entity, he is caught up with and in the present in such a way that he is lost in the present and thus, cuts off from its authentic future or what Heidegger says as its 'ownmost possibility.' As temporal being means we have limited surplus of time; our future is always death or what Heidegger aptly calls as being-toward-death.

Since human is an openness to temporality, the idea of 'knowing' or 'understanding' is not just about the connection between our mind and the object which it seeks. Knowing happens since Dasein exist in the temporal state of past, present and future. The flow and range of time is what made 'knowing' occurs as a mode for our being. Time opens up the horizons of our existential space so that beings manifest themselves in their varieties, multitudes and solitudes. Without time there will be no understanding. What Dasein really is, is a temporal nothingness through which entities 'be' and manifest themselves as the way they present themselves. Human Dasein is what Heidegger expressed as *Ereignis*, or 'event of appropriation,' the site for the self-manifesting of beings. It is unfortunate, however, when Heidegger did not finish *Being and Time* in its entirety. The chapter on the ontology of time is left with a final question: "Is there a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of *Being*?" (BT, p. 488). The question is never fully answered in his subsequent writings.

#### **2.4. Definition of Phenomenology as Ontological**

While the path to phenomenology is influenced by Husserl, Heidegger's thinking is much more predisposed to classical Greek thinkers especially Aristotle. William J Richardson



once pens that, “Aristotle influenced him more profoundly than any other thinkers” (1963, p. 309).<sup>6</sup> This can readily be seen in Heidegger’s series of essays, lectures and critical reviews whereby Aristotle’s thinking are everywhere; ready to be made available, to be called to shine light on Heidegger’s path to thinking. Extended study of Heidegger’s interpretation on Aristotle can be read from his collected writings entitled *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*,<sup>7</sup> to *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Θ 1–3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*,<sup>8</sup> to *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*<sup>9</sup> to a shorter lecture *On the Essence and Concepts of Φύσις in Aristotle’s Physics B, I*.<sup>10</sup> Heidegger has even voiced to his readers: “It is advisable, therefore, that you postpone reading Nietzsche for the time being, and first study Aristotle for ten to fifteen years” (1968, p. 73). This clearly shows the extant of Aristotle’s influence in Heidegger’s foundation of epistemologies. At the same time, even when doing close reading of Aristotle’s thoughts, Heidegger employs a radical translation of what Aristotle’s thought really means.

Why Aristotle was such an important figure in Heidegger’s text can be made apparent by the huge influence Aristotle’s thought exerts on Western metaphysics. The first extended study ever made on the realm of Being can be found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* or what is originally known as *ta meta ta phusika* (things after physics), a book which still remains a powerful treatise on what-it-is-to-be even after more than 2,000 years ago. It is to *Metaphysics* that Heidegger keeps coming back to in his fundamental excavation to

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<sup>6</sup> Further study about relationship between Heidegger and Aristotle can be seen in Thomas Sheehan’s illuminating essay, “Heidegger, Aristotle and Phenomenology,” *Philosophy Today*, Summer 1975: 87-94.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, M. (2009), *Basic concepts of Aristotelian philosophy*, (R. D. Metcalf and M. B. Tanzer, Trans), Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, M. (1995). *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Θ 1–3: On the essence and actuality of force*, (W. Brogan and P. Warnek, Trans.). Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, M. (2001). *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into phenomenological research*, (R. Rojcewicz, Trans.), Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Which can be found in W. McNeill (Ed.), *Pathmarks*, pp. 183-230.

ontological phenomenology. In the study of philosophy, metaphysics refers to the essence of what things are: For instance, “What is cause?”; “What is ‘is’?”; “Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?” Martin Heidegger sees metaphysics’ fundamental task as not about the nature of things but as the fundamental asking of the essence of Being. To this, he delves deep into the archive of Greek thinking and German Idealism for texture and as for its method, he improvises from his teacher, Edmund Husserl, which is phenomenology.

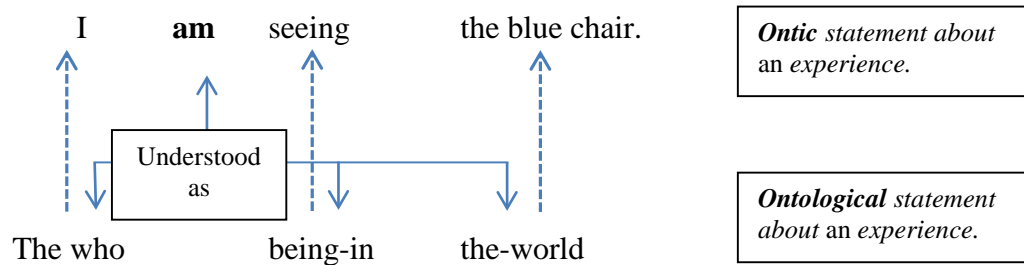
Heidegger, of course, has a different tact in mind in employing phenomenological procedures. According to him, etymologically, the expression ‘phenomenology’ goes back to Greek thought, and comprise of two parts which are the φαινόμενον (*phainomenon*) and λόγος (*logos*) [BT, p. 51]. The expression phenomenon is derived from φαίνεσθαι (*phainesthai*) which means ‘to show itself.’ *Phainesthai* itself comes from φαίνω (*phaino*), “to bring to the light of day, to put in the light” (BT, p. 51). *Phainomenon* is “that which shows itself in itself, the manifest” (BT, p. 51). At the same time, *phainomenon* too give a sense of ‘showing-itself’ that is like *seeming* (*Schein*). The other part of the term phenomenology, *logos*, has the root meaning from the Greek word λέγειν (*legein*). *Logos* here do not correspond to the usual sense like ‘knowledge’ or ‘science’ and to certain extent; ‘reason’, ‘judgment’, ‘concept’, ‘definition’, ‘ground’, or ‘relationship.’ Heidegger is not interested in the usual meanings of *logos* but see it as *discourse* and by discoursing, something is made manifested in the discourse. He argues how in discoursing we are using φωνή (*phōnē*) or ‘voice.’ Heidegger links *legein* with the term δηλοῦν (*dēloun*), which stands for ‘to make manifest’ or ‘to become alight.’ Thus, *logos* is transformed into “utterance in which something is sighted in each case” (BT, p. 56).

To make ourselves nearer to the essence of the meaning, Heidegger borrows Aristotle's ἀποφαίνεσθαι (*apophainesthai*) which denotes "letting-itself-be-seen-from-itself." Take note that the term *apophainesthai* is one of the main essence to Heidegger's phenomenology. *Apophainesthai* is like a torch light, alighting itself so as be perceived and reflected. However, the light – which brightens – the space of the thing only comes in a short spurt of a moment – a flash! – and everything becomes dark again.

According to Heidegger in *Being and Time*, phenomenology formally means "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (BT, p. 58). As a method, phenomenology does not "designate the object of its researches" but to grasp its objects in such a way that everything regarding the object can be exhibited to be described. Object as itself comes to our appearance as something that lies hidden, covered up as phenomenon (BT, p. 59). The task of phenomenologist then, is to uncover the essence of the *trapped* Being in the object he has made his own research. How does Being is made apparent?

To that, *ontology*, a term for the philosophy of the essence of being, is gathered into Heidegger's analysis of phenomenology. "Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible" is Heidegger's famous maxim in doing phenomenology. There is very special weight by Heidegger on *language* as a path to understand (and thus, to un-conceal) being, and this emphasis grows exponentially over the course of his later works. It is from the play of language, our making home of it, that our hermeneutics – interpretation – to its essence can be grasped. Heidegger describes how there are differences between ontic and ontological; The *ontic* is concerned with the concrete, specific, and local matter of Dasein (*existentiell*) while the *ontological* is related to what underlies and instantializes the ontical matter and

provides a phenomenological description (*existentiale*). It is to this *existentiale* that Heidegger believes phenomenological analysis should give further account to. The distinction between ontic and ontological can be seen in sentence below.<sup>11</sup>



Phenomenological method is very personal since it is not the accrued data of variable surveys but instead, the subjective reflection of the researcher himself as he adds in his own experience in understanding the observable facts in his perception. The light which emanates in his perception marks its own truth as he only knows it true. To quote Robert Sokolowski:

In phenomenological reflection, however, we turn our focus toward these disclosures themselves, toward the evidences that we have accomplished, and we think about what it is to be datives of manifestation and what it is for beings to be manifest. Phenomenology is the science that studies truth. (2000, p. 185).

The truth is that which manifested in our experience as being-in-the-world; the essence of understanding of being as they are perceived in our consciousness and interpreted according to our understanding of it. Truth is what Heidegger has said plenty of times throughout his whole life as *alétheia*, the unconcealing of essence in the clearing of

<sup>11</sup> The example here is influenced from T. Stapleton, (2010), Dasein as being-in-the-world, in B. W. Davis, Ed, *Martin Heidegger: Key concepts*, Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, p. 47.

entities. *Alétheia* is uncovered only in our understanding of our relation with beings in the world. Further elaboration on *alétheia* in artistic understanding is explained in chapter three.

## **2.5. Brief History of Phenomenology**

As a philosophical movement, phenomenology has its starting point from Germany in the writings of Heidegger's mentor, Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938). The first major publication on phenomenology arrives in Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen I (Logical Investigation I)* in 1900. Husserl, who is trained in mathematics and logic, claims that "all philosophical disciplines are rooted in pure phenomenology" (1981, p. 10). Husserl wanted to break away from the shackle of his teacher, Franz Brentano (1838-1917) and his idea of psychologism. Psychologism is a form of rigorous science whose function is to identify, describe and classify psychical acts and their essential parts. Husserl wishes instead to tackle directly at the phenomenon which addresses him in the first place. To that he differentiates the concept of pure phenomenology (which is rooted more on psychologism) with phenomenology per se:

*Pure Phenomenology* represents a field of natural researches, in which several sciences have their roots. It is on the one hand, and ancillary to *psychology* conceived as an *empirical science*. Proceeding in purely intuitive fashion, it analyses and describes in their essential generality – in the specific guise of a phenomenology of thought and knowledge – the experiences of presentation, judgement and knowledge, experiences which, treated as classes of real events in the natural context of zoological reality, receive a scientific probing at the hands of empirical psychology. Phenomenology, on the other hand, lays bare the 'sources' from which the basic concepts and

ideal laws of pure logic ‘flow,’ and back to which they must once more be traced, so as to give them all the ‘clearness and distinctness’ needed for an understanding, and for an epistemological critique, of pure logic (2001, p. 66).

Thus, phenomenological observation goes beyond than scientific and logical readings of objective evaluation of empirical research by going directly toward the things perceived and its intentional acts. More importantly, as Klaus Held succinctly says it in ‘Husserl’s Phenomenological Method,’ “*The objects in the How of their appearances* with their associated manners of givenness are the ‘phenomena,’ the ‘appearances,’ that ‘phenomenology’ deals with, and from which it obtained its name.”<sup>12</sup> That a thing appears in the sight of man means man is apprehending it. To this, Husserl calls for ‘phenomenological reduction’ through the bracketing of the affirmation of the actual world. This means putting up restriction of the correlation of the phenomena that corresponds to our acts of consciousness. Phenomenological reduction enables our thought to examine the said phenomena as they are given to consciousness. This reduction is a kind of meditation requiring rigorous, continual effort that is, however, not easily achieved. Husserl’s term for this particular rigorous method is ‘transcendental ego.’ It is a study of ego (the experienced self) where it serves as the “center of affects and actions, of all attention, grasping, relating, connecting” (1989, p. 112). Although Husserl developed further his idea of ‘transcendental ego,’ his idea wasn’t fully accepted by some of his followers and students; Heidegger, for example, did not believe that the path to phenomenology is through reductionism. In *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (1985, §.4 & §.10), Heidegger spent several chapters discussing its merits and finally dissected it as unsuitable to his project Dasein, a

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<sup>12</sup> Italic is not mine. See the excellent summary of Husserl’s phenomenology by K. Held, (2003), “Husserl’s Phenomenological Method,” (L. Rodemeyer Trans.), in *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Welton, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 9.

being who is inescapably always in the world. A bracketing of the world is impossible since it cuts out the meaningfulness of Being as experienced by entity. Husserl's writings, it seem, "appeared unable to ever get beyond talking about the method itself (rather than using it) in a not-so-virtuous circle" (Langiulli, 1997, p. xxvii).

We must understand that there are no real true ways or approaches to a phenomenological program. Whilst it is true that Husserl's earlier formation of phenomenology is not permeated with the problematic and history of hermeneutics, nevertheless, phenomenology after Husserl is very much hermeneutical, which we can see from thinkers (other than Heidegger) like Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1907 – 1960), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 – 2002), Alfred Schutz (1899 – 1959), Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995), and Jean-Luc Marion (b.1946). Each phenomenologist ends up interpreting their different approach to cater for their own set of belief and understanding. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls for ontological phenomenology – as a way for Being manifests itself. He argues that it is only through phenomenology that we can perceive the essence of Being. Merleau-Ponty in his groundbreaking work, *Phénoménologie de la perception/ Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/ 2002), argues for the significance of the body in the experience of intentionality and 'givenness' of the phenomena. Jean-Luc Marion, for example, elevates the process of 'givenness' in the perception of appearance: "A phenomenon only shows *itself* to the extent that it first gives *itself* – all that which shows *itself* must, in order to reach that point, first give *itself* (2002b, p. 30). Marion sees phenomena not as deficiency in the intuition, but rather in its *excess* of meanings, "a phenomenon in which intuition would give *more, indeed unmeasurably more*, than intention would have intended or foreseen" (2000, p. 195).

Early on, Husserl wanted phenomenology to be a scientific description of the consciousness. But Heidegger could not accept Husserl's reductionist phenomenology since he believes that it will exclude the world as it manifests to our sight and our experience. It is only when we are in the world, comported to the world, that we truly can make sense of the world we find ourselves in. As such, it is impossible to bracket a certain fact from our sight. Phenomenon, however and whatever they are, do not make apparent their essence for our perception. They stand concealed to our thinking of them; what Heidegger calls as 'covered-up-ness.' In Heidegger's writings, phenomenon is always concealed, and stays hidden to our thoughtful sensing. Taylor Carman sums it up better:

If we had to define phenomenology as a study of appearance, in some sense of the word, we would have to add that the relevant contrast is not between appearance and *reality*, as it was for Husserl, but between appearance and *disappearance*- showing and hiding, revealing and concealing (Heidegger, 1962, p. xviii).

In phenomenological description therein lies the concept of *intentionality*, the way our consciousness directs towards an object in our presence. Take for example a red ball three meters away from my body; I am aware of it and in sighting its presence, my consciousness moves towards it. I *intend* to its direction. "In phenomenology," Robert Sokolowski says, "'intending' means the conscious relationship we have to an object" (2000, p. 8). Heidegger argues that the term 'intentionality' comes from the Latin word *intention*, which means *directing-itself-toward* (1985, p. 29). Every psychic comportment is a lived experience and as itself, always pointing toward something. To see a hammer on the table means that that we are already directing-itself-toward the hammer. In focusing our



perception toward the hammer, our awareness of other things beside the hammer pale in contrast with it.

The phenomenon of a hammer, as such, is not about its characteristics – the wood and the steel, or the measurement of its length or wide – but more as a tool to hammer-for-something. A door is not just about the kind of possible design of doors, but as *a way to go through*. By phenomenology, we look at things as how we can experience it. The process of phenomenology is to dig, to uncover, the being of things as they show themselves to us. Things get illuminated. They are ‘brought to light.’ This is one of the reason why Heidegger’s phenomenology is highly *hermeneutical*. This idea of hermeneutics is what will be explored next.

## **2.6. Phenomenology as Hermeneutics**

I have written earlier of hermeneutics. What does it mean? Hermeneutics in philosophy is what is considered as the art (and science) of interpretation. Early on, under the scholarships of Friedrich Ernst Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833 – 1911), methods of hermeneutics were employed in the process of understanding Biblical exegesis, historical research and literary texts. Nowadays – thanks to the radical reading from Heidegger in *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927) and especially too by Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (*Wahrheit und Methode*, 1960) – hermeneutics no longer refer to just a mode of objective, philological interpretation, but more, to the everyday manner of interpretation that forms and occurs in our essential characteristic as humans – or Dasein;

Heidegger's term for Being who makes the being-ness as its issue.<sup>13</sup> One of the earliest understanding of hermeneutics comes from Aristotle's *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας* (*Peri Hermeneias*, 'On Interpretation'), c.360 BC. The etymology of hermeneutics can be seen from Aristotle's Greek term ἑρμηνεύω (*hermeneuō*) and ἑρμηνεύειν (*hermeneuein*), which can be defined as 'translate' or 'interpret.' Heidegger says that the term hermeneutic is derived "from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*" (1971, p. 29) which is related to Greek god Hermes. In ancient Greek myth, Hermes is the divine messenger of the gods. He is the mediator of gods' will to the priests, using medium in the guise of lies and truths. *Hermeneuein*, in this sense, "is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message" (1971, p. 29). Heidegger appeals to this tiding, which mediates us with the object given to us in its appearance, thus; opening up channel – dialogue – between us and the message contained therein.

Gadamer argues that "the real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable" (1976, p. 13). Phenomena as they are perceived by me – the greyish Proton car that I see and drive, the vast, blue sky above me or the sharp Staedtler pencil I am using – should be understood as appearing in a hermeneutic space since it is *I* who are actively interpreting the phenomena, even making the phenomena as part of my consciousness as I too, join in its appearance. The appearance of object in my perception requests a confrontation for a further self-reflection as I go along with its existence, its usability and its immediate presence. The finding of my relation with the object perceived is a discovery of my personal impression of the object. To be sure, "phenomenology," says Sokolowski "is reason's self-discovery in the presence of intelligible objects" (2000, p. 4).

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<sup>13</sup> Recalls Heidegger's statement: "Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being" (BT, p. 78).

Heidegger puts special placement to human beings as the only entity that encounter the question of what it means to be, in our everyday life in a world. Unlike other objects like car or tree, it is *only* humans that is leading and experiencing their lives. Heidegger departs from Husserl's teaching, by arguing that phenomenology is not just about the manner of things that appear in consciousness, but to take its point of ordinary experience, in which through rigorous examination, is able to perceive the a priori that condition and shapes it to its understanding. Phenomenology, permitting Heidegger, is the "process of letting things manifest themselves" (Richardson, 1963, p. xiv). In Heidegger's hands, phenomenology becomes highly hermeneutical. In *unconcealing* the essence of being that always gets covered up in its manifestation as an entity, our understanding of this entity can be delivered through the interpretation of its Being.

According to Heidegger, beings are existentially structured as Care (BT, §.41). We want to know something, gain new knowledge and show concern for someone else only because we are already existentially *gripped* to care enough as it is. We are *terbelengu* with care.<sup>14</sup> In being caring, we project possibilities in our everyday concern with entities. Heidegger gives us a profound way of understanding *Understanding* (BT, §.32-33). Dasein's mode of existing is through 'Potentiality-for-Being' (*Sein-können*) or 'able-to-be.' We live the way we do in relating with objects around us because 'I can.' This ability to see a pencil, and knowing how to handle or to use the pencil happens because Dasein sees the world for *Dasein own's sake*. Our understanding is a projection of Beings' possibility to exist. We understand because we project possibilities. The act of interpretation is a way of

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<sup>14</sup> *Terbelungu* comes from the Malay verb *belengu*, which means in English as 'shackled'. It has special negative connotation. I use this word since this is the word that keeps on occurring to me when I perceive Heidegger's Care-structure, in which by having the existential caring, we are then 'shackled-down' with responsibility in owning and distributing up Care.

*Vorstruktur*; the preunderstanding, fore-structure of consciousness that we bring along as we approach a text, work or object to interpret and imparting our own personal horizon of understanding.

In hermeneutic phenomenology, language is privileged since this is where interpretation of the world occurs and put into words. Heidegger famously states that “language is the house of Being. In its home human beings dwell” (1998, p. 239). The existential- ontological foundation of language is talk (BT, p. 203). Heidegger sees communication as a way for Beings to be with other beings, and not just to give expression about something, but to express their beingness in the world. He argues:

Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another. Dasein-with is already essentially manifest in a co-state of mind and a co-understanding... Whenever something is communicated in what is said-in-the-talk, all talk about anything has at the same time the character of *expressing itself* (*Sichaussprechens*) [BT, p. 205].

For example, when we hear a sound of a car, we say it as *a car*, and not just sound of “vroooooomm” or “brrrrrrmmm”. This is because each sounds come to our hearings as meanings and not just as the complexes of sound. The same also when we are reading a book, sometimes we forgot the text that is in front of us, and see instead the meanings contained in the text. Thus, meaning refers to the condition of being and not to words and sentences.

Language, the bearer of man's home, is what testifies our existence. Speaking maintains the happenings of soul in dialogue. According to Gadamer, we are beings concerned with others as dialogue. What defines *dialogue*? The historical view of dialogue originates from Greek thought – διάλογος (*dialogos*). The word itself is a combination of διά (*dia*) which means 'through' or 'inter' and λόγος (*logos*) which suggests "speech, oration, discourse."<sup>15</sup> The definition proposes the manner in which *dialogos* arrives, which is *through* open channel made to convey thoughts. But don't we open up mouth so to speak? Open up mind so to think? Open up computer to type? Heidegger argues that the word 'idea' comes "from the Greek εἶδω which means to see, face, meet, be face-to-face" (1968, p. 41). Thought as εἶδω (idea) comes to its utterance as 'meeting' or 'face-to-face.' This statement sets dialogue *as* communication between someone with someone. In conversing, we bring the hearer/ receiver to participate towards the content being talked/ sent about. The whole nature of *logos* happens in such a mode that we become conduit for dialogue to operate its appearance. The dialogue is something from where question is asked and meaning is answered. When a statement is posited in understanding, the direction to answer is lighted as pathway to meanings gets renewed. The ideas of discourse as hermeneutical possibilities have been taken up by the American philosopher Richard Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) when he defines hermeneutics as "relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts" (1979, p. 318). What this holds is that in conversing with the other, a relationship of differing discourses is opened up and is maintained to such a degree that agreement can only follow according not to the simplicity or complexity of the discourse but in adherence to the duration of the conversation.

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<sup>15</sup> This definition is taken from <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dialogue>.

Consequently, to endure an opposing idea in a discussion means also to achieve consonant in disparity. To quote Gadamer: “In fact language is the single word, whose virtuality opens for us infinity of discourse, of speaking with one another, of the freedom of ‘expressing oneself’ and ‘letting oneself be expressed’” (1989, p. 553). Risking openness to other’s outlook is to dwell well in the measure of communication. It is to take into play people’s preconception. Gadamer offers interesting possibility in grasping understanding by stressing the affair of prejudices in disseminating meaning. To him, “prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something” (1976, p. 9). It is only when there is language, can there be experience of beings. The approach towards confronting a text calls for having aware of our consciousness of historical *situatedness*, of our own hermeneutic bias and of temporal distance. This is why Gadamer states: “The possibility that the other person may be right is the soul of hermeneutics” (Grondin, 1994, p. 124).

Interpretation is a ‘working-out’ of the possibilities projected by understanding. As beings who project possibilities, it is only when we are interpreting, that we are *understanding* something. If we are interpreting something known, then why do we bother to interpret? For sure, Heidegger’s German term for interpretation is *Auslegung*, which means ‘laying out.’ To ‘lay out’ means to lay something that we already have in our being. There is something like a vicious circle in Heidegger’s understanding. This is since hermeneutic structure works like a circle as Schleiermacher has foreseen it earlier. As we arrive into an understanding of an entity, we come into contact with our pre-understanding that has been there all along. As we interpret even more, we come into a fuller comprehension of the entity. And as we moves deeper into the contemplation of the entity, we meet again the earlier pre-understanding, and this dialectic turns our understanding to a

better understanding. In other words, the circle equates to the idea where a meaning of a text can be understood by conceiving the whole, but the whole can only be comprehended for an understanding of the parts.

## **2.7. On Translations of Heidegger's Writings**

It is very common for the writers to preface their writings on Heidegger by observing the prickly issues of translating Heidegger. Walter Kaufmann, in translating Nietzsche states that “great writers are far more difficult to transpose into another language than is usually supposed” (Nietzsche, 1954, p. 3). The same thing is true with Heidegger’s translation. The style of German language that Heidegger uses in explicating his theories of Dasein in *Being and Time* is highly complex to the point of obfuscation. It is, as Gelven declares, “a truly intimidating book, challenging even to the experts and scholars” (1989, p. 4). Even in the original German, Bertrand Russell criticizes harshly the languages in *Being and Time*:

Highly eccentric in its terminology, his philosophy is extremely obscure. One cannot help suspecting that language is here running riot. An interesting point in his speculations is the insistence that nothingness is something positive. As with much else in Existentialism, this is a psychological observation made to pass for logic (1989, p. 303).

Heidegger’s text and jargon are very dense: They can prove to be an obstacle just as much as *pathway* to open up language that has become barrier to the appearance of things and to the way we perceives them. As Herbert Spiegelberg says, Heidegger “mostly points at the phenomena by means of new, provocative and, at times, stunning terms which keep

even the native German groping his way toward a tentative understanding” (1982: 386).<sup>16</sup> The complications that arose in Heidegger’s play of words happen because the subject matter is hard to define and explain. At the same time, we must take note that Heidegger is very much attracted and influenced by poetry, especially by the Friedrich Hölderlin and Rainer Maria Rilke.

Writing originally in German, he employs etymological connection of words to work out his concepts regarding the uncanniness of Being. For example, the expressions ‘Sorge’, ‘Fürsorge’ and ‘Besorgen’ introduced in Section 26 of *Being and Time* are etymologically associated, but their derivative connection are lost when translated to English as ‘Care’, ‘Solicitude’ and ‘Concern’ respectively. Heidegger believes, especially in later works, that the way to philosophy is through poetic sentences since it is the poet who has the unique task to push the boundaries of language so as to be able to express the essence of events and things, the unsayable. “All philosophical thinking,” says Heidegger, “...is in itself poetic” (1991, p. 73). This so called poetic style contributes to the common misunderstanding in comprehending his writings. His position to think like a poet, to ponder on philosophical problems, rhymes with another great thinker – Ludwig Wittgenstein – who declares: “Philosophy ought really to be written only as a poetic composition” (1980, p. 24).

Since *Being and Time* is considered as Heidegger’s magnum opus, this will be the main body that my dissertation will keep on getting back to in the elaboration of Heidegger’s other works. There are currently two different translations available to English

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<sup>16</sup> Even his corpus of writings and collected lectures can be daunting. Just to get an idea of his philosophical outputs, there are currently about 100 volumes of collected (and some waiting to be published) works grouped under *Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* (published by Vittorio Klostermann).



speaking publics: John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (1962) and Joan Stambaugh (1996). The translations for Standard English are not exactly easy, and one's interpretation differs with another translator. Observe the term *befindlichkeit* in Heideggerean studies. *Befindlichkeit* is one of the three parameters set by Heidegger in defining the modes of being; the other two are *understanding* (*Verstehen*) and *fallenness* (*Verfallen*). Heidegger means the term as 'being in the mood,' the kind of being that is able to have 'feelings,' attuned with regard to everyday-ness. *Befindlichkeit* has its roots in 'finden', which means 'to find'. The German expression of "Wie befinden Sie sich?" is equal to English as "How are you?" or to translate it literally, "How do you *find* yourself?" Macquarrie and Robinson use 'state-of-mind' for *befindlichkeit* while Joan Stambaugh employs 'attunement.' 'Disposedness' has been applied by Mark Wrathall. Hubert L. Dreyfus, on the other hand, utilizes 'affectedness.' Sometimes, one can even find the word translated as 'situatedness.' These conflicts of expressions are only one out of many others that run rampant in Heidegger's scholarships.

## **2.8. Summary**

We have seen so far a sense – a gist – of Heidegger's philosophy and phenomenology. While there is still much to learn, it is enough for us to understand Heidegger's thought to seek our own path further down the road to phenomenological thinking. Let us be reminded again of the definition of phenomenology, this time from a different thinker who is also influenced by Heidegger, Dermot Moran:

Phenomenology is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophizing, which emphasis the attempt to get to the truth of matters to

describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer (Moran, 2000, p. 4).

This dissertation employs Heidegger's phenomenology as its task to uncovering the filmic aesthetics of Béla Tarr. This is not an easy task. While the author has to immerse in vast Western philosophical texts and voluminous Heideggerian literature, what is at stake here are the rigorous thinking and the depth of interpretation phenomenology brings to the table. If there is anything that Heidegger absolutely wants from his reader is the *love* to think, to seriously meditate upon the essence of things. To simply lead life without reflecting upon it is a life wasted away by the hubbubs of modern needs. To reflect means to have the courage to take a stance in life. It is to commit oneself to the art of thinking. "Reflection," writes Heidegger, "is the courage to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into the things that most deserve to be called in a question (QCT, p. 116).

However, Heidegger's sense of thinking does not seek to overcome anything, or to grasp and shape the world; it is a thinking that restraints itself first of all to allow the world – entities – to show themselves in their openness, in their own terms. In the clearing of this openness, therein lies a multitude of possibilities which must be recognized and grasped in its probabilities. To seek phenomenological understanding is to welcome the angst and chaos of possible ranges. This is why Heidegger writes: "We can understand phenomenology only by seizing upon it as a possibility" (BT, p. 63). Phenomenological method inspires one to open up the possibility that is and might not be there in the first

place. By meditating upon thing, bracketing oneself or *epochē* as Husserl would say it, we open ourselves to the different vistas unavailable to us in the first place.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **HEIDEGGER'S METAPHYSICS: ART, MODERN TECHNOLOGY, MODE OF DWELLING AND NOTHINGNESS**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter is a discussion on the problematic of art, essence of technology, truth and dwelling which arise from the writings of Martin Heidegger. To start with, I will give a general introduction on art, and from there, I will give a close reading on Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*. These reviews will set-up the analysis regarding Béla Tarr's layout in Chapter Five. I will discuss Heidegger's interpretation on the essence of modern technology from his lecture *The Question Concerning Technology*. We will also take note on the ontology of dwelling and the 'fourfold' from the essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*. The chapter ends with a reading on 'What is Metaphysics?' The question of Being brings along the forgetful Nothingness, but why does the problem of the nothing is important in understanding Heidegger's thinking? How is our anxious mood connected to the idea of the nothing? These questions will be answered by the end of this chapter.

#### **3.2. What is Art?**

Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is (Hegel, 1975, p. 11).

The problems of art have been the concern of many philosophers, poets, artists, scientists and even layman. Nietzsche once said: “Art is worth more than truth” (WP, §.853). Nietzsche’s statement here privileges art as an all-powerful, incomparable study for its own sake. Art cannot be separated from thinking of ‘what is.’ Furthermore, art empower the soul in confronting the problems which appear in front of us by making sense of things that do not make sense. Art uncover the essence of things around us, making the things appear not the same to our experience. Wouldn’t the order of cosmos around us like a thing of beauty to our senses? Hegel provocatively says that “the beauty of art is *higher* than nature” (1975, p. 2). This is true in the sense that by observing nature, man is called forth to give response of his being to order and preserve nature. By defining art as a beauty of a higher order than nature, Hegel clears a path for the unsayable in art, the emotional side which always counters the logic of our brain.

What is art and how do we seek to understand it? This is the question with wide-ranging answers with no ultimate solution. This is since the essence of art itself is comprised of many things and these things have variable perceptions and understandings. The wealth of forms art can take up include not just the five major disciplines which are painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry but also drama, theatre, cinema, comics, fantasy, literature, dance and many others.<sup>17</sup> The wide varieties of artform possible from Stone Age to current digital culture make the study of art even more baffling, challenging and yes, much more interesting. Each art has a unique form of being. It tells us something about the world and if not the reason why we are living, then it gives us reason to live fully in the world. The early Greek term for art is called *τέχνη* (*techne*) while the Latin term is

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<sup>17</sup> The five major arts here are taken up from Paul Oskar Kristeller, (1978), *The Modern History of the Arts, Journal of the History of Ideas*, (12), 496-515.

*ars*. However, neither word applies to specific ‘fine arts’ but more of general human activities like crafts and sciences. The discourse of and on arts is generally known as *aesthetics*; study or research on arts, beauty and taste. The term ‘aesthetics’ has world-ranging etymologies and possibilities and can also be observed in German (*Ästhetisch*), French (*esthétique*) and Malay (*estetika*). Historically, the etymology of aesthetics actually comes from the early Greek tradition which is αἰσθητικός (*aisthetikos*, which means ‘beautiful,’ ‘sensitive,’ and ‘live’) and αἰσθάνομαι (*aisthanomai*, which suggests “to perceive by the senses or by the mind, or to feel”).<sup>18</sup> Plato, who is known as the founder of philosophical aesthetics, observes art (*techne*) as a principle for measuring (or *metron*, from *Philebus* 64e).<sup>19</sup> As *techne*, it presupposes a knowing of ‘how’ and the way of its making. Plato argues that the most fundamental of art is to know the art of measure without which the craftsman is not knowledgeable at all in his arts. A person who doesn’t understand the measurement of things he designs has no command of art. It is through the art of measurement that principles of good and beauty manifest themselves.

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, a German philosopher, is credited as the first who coins ‘aesthetics’ from the Greek ‘*aisthesis*’ and who works out an early formal system of art. Taste, according to Baumgarten in *Metaphysic* (1739, §451), is seen as the facility to judge according to the senses, instead of intellect. David Hume’s ‘*Of the Standard of Taste*’ (1757) – an important essay on modern aesthetics – describes the problems of inconsistencies in understanding art, and that the differences on the matter of taste falls down on sentiments, the essence of evaluation. He writes that “all sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, whenever a

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<sup>18</sup> Sourced from <http://etymonline.com/?term=aesthetic>.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, “The Arts and Measure,” from *Statesman*, 283b- 285b.

man is conscious of it” (1882, p. 268). Accordingly, in evaluating aesthetic object, we must take into consideration our moral judgments. Hume pronounces two basic types of taste: Vulgar taste (which is more idiosyncratic and whimsical) and refined taste (which is more stable properly and rule-governed). As such, the appearance of beauty does not exist in the quality of things perceived but rather exists “merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty” (Hume, 1882, p. 268). Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790) argues that art manifests its beauty through taste and is not rule-governed. The sublime in art is the sense that goes beyond of the value of representation or any scientific comprehension and moral reason. The beauty that we see in red rose, for example, is not the property of the thing or of any natural phenomenon. Instead, it is found in our consciousness: The pleasure of ‘free play’ of the imagination and understanding (*Critique of Judgment*, A320/B376). Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian author of *War and Peace*, perceives art as the fundamental structure of human existence. In *What is Art?* (1896) Tolstoy asks us to stop thinking art as means to pleasure but instead, the natural conditions of human beings living on this earth. It is by having a charity toward art that conversation between two humans flourishes. Tolstoy sees art as a human activity whereby art is a bond which can be shared, and can become infectious from one person to another.

Currently, in continental aesthetics (which is prominently French and German), there is no single major strand of aesthetic movement. Theodor Adorno, writing in *Aesthetic Theory* (published posthumously in 1970), says:

Like a weather vane it is blown about by every philosophical, cultural, and scientific gust; at one moment it is metaphysical and in the next empirical;

now normative, then descriptive, now defined by artists, then by connoisseurs, one day art is supposedly the center of aesthetics and natural beauty merely preliminary, the next day art beauty is merely second-hand natural beauty (1997, p. 333).

We must take note that continental thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and so on write their ideas on art in opposition to philosophical categories such as Kantian taste and Tolstoy pure feeling. What they are interested are the disclosure of Being, understood in the sense of the meaning and truth found in an artwork. On the other hand, other continental theorists like Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard and Roland Barthes see aesthetic from different points such as semiotics, political, ideological and sociological.

For reason of space, this chapter only offers a small introductory reading of aesthetics and could not do justice for a better overview of the condition on art as reflected by major thinkers from around the world. It is enough to note several discrepancies in the understanding of art so as to establish a locus point in introducing Heidegger's ontology of art. This will be our next discussion.

### **3.3. Reading Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work of Art'**

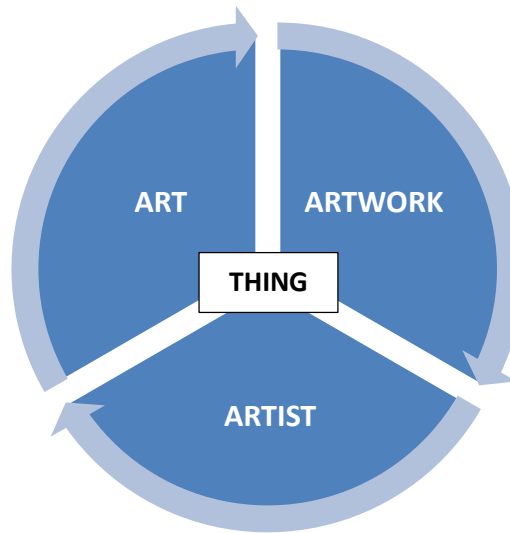
In the history of philosophical studies on art, Heidegger's '*The Origin of the Work of Art*' is a work of tour de force. It is also a perplexing text; Heidegger's lecture on art talks about art in a different way than his predecessors. He asks his audience not to appeal to the judgment of taste or formal assertion of art but to appeal to the presence of Being which stands concealed in the *ever-striving* artwork. *The Origin of the Work of Art* (original



German – ‘*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*’) was first given as lecture in Zurich and Frankfurt from 1935 to 1937. The lecture was eventually published in a volume entitled *Holzwege* (GA 5) in 1950. Heidegger’s translated English essay can be found in the collection of lectures in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2001, 17-79). For the whole thesis, I will cite according to Hofstadter’s translation and for easier citation, I will use the abbreviation PLT for *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Collected in this extraordinary volume includes ‘*The Thinker As Poet*’ (*Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*), ‘*The Origin of the Work of Art*’ (discussed in Chapter 3), ‘*What are Poets For?*’ (*Wozu Dichter?*), ‘*Building Dwelling Thinking*’ (*Bauen Wohnen Denken*) – which will be discussed later on in this chapter, ‘*The Thing*’ (*das Ding*) ‘*Language*’ (*Die Sprache*) and ‘*...Poetically Man Dwells...*’ (*...disterisch wohnt der Mensch...*). While these lectures are collected together under the rubric of art, poetry and the way to thinking of their essence, the artful concern are purposely strange; they are not written in the usual practice found in philosophizing of art but mysteriously, to get into the essential nature of being through playful *destruktion* of language. “These pieces,” cautions the translator Albert Hofstadter, “should not be thought under the heading of ‘aesthetics,’ nor even under that of ‘philosophy of art’” (PLT, p. ix).

Martin Heidegger sees art as a relationship which involves the artist (who works on art) and the artwork (the one being worked upon). Without these two factors, art cannot be as it is. These three elements make up an intrinsic connection in such a way that each is in conflict and at the same time, in harmony with each other (see Figure 3.1). As an artwork, it has a *thingly* character. For example, in the building where I am typing these words, there are the elements of stone-ness and wood-ness around me. There is the element of colour-

ness and line-ness in the drawings I have made. The thing-ness elements exist in art as it becomes both its structure and its own embracing.



**Figure 3.1:** Circular relationship of art. Design by Fauzi Naeim, based from Heidegger.

What does it really mean by the expression ‘*thing*’? It is a material from which it is impossible for any object *not* to have it. Thing is what the essentials are convened. Heidegger says it as ὑποκείμενον (*hupokeimenon*) [PLT, p. 22]. According to Joe Sachs’s translation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, *hupokeimenon* is “that in which anything inheres” (Meta. 1029a 20-28; 2002, lix). It is an underlying thing. Thinghood is called as οὐσία (*ousia*) by Aristotle. As thing, it unites what-it-is with what it appears as-it-is. “The thing is *aistheton*, that which is perceptible by sensations in the senses belonging to sensibility” (PLT, p. 25). The book which I am holding is rectangular, has its own smell and is smooth to my touch. I am attributing the book according to my sensations of it. The thing which is what makes up the book is what makes me understand the thinghood of other books. At the same time the thinghood is not reducible to its attributes like qualities, spaces, actions and

so on but is the fullness of being. Let us be reminded again of Aristotle's τί ἦν εἶναι (*ti en einai*); "what anything keeps on being, in order to be at all" (2002, p. lix).

Accordingly, a thing is either useful or not. Heidegger argues further: "Usefulness is the basic feature from which this entity regards us, that is, flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this entity" (PLT, p. 28). The book on the table beside my Pentium i5 computer is able to take up – calls forth – a glance from my perceiving of it when it gives me a sense of its usefulness. This makes its appearance intensifies as a thing. In the everyday phenomenon of things that can be seen and touched, there comes together another aspect, συμβάλλω (*sumballein*). This is another Greek term which means 'bring together' (PLT, p. 19). In another word it denotes symbol. For example, in an oil painting of an apple, the apple stands as a representative of Real apple we know of in real life. Yet, the apple can symbolize other things than its appearance; perhaps sexual tension, political oppression, agriculture or anything at all that the artist and the audience can think of. There is no limit to our imagination regarding the representation of the apple in a painting and the way our thinking concurs to the way the apple being composed and colored. What it brings in effect is that the depiction of apple brings-together something else than what it is. This something else becomes mixed up with the artwork: *allo agoreuei* or "saying something other than the mere thing itself" (PLT, p. 19). Consequently, all artworks are symbolic and cannot be otherwise.

We must understand that the thing is a formed material. The Greek word for 'form' is *morphe* which can also denote 'shape' or 'visual appearance.' Heidegger defines form as "the distribution and arrangement of the material parts in spatial locations, resulting in a particular shape, namely that of a block" (PLT, p. 27). He argues further that it is not the

matter which results the composition of form but it is the form which determines the arrangement of the matter. A formed entity has its own force to come nearer to us – closing the gap of its distance to us – through the function of its usability. Usually useful things are what we call tool or equipment. This gives us a context whereby as tool, it has its own unique function and in its deployment. As a tool, it must have its creator, its process of becoming its own form. The distance between me and the object in my gaze revolves around the intensity of its usefulness to me. For example, in front of me lay a book by Andrei Tarkovsky, but since I am not determined at this moment to read the book, but to watch film, then the HDTV out in front of my bedroom seems nearer to my consciousness. Such is its nearness that I even get up to close the distance between me and the HDTV. In a way, the famous Malay proverbs of “*Kuman seberang laut nampak, gajah di depan mata tak nampak*” (Germ across the sea can be seen, but elephant in front of eyes is unseen) refers to the interested-ness we present in our perception of things. What this really means is that it is our intentionality which actually gives the sense of distance pertaining to objects and space.

Early in the essay, Heidegger tries to formulate art as a thing. According to Heidegger, there are three ways in defining thingness; the thing as bearer of traits, the unity of a manifold of sensations and as formed matter. The definitions given here are to give sense of Heidegger’s interpretation of the equipmentality of equipment (PLT, p. 31). To understand further, let us take a look at one of Heidegger’s observation of an oil paint by Vincent Van Gogh, the famous *Post-Impressionist* Dutch painter (See Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2:** *A Pair of Shoes* (1886) by Vincent van Gogh. Oil paint on canvas. 45 x 37.5 cm. From Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.<sup>20</sup>

Van Gogh's painting entitled *A Pair of Shoes* above is produced in the year of 1886. The issue regarding whether it is a shoe or not is not deliberated here. From the painting, it is enough to see that it is a depiction and representation of shoes which exist in the world where Van Gogh is working, the same world we are in. The form of the shoes is the same like the everyday shoes we see. Shoes, as everyday equipment, are what are sheathed to the feet, which eventually helps protecting the feet. Heidegger interprets the shoes painted by Van Gogh as owned by woman pheasant working in the field.<sup>21</sup> It is only when the shoes

<sup>20</sup> This image is taken from <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/vincent-van-gogh/a-pair-of-shoes-1886>.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger's interpretation on woman pheasant is challenged by Meyer Schapiro as false. Schapiro argues instead that the shoes do not belong to the pheasant woman but are owned by Van Gogh himself. See Schapiro, (1994), "The Still Life as a Personal Object - A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh," *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society*, New York: George Braziller, pp. 136-138. For further discussion on this conflict, see I. Thompson, (2011), *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 106-120.

are used in the field that the shoes are as what they are. Heidegger says that the value of the shoes is even purer when the peasant woman doesn't think of her shoes – forgets she is wearing her shoes – in her busy-ness of working, tilling the land. This happens when the shoes *as* shoes serve their function as *equipment* for the peasant for whenever the peasant is standing, walking and sitting. It is only in this practice of “the use of equipment that we must actually encounter the character of equipment” (PLT, p. 32).

What does it mean by equipmentality and the usefulness of thing? To answer this question, we need to go back to Heidegger's early conception of equipmentality in *Being and Time*; *Zuhandenheit*, which is translated as *ready-to-hand* (BT, pp. 100-107). The existence of man is not alone. We live in this world *only* when we live with other entities around us. We are surrounded by existing things and they are divided by Heidegger to two definitions; *Vorhandenheit* or present-at-hand (when thing stops functioning its basic ability, for example, when a scissor broke down, it has become a thing that simply lies there, without any meaningful equipmentality) and *zuhandenheit* or ready-to hand (a thing that is used for its readiness to be used, for example when I want to go inside my house, I twist the door-knob to open the door). Heidegger's phenomenology in interpreting the work of art highlights the usability of the thing in the world. To him, if the thing – which in this case, peasant's shoes – is not used but left to rot, then we are unable to establish the exact usefulness of the shoes. It is as if we have no relationship to the shoes except through our perception of its shape, texture and color. Observing again van Gogh's painting, we can start noticing that the painted shoes show that it has been used many times and that it is not cared and its skin has aged. In this case, the usefulness of the shoes has gone through anxiety and loneliness. The usability of the shoes by the peasant, according to Heidegger, is full of loneliness and weariness – which can be seen by the worn façade of the shoes. The

peasant worked hard for daily bread, and the shoes' skin is full with the moisture of soil. Through the appearance of the shoes, the peasant is close to the soil, and sheltered by the earth. What must be understood by Heidegger's writings here is that from van Gogh's oil painting, the world of the workers can be manifested and disclosed.

“The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work” (PLT, p. 35). “Art is truth setting itself to work” (PLT, p. 38). What does Heidegger mean by these statements? In the literature of Heidegger's interpretation on Greek's thought, art is called as *techne*. This is the same term that can be heard in the usual English expression of ‘technic’ or ‘technology.’ *Techne* here denotes ‘craft’ while craftsman is called as *technicians* (PLT, p. 57). However, Heidegger interprets *techne* as more than mere ‘craft’ and ‘art’; it means “way and form of knowing.” To know means to perceive and in perceiving is to perceiving what is seen which exists to our perception. In Heidegger's thinking, art is close to the Greek expression of ἀλήθεια or *alētheia* (PLT, p. 57). *Alētheia* in this case is not just about ‘truth,’ ‘assertion’ or ‘judgment,’ but more, as *unconcealing* (*Unverborgenheit*). This is one of the key words in understanding Heidegger's conception of art in relation to Being and truth. It is akin to unblock something which conceals something which is unseen earlier. Thus: Being = *alētheia* = unconcealment = truthfulness. Truth here is no mere concept. It is not even a natural being. Truth presides in the relation of being-in-the-world. Truth is formed from our lyrical affinity to language, what August Wilhelm Schlegel says as “the most marvelous manifestation of the human poetic power.”<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche once asks a question, “What then is truth?” and proceeds to give a full answer:

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<sup>22</sup> From E. Behler (1998), Translating Nietzsche in the United States: Critical observations on ‘The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche.’ In K. Mueller-Vollmer & M. Irmischer (Eds.), *Translating literatures translating cultures*. Berlin:

A moveable army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered simply as metal and no longer as coins.<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche's understanding of truth has to do with the willing to power and dominate which is already structured existentially in human Dasein. Truth is neither a secured point nor a life-affirming assertion but is established in the game of rhetoric and language. The pragmatist William James argues for the dynamism of truth by saying, "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent to it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events" (1991, pp. 22-38). But this is far from what Heidegger articulates, since truth is not a *process* (happening → becoming → gets made → event). Truth is not something attainable like 'objective knowledge' or 'ascertainable data' but it is the way we comport and *conjecture* to entities. This is why Heidegger transforms the Greek term *alētheia* to justify his understanding of truthfulness as unconcealing; that Being is manifested in the ground of language and as phenomenologist, we must uncover its truthfulness and grasp its essence from the language where Being finds as its home.

In a painting by Van Gogh, the equipmentality of the thing emerge its usefulness when we see the thing in the context of our relation to it in the world. Van Gogh's art

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Erich Schmidt Verlag GmbH & Co., 144. Originally from Schlegel, (1846), *Briefe über poesie*, Silbenmaaß und Sprache (1795), in August Wilhelm von Schlegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Eduard Böcking, 16 vols, Leipzig: Weidmann, vol.7: pp. 98-154.

<sup>23</sup> Here, I refer from E Behler, 1998, p. 144. The statement is originally from Kritische Studienausgabe, ed Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Guyter, 1980), 1: 880. English translation from S. L. Gilman, C. Blaire and D. J. Parent, (Trans.) (1989), *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, Oxford University Press, p. 250.



reveals the thing's usability through his painting of the shoes. Art, in this case, is not about the consideration of beauty and taste, but the site where truth is working itself in the ground of the artwork. What is concealed in entities can emerge in artworks through its distinctive representation by the artist's imagination. For sure, if we are to view a mango tree in front of us and then compare its visual to a painting of the same said tree, there will no doubt emerge two different interpretations of the mango tree. In fact, after viewing the painting of mango tree, we might even come to see the real mango tree in front of us in different light. Such is the possible powers of poetic expression inheres in an artwork.

### **3.4 The Strife between World and Earth in Art-space**

Artwork “opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth” (PLT, p. 41). In the space of the artwork, there arise two realms: World and earth. ‘World’ here means the totality of our relation to other beings in the world, the way we organize our thinking and body with the equipment we find in everyday usage. ‘Earth’ to Heidegger, is the grounds where man stands, walks, sits and dwells. It is a place “that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation” (PLT, p. 41). The meeting – the clash – of the world and earth is the *establishment of truth*. As stated before, Heidegger's notion of truth is not about ‘correctness’ or ‘assertion.’ By employing the Greek term *alétheia* he refers truth as ‘*unconcealment*’ (which means ‘uncovering’ of an obstacle that impede our perception towards its essence). The clash of both world and earth is – at the same time – a breach and a unity; both cannot live without each other and yet they balance each other. Heidegger strongly states: “*All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry*” (PLT, p. 70). This is the crux of Heidegger's main phenomenological seeing in the interplay of art and

truth. Since Heidegger very much wants thinking and writing in the search of essence done in the nearness of poetry, the style of my writings here *attempts* to echo its disposition.

When Heidegger analyzes Van Gogh's painting – *A Pair of Shoes* (1886) – he is not interested in the nature of form, color, psychological process or the historical background of the painting. What interests him most in *The Origin of the Work of Art* is the utility of the things that is made apparent in the art of painting. "Usefulness is the basic feature from which this entity regards us, that is flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this entity" (PLT, p. 28). In the case of shoes, he is interested in the *equipmentality* of the shoes; who uses the shoes, whose world does the shoes belongs, what type of world is the owner of the shoes lives in? These readings are existential probing to the readiness of art – as a site to truthfulness – to open its truth in being. Through the questioning of usefulness of equipment, Heidegger interprets the kind of life the person who puts the shoes lead.

If any phenomenological aesthetic can teach us, it is that artwork as experienced is not just a modification from reality but "regards what it experiences as genuine truth" (Gadamer, 2000, pp. 83-84). Let us consider Heidegger's words below:

Dasein seeks what is far away simply in order to bring it close to itself in the way it looks. Dasein lets itself be carried along solely by the looks of the world; in this kind of Being, it concerns itself with becoming rid of itself as Being-in-the-world and rid of its Being alongside that which, in the closest everyday manner, is ready-to-hand (BT, p. 216).

Our awareness of an object to our consciousness is according to its usefulness as equipment or as an exhibition of its appearance. Our consciousness of thing made the thing

appear nearer to our perception. For example, in an exhibition of tools found in a kitchen, my hand goes directly to a knife since at this time, I am interested in using the knife to cut a water-melon. Here, the knife flashes its being-ness to my perception, dulling the 'flares' from other tools the knife sits near; spoon, forks, chili sauce and so on. To quote Heidegger: "Usefulness is the basic feature from which this entity regards us, that is, flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this entity" (PLT, p. 28). By "flashes at us," it does not mean that the knife emanates light from its façade (even though my eyes can see a glint from reflected sunlight or fluorescent light), but the knife flashes its 'usefulness' to my intent. In the glint of usefulness, the knife stops being *simply* a form; it has become a tool which can be used to cut-something.

"This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be" (PLT, p. 35). By this statement, Heidegger does not mean we are physically teleported to another location. The painting which manifests its visibility to my eyes speaks to me in such language that I am suddenly transported to somewhere else other than where I am. What is being transported is my sense of being and time. In focusing and apprehending the viscosity of the painting, I suddenly forget where I am at, and in the process, my timing is off since I was deep entranced with the painting. The nearness of the artwork with my consciousness of it has a magical way of making my thought far away. Art, according to Heidegger, "is the becoming and happening of truth" (PLT, p. 69). *Art is truth*. Truth is what happens in an event named artwork. This is the main thesis of Heidegger's lecture, '*The Origin of the Work of Art*.' By placing the question of truth in the happening of artwork, Heidegger situates the importance of art as a way of philosophizing. The ideal model for art is poetry. "*All art*," Heidegger states further, "as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, *essentially poetry*" (PLT, p. 70). By saying

*all art*, Heidegger means the whole spectrum of possible art in this world; architecture, painting, sculpture, drawing, dancing, film, literature, comics and so on. No matter what platforms – paper, wood, canvas, bricks, keyboard – their proper essence can be phenomenologically understood best as poetry, which is the level of abstraction necessary to incite deeper meditation. Poetry gives something *more* toward the whatness of an artwork; it brings the Open, in such way that “the Open brings beings to shine and ring out” (PLT, p. 70). What does Heidegger mean when he speaks of the Open in artwork? The Open is a site whereby something is let forth and let be.



**Figure 3.3:** An abstract expressionist painting by Awang Damit.

An abstract expressionist painting by the Malaysian painter Awang Damit for example (see Figure 3.3), is an artwork made from variable medias – acrylic, canvas, and so on – but such are their combinative bond that they contribute together to become a place for an openness where thinking can reside and take ground. The lines of his painting crisscross each other, some space is textured white whereas for others, murky black and

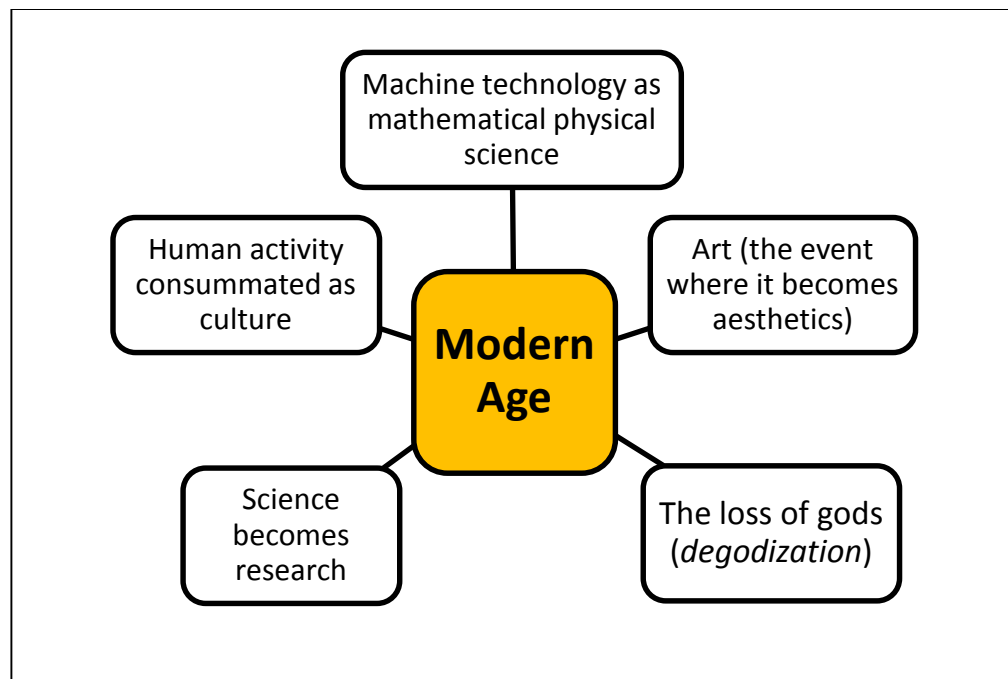
brown. Some space withers under the rough outline of brush, while in other, grows and overlaps its boundary. Each line and space of Awang Damit's painting names and brings the Open into view. The Open is the spacing "which everything stands and from which everything withholds itself that shows itself and withdraws itself as a being" (PLT, p. 59). The Open is a clearing and a lighting, a site of conflict between earth and world. The strife between the earth and the world is the happening of truth in a work. It is what "makes space" in the spaciousness of a work (PLT, p. 44).

### **3.5. Essence of Modern Technology in '*The Question Concerning Technology*'**

For this section, we will be discussing Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology*, his radical idea on the essence of modern technology (*Ge-stell*), and the human mode of preserving under the domination of science. *The Question Concerning Technology* (Original German: *Die Technik und die Kehre*) is a lecture given by Heidegger under the title of '*Insight into That Which Is*' on December 1, 1949, in the Club at Bremen which are comprised of four lectures; 'The Thing' (*Das Ding*), 'Enframing' (*Das Gestell*), 'The Danger' (*Die Gefahr*) and 'The Turning' (*Die Kehre*). The first extended lecture was given on June 6, 1950, before the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. The second lecture with an extended version was also given on November 18, 1955, in the series entitled "The Arts in the Technological Age." This discussion on *The Question Concerning Technology* refers to the translated version by William Lovitt, published in a collected volume entitled *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 1977 (New York: Harper & Row), pp. 3-35. For shorter term, the abbreviation QCT will be used throughout our discussion.

“In approaching Heidegger’s work,” the translator Lovitt says, “the reader must ask not only what he says, but how he says it.” These words are true; Heidegger’s style of writings and especially so in his later phase is closer to the state of poetic-ness. This transpires since in the process of examining the essence of things, he borrows heavily not from positivism or natural science but from the poetry of Hölderlin and Rilke. In thinking the essence of things, he reads the way to the *openness* of Being by placing series of questions, which gets repeated again and again throughout his lecture. “Questioning,” says Heidegger, “builds a way” (QCT, p. 3). A way to what? What is this path that Heidegger is building and why must it concerns us?

To comprehend this, we must first recognize that *The Question Concerning Technology* seeks a way into the essence of modern technology. In the center of this essence, the fate of mankind, which is chained to our reliance to science and modern technology, can be opened so as to safeguard us in our knowledge. To provoke this thought further, Heidegger posits that the essence of modern technology has nothing to do with technology or modern machine at all. What this means is that the essence of technology is not with the latest iPhone or with the any state-of-the-art digital apparatus we can buy (which surrounds us so to speak) in the hypermarket. If that is the case, in what *way* does the essence lay?



**Figure 3.4:** Symptoms of modern age according to Heidegger.

To even answer this, we must ask an earlier question: What is ‘*technology*’ in the first place? There are two answers: First, technology is a means to an end. Second, technology is a human activity (QCT, 4). Both definitions are entwined together like two sides of a same coin. Accordingly, the expression technology as a ‘contrivance’ comes from a Latin word, *instrumentum*. The German word Heidegger uses here is *Einrichtung*, which signifies ‘arrangement’, ‘adjustment’, ‘furnishing’, or ‘equipment’ (QCT, p. 5). Subsequently, things like nuclear power plant, F-15 Eagle jet fighter, Porsche 911, electrical piping and so on is all man-made for means to an end established by mankind for mankind. Such is the means to an end that the machines are made for our utilization and pleasure, to a point where suddenly it is the machine that seeks us for the *will* to master them. We can feel everywhere a sense of urgency to master modern technology even as the technology threatens to slip from our control. Figure 3.4 shows Heidegger’s list of the symptoms of modern age in his essay *The Age of the World Picture* (QCT, pp. 115-154).

There is more about modernity than just an equation with scientific progress; it has become a culture which is inescapably ingrained in our modern lifestyle. Ever since the advent of printing press, man's voice has become louder and domineering, all under the pretext of freedom of speech; a freedom which owes much to mass production and commercialism. The critic Lawrence E. Cahoon writes:

The positive self-image modern Western culture has often given to itself, a picture born in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment . . . of a civilization founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value, which places the highest premium on individual human life and freedom, and believes that such freedom and rationality will lead to social progress through virtuous self-controlled work, creating a better material, political and intellectual life for all (1996, p. 12).

“When modern physics exerts itself to establish the world's formula,” Heidegger writes, “what occurs thereby is this: the being of entities has resolved itself into the method of the totally calculable” (1958). The sun which gives life is calculated from its distance to planet earth, the light which gives warmth is calculated to its speed, which is 299, 792, 458 meters per second; everything object which can be objectified is objectified. Under the scope of physics and empirical sciences, everything that can ever be observed is observed as something to be assessed and accessed by numerical data. According to Heidegger, machine technology is an autonomous transformation of praxis, which demands the exactness of mathematical physical science. In the science where data is collected and objectified, mathematics rules supreme.



Intrinsically, Heidegger believes that modern technology is the cause of ontological forgetfulness. Such is the prevailing of modernity that man continues to be pre-occupied with the measure of man's worth rather than the *what-it-is* that man should be concerned with; *Seinsfrage* or the question of Being. In modern society, one gets dumbed down by the Others. One listen to what others are listening, one wears what others are wearing until one's thinking is none other than *what* the others have put into his head. Man's sojourn to the beginning of modern age starts when man could represent reality to himself, set it up over against himself. Heidegger cogently argues in *The Age of the World Picture* how the earliest epoch for modernity begins with Descartes' famous dictum *ego cogito [ergo] sum* ("I think, therefore I am"). It is from here that man splits from within into two: subject and object. Consequently, man finds certainty within himself and the certainty of the reality which stands over against himself. The split of subject and object remains one of the most commanding events in the man's history of modernity.

In bringing out the discussion on modern technology, Heidegger places important roles to the Greek thought. The reason for this is the influential tradition Greek thinking exert on Western metaphysics. Greek experience of reality is uniquely responsive to what is present in front of them – to behold in wonderment! What more, Heidegger believes that the original thinkers from Ancient Greek like Parmenides or Heraclitus are not diluted to the later Christian theology which has been dominating Western hemisphere ever since the birth of the institution which is Church. This too, is one of the aspect of modern age since man has learned not to just assert dominance through self-salvation but for the quest of self-assurance through control of landscapes and other beings. Church helps man in finding security within himself under the guise of Christianity. This is of course just a strand of religious imposition, but still an overbearing imposition to Western thought.

According to Heidegger, for centuries mankind is taught from Greek philosophy of four main causes that has brought the existence of *instrumentum* (QCT, p. 6). They are:

1. The *causa materialis*: The material, for example, from which a sword is made; metal.
2. The *causa formalis*: This is the form the sword takes, thin, long, sharp, with wooden handle. The form of the sword is designed in such a way that it differs from other immediate forms like fork, shield or frying-pan.
3. The *causa finalis*: The final function for the sword; to wield, to cut.
4. The *causa efficiens*: The originator, the blacksmith who makes the sword.

While the four causes above are taught by Aristotle the First Teacher, however there is something lacking to the causes. Heidegger asks: What unites the four causes? What Roman called as *causa* (cause) is called as *aition* by the Greek; that which something else is indebted. The metal (*hyle*) is indebted to the form (*eidos*) and is indebted to the purpose, “that which give bounds” (*telos*) of the sword” (QCT, p. 8). But what about the *causa efficiens*? It seems that the Greek has no exact word for the originator of the sword. Heidegger offers a Greek word here: *legein*, which means “to bring forward into appearance” (QCT, p. 8). *Hyle*, *eidos*, *telos* and *legein* are co-responsible with each other so as bring forward the sword, ‘lying ready’ (*hypokeisthai*) in “presencing of something that presences” (QCT, p. 8). Presencing here is Heidegger’s German *An-wesen*. The sword makes presence of itself. It appears in its presencing. Thus, the unison of the four ways which are presencing is what Heidegger terms as *poiesis*. This word – *poiesis* – is what Heidegger wants to say all along in his conception of essence of things, but have to take a

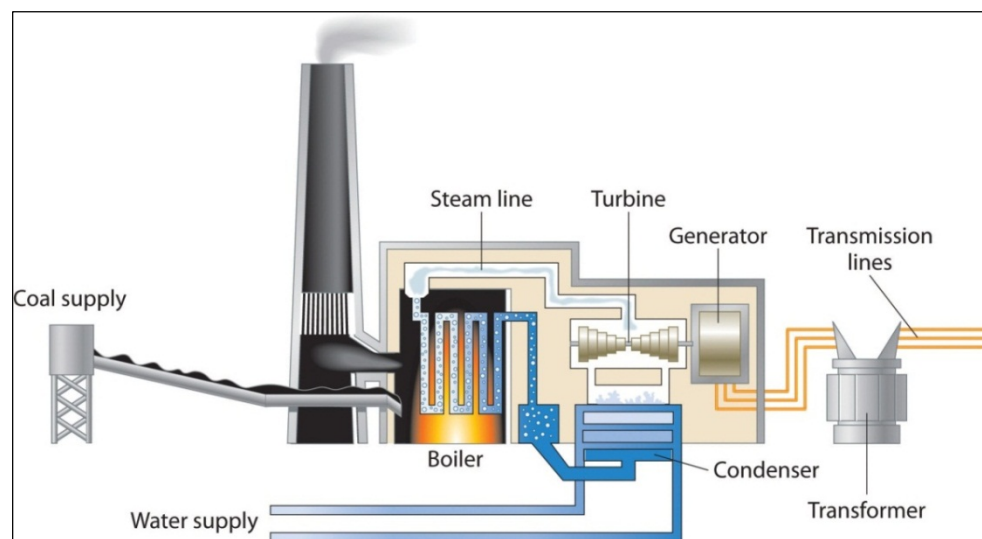
short detour to causality so as to impart the sense of Greek thinking. *Poiesis* is actually Heidegger's Plato's words, taken from *Symposium*, 205b: *He gar toi ek tou me onton eis to on ionti hotoioun aitia pasa esti poiesis*. The English translation runs: "Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is *poiesis*, is bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*]." The German word *Her-vor-bringen*, when translated literally by William Lovitt, is "Bringing-forth-hither brings hither out of concealment, forth into unconcealment" (QCT, p. 11).

How does *poiesis* as 'bringing-forth' occur in our discussion of modern technology? Heidegger argues that *poiesis* brings the four causes discussed earlier into a mode of revealing (*das Entbergen*). According to Lovitt, the German term *Entbergen* is allied to noun *Bergen* which means to rescue, to recover, to secure, to harbor and to conceal (QCT, p. 11). Thus *Entbergen*, which is translated as 'revealing' also connotes "an opening out from protective concealing, a harboring forth" (QCT, p. 11). The Greek word for revealing is *aletheia*. It is like a membrane which covers up something in that it become a layer and a protective shell to that something and yet when it opens a gap, the layered membrane reveals what is underneath. This revealing is revealed in so far as it recovers it reveal-being.

### **3.6. Enframing as Ges-Tell which Reveals and Challenges**

Technology which is *instrumentum* is therefore a way of revealing. And what it reveals is its truth. "Technology comes to presence," Heidegger posits, "in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth happens" (QCT, p. 13). And yet, the way modern technology – Internet, Soviet T-34 tank or nuclear warhead – reveals itself is not akin to *poiesis*. Instead, the way modern technology reveals arrives in the form of

*Herausfordern* (challenging). What Heidegger means by this is that nature is challenged by man so as to extract its resource to full use. The earth which shelters man becomes something else when revealed in the form of modern technology. “The earth,” says Heidegger, “now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit” (QCT, p. 14). Let’s take a look, for example, the operation of coal-fired plants which is important in generating electrical energy (see Figure 3.5 below).



**Figure 3.5:** Drax Power Station.<sup>24</sup>

Firstly, the coal (or also known as mineral of fossilized carbon) has to be obtained through underground mining, for which it will then be sent to a coal-plant. From there it will go through a boiler. The coal heats the water inside the boiler so that turbine generators can produce electricity. Steam turns the turbine, and will turn back into water. Electricity is not the only one produced; the process emits nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon dioxide. The electricity generated will then go through a transformer, runs through the transmission lines and from there, it will go to our house so that we can tap the

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<sup>24</sup> Image taken from [http://photos.wikimapia.org/p/00/03/22/10/77\\_full.jpg](http://photos.wikimapia.org/p/00/03/22/10/77_full.jpg).

electricity generated to light our TV. The process I have entailed here is what Heidegger sees as challenging; when things are taxed beyond their things-ness to be something else.

That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew (QCT, p. 16).

Uranium, a mineral deposit, is challenged by man to become nuclear. Coal is challenged by man as energy resource. Everything that is nature is set, challenged, stored, disseminated in mass bulk and gets to be repeated again and again. From this vicious cycle of man's dependency to nature and machinery, the essence of modern technology is revealed radically by Heidegger as *Gestell* (*Enframing*).

Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological (QCT, p. 20).

The German term *Gestell* is defined as a kind of apparatus like a bookrack or skeleton (QCT, p. 21). The German word *stellen* from *Ge-stell* is defined by Heidegger as 'to set upon' but in such way that "in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into unconcealment" (QCT, p. 21). A pair of scissors is useful to cut things, but to actually use the scissors means to grip its handle by putting two or three of our fingers inside the hole that makes up the scissors' frame. In using the scissor, the presence of "cutting" is brought forth into unconcealment. As *enframing*, things are called to being under the

influence of modern technology to reveals the “real as standing-reserve” (QCT, p. 21). A red Ferrari is beautiful to look at (at least, to my eyes), but as a modern technology, it stands there before my eyes as standing-reserve; a storage of energy to be unleashed provided I know which buttons to press to challenge it. Modern technology brings nature as a resource to be tapped into. Nature is withheld by scientist and engineers not as vista or shelter but as “calculable coherence of forces” (QCT, p. 21). In the challenges of standing-reserve set up by modern technology, man longer knows his own essence much less care about his essence. Everything that can be ordered is ordered, including man. In the essence of modern technology as *Enframing*, man has lost himself to the ordering he has set up, and has become *just another* resource; orderable storage that can be switched at will. “Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding-sway of truth” (QCT, p. 28). The truth of the essence of things is swayed from its poetic rendering but comes to us under the compression of fastness. The will to master nature, which in turn means the will to master technology, transforms our inner will to be subjected by the technology’s inexhaustible compositional drive to enhance itself perpetually. We are no longer able to see clearly since everything is framed by the rectangular frame of our smart phone. Landscape is no longer captured for its beauty, but as a means to be shared in Twitters and Instagram, to get more ‘Likes’, and thus more ‘followers.’ This is the danger of modern technology; it affects our openness for Being. Is there any possible saving grace from the oppression of modern technology that is everywhere, that has infected our inner core? Perhaps, there is. Pointing to Hölderlin’s poetry – “But where danger is, grows The saving power also” – Heidegger believes that in the extreme path of danger is where we can find the power to save from the danger. This is the paradox, and since Dasein’s essence lies in paradox, it is here Heidegger trusts we must find some answer. The saving power lies in the *thinking about art*. Heidegger writes: “Yet the more questioningly we ponder the essence of

technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes” (QCT, p. 35). The mysteriousness of art thwarts the “calculable coherence of forces” (QCT, p. 21). In the realm of art, by dwelling in the earth poetically, Heidegger thinks, is where Dasein is able to save its inner abyss from being drowned altogether by the pervasiveness of cyber technology.

### 3.7 Regarding Thinking and Dwelling

*Building Dwelling Thinking* or in German original, ‘*Bauen Wohnen Denken*,’ is originally a lecture given by Martin Heidegger in the course of the *Darmstadt Colloquium II* on ‘Man and Space,’ August 5, 1951. It is collected in the Proceedings, *Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt*, (1952), p. 72. The English version for this lecture can be read in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins), pp. 141-159. While the title is about building and dwelling, the essay itself is not about building construction or practical architectural theories but moves deeper away into the essence of our being as dwellers in thinking. To start with: What does Heidegger mean by ‘building?’ To answer this means to delve into the definition of word itself. According to the Old English and High German, the word building – *buan* – means ‘to dwell.’ Other ideas that resonate include ‘to remain’ and ‘to stay in place’ (PLT, p. 144). Heidegger proceeds to rhymes ‘to build’ with other Old English and German words such as *neahgebur* and *Nachbar* (neighbor) and *buri*, *buren*, *beuren* and *beuron* (dwelling, the abode). The words *neah* (near) and *gebur* (dweller) can be seen in the expression *neahgebur* which means ‘near-dweller.’ What Heidegger sets out in defining building in the connection of Old English and German is to give us a clue that our everyday usage of the term ‘building’ has lost its historical, meaningful significance. By ascertaining the relationship between

building and dwelling, we begin to see that not only there is a nearness of original meanings between the two but the quiet sense of bodily nearness we feel in every time we live in a building. When we see a 30-storey building in front of us, we might see it as human construction that takes up space but more, we see the building as a possibility for human dwelling; as a shade to the sun and the rain, and as that which gives comfort and security. Wouldn't we feel the first time of entering a building a sense of respect? This is mostly the case unless the content of the building repels us so. For example, we will have different feeling in entering sacred ground like mosque or temple in comparison with entering enemy camps.

“Building,” Heidegger writes, “is really dwelling” (PLT, p. 146). To build means to dwell and to dwell means to build. In this bond between building and dwelling, we must understand first that we are dwellers first and foremost. Heidegger states: “We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers” (PLT, p. 146). The German *bauen* (to remain, to stay in place) is also called as *wunian* in Gothic word and *wuon* in Old Saxon. *Wunian* is defined by Heidegger as “to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace” (PLT, p. 147). The expression ‘peace’ like the German word *Friede* (peace) – also means ‘free.’

What Heidegger has been pushing forward in his etymological game is to go deeper into the task of thinking *space*. Heidegger defines space as “something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*” (PLT, p. 152). The employment of Greek's *peras* here is to remind us the original idea behind boundary; it is not as which something discontinues, but “from which something begins its presencing” (PLT, p. 152). For countries to be as they are, they are defined not



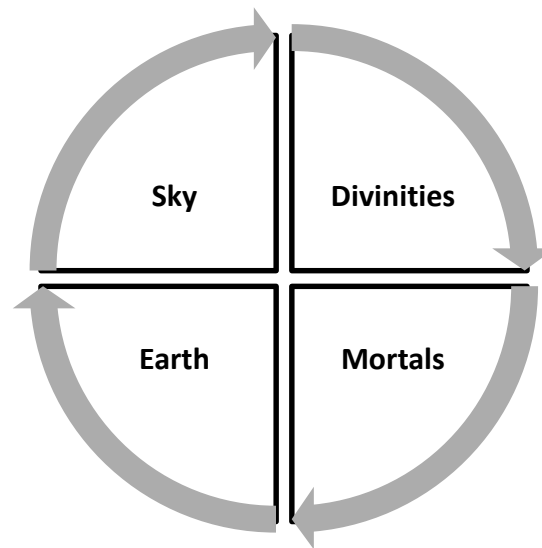
only for the contents found in their geography, but for the boundaries that are set up in limiting spaces. The restriction of space frees the space contained to its bounds. Without boundaries, there will be no countries, no sense of location. It is when boundaries – *peras* – exist that presencing of geography becomes real. Space after all, Heidegger argues, receive their being from locations. Space (or German *Raum/ Rum*) when defined to its ancient term is a “place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging” (PLT, p. 152). *Räumen* denotes ‘to empty’ and ‘to evacuate.’ Space then is a clearing; an opening from where mortals dwells and divinities can appear. By clearing, space is brings together (*sumballein*) things and mortals.

“To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell” (PLT, p. 145). It is not enough that we dwell on this earth in our home; we have to dwell in the mode of preservation. This is why Heidegger believes that the most “fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving” (PLT, p. 147). In every human lurks a part which wants to conform ‘to *be*’ within a location to just simply frees itself as the space he dwells. Living then is akin to opening ourselves to the space as poetic.

Let us take a look again at Heidegger’s etymological concern. We have: Building → *buan/ bauen* (to dwell, to cherish, to protect) → dwelling → *Nachbar* (neighbour) → *Nachgebauer* (he who dwells nearby) → *wuon* (to stay in a place) → *wunian* (to be at peace, remain at peace) → *Friede* (peace) → *das fry* (preserved from harm and danger, safeguarded) → space → *raum* (clearing in space) → *peras* (boundaries) → thinking. What can we conclude from the exercise above? Heidegger’s repetitive prepositions are to give the reader senses of familiarity through connection of meanings from one expression to another as their meanings get transformed slightly over time. To understand the essence of

‘to build’ is to see it in the context ‘to dwell.’ Words here are intertextual; meanings are gained and eluded in relation to other words, without which there can be no meanings at all. Heidegger knows this and asks us to confront the nuances of language through hidden resources of older definition such as from Ancient Greek and Old Saxon. Repetition, after all, gives emphasis. Meanings achieve certain richness over passages of time; suddenly, it is hard *not* to think of peace, freedom, clearing and caring when the words ‘building’ and ‘dwelling’ come up again. Albert Hofstadter is right when he writes of how translating Heidegger’s shaping of words “is essentially akin to translating poetry” (PLT, p. xxii). Poetic abstraction is not something equivocal but is a way of relating ourselves to Being, which already resides in language. Are not we after all – as Heidegger adamantly argues in *Being and Time* – being who has made a home in language? The greatest access humankind has at its disposal to language is only through thinking. It is language that tells man about the nature of a thing and not the thing itself. Heidegger commits: “Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man” (PLT, p. 144).

The most interesting aspect in the lecture *Building Dwelling Thinking* is the idea of ‘*das Geviert*’ or *fourfold*. This is controversial and strangely mystical. But *what* is fourfold? It is the oneness of the collected four beings which are mortals, earth, sky and divinities (see Figure 3.6).



**Figure 3.6:** Grouping of fourfold.

Earth, one of the fourfold, is the bearer of things, “blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal” (PLT, p. 147). Earth in Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art* – is that “which comes forth and shelters” (PLT, p. 45). The soil which grounds our feet, our body and our home is an untiring thing; it works in the quietness of lifetime solitude. Earth does not whine nor curse. It bears the heaviness of Being in silence.

The other fourfold – sky – is the one which receives the earth in its openness. It is “the vaulting path of the sun the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year’s seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether” (PLT, p. 147). The sky is also the oxygen we cannot see. It looks perpetually down on the earth just as the earth unceasingly looks up to the sky. When our eyes strain upward to experience the sky, its colour washes our eyes to its tone just as it washes our body with

its warmth and cold air. In straining upward, we feel the limitless possibilities of openness. If earth pulls things down with its gravity, then the sky is the one that frees our weight.

The third fourfold, mortals, is we who read and seek to understand the sense we bestow to things. We are the Aristotle's *zōon logon echon*, the conversational animal. We move around the earth and taste its fruits and seek shelters from the sky. We are the ones who dream of the stars while our body is chained to the soil's sheltering gravity. To roam the earth is to die in our mortality. Finitude is our being. This is the true defining moment for mortals when speaking in the face of the earth, the sky and divinities.

The fourth is the unseen divine powers. "The divinities," Heidegger says, "are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment" (PLT, p. 147).<sup>25</sup> The Divine here is called forth into the dwelling as part that contribute to the *oneness* of the fourfold. Man awaits the divinities; the divinities bestow the mortals with the intimations of their coming. The range of divinities is immense, but is never further clarified by Heidegger; it is enough to know that he sees all gods from different religions are equal to one. There is no one particular god that Heidegger singled out; all gods are equal in his eyes as long as they are not *mere* idols to kneel over. Godhead makes itself *presence*. As unseen presence, it *completes* the *seen* presences of thing in the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Original German is *Die Göttlichen*. 'Divinities' is used by Hofstadter in preference to 'god' (PLT, 148). If I have to interpret the question of God in Heidegger's fourfold according to my Islamic belief, this means to put the level of divinities to be above the rests. However, Heidegger places equal importance to the four beings – mortals, sky, earth and god – with each other co-existing harmoniously. To this, we must understand Heidegger's composition not from religious standpoint but from ontological and aesthetic perspective.

<sup>26</sup> While Heidegger thinks poetry highly, we must understand that Heidegger *is not* a theologian, and as such, is not interested in the experience of religious ecstasy. If I might add, Islamic Sufism highly regards poetry and the Unseen God, and in the state of mystical experience, someone can turn dumbfounded. This is why there is a saying of, "Who knows God, his tongue becomes dumb." See the discussion regarding poetry, mystical experience and Islam in the excellent book by A. Schimmel, (1979), *As through a veil: Mystical poetry in Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press.

According to Heidegger, the happenstance of the fourfold comes to fore in the way a thing gathers itself in the space it has made as its own location. A bridge constructed across the river, for example, connects a bank to another bank. As the bridge stands its ground, torrent of river flows beneath it while man and animal pass over it. The bridge creates a pathway. It is its own structure which forms its visible-ness to our insight as something to be crossed over. In the space which is the bridge – a space which is uniquely its own in its own individual time – the bridge *gathers* the earth which it is on. It gathers mortals who have built it and who is using it to get across the flowing river. As something that crosses over, the bridge keepsafe the mortals from harm's way. The bridge blankets the space where it is built with its form ins such way that it stays in the earth under the grace of sky. When the rains come pouring, the rain pounds into the bridge and overflows into the river beneath it and becomes part of the river. Under it, the bridge sets the rain free to its watery course. In staying visible to its appearance, the presence of bridge gives thanks to the divinities that stay hidden from our gaze.

A 'thing' by its older definition is not substance but a gathering. The Old Norse, Old English and Icelandic word '*þing*' means assembly or council.<sup>27</sup> Proto-Germanic *thengan* equals to 'appointed time.' The meeting which is held is called *thingstead*. Thus the Heidegger's radical definition of the bridge is a thing that gathers and what it gathers is what sets itself in the relationship with the fourfold. Heidegger states further: "Dwelling preserves the fourfold by bringing the presencing of the fourfold into things (PLT, 149). Thing is the gathering of the earth, sky, divinities and mortals. This fourfold comes together

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<sup>27</sup> I refer this meaning from Online Etymology Dictionary, which can be accessed from [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=t&p=15&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=t&p=15&allowed_in_frame=0).

in such way that space can be fully understood for its spaciousness: The Open bestowed by the fourfold. A thing like a guitar does not merely reside on an empty space; it dwells by letting the space received in the *gatheredness* of the fourfold. “To say that mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling they* persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations” (PLT, p. 155). A thing, for example a guitar, pervades the space, is part of the space. I am able to come into contact with the guitar, touch and move the guitar not because the guitar and me have skins, but because and foremost, both the guitar and me dwells in space.

Space is not just mere space but place from where, in dwelling, it receives its calling of the *fourfold*. Heidegger’s sense of dwelling is thought by Julian Young as “ontological security” (2000, p. 187-203). Dwelling secure mortal since it is also what secures the *thereness* of the space. After all, the Being is only revealed in the horizon of a space. Why does Heidegger emphasis on dwelling? To answer this, we must look at Being and Time whereby he argues that man lives in the state of *Unheimlichkeit* (‘not-being-at-homeness’), which construe as an existential facet of human condition (BT, pp. 188-189). It is the feeling of uncanny we feel every day when faced with the ambiguity of anxiety. In the age of digital technology, mortals have forsaken their mortality and their god, while the earth and the sky are polluted by mortal’s excess for domination. The fourfold is untended; neglected to their unconcealment. They have lost the spirit of oneness. The essence of digital technology which is revealed as *Ges-tell* (see earlier discussion on *The Question of Modern Technology*) ‘enframes’ man to his dependency to modern instruments. It shackles us down in our greed for domination of earth and in the process, makes us lost sight to what it is to think Being. The more we play with our computer games and Facebook, the more become lost to a world that is forgetful to the question of Being.

If dwelling is the nearness of our being-with-place, then its opposite is homelessness or alienation. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger borrows the Greek word *deinotaton* as part of human being existential package (IM, p. 159). The word *deinotaton*, which means the *uncanniest*, can be seen in Sophocles, *Antigone*, line 332: “Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing uncannier than man bestirs itself, rising up beyond him.”<sup>28</sup> *Deinon*, Heidegger says, equate to ‘violence/ overwhelming/ uncanny.’ Uncanny (German: *unheimlich*) here refers to the way canny/ homely is thrown out so as to give way to unhomely. Overwhelming which is *deinon* is what is Being in the face of the homely. Thus, “human beings are uncanniest because we step out/ move out of our limits of the homely” (IM, p. 161). Before we get confused even more by Heidegger’s interplay of German and Greek words, let me give an example. Imagine you yourself at home, sitting in a cozy sofa. Time passes by. How long do you think you will stay put in that position? Would you stay long until you get cramps all over your body? Is there a bling in your brain asking you instead to *be* somewhere else other than where you are at? So you stand up, move around. There are many reasons for you to rise from the comfort of the sofa: Might be, a meeting will take place outside of your house, in a restaurant or might be, you just want to go to the toilet. We live by taking up space in the earth. The place where you want to go always stands in conflict with the place you are already are. Therein, there is always a distance which you feel the urge to *destroy*. Why does our body arrive at a place, in such a state, that we want to move on to another place? What happens here is that our existential structure is made up in such a way that we will always want to be *to* another place other than *here*. There is something which drives us to close a gap from point A (where we are at

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<sup>28</sup> Or to take from a different translation: “Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man.” From Sophocles, (1891), *The Antigone of Sophocles*, Sir R. Jebb, (Ed. & Trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. The online version can be found here: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=soph.+ant.+342>.

now) to point b (where we will be next). This is what Heidegger means as the uncanniest, since we step out/ move out of our limits of the homely. *The uncanniest overwhelm our being.*

In naming man, we name space too. Space is not something above or below man, but is something that stays in the naming of man. “Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach,” Heidegger declares, “we are staying with the things themselves” (PLT, p. 154). This happens since our thinking – our imagination – brings us closer to the place we are thinking of, persists a space for the dwelling and the space “are let into the dwelling of man” (PLT, p. 154-155). When I am reflecting of my childhood home in Ipoh which has been destroyed for a hypermarket project, I am able to do that not just because I still retain my memory, but because my existential structure *is* already inhabiting space. My relating to that piece of memory is just another space (which is me) relating to another space (home). Right now, I can stop my typing in the computer, stand up and exit the room and go to the kitchen. I *can* do all this since “I am never here only, as this encapsulated body; rather, I am there, that is, I already pervade the room, and only thus can I go through it” (PLT, p. 155). This is all quite interesting and very mystical. What Heidegger is offering here rhymes with the Eastern spirit of oneness, like what Chuang-Tzu states, “The Universe and I exist together, and all things and I are one.”

The existential analysis of building/dwelling given here will go right over our head if we have no appeal to the presence of Being of entities. Existential observation runs counter to analytical philosophical precisely because the hermeneutic capabilities of Dasein are celebrated rightly as ontological. Reasons are given through our *way* of living – our comportment with things – rather than explaining rationally the course of man’s action



through systematic methodology. For instance, our comportment to constructing a house has more to do than simply having the intellect and the technical and economical means of doing so. We are proficient to build because we are first and foremost, a dweller of space. No mathematical calculations or scientific clarifications can measure our worth as a dweller. We exist, thus, we dwell. This is why Heidegger emphasizes his wordings – twice – almost at the end of the lecture as such: “Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build” (PLT, p. 157). What is essential to Heidegger is to come nearer to the truth of Being. Thus, dwelling, for a thinking being, is “*the basic character of Being in keeping with which mortals exist*” (PLT, p. 158).

Nearing the end of the essay, Heidegger asks: “But what is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?” (PLT, p. 158). In the world over there is still a shortage of houses even when there is still land, mountain and jungle being vacated for the development of housing projects. Humans are growing. In our expansion, there exists the unabated hunger for residing in a place which we can call home. Take a look for example of Mathare slums, Nairobi, Kenya. See Figure 3.7 below. With an area size of about 3 km<sup>2</sup> (1.2 sq mi), it has the population count of 161,031-300,000. Population density? Around 60,000-100,000/km<sup>2</sup> (155,000-259,000/sq mi).<sup>29</sup> Mathare slums also have one of the poorest conditions in the world. Looking at the place, I feel lucky to be born where I am, and with the kind of education that I have. But is this the kind of state that Heidegger wants to talk about in his philosophy of dwelling?

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<sup>29</sup> The reference for the figures and images are taken from ‘The most densely populated places on Earth,’ <http://imgur.com/a/C5nVP>



**Figure 3.7:** Dense population in Mathare slums, Nairobi, Kenya.

Architectural edifices can be built not because there are materials from where we can extract in the making of the edifices or that there are empty spaces from where we can locate the edifice, but first and most originary of all, Heidegger argues, “*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build*” (PLT, p. 157). To dwell means to dwell in respect with the fourfold. To be *properly* capable of dwelling, we must equip ourselves with the deepening strength of and *for* thinking. Thinking and building cannot exist separately, and come together in the way Dasein is capable of dwelling. These three conjecture together in the oneness of the fourfold, and why Heidegger titled his lecture as *Building Dwelling Thinking*. Significantly, Heidegger asks us not to confuse the problem of housing and its lacks as the main theme for the “*real plight of dwelling*” (PLT, 159). The problem resides *existentially*; it is the reason why homelessness can be felt in our being and why homesickness is borne. The real plight of dwelling consists in that, “mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*” (PLT, p. 159). Only by *learning* how to dwell, in the mode of preserving and safeguarding the world and

the earth, then we can properly dwell as Dasein. Dwelling is not a gift; it is sacredness in the oneness of the unity of the earth, sky, mortals and divinities.

“Learning to dwell” in Heidegger’s language means to give thought to our homelessness. Only then will we no longer be confounded by its misery. The distance we put between what we think and the whereabouts of where we are and soon will be is the space of our plight. This space is a grace for the fourfold, the receiving and bestowing of letting-dwell and thanking. I will further expound on this nature of letting-dwell from a cinematic perspectives in Chapter 5 and see how we can give *think* the privileging space between filmic essence and our homelessness existence.

### **3.8. Heidegger and the Metaphysic of the Nothing**

To understand Heidegger’s metaphysics, we must understand Heidegger’s idea on *Dasein* (literally translated as being-there); a human entity who makes Being as its issue. Dasein exists in this world not as an individual, alienated being but lives in co-existence with other beings. As such, Dasein is termed by Heidegger as being-in-the-world, an entity who is always with the world and any analysis done on human must take consideration of the way Dasein is comported to its world. Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics (Was ist Metaphysik?)* 1929/ 1998) asks a unique question: “*Wie steht es um das Nichts?*” “How is it with the nothing?” This question not only says ‘hi’ to *the nothing* but asks how its feeling is! The nothing, according to Heidegger’s conception of western philosophy, is a neglected question in man pursuit of the research on entities. Science, for what its worth, *dominates* the history of modern man. Even the studies of humanities now have become entrenched with scientific objectivity and measurement. But this is wrong. Heidegger states: “To

demand exactness in the study of history is to violate the idea of the specific rigor of the humanities” (1998, p. 83).

The problem of science is not just that it is a dominating discipline, but that in the course of its verification of things, we have become lost to its fastness, its compressive methodology, its mass-ness. “Science wishes to know nothing of the nothing” muses Heidegger. But what is nothing? Is nothing a being? If so, why is there an ‘is’ when a question is posed? What is ‘is’? It is more than a predicate, but a way Being is stated. In speaking Being, *das Nicht* (the nothing) too is asserted. The nothing, Heidegger writes, “is the negation of the totality of beings; it is nonbeing pure and simple” (1998, p. 85). He asks further: “Where shall we seek the nothing?” The assumption that we dare to seek it means that it exists, encounterable to our intellect. “No matter how fragmented our everyday existence may appear to be, however, it always deals with beings in a unity of the ‘whole’, if only in a shadowy way” (1998, p. 87). This ‘whole’ can be seen in authentic boredom. “It erupts when ‘one is bored’” Heidegger continues:

Profound boredom, drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog, removes all things and human beings and one self along with them into a remarkable indifference. This boredom manifests beings as a whole (1998, p. 87).

These are strange wordings. Our state of boredom, it seems, is the whereabouts from which beings can be made sense. To be sure, our existence is an existence full of boredom. This boredom becomes even more pronounced when one is waiting for someone; unless one has something to pass away his time, one will get restless out of the waiting. Sheer boredom is stretched even further when the person whom we are waiting still has not turned

up. In this state of boredom, things around us become more ‘manifested’ in their beingness. In this process of waiting, we grew even more anxious. The anxiety we are feeling does not turn up suddenly like an uninvited guest. It is already there, in the depth of our abyssal being. But the manifestness of the boredom and such and such moods provoke the anxiety to its surface. Boredom brings out the wholesome of beings, and yet, the essence of the beings continues to be trapped under the smoldering, bouldering boring. This is why time looks and feels very slow in the state of boredom. Things look blander. But boredom is not the only event which manifests beings as whole; there is joy, especially in the presence with other human. Joy and boredom attune ourselves to beings, and this attunement “conceal from us the nothing we are seeking” (1998, p. 87). But what type of mood can disclose the nothing in its most fundamental nature? Heidegger answers: It is in the fundamental mood of anxiety (1998, p. 88). Anxiety is an existential structure in human; a *fitrah* (an Arabic word that can also means primordial human nature). Anxiety is different than fear in that it does not cloud and confuse; for example, when we are afraid of something. Anxiety is a fundamental phenomenon to Dasein in that it arrives to us in such a way that “a peculiar calm pervades it” (1998: 88). Two important theses by Heidegger must be stated here: a) In anxiety, we say “one feels uncanny” (1998, p. 88). b) Anxiety makes manifest the nothing (1998, p. 88).

Things slip away from consciousness. The slipping away is a phenomenon like a receding, and this recession oppresses me. My indifference toward the chair (that I am currently sitting) ropes my existential structure into an anxiety that is always there since as beings, we ‘hover’ always in the abyss of anxiety. To be precise, says Heidegger, “anxiety leaves us hanging, because it induces the slipping away of beings as a whole” (1998: 88). The hovering of the nothing is vertigo-like; but nothing is what we are holding to in as a

questing Dasein. The manifestation of anxiety is not without its repercussion: “*Die Angst verschlägt uns das Wort.*” “Anxiety robs us of speech.” (1998, p. 89). Continuing further: “Because beings as a whole slip away, so that precisely the nothing crowds around, all utterance of the ‘is’ falls silent in the face of nothing” (1998, p. 89). In the abyss of our existence, the ‘is’ turns silent when nothingness is all there is in its depth. The crowding of the nothing; it is “precisely from the fact that the meaning is so bare” (Sontag, 2002: 29). Language is silent since it is bared for its nothingness.

Heidegger posits further: “That in the uncanniness of anxiety we often try to shatter the vacant stillness with compulsive talk only proves the presence of the nothing” (1998, p. 89). We fill up the void felt by our anxiety with incessant talk – but this vacuum is a necessity to us, to give strength to our words, to lend gravity to our meanings. There is a game of anxiety and pleasure in the writings of existentialists like Heidegger, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard describes: “Flee from anxiety he cannot, for he loves it; really love it he cannot, for he flees from it” (2014, p. 53). Anxiety is defined by Kierkegaard’s Christian belief as “freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility” (2014, p. 51). Anxiety is also described by Kierkegaard as “the anxious possibility of being able” (2014, p. 54). In *Being and Time* (1927/1962), Heidegger sees anxiety as the ground from where we fall into. “Anxiety,” Heidegger argues, “is characterized by the fact that what threatens is *nowhere*” (BT, p. 231). It is already there but actually nowhere. It cannot be exactly pinpointed. No exact measurement can be fulfilled against it. This is why when anxiety recedes, one says, “Ah. It is nothing,” or in my everyday Malay language, “*Takde ape-ape hal punya.*” Precisely because nothing *is* that the nothing can be called forth to cover its invisible track. “*In der Angst is einem ‘unheimlich.*” “In anxiety one feels uncanny” (BT, p. 233). The German word for uncanny

is *unheimlich*, which literally means ‘unhomelike,’ or ‘homelessness,’ whereby beings are abandoned by Being (Heidegger, 1998, p. 258). To be in the state of anxiety, is to feel that we are not at home within our inner being. “Being has become manifest as a burden. Why that should be, one does not know” (BT, p. 173). Anxiety and uncanny, structured to the core of ‘care,’ brings forth conscience. It is this that saves man from being lost to the mass, to the public, the herd mentality. But this conscience has a character of silence. The call of conscience brings forth ‘the nothing’ into the discourse. This is why Heidegger can say: “Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent” (BT, p. 318). It is perceived in its ‘nowhereness’, but forces Dasein into a mode of reticence. This is too the source of why man can turn quiet, goes into solitude, meditates. The call, which is nowhere, comes from nowhere. It drifts “here and there, in the abyss of our existence like a muffling fog” (1998, p. 87). The nothing grows in the recession of entities. But is nothing a being? Heidegger answers: “The nothing unveils itself in anxiety – but not as a being” (1998, p. 89). A true anxiety is the willingness to behold Being. The occurring of anxiety is a “shrinking back before” but it happens in the kind of “entranced calm” (1998, p. 90). There is no doubt that a sense *for* the nothing is crucial in obtaining an entranced calm. In Buddhism, the monks are fundamentally taught to annihilate the self, where meditation and chanting can take place in a peaceful reality. This process is a “shrinking back before beings,” to withhold the self (while destroying the self).

“In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety,” Heidegger writes, “the original openness of beings as such arises; that they are beings – and not nothing” (1998, p. 90). The nothing is given a color by Heidegger: “a clear night.” This tone arises in the “original openness”, an expanse of clearing where truth can be sensed in the ambiguity of openness. Heidegger believes that it is only “on the original manifestness of the nothing can human

Dasein approach and penetrate beings.” (1998, p. 91). But there is more in the Heidegger’s metaphysic of nothingness, in our special relationship with it: “Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing” (1998, p. 91). This is a unique statement. Dasein is named as an entity that not only *is* the site for the nothingness, but that its existence holds fast to the abyssal ground of nothingness. The essence of Dasein is actively seeking out things since: “Going beyond beings occurs in the essence of Dasein” (1998, p. 96).

An inner mode of existence is always seen by Heidegger and Nietzsche as a sort of abyss, a depthless bottom where thinking grows its rootedness. A click to the [wiktionary.org](http://wiktionary.org) shows the definition of abyss as “anything infinite, immeasurable, or profound.” The abyss holds a powerful grip in the manifestness of anxiety. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche states:

Not the height: the precipice is terrifying! The precipice, where the glance plunges *downward* and the hand reaches *upward*. Where the heart is made dizzy by its double will. Ah, friends, can you perhaps guess what is my heart’s double will? This, this is *my* precipice and my danger, that my glance plunges into the height and my hand would like to hold on and support itself – by the depths! (2005, p. 123).

There is real power and fear in Nietzsche’s abyss-groping and abyss-holding statement above. It shows man not as a master of his mind, but as a spiritual beast. The plunges downward into our depth are imagined like ascension of man’s being. Furthermore, in the poetic imagination of Nietzsche, “the human is a rope, fastened between beast and Overhuman – a rope over an abyss” (2005, p. 13). Overhuman is Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, a future people who is stronger in willing, a goal for humanity, the creator of new values.



The abyss is expressed by Nietzsche in a different light than Heidegger's ground for astonishment; it is "a dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still" (2005, p. 13). Our abyssal ground moves but it moves precisely since it is *standing still*. There is a dualist vibration between being-still and being-moving in our *jasad* (Malay word for 'body'). This is Nietzsche's image for the paradoxical nature of man as a spiritual beast. Close to the end of '*What is Metaphysics*', Heidegger gives us further clue in the operation of nothingness for understanding the beings around us:

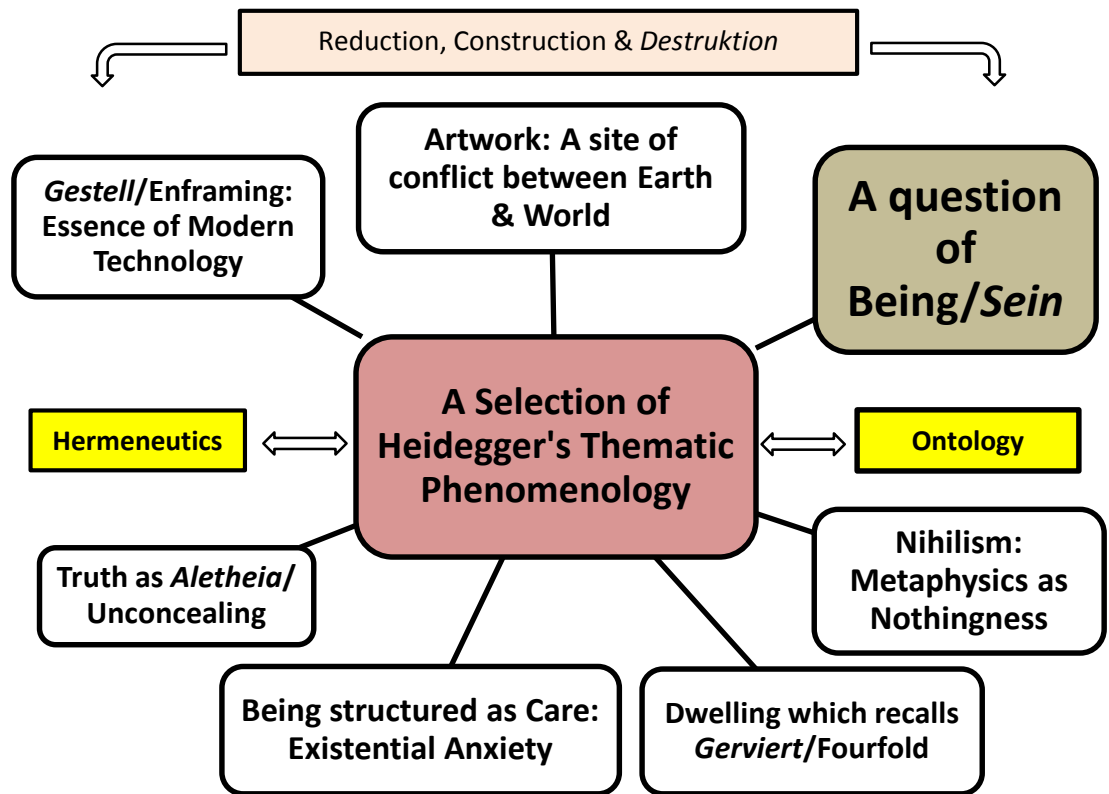
Only because the nothing is manifest in the ground of Dasein can the total strangeness of beings overwhelm us. Only when the strangeness of beings oppresses us does it arouse and evoke wonder. Only on the ground of wonder – the manifestness of the nothing – does the 'why' loom before us. Only because we can question and ground things is the destiny of our existence placed in the hands of the researcher (1998, p. 95-96).

### **3.9. Summary**

In this chapter, we have gone through several key ideas by Heidegger on art, technology, dwelling, anxiety and nothingness. This chapter follows up Heidegger's thinking of *Sein* (Being) and the history of Western metaphysics which can be found in Chapter 2. Art to Heidegger are both poetry and truthfulness. Truth is termed as *alētheia*, unconcealment or disclosedness. Art is what speaks of the Open. Artwork brings the earth and the world together to strife and harmonizes with each other. Technology, which Heidegger sees as the main drive for modern people, not only dominates modern society or our way of thinking; it is also what traps and frames our humanist essence. Modern technology like nuclear

factory is not only a source of energy but comes to the fore in such a way to make use human as resources. Under the guise of modern technology, human is categorized, organized, stored; to wait for further instructions in a long chain of command structure. This is why we have department like Human Resources in a factory or in government office. Heidegger's critique on the relationship between human and modern technology is not without a saving grace, which he argues, can be found in the poetics. In his discussion of dwelling, he again asks us to see our dwelling not in terms of physical place or housing logistics but in the existential manner where our thinking resides. To 'be' means to dwell on the earth, to save and preserve the earth from the domination of modernity, to take care our thinking so as to receive the unconcealment of the fourfold; the mortals, the earth, the sky and the divinities.

As Dasein who lives in the world under the cover of the earth, we exist in such state that we cannot help it but to be perpetually anxious about something. We project our wills toward the world since we already have Care structured in our body. To exist means to be alive to feel guilt. Some of Heidegger's conception of the essence of Being and beings can be glimpsed in Figure 3.8. I have tried to compress some of Heidegger's concepts that have been written so far (chapter one and two) so that we can have an overarching theme – at the very least, we might get some clearer idea where we are at now. We have seen how *Gestell* is named as the essence of modern technology, and truth is named as *alétheia*. As Dasein, we are being-in-the-world, and such, we are already structured by 'care' and 'anxiety.'



**Figure 3.8:** Some of Heidegger’s Thematic Phenomenology. Diagram design by Fauzi Naeim.

I highlight ‘Question of Being’ (or *Seinsfrage*) in Figure 3.8 since clearly, this is the crucial melody that runs in all of Heidegger’s writings regarding phenomenology. In *phenomenologizing* about the essence of thing, Heidegger suggests several steps; reduction, construction & *Destruktion* (see chapter one). Doing phenomenology in the Heideggerian tradition can mean many things but chiefly amongst them are hermeneutics and ontology. The first celebrate that any description of the essence of things must be in the form of *destructive, radical interpretation* while the latter submits the *whatness* that makes the what-as-it-is. The meditation of the thingness of thing stretches our imagination and language to the point of *destruktion* of the thingness of thing. The recovery of the essence is the reduction of the basic condition of the thing. The complexities of the discourse on

modern technology, for example, are reduced to its essence, which is Gestell or Enframing. Language is stretched so as to excavate its poetic flamboyance but the forms of our everyday language keep on masking us from experiencing “the truth of Being” (*die Wahrheit des Seins*). In Heidegger’s ontological-phenomenology, the language *speaks*, and fights nothing but its own form.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **CINEMA, PHENOMENOLOGY & SLOW CINEMA**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

For this chapter, we will review some definitions of cinema. Several ideas regarding cinema pertaining to phenomenology will be studied. Here, I will analyze two essays pertinent to phenomenology and film; ‘*Showing and Seeing: Film as Phenomenology*’ (2011) by John B. Brough and ‘*Filming: Inscriptions of Denken*’ (1990) by Wilhelm S. Wurzer and Hugh J. Silverman. The first essay argues for film *as* a way of doing phenomenology while the latter, heavily influenced by Heidegger, posits film as a question of thinking. The undertaking of this chapter is to establish a context prior to the analysis on Tarr’s cinema which will be conducted in Chapter 5. The chapter ends with analytic notes on the aesthetics of slow cinema. What is the definition of slow cinema? Why is slow cinema important in the contribution to personal meditation? These questions will be answered here and perhaps more. Several filmmakers other than Béla Tarr whose works are grouped under the radar of slow cinema will be reviewed in this chapter.

#### **4.2. Cinema: Definition, Seeing and Experiencing**

Cinema is more than just *any* intelligible objects. Film is an event. An experience of a *reality*. A play. Festival. A dialogue. A looking. An ideologue. If Roland Barthes declares that “to read, in fact is a labor of language,” (1974, p. 11) then, to read, to watch and listen is the labor of film. Stephen Prince, writing in *Digital Visual Effects in Cinema: The Seduction of Reality*, defines cinema as an “art of the fragment, composed of slices of

pictorial space created at one moment in time and picked over by filmmakers and assembled into a new organization at a subsequent point in time.” (2012, p. 52). Prince sees cinema as space carved by images organized by a group of people. He thinks cinema as art of fragmented images and made by a community over specific time. The media theorist Lev Manovich defines differently: “Cinema is the art of the index; it is an attempt to make art out of a footprint” (2002, p. 295). Manovich thinks cinema as part of a bigger intellectual tradition and as such, it is an art that cannot be understood without comprehending the context that gives birth to it. In the digital age, cinema has become an art of categorization and name cards. Manovich’s semiotics of cinema runs counter against Vivian Sobchack in *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, who sees film as sensuous experience that is able to move our consciousness to reflect on our life. Sobchack asserts:

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 and understood (Sobchack, 1992, pp. 3-4).

Sobchack places the importance of our bodily eyes as *what* makes film the spectacle it is, a reflexive human communication. A film is an experience that wholly immerse in its own *reality*. How do we experience this seeing and looking? To borrow Jean-Luc Marion’s words:

To see does not require any choice or decision; it is enough to be exposed to the wave always recommenced from the visible. In order to see, it is enough to have eyes. To look demands much more, one must discern the visible

from itself, distinguishing surfaces there in depth and breadth, delimiting forms, little by little marking changes, and pursuing movements (2002, pp. 55-56).

Marion is talking about the art of painting, but we can see how painting and cinema emits wave in such way that our eyes, when looking toward them, are exposed to vibrant, moving world. Cinema offers commanding visibility; not only it shines a light toward our eyes, it also manifests the character's movement that frames and focus a different but nevertheless, understandable world. It attracts our gaze and in a form of powerful cinematic narrative, for example, *Andrei Rublev* (1966), *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953) or *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), it pulls us from our world, and entrances our gaze as part of its horizon.

Aristotle starts his authoritative and most puzzling book *Metaphysics* with a sentence: πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει (*Pantes anthropoi tou eidenai oregontai physei*) [*Meta*, A 1, 980 a21]. The common translation runs: "All men by nature desire to know." Heidegger interprets as thus: "The care for seeing is essential to man's Being." This is a very important statement. The existential nature of man which is *care* comes to fore in the nature of seeing what is there. "Look at this!" We say to ourselves and others upon coming to a thing. "What is that?" We query further. "Why does it look like that?" "This is it!" "See this." And so on. The first conception of man with things is always in the looking-at-things. This is not to say that other senses like touch, smell and hearing is unimportant, but that the importance of eyes in giving us being able to look and looking at things are what is the most essential; a perception which creeps into our mode of language. A meal becomes much more interesting (or more distasteful) when we are able to see it

with our eyes in conjunction with smell and taste. When we see coarse granite, without even touching it, we can say safely from a distance that “it looks quite rough.” It is as if the eyes have managed to roam all over the granite and having done so, found the texture rough to the perception. No doubt the eyes are telling us the information after having accessed the brain for past experience in confronting granite. Other senses (other than touch) cannot set the roughness which we are seeing. In this, seeing becomes sense par excellence for bodily contact with objects. This is what Aristotle believes since sight is not “only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated, we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses” (Meta, A1, 980 a21). Sight gives us a fuller understanding than other senses like hearing and smelling, and is what clinches our idea of world-view.

What I want to set up here is that cinema – the object of my dissertation – privileges first and foremost the act of seeing. Yes, the sound plays very important factor, but the sounds are there to intensify our perception. In a musical performance, say for instance, a performance of J. S. Bach, Air on G String BWV 1068, the sound is principal while sight is secondary. In the performing arts like theatre, eyes is imperative than ears. In the emphasis on sight, we must also never forget the body since it is what bears the eyes and situates the perspective of our sight in a particular space. In a cinema, while our eyes are taking in the illusion of world, our body is ever ready to give comfort to our eyes by giving a nod here and there, scratch a leg and hand, even resting the body so as to give further concentration to the sight.

In film, the geography of lines and the contour of its spaces are markedly different than other arts like painting, music or still photography. The lines *moves* along with the camera, sets a certain horizon that we (automatically) strive our eyes to see: A certain



beyond-ness that becomes much more nuanced when a figure is seen to foreground it. The forming of background and foreground are what happen when the figures, the lines, the borders get attracted to each other. Film, as art, “tears the look from the attraction of the earth, from the fascination of its single landscape” (Marion, 2002, p. 61). The look which we bestow upon a thing is our own horizon. For the horizon is where the earth and the sky encounter in the luminosity of being, in the lines of being’s sight. In this horizon, which is also a horizon of shared world-view with others like us, the film experience gives not only the “*feel where I am,*” but more importantly, the “*feel where I am not*” (Barker, 2009, p. 84).

#### **4.3. Film as Phenomenological Seeing and Thinking**

The question is not just about phenomenological reading of a thing; a thing too is capable of doing phenomenology in itself, especially art-object. Steven Crowell states: “Of all philosophical approaches to aesthetics, it is phenomenology that best accounts for why art matters to us” (Parry, 2011, pp. 31-53). Art is a lens whereby what it presents becomes a way of how we see itself. A watercolor painting of a red rose on a paper is more than just a representation of a red rose; the painting sets a limit to our perception while simultaneously frees our gaze to concentration. The water colour wash shows the *rose-ness* of the rose by differentiating from the actual rose it represents. The rectangular framing of the painting, which limits and simultaneously emphasizes on what we can view, is also what structures the doorways and windows, photography and sculpture and most importantly for our chapter, film. Film’s logical apparatus – the way it is built and presented – means that it comes to our experience as something which frames and image-projecting. The film shows us a world that resembles our Real world. To watch film means to be within the world it is

projecting. In a Husserl-influenced essay entitled “*Showing and Seeing: Film as Phenomenology*,” John B. Brough argues that film could function *as* phenomenology (2011, pp. 192-214). In film, “the thoughtful viewer would encounter what amounts to phenomenological revelations about important dimensions of our experience” (Brough, 2011, p. 193).

Brough, who agrees with Husserl, believes that “authentic philosophical argument must be founded on a seeing, an insight, a showing” (Brough, 2011, p. 193) something which is wonderfully present in film since they “rarely argue in a formal sense.” After all, the film, while certainly displays powerful projection of moving images, lacks an Ego of its own, an Ego which human have. And yet, in its lacking, its visual projectiveness is something astonishing to behold; it ‘monstrate’ rather than ‘demonstrate’ (Brough, 2011, p. 193). Brough sees film as a brilliant apparatus for *cinematic epochē*, an idea which is influenced from Husserl’s phenomenological thinking. To understand this idea further, in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913/ 2012), Husserl argues that the way to reflect the phenomena in our experience is through phenomenological *epochē* or phenomenological bracketing.<sup>30</sup> The world which surrounds us, which “spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end,” that constitutes a “continuous ring around the actual field of perception” is “the world in which I found myself and which is also my-world-about-me” (2012, pp. 51-53). Let us assume the world as I see and experience it as my natural standpoint. To radically attempt an investigation of phenomena, this natural standpoint is bracketed – so as to bar me from using any “judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence (Dasein)” (Husserl, 2012, p. 59) – in what Husserl

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<sup>30</sup> See Husserl, 2012, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. by W.R. Boyce Gibson, foreword by Dermot Moran. London & New York: Routledge Classics. Originally published as *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Buch I, Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie in Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung I, I* (1913): 1-323.

deems as a peculiar ἐποχή (*epochē*). This originally Greek word, which means ‘suspension’ is defined by Husserl as “a certain refraining from judgment which is compatible with the unshaken and unshakable because self-evidencing conviction of Truth” (2012, p. 58). In the midst of apprehending being, the world-about-me is “put out of action”, so as to elicit its truthfulness. Please take note: the impossibility of this bracketing has been argued prominently by Heidegger in his writings; which is why beings is situated by Heidegger as being-in-the-world, and can only *exist* as such. (See Chapter 2 for further discussion of Heidegger’s being-in-the-world). Being cannot stand aloft than their comportments with other beings. In Husserl’s phenomenology, *epochē* presumes a disinterested stance to all the sciences:

I disconnect them all, I make absolutely no use of their standards, I do not appropriate a single one of the propositions that enter into their systems, even though their evidential value is perfect, I take none of them (Husserl, 2012, p. 59).

“Film,” Brough posits, “has unique ways of detaching us from the natural attitude and turning us into phenomenological spectators” (2011, p. 194). For example of phenomenological *epochē* in cinema, the process of suspending ourselves from the natural standpoint can be seen in the way we see cinema in a darkened theater. The darkness which envelops becomes a heightened means – a bracketing – for us to focus at the screen in front of us, the kind of screen which is already big enough to wrap us even further in the enfolding of the cinematic-world. While it is true that what we see there is image, not a reality, however in the duration of the filming, the image *becomes* our reality – such is the dominant pull and seduction of the cinema. Here, is what Brough misses. It is not the problem of image vs. real; it is the question of how much we invest our Ego into the film.

Watching Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, for example, I am aware it is only a film, and yet, I still find myself living *within* the film. The aesthetics sucks my soul and breathe in it. This is since the dramatic narrative, the performance and the sound pulls me from where I sit and into the world of *Schindler's List*. Herein lies the conflict of bracketing; the way we can actually able to critically observe cinema means we have to stand back but at the price of not having been able to really let ourselves drawn into the diegesis. "To see a film," Brough argues, "then, is to enter into a *cinematic epochē*" (2011, p. 195). This is since film reflects *on* reality, unlike mirror which simply *reflects* reality. "Because the film is a product of imagination and creates a world of its own, it is free to explore the world of the natural attitude, not just repeat it. The film as an imaginative reconstruction of the world is a lens through which the world reveals itself" (2011, p. 195). This is an important statement by Brough: a film is a world whereby we can understand and imagine world better.

One of the examples of phenomenological reduction *as* film used by Brough in his lucid essay is Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). I have procured images from the said film below so that we can further understand *Rear Window*'s excellence as *cinematic epochē* (see Figure 4.1 and 4.2). Based from the 1942 short story "It Had to Be Murder" by Cornell Woolrich, *Rear Window* tells a story of a man with a broken leg (H.B. Jeffries played by Jimmy Stewart) who is confined to his wheelchair in an apartment. To appease his boredom, he points his camera to his neighbors, to see what they are doing; in short, he becomes a peeping Tom. Brough argues cogently that the structure of *Rear Window*'s narrative turns the film phenomenologically. Jeff's observation becomes our own lens to understand what is going on in his vicinities.

Phenomenologically, the film has its own exemplary case of bracketing: Jeff's broken leg, the confinement of his apartment (which limits his visual) and the window where he sees events. Even the windows become double-layered framings (see Figure 4.2); first, from his window, as the framing from *where* he sees, secondly, from the neighbour's window, as further focusing of *what* he can see. If the framing of the cinematic screen limits our focus into the film, then the windows where Jeff peeps is film's limitation into what it focus. Film is capable of distancing and distilling the viewer's experience.



**Figure 4.1:** Jeff and his friends inside his apartment. *Rear Windows* (1954), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, produced by Paramount Pictures.

Furthermore, film is a means to achieve what is *eidetic* or essential. Brough states: “Films are the products of the creative imagination, and it is through imagination that phenomenology reaches the essential structures of experience” (2011, p. 197). For example, Michael Dudok de Wit's *Father and Daughter* (2000), a short 2D animation, depicts a young girl bicycling across the open road as the wind sweeps her body, resisting her cycling effort. Since this is an animation, the drawing of this event, the girl-figure-cycling, can be seen as a form of bracketing, which helps our gaze focus only on the essential part

of the story. The profile drawings of the girl-figure distill what is important about the idea of a girl-figure and brings forward what is essential simplicity of the girl-figure.



**Figure 4.2:** The view outside of Jeff’s windows. *Rear Windows* (1954), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, produced by Paramount Pictures.

I am agreeable to Brough’s statement that films “hone the phenomena and pare away the incidental to let essence shine through” (2011, p. 198) since in the case of Béla Tarr, his films do precisely that. Utilizing long take in a very slow movement, the concreteness of Tarr’s images fall away to reveal the being-ness of the images until there is nothing but the pure sight being filled with image-ness. The black and white patterns clear away the unnecessary colour of the reality so that what matters is the essential feature of what makes the images as such. Tarr’s film is therefore a “prepared particular,” a richly complex image created precisely to present something beyond than what it is (2011, p. 198). The cinema too – enworlds. The thematic concern in real world saturates the captured world of *Rear Window*. The cinema “discloses what it is to be a home world essentially” (2011, p. 211). Just like natural world, cinema speaks of what Husserl says as “world of values, a world of goods, a practical world” (2012: 53).

Even under the confinement of the apartment, *Rear Window* never ceases to appeal to the horizon of unlimited world beyond; the glimpse of a street which goes further to another, unseen part of the town. We know that he is not alone with his friends and enemy. This is also just like our real life. Even as I type this, I know that there are other things going on in other part beyond my room. I know my wife is asleep with our youngest child. The blaring of fireworks tells me there is a Chinese New Year Festival going on tonight. If I strain further, I will hear the distant sound of cars nearby the road of my apartment. Something is always going on within the periphery of my vision and sensation.

The argument of film doing phenomenology is not as extravagant as it sounds. “Films that work phenomenologically refine, concentrate, and manipulate our experience,” says Brough, “but do not fundamentally alter it” (2011, p. 184). Brough is correct at the end of his essay when he points out that not all films are capable of sustaining a high reading of what they presents to the audience. There are films which offer thoughtful rumination just as there shallow films which numb us to what they present.

One of the earliest essays that engages Heidegger’s thinking with film comes from Wilhelm S. Wurzer and Hugh J. Silverman, entitled ‘Filming: Inscriptions of *Denken*.’<sup>31</sup> Influenced by the readings of Heidegger’s ‘Question Concerning Technology’ and ‘The Age of the World Picture (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*),’ both Wurzer and Silverman argues for the sense of *Besinnung* as filming. The term *Besinnung* is one of Heidegger’s unique vocabularies translated into English as *Mindfulness*, which means; an “active unfolding of

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<sup>31</sup> For further reading, see W. S. Wurzer and H. J. Silverman, (1990), *Filming: Inscriptions of denken*, in H. J. Silverman (Ed.), *Continental philosophy III: Postmodernism- philosophy and the arts*, New York & London: Routledge.

the truth of being in and through thinking,” that is “opposed to calculative thinking and representation” – a “calm, self-possessed surrender to that which is worthy of questioning, that is, the mystery of being” (Schalow & Denker, 2010, p. 188).<sup>32</sup> The term *Besinnung* is translated as ‘meditation’ by Theodore Kiesel which he later clarifies as “a process of taking thought over the radical situation in which we find ourselves by way of a phenomenological return to its meaning, or sense” (Kiesel and Sheehan, 2007, p. 45). In a way, as a “releasement into the most worthy of question,” *Besinnung* is a “pause that takes thought” when confronted with war and domination of machinery (Kiesel and Sheehan, 2007, p. 45). It is when we are in the midst of *Besinnung* that we can be close to the truth of Being, and turns away from the gestalt of modern technology and the grip of quantification of science. Earlier in his life, Heidegger defines meditation as “the apprehension and fathoming of what I am and ought to be.” Furthermore, meditation is the “unprejudiced knowledge of life and the consistent, resolute actualization of that which the sense of life demands.”<sup>33</sup>

Getting back to the essay, Wurzer and Silverman states that in apprehending “filming as *Besinnung*, representations of man and world do not emerge as concepts of objects but rather as images of increasingly diffuse beings-in-imagination” (1990, p. 178). Filming it seems, collaborate with beings in enhancing the imaginative faculty of thinking. A formulation of filming means more than reflective imagination; it is a “critical unconcealment of movement-images” (Wurzer & Silverman, 1990, p. 176). The usage of ‘filming’ rather than the usual ‘film’ by both authors suggests that filming is an act of ongoing contemplative-event; a perpetual thinking process of something that goes beyond

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<sup>32</sup> There has also been a publication of Heidegger’s notes entitled *Besinnung* (Vol. 66 of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*) which has been translated in English as *Mindfulness* (2006), translated by Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary, London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

<sup>33</sup> I refer here to the translation by Theodore Kiesel of Heidegger’s ‘Das Kriegstridium in Messkirch’ Heuberger Volksblatt 17, January 13, 1915; a newspaper article. The translation can be found in *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927*, 2007, pp. 47-50.



than the mere mechanization of film. This can be seen when the authors argues that filming “denotes a reflective desire to disrupt the paths of logos within the dispersed ‘movement-images of contemporary technology” (Wurzer & Silverman, 1990, p. 178). To this, the phrase ‘filming’ is used as a different context to film-making, film showcase, or any cultural event of electronic images. Filming, the writers say, “disengages images of being from the hermeneutic power of establishing a new presence, i.e., images of *Ge-stell*” (Wurzer & Silverman, 1990, p. 176). The term *Ge-stell*, which we have discussed earlier in Chapter 3, is Heidegger’s interpretation of the essence of modern technology – the *Enframing* of beings by machine which challenge beings as orderable storage and consumption. The image of man under the caprice of Western metaphysics becomes only “transcendental illusion” (Wurzer & Silverman, 1990, p. 182). “Man,” Wurzer & Silverman write, “is seen as withdrawing into a time of filming in an obscene world of postmodern images” (1990, p. 182).

But filming, the authors argue, cannot be ontic or ontological. It cannot be the movie-house manager, the theatre, “the Being that sets itself off from what is,” (1990, p. 184) the existence of celluloid, scenery, photographers or the representing, imaging and the showing. Filming it seems cannot even originate nor provides what it is displayed. What is filming then? Here the authors’ answers become vague at the close of the essay: “Filming is that ontico-ontological activity and space that has no identity of its own” (1990, p. 184). In the space of technological machinery, human capacities and aesthetics, filming “arises, occurs, and happens in the place of difference, in the place where meaning takes shape” (1990, p. 184). The authors are not above to write ambiguous statement: “Filming is the activity which renders into film what is not film” (1990, p. 185). At the end of the essay,

true to Heideggerian spirit, the authors define filming as its own limits that frames, but what it frames can only be the content, meaning, character of the modern age.

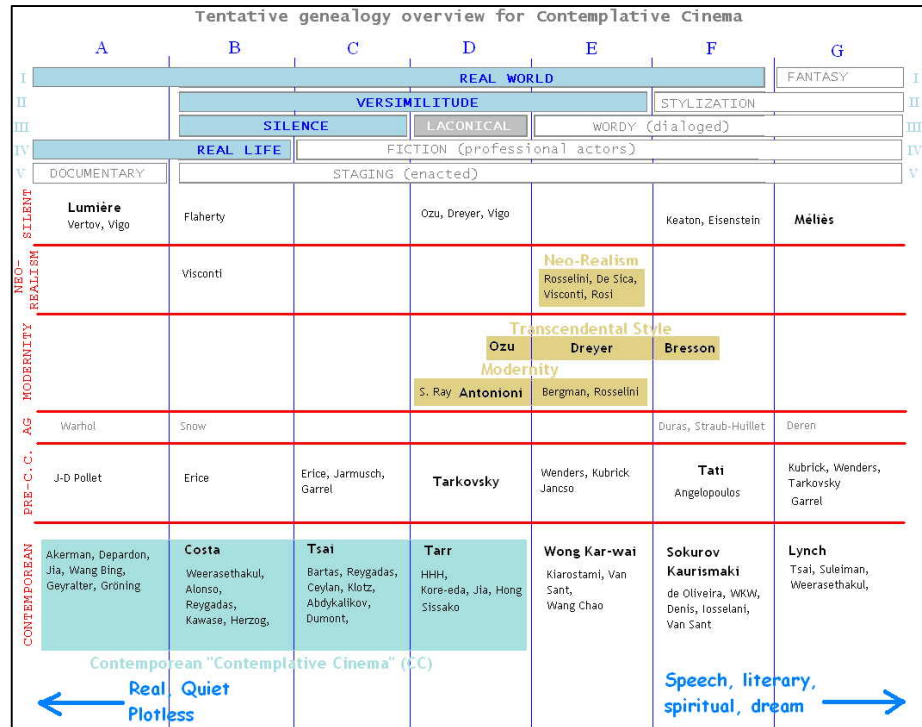
It is unfortunate however that the essay is not developed further in making the readers aware of *how* exactly filming can be thought phenomenologically. Instead, there is too much push toward presenting filming as *Denken* (thinking). For all this, film is a media while ‘filming’ is not thinking but a process of ‘doing film.’ Filming cannot be thinking as *such* since we can see the apparatus which captures and projects whereas thinking is something that cannot be grasped physically; a mental and spiritual deed which is already ingrained existentially in Dasein. I fully understand that the authors is pressured by their writings to provide the essence of filming; as an event of non-space that spaces “a set of differential codes, marks, and traces,” to deconstruct what filming should be and stands for (1990, p. 185). As it stands, the essay is vague to what it wants to achieve other than celebrating the possibility of *Besinnung* which filming is capable of and of which I too agree. Unlike Brough’s essay earlier – ‘*Showing and Seeing: Film as Phenomenology*’ – which is rich with examples of specific films (and to *actually* analyze a film), Wurzer and Silverman are unable to give even one film example. Surely not *all* filming is catalyst for *Besinnung*-mindfulness-meditation? For instance, there is huge philosophical difference between experiencing Steven Spielberg’s *Raiders of Lost Ark* (1981) and Michael Haneke’s *Amour* (2012). The first one is an American blockbuster with non-stop-action-adventure while the later is a slow cinema of an elderly couple living and dying quietly under the restraint of their apartment. I enjoy both films and yet, it is *Amour* that presents a great deal of contemplation within my Ego. Just like thinking and writing, which Heidegger has elaborated for a great number of times in his lectures, not every act of thinking and writing are capable of being nearer to the truth of Being. The same can be said of film too.

#### 4.4. 'Slow Cinema' as Contemplative Cinema

There is no doubt that Béla Tarr's films, in their slowness, prevail in the realm of contemplation. There is a niche in the current discussion in film studies which is simply called as 'contemplative cinema.' Ambiguous as it may sound; we have to give credit to its discussion since it elevates a certain status to 'thinking film' as a serious mode of aesthetics. Perhaps, the most protracted appreciation going on in the Internet regarding the concept of contemplative cinema comes (as far as this dissertation is written) from Harry Tuttle in his blog, [unspokencinema.blogspot.com](http://unspokencinema.blogspot.com). The exact term Tuttle employs is *Contemporean Contemplative Cinema* (CCC). Major filmmakers that are grouped under this title include not only Béla Tarr, but also Sharunas Bartas, Tsai Ming-liang, Semih Kaplonoglu, Carlos Reygadas, Hong Sang-soo, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Hirokazu Koreeda, Abderrahmane Sissako, Chantal Akerman, Naomi Kawase, Bruno Dumont and few others (see Appendix D).

The key words on the aesthetics of contemplative cinema range from the portrayal of emptiness to the minimal sound design. Shots found in this type of film showcase preponderance of landscape in contrast to man. Narrative wise, there is no exact denouement which can be found in contemplative cinema; no climactic scene like Bollywood films tend to overuse. In most cases of contemplative cinema, the camera withholds the subject like "fiction with documentarian gaze" (Yamane, 2002). Figure 4.3 shows an interesting genealogy of *Contemporean Contemplative Cinema* (CCC) according to the diagram by Harry Tuttle. Béla Tarr is placed at the middle of the last row, along with

Bartas, Reygadas and Dumont. The extreme left of the final row sits filmmaker like Wang Bing who exhibits the ultimate in ‘real, quiet and plotless’ narrative.



**Figure 4.3:** The Genealogy of *Contemporean Contemplative Cinema* (CCC) according to the diagram by Harry Tuttle.

What I want to note in this section is the *existential understanding* of the contemplative aspects of slow cinema. It is impossible to sample all the contemporary slow cinemas. Each director who has established their oeuvre in such cinemas has their own distinctive style and philosophy. The Malaysian-born film director Tsai Ming-liang, for example, prefers his cinematography in colourful static shots, while Béla Tarr favors moving long take in black-and-white. Each is unique in their storytelling but at the same time, they all share the passion for the *metaphysical dullness*. Life's possibility in the recurring movement under the pressure of time; this is what excites them! We will go through some of their works so as to understand further the question of slow cinemas, and

hopefully, as guides in the pathway towards the ambiguity of the relationship between thinking and cinemas.

Below are quick, short notes that I have jotted down in my notebook while processing the boundaries of slow cinema:

- ❖ Essencing time
- ❖ Aesthetic of 'literalness'
- ❖ Cinema which employs numerous long take (whether moving camera or static shot)
- ❖ Many domains of ponderous silence
- ❖ Alienated characters?
- ❖ Angst? (cold-angst)?
- ❖ Plotless-based narrativity
- ❖ Dead space; nothingness made palpable
- ❖ Minimal music
- ❖ Moment is its own blossoming world
- ❖ A world where things exhaust their meaningfulness (?)
- ❖ Anti-climactic stories
- ❖ Active nihilism (See Nietzsche's *Will to Power*)
- ❖ Openness to profound boredom
- ❖ Temporality normalized, crescendo disrupted
- ❖ Expressing muteness
- ❖ To cleanse the image-noise clogged reality
- ❖ An establishment of distance between us and cinema (which paradoxically is what grows the nearness between us and our abyssal depth)

- ❖ Pure visual situation
- ❖ Letting things be (Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* = *release*)
- ❖ Weariness, world-weariness, eternal world-weariness
- ❖ More 'whatness' than 'whyness'

It is unviable for this chapter to go through each theme above, one by one. I can only describe some of slow cinema's key ideas fleetingly, so that by the end of this writing, even when we cannot see the whole form of its flower, we can sense and imagine at least, an underlying reddish beauty that makes up its form. But the semiotics above should not be limited. I am sure there are *more* lying on the ground of Lav Diaz's cinema than my inadequate words could fathom. (Understandably, while putting the list above, I was reading both Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* and Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*. It comes as no surprise to see the listings above shaded with phenomenological/ existential perspectives. I am just guessing around with my notebooks, finding the best way to understand slow cinema and why it matters *so* for my thinking). Several questions boil up: Is watching slow cinema considered as elitist pastime? Should I care about the power struggle inheres in the time taken watching Dumont's *Hors Satan*? Does it add up to the world peace? Should I even care about world peace when drinking the sight of Tsai Ming-liang's sexually drenched cinema?

Tsai Ming-liang's *Xi You* (2014) is a radical example of a slow cinema; it plays around with the genre 'slow' by straining its main character with a snail-like pace. Personally, as a fan of Tsai Ming-liang's films, it is hard not to smile when watching Tsai's frequent alter ego, Lee Kang-sheng, becoming a monk and walks in extreme slowness all over *Xi You*'s cityscape. Every step is an excruciating minutiae, a forced slo-mo of human

gesture (see Figure 4.4). Even when he walks slowly, the hubbubs of the city life around him still continues, vibrantly. The story begins with close to eight minutes of extreme close up of Denis Lavant's face and then just as sudden, the film proceeds to Lee Kang-sheng walking in dreaded slowness, barefooted, in a dark alley, head bowed to the ground, toward the bright cityscape, but long shot this time. Here, the monk's slow walks became the film's central calmness from where the gawking of the pedestrians orbit.



**Figure 4.4:** Even the doll figure watches the red monk's slow gesture. From *Xi You* (2014).

Is it possible to see *Xi You* as Tsai's ironic ode to slow cinemas or of the artificiality of slow cinema? It is easy to read dualistic tension in *Xi You*. Human body as landscape (Lavant) vs. Human body as movement (Kang-sheng); Facial expression (Lavant) vs. Body gesture (Kang-sheng); Capitalism (everyone else) vs. Religion (Kang-sheng); Fast (Everyone else) vs. Sluggish (Kang-sheng); and so on. But this dualistic tenseness would not get us nowhere to the core of Tsai's cinema; which is the aesthetic tempo of the cosmos. This can be concluded from the overall schemata of *Xi You*, from the early close-up scene of Lavant's face to the final upside-down scene at the end of the film, where the

sky seems glittered... with human busyness. The cosmos, the universe, observes Tsai, is a mystery that can only be apprehended when they are substituted with human movement.

In modern political cinema, “people no longer exist, or not yet... the people are missing” (Deleuze, 2013, p. 223). Everything, says Deleuze again, “is put into a trance” (2013, p. 225). Loznitsa’s *V tumane* depicts a journey of a small group of men in; in the midst of cold forest, the real war is suddenly put on hold, but felt throughout the film. In *I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone*, Tsai’s characters exist in the brink of society’s periphery. In Roy Andersson’s baffling masterpiece, *Songs from the Second Floor*, the society stops functioning properly but continue to moves around in zombie-like movement. Everyone’s faces are painted white, enhancing further the existential guilt these people carry, unable to do anything but to move, a step at a time. Perhaps, the ashen condition found in *Songs from the Second Floor* is described best by Levinas’s statement:

There exists a weariness which is a weariness of everything and everyone, and above all a weariness of oneself. What wearies then is not a particular form of our life – our surroundings, because they are dull and ordinary, our circle of friends, because they are vulgar and cruel; but the weariness concerns existence itself (1988, p. 24).

Deleuze, when contemplating Antonioni’s poetic cinema, writes: “Perhaps tiredness is the first and last attitude” (2013, p. 196). There is an endless circle of tiredness concealed under our skin and bones that makes up, and grounds, the configuration of the way we move our physiques. Modern society is world-weary. We are quick to point out others’ fault, but unable to reflect our own since the ground where we live have sunken. Our



existence have grown to weighs us; this is why the anomaly called as slow cinema can exists in modern times, and continue to thrive, even marginally.

What is astonishing in Diaz's or Tarr's or Dumont's or Kaplanoğlu's cinematic canvases are the amounts of shots displaying human 'gazing-out' in the backdrop of open landscape. I find myself perpetually gazing at a character who...gazes somewhere. Would this constitute as an important semiotic of slow cinema? Would by staring at a long take sequence of a man in the 'posture of gazing' (which actually amounts to, according to my cultural upbringing, a 'contemplative mood') actually adds an extra level to my contemplative intensification? I think – it might. The sight of a man in contemplation *moves* our thinking in a quieter respect to the sight behold. Sontag: "Traditional art invites a look. Art that is silent engenders a stare" (2002, p. 16). The contemplative pose that man wears is something unlike of a pose by frog or of a horse. The poses he holds, the still gesture, the eyes; the wind moves behind him and it soothes the anxious reality behind my soul. There is no sexual attraction here; only a respect of the gesture, for the automaton it cages and left behind. Sometimes, the camera even captures the back of the man's head, tarries behind him, holds his moving head in its rectangular frame – while he gazes *out* from the frame. We cannot see his eyes, no; it is not even vital for the understanding of the bodily pose. The striking passage when the wind blows Claudia's hair in Antonioni's *L'Avventura* is not something which I can forget easily. The camera captures the flow of her hair, and simply halts there – in awe of the way the strands of her hair *could* move, the *direction* the hair *can* take in the billowing sea wind. It is only the back of her hair but the whole universe is at risk here. For a while I cannot see her eyes, her facial complexion but she exists, lonesome, bleak – a dust of beauty in the world's nothingness. Slow cinema abandons me to the fixation of my gaze.

In contemplating a figure in contemplation; our silence, like wearing armor when playing a role-playing computer game, is upgraded. Unlike watching a football match where a goal is celebrated with a clenching “yes!” – you simply do not shout when a person suddenly takes up a posture that emits ‘contemplation.’ More, the figure’s act of thinking influences the level of my silence. The salt of my silence *grows* deeper. The camera’s framing helps too. This is why there are huge expanses of man standing (or walking) in silence found in slow cinemas. In Tarr’s *Werckmeister Harmonies* for example, there can be found group of people, walking, and walking endlessly in silence. Dumont’s hero in *Hors Satan* walks forever, crossing mountains and swamps, in piety towards the earth. This is part and parcel of slow cinema’s arsenal in slowing down our tempo, but in my case, it worked, yes.

How do we define Warhol’s *Empire Building* in the range of slow cinema discussed so far in this article? For sure, the film is eight-hour long, shows nothing but *Empire State Building* in New York City in silent black-and-white. Clearly it is a film, but there is not much narrative, bodily movement or enough mise-en-scene in the film to garner a closer existential inspection. I am going out of a limb here by defining it as a too-super-slow cinema; I appreciate its existence, but it does not offer much beauty (to me at least) to even warrant a contemplation risked in this paper. Eight-hour long take of a building puts cinematic art not into the serious art of contemplation but as a visual decoration where one can glance, sometimes.



**Figure 4.5:** The camera feels like it is inside the car, capturing the heads of the actresses' bodies. Lucrecia Martel's *The Headless Woman* (2008).

Lucrecia Martel, in an interview, describes the process of filming akin to hungry octopus; the camera is like a little monster with lightings and microphones with cables as its tentacles (Taubin, 2009). The screening of the film *The Headless Woman*, on the other hand, is nothing monstrous; the camera is placed close to its subjects, as if it is one of the characters of the film, but is detached by the narrative where it is set (see Figure 4.5). With its shallow focus, numerous head shot, there is a sense of immediacy in her films. According to Martel:

I like to think that the camera is actually somebody who is physically there, like a creature, and it's somebody who is very curious, with no moral judgment. Somebody who is not scandalized by what they see (Taubin, 2009).

Martel states how her camera is like depersonalized figure who watches the individuals from such nearness, like being "physically there." But this nearness is an ironic gesture in a slow pace narrative. The nearness between the camera and the subject it is pointing to create a cold distance in *The Headless Woman*, making the woman Verónica

perpetually perplexed by the everyday things surrounding her body. You see, after an accident with a boy (while driving her car early on in the film), Verónica grew profoundly detached in her relationship with everyday beings. Did she kill the boy? Or did she not? If anything, why didn't she stop the car to look? After the accident – she has stopped functioning in society, but moved because, she *can move*. Moving has become an automatic response of bodily gesture, but she was outside of herself, enraptured by how objects have turned meaningless in their relationship with her. A gaze from nowhere; a long nothingness; suffocation; coldness of self; these are symptoms of nihilist cinema. As Nietzsche puts it: “This is the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (‘the meaningless’), eternally” (WP, §. 55). An awareness of guilt is also an awareness of the eternal, the timelessness of spirit in the presence of historical world. Verónica's body moves, remembers, but the spirit is caged by the perpetuity of the moment, the instant of before-and-after the accident. In the meaninglessness of things and everyday events, suddenly, Veronica tastes the eternity of time. In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger discusses how, as concerned entities, we cannot escape being ridden by guilt and anxiety. Guilt and anxiety are no mere moods, but parts of the structure of our being that give us a taste for existence. Personally, I believe that *The Headless Woman* is one of the most powerful films (that I have watched so far), which actually manifests, in a most subtle and visual manner, the way existential guilt comes to fore from our abyssal psyche.

It is not accidental that Weerasethakul, Tarr, Dumont, Tsai and Ceylan develop a close affinity to long take cinematography; time is not only captured in its ‘stretchedness’ but is what prolongs the texture of thingness in our consciousness. Long take puts the gesture of the characters in the dual compression and release of realism. The Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini writes:

The substance of cinema is therefore an endless long take, as is reality to our senses for as long as we are able to see and feel (a long take that ends with the end of our lives); and this long take is nothing but the reproduction of the language of reality. In other words it is the reproduction of the present (1980, p. 5).

It seems that Pasolini believes long take manifests the presence of so much 'nowness.' I have come to conclusion (one of many) that slows cinema *lets things be*. In exhibiting the nothing-really-happens, the lingering camera brings forth the beings for what they *be*, and brings forth luminous thinking towards beings. The unhurried pace of Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* gives us ample time to think beings and Being. The tracking shot of the herd of cows in *Sátántangó*'s opening shot, as they moo and move between buildings, are remarkably dry and mysterious. But it sets the tone for the whole film, and demands serious time from the spectator, the kind of time we reserved for something solemn and tragic. The lingering, long shot from Tarr's sequence asks us the *manner* of things as they stand still in realm of our gaze. We are *forced* to see them, to drink their sights for what they are, while the camera moves hypnotically over the landscape, putting into reality the horizon of its world.

Slow cinema is about *solitude*. It is not just about the way the characters live but about the way we should apprehend it best; in solitude, as solitude. Slow cinema is camaraderie of solitude, a festival of solitariness, worldhood of loneliness. It fits Susan Sontag's idea of silent art, "of the mind's need or capacity for self-estrangement" (2002, p. 4). The individuals in this type of films live quietly, if not out-of-place in urban context, then a sense of unity with the bleak landscape. We can see this form of solitude in Ceylan's

*Uzak*, of the loneliness of a man in the city – who cannot help but continues to be alienated with his ideal self. This sense of alienated self can also be glimpsed in Kaplanoğlu's *Yusuf Trilogy* (Yusuf is anti-social, does not know how to make friends, and when he was a child, cannot speak properly), Tarr's *The Turin Horse* (the father and daughter couple live by themselves, far from town and rarely speak to each other), Martel's *The Headless Woman* (the heroine literally *forgets* her sense of Being, becoming *existentially* isolated from her family and surroundings), Akerman's *23, Quai du Commerce* (the main heroine lives with her son and spends her time doing daily household chores), Nicolas Winding Refn's *Valhalla Rising* (Mads Mikkelsen's One Eye is mute, detached from everything except with his inner understanding of the way the forest moves around him), Tsai's *The Hole* (Lee Kang-sheng is trapped in an apartment with a hole in its floor). The landscape in Ceylan's *Winter Sleep*, the film critic Peter Bradshaw comments, is like "a planet on which the characters we see are the last humans left" (Bradshaw, 2014). In Julian Pölsler's *Die Wand*, a woman finds herself trapped in a remote area, cut off from the rest of the world by a sudden invisible wall. Why and how the invisible walls came to be were not answered, but were an answer truly needed under the common solitude of slow cinema? It is not the 'why,' but *the way an individual moves under the heaviness of solitariness* – this is what continually drives slow cinema directors to create, perfecting their crafts. Solitariness instills in us – both creators and spectators – joy of thinking. "In thinking," Sartre writes, "he thinks the universal, but as existing in this thinking, as assimilating this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated" (1943, p. 62). With numerous long shots showing the way the characters live, the open landscape has become more than a place that locates the world's horizon; becoming instead the obstacles that cut off the main protagonist from the society; a reflection of the protagonist's inner abyss. *Winter Sleep*, Bradshaw writes, "has an oceanic swell, or surge of emotion that appears to

be building somewhere in its depths, but never quite breaks into a wave” (2014). The reason for this is that the oceanic swell that colours slow cinema is not interested to dissipate in torrent of explosion like Martin Scorsese’s *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) or Christopher Nolan’s *Inception* (2010). The swell wants to stay where it is at, to brood and sulk in the film’s depth. In fact, the swell is none other than our fixed gaze.

Slow cinema, as that modern genre of art, is also an art of visual decay, but with perplexing life-affirming energy. Nietzsche, of course, has predicted this earlier when he wrote: “There is an element of decay in everything that characterizes modern man: but close beside this sickness stand signs of an untested force and powerfulness of the soul” (1968, §. 109). The spirits of the characters that make up the world of slow cinema may decline and perpetually lost to their mundane activities – for example, in Lav Diaz’ *Siglo ng Pagluluwal* (Figure 4.6), a girl was raped by a male friend, and totally lost her mind after being rejected by her religious guru – but my searching gaze – upsurge!



**Figure 4.6:** The moving, madness of a girl, in contrast to the stillness of a tree. Lav Diaz’s *Siglo ng Pagluluwal* (2011).

In the films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul or Lav Diaz, the sense of the political ‘we’ is very strong. If I have to translate the feelings I get from watching these films, in my automatic local Malay dialect, it would be: “*semangat kekitaan.*” To crudely translate the words into English would be: “The spirit of we-ness.” These South-Asian directors produce personal films, but are still rooted with the life-long love/hate relationship with nationalistic pride, which is always, a confrontation with the status quo. Diaz’s black-and-white long take is a continuous process to capture the desolation of his people and his environment. “The socio-cultural devastation was just so vast and unheard of,” laments Diaz, “everyday it was staring at us, and really, it was just a mystery why it took Filipinos years to wake up. Why was there apathy?” (Tioseco, 2006). In the hands of Lav Diaz, the camera turned from a cold mechanical object into a weapon of choice, but the ambience, while socio-political, is strangely ontological. A Heideggerian with eyes for cinematic aesthetics will be drowned by Diaz’s films; a decaying-everything of jungle of beings, which sings the soothing ache of Nothingness and Being.

Diaz (and we can see the same too in Weerasethakul and Tsai) sees his process of filming as ‘organic.’ By ‘organic’, Diaz means the way his films incorporate ‘real life event.’ His films, since they are independently produced under tight budget, have to be open to the possibilities of life, of historical events, since films, according to him, are not looped in a limbo, but exist alongside with the life we are currently living, “because all my films connect in terms of vision and political perspective, in terms of how I see life” (Guarneri, 2013). The connection between real life and film diegetic is deeply blurred; but Diaz’s filmic process insists on this ambiguity, in fact, thrives in this creative rawness. This is also one of the reasons why *Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino*, Diaz’s longest film to date (10 plus hours) took eleven years to finish. Diaz in an interview states:



My cinema is as pure as I want it to be now, in my own terms, pure in terms of the degree of freedom that I put into it, the degree of struggle, and I'm fully aware of the degree of responsibility that comes into it (Tioseco, 2006).

What does Diaz mean by pure cinema? We must think of this term from the purity of artistic possibilities and how it can be enhanced through the inner workings of creation. The possibility to create pure cinema is but Diaz's interpretation of radical freedom – to state one personal statement in the face of political ambiguity and upheaval. That life is an expanse of canvas is why the Filipino filmmaker Diaz decorates his landscape with the face of space's emptiness. "Free appearance, that is, beauty," says Günter Figal "thus stems from emptiness" (2015, p. 210). The long take/long shot methodology suits Diaz's intellectual outlook towards existence, which is bleak under the optimism of life. But does not the configuration of long shot in long take offer us a wider scope of the mode of appearance? Figal writes how, "the experience of the beautiful is an experience of the distant" (2015, p. 210). Distance puts things in context, time unites context with distance. The numerous mise-en-scenes of long shots in Diaz's film puts the viewer as far as possible from the characters' bodies but the length taken for these shots to finish, the black-and-white atmosphere, they all add up to the metaphysical thrill in – to borrow Heidegger's main thesis – unconcealing Beingness. It is an unconcealment that can be glimpsed only by *dwelling rapturously* in the depth of cinema. The magnificence of Diaz's film is precisely the way lengthy shots accumulate with each other, blocking each other, revealing each other, prolonging each other, to cohere in the end, in striking, emotional distraught.

I would like to end this chapter with a final note on boredom. Perhaps, the German word for boring, '*Langeweile*,' literally translated into English as 'long while', can capture the transient essence of boredom. We must take note that in a state of boredom, the 'while' is prolonged. It is boring because we are "entranced in the expanse of the temporal horizon [...]" (Heidegger, 1995, p. 151). Waiting for half an hour for a train to arrive with nothing to do but wait has different temporal meaningfulness than spending with your lover over dinner for half an hour. Our sense of time stretch and shrink according to the meaning we bestow upon it. Boredom prolongs the sense of time. The main obstacles in appreciating slow cinemas are many, and other than the accessibility of the films themselves or their lacks of exposure, there is the problem of *patience*. There is a reason why most Hollywood movies are what they are, mass-marketed and entrepreneurially successful; their images are easy to get in, and easy to get out. When a film refuses to distract us with fighting or melodrama, our sense of anticipation and adventure is thwarted, especially when watching lengthy shots showing a man's deliberate movement, as he ponders about things inside a room where his father has just died, in semi-darkness, in silence (The scene *does* exist; I am referring to Sokurov's *The Second Circle*). What is this?? Asks the uneducated gaze. The nerve of the director! We grow bored by the spectacle; everything we see on the screen becomes languorous and tiring. We started imagining things not related to the cinema, we lost focus, and suddenly, fall asleep. Or, we simply stop watching the film altogether, curse it for wasting our times, and focus on other 'fast thing' like internet or mobile game instead. Why would one watch a seven-minutes-and-a-half *Sátántangó*'s opening shot, showing herd of cows... moving about? It is *boring*. There is nothing much to see, except for herd of cows moving about. Modern society is helplessly restless; experiencing slow cinema brings forth our fidgeting-here-and-there, which already lurks and structures our bodies.

#### 4.5. Summary

We have seen in this chapter the phenomenological qualities of film. It shows the world but the world it shows differs than the world we know; it is in fact a lens where we can understand better the world we live in. “The film,” Brough writes, “as an imaginative reconstruction of the world is a lens through which the world reveals itself” (2011, p. 195). Our discussion in this chapter starts from the definition of cinema, to reviewing several writings that relates to cinema and phenomenology. This in turn makes us reflects on the power of cinema as a thinking apparatus, which is why at the end of the chapter, we travel deeper into the art of cinema as ‘slow cinema,’ a style that goes against typical narrative of mainstream Hollywood movies. I introduced in this section several types of slow cinema; emptiness, minimal sound design, preponderance shots of landscape in contrast to human figure, no climactic scene, and the kind of “fiction with documentarian gaze” (Yamane, 2002). The strategy in watching Lisandro Alonso’s *La Libertad* is vastly different than watching Steven Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park*; the first showcase the simplicity of human movement in everyday life but done in rather plotless narrative while the latter is a movie that celebrates fast-cuts, action and special effects with clear narrative structure and many climactic scenes. What I emphasize in this section is the *contemplative element* in slow cinema, a hint of why Bela Tarr’s filmmaking is regarded highly and why this dissertation comes to be in the first place. This section of slow cinema ends with a small note to boredom (which will be explored fully next chapter). Slow cinema brings boringness, and yet this must not be construed as a negative aspect but rather, as what grounds the space of slow cinema.

This is the obstacle and splendor of slow cinema: The slowness that veils its visual stretch is also that which discloses its temporal profundity. It is boring, only if the gaze is not trained and attuned to meditation's nightfall. Slow cinema brings us to confront our sense of time, and most of the time, it is a time we are not even prepared to invest. It is not slow cinema's main job to make people forget about time, unlike watching say, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), where we are engrossed with watching machines rushing each other, blowing each other, in empty desert, loud music, and suddenly, the film finished; we forget about time. We forget about time, and thus, we pass the time. "Passing the time," Heidegger writes, "is a driving away of boredom that drives time on" (1995, p. 93). Time is not about something we pass by and pass through, but is what *is* us, what manifests the boredom, a boredom that drives time on! What slow cinema emanates, in the visual leisureliness of its being, is a profound boredom. According to Heidegger's thinking, profound boredom is the fundamental attunement between human and his existence. Slow cinema, which is also a metaphysical investigation regarding waiting, lets us confront our boredom, and held it there in the abyss of our thinking. In the midst of this, our true nature as entity with space and time of its own becomes open to further questioning. The word 'bore,' which comes from the Old English '*borian*' means 'to pierce.' Such is the slow pace of slow cinema's images that the boredom is summoned, strikes open, pierces through our senses, and only the strength of the intellect, the feeling for *pathos* and astonishment, that hold the boredom nearer but colder, never letting it go and never also, letting the gaze be drowned in its immensity.

## CHAPTER 5:

### PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF BÉLA TARR'S CINEMA

#### 5.1. Introduction

For this chapter, perhaps it is still not too late to start with a brief introduction to Béla Tarr and his filmography. After this introduction, I will attempt a Heideggerian phenomenological analysis of his film works. The analysis is divided into two main sections. The first is entitled 'A Phenomenology of Lingering shot,' which will cover the cinematograph of Tarr's aesthetics, the stillness and longevity of the lingering shot. I note here that Tarr's cinema is a form of *contemplating profound boredom*. I will make connection how profound boredom always lurks in long take, and in the way we contemplate things. The second section elaborates Heidegger's thinking on art and how we can view his thinking in relation to Tarr's filmmaking. Right after – taking a cue from Heidegger's lecture, '*Building Dwelling Thinking*' – I posit several phenomenological sketches to understand what *it is to dwell in cinema*. At the end of this chapter, the phenomenological analysis are discussed and summarized.

#### 5.2. Béla Tarr the Filmmaker

Not many film fans over the world know of the filmworks of Béla Tarr (1955–now), much less having the experience of watching his films. Hailed from Hungary, Béla Tarr's films consisted of social symbolism of the Hungarian condition. He originally wanted to be a philosopher, but turned into filmmaking after making his first 8mm short films, which ironically, made Hungarian government, banned him from attending university. At the age

of 22, The Béla Balázs Studios helped him to fund his first feature film *Családi tűzfészek* (*Family Nest*). His major influences were varied, but one will notice a certain attunement towards the aesthetic of long-take, pioneered by Andrei Tarkovsky (Russian filmmaker), Miklos Jancsó (Hungarian filmmaker) and Theo Angelopoulos (Greece filmmaker), with narratives full of cold human angst and hopeless cause. To borrow critics Fergus Daly and Maximillian le Cain's words: "In Tarr's Satanic universe there is no place for a benevolent force such as God, merely a conflict of equally ill-conceived belief systems" (2001). There is a reason why Daly and le Cain employs "Satanic universe" in describing Tarr's Reality; it is for no other reason than the coldness and oppressiveness that are manifested in Tarr's visual images, which both disrupts and enthralls the viewers mind at the same time.



**Figure 5.1:** Portrait of Béla Tarr (1955- current).<sup>34</sup>

While Béla Tarr's long take is a powerful arsenal in his repertoire, we must understand the Hungarian context out of which his films are produced. The political

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<sup>34</sup> Image is taken from [http://www.old.fff.se/press/Director\\_Photo\\_Bela\\_Tarr.jpg](http://www.old.fff.se/press/Director_Photo_Bela_Tarr.jpg)

repression of Hungarian government in 1920s has a long-lasting effect on Hungarian cinema industries. There were many cruel laws passed in the 1920s, such as the introduction of *bastinado* law (beatings on the sole of the feet) for military insubordination, the restriction of Jews to better education and many others. All these create a negative environment for creative people to thrive (Cunningham, 2004, p. 24). Many film-makers (especially from the Jewish origin) fled the country. A strong example of a film-maker who paid the price of insubordination was Sándor Pallos, the director of *Money* (1919), who was tortured by the counter-revolutionaries and left to death (Cunningham, 2004, p. 25). Many directors went to exile, to escape from the anti-Semitic regime and the Nazi. At the time when the cinema industries in Germany, Soviet Union, France, America and England thrive, Hungary lags behind. In 1932, only 6 films were made while but in 1939, Hungary produced 28 films (Cunningham, 2004, p. 38). If not of government-sponsored initiative – so as to showcase the state ideologue – the Hungarian cinema would not last long. The oppression goes further and from 1948 to 1956, *Államvédelmi Osztály* (better known as AVO, the Office of State Security), introduced 1,017,698 cases against what the Hungarian state named as “enemy of the people”; around 30,000 people were imprisoned and between 30,000 to 40,000 people were interrogated, interned, and if not, threatened (Brown, 2004, pp.152-153).

Catherine Portuges, in her essay entitled *Intergenerational Memory: Transmitting the Past in Hungarian Cinema* (2003), describes Hungarian cinemas as preoccupied with historical memory throughout post World-War II. The Hungarian cinemas were scarred by the Communist government and social injustice. The affectations of World War II, the uprising of 1956, the suppression and oppression of Soviet Union, all these create the kind of atmosphere of laconical filmmaking, championed first and foremost by Miklós Jancsó,

the director of the profound *The Round-Up* (*Szegénylegények*, 1965). The political tension and social inequality in Hungary also gives birth to filmmakers like István Szabó, Károly Makk and Béla Tarr whose films are (mostly) politically-conscious and charged with the mission of showing the corrupt reality around them.

The long repressive history of Hungary is perhaps why Béla Tarr's films are existentially bleak. The filmic production in black-and-white enhances the corruption of his characters, and these can be seen in his more famous films such as *Sátántangó* (1994), *Damnation* (1988) and *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000). His style has evolved over the years ever since his early feature film *Family Nest* (1977), and he has found respite in using very long takes with acute sequence shot. In an interview with Michael Guillén, he spoke of the tension that can be made available using long take, and opined that "...short takes are terribly boring for me" (Guillén, 2007). For example, Figure 5.2's running time is five minute, which is already long in usual movie standard. Yet, this is not the longest scene in *Werckmeister*; the longest shot is 10 minutes and 20 seconds, the bar scene. Tarr jokes: "Because afterwards the camera runs out of film. Kodak cannot make it longer than 300 meters, which is about 11 minutes. Yes (laugh), this is my limit, this fucking Kodak (laughs), a time limit. A kind of censorship" (Bittencourt, 2012).

The complexities of shots in Tarr's film, which are conveyed into a simple power of human emotions, are presented as mostly nihilist energy. Tarr's vision is of the bleak human condition. However, this does not mean that the composition is any less beautiful. Regarding *Sátántangó* for example, the American critic Susan Sontag has gone so far to say: "Devastating, enthralling for every minute of its seven hours. I'd be glad to see it every year for the rest of my life" (cited in Daly et al, 2001). In the words of Piers Handling, CEO



of the Toronto International Film Festival Group since 1994, “Tarr’s films sit astride a momentous event in history, the dissolution of the communist world, and document this moment in a way that only great art can” (Daly et al, 2001). Tarr’s influences are abundant. Gus van Sant, an American director, confessed to be influenced when he directed *Gerry* (2002) and *Elephant* (2003). In *MoMa Bela Tarr Retrospective Catalogue* (2001), Gus van Sant states:

Béla’s works are organic and contemplative in their intentions rather than shortened and contemporary. They find themselves contemplating life in a way that is almost impossible watching an ordinary modern film. They get so much closer to the real rhythms of life that it is like seeing the birth of a new cinema. He is one of the few genuinely visionary filmmakers.

The above admirations show how well Béla Tarr is being received by art-house critics even though there are some factions that spoke of how slow and boring his filmmaking can be. Clearly his heavy usage of long take deters newcomers to his works. For the sake of comparison, take a look at Table 5.1, which is a collected database of Tarr’s ASL (Average Shot Length) per films starting from *Family Nest* to *A Torino lo*. The difference of colouring (from green to blue) is to differentiate Tarr’s early films and later films, starting with *Damnation*. His longest feature film is still *Sátántangó* at 415-minute and his shortest is *The Prefab People* (not shown in Table 5.1). We can see how the average longest shot Tarr ever put into canvas comes from *The Man from London*, which is 248.6 seconds. The same film also boasts of the most minimum number of shot-counts; only 31 shots.

**Table 5.1:** Béla Tarr's films in term of average shot length (ASL) and other stats.<sup>35</sup>

Film title:	Year:	Director:	Country:	ASL:	MSL:	StDev:	NoS	Max:	Min:	Length
<i>Family Nest</i>	1979	Béla Tarr	Hungary	31.7	22.8	30.5	188	200.9	0.1	99:24.2
<i>Almanac of Fall</i>	1985	Béla Tarr	Hungary	57.2	43.9	52.1	119	288	1.6	113:29.7
<i>Damnation</i>	1988	Béla Tarr	Hungary	116.7	83.1	93.1	57	454.8	19.4	110:52.8
<i>Sátántangó</i>	1994	Béla Tarr	Hungary	145.7	108.3	118.6	171	614.9	7	415:7.1
<i>Werckmeister Harmonies</i>	2000	Béla Tarr, Ágnes Hranitzky	Hungary	219.4	203.5	111.2	37	575.9	45.4	135:16.1
<i>The Man from London</i>	2007	Béla Tarr, Ágnes Hranitzky	Hungary	248.6	222	142.6	31	579.5	3.5	128:25.9
<i>A Torino lo</i>	2011	Béla Tarr, Ágnes Hranitzky	Hungary	229.2	245.2	127.5	38	440.1	6.4	145:9.8

One of the important factors of long take is the idea of *realness*. An extended shot of man running up and down captured without edit gives us not just the real time that is operating at hand but the perseverance of the man-image to hold into our perception. Such is the perseverance of the image, working in tandem with time that once the shot is finally cut, after a ten minute running time, there comes a sense of an ending much more swaying than 50 cuts in ten minute sequence. In an essay entitled *Observations on the Long Take* (1967), the controversial Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini writes:

The substance of cinema is therefore an endless long take, as is reality to our senses for as long as we are able to see and feel (a long take that ends with

<sup>35</sup> Resourced from [www.cinemetrics.lv](http://www.cinemetrics.lv). Contributions above are credited to Andras Balint Kovacs, J. Brandon Colvin, Brian Udof, Tristan Mentz, Elina Reitere and Adrian Tomas Samit.

the end of our lives); and this long take is nothing but the reproduction of the language of reality. In other words it is the reproduction of the present.

“A long take that ends with the end of our lives.” What does Pasolini mean by this statement? Is by ending an extended sequence means we too end our life? Or, is the ultimate end of our live equals to the end of the cinema? What is crucial here is to take note the words “reproduction of the language of reality.” Our awareness of time and image draws out an interestedness (or curiosity) and the longer the shot is shown to our perception, the longer the imageness of the shot resides in our perception. A cut kills not only the shot, but our lives – that is, our lives which reside within the experiencing of cinema – in the tense dialectic of our perception and the imageness perceived.

*Werckmeister Harmonies*, for example, is shot with intense long takes that can take up to 11 minutes. The film is based from the novel *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989) by László Krasznahorkai. In the film, a bloated carcass of a whale came to a town following a circus. Suddenly, the town’s regularities were disrupted. People went from their home to see this circus but that is not all; they were incited to mass demonstration, and ended up destroying public buildings and beating helpless patients in a hospital. A sense of dread is felt throughout and Tarr’s lingering cinematography captures the tension succinctly. Béla Tarr has his own reasons to employ long take:

You know I like the continuity, because you have a special tension. Everybody is much more concentrated than when you have these short takes. And I like very much to build things, to conceive the scenes, how we can turn around somebody, you know, all the movements implied in these shots. It’s like a play, and how we can tell something, tell something about life...

Because it's very important to make the film a real psychological process...  
(Bittencourt, 2012).

What is even remarkable is that for a film with a running time of 145 minutes, it has only 37 cuts. Richard Williams calls *Werckmeister Harmonies* as “[s]low, elliptical and discursive, it conforms to the old art-house stereotype; yet it is also novel, compelling and sometimes quite astonishingly moving” (2003). This praise shows the importance of Tarr’s vision in the history of modern cinema. For myself, *Werckmeister Harmonies* is the first film that introduced me to Tarr’s world and it seems as if I could never fully escape from it ever since. There is a hypnotic quality in the cinematography of *Werckmeister Harmonies* that pulls me in, an indefinite beauty that is absorbing even though what is being presented are only of “ugly people” in ugly buildings,<sup>36</sup> “with the crawly feeling that evil is penetrating its somber little town” (Ebert, 2007). Romney even describes *Werckmeister* as a “metaphysical horror” (2011). The reason for this statement is understandable; there is an aura of dread which is not exactly seen, but more felt in our perception of experiencing Tarr’s cinema.

To grasp a glimpse of Tarr’s long take film, I ask the reader to observe Figure 5.2. Here, we see the János Valuska, the town’s conscience and protagonist in *Werckmeister*, running on a train track, with his face and body fronting towards the camera. The sequence is taken around 15 minutes before the end of the film. To be exact: from 2:02:25 to 2:07:28. There is no background music. There are only the running steps of Janos and eventually, the helicopter. Who is he running from? Authoritative figures, government, police, friends; Janos is running away from the chaos around him, and maybe too, to escape from his guilt.

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<sup>36</sup> Tarr comments: “But I hope we have some social sensibility – and of course, we are always with poor people and ugly people.” From an interview with Jonathan Romney, “Out of the Shadows,” *The Guardian*, 24 March 2001.

We must understand the two scenes prior: In the first scene, he was confronted by the death of his Uncle Lajos; the second, the wife of Uncle Lajos asking him the whereabouts of her husband. It is always strange and comforting to place one's own body to a different location, as if, by the differences of geography and the process of movement, one can take flight from existential guilt. For surely, *Werckmeister Harmóniák* as metaphysical horror, deals the form and continuity of what Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1962) would term as 'existential anxiety.'<sup>37</sup> Janos's environment sinks away in the immediate angst of his plight of himself from himself. However, the coming of a helicopter makes him stop his tracks. He knew just now and just then, that he cannot escape. In his naivety, he is also one of the main people who are the catalyst to the anarchy in his town, Tarr's own personal town idiot. "Perhaps," Rancière ruminates on Tarr's film, "human life is nothing but a story of sound and fury told by an idiot" (Rancière, 2013, p. 48). This realization of his role came too late, but its impact is felt when the person nearest to him – Uncle Lajos – is found dead in the quietness of a morning, in the secluded corner of a street. In Figure 5.2, two immediate things form the movement of circularity; Janos's body, the helicopter that encircles Janos and the camera as it encircles the space in front of Janos. It is very important to note that the camera is all the way always in front of János's body – creating an invisible wall of obstacle to scale out. These three encirclements are choreographed as so to create and to capture the pervasive image of helplessness. The sequence noted is a good example of Kovács's argument on Tarr's camera as "a cyclical process returning to itself while having to create the illusion of moving forward" (2008).

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<sup>37</sup> See Heidegger's generous study of anxiety as foundational existential mood in *Being and Time*, 1962, pp. 226-235.



**Figure 5.2:** Janos encircled by the helicopter in *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000).

In the last frame of Figure 5.2, we are shown about more than 1 minute shot of the helicopter doing nothing but floating and floating, creating quite a repressive image. In *Werckmeister Harmonies*, the shots are extraordinarily planned, performed and captured. There is a certain complexity that stands tall above most of the long-take-style-films made. However, Bela Tarr says that movie is “the most simple thing in the world.” He continues:

If you are a writer and you have an ashtray like the one I have in front of me now, you can write 20 pages about this ashtray, with metaphors and symbols, you can say a lot of theoretical things, because everything depends on the imagination of the reader. But I am a filmmaker; I have just the concrete, definitive ashtray. And the question is how am I able to show you the ashtray. In this case, I’m able to develop emotions from you, but it’s always physical, concrete, and clear. I cannot use any metaphors. I cannot use any symbols. What I have are just some lenses, which are objective. I tell you and show you real things (Meade, 2007).

Tarr insists in the simplicity of things that he captures in his films. Clearly he is thinking about the definiteness of thingness, which takes a higher priority than simply sending moral messages in the narrative. What he is after is the concreteness of the situation; that the character *is* there, and then the character *moves* here, pauses, and then moves *there*. The metaphors of filmic languages are not as important as showing the *there-ness* of his characters and the objectivity of the things he captures. This is one of the reasons why Tarr’s cinema manifests a strong character of the metaphysic of Being, which I will develop later in this dissertation.

When shooting a location for his cinemas, Tarr and his crews spent painstaking amount of time scouting for ideal locations. In Tarr’s world, the landscapes are a model of

destitution. The atmosphere that foregrounds his story and actors are just as important. According to Tarr, “In all our movies, the location has a face. It looks like an actor” (Romney, 2001). The landscapes in Tarr’s films are barren and other than the small group of people who co-exist there, the landscapes are mostly lifeless and cold. The atmosphere of decay conquers everywhere else. Buildings, awashed in their black-and-white colours, promise nothing but further state of decline for itself and for its occupants. In *Sátántangó*, buildings do not house and shelter men, but to keep them caged, to impede their freedom. If Heidegger’s definition of home (*Heimat*) is “the circumference that is historically enclosed and nourishing, that fuels all courage and releases all capacities, that surrounds the place where humans belong in the essential meaning of a claimed listening” (2011, p. 24), then Tarr’s idea of home runs counter to Heidegger’s conception. Home for Tarr is a place for temporary belonging and not as place for permanency. In his previous films like *Prefab People* (1982) and *Autumn Almanac* (1985), people have to fight for a place to stay, and even then, the house is always cramped. The idea of being peaceful in a house totally escapes Tarr’s aesthetics.

The ambiance in Tarr’s film is the fulfilling prophecy of helplessness. Characters live to be doomed in relationship. The black-and-white color template enhances the coldness of this helplessness. Tarr’s world mirrors the way of *possible* bleakness. In the words of András Bálint Kovács:

Tarr tried to create the semblance of reality in an intensified way, so that the spectator cannot escape the feeling, that it is his/her own world, so that he/she would see exaggeration as natural and recognise what he/she has failed to see, to which he/she has always closed his/her eyes. So that the



spectator would see his/her own world as being just as suffocating as the human relationships in it” (2008).

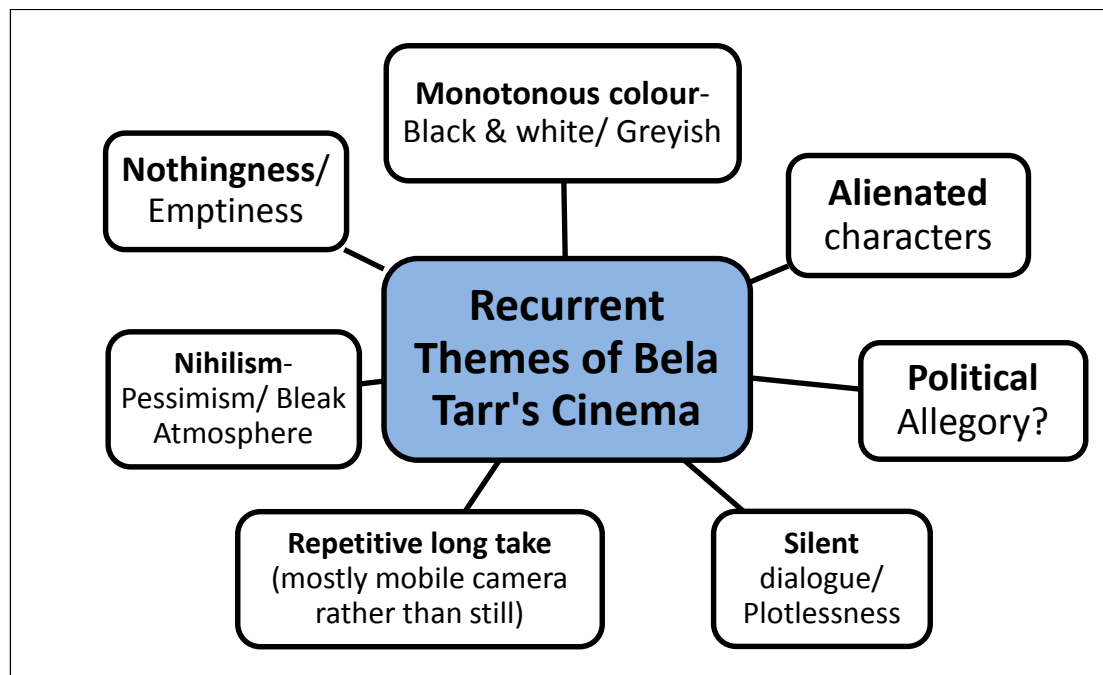
Tarr’s narratives are what Bordwell (2011) would call as *dedramatization*; the kind of slow paced style that seem to almost halt the process of conventional narrative. The overall theme has the look of minimalism. Unlike most filmmakers who utilize rich cuts, time is a luxury that Tarr can afford. The preoccupation of Tarr with time-frame makes the audience equally anxious what they’re experiencing on the screen; we are acutely aware that time is slipping by just as we follow a shot of mostly non-eventful story. This non-event – where nothing really happens – can be seen in the sequence of images found in *Werckmeister Harmonies* (Fig. 5.3). In the stature of Tarr’s long take, the shot itself is not long; only 2 min 50 second. The first frame of Figure 4 shows an indoor furnace. Janos’s hand pokes around its fire, and then he prepares his bed. Soon, he turns to his kitchen, heats up a can. When the can is ready, he opens it, pours it on a dish, and starts eating it. What does the sequence tells us? That it shows a slice of Janos’s life, doing his daily chore. However, when photographed in its dark somber, in long take, Janos’s daily routine turns mesmerizing. A strong example of the same mesmerizing effect can be seen too in Chantal Akerman’s *Jean Dielman*. Both Janos and Jean Dielman are shown to be busy doing their daily chores and yet, since they are doing them in silence, framed in long take, their chores brings saliva of tenseness that is equally hard to say objectively. Since there really is no true peace in Janos’s life, right after the sequence of Figure 5.3, we see a woman coming into Janos’s home, interrupting his meal, for she has come for Janos’s help.



**Figure 5.3:** Janos preparing his meal. *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000).

Tarr's cinema is about the *realness* of reality. To borrow Alexandre Astruc's statement, Tarr's camera "defines; it does not surpass, it observes reality. It is naïve to believe that the systematic use of a wide-angle lens can change the course of events. To compensate for this passivity, the camera does not lie" (1993, p. 133). To be sure, Astruc was talking about the Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953), but he might as well be talking about Béla Tarr. The reality of Tarr's camera comes to force under the impact of time in its slowness. The long take aesthetics, when shown and

renewed incessantly over the course of a film, almost makes a paradoxical statement of its realness; one feels the surrealism of the reality when the camera seems to continue on and on. This happens since the context of Tarr's cinema is a style that vehemently opposes mainstream cinemas. For casual film goer who is experiencing Tarr's filmmaking for the first time, he will be dumbfounded by the longevity of the takes. It will occur to him or her of how absolutely strange to see a take with no sight of cuts around. He will be waiting for an end. To this person, the realness of the time can even be constituted as surreal. Such is the influence of fast cuts is having on the contemporary generation of today.



**Figure 5.4:** Running themes and aesthetic possibilities in Tarr's cinema. Diagram design by Fauzi Naeim.

The running themes found in Tarr's filmmaking can be summed up in Figure 5.4; monotonous colour – black & white/ grey; manifesting the sense of nothingness; nihilist cinema – pessimistic narration with very bleak atmosphere; repetitive long take (mostly

mobile camera rather than still); silent dialogue/ plotlessness; political allegory (?); and alienated characters. The question mark for 'political allegory' is there because Tarr has many times declared that he was not interested in politics but was concerned in showing the concreteness of the situation. Tarr once says: "We never thought about any political connection. The 600 unemployed men are real, in their real clothes, with the real ugliness, and this is the real poverty. Everything was real - it looks like a documentary" (Romney, 2001). However, I cannot help it but put this specific theme along Figure 5.3 since there is an understated, symbolic indication in Tarr's later films that his characters moves under the repression of Hungarian political climate and this climate help to, somewhat, influence the corruption of their morality. These symbols found in the ground of Tarr's cinemas are very important since they will help us to go further in understanding the pattern of Tarr's aesthetics, which is what we will do next: a phenomenological reading of his cinematography, which I will call the 'lingering shot.'

### **5.3. A Phenomenology of Linging Shot**

In the fourth scene of Tarr's *Damnation* (see Figure 5.5), we see our protagonist Karrer lurking behind a wall, watching from afar, two people walking to a car. These two individuals, a man and a woman, get inside the car and drive away from the scene. After finding out the field is empty, Karrer proceeds to walk towards the distant building, away from the camera (which is directly into the middle of the camera's framing). His figure soon recedes, lost to the buildings, and we are left shot showing an open expanse of the townscape. In the next scenario, we see him talking to a woman, who half-hides her body behind a door, listening to Karrer's pleading. Putting two and two together, we can surmise that the location of her house is where Karrer's figure went and got lost into. We eventually

find out that the two figures who went into the car were the daughter and the husband of the woman he was seeking company with. It seems that Karrer was waiting for both to be gone, so that he can sneak past into his lover's house. This entire story is dramatic enough, fine, but what interests me most here is the movement of the camera. Close to the final cut, just when Karrer's body is nowhere to be found, it continues to stay put on the location and linger on for another 14 seconds, before the cut, which shows next the place of Karrer's lover.

For 14 seconds the shot stays, and just as sudden, the scenery becomes more pronounced. With no humans to look at, everything becomes quiet; my eyes grope around the scenery, trying to find other subjects for my gaze to hook on. The scene (see the second frame of Figure 5.5) shows a symmetrical composition; a two-division which cuts the frame into clutter of buildings (upper half) and expanse of earth (below half). A sense of nothingness suddenly exudes and vibrates in the lost-ness of the man figure. The film refuses to cut itself, but *tarries a while*, prolonging moments in its deadening silence. This 'tarries a while', which I will call as *lingering shot*, is a mesmerizing effect in the world of Tarr's long take. Tarr's long take does not end with a climax like Orson Welles opening shot of *Touch of Evil* (1958), or to create situational tension like Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013), but it is the kind that maintains its rhythm monotonously; a visual stretch which dissipates slowly without any distinctive suspense. What I am going to attempt in this chapter is to understand, phenomenologically, Tarr's lingering shot. I will try to elicit several key ideas from this lingering shot and see how Heidegger's metaphysics can be put to use, so as to understand the essence of long take better.



**Figure 5.5:** Karrer walks away from the camera, while the camera stays on his form. *Damnation* (1988).



**Figure 5.6:** The horse shack, from outside. *The Turin Horse* (2011).

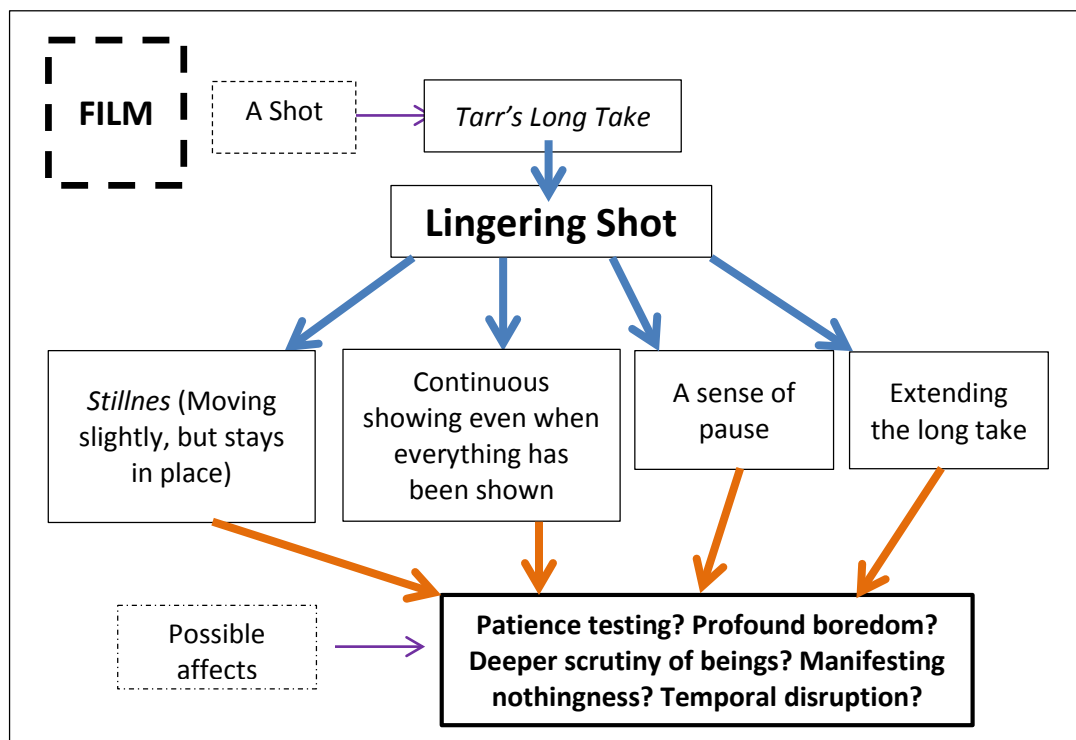
Clearly the scene in Figure 5.5 is not the only instance of lingering shot to be found in Tarr's oeuvre; they are many. We can find this lingering shot 41 minutes and 32 seconds into *Damnation*, a long take that starts with a scene outside of the house (in this case, the camera lurks behind veiled windows, peeking – of all things, moving cranes) and ends after showing – for twenty-four seconds – Karrer sleeping on a bed (see Figure 5.7). Another good example of lingering shot can be seen in *The Turin Horse*; the scene where the man

and his daughter are stowing back the horse after the horse refuses to cooperate. In one single take, we are shown how the horse is prepared, and then led outside, but after its uncooperative behaviour, the horse is then arranged to be led back inside its housing. It is a remarkable showcase of a process, of the paradox between necessity and the hopelessness of human activity. Here, the camera suddenly stops moving about, but stays still to continue filming the space (see Figure 5.6) even though the man, the daughter and the horse have moved out from its framing. What is left is the maddening gale upon the horse shack. We sense here an otherworldly power that is oppressing Tarr's characters, but this power is nowhere to be seen. It is *felt* instead in the depressing tonality of the human movement, in the way the camera moves in its inexorable slowness. Take note how the central theme of Tarr's film is not just about human and its society, but emphasizes also the space of its town and its landscape.



**Figure 5.7:** A lingering shot showing Karrer on a bed. *Damnation* (1987).

What can we define from the phrase ‘lingering shot’? What is its significance in our inquiry into the metaphysics of being in Tarr’s aesthetics? Why is it placed highly in our consideration of the phenomenology of long take? These questions must be cleared first before we venture deeper into the depth of Tarr’s lingering shot. Lingering shot here is defined from the sense when the camera *continues showing* even when the subject of the focus has gone from its view or even when everything there is that needs to be shown, has been shown. Figure 5.7 shows the extent of lingering shot in a long take when the camera decides to pause on Karrer’s figure for another twenty four seconds before cutting-off to the next scene. In a lingering shot, the camera refuses to cut, but stays and tarries for a while. Please see Figure 5.8 for a diagrammatic understanding of lingering shot.



**Figure 5.8:** Movement of Tarr’s lingering shot. Diagram design by Fauzi Naeim.

The lingering shot is a ‘stillness’ but it is also a ‘continuous showing.’ It is a sense of pause but at the same time, has the capacity to extend the long take. What does it want?



Testing my patience? Enhancing further my state of boredom? Is it possible to see lingering shot as something that manifests and displays uncanniness? For example, as I write this text, I am aware of the table in front of me. However, since my focus is on the laptop and on the process of typing in words and paragraphs, the table becomes just one of another meaningful horizon of my perception. However, once I start taking notice of the table, taking into account its smooth texture, its yellowish colour, suddenly aware that it carries the sign 'The Coffee Bean' on top of its surface, a sense of uncanniness begins to creep in. The more and longer I concentrate on the whereabouts of the table as it shows itself to my perception, the more the table becomes something other than what it is. In the stretchiness of familiarity, there stands the *astonishment of the unfamiliarity*. To borrow Dylan Trigg's words:

Yet no less a displacement from the everyday, the uncanny simultaneously places us in the midst of the familiar. Here a disturbance occurs: The uncanny refuses to concede to stillness, and instead presents us with something genuinely novel: *an augmented familiarity*, thus (un)familiar to the core (*unheimlich*) [2012, p. 27].

"The uncanny refuses to concede to stillness," writes Trigg above. The reason for this is that the uncanny already resides in stillness; which is why lingering shot takes the form of stillness, refusing to stop or to give up the images easily. It delays the images and releases the images to its profound temporality. Since the uncanny is already residing in stillness, it follows that only in stillness, the uncanny is able to exhibit to us as something *becoming*, an "augmented familiarity." The table that I have suddenly takes notice in front of me – a table that is *already* in front of me nevertheless – brings into its own (under the *duree* of contemplation), a something other – an amplified familiarity. The commonness of

the table is augmented by the astonishing fact that it is *too* familiar. The ‘*too*’ is what comprises the plenitude of the ‘augmentation’ and what enhances it. Other enhancements that join in the ‘too familiar’ include also ‘boredom’ and ‘weariness’ (more on this later). In Figure 3 for example, the scene where Karrer is found sleeping naked on a bed (tired after having sex with lover), the camera suddenly pause its slow movement; a pause that is twenty-four seconds long, that creates into Karrer’s reclining figure, an enhancement of familiarity, an uncanniness, not because it is strange, but because it is too *mundanely* familiar.

Whether the camera is moving about or in the state of immobility in a lingering shot is not important. The lingering shot is usually an aftermath of a long take, but sometimes can be a part or parts of a long take sequence. The lingering shot extends the power of a long take. A close-up shot of a human face, in the face of a long take, might be the camera’s answer to an unblinking view it has on its viewer. The lingering shot holds off the cut as long as possible, but extends its temporal nature, even to the point of bringing boredom to its viewer. The significance of the lingering shot is more than meets the eye, and must not be neglected in our understanding and analytics of Tarr’s filmmaking (or even, in understanding slow cinema in general). I strongly believe that the framing of a lingering shot can gives us a *poetic glimpse* into the realm of Tarr’s existence. The lingering shot, since it lingers-a-while in a long take’s reality, brings opens and holds up a lighting *in* and *as its* space. Heidegger’s essential writings about the Being of beings can be put to task here. But the way to the Being must go into a confrontational mode: “The ‘essence of life can become accessible only if we consider it in a deconstructive [*abbauenden*] fashion” (Heidegger, 1995, p. 255). We will have to deconstruct the

understanding on lingering shot, so that we can get into the essence of its way of manifesting. And to do this, we need to apprehend the *whatness of a shot*.

Do we still find it strange that Tarr's cinema is rectangularly shaped? Or, have we, by now, so used to the rectangular frame of the cinema that we take it for granted? A shot in a film is a sequence take between a cut and its end cut. A shot in a film is *physically framed* to take benefit of modern contraptions like HD camera, digital hard drive, films stock, lighting and aspect ratio. The rectangular aspect of its framing is a *given* in modern culture. It takes advantages of the highest possible viewing a framing can muster; making it also accessible to other rectangular-looking objects such as computer, TV set, cinema screen, smart phones and other medias. A rectangular framing makes it easier to be placed in architectural composition. This is why paintings and photographs are (usually) rectangularly shaped. An oval-shaped or triangle-shaped framing will look out of place plus, will not be able to take advantage of the highest, possible viewing an image can muster. We can easily notice that arranging rectangular shapes (such as books) are so much easier to handle and stacks, unlike circular or triangular shapes. Most importantly, the way we view things in our perception *too* lends a way in matching the shape of the film or photography. Do we not *see things* in a rather rectangular-kind of perception? Our eyes, usually, track easily the horizon of our perception rather than its vertical counterpart. This is why also the windshield of our car is rectangularly shaped – for a better horizontal scanning.

A shot is an extension of a camera's life. By showing a scenario, say, of a horse hauling a carriage, the camera exhibits a certain reality, a snippet of a world – which was earlier hidden from our everyday view. There is a world out there, brimming with life, but

we are not always aware of its diamond-like quality; its stays hidden and always incomplete. Facets of the hidden world become noticeable when we read a paragraph of something happening in Somalia from newspaper or when we hear news from a car radio, reporting the mobilization of army in Ukraine. We are not there in the stories they tell us, but they contribute to our understanding of a world; that the world outside is big and encompassing, and even mysterious. The world sets content for us to be but it also arrays the way we understand its horizon. A long shot of any Tarr's cinema showing a man walking down an empty road on an open landscape describes the way he views his world; empty and bleak. According to Christian Metz, a shot is like a sentence but unlike a sentence; it states and asserts something just like a sentence, but is not quantifiable like a linguistic unit of a sentence (1974, pp. 115-116). A shot, Metz writes, "is like the complex statement of undefined length" (1974, p. 115). In film semiotics, a shot showing an image of a black cat sleeping does not necessarily means a 'BLACK CAT', but rather, a way of exhibiting that here, in this shot, "THERE IS A CAT". A cinematic shot presents to us a limitless way of saying things, and limitless information of how things stand in the shot. A shot *shows* a picture of a world whereas a sentence *tells* how a world can be pictured in an imagination.

Film is a series of temporal images. As a series of moving images, it exhibits the world as an event. The sense of immersion we have in watching a film – *of experiencing its semiotic contents* – is the level of intensity we bestow to its ability to offer narrative of the world. We *enworld* film – just as the film encompass our horizon of gaze. Pausing a film disrupts its temporal sequence. It becomes just another picture; it has lost its inner movement, but the pictureiness which grounds its being is still there, withheld as it is by the lines and forms which continue to mark its look, and which influence its exhibitiveness.

capacity. It is important to not overlook the fact that any *meaningful* picture is a framing of our personal outlook of what a world is. The relationship I have with beings around me informs and transforms the way I am connected to the beings presented in and *as* the film.

An artist with a vision – a director, in this case – molds the possibility of a shot, the location of a shot (in the relation with its previous shot and next shot) and its contents for certain ideological or aesthetic reason. But what is spent in the pursuit of artistic goals and the eventual spectator's appreciation are two different things. The meaning of any picture is *only* insofar as the intensity of the inquiring mind that behold the picture. Tarkovsky realizes this truth in his writings, which is why he says: "The meaning of an artistic image is necessarily unexpected, since it is a record of how one individual has seen the world in the light of his own idiosyncrasies" (1986, p. 169). The 'unexpectedness' happens since the reader and the author, for most of the time, do not always see eye to eye with each other. Therein lies the conflict. Therein lies also, the greatness of the art. The anticipation of a narration between its maker and its audience contributes to an ideal that mirrors our reality. "Cinema," writes Tarkovsky further, "is an art which operates with *reality*" (1986, p. 176, emphasis not mine). But a powerful cinema, I must say, is *its own reality*, a reality that can exhaust while simultaneously enrich our inner abyss.

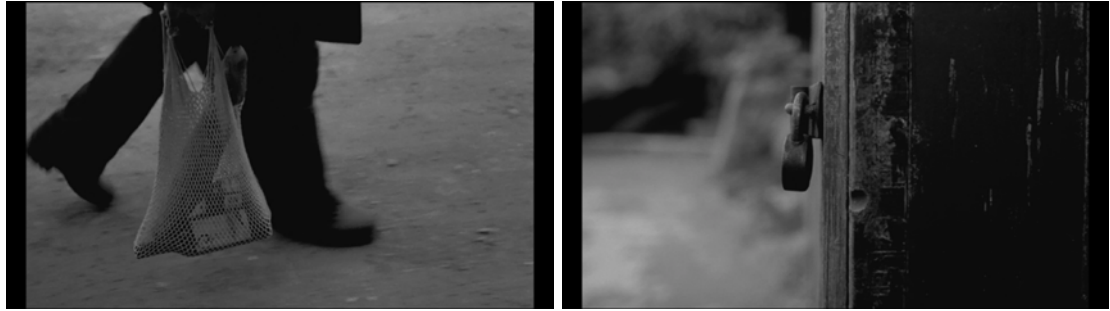
One of the magical strength in Tarr's filmmaking is the rhythmic character of the camera's movement, thanks to the long take composition and the invention of Steadicam. Ever since *Sátántangó*, Tarr has employed Steadicam as means to capture the fluidity of the world's monochromic reality. According to Kovács, Tarr's *The Man from London* has a high camera movement count – about 70 percent of the film length (2013, p. 94). Not every long take sequence has to move, of course. Some of the slow cinema masters – Tsai Ming-

liang, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Semih Kaplanoğlu and Roy Andersson – prefer their long take done as static shot. Is it possible to think that static shot offers a *robust* capacity to convey deadpan atmosphere? One only needs to observe Tsai’s *Journey to the West/ Xi You* (2014), where the monk is walking in extreme slowness or Roy Andersson’s *Songs from the Second Floor* (2000), where the white-faced casts stare out in the stillness of the camera. In both films, the camera plays passive roles to the staging of the characters, by not intruding into the *circle* of the character’s movements. This can create a deadpan ambience. Tsai Ming-liang says: “I’m trying to give these long takes their own freedom” (2015). Perhaps static, long shot, brings a different kind of freedom to the characters since physically, the camera is not circling too much into their space. Take note that moving camera in long take sequence is a little bit complex to enact than static shot. The director and the cinematographer have to take into account the placement of the camera, where the camera is going to be in another minute, and how the staging of the casts going to look in that same minute. A wrong move and the shoot will have to be redone. It adds to that tense atmosphere Tarr seems to enjoy the most: “You know I like the continuity, because you have a special tension. Everybody is much more concentrated than when you have these short takes” (Schlosser, 2000). The intensity of a very long take in a bleak atmosphere is so foreboding that Jonathan Romney, when experiencing Tarr’s *Sátántangó*, describes it “as close as cinema comes to nightmare” (2001). The camera’s choreography is significant in Tarr’s philosophy since it is what sets the rhythmic structure of his film aesthetics. The way the camera moves – tracking shot, long shot – define the line of Tarr’s horizon, a line which carves the space between his film and the location it sets its eye on. “For me,” Tarr confesses in an interview, “the movie is not the story, it is mostly rhythm, camera, pictures, sound, noises, and the human eyes” (Maude, 2007). In another interview, he comments:

“The landscape is one of the main characters. The landscape has a face. We have to find the right location, like we have to find the right music” (Sweeney, 2012).

We are here specifically to inquire about the phenomenology of Tarr’s lingering shot. The framing towards this phenomenological pursuit will be guided by Heidegger’s thinking. We have established the definition of a shot and its form but these serve only as foundation to seek further into the *essence* of Tarr’s lingering shot. Let us take another sequential extract from Tarr’s filmology as a reference, but this time from *The Man from London* (Hungary: *A Londoni férfi*), produced in 2007. To be even more specific, the sequence is exactly between the times of 1:50:28 to 1:54:33 (see Figure 5.9). The sequence is a long take and runs for about 4 minutes, in black and white. What do we notice first? We see first a pair of legs walking, moving to the left of the screen. The camera too moves to the left, panning with the speed of the person’s walking. The body is not yet fully seen but I notice the person carries a bag with bread and a bottle of wine. All this while we can only listen to the wind and the sound of the ocean wave. Where is he going to? What purpose does he have? As the camera moves up, slowly we notice the back of the man’s head, his bobbing figure. Soon after, he takes a turn to the left. By this time, the camera puts a bit of distance and the overall outline of the man figure can be seen. His travelling stops when he comes upon a house. A long shot at this stage; and then the camera moves closer to his action in medium shot. He opens up the lock to the door and then goes inside. The camera moves from showing his side profile to his back. It stays at the door for several while, waiting. Suddenly, the door opens, and the man walks out slowly. Something has happen. We see this, by the way he moves and the strange look on his face. As he turns back to the door to lock it back up, the camera moves back to the same position as when he opened up the lock earlier. After finish locking up the place, the man moves away from the

framing of our view. But the camera does not follow his movement any longer. It stays in this position and tarries a while – lingering in *light-waverly-movement-but-stays-in-place*, before it finally cuts to next scene.



**Figure 5.9:** A sequence from *The Man From London*. The first frame in the left is the beginning of the sequence and the next frame is its end.

What can we make of the scene described above? How do we understand it in the light of the discussion we have held so far in pertaining to Heidegger's metaphysic of Being? I have been running the sequence again and again over my computer, in the state of curiosity of *how* this shot is composed, and more importantly, why the sequence *matters* to my intellect. Technically, the shot is amazing for its economical use of space and the composition of the camera. There is a mystery here – a mystery that can be (or might be) unfolded by *understanding* the overall structure of the film's narrative. A man walks by the bank, comes up into a house, unlocks its door, goes inside, several while later comes out, locks the door back, and flees from the scene. What is there in the house that makes the man comes inside and suddenly, bolts away? Does *not* knowing what *really* happens detracts our appreciation of the shot or is the knowing itself becomes *secondary* to the understanding of the aesthetic composition of the shot? Maybe, we can *attempt* to view Béla Tarr's long take (since it is already *too* long) *as* its own separate reality, like a short film. But the real tension of Tarr's temporal aesthetics does not merely reside in the form of



long take, but its connection with other long takes that take place before and after the long take in question. The film itself is a series of blocks filled with long takes. We must not be led astray to the fact that there are *no cuts* in Tarr's long take; they exist but in the form of blocking, in the way buildings and walls are staged to block something from view. The architecture in Tarr's film exhibits more than just a face for scenery, but as blocks of *inner cut*, that divide several periods of moments that are already entombed within an extended take. I will speak more about this later.

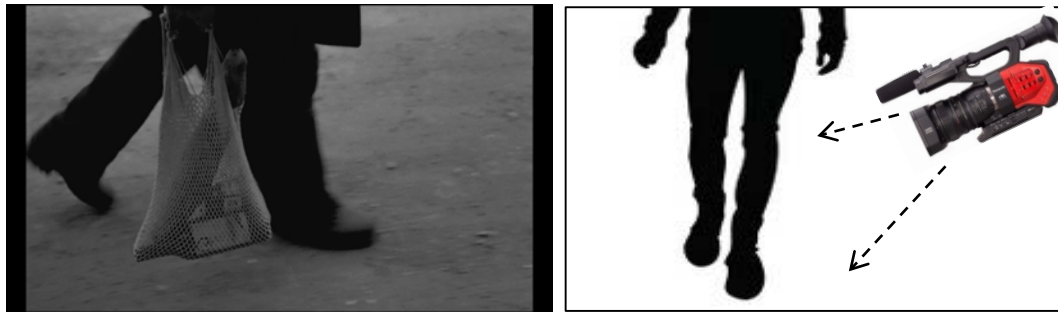
The *stretchedness* of the sequence is precisely the *expanse of our anxiety* in the comportment towards time, in the midst of the world. In long take, time is shown in its stretchedness, but the full meaning of its prolonged stretchedness fluctuates unevenly. In *The Man from London*, like any Tarr's later films, no matter how important the story or the character motivation might be, the film must be understood in the light of the *way* they are presented. In the sequence (see Figure 5.9), there are two essential moments that *stretch* the long take even further: first, the scene when the camera shows the door of the house (right after the man goes inside), and secondly, in the last scene, where we see the close-up of the lock. These two scenes, what I call as the lingering shots, stay in their position without changing their depth of field, but at the same time bobs ever slightly in their mode of standing still. In a physical world beyond the sequence inquired, this slight bobbing happens because of the effects of a man holding a Steadicam. In the view of the filmic diegesis, it resembles the uncanny perspective of a first person's view, like our natural human perception that cannot stand still. To be alive, is of course, *to move about*. The slight, waverly movement brings into the sequence a sense of realism in the way we perceive our environment. The absence of a man – which hooked our objectivized looks in both lingering scenes – is what makes the long take especially remarkable in its acute

display of uncanniness and nothingness. The man is there, gone for a while, resurfaces, and then gone. But the camera lingers on and on. It tarries here and here, but like a brush that sweeps our sense of time, it *stills* and *erupts* our sense of nothingness.

There are two arguments I want to make here, so that we can *phenomenologically locate* further the essence of the lingering shot, in the range of Tarr's long take sequence. The first regards the world of the camera's movements as encirclement of beings, from an external point of view. The second, from an inner point of view, is the movement of the 'lingering takes' in its existential connection to Dasein profound boredom.

### **5.3.1. Cinematography's worldly movements as encirclement of beings**

Let me elaborate on the first argument. When the man in Figure 5.9 walks, it is not just about being shown by the framing of the camera that *he walks*, but that in the midst of his walking there is a camera which moves around and captures his movement. To illustrate further the first statement, please take a look at Figure 5.10. In the first frame, we see a man walking, while the camera pans from left to right, close-up. The second frame shows the placement of the camera, in a mode of low angle, handled by a Steadicam operator. The first frame is the diegetic of the film narrative, while the second frame is the actual physical movement in carrying out the scene.



**Figure 5.10:** A sequence from *The Man From London*. Screening diegetic (left) vs possible camera placement (right).

In the early scene of Figure 5.10, the camera revolves around his walking, first, as a panning, low-angle shot and after a while, continues to over-the-shoulder-shot, medium close up. This change of framing changes forth the intensity of the distance of the man it is seizing. The man walks about to finally reaches his destination, but in the process towards his destination, the camera never stops encircling him. *The camera orbits incessantly to what it is seizing as beings-being-framed*. The cinematography measures the space, finds itself in the space, and becomes part of the space in such a way that it stays hidden from our views. The camera, in a formulaic short, *move-capture-circle* in space. The physical camera, when moving, *performs* its own reality. Fred Kelemen, the director of photography for Tarr's last film *The Turin Horse*, describes the process of filming as a kind of “physical performance”; “The human being is a moving being—physically and spiritually—not a stationary one. The moving image is thus a thinking image” (Koehler, 2012). Kelemen's coinage, “moving image is thus a thinking image,” gives a positive status to the physicality of moving camera, a kind of fluidity that is further emphasized as a long take. Explaining further the process of cinematography, Kelemen pronounces:

Yes, it's very elastic, like a material you can form, like hot wax. It is like dancing with the world around, and while moving creating it. A quotation of

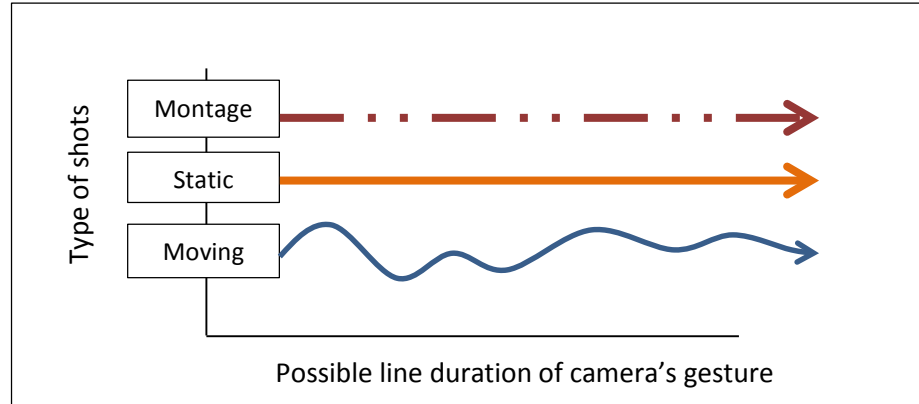
Nietzsche comes to mind—that we have to be able to give birth to a dancing star (Koehler, 2012).

Here, Keleman's camera not only moves and captures reality; the camera's physique itself becomes something malleable – like a “hot wax”! In the hand of ardent, thinking cinematographer, the camera becomes something like an organic material, or even a part of his body, a protruding brush of lighting, an extension of his consciousness of the world he is gazing towards. In other words, the cinematography is the dancing figuration of man's hand and his will, to transform according to the whims of the body and the mind. In Tarr's films, not only the camera and the human do move, but so too the lighting or even the set piece. In *The Turin Horse* for example, the wind machine that creates the billowing gale have to move along with the camera, so that the impression of ‘strong, heavy wind’ can fill up the whole frame of the camera. Kelemen is right when he describes his filmmaking process as *elastic*. This is why when explaining the idea of elasticity, the term ‘thinking image’ creeps up into the statement. I would like to give a clearer indication, and by borrowing several understandings from Heidegger, why this is so. There are two phenomenological points that will help us understand this indication: a) Elasticity as physical properties of long take, b) Dasein is first and foremost, a stretched being, which is why long take *is* and can be labeled as elastic. The analyses regarding these two statements are elaborated below.

a) *Elasticity as physical properties of long take.*

This first statement follows a very physical aspect of filmic process. Elasticity in Tarr's cinema here does not mean the film shot has rubber-like quality, but that the shot in Tarr's

cinema is malleable in terms of its cinematographic movement in space. For example, when shooting something, unplanned objects or accidental events come along in the process, but sometimes these things add in, aesthetically contribute, into the shooting process. Filmmaker Lav Diaz calls this style, ‘organic’ (Guarneri, 2013). Long take, since it is already very long and strenuous, opens up space and transforms space in its process of capturing the movement of beings. When the camera starts rolling, as it runs over its course, several things – lighting, costumes, location and so on – change their usefulness, their texture, their beings. For example, Sokurov’s *Russian Ark* consumes so much change – e.g. actor’s mistake, costume alteration and so on – in its one take, 90 minutes duration, and yet, the composition of its long take, the *nature* of long take itself, brushes away some of the planning and disappointments. In the eventual exhibition of its vision, the mistakes and accidents form the eventual structure of its take. Interestingly, *Russian Ark* runs a very long line of space, almost two kilometres (Halligan, 2003). This is an astounding fact seeing that the film took three attempts before finally getting it right. It is not easy shooting 90 minutes long take since problems can easily occur over the course of the shooting, promulgating re-shooting and further tension. In a very long scene, rehearsal is a *must*. That a film like *Russian Ark*, “achieves a freshness and a sense of the unexpected just around the corner, making for a frisson of reality in this real-time timelessness” (Halligan, 2003), describes largely the achievement of elasticity found in Tarr’s long take. That “sense of the unexpected” can be seen in the sequence from *The Man from London* (Figure 5.9) when the camera tracks down the man’s walk, rises up and follows his back, until he arrives to a cottage beside the sea, and all this while we the audience wonders where this long take is leading to.



**Figure 5.11:** Type of shots. Illustration by Fauzi Naeim.

For comparative purposes, I have drawn three types of shots: Static long takes, moving long take and montage. Please see Figure 5.11. The three different lines should be understood *metaphorically*, under the theme of ‘elasticity’ discussed here. The dash lines found in montage simply refers to its variable cutting process. For static long take, championed by Tsai Ming-liang and Roy Andersson, the camera is fixed in one location and usually in long shot. On the other hand, moving long take, championed by Tarr, Jancsó and Tarkovsky, travels the space in a wavy line according to some thematic ideas like following human walks, landscape control and so on. Here, the moving camera is much more dynamic than static shot – but harder to plan. The wavy line shown in Figure 5.11 attempts to show the elasticity of a moving long take. To understand fully the moving long take with its lingering shot is akin to observe its poetic movement like a slow blooming of a red flower, or a snake heaving the branches of a tree, or the rippling water as it washes the river banks. The movement of the camera transforms the way nearness and distance operates in our gaze.

And yet, observing again the nature of Tarr's long takes, they do not operate with any pyrotechnics such as the ones in the restaurant scene where Uma Thurman is tracking the yakuza in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill Volume 1* (2003), or in the scene where Ray Liotta brings his girlfriend to the Copacabana nightclub through the back door in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990). These two sequences by Tarantino and Scorsese show the busyness of lives, the noises they make, with background music. If anything, the long takes found in Tarr's cinemas are quite ... anti-climactic, and even dull. But it is in this dullness a different sense of quiet power burns and vibrates coldly. Tarr's cinematography is grounded in silence, and moves in the quietude of the moment. Referring again to the scene above from *The Man from London*, (starting from when the camera shows us a pair of legs to its sudden ending with a lingering shot of a lock on a door), silence pervades its whole moment. We might hear the ocean waves, the steps of the man's walking, but all in all, silence pervades the whole moment. The busyness of lives in Tarr's world points to the quiet inner turmoil of Heidegger's Dasein living its existence. In *Damnation* (Figure 5.4), the man moves and stops, but moves and stops in the quietude of the moment. Is it possible to see Tarr's cinema as a piety towards the solitude and the silence?

The silence that intrudes and pervades Tarr's cinematography is also that which structures the camera's elasticity over its topography. This is also why I pointed out earlier of its metaphoric qualities like a snake heaving between wooden branches or like a flower blooming but never like a train running on the rails since a flower blooms *quietly*. When Tarr directs his camera, what gets involved in the shots is nothing but the respect of silence. In the mode of silence, time grows and lends our contemplation wings to fly into our inner abyss. When Keleman sees his photographic collaboration with Tarr is just like "dancing with the world around, and while moving creating it" (Koehler, 2012), he rhymes this

dancing around like a dancing star. Is not a dancing star something shining and beautiful – and observed from a far, a force of nature moving silently? Clearly, in the face of elasticity of Tarr’s lingering shot, *it is silence which foregrounds its malleability*. If the camera’s elasticity is what moves-creates, then silence is what is contained in the essence of the elasticity, what helps thematize the movement and the creation.

*b) Dasein is first and foremost, a stretched being, which is why long take is and can be labeled as elastic.*

Earlier I have elaborated about the elasticity in the silence and durability of Tarr’s lingering shot. Tarr’s cinema is elastic not only because of its physical aspect, or its starry dance, but rather, the way we are *existentially elastic* first and foremost. To remind: Our span as planetary being is but momentous. In the second half of *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes the mode of Dasein in its comportment to temporality and death. Dasein, as a being-in-the-world, is *an entity stretched over time*. At each end of this expanse of stretchedness, lies birth and death (BT, p. 425). For example, the life that I am leading now stands between unremembered birth and my unknown death. However, this stretching life is by no means rigid, but a malleable sort, very elastic. The life that I lead differs from another person’s life; I age differently than the other, I have no idea when the other will die, and could never know or taste the other’s death. It is my belief that long take, esoterically, portrays the mystery of our lives much more than montage; the more monotonous the long take is, the more it reflects the uncanniness of Dasein, “who stretches along between birth and death” (BT, p. 425). Since Tarr’s lingering shots are remarkably slow, monotonous and anti-climactic, they in fact *can* soothe us to sleep! Unless, of course, we can awaken in our inner being, a way of gazing that elevates our thinking, an observation to what is important,



the Being of beings. As beings that cannot escape time, we are finite creatures, but film montage will not remind us of our temporal nature; it is only in the presence of long take, in the stretchedness and *pressuredness* of time, that the sense of temporality exudes its smell and invades us with urgency – an urgency which afflicts more on those who cannot stay still but fidget around with technologies and talkativeness. It is not for nothing that a very long time ago, the Greek philosopher Plotinus stated Time as image to Eternity (Plotinus, 1991, p. 214). Long take exudes the eternity of time in the temporal shortness of a film-image. Long take reminds us of our finitude. *Long take measures our presence, and stretch our tempo towards time ecstatically.*

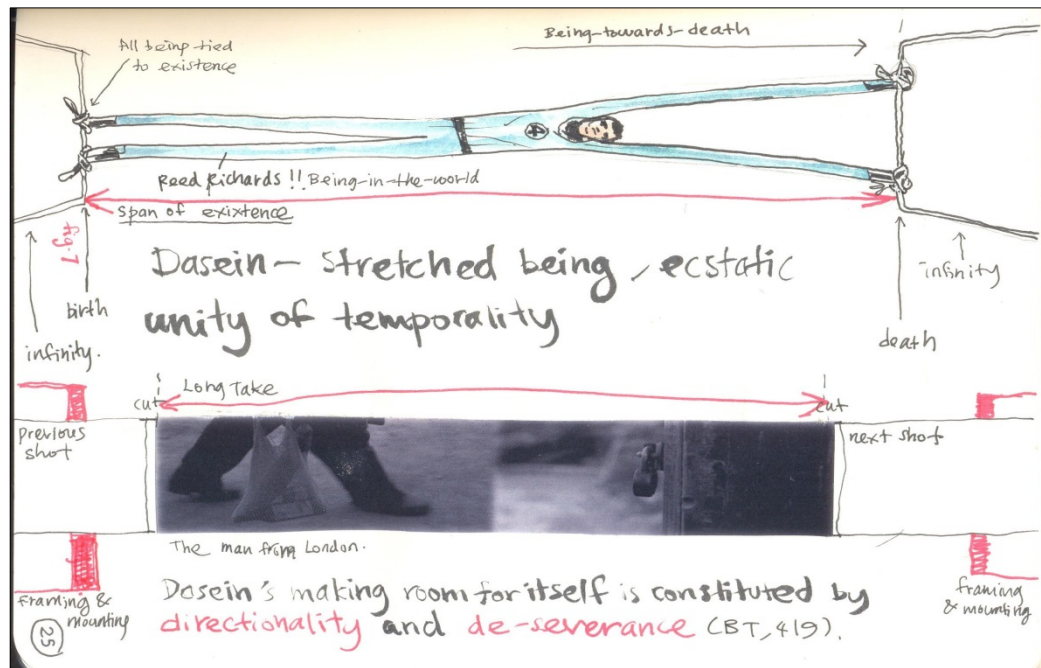
According to Heidegger, we are beings “continuously enduring sequence of pure ‘nows’” (BT, p. 462). The ‘nowness’ is what unites and condenses the phases of time, which is why we can contextual ‘then’ and ‘later’ in the portrayal of the moment. The phrases like ‘span,’ ‘stretch,’ ‘expanse,’ ‘length,’ ‘duration’ are verbs given by us to situate time, to understand and measure time for our everyday projects. Time is but “Dasein’s own temporality as ecstatically stretched...” (BT, p. 463). What does ‘ecstatic’ means in Heidegger’s vocabulary? How does the understanding of ‘ecstatically stretched’ can help us analyze further, and thus gives a fuller account of Tarr’s cinematic raptures? A statement by Heidegger in *Being and Time* can perhaps shed an initial light: “*The existential-temporal condition for the possibility of the world lies in the fact that temporality, as an ecstatical unity, has something like a horizon*” (BT, p. 416). This is a powerful but still, a difficult statement to follow. What we will do next is to unpack this particular statement slowly but surely, so that we can have a better picture regarding the range of our existence in the movement of existential elasticity.

To remind again: Dasein, as have been explained earlier in chapter two, is *human existence*. Dasein is human being who is, always, ‘there.’ Dasein is the ‘there’ in being. Heidegger writes; “temporality constitutes the disclosedness of the ‘there’” (BT, 416). As Dasein, we are space and time combined together. Dasein cannot exist and *be* but within *time*. Time is an ecstatical unity. By ecstatical unity, Heidegger indicates how time is the unison of past, present and future. This gives a sense that Dasein is dynamically moving along a *line* of here and there, now and then. The word ‘ecstatic’ comes from the Greek term ‘*ecstases*,’ meaning ‘standing outside’, ‘removal’ or ‘displacement.’ Etymologically, *ecstases* has close affinity with ‘existence.’ *Ecstasies*, which comes from *ecstases*, means ‘rapture’ or ‘pleasure.’ Nietzsche in *Twilight of the Idols* notes: “If there is to be art, if there is to be any aesthetic doing and observing, one physiological precondition is indispensable: *rapture*. Rapture must first have augmented the excitability of the entire machine; else it does not come to art” (1888, VIII, 122-23). Such is the fluidity of the *ecstases*; time, being and rapture all come together, elevating the profoundness of temporal awareness.

Dasein, as living being in a world, with a will to understand and project to pursue, moves along the world. As a moving-along finite being we strive in a manner of stretching along. Heidegger writes: “The specific movements in which Dasein *is stretched along and stretches itself along*, we call its ‘*historizing*’” (BT, p. 427; italic not mine). History does not exist suddenly as science of culture, but because we are first and foremost, a stretched and concerned being, thus that historicity can be taken up and becomes our subject of study. Dasein here is seen by Heidegger as something that not only moves along, but stretches along in the world. This stretching along is a unique human movement since it is an existential undertaking that moves with and *within* time. Such lucid awareness of time is what defines our finitude, but this finitude is still something we existentially fight, which is

why we stretch forward, facing up death everywhere. As existing and temporal being, only thus that we can stretch along, from point A to point B, from birth to death, taking up and making up space. Perhaps an illustration (taken from my sketchbook) regarding the existential *stretchedness* can help to clear the smoke a bit (see Figure 5.12).

To continue with Heidegger's remarks, "...*the possibility of the world lies in the fact that temporality, as an ecstatical unity, has something like a horizon*" (BT, p. 416), we notice how world opens up its possibility since human being is a temporal being. This temporality manifests a horizon since our world manifests a horizon. For example, when we look out the window, we notice buildings and trees, and some things have variable distances between each other. At the far off building and trees, beyond the mountains, we notice horizontal lines that are quite vague to our eyes, the limit of our perception. Something exists out of the corner of everywhere we look; boundaries that delimits and enriches the way we can fathom things. In language, for example, we find limits to the possible ways we can construct sentences; not the language itself but the time and body which limit the many ways we can say different words. It is impossible to speak thousand vocabularies at the same time, and this limitation is the horizon that creates and shelters our world. The horizon puts a certain, necessary distance between us and meaningful things, and in this distance, possibility of the world manifests the *ecstatical* unity of time. We can utilize 'then', 'now' and 'later' in everyday language since we are ecstatic being, stretching alongside the world.



**Figure 5.12:** Stretched being and stretched time. Illustration by Fauzi Naeim.

In the process of measuring time, space too gets involved in the horizon of our existence. A moving long take always covers certain geography. A moving long take in cinema shows, and cannot help but to *continuously shows* over its duration. What is shown *points* and *directs* our gaze toward whatever beings it has framed and captured in and *as* its space. In the space of what is shown, in the space between me and the screen, in the space of my being, therein entombed a world of meaningfulness; a consciousness of a reality. Without this world of meaningfulness, no space can ever be fathomed and apprehended wholly. “Consciousness of Reality,” writes Heidegger, “is itself a way of Being-in-the-world” (BT, p. 254). But reality is not something which we can calculate like mathematical equations, in fact it is so much already there for our involvement, or perhaps *because it is so much already there* that we forget the reality we are in. The business of everyday sucks us from slowly meditating on the reality we are in. A small hit to the hips by a corner of a table suddenly reminds us again the position of the table in front of us, the sharpness of the

table's edge, and simultaneously, the drawback of the body that we are living in. The reality *exhausts*, but as a cinema, the reality becomes refreshed again. In cinema, the world is retouched, remade and renewed. We are conscious again of our world. Cinemas that exude a strong reminder of our reality – for example, Lisandro's *Los Muertos* or Dumont's *Hors Satan* – are the ones that slow down our everyday business and busyness.

Getting back to the idea of elasticity in Tarr's lingering take, we can summarize how Tarr's long take, since it moves dynamically over space while prolonging the heaviness of time, symbolizes the dynamism of our existence, which “*is stretched along and stretches itself along*” (Heidegger, BT, p. 427). Furthermore, since we are already a stretched being, a deeper rumination of moving long take and its lingering shot – something which Tarr sublimely creates – is nothing other than a comprehension of our existence, of *Dasein*. Lingering shot, analyzed phenomenologically within Heidegger's corpus, is akin to restraining blocks in the ecstatic unity of temporality. It is the line that stutters the smoothness of an elastic cinematography, but which guides the movement in its temporal profundity. In Tarr's lingering shot, *not only is time ecstatically stretched, but it is also slowed up*. A lingering shot, since it pronounces and dictates further the slow tempo of a moving long take, restrains the elasticity of Tarr's long take, and in restraining, the horizon of the world and the ecstaticity of *Dasein* manifests – stay and transform each other – in the momentariness of a lightening in the darkness of night.

What is so extraordinary about the stretchedness quality one finds in Tarr's long take? The long take extends time and horizontal space, but why is it so *existentially* important? Heidegger did not pursue this line of thought since cinema was never something that interests his ontological investigations, unlike painting, sculpture and architecture.

Only God knows what he must have thought if faced with slow cinemas by Bela Tarr, Apichatpong Weerasethakul or Lisandro Alonso. It is highly likely he will fall asleep for the boredom of watching the banality of life. But this does not mean that we cannot conjecture. This is one of the main reasons why this dissertation exists in the first place; to offer Heidegger's *Andenken* (thoughtful recollection), which is the priority of the question of Being. When he died in 1976, he left us immense textual works, mostly repetitive questioning about the meaning of Being, rejoinders about the oblivion of Being in the history of world civilization, but scattered among the questionings are some of the most highly original insights regarding Dasein's inner abyss, and if not, some of most radical and uncanny interpretation on essence of beings. Heidegger's statements cited so far are to help us clear the path to deep reflection, to renew our thinking why poetic consciousness is important in the first place.

In reply to the interrogation of *existential power* found in Tarr's extremely long take, I would like to furnish a statement by Saint Augustine on time, which is also quoted by Heidegger in *Being and Time*: "Hence it seemed to me that time is nothing else than an extendedness; but of what sort of thing it is an extendedness I do not know; and it would be surprising if it were not an extendedness of the soul itself" (*Confessions* XI. 26; cited in BT, pp. 479-480). Here we see an interesting insight regarding the extendedness – *stretchedness* – of time. Aquinas confesses he does not know why there is a feeling of extendedness but thinks that it is no other but the manifestation of the abstract soul. One cannot *see* soul, but one can feel and understand its invisible form. Time, since it is what endures in the finitude of mankind, is also what lengthens our spatial sense as dweller of the earth, whose gaze rests on the cosmos. To look around, to find and place meanings to things we see; these all can only be resolved in temporal manner and not in a vacuum. Film

image, the American phenomenologist Edward Casey writes, “supplies a plenitudinous presence in its luminous showings” (1981, p. 260). There is too much happening in a film image; a bountiful of movement, memorable richness! Furthermore, Casey believe there are three important types of semiotics in film images; ‘imagefulness,’ ‘beingfulness’ and ‘eventfulness’ (1981, p. 260). This is why film images are so memorable, he thinks. Each brings together the brimming spaciousness that is withheld by the film images. Heidegger too wonders the same thing when he writes, “A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness” (PLT, p. 44). Heidegger is, of course, thinking of the setting-up of truthfulness in the spaciousness of artwork. Consider the way Casey adds “fulness”: it is as if the film image is a container of moist elixir-something that is tipping to fall over, ready to overflow the cinematic frames. Tarr realizes this abounding image that is ever ready to overflow itself. This is perhaps why Tarr frustrates the image by tinting his cinema with the darkness of white over grey. Colour must be leached out so as to maintain the solidity of the ashtray.

Fast cuts in films remove time, but long take lengthens our awareness of time. Both style promises the endurance of the world, but long take reminds us the infiniteness of the image, which can only be a contemplation of the soul. “If there were no soul,” Aristotle thinks, “time would be impossible” (*Physics*,  $\Delta$  14, 223a 25; cited in BT, p. 479). “Time,” the Russian filmmaker Tarkovsky thinks, “is a condition for the existence of our ‘I’” (1986, p. 57). Without time, there is no ‘I’, or: without ‘I’, time does not exist at all. The extendedness Saint Augustine feels of time, is none other than the extension of our soul wrapping over beings. In other words, the ‘plenitudinous’ and the ‘luminous showings’ of image philosophized by Casey are none other than the shimmering abstraction of soul, the unquantifiable richness that can only be felt in the extendedness of time. Getting back to the

original question, the existential probing undertaken by Tarr's cinema – a probing of the concreteness in the simplicity of existence – ekes out a space in such a way that human soul is what it is reflecting upon. Bela Tarr's long take, accordingly, is the extension of soul that probes out, gauging the world.

### **5.3.2. The movement of the 'lingering takes' in its existential connection to Dasein profound boredom**

A rapid sequence with many cuts will not be able to make us listen to the temporality of our depth; but a very long take sequence can situate us directly towards the path of *contemplating profound boredom*. What is profound boredom here? How do we connect the common appraisal that long take *is* boredom? How does profound boredom become important in understanding the metaphysics of filmic takes? These are the questions that will guide this section.

One of the (usual) main criticisms of long take is that audience gets easily bored, especially when nothing much happens in the shots. A long take showing a man walking from far off horizon, in a one-point perspective road, to only arrive two minutes later in front of the camera (as in Tarr's *Sátántangó*), shows nothing much but *a man walking on the road*. The 'unenlightened audience' will complain, "why are we shown this boring spectacle?" "Can't the shot be cut into two or three very short segments, say, 3 seconds each?" These all are normal complaints, but still better than having the audience dozing off in the middle of the film without any comments. A long take might take two minutes to show a man walking from a distant horizon, but that a man is walking towards us from a distant horizon is *precisely* what the long take is concretely showing about! In the man's



walking, his feature grows as he comes nearer to the camera. His appearance, over time, becomes much more pronounced. It is not in the strength of the eyes towards looking and holding this sequence that will hold off the boredom, but it is in *the attunement of our inner, creative strength toward whatness of beings*, their modes of appearance, that will help us understand the stance of slow cinema towards what is boredom.

There are several reasons why mainstream audience is easily bored with Tarr's long take. Chiefly among them; modern audience has lost the strength to focus on what is banal. The *will to wait* is not nurtured. The technological apparatuses have drowned us with rivers of buttons and panels. There are too many things that need our attention, and not enough time to do them. Phone to check emails, notes, SMS, and each action is to be done in a most economical and efficient manner. Even *the will* to read long, strong literature have been taken away, slowly, by modern technologies. Writing long letters have already becoming obsolete. The emails, the SMS, *WhatsApp* messages are set up in such way that only short texts are encouraged. Modern audience has lost the anticipation for the longer and the dreadful. We rush to fill up our time to avoid precisely the longer and the dreadful. Life has become something whereby we actively participate in never-ending events and busily communicate here and there just so that we can escape boredom. And yet, there still exist some film makers who produce long, slow cinemas! Why do they still create this slow form of art when modern spectators ignore their spectacles? In an interview, Tsai Ming-liang says: "The thing is, I think much of life is boring. Life is nothingness. I want film to reflect that" (Jenkins, 2015). Life is boring because life *is*. Tsai, Tarr, Kaplanoğlu or Sokurov hail long takes because the form reminds them the nothingness of temporality, which is the boringness of it all. To escape long take, is to escape the existential aspect of life. Long take bores when there really is *nothing* much happening in the shot. But this

*nothing* is the personal truth Tsai wants to reflect in his film, which is why he states: “I think we’re collectively afraid of boredom” (Jenkins, 2015).

Such a statement by Tsai celebrates and simultaneously problematizes the way we think boredom. To think and *dreams* boredom is Tsai’s way of a brave cinema, which is why he fills his shots with slowness and emptiness. Tsai thinks that long take is a peculiar strength in understanding the boring life. This also means: slow cinema as a courageous stand, not against the boredom but as that what employs boredom as part of its forte. These filmmakers do not escape the reflection of boredom in their image-works, but confront the boredom directly; even to actualize the boredom in their cinematography, making boredom as part of their courageous arsenal in their stance regarding existence. Slow cinema is *what regards the boredom* since boredom is understood here not as a matter of what is boring but as a *profound boredom*, an existential boredom which is essential in experiencing the fullness of life. *Slow cinema is a love letter towards what is boredom.*

In Chapter 4, under the section on Slow Cinema, I have touched a bit about boredom when experiencing slow cinema. There, I elicit the English word ‘boring’ with its German counterpart, ‘*Langeweile*,’ which when literally translated into English, is ‘long while.’ It is not difficult to see that boredom is something that has to do with very long while. My reading regarding *langeweile* (and for the most part of this section) is influenced from Heidegger’s lecture, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (1995) [originally, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit*, 1929]. In Chapter 4, I also quoted a statement by Heidegger, which I procure again here: “Passing the time is *a driving away of boredom that drives time on*” (1995, p. 93). We passes the time is such way that we drives away boredom. We do not want

anything to do with boredom since it is what makes us so restless. However, Heidegger believes that boredom is not something attached to human like a red sleeveless shirt put on a body; boredom is one of Dasein fundamental attunement, just like the structure of care and anxiety that *are already existing* within human as long as he is being-in-the-world. *Dasein is Being and Time*. “Boredom,” Heidegger thinks, “springs from the temporality of Dasein” (1995, p. 127). For this section, we will go deeper into this line of thought. Two questions will be pondered upon: What does Heidegger mean by boredom? How does Heidegger’s thinking on boredom can give us clue to understand Bela Tarr’s lingering shot?

The question of time always lurks behind the problematic of boredom. To be bored with something means to feel lethargic, restless by something other. Waiting for two hours with nothing to do for your name to be called by a clerk in a government office can be something terrible to behold. You *feel* boring since time is oppressing your mind, affecting your mood. When one is bored, one tries to escape from it. However, it is impossible to truly escape boredom since it is already part of abyssal structure. We can only shake it off, or drive it away, Heidegger believes, by causing it to sleep (1995, p. 79). To cause boringness to fall asleep is to do paradoxical activity such as jogging, or playing computer games; anything that can help us thwart the coming of boredom. “We ‘know’ – in a strange kind of knowing – that boredom can return at any time. Thus it is already there” (Heidegger, 1995, p. 79). That which bores, Heidegger writes, “is that which holds us in limbo and yet leaves us empty” (1995, p. 87). The state of boredom does not excite us; it makes our body fidget here and there, itching for some action. Being bored “holds us in limbo and yet leaves us empty”: What does Heidegger mean by this statement? What does one feel empty of? Why is limbo there when one feels boring? To understand fuller

Heidegger's statement, we must imagine ourselves elated to the state of boredom. Let us visualize. You are reading a thick book. The book is boring. You are not interested in what the author is saying. In fact, the subject matter of the book is not up your alley anyway. But you carry on ahead. Suddenly, you feel drowsy, and before you realize it, you fall asleep. Now which part of this scenario gives you the sense of limbo and emptiness? The whole point is that in being bored, *nothing* really happens. When nothing happens, life feels boring. But in this "nothing really happens" the Nothingness comes to fore and covers up your sense of being. When the nothing comes to the fore, anxiety too wakes up, creating that vibrant mood of boring which makes us see "nothing is happening" when clearly something is really happening; you *are* reading a book, a book which you do not like! Yet, in the mood of being bored, our inner abyss is left hanging in limbo. *In being bored, nothingness makes itself present.* What is most unfortunate is that the presence of nothingness threatens to swallow our concentration of reading the book that the nothingness turns opaque and mask us for further contemplation. For instance, I absolutely adore Camus's *The Plague*, yet there are times when I feel a bit bored by some of his paragraphs. It is in this dualistic tension between boringness and nothingness that true beauty can come shining forth.

"Boredom springs from the temporality of Dasein" (Heidegger, 1995, p. 127). Boredom is nowhere but reigns within the nothingness of our Being. Boredom is insightful since it connects us deeply to the rapture of time, which we stand to forget every time we become obsessed with our everyday works. Like a slithering dark snake the boredom come and attack us but the attack is slow but sudden, silent but vibrating, and incredibly consistent. Who can make the boredom 'sleeps' forever? This is impossible! This is what Heidegger tries to articulate in his lecture when he asks: "Do things ultimately stand in such

a way with us that a profound boredom draws back and forth like a silent fog in the abysses of Dasein?" (1995, p. 77). The movement of boredom, who glides back and forth, is a silent fog in the forest where our consciousness reigns. Since it is a silent fog, we ignore its poignancy and see it instead, as threat to our well-being. Such strange power boredom holds over us, and such uncanny resilience our soul has, in not giving in to boredom. Yet, the boredom must be risked in the journey toward our inner self or else there is no true contemplation. When boredom is awakened for what it *is*, only then can the boredom be perceived for its *profoundness*.

Clearly it is impossible to do justice to Heidegger's superb lecture on the uncanniness of boredom, but the paragraphs above should suffice to let us see the difficulty in trying to work out how boredom stands for Dasein, and the manner of Heidegger's interrogation in thinking the way in defining the silent fogginess of boredom. Let me repeat again my second question: How does Heidegger's thinking on boredom can give us clue to understand Béla Tarr's lingering shot? The answer can be found in the nature of the slow, long, lingering shot that is manifested in Tarr's aesthetics. In long take – in opposition to fast cut (especially when the content of the long take speaks of the banality of the situation) – *boredom is risked*. In risking boredom, two things are exposed: either audience is bored, fall asleep *or* audience is reinvigorated by the boredom to such an extent that enhancement of contemplation is realized through Dasein entrancement with time.



**Figure 5.13:** Futaki leaving the scene (left frame) until he becomes a dot in a landscape (right frame). Scene from *Sátántangó*.

Let us try to fathom “being-bored” with the issue at hand, namely Bela Tarr’s filmmaking. Observe for instance Figure 5.13, which shows a lone figure of man (Futaki) walking towards the distant horizon in *Sátántangó*. So a man walks; we see his back, but is that all? *Something* is happening: a man walks, the camera crabs gently to the left, he turns into a small dot in the middle of the road, the camera slowly tilts up, waits for several precious moments, and then the scene ends. And yet, *nothing* really remarkable happens either; a scenario of a man walking is too mundane to be shown in extended length. As so, it is normal for a person who watches the scene gets restless, and asks around (if not to himself), “What is going on?” “Why are we shown a person walking to the distant horizon?” “What is there to see? Nothing really happens!” or “Enough! Cut the bull!” When *nothing is happening*, we get easily restless. But precisely ‘a nothing happens’ that our anxiety can be vibrated for its discontentedness. The happening of a man walking at a leisurely pace places a certain burden to the untemplated audience since the observation of a man’s ‘leisurely pace’ takes a toll on the amount of time the audience is investing his or her time over. As such, he or she thinks that time has not been well spent. What is so special about *another* walk? Clearly the lone figure of man does not walk on a sky! Time is too precious to be squandered over for mundaneness. “Where is the nerve-wrecking action?” asks somebody, as she gets up and checks her hand phone for more...pressing

matters, chatting in WhatsApp for example. An ironic statement by Kierkegaard (which was also quoted by Dan Moller's intriguing essay '*The Boring*') is exemplary:

There was a man whose chatter I was obliged to listen to because of the circumstances. On every occasion, he was ready with a little philosophical lecture that was extremely boring. On the verge of despair, suddenly I discovered that the man perspired exceptionally much when spoke. This perspiration now absorbed my attention. I watched how the pearls of perspiration collected on his forehead, then united in rivulet, slid down his nose, and ended in a quivering globule that remained suspended at the end of his nose. From that moment on, everything was changed; I could even have the delight of encouraging him to commence his philosophical instruction just in order to watch the perspiration on his brow and on his nose (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 299).

Kierkegaard is pointing the absurdity that can arise in a very boring situation. A rivulet of perspiration at the end of man's nose can be very entertaining indeed, especially if anything else is dull! In extreme situation of kindness, nothing but violence can grow from it. A boring scenario will stop being boring when something is happening, and this happening catches the viewer's attention. One of the best strategies of watching and appreciating Tarr's cinemas and other slow cinemas like his is to read beyond "nothing really happens", to a level of "I am curious where this is going to lead". Something *is* happening in Figure 5.13 above: A human movement. His gesture might be slow and steady, but a ripple of the smallest gesture is enough to change the landscape of *Sátántangó*, enough to move the interior of my dimension.

“A puzzling feature of a great deal of art,” Dan Moller (2014) writes, “is just how boring it is.” He continues, “...why is so much of it – even the best of it – so dull?” There is no clear cut answer for this type of question. For my part, while I agree for his assessment that great art contribute to the great part of boringness, the boringness that come to my consciousness in apprehending great work of art is what moves me to the state of contemplation. *Boring is what clears us for emptiness to come forward.* In the state of being empty, the feelings of amazement arrive suddenly to the scene without which, we are left with being empty without the opportunity for critical appraisal. Great work of art such as Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* or Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* elicits cathartic feelings from where the dualistic tension between emptiness and boringness meets. It is in this way that beauty and pathos can be fully grasped in their unsayable sighs. In fact, I *personally* do not consider watching Bela Tarr’s films as boring though I know my students fall asleep when I showed a four-minute sequence of long take from *Damnation*. I cannot blame them: These students do not know what to expect, do not know what to look for plus they are not engaged with the art of slow cinema. A person whose staple diet consists of watching superheroes movies like *Avengers* will find their excitement for action absolutely thwarted by the sudden action of Futaki walking slowly down an empty road. However, there constitutes a strong element of being bored when experiencing Tarr’s films, but which I attach with different connotations; being bored as in being anxious and being empty. It is important in this section for us to come in contact with most unique presence in the engagement with Béla Tarr; being bored. Only once we can grapple with this problem, can we move on to his metaphysic of nihilism. In fact, it is impossible to work out how nihilistic his work is (if it really is nihilism) without understanding the world-weariness that patterns of his narrative style.



For the uninitiated to the game of slow cinema, it is true that very long take produce exactly the kind of boredom that either makes you want to sleep, or makes you stand up and leave the room. The numerous lingering shot such as can be found in Tarr's *Sátántangó* can move either a thinking man to the state of cathartic meditation or creates some impulse to curse Tarr's cinema. A lingering shot can become like an eternity, a long sigh of stretched 'now'. However, Tarr believes that the idea of eternity is quite important in his aesthetics. In an interview, he says:

This eternity stuff is definitely very important for me. The days are passing, time is running; we will die, everybody has just one life. That's why it's very important how this life is going. The quality of this life. We are not in the church, where people are told lies (Meade, 2009).

Long take pushes the idea of Time to the forefront. "For the cinema image is essentially the observation of a phenomenon passing through time" (Tarkovsky, 1986, p. 87). What passes, decays over time. Time is running, Tarr says, and everyone will die. What differentiates two different people instead is the quality of the life he or she leads. This means finding the life through the truthfulness of leading a critical life rather than through listening to religious talks that can be found in the church that Tarr thinks, "where people are told lies." In Tarr's films, people lie to get what they wanted; Karrer who lies to his lover's husband in *Damnation*; Irímias who lies to the town folks in *Sátántangó*; Maloin who lies to his wife in *The Man from London*; György's estranged wife who lie to Janos to make sure her scheme works; in *Almanac of Fall*, the five inhabitants who live in the same apartment lie to each other; finally, in *The Turin Horse*, the whole earth lie to the father and daughter couple by stealing the water from their wells! By lying from one to another, it seems, the characters get the chance to be distracted by the oppression of life, the boredom

of having nothing but time. Thus, Tarr's characters are able *to pass the time*. "We pass the time," Heidegger writes, "in order to master it, because time becomes long in boredom" (1995, p. 80). Tarr's characters pass the time, enmesh in its *longness*, and master the boredom through cheating and scheming. When asked about how the takes get longer in his later films, Tarr answer, "The takes get longer and longer to go along with my thinking" (Sweeney, 2012). Clearly there is more here than *just another* complex shot. The longer a shot runs, the more 'being bored' is made possible. In the tenseness between longer shots and being bored, *thinking* too grows.

It is not for nothing that Tarr shows us abundant images of man in solitude, framed by the horizon of the open background. There is metaphysical reason for this, something that Heidegger austere researched and something that Tarr *intuits* in his artistic pursuit of the "heaviness of being" (see interview with M. Olsen, 2012): "The days are passing, time is running; we will die, everybody has just one life." Horizon is *binding*. It is what spatially binds man to wander. Spreading beyond the horizon is the prospect of time like a silent fog that announces itself in the mode of boredom. In the images above (see Figure 5.13), where we see the loneliness of man – "everybody has just one life" – in the exposedness of landscape, man is shown to be forever entranced by the temporal horizon. Heidegger writes: "Time entrances [*bannt*] Dasein, not as the time which remained standing as distinct from flowing, but rather the *time beyond such flowing and its standing*, the time which in each case *Dasein itself as a whole* is" (1995, p. 147). What is staggering here is to realize Tarr's intuition, something perhaps he did not realize but nevertheless instinctively show, how time flows and stands, and how it entrances Dasein as a whole. This is one of the many instances where we observe how an artist of Tarr's caliber is already a natural phenomenologist. In visualizing a man walking slowly in the distance of

horizon, Tarr shows a man basking under the temporal horizon, where time flows and stands in boredom; bringing Dasein in its wholesome through the juxtaposition between earth and sky. The Dasein *juts* out in the expanseness of Tarr's canvas, but in such a way that it *shrinks* (the reason why Tarr always play in the contrasts between smallness and bigness of the figure in the composition of one-point-perspective imagery) since Dasein is always entranced by the temporal horizon.

We can easily surmise that Tarr is interested in the imperfection of the human condition, but is it possible to see that his narratives – which are plentiful with amoral characters – come to be because his characters are leading dull life? We must take note that Tarr usually captures his characters in idyllic state. The characters most of the time walk silently, and when they finally find a place to sit, they wait out time by staring into empty places. His characters are cold. Why does Tarr show us all these scenarios? The characters who peopled Tarr's plain landscape – they are suffocated; if not by the close-ups of claustrophobic environment inside a house in Tarr's earlier films (*Prefab People & Family Nest*), then by the long shot of exposed environment in Tarr's later films (*Damnation, Sátántangó, The Turin Horse*). Significantly, why am I using 'suffocated' to talk about Tarr's existentialist cinemas? But what suffocates them and with what method? The clue to the answer to both questions has already been given in the preceding paragraphs. These people, since they live poorly, are suffocated by the boringness of their environment. Tarr's cinema attempts to take hold of this boringness, and in the process, sustains the boringness with extended shots of the cinematography. In this 'boring situation' emptiness is teased out and limbo is called upon. This is also why Tarr's film language is *languid* in its pacing. Tarr has a bigger target; *the cosmos of life*. As such, he must show the eternity of the moment. To show a man walking down a road from a far horizon while the camera waits

patiently his for his figure to looms larger to the camera's framing is to show the immensity of life in time. Boredom is the essence of our eternity, without which, eternity might not be properly sensed and placed in our imagination. We can see incredible parallel between Heidegger and Bela Tarr: *Both see boredom as fundamental attunement of existence.* Heidegger writes and philosophizes about this state, while Tarr is fascinated in showing the boredom that is trapped in his films. Both thinkers stand in awe of this thing called as boredom, which is why they intend to capture this boredom through poetic thinking. Both thinker and artist believes that eternity is what stands in meaningfulness relationship between human and the world, and both attempt to show the question of eternity in their respective crafts. Tarr, in particular, manifests boredom through rigorous display of long take, to remind us again and again the uncanniness of profound boredom from where contemplation takes its roots, and grows.

### **5.3.3. Tarr's cinematography as world-enframing that encircle beings**

The intricacies of the camera movement and the meticulous planning in the preparation of long take scene must not be ignored. Miklos Jancsó, the other famous long take Hungarian director (who also influenced Tarr's languorous cinematic sensibilities) creates remarkable cinematographic staging in his films such as *The Round-Up* (1965) and *The Red and the White* (1967).<sup>38</sup> Jancsó takes full advantage of widescreen format by capturing in long shot, the composition of small human figures moving (or keeping still) in the *puszta* (Hungarian word which refers to 'featureless plain') in the majority of his films, especially in his masterpiece, *The Round-Up*. Since Jancso's camera is always moving, sudden appearance

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<sup>38</sup> When Jancso died, Tarr ruminated: "We have lost the greatest Hungarian film director of all time, a thinker and a real democrat. We are all poorer for it. We will miss him forever" (cited in Dunai, 2014).

or disappearance of character creates curious juxtaposing effects in the visual design. Figure 5.14 for instance, shows a group of prisoners, with their heads covered up, doing a round-up following a circular strand of rope. The movements of the masked group, which is already strange as it is, create a contrasting weight to both the man in the middle who stands still watching the procession and the many vertical, still, wooden columns at the back. In long-take-wide-screen, my eyes dart here and there all over the screen trying to fathom the movement of the character as he moves or stands still, as the camera moves on to capture another detail from another distant figure, or introducing sudden intrusion of a group of armies. Gyula Maar, who was present at the location in the shooting of Jancsó's *The Red and the White* (1967), remarked:

Because this is what is actually involved: the camera is taking part in the gigantic confusion as a continuous observer, it walks with perfect naturalness in the very centre of the event, it stops if it wants to eye something and starts if some new kind of motion carries it off (Maar, 1968, p. 28; cited in Cunningham, 2004, p. 111).

In the operative of filmic production, the camera is, undoubtedly, an undeniable focal presence. Everything revolves around what the camera has shot, what it is currently shooting or what it is going to shoot next. The director will direct a scene, the cameraman and his helpers will move the camera about, the actor will move according to the scene (but with awareness of *something* capturing his or her gesture), the lighting will follow the camera and the actors; but the camera stays silent in its movement in the “gigantic confusion.” It looms over a scene; manifesting a point of loci. It is its own vortex of self-important-contraption since it is what captures and what stores the visibility of the scene. While the cameraman might grapple with some of the camera's keys and mechanics,

always in bodily contact, the actors stay a certain distance but still with his or her spatial body in awareness of the camera's capturing gaze. The camera's operators will not be seen in the final exhibition of the film but the actors, they are the subjects that prolong the content of the film. The camera, what Maar says a "continuous observer," takes part "in the very centre of the event," enticing our worldly things to its reality-projection. In the process of enticement, the camera moves around its subjects while the subjects move or stay inert in front of the camera's point of view, helpless over their visibility, prisoned as such in the intensity of deep focus. This moving-around the subjects is what I would like to call in this section as the *world-enframing that encircles beings*. From this point onwards, I am going to connect this idea and latch it with our previous discussion on Bela Tarr's phenomenology of lingering shot.

As we have seen previously in this same chapter, Tarr's filmmaking lingers and tarries a while. A shot showing a father and daughter eating potatoes at a table in *The Turin Horse* shows more than simply *this* description. The camera, after showing us exactly this, stays for many while before cutting to its next scene. In this type of long take, the atmosphere is subdued by, if not by boringness, then by the quietness of the scenario. The camera *stays*. The man and the woman *stay*. The relationship between these two – the camera's placement and the figures' visibility, creates a special tension in Tarr's aesthetics. This is since the camera is in a state of refusal to immediately cut to the next scene. It is as if there is more to be said, even after everything has been said. It is as if the spatial connection between the camera and the figures' visibility that it is busy capturing is not over yet.



**Figure 5.14:** Prisoners with their faces covered up. *The Round-Up* (1965).

The camera encircles beings, but whether staying put or moving, the camera places a distance between itself and the entities it is capturing within its frame. The lingering shot stays respectful for the possible meaningfulness of Being manifested and extended over time. But what is crucial here is to understand the process of capturing the man and the woman eating in semi-darkness; the created distance between the camera and the figures it captures. For example, in the scenes above from *The Man from London* (see Figure 5.9), the camera actively pursues the man moving from his house to the shack outside; first, it stays in parallel with the man's body, and then stays back behind the man's walking, and afterwards stays put on the shack's lock; suddenly, the man's body is lost and forgotten by the camera's visual composition. Here, the existentialist strength of long take becomes more pronounced as the movements of both the camera and the human figure are stretched out. In this 'stretching out', the distance between the camera and the figures becomes more distinct than usual – it has to be admitted that the nihilist mundaneness of the situation

helps to emphasize the distance more – and beings are teased out of their essence for the unconcealment of Being, which habitually lies trapped by the appearance of beings.

Tarr's cinematic aesthetics is *world-enframing that encircles beings*. Tarr's cinema shows beings but lingers a while. It moves with the slow sureness of long sigh. The movement of the camera puts up a distance so that it can walk slowly, caressing the space of beings while preserving the space for the harmonious confrontation between the visibleness of the figure and the capturing camera. The camera encircles beings, but the mode of its encirclement is profoundly lethargic. Why it tires is mysterious, but if I have to hazard a guess: it must be because the camera, like the figures it is deeply entrancing, is *world-weary*. The cinematography is what exudes boredom and joyous nihilism at the same time. (The analysis on Tarr's nihilistic filmmaking can be seen next in Chapter 6). This is perhaps why I give the camera's procession a name; encircling world-enframing. It is what sets up a world and prolongs a reality. The term 'enframing' connects Heidegger's idea of *Gestell*, the *Enframing* that sets up the essence of modern technology as what frames, stores, and chains human as resources. Does Tarr know his camera is world-weary? Perhaps. Can a machine be *truly* world-weary? Who knows? In fact, why not? Our interpretation as phenomenological rumination must be bold and destructive. Surely the taste for the prolonging of human condition under the guise of long take means some of the enticement of Being of beings is strangely absorbed by the essence of Tarr's phenomenology of lingering shot. If I have to interrogate this phenomenological reading deeper, Tarr's camera imitates Heidegger's conception of 'there' in 'Dasein.' As we have already known since Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Dasein is a German word whose literal translation into English is 'There-being.' Heidegger writes: "Being away is itself a way of man's being" (1995, p. 64). We are able to be away since we are Dasein, 'being-there.'



Tarr's camera stays but in such staying it is simultaneously being-away and being-there. To restate again: The camera encircles beings, but whether staying put or moving, the camera places a distance between itself and the entities it is capturing within its frame. The distance is necessary for any filmmaking process since it will make it easier to shoot actors, but in the hands of Tarr and his collaborators – his wife Ágnes Hranitzky, the film composer Mihály Víg, and his cinematographer Fred Keleman (who sees his cinematography like Nietzsche's 'shooting star'), the distance is the rapturous event between man and space, space and time, time and cinema. The camera both creates and maintains distance in the process of shooting and in the final exhibition that is the filmic diegesis. This putting-up-a-distance is the being-away essence of human existence. The camera imitates human essence ("Being away is itself a way of man's being"), languorously follows the visibleness of the figures, frames each figure's movements to the point where the world-weary characters of Tarr's black-and-white reality seeps and constitutes as part of the essence of the cinematography. Finally, I want to add that Tarr's "heaviness of being" no longer applies to his human character and the cold landscape only; the lingering camera *too* is full with the rapture of "heaviness of being."

The analysis on lingering shot, the boredom that it brings up, can come to be since Dasein itself is rooted in temporality. Time is part of Dasein make-up. The anxiety in the face of boredom is one of the manifestations of temporality who is sleeping quietly under the rug of our body. Heidegger's philosophy is an act to stir the Dasein from his slumber in the bed of roses made from modern technology. If the act of philosophizing, according to Heidegger, "*is not to describe the consciousness of man but to evoke the Dasein in man*" (1995, p. 174), then the phenomenological description so far on Tarr's aesthetics cannot be seen from psychological perspectives, but in the manner of stating the ways our human

essence move in its skirmish with what exhausts and what too, energizes its spirit, that is, through understanding the necessary existence of beautiful nightfall that is Tarr's cinema.

#### **5.4. Heidegger's Conception of Art and Truth in the Ground of Béla Tarr's Cinema**

For this section, we will be engaging Béla Tarr's cinematic art according to Martin Heidegger's understanding of *art as truth*, specifically from Heidegger's inspirational essay, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes (The Origin of the Work of Art)*, presented first as a lecture on November 13, 1935 at Freiburg, Germany. A review for this essay can be read in Chapter Three. For this chapter, we will be extending further by looking into the manner of cinema as a site whereby the earth and the world strife harmoniously. Two key *poetic interrogations* to consider: Does Béla Tarr's cinema exhibits the essence of art as truth of Being? How does Heidegger's ontological-phenomenological idea about art – the strife between earth and world – can be understood in the darkening ground of Tarr's cinema? I argue here how Tarr's images – the numerous scenes of long-shot-long-take of distant horizon, as lonesome figure moves or stay still from afar – are the key figures to understand the questions raised.

There is no doubt that Béla Tarr's cinema sits well under the category which is art more than science. However, the grounds where his cinema sits are metaphysical. His cinematography, carefully and meticulously planned, manifests the lightning radiance of dark beauty, but what hidden inside, lurks the 'saying hi' of the Nothing and Being. Tarr's story (developed in tandem with Krasznahorkai), the composition of his cinematography, the sound design – they all contribute to the unitary telling of an abyss, our interior

wasteland. (The idea of 'nihilist wasteland' is expanded in Chapter 6). The ordinariness of everyday things – baked potatoes, leafless tree, empty road, beer glasses, locks – turns into something extraordinary under the languorous long take of his camera. Heidegger's words resonate well here: "The ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary, uncanny" (PLT, p. 53). What is ordinary, when delegated as an artwork and observed in a long span of moment, becomes extraordinary, a stranger to our eyes.

The uniqueness of poetry can be seen in the *way* language plays an important role. Without language, there is no openness of *what-is* (PLT, p. 71). Language is what name beings, what brings entities to word, and what gives entities its appearance. Truth is *alétheia*, "unconcealedness." Something is hidden – and stays hidden – in every being. To uncover beings means to interrogate the nature of beings in such way that their hidden essences are laid bare. What stays hidden is invisible to everyday perception. The task of phenomenology then, as a mode of meditation, is to think the Being of beings, to bring the essence of Being from its hidden place amongst things. This is why poetry is named as the highest peak of art; it brings the employment of language so that it can be *stretched* to naming Being. "Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of what is," says Heidegger (PLT, p. 71). All art *speaks*. Contained within a painting by Awang Damit, for example, are inner symbols that can be deciphered and made meaningful only when language assaults its appearance. Awang Damit's painting not only exerts its appearance to me, but it also *speaks*. Heidegger continues: "In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be" (PLT, p. 35). The nearness of my thinking of Awang Damit's painting transforms the space between me and the painting. As my mind wanders off, reflecting on the problem of the design or its muddy colour, suddenly, I am no longer aware of my surrounding. The artwork alters my perception of space. In fact, it is not even

surprising for the artwork itself turning invisible, since in meditating seriously and quietly about the painting, my mind transport me to other place that is paradoxically so far from my vicinity with the artwork, and yet so near since the idea of the painting is what fills up my conscious awareness.

What does all this tell us of the subject under interrogation, the *cinema* of Béla Tarr? Firstly, Tarr's cinema, since it is foremost, an artwork, is a poetry. Secondly, it is its own truth. Thirdly, it speaks of the Open. Fourth, in Tarr's cinema, therein hides an essence of Being. Fifth, each essence of Being is unique according to the viewer or the creator of artwork. Sixth: As such, Tarr's cinema is a *mode* of phenomenology. The phenomenological analysis of Tarr's art can only be proper when understood as poetic interrogation. Otherwise, we will never get nearer to the Open Heidegger speaks about. The poetic imagination and wordplay is crucial for such an analysis, or else we will be drowned by the machination of scientific method, which rules supreme in Malaysian universities.

In Heidegger's thinking on artwork, earth and world comes about and strife with each other. The earth – the soil that shelters mankind – and the world – the organization of ways mankind approach beings – lie in a work of art, and each contribute to the essence of truthfulness in art. This is a vital recipe in Heidegger's understanding of the Being of artwork. Earth and world lie hidden in an oil painting, a black and white photograph, or a Greek temple but are manifested through destructive interpretation that is Heidegger's philosophy. How does Heidegger's ontological-phenomenological idea about art – the strife between earth and world – can be understood in the darkening ground of Tarr's cinema? What other abyssal signs that can be gleaned from Tarr's cinema, that further enhance our understanding of the strife between earth and world? To even attempt to answer these

questions, I would like to cite a scene from one of Tarr's later films. Please observe Figure 5.13, taken from Tarr's last film output, *The Turin Horse*. The image shows location seen from the inside of a house. The wind blows heavily outside, leaves fling everywhere, but if we look deeper, we will see an outline of a person carrying two pails. She is moving slow towards the well since her body is being assaulted by the violent wind. Behind her, we see hills rising. Except for the shrubs of tree to her left, the hills, the well, leaves flying – everything else is empty. Soon, she will be running back inside the house, screaming for her father; for the well has suddenly runs dry. For now, she moves with the expectation of water in the well. All these descriptions *might* tell us of what are happening in the shot, however; it does not tell us why Béla Tarr puts such image in the first place. What is so significant of doing a long shot scene in long take, showing distant human figure in empty landscape?



**Figure 5.15:** A young woman with pails at a distant well in *The Turin Horse*.

The basic answer for this question is very simple: Bela Tarr shows us such image to let us see the horizon which grounds the Open of his film. By putting a lone figure at a

distance, Tarr gives the space of his film a reverberating call of the uncanniness. In this spacious, greyish image, the earth and the sky become much fuller in the distance of human figure. The longer the scene – as the camera moves slowly, tracking the lone woman figure – the stranger the ordinariness of the landscape turns. The phenomenology of image in Tarr's oeuvre is the bleak horizon that lines and crosses throughout his images. For the horizon, as I said somewhere, is where the earth and the sky encounter in the luminosity of being, in the lines of being's sight. The exhibition of horizon shows Tarr's interest in the hermeneutics of cosmos. In an interview, he says:

At the beginning of my career, I had a lot of social anger. I just wanted to tell you how fucked up the society is. This was the beginning. Afterwards, I began to understand that the problems were not only social; they are deeper. I thought they were only ontological. It's so, so complicated, and when I understood more and more, when I went closer to the people... afterward, I could understand that the problems were not only ontological. They were cosmic (cited in Kohn, 2012).

The modern society is in a state of ruin. According to Tarr further, its problem is no longer social degeneration but both ontological and cosmic. By ontological, Tarr tries to ask the question of the essence of Being. In Tarr's early films, *Family Nest* (1979) and *The Prefab People* (1982), he criticizes the State by showing social problem; not enough housing, unemployment, urbane lethargy and so on. Right after *Almanac of Fall* (1985), his films started delving deeper – into the condition of the human soul by way of emptiness and silence through moving long take. The composition of emptiness in the vastness of the landscape found in Figure 5.15 is neither new nor singular; we can see this pattern throughout his later films like *Sátántangó*, *Damnation*, *Werckmeister Harmonies* and *The*

*Man from London*. Some sample of scenes from each film mentioned can be seen in Figure 5.16.



**Figure 5.16:** Film from left to right, top to bottom; *Sátántangó*, *Damnation*, *Werckmeister Harmonies* and *The Man from London*.

Each frame from Figure 5.16 is taken from long take scene. They show us human moving either from the horizon toward the camera, or from camera toward the horizon. Long take in the hand of Béla Tarr is not just about choice; it is about *being existing*. In an interview, Tarr declares: “Why did I take so long? Because I didn’t want to show you the story. I wanted to show this man’s life” (cited in Kohn, 2012). A man’s life is neither short nor long; no one can know one’s own death. Man’s life, however, consists in the worth of his duration in existing. In prolonging a take, Tarr is extolling the duration of man’s life. And this is much more important than just telling the story. The manner a man leading his life is more interesting to Tarr’s eyes than the dramatic plot of his life. This is why the pattern found in Figure 5.16 above is repeated many times throughout Tarr’s later

filmmaking. Figure 5.15 above, for example, shows a woman walking outside her house to fetch water and then comes back to her house, all the while the camera shoots her figure from the safe of the home and waits for her to come back, with no cuts. The longevity of the action is safely secured in the form of long take. In the first frame of Figure 5.16, taken from *Sátántangó*, Futaki (Miklós B. Székely) walks away – after receiving money from Irimias – toward the distant horizon, while the camera slowly pedestal up. The second frame right, from *Damnation*, Karrer (again played by Miklos Szekely) walks and whines with his lover toward the horizon, while the camera (eventually) crabs to the left, ignoring the moving figures. The third frame sees Janos (Lars Rudolph) running away from something over the train tracks, toward the moving camera. The camera dolly out, while maintaining its distance with Janos. A helicopter is seen encircling him. The final frame sees the over the shoulder shot of a moving camera, as it tracks three people walking on a road nearby a sea. Each scene sampled here show the slow and vast landscape in the smallness of human figure.

In the *Origin of the Work of Art*, we can find many instances of the Heidegger's the Open. What and how does the Open come to be? "The Open happens in the midst of beings." Heidegger continues: "To the Open there belong a world and the earth" (PLT, 53). I would like to argue here that the composition of images found in Figure 5.15 and Figure 5.16 is very important for this dissertation on Tarr's aesthetics since they exhibit Heidegger's conception of *the Open*. What we are going to do next is to do close reading regarding Tarr's openness by sampling a scene from *Sátántangó* (see Figures 5.17 and 5.18), which I believe, absolutely encapsulate Tarr's ontological investigation; the tumultuous relationship between the earth and the world. This scene arrives almost at the



end of *Sátántangó* just as the doctor walks slowly from a distant horizon on an empty road towards the camera. Tall trees besiege the muddy road.



**Figure 5.17:** The doctor arrives and takes a look around. Scene from *Sátántangó*.



**Figure 5.18:** What the doctor sees is a vista of horizon. Scene from *Sátántangó*.

Artwork is not just about production of thing; artwork is an event, a site, a meeting. Artwork, Heidegger thinks, is the space where earth and the world meet and strife with each other. In this site, the organization of beings comes in contact with the ground that shelter beings. The horizon is already there in the artwork; within the boundary from where the world and earth meets and mingle with each other, within the imaginative realm of our interpretation and how beings can stay being meaningful to us. Figure 5.17 and 5.18 are quiet images, and since they speak of the poetic reverberation, are quite startling for the receptive soul. After the doctor comes toward the camera, his body turn left, and takes a look of the vista in front of him. Here, the camera becomes his eyes as it pans slowly from

left to right, showing us a vast empty landscape, the sky clear grey, while the ground full of stinking bog. The music is monotonously ominous, as if announcing an incoming that is unsayable, and terrible. Soon after, we see a ruined chapel as both camera and the doctor moves toward it (image not shown). What do we make of this series of images? First thing is clear: Tarr is interested in showing the expanse of the location through the languorous process of long take. The exhibition, however, is ontological; it speaks of the oscillating signs between Being and nothingness which lurk in the Open that resides in Tarr's metaphysic of contemplative nihilism. Let us observe again Heidegger's statement: "Earth juts through the world and world grounds itself on the earth only so far as truth happens as the primal conflict between clearing and concealing" (PLT, p. 54). What Tarr is displaying, through creative instinct, is the way the grounds and the heavens meet in the eternity of the moment. The horizontal line that divides the grounds and the heavens – a line that unites the openness and the mysteriousness – is also the same thing that connects the clearing between man and truth. In these meetings, cinematic truths manifest itself as emptiness in the form of beauty. No matter how much time is stretched inside a shot or between shots, Tarr is clearly interested in capturing the fleeting beauty of the nothingness. This is the reason why there are many scenes in his films showing clear grounds – it is to 'alight' the emptiness, to make manifest the Open. A lone figure of man walking down the one-point-perspective road is not there just to elongate the eternity of the image; he walks so that there is a nuance in the clearing. He is there to help unconceal further the movement of Dasein inner being. Since the nuance is incremental, the sound is low, and the shot is long, stillness gifts its presence in the clearing of the Open. A small nuance of nothing; "cause mighty things to appear out of a strange stillness" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 18). Perhaps, in other words, the nuance of the movement, "tears the look from the attraction of the earth,

from the fascination of its single landscape” (Marion, 2002, p. 61). Tarr’s walking man is there to *imbalance* our existential fascination with mother earth.

The horizon in philosophical phenomenology always refers to the limit of meaningfulness. It is not just a boundary that merely divides the mountain and the sky. It is a boundary which opens the vista of the world to us. To quote Heidegger’s statement: “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presenting*” (PLT, p. 152). The horizon is the context of ecstatic existence; Dasein who has a past, present and future. *The horizon in Tarr’s films elicits the expanseness of Dasein temporality*. This is why the grounds are laid bare for the earthiness to shine through, to give texture to our temporal nature living as Being-in-the-world. When the doctor in *Sátántangó* take a look around himself, after walking far in open road, he sees the earth for what it is; soil that calls forth emptiness. The slow, unfolding vista has something like reservedness, a covering-up of another unsayable darkness. To cite Heidegger’s words in his *Black Notes*: “*In der Verhaltenheit liegt die verschwiegene Kühnheit*”. “In reservedness, lies concealed audacity” (GA 94, p. 284). We must not let this mysterious audacity runs from our sight.

Take a look again at Figure 5.17. We see the small figure of Futaki but the placement of the figure is close to the centre of the image. Why must a figure of man be placed in the middle of the overall design? What is Tarr trying to achieve? Take note that this composition is not unique in *Sátántangó*; the centralization of a lone figure can be seen in many of Tarr’s later oeuvre (see for instance, Figure 5.5, Figure 5.13, Figure 5.15, Figure 5.19, Figure 5.20 and so on). I would like to interpret the centralization of man here as not only as one of many instances of Tarr’s “heaviness of being”, but of *how our inner gravity*

*is depicted*. It is possible to look deeper into this and hermeneuticize further: Human is at the centre of things, and as such, is the *centre of what makes horizon of the world so meaningful*. Tarr's placement of his character is classic Emerson's: "The hero is he who is immovably centred" (cited in Rilke, 2006). The deliberate movement of the figure accentuates further what Tarr tries to depict, the depth of the inner gravity. The inkling to understanding this composition can be seen in Heidegger's *What Are Poets For?* In the essay, he quotes Rilke's *The Force of Gravity* (PLT, p. 102):

Center, how you draw yourself  
out of all things, regaining yourself  
even from things in flight: Center, strongest of all!  
  
Standing man: like a drink through thirst,  
gravity plunges through him.  
  
But from the sleeper there falls  
as from low-lying cloud,  
a rich man of weight.

The gravity named here by Rilke – and thus, Heidegger – is nothing like the modern understanding of physical gravity. Here, the gravity is observed *poetically*, the way we draw and regain ourselves as beings endowed with weight and balance, and this gravity is strongest of all in the centre of our being. How does Rilke's poetry understood in the manner of Tarr's aesthetics? Can filmic images show the path to the essence of horizon and gravity in Heidegger's and Rilke's thinking? The answer is ambiguous and at best, enigmatic. Referring again to figures above, there is clearly something going on in Tarr's imageries, and *what* is going on – in the strife between the earth and the world where truth

shines as beauty, in the expanseness of horizon and the smallness of human figure – is that human is what holds the gravity of the situation, and what weighs the ‘horizontal schema.’ This must be the creative motivation why Tarr maintains his human figure at the centre of the image. His actor is either walking towards the horizon (Figure 5.13), or walking from the horizon towards the camera (Figure 5.17), or stays in the horizon (Figure 5.19), or walks alongside the horizon (Figure 5.20). Without human figure located at the centre, creating nuance of movement, there is only mere emptiness of space, not the truth of beingness – human as preserver of the earth, even as earth (untiringly) rises up and shelters human. Art is *alétheia* where truth is unconcealment. The cinematic truth Tarr engages, it seems, is made clearer (if this word is possible) when observed through Heidegger’s phenomenology. (I could never make out the artist’s instinct, the display between emptiness and bleak landscape, without the poetic text from Heidegger). What more, Heidegger believes that it is only in the realm of art that we can save ourselves from the domination of modernization, industrialization and cyber technology. To restate again Rilke’s words above: “Center, how you draw yourself/ out of all things, regaining yourself/ even from things in flight: Center, strongest of all!” In putting human figure at the centre, Tarr’s images achieve a high level of symmetrical balance and yet the symmetrical balance is nothing but a paradox; the synergy between human and landscape is precisely in the lethargy of the moment, the precious long take. The images soothes my perception while simultaneously disjoins my appreciation. Tarr’s strategies, it seem – has always been, in fact – is to offer joyful longing in the anxiety of eternal moment.



**Figure 5.19:** The alienation and destruction of Janos in *Werckmeister Harmonies*.

The images I have sampled here clearly show Tarr's rigorous engagement in the placement of beings through cinematographic staging; *that human is the centre of beings but without the landscape he is nothing*. This is perhaps the sense of audacity concealed in Tarr's reservedness. This is the reason why everywhere in Tarr's composition, grounds *juts* out in its emptiness, if not as stinking bogs and ruins, then as locations where building amass themselves to restrain human movement. The French phenomenologist and Heidegger's student Levinas writes, "Art brings into the world the obscurity of fate, but it especially brings the irresponsibility that charms as a lightness and grace. It frees" (1987, p. 141). When Levinas says that art frees as lightness and grace, we must understand that what it frees is the Open. In the Open, truth is measured as a way to Beauty. The measurement is nothing scientific or mathematical; it belongs to the horizon where earth and world meets. In the expanseness of Tarr's imageries, the Open is manifested, but the Open makes itself presence in such way that fate is obscured. We do not know for sure *what truly* happens next in Tarr's films. Since his films disclose themselves slowly, the build toward heightened anticipation always feels thwarted. The horizon that grows somewhere in the

corner of our eyes blinds us to the fate of the characters. The horizon is too... *stagnant*. As such, we cannot expect any vibrant hopefulness from its stagnant presence.

The image in *Werckmeister Harmonies* (Figure 5.19), which shows again the smallness and the centrality of human figure, exhibits the loneliness of Janos Valuska and his eventual mental destruction. The scene, taken somewhere in a mental hospital, again done in long take, can be located at the end of *Werckmeister Harmonies*. Just prior to the scene, his uncle comes to visit him but his soothing words fall on deaf ears since Janos is having a nervous breakdown. Janos stares at the camera, immobile, seeing things but really, *nothing*. His thinking has gone but what is left of his body *shines* in the horizon where earth and world encounters. The horizontal lines that perpetually cross and mark Janos's body has changed its form; from the distant forest and railway tracks (Figure 5.2) to windows sill (Figure 5.19), but the lines are still there, staying faithful to Janos's background. The horizontal lines follow Janos to the very end since they need the centre of human body, since human body is what gives weight to the surrounding lines. Is this not a remarkable display of Tarr's strength as an existential filmmaker? Both Tarr and Heidegger, in their own distinctive ways, are very much interested in the reverberation of inner gravity, the way and how this inner gravity takes hold of Dasein's movement. By accessing the emptiness that can be found in the concreteness of everyday things, Tarr gives evidence – a visual manifestation – of what Heidegger thinks as “agitated stillness” (2002, pp. 26-27). If this sounds oxymoronic, it is *so* since human existence is paradoxical! There is no pure movement without pure stillness, and vice versa. And yet, *and yet*: this is the kind of state that interests both Tarr and Heidegger.

What Tarr shows to us is not the illusion of stillness when the camera stops moving or when it stays at Janos's frozen figure. No, what he is after is to bring forth the hidden resources of the silence in the stillness. The horizon, the earth, the world, human figure; these things are composed in Tarr's framing in a Heideggerian "unitary repose," a "resting-in-itself." *Tarr's aesthetics is to awaken the movement for its motionlessness.* Tarr's cinema art arrests movement in the gravity of agitated stillness. The restlessness shown earlier by Janos, as he scrambled away from something (it was shown later to be a circling helicopter), is suddenly arrested in the catatonic state found in Figure 5.19. It is a destruction of extreme agitation into a unitary repose of agitated stillness. The sense of longing and alienation is complete. Janos's body is at rest, but it is the kind of state, to borrow Heidegger's wordings, "which is an inner collection of motion" (2002, pp. 26). At this stage, the cinema shows its true temporal power, leaving behind other arts for this terrorizing display of *awakening the movement for its motionlessness.*

What weighs man's gravity? Tarr's poetic interrogation seems to offer the briefest of answer: Restrained angst. In other words: Coldness, the kind that engenders automatic bodily movement, and the kind that slows one's emotional response. In *The Man from London*, for instance, the man, after asking his daughter to stop working in the shop, finds resistance from the woman-owner of the shop; he then turns to his right, and walks up to the distant horizon of a one-point-perspective road (see Figure 5.20). The kid who plays with the ball far in the distance is there for two reasons: a) as a nuance that foregrounds horizon, b) to emphasize the enclosure of the alley; the ball that he kicks ricochet back and forth between decrepit buildings.





**Figure 5.20:** Walking towards the horizon, from *The Man from London*.

The man's walk is slow, automatic if not sudden. Is there something in the horizon that calls him *up*? But there is Nothing in the horizon; it is only his primordial existential state of Being-there (Dasein) that moves his body, to go somewhere since the space is *already* always occurring in his inner gravity. Maybe what call him are the hidden divinities from Heidegger's fourfold? Before ending the scene, the camera unexpectedly tilts up, and we see a line of sky enclosed by the buildings in the alley, as if mirroring the line of road below. Suddenly, the path he walks turns transcendental; a rare occurrence in Tarr's pictures. The divines here are the line that creates path for him to walk, from the ground below to the sky above. But with the kid playing around with the ball *there* in the horizon, the path that shows us the way to the sky is struggling to be named. (I dare not name the path Innocence, or Astraea, the Greek Goddess of innocence and purity, since the horizon that the kid is playing is shared with another being, the discordant Man).



**5.21:** It is raining, and Karrer walks in the muddy ruins. Scene from *Damnation*.

The restrained angst sometimes exploded; one can see this event at the end of *Damnation*. Karrer, walking alone on the empty road (Tarr's typical semiotics!), meets a gang of barking dogs and surreptitiously, bows and barks along with them. In this particular revealing scene, the essence of human being is drowned by the beast of human body, the animality that usually stays hidden inside our inner gravity. The pressure of society that hides in Karrer's physiology cannot contain itself any longer. After series of betrayals, delays and blocks of very long takes, the pressure manifests into a barking dog, in automatic response to the environment where it is besieged. The scene is unique since nowhere else Tarr repeats the same transformation again. But the snarling between man and dogs does not last long. Right after, under pouring rain, Karrer is seen walking down the empty road again, muds and ruins everywhere accompanying his lone walks while the camera pans along the road (Figure 5.21). This time, the lone figure of man no longer walks toward the horizon or from the horizon. He is walking alongside the horizon, with the camera walking slowly, seizing his movement. At his back, we see lines of mountains and

perhaps forests, but they are a bit blurred to be seen. They are too far away, and the rain mists everything. The rain batters the lone man and pours heavily on the grounds, the ruins beside him. Small ponds and mud sprouts where everywhere the rains falls, water that runs over the grounds splashes over the ruins and meets back its originator up in the sky. The earth, a quagmire of dark and grey tones now, is serene in the sound of heavy rain. The man walks quietly, but slowly. The rain does not wash Karrer's troubled soul; this is never Tarr's true intention. The rain is *there* to blur the place where man and horizon meets. Since the man is walking alongside the horizon (his figure is made small by the framing of long shot), the horizon becomes a succession of blurs.

The Tarr's canvas, the image of man shrinking into the horizon (or vice versa) keeps on repeating again and again, creating some kind of patterns that is hard to ignore. Why is this image important? More importantly, how can we describe this shrinking pattern from Heidegger's ontology? The answer to this riddle can be found in the striking passage by Heidegger: "In anxiety there occurs a shrinking back before—that is surely not any sort of flight but rather a kind of entranced calm" (1998, p. 90). Heidegger is writing about the angst that dwells in human being, its movement back and fro. Yet, the flight of the angst is written as "a kind of entranced calm."

Is it conceivable to think that the shrinking of man into the horizon is an existential showcase of the human condition in relation to angst? The type of images shown so far (Figure 5.16 to Figure 5.21) describes the automatism of the walking, like a person who is captivated by the horizon. I asked earlier: What weighs man's gravity? The answer continues to be the same: Restrained angst. There is coldness in the restrained angst since the movement encapsulates the entrancement of the horizon. Sometimes, when the man

shrinks in the distance, and we see the horizon slowly swallows him whole. Other times, when the man appears from the distant earth, his figure grows to overlap the horizon. In each case, the earth and the sky are shown for their harmonious tenseness for openness and nothingness. As long take, the earth and sky *bears* the Open. In the meeting between the earth and the sky, the horizon lines up its vista and *endures* in its staying. These patterns are instinctually artistic but they point to Tarr's existential interrogation; a kind of cinematic thaumaturgy that locates the inner space that grounds man.

### **5.5. Cinema as Art of Dwelling**

We have phenomenologically gone through the lingering shot and have observed the snaking elasticity of the Tarr's shot. We have seen so far the existential probe by Tarr through his cinemas – the way his character moves to a distant horizon, and sometimes, appearing out of nowhere from distant horizon towards the audience. In his cinema, the earth and the sky meets in a desolate landscape that is both silent and Open. To say Tarr's cinema is slow is an understatement; *the sweating slowness is what moves his cinema's soil*. But: What does it mean to dwell in film image? How does it come to be that human Dasein *able* to do so? What kind of manner – equipped as so in our existential being – that enable us to dwell in film image? These are the kind of questions that will direct us in this sub-section, which takes its cue from Heidegger's lecture, *Building Dwelling Thinking* (*Bauen Wohnen Denken*, 1951).

Tarr's cinema – a cinema that philosophizes – is an event whereby the tarrying and stillness of its shots unconceal Being for what it is. (Further analytics about this can be found next in Chapter Seven). The long take is both the condition and the result of Tarr's

aesthetic and political engagement with his world. While Heidegger and Tarr sit so far apart in their medium of choices, yet both thinkers create works that are questing toward the *whatness*. Tarr's statement bears repeating: "When you shoot a movie, you can only shoot the reality, something that definitely exists. You know, the feel of this movie is very concrete." It is this *concreteness of life* that Tarr and Heidegger dedicate their works to. Both grapples with the "heaviness of being"; their creative works speak volume in the consistency and persistency of tackling the essence of human being, trapped in its relationship with the world where it is abiding. Surely enough, both believe in the strength in poetics art in understanding and transforming the world. Heidegger believes that the experience of thinking is well served by the power of poetry as the happening of truth; Tarr, on the other hand, conceives filmic images as poetic utterance of the cosmic.

Let us assume a screen in front of us. Let us put a bit of a distance between us and the screen, but with just enough nearness so as to observe the details of the film playing across our perception. The screen is, of course, rectangular; the boundary of the film-content. Once the film starts playing, we begin to forget about the distance between us and the screen, or the room where our bodies and the screen are located. The more the film-content fascinates our minds, the more spaces measured forth from our bodies are withheld. What is holding us from gauging the distance between our bodies and the wide screen in front of us? Have the space between us and the screen becoming lost in our *concernful* attitude toward the film-content? Are we measuring instead the content of the film more than the awareness of the physical spaces which lie directly in front of us? All these answers point toward one thing: Our conscious attitude has lost its grasp of the real world through the act of experiencing film-content. The film *enworlds* us. In the immersion of our conscious perception with the film-content – which is a unification of Dasein consciousness

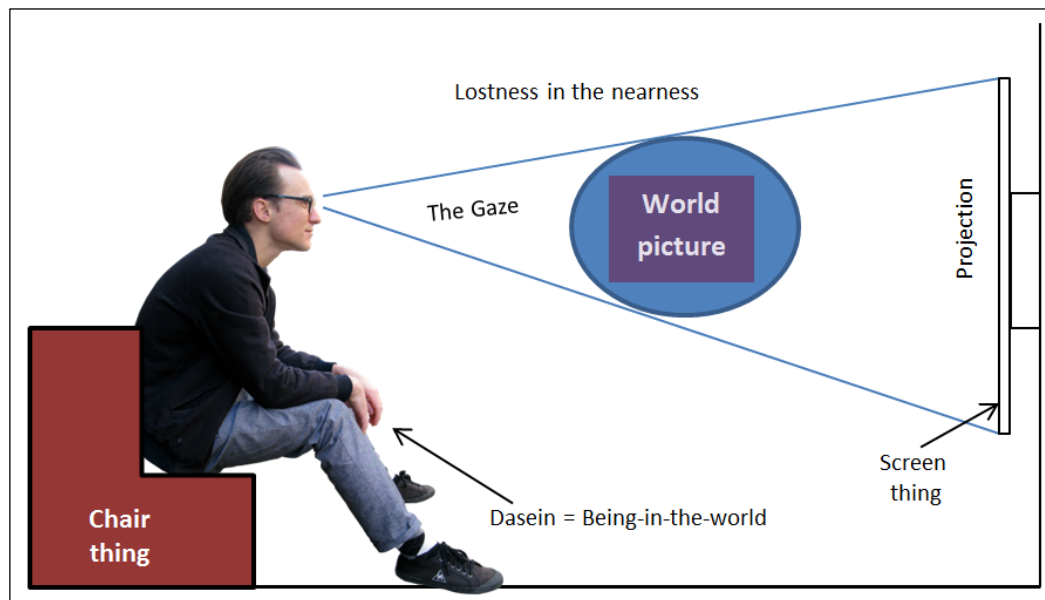
between aesthetic experience and imagination – what is important in our immediate understanding is what happens inside the screen, not what made the screen and its outside. A tense race between two cars on empty desert in *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) matters most to us than the stage and the wall in front of us, where the screen is attached. This happens since contained within the properties of the film language (and not the physical film's properties such as projector, Blu-ray disc and so forth), is a *world* that speaks of our world. Watching film unifies multiple worlds together into one. The immersion is complete – can be completed – since Dasein is nothing but Being-in-the-world. To move, to speak, means to navigate the worldhood. The world affects us since it is already running alongside our Being-In-The-World. The more the film-world speaks and shows our world, the more we become entranced by it. On the other hand, the more film-world exhibits abstraction or ambiguity, the more we become disconnected with it, unless of course, our gaze has already practiced beforehand to apprehend the abstraction of the film-world.

Heidegger writes: “To say that mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations” (PLT, p. 155). The earth is our dwelling-space, but that humans simply *are* – this is the *staying* of us with things and spaces. The main reason why we can dwell well in a film is since we are already dwellers in the earth. This dwelling state is ingrained in our potentiality as projecting Dasein. In existing, we project our Being to others – the same project that grounds our Being. “As *understanding*, Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities” (BT, 188). Being-in-the-world moves in the spirit of projecting-towards-something; this is why we are able to *transcend*. To be with a cat in my room, is to project my beingness towards the essence of the cat. In projecting, I transcend beyond me. What barricades and what grounds the projection is none other than language. This is why language *stays* the gathering of our thought. That we

can seek a meaningful-something in our encounter in everyday business is nothing but the transcended nature of our being. Heidegger again: “Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves” (PLT, 154). The reason for this is that space is not something which hovers in front of me or over me; it is there staying in my thinking. It is what makes myself present as time. To think of my office in Universiti Kuala Lumpur means to becoming near to that office room, a nearness that is much nearer than the chair one meter away from me, even though my office is more than ten kilometres away. It is in the immediacy of what we are thinking-of that brings us nearer to the object and not physical closeness. The thinking *stays* the nearing of the space. Thinking gathers space – because we are but dweller that persists through space, always in constant relation with space. We can see this intimate relationship between human and space when Heidegger emphasizes: “The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, strictly thought and spoken” (PLT, p. 155).

As such, the dwelling in things is a given. This is so much apparent for film since film gives more than a portrayal of a reality; it is also a thing that dwells near to my body. A film, as a physical elaboration, is both what projects light and what gives light so that a thing can be shining. But the content of the film rests not on the thing but rests fully on the minds of the receiver of the film-content. Let me repeat again a question asked earlier: What does it mean to dwell in film-image? Our readings of Heidegger’s essay will be more fruitful if we can deconstruct his ideas to fully fit with our ontological discussion on cinema. *To dwell in film-image, is to absorb a world-being-played-out.* This is nothing like watching a fight of our neighbor as we look on from our window at home. The absorption of the world is the kind where – in apprehending a story which circulates in our perception – we open ourselves to the content and nuances of the story to such an extent that we

become part of the story, actively performing its plot. I refuse to see the simple artificiality of the film-world or the illusion of the film-world, because it is a path that is so easily trodden about. To simply subject Tarr's reality as an illusion is to degrade the potential existential or aesthetic awakening one gets in experiencing his or her world. For example, I know that James Cameron's *Avatar* is a *world* and yet its world is nothing like the one I live in. *Avatar*'s creatures are mysterious, mesmerizing but they are nothing like the ones I see in real life. But to understand *Avatar* as merely artificial world is to demean the wondrous experience I had in watching it or to belittle the artful concern it exhibits.



**Figure 5.22:** Phenomenological positioning of a gazing man toward screen. Design by Fauzi Naeim.

If I may draw the reader's attention, please see Figure 5.22 as a minor illustration to our discussion so far. The image indicates the relationship between a spectator and the screen he watches. The spectator sits on a chair and watches, over a short distance, a TV screen. But he watches not the physical aspects of the screen; what he really sees is the movement of the images of the film projected by the screen. The image, the sound or even



the acting of the film enraptures him (see also Appendix F). In experiencing cinema, the man, or in a Heideggerian lingo, Dasein as being-in-the-world, is really being in another world. The gaze that he emanates from his perception meets with the narrative shone and projected of the TV screen. A world picture (if I may use this Heideggerian term) is formed from the meeting of both; it is an idea of the conquest of the world as a picture but more, it is a world of *another* world. I see a man staring at nowhere in Tarr's film, his pose is something that I am used to watch, but the colour that he wears is starkly different than my world. His is black-and-white while mine is colourful and full of texture. The Tyrannosaurus Rex that hounds the children in the movie *Jurassic World* (2015) is of another world, but at the same time, speaks of the world the audience is entombed in.

Not only that, the viewer is able to share multiple world-views according to the placement of camera. In *Predator* (1987), the viewer can see the point-of-view (POV) of Predator just as much as the victim the Predator is chasing throughout the jungle, the commando character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Each POV offers different world, but these worlds cohere together to become the world picture of "plenitudinous presence in its luminous showings" (Casey, 1981, p. 260). As such, when the TV shows us Tyrannosaurus Rex, sometimes, it can only show us a small facet of its wholesome feature. There are usually two reasons for this: First, production limitation: Showing a tail of the Tyrannosaurus can save budget since it is usually costly to build a whole robotic dinosaur, plus, it is hard to maintain realism when presenting the whole robotic dinosaur walking. Secondly, it is for emphasis: When the tail moves and slashes something, our eyes are concentrating *only* on the tail that slashes and its effects. A close-up on Tyrannosaurus Rex's angry eyes means that there are other body parts that are left out, and yet our consciousness still sees Tyrannosaurus Rex's figure as *complete*. This is since there is an

active consciousness in our body that seeks to close the gap or knits two-and-two together into something meaningful. In gestalt psychologism, this usually referred as closure. Our existence is one where we cannot live fully without making things meaningful through knitting one with another.

We need to push more. Our discussion must not ignore the existential interrogation and the austerity of Tarr's cinema. I would like to attempt a statement here: *Dwelling in Tarr's cinema gathers the lostness in the nearness*. There are several reasons why this is so. First: According Heidegger's lecture entitled '*The Thing*,' distance cannot be removed. Just because I am near to a table does not mean I really am *near* to it. What if in my nearness to the brown wooden table, I am thinking of something else, my youngest son Kaliq, for example? If so, then the wooden table has lost its usefulness as a table, becoming just another everyday-thing that decorates the corner of my sight. In thinking of Kaliq, his being *shines* so brightly that my nearness to him is much more prominent than my nearness with the table, even though he is far away, more than 1000 kilometres away, and the table is only one metre away from my body. Here, the lostness in the nearness of things means the lessening of the awareness of what is near to me by the shining of the thing focused by the gaze. What is nearest, according to Heidegger, is Being. But its presence stays in the farthest of our thought. "Being is the nearest. Yet the near remains farthest from the human being" (Heidegger, 1998, p. 252).

Secondly, the film-content not only sucks my conscious awareness of things around me but it also problematizes the lostness even more. Experiencing the long take of the riots in a hospital at night from Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* is not only amazing; it is also absorbing since my mind is busy being enthralled by the scene to notice anything else

beside the projecting TV, other than the scene. My consciousness is lost in the nearness of the film image, but gains instead the portrayal of *a* world. The lostness in the nearness is the gaining of a world picture in my consciousness. In another word, the dialectic lostness in the nearness is the *active transference of world picture into my gaze*.

Thirdly, looking differently, we can say that every film shown is the lostness of the making of the said film. In an interview, Tarr says:

First of all, when you touch the camera, then you are waking up at four in the morning, in the dark, you are driving to the location and it's cold and everybody hates everybody, it's too early and you hate the actors, the actors hate you and the catering is bad, the coffee is bad and you hate the whole world (Olsen, 2012).

The actual film does not show what is happening above but stays opaque to its production process. The mood *can be felt*, though. (Is it possible to see the supreme bleakness in Tarr's content coming from Tarr not having a *good coffee* in the morning? This might be a fascinating topic for another time!). As such, the film-content veils us from another happening. To be a film is to lose itself from its historical process and cinematographic means. Both production process and the film diegesis stay so much nearer with each other that its stays so far apart from each other. What is recorded and the means to record sit distinctively apart in such way that they cannot exist without each other.

Fourth: In experiencing film, our worldly real-time not only connects with the time of the film-content, but uncannily, demands a radical suture with the time expressed by the film-content. Two hours of film – as our gaze requests it – should not be the actual two

hours duration of our world, but a *presentation of compressed time*. What is lost here is the duration of hours in the nearness of our gaze toward the film. This is the basic reason why films have montage in their structure. The radical suture is to cut the hours into several lives or even, several generations. For example; even though the one-shot *Russian Ark* is only 96-minute, but it tells instead the (disjointed) history of several generations of Russian people. Or to take another example; while *Groundhog Day* (directed by Harold Ramis, 1993) is only 101-minute, the narrative of the film shows, according to Ramis himself, that 30-40 years have gone by inside the film. Here we have several levels of time in the structure of filmmaking: The duration it took to finish the production of the film; the *actual* duration of the film; the duration of the film diegesis; the duration it takes for us to finish the film. The one-long-take-film of Sebastian Schipper's *Victoria* (2015) is a remarkable exception to this.

Heidegger writes, "Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of being" (1998, p. 258). Dwelling in cinema revolves in the nature of man as homelessness. That we are at home in the first place, is why our thinking can stray from here to there and everywhere. To be at home in Tarr's long take brings is to gather nearness of infinity to the thinking gaze, but the infiniteness always stay lost in the finiteness of human live. This is the reason why Tarkovsky writes: "The idea of infinity cannot be expressed in words or even described, but it can be apprehended through art, which makes infinity tangible" (1986, pp. 38-39). Film image manifests the tangibility of infinity in film more when exhibited as long take. The conscious gaze, however, in apprehending the shining projection, still demands cuts in its nearness to infinity.

## 5.6. Summary

Chapter five, which is the longest chapter in this dissertation, starts with an overview of Bela Tarr and his films. I note several Tarr's key concepts: black & white/ grey wash; the sense of nothingness; nihilistically bleak atmosphere; repetitive long take (shot using mobile camera); silence; plotlessness; and perhaps political allegory (even though Tarr denies this implication). The introduction foregrounds the Heideggerian phenomenological readings afterwards: which include a phenomenology of lingering shot, interpreting the elasticity of Tarr's camera movement, its relations with Heidegger's profound boredom, how the camera comes to be as a state of word-enframing that encircles beings. I suggest that it is not just a shot that is extended and stretched over time; this happens since Dasein first and foremost, a stretched being over time; as Heidegger would say it, a being that "continuously enduring sequence of pure 'nows'" (BT, p. 462). We are existentially elastic; Long take reminds us of our finitude. *Long take measures our presence, and stretch our tempo towards time ecstatically.* The key word to understand this comes from Heidegger, "the possibility of the world lies in the fact that temporality, as an ecstatical unity, has something like a horizon" (BT, p. 416). In Tarr's lingering shot, not only is time ecstatically stretched, but it is also slowed up. In another words, Tarr's concreteness of life is the existence under the pressure of slowness. Further, through a reading influenced by both Heidegger and Saint Augustine, I have tried to show that in long take, the sense of extendedness points to an existential but abstract root; the soul. I posit that Tarr (instinctually) is not just interested in the intensification of moment, but to exhibit the abstract soul in the stretchedness of long take.

The implication of very long lingering shot in Tarr's game brings another theme, the boredom. Bela Tarr's films configure easily into discourse of boringness since his films exhibit patterns that thwart active cinema; very long take of banal human activity, frequent shots of empty corridor, featureless plain, and so on. Our discussion so far – from the phenomenology of long take to boredom as fundamental attunement to the way camera becomes an apparatus that encircle beings – must be seen in the context of ontological and poetic investigation of the cinematography, which is another world unto itself. By relating to the essence of boredom that lurks in Tarr's cinema, I am giving an utmost concern to the way time is existentially presented in his cinema.

In the final section of this chapter, a topic on dwelling in cinema, I offer that the process of watching film means to dwell in film-image, to absorb a world-being-played-out. To watch film means to actively participate in losing our consciousness into the film image, until our consciousness is part of what decorates and moves the film image. (The move is a bit sudden, especially after relating about the horizon and the centralization of gravity in Tarr's composition. Unfortunately (or fortunately), the theme of dwelling cannot carry itself properly without discussing on the existentially cinematography of Tarr's aesthetics). The analysis goes further: *I argue that, the essence of this cinematic dwelling, is the lostness in the nearness.* There were four reasons why this is so: 1) lessening of the awareness of what is near by the shine focused by the gaze; 2) the dialectic lostness in the nearness as the active transference of world picture into the spectator's gaze 3) every film shown is the lostness of the making of the said film; 4) the demanding conscious gaze for suture so that film is always compressed, even where time is continually lost in our gaze.

I have tried giving varied readings of the lingering shot, but it is important to be able to see Tarr's film as a phenomenological investigation in its own right. Clearly some interpretations above are hard to be quantitatively demonstrated which are why the ranges of our analyses so far are highly intrinsic, not to mention highly subjective. Phenomenological analyses such as practiced to the extreme shore by Heidegger are very potent tools to find not only meaningful relationships between the object under investigation and the way we can understand the object, but to create images, transforming the understanding of our relationship with the images itself, pushing our thinking, in the words of Heidegger, of "learning and understanding how to move in the depths of Dasein" (1995, p. 131).

## CHAPTER 6:

### TARR'S NIHILIST CINEMA AND HEIDEGGER'S THINKING ON NIHILISM

#### 6.1. Introduction

Is Béla Tarr's cinema nihilistic? What are the forms and ways of nihilist cinema? For this chapter, we will look into Tarr's cinemas in the range of its nihilism so that we can put into task the Heideggerian ontological-phenomenological readings regarding the prevalence of nihilism in Tarr's cinemas. Not only is Heidegger's thinking on nihilism is very much influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy of existence, but many of Heidegger's ideas on existence were very much a fruitful confrontation (*Aus-einander-setzung*) with Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche's posthumous work – or better, a collected aphorisms for a planned book but was never finished – *The Will to Power* (*Der Wille zur Macht*),<sup>39</sup> is a strange and uncannily mesmerizing work, and has many things to say about the state of nihilism. In 1936-1944, Heidegger dedicated much of his creative energy to understanding and elaborating Nietzsche's thinking (a thinking which is, of course, to manifest *the history of Being*), especially on *The Will to Power*. Two volumes on Nietzsche were borne from this period with several other works that extended several ideas from Nietzsche.<sup>40</sup> Such critical engagement with Nietzsche, for instance, can be seen in the lecture delivered in 1951-52, 'Was Heisst Denken?' (*What is Called Thinking*, 1968) where the first half of the lecture was based on Nietzsche's writings. Thinking is very important to Heidegger, much more

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<sup>39</sup> Throughout this dissertation, the text *The Will to Power* refers to Friedrich Nietzsche (1968), *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books. I will be using the short form WP for *The Will to Power*.

<sup>40</sup> *Nietzsche 2 Vols*, Gesamtausgabe, 1961, Vittorio Klosterman. These volumes have been translated into four volumes in English, see Heidegger (1979-1991), *Nietzsche*, (D. F. Krell, Ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

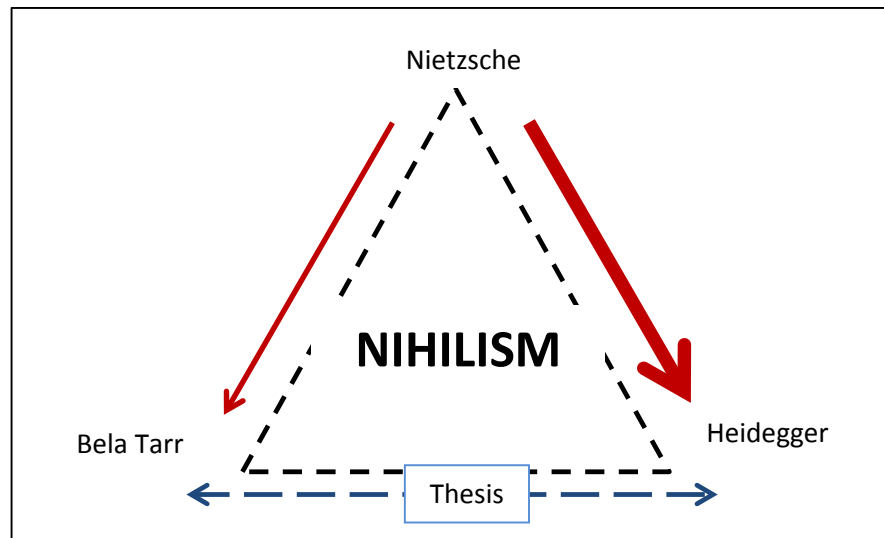


important than philosophizing; in grounding his lecture on Nietzsche's writings, he is giving an utmost admiration to Nietzsche's provocative aphorism of will to power.

It would be ridiculous if we cannot confront Bela Tarr's cinemas without taking into account Nietzschean metaphysics as well, since clearly, Tarr's thinking, in a deeper but modest level, is influenced from Nietzsche's thought. In one of many interviews concerning Tarr's philosophical relationship with Nietzsche, Tarr declares: "Of course, I was reading Nietzsche and I know his theories very well" (cited from Sélavy, 2012). This statement shows how familiar Tarr was with Nietzsche's basic ideas. Such is Tarr's respect for the great thinker's thought that his final film *The Turin Horse* takes its cue from the story just *right* before Nietzsche's lapse into madness. The horse in *The Turin Horse* refers to the same one Nietzsche saved from the beatings by its owner. The idea for *The Turin Horse* already started thirty years ago, right after both Tarr and László Krasznahorkai (the author of *Sátántangó*) attended a lecture on Nietzsche, and they both discussed about what happened to the horse after its beatings by its owner. Fred Kelemen, Tarr's director of photography who also read Nietzsche's philosophy, sees his camera movement as something that is "able to give birth to a dancing star", which is a quotation from Nietzsche (cited in Koehler, 2012). The Hungarian film critic András Bálint Kovács notes that in *The Turin Horse*, the never-seen-Nietzsche is that "most poetic visionary philosophy of a new human existence," while the seen "beaten horse represents the most humiliated, helpless and miserable subhuman existence" (2013, p. 146). The spectre of Nietzsche's philosophy – the joyous radicalism of human existence, the will to power – lingers fleetingly like dark clouds over a chasm that is Tarr's cinematic atmosphere.

It is *too easy* to say Tarr's cinemas as a display for the creative power of nihilism. The bleakness of Tarr's human characters moves in the colour of helplessness; they are unable to escape from their sufferings and their eventual fate simply because they are but humans, chained to their need to existence by *simply existing*. The sufferings are what compress and sustain the characters' depth. Simon Jablonski writes how Tarr's cinemas, *The Turin Horse* and *Family Nest* especially, "teeter on the brink of nihilism and lack one of the most enthralling and overlooked aspects of Tarr's work: his mischievous sense of humour" (2012). Richard Marshall, who observes the nihilistic aspect that governs Tarr's cinema, cannot help but sympathize the woman staring out from the window in *The Turin Horse* and describes her stare: "There is a quality of annihilation in that look, and an existence that is on the edge of existence, a small duration, terrible in its absolute stillness, a spectre of nothingness. It is a strange and distant image" (2014). A woman staring into a distance in Tarr's film unite the prospect of stillness, nothingness and annihilation into one terrible and cold image. Ela Bittencourt (2012) writes in *Bright Lights* how, "Béla Tarr's films show evil like you've never seen it before" and thinks that Karrer in *Damnation* is both nihilist and sadist. From the writers cited here, we can easily note how Tarr's *cinematic sensibilities are rhymed with nihilism*. After all, does not a film which portrays elements of ambiguous moral, plotlessness and composed in slow tempo, almost always a good recipe for 'nihilist cinema'? But how much nihilism is Tarr's cinema in the range of its visual decadence as existentialist art? What can we glean from its depth so as to understand its nihilistic quality proper to our task of understanding Tarr's filmic structure from Heidegger's thought? These are the questions that will reverberate throughout this chapter, questions that hopefully my meagre knowledge able to pursue and carry forward. For a contextual perspective in the range of this chapter's discussion, I bid the reader to observe Figure 6.1. It displays the range of relationship between Nietzsche, Heidegger and

Béla Tarr. The thick arrow shows deeper influence while non-thick arrow shows modest influence. It is understandable to note that Heidegger's relationship with Nietzsche is much more 'closer' (and as such, much more polemical) since both thinkers utilize written text, whereas Tarr employs film language.



**Figure 6.1:** Nietzsche and his influences, Heidegger and Béla Tarr. Illustration by Fauzi Naeim.

It is necessary in this chapter for us to look first to Nietzsche's philosophy and what he has to say about nihilism. Then, we will turn to Heidegger's conception of nihilism and his confrontation with Nietzsche's thought in extracting the essence of nihilism. By this point, using the knowledge of these two German thinkers as initial base, we will phenomenologically travel deeper into Tarr's cinematic grounds, to understand the sense of nihilism and the composition – *the strength* – of nihilism that makes up the inner workings of his cinemas. Several scenes from Tarr's longest film, the majestic *Satantango*, and his last film, *The Turin Horse*, will be extracted for this chapter's studies.

## 6.2. Nietzsche and Nihilism

Nietzsche, whom Heidegger called “the thinker of the thought of will to power,” and “the last metaphysician of the West” (N3, p. 8), was a controversial existentialist German thinker, and authors of several powerful writings that include *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1892), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *The Will to Power* (1901-1911), among others.<sup>41</sup> His style of writings is aphoristic, didactic, provocative, and ambiguously challenging. To me at least, he is that *impeccable ironist philosopher*, an exceptional thinker who measures the depth of our soul, tracking human values in the madness of life. It is not an exaggeration to say that his writings have influenced the history of modern philosophy, becoming the foundation of post-modernism, even to the extent of having been (unreliably) accused of starting the World War II.<sup>42</sup> In 1916, Clarence Darrow declares: “Since his death, no philosopher on earth has been so talked of as Nietzsche... The universities of the world have been turned upside down by Nietzsche... Nietzsche has helped men to be strong – to look the world in the face” (cited in Hollingdale, 2006, p. 72). In 1922, Giovanni Papini states, “I declare to you I do not know of any modern life nobler, purer, sadder, lonelier, more hopeless than that of Friedrich Nietzsche” (cited in Hollingdale, 2006, p. 72). “Nietzsche,” writes Walter Kaufmann in his introduction to *The Will to Power*, “is Germany’s greatest prose stylist, and his language is a delight at every turn like a poet’s...” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. xxi). All these statements show their admiration to Nietzsche’s thought, acknowledging the impact of his thinking to modern philosophies and critical theories.

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<sup>41</sup> If I have to put up a list of 10 most powerful philosophy books I have read so far, Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will definitely be in that short list.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, the provocative title by Konrad Algermissen, (1914), ‘Did Nietzsche cause the war?’ *Educational Review* 48: 353-57.

Even as early as his intellectual life, Nietzsche sees things in dualistic tension; between good and evil, between moral and non-moral, between Being and Becoming, between slaves and freedom, between truth and art. This dualistic tension can be seen in his early book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), when he theorizes that the Greek tragedy is built from two main sources, the deities Apollo and Dionysus, between rigid order and excessive chaos, and how both styles in need and in conflict with each other. These two conflicting bases are what form the best of Greek tragedy, the kind which celebrate the human life capacity for *ecstatic existence*. This is since, according to Nietzsche, “It is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” (1967, p. 52). Art plays significant part in Nietzsche’s repertoire; we can see this in one of his famous slogans, “Without music, life would be a mistake” (*Twilight of the Idols*, §.33). Art critically enhance life; one need only to read this special aphorism by Nietzsche to understand what is really at stake: “We have *art* so that we *do not perish from the truth*” (WP, §.822). Art is more worth than truth while life is worth nothing without beauty. Nietzsche’s writings are full of nausea and vehemence against morality; only through art does one combat this inertia of ethical concerns. To cite another sentence from *The Will to Power*, “Our religion, morality, and philosophy are *decadence*-forms of humanity. – The *countermovement*: art” (WP, §.794).

*The Will to Power*, which is actually comprised of collected notes published after Nietzsche’s death, is his most concentrated writings on nihilism. The notes show exceptional understanding about the polemics and paradoxes of nihilism *as way of being*, as a history and as a concept. ‘Nihilism’ is a term that points to the meaningless of things, pessimism about or in life, a refusal to believe in tradition and religion, amoral, or the lethargic quality of life. The key word to nihilism, the Latin *nihil*, means – ‘nothing.’

Nietzsche: “This is the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (‘the meaningless’), eternally” (WP, §.55). “‘Nothing’ implies a thing’s not being at hand, its not being” (Heidegger, N4, p. 18). When looking for something which then turns out to be not there, we commonly say, “There’s nothing there.” The nothing is a negation of thing; for example, when a thing ceases to be a thing, when its meaning and value has changed, or when something has lost the appearance of its *somethingness*. Perhaps, the first employment for the term ‘nihilism’ came from a letter by Friedrich H. Jacobi to Fichte (Heidegger, N4, p. 3). In the letter, ‘nihilism’ was used by Jacobi as an opposition towards Idealism. Idealism – in the range of Nietzsche’s thoughts – points toward Platonic ideas, something which, by using (or misusing) nihilism, Nietzsche is in fight with.

“What does nihilism mean?” Nietzsche, formulating the essence of European nihilism, answers: “*That the uppermost values devalue themselves*. The aim is lacking; the ‘why?’ receives no answer” (WP, §.2). This is a very important statement by Nietzsche since it defines in a most ambiguous but ingenious term, how value have gained currency in human and that nihilism is the overturning of the highest value (for example, ‘God’, ‘religion’). Nihilism names the pessimistic strength that dominates the history of European nihilism, a kind of strength that has its bases in value-positing activities. When ‘aim’ loose its reason, every value becomes meaningless. This is why “the ‘why?’ receives no answer.” The state of nihilism is the state of meaningless in the eternally recurrence of the same, in the tiredness of existence itself. The ‘uppermost values’ in Nietzsche’s vocabulary pinpoints to Christendom and its moral superiority, which Nietzsche believes, handicaps the power of existence to *mere* ethics. Christianity was Nietzsche’s main enemy; the ones who *suppress* human intelligence and freedom. His bile towards Christianity was so strong that in 1888, he dedicates an entire book, *The Anti-Christ*, into a personal vendetta against

everything Christian. A smallest cue from *The Anti-Christ* will suffice: “it is indecent to be a Christian these days. And this is where my disgust begins” (1995, p. 35). Religion is considered by Nietzsche as nihilism, the eternal roots to decadence. In a vehement sarcasm, Nietzsche describes: “Christianity is the decadent form of the old world sunk into deepest impotence, so that the sickest and unhealthiest elements and desires come to the top” (WP, §.173). This is a warning by Nietzsche. The ones who “come to the top” simply cannot be trusted. Unfortunately, Christian morality had already been entombed over Western European bodies for many centuries, influencing the way human bodies prefigure their movements. In one of his many notes against the Christian church, he sums up: “The church is precisely that against which Jesus preached and against which he taught his disciples to fight” (WP, §.168).

In nihilistic thinking, morality is a suspect. More, morality is assumed by Nietzsche as *what* hinders mankind’s progression toward something stronger and more beautiful. The extent of morality that governs the history of man is incalculable, but from where does this ethical concern gained its directive? For example: How do we judge our existence? Do we not ultimately, without even realizing it, judge existence according to the standard and measurement of morality? Nietzsche notes: “This is the *antinomy*: Insofar as we believe in morality we pass sentence on existence” (WP, §.6). Subscribing existence to morality means to subjugate everyday things to ethical concern, which in turn dominates everyday things according to the relationship between subject and object, where the subject is given power to rule the object. This is why Nietzsche is against the superiority of morality because to him, morality is just another word manifested from being’s will to power. Existence is nothing but a mode and growth of the power of pessimism. If all willing is nothing but a will to power, then existence itself is a growth striving beyond itself. Can we

escape the pessimistic power of nihilism? Nietzsche does not think so. We are already *part* of its history; we are *what* constitute its history. Nietzsche in fact suggests overcoming nihilism with *overman* (Original German: *übermensch*); beings whom every stronger man should strive for; beings who are willing to forsake everything for a better and stronger world – a world without religious polemics.

The history of man is the history of will to power manifesting endlessly. This is Nietzsche's main thesis about existence. Our history cannot be grasped like as if it has a coherent structure, with gaps that can be calculated like an object in a lab; it is a vice of the unintelligible, occupied by human who posits value, who bows to value. The positing of value can only happen since beings are already endowed with an intrinsic willing to strive beyond itself. To put a value into a thing or a person is to subject the thing or person rankings of value – this is will to power. A person wanting to educate herself in archeology will strive to endow herself with knowledge about archeology; this too is will to power – putting oneself beyond one's means in the acquisition of more knowledge; which means, more power. Some of the interesting definition by Nietzsche on human history can be summed up below:

All major growth is in fact accompanied by a tremendous *disintegration* and *passing away*: suffering, the symptoms of decline, *belong* to the times and tremendous advance; every fertile and powerful movement of humanity has also *created at the same time* a nihilistic movement. It could turn out to be the sign of crucial and most essential growth, of transition to new conditions of existence, that the *most extreme* form of pessimism, *nihilism* proper, comes into the world (WP, §.51).



Please take note of this thought-provoking statement since I will foreground it later in the section on Tarr's nihilist cinema. For now, we need to observe several fundamental points. First, existence is always about growth of nature, but in Nietzsche's perspectives, this growth involves "tremendous *disintegration* and *passing away*." A hibiscus which is starting to spurt its petal, from green to red, implicates its growing by not only blooming and transforming itself, but by discarding something in its growth; the green colour, the pointed shape, the way its movement has now changed when the wind sweeps its body. Something else *had* to pass away so that something other can be moved forward. Existence, its "tremendous advance," cannot be joyful without having in contact with "suffering, the symptoms of decline." When dark thoughts, formed over the course of our life, nurtured perhaps by the need and calculation for revenge, is not this dark thought first and foremost grip us, burn us into becoming something that we can grow beyond? Nietzsche realizes the truth of this; that in the very ground of Being, lurks the power of nihilism, the self-destruction and the pessimism. Secondly, nihilism is named by Nietzsche as "the sign of crucial and most essential growth, of transition to new conditions of existence." Not only is nihilism is crucial, but it is *an* essential for existence to develop and mature beyond itself. An existence, that of *living* and *being*, cannot transform itself without roaming deeper into nihilism. "New conditions of existence" are perhaps but a deeper, abyssal mode of nihilism – *a passing away of things*. We see glimpse of Nietzsche's paradox of endless, *wearying* circle of life on Earth: nihilism is what stands against humanity and what also gives birth to humanity.

Thirdly, "*most extreme* form of pessimism" is "*nihilism proper*." This situates the force of pessimism as the core of nihilism. But what do Nietzsche means by most extreme form of pessimism? In series of notes in *The Will to Power*, we can find abundance of

instances of pessimism. For examples: Pessimism is seen “as a preliminary form of nihilism” (WP, §.9); the working force behind nihilism is shown to be pessimism – “the idea of valuelessness, meaninglessness: to what extent moral valuations hide behind all other high values” (WP, §.11); Nietzsche’s personal pessimism – “suspicion and malice against what they call ‘ideals’” (WP, §.80). It is no wonder that having recognized the sapping-energy of pessimism, Nietzsche explains further what nihilism is:

Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the “in vain,” insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure – being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had *deceived* oneself all too long (WP, §.12A).

Nihilism does not come around in sudden flash, in machine-gun bursts, but moves in “the long *waste* of strength.” The strength is there, but is wasted for something other, or according to Nietzschean terminology – *wasting away* towards tradition and morality. This long wastage of energy does not come alone but comes with the unitary force of insecurity (or weak of will), the inability to regain confidence with self (or demotivation) and being ashamed (or self-loathing). Notice how Nietzsche uses the word ‘long’ twice in the sentence above; firstly, as “long *waste* of strength” and finally at the end, “as if one had *deceived* oneself all too long.” There is a reason for this. ‘Long’ here refers to the stretchedness of life, the existence of never-ending deception and weariness. By stating ‘long’, Nietzsche not only speaking about duration in time but about ‘slow’, which life *is*. Existence, Nietzsche permits, throbs and ebbs in oscillating line of the sameness, *always the same everywhere, anywhere* – and, being aware of this, makes one a nihilist.

### 6.3. Heidegger's Nihilism, from the Light of Nietzsche's Metaphysics

There are five major rubrics that we have to understand from Heidegger's hermeneutics on Nietzsche's metaphysics: 'nihilism,' 'revaluation of all values,' 'will to power,' 'eternal recurrence of the same' and 'Overman.' Each five rubrics named here, according to Heidegger, are *the basis* of Nietzsche's writings, the theme that Nietzsche keeps referring back, especially 'will to power,' his most important contribution to the European philosophy. For reason of space, it is impossible for us to analyze the themes individually, so we will concentrate on the main topic at hand, nihilism. Heidegger's thinking on nihilism pretty much extends Nietzsche's nihilism, albeit with his usual thinking from the perspective of the history of Being; nihilism as the culmination of Western metaphysics. According to Heidegger, "nihilism is concerned with the nothing and therefore, in a special way, with beings in their nonbeing" (N4, p. 19). In a way, "it is the essential nonthinking of the essence of the nothing" (N4, p. 22). (Please take note that Heidegger's metaphysic of the nothing as *nothingness* is already elaborated in Chapter 3). Describing further the state of nihilism, Heidegger writes:

Nihilism is that historical process whereby the dominance of the transcendence becomes null and void, so that all being loses its worth and meaning. Nihilism is the history of the being itself, through which the death of Christian God comes slowly but inexorably to light. (N4, p. 22)

Nihilism is thought here by Heidegger as an inescapable historical conditioning whereby meaningful being loses its worth. Not only is nihilism a historical process, it is also "a process of the devaluation of the uppermost values" (N4, p. 22). There are no longer higher values since all values have become suspect. In Heidegger's fascinating essay on

Nietzsche and modernity, *'The Word of Nietzsche: God Is Dead'* (*Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot'*, 1943), he argues that when Nietzsche says "God is dead", it is not that *God is truly dead* or that *God is not there*, but that transcendence has *lost its power* over entities. Modern man has become the godless being; freed from the debacle of the Christian God, *free to be himself from himself*. Nietzsche thinks that man must free himself from the centuries-long history of being chained to one god, to become more than himself, to overcome himself to be *overman*, the type who is stronger in willing, who takes full control over his destiny. This overman is not a mythical or mystical creature who has power beyond his physical means (like Superman) but it is of the strength of ordinary man, taken beyond measure through tribulations of life.

"'God is dead' means: the suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life" (QCT, p. 61). The 'suprasensory world' Heidegger refers to here is the realm of ideas, in contrast to the sensory world which is the world of physical and appearance. When the suprasensory has lost its governing power, "then nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself" (QCT, p. 61). Here, the Nothing spreads all over the realm and rules over all meaning. And how does Heidegger define the Nothing in the context of Nietzsche's pronouncement? It is the "absence of a suprasensory, obligatory world" (QCT, pp. 61-62). The absence – the giving up of the values of tradition – is however, cannot be immediately felt since it is covered up by man's dominion over the earth. "Nihilism," Heidegger argues, "is the world-historical movement of the peoples of the earth who have drawn into the power realm of the modern age" (QCT, p. 62-63). The discussion on Heidegger's criticism regarding modern technology can be seen in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, so I will not repeat. It is enough to note that the *modern history of man is the pervasion of nihilism*. To be drawn into our technological apparatus, Heidegger

argues, is also to be drawn into nihilism, which is the totality of chains that connect meanings, humans and machines under one unitary *Gestalt*. Can we escape it? Heidegger offers cautionary answer: “Those who fancy themselves free of nihilism perhaps push forward its development most fundamentally” (QCT, p. 63). Nihilism, it seems, not only foundational but it is also inescapable. We can see this form perhaps, in the politics of ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), a fundamentalist group who thinks itself as legitimate authority over the Islamic world – it also believes in the corruption of the West – but the violence and hatred that are used to fight its cause *is* something they cannot even see, or refuse to see. This is since, this group firmly believes that the evilness are everywhere, but not in them. In (thinking of) freeing the state of Islam from corruption, the ISIL is pushing itself forward but directly into corruption. Is not this the irony and blindness of nihilism?

In the first section for the outline of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche asks: “Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests?” (WP, §1). Why does Nietzsche call nihilism as uncanny? Heidegger’s answer has a taint of irony; “it is called the ‘most uncanny’ because, as the unconditional will to will, it wills homelessness as such. This is why it is of no avail to show it the door, because it has long since been roaming around invisibly inside the house” (1998, p. 292). Nihilism here is treated like an unwanted guest, but the kind that is hard to be turned away. It is an unwelcome guest that has overstayed its welcome, a shred of something that cannot be properly placed, a scratch that nudges our well-being. Nihilism is uncanny – creepy, unearthly, *tremendous* – in the sense that it brings something undefinable, but still familiar to our consciousness. And yet it stays *guestly* in its invisibility. This uncanny nihilism, which has made itself home in our being, remains in such a way that it “wills homelessness.” Please take note that the word

‘uncanny’ in Heidegger’s original German is *unheimlichkeit*, which literally translated, is not-at-home. This is also the reason why we feel like going out from our home every now and then, and yet, still coming back to home after the ventures. The homelessness is a condition of a soul, a willing-for-nothingness that is already ingrained in our being, but necessary for the state of meditation. (Please see Chapter 3 on dwelling and contemplation for more discussion on *unheimlichkeit*).

In a lecture titled ‘*Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being*’ (given in 1944–46, but was published in German in 1961), the philosophy on the essence of nihilism is thought further than any Heidegger’s essays on Nietzsche. We must take note first: The foundational common thread that runs gamut in Heidegger’s thinking on history is always that the history of Western metaphysics is the history of the oblivion of Being of beings. To think metaphysics, is to neglect the thinking on Being. In this lecture, nihilism is thought as the metaphysics proper. Heidegger sees Nietzsche’s metaphysics as the culmination of Western metaphysics; Nietzsche had never really overcome nihilism or Platonic thinking, it is in fact “the ultimate entanglement in nihilism” (N4, p. 203). Nietzsche’s interpretation of Being as value means that he cannot even give a proper insight into the *whatness* of Being. “Fulfilled nihilism definitively shuts itself off from the possibility of ever being able to think and to know the essence of nihilism” (N4, p. 203). In straining the principle of Being as value (as will to power, as eternal recurrence of the same), Nietzsche’s thinking walks further than most but never really uncover the essence of Being. Take notice how Heidegger’s deconstruct the meaning of nihilism here. It is no longer mere pessimistic force, but nihilism as the happenstance of Western metaphysics in the lostness of the question of Being. “The essence of nihilism,” Heidegger writes “*is* historically as metaphysics, and the metaphysics of Plato is no less nihilistic than that of Nietzsche” (N4,

p. 205). This is one of Heidegger's criticisms regarding Nietzsche's thought. When the great Greek thinker Plato philosophizes, it arrives in such a manner that it conceals the essence of nihilism, but when Nietzsche philosophizes, it manifests the essence of nihilism. Being is thought as *idea* by Plato while Nietzsche thinks Being as will to power. And yet, both Plato and Nietzsche *still* cannot escape nihilism, since the question of Being was not fully interrogated properly. Thus, Heidegger concludes Western metaphysics in continuous entanglement in nihilism; it is "indifference to Being," (N4, p. 195), suffering "history as the release of Being into machination" (N4, p. 196).

The last part of Heidegger's lecture on '*Nietzsche: The Will to Power (European Nihilism)*' is fittingly titled 'Being as the Void and as Abundance' (N4, pp. 188-196). I say 'fittingly' since after the series of sections about nihilism, negation, nothing, Descartes and the history of Western metaphysics, at the end, he comes back to praise Being. Here, Heidegger openly admits how *familiar* we are with Being to the point that we have become lost to the sight of it. Being flies in the face of 'is' – "How *is* your day?" – and "passes like a fleeting echo" (N4, p. 191). Using variables instances of 'is' in sentences, Heidegger jots down the many meanings of 'is' such as; 'comes from', 'belongs', 'has set out', 'signifies', 'really present', 'prevails', 'consists of', 'has taken up his sojourn there', 'has spread', 'will take place', 'is rooting about', 'behaves'. So many meanings for the word 'is'! The 'is' is what forms our understanding, the 'what' that grounds the world as we know it. And yet, in its abundance, it *is* its own void. To quote Heidegger fully:

Being is what is emptiest and at the same time it is abundance, out of which all beings, known and experienced, or unknown and yet to be experienced,

are endowed each with the essential form of its own *individual* Being (N4, p. 192)

The statement above must be understood poetically. Each beings or entities are endowed with unique essence of beingness. 'Is', like 'Being', is hard to define since it is easiest to grasp. "The most intelligible defies all intelligibility" (N4, p. 192). Being is chaos and order, in conflict and in harmony with itself. In its intelligible unintelligibility, it is "most in use and yet to come, most reliable and most abyssal, most forgotten and most remembering, most said and most reticent" (N4, p. 193). The relationship between forgotten and remembering is one of discord but essential, and yet is not interrogated deeply enough in Nietzsche's writings. Nietzsche's nihilism is the promise of Being, but *stays* as a promise. "*The essence of metaphysics*," Heidegger concludes, "*consists in the fact that it is the history of the secret of the promise of Being itself*" (N4, p. 227). In staying as a promise, Being haunted the history of Western and European metaphysics, but never really manifested itself clearly in the writings from Plato to Descartes to Kant to Nietzsche. By the end of the lecture, Heidegger laments the nature of our technological thinking. We are already deep in the age of *Weltanschauung*, an event of modern metaphysics whereby Ideas and Values are celebrated rather than the poetic tension between Nothingness and Being.

#### **6.4. Béla Tarr's Cinema: Nihilism, Bleakness and Will-to-power of the Image**

Clearly, the engagement with Béla Tarr's filmmaking under the question of nihilism will not be as *direct* or *philosophical* as Nietzsche or Heidegger. While Nietzsche and Heidegger is very much involved knee deep in the problematic of nihilism and Being, using



written notes and lectures to argue their positions, Tarr's filmmaking involves instead visual images, and to these we need to *uncover the phenomenology of nihilism*, byway of the literature of Heidegger's Nietzsche. The basic tenet for this section is not only to phenomenologically describe Béla Tarr's cinemas, but also to argue further that his cinema is a phenomenology of nihilism. How does his film image expose nihilism at work? Does Tarr's cinema really push the boundary of nihilist cinema or otherwise? To be more specific, how do we connect the uncanniness of Nietzsche's nihilism ("the recognition of the long *waste* of strength") and Heidegger's nihilism ("it wills homelessness as such") in the grounds of Tarr's cinemas? These are the questions that will help to build the bridge into Tarr's cinemas.



**Figure 6.2:** The final frame of the opening scene in *Sátántangó*.

We will start our phenomenological analysis with *Sátántangó* (1994), the eight-minute long opening shot which shows camera tracking from left to right, displaying rows of houses as the cows disappear into the horizon. Please see Figure 6.2. *Sátántangó*, Tarr's sixth feature, is based from László Krasznahorkai's novel of the same title. The caption (not

shown in the figure), which runs in a dark background just right after the final shot of Figure 6.2 says:

One October morning before the first drops of the long autumn rains which turn tracks into bog, which cut the town off, which fell on parched soil, Futaki was woken by the sound of bells. The solitary chapel eight kilometers away, had no bell and its tower had collapsed during the war. The town was too far away, its sounds do not carry here. (English subtitles translated from original Hungary).

The description by the narrator runs counter with the images running alongside it. For one, the image is dark. For second, there are no images of Futaki, or the house where he is at, or “the solitary chapel eight kilometers away” (Futaki will only be introduced later). What we have here is the contradiction of imageries, between the commentator’s text and the film, and yet, is it not in this contradiction that the power of imagination can surge ahead? “Indeed,” the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard writes in the *Poetics of Space*, “everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate” (1994, p. 39). The film images are dialectical; they must be in *tension*, if not with each other, then with the words that accompany them. Images, according to Bachelard, are manifestation of complete imagination, and “owes its entire being to the imagination” (1994, p. 74). The opening shot of *Sátántangó* not only establish the context of the story, but serves as an introduction to the languidness that will continue to be present throughout the film. In a way, the opening shot also function as a deterrent to non-visual-contemplators; if you cannot take it, then maybe this is not your *home*.

If I have to do a formal description: Figure 6.2 is an image showing several houses divided by a road in the middle, with several leafless trees scattered here and there. The atmosphere is serene, quiet. The road is muddy; perhaps the image is captured right after a rain or in the middle of snow thawing. The sky is slightly dark – dusk or dawn? – while electric lines can be seen running its horizon. All in all, a typical vernacular houses that can be found in modern era Eastern European. What is not clearly seen are the cows that have moved out from the long-tracking camera.

The town in Béla Tarr's film reminds me of Albert Camus' profound existentialist work, *La Peste* (*The Plague*, 1953/1975). Oran, the name of *The Plague*'s town, "is ugly. It has a smug, placid air," "a town without pigeons, without any trees or gardens, where you never hear the beat of wings or the rustle of leaves – a thoroughly negative place" (1975, p. 3). I can already feel the damp coldness seeping in every corner of its beings. The village in *Sátántangó*, on the other hand, has plenty "rustle of leaves" but that does not make it any less negative. Its sun is too soft, too weak. Both towns in *Sátántangó* and in *The Plague* are built so as to trap darkness. Both succeed. The only difference; Oran exudes claustrophobia while *Sátántangó* baits darkness through open, empty landscape. *Sátántangó*'s description – "long autumn rains which turn tracks into bog, which cut the town off, which fell on parched soil" – shows the isolation held by its people. This is why the first long-tracking shot shows rows of cheerless houses but with no people; to establish the atmosphere of emptiness, of alienation, of austerity.



**Figure 6.3:** The steps in *Sátántangó*.

How do we understand nihilism here? Does the procession of cows moving here and there constitute the force of nihilism? Or, are visual displays of Hungarian houses in rural area attributable to nihilism? It is not in the display of cows, houses or roads that nihilism can be manifested. Nihilism is in the *slow way* the cows and houses are being presented, especially when the images are exhausted from their natural colours, with only black and white saturation reigning supreme. The slowness of the cinematography runs counter against mainstreams' expectation of what film supposed to be; which is why we hear immediate labels like 'nihilistic,' 'bleak,' 'boring,' 'sleepy' in the discourse of Béla Tarr and the type of films he is categorized in.

Does nihilism have anything to do with the representation of human figure in cinema? It does not have to be so, and Béla Tarr's art is a prime example for it. To be sure, a nihilist film has no need represent human figure; only contemplative human audience. An image can be composed of a chair, a table or steps leading to a door, but what makes the image uncanny are the *way* the chair, table and steps being shown, the context of the

images in relation to the previous shot and its next shot. I would like to cite a scene from Tarr's oeuvre. Figure 6.3 shows a scene from *Sátántangó* (from the DVD, the exact position is 1:10:53–1:12:29). In the background, while the monotonous music is playing, we hear the narrator's voice in Hungary. The English translation says:

In the east the sky clears fast like a memory. At dawn, it leans all red on the waving horizon. As the morning beggar trudges up the back steps to the church, the sun rises to give life to the shadow and to separate earth and the sky, man and animal from the disturbing, confused unity in which they became inextricably intertwined. He saw the fleeing night on the other side, its terrifying elements in turn diving on the western horizon, like a desperate, defeated, confused army.

I will start with Heidegger's words: "Nihilism is concerned with the nothing and therefore, in a special way, with beings in their nonbeing" (N4, p. 19). In another lecture, he pronounces, "Nihilism means: Nothing is befalling everything and in every respect" (QCT, p. 110). How do we relate Heidegger's 'nihilism as nothing' with Figure 6.3 above? Is the representation of nothing is what develops nihilism or is nihilism already stands in the realm of the nothing? Compositionally, the steps, the darkness, the rain, the music and the narrator's sound are linked with each other to create the prevalence of nothing. I believe this to be a much more powerful representation of the nothing rather than simple blank canvas. By composing Figure 6.3 as such, beings stand concealed: Half-covered and half-seen in the dead of the darkness, *nothingness* reigns. Mihály Vig's music that accompanies the scene above exhausts the beings' appearance even more.

Notice how the horizon is swallowed whole by the night's darkness. What we see are beings with no support by horizon, the hope of distance. The small light above the steps is there only to give a slight sense of radiance, a vertical flash that deemphasizes the horizon even more. The night rules supreme. To gain knowledge of this essence of darkness, let us hear again the words sounded calmly by the narrator: "The sun rises to give life to the shadow and to separate earth and the sky, man and animal from the disturbing, confused unity in which they became inextricably intertwined." Such sun in the land of *Sátántangó* is colder than the sun found outside my room. In fact, the sun radiates grey light that spreads all over Tarr's earth. It moves, rises, only to grow shadows from beings. Furthermore, the sun is there not to just shed light onto things, but to pronounce the boundary between the blue sky and living beings, to withhold the unison of things and living beings. Such description found in *Sátántangó* is phenomenological; the tension between text and image alerts our imagination for different depth and texture. The description of the sky which starts like a reddish "waving horizon," that turns into "desperate, defeated, confused army", transforms the darkness of the night into living, breathing beast, shrouding the cosmos. The rains, which can only be seen under the light, suddenly become soothing over the pessimism of cosmos.

In phenomenological observation, light is important. It is what gives visibility to things. Under the radiance of light, colour can be observed and discriminated. In Heidegger's first lectures at Marburg (1923-1924), collected in *Gesamtausgabe* as *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (1994), Heidegger writes: "Colour is what is spread over something visible in itself" (2005, p. 4). This means that any visible things are fully covered with colour. When things are coloured differently than usual – in the case of Tarr; black and white – our scheme of colour is thwarted. At this stage, we

cannot be sure how to assign meaningful signs to beings' coloration. In a world of black and white, the difference between the brilliant colourings of a Poisonous Frog and a normal frog is lost. Here, everything is possible in its ambiguity. How do we phenomenologically define darkness? According to Heidegger again, darkness is an *adiaphanes*, something that does not let thing be seen (2005, p.7). Yet, darkness also lets some other thing be seen; for example a light from torchlight is more apparent in darkness than in the clear sunlight of an afternoon. Earlier in the section on Nietzsche's nihilism above, I quoted an interesting statement from *The Will to Power*, and it is worth repeating: "All major growth is in fact accompanied by a tremendous *disintegration* and *passing away*..." (WP, §.51). Here, Nietzsche was describing a state of nihilism. How does this text relate to Tarr's film making? There are three important signs from Nietzsche's statement that can *light* a narrow path to Tarr's cinematic thinking; 'growth,' 'disintegration,' and 'passing away.' As I have explained earlier, nature grows forth according to the principle of the will to power, but such growth partakes in the decadence of its form. What I would like to pursue further is how the three combinative signs of nihilism – 'growth,' 'disintegration,' and 'passing away' – are emblematic in the aesthetic operation of Tarr's universe. To do this, I ask the reader to closely observe another shot found in *Sátántangó* (Figure 6.4).



**Figure 6.4:** Estike carrying the dead cat in *Sátántangó*.

Here is the context for Figure 6.4. The girl in the image, Estike (played by Erika Bók, who also played the daughter in *The Turin Horse*), had been cheated from her savings. Earlier, an older boy manipulated her into thinking that money can grow when planted on the ground. She came back to where she planted the money, but the money was gone. Her protest to the older boy went unheeded. Desolated, she poisoned and murdered her only companion, a black cat. Figure 6.4 shows her walking on a barren road, towing the dead cat under her arm. For 2 minutes and 24 seconds, the shot maintains its duration; the first frame in the left is the starting point of the shot, while the second frame is its final. From the first to the final frame, we can see not much has changed. Camera staging is still medium shot, track out. Other than the front of her body, some trees at the back, only her footsteps resound throughout the shot. The scene afterward, Figure 6.5, shows another location, a long shot of a ruin, as Estike's body slowly emerges from right to the left.



**Figure 6.5:** The girl arrives at the ruin in *Sátántangó*.

Both Figure 6.4 and 6.5 can be described as nihilistic. Estike's movement goes on and on, while the camera maintains its physical distance. The shot is about repetition. More



importantly, it is about the *mood of emptiness*. We must recall back the basic foundation of the word ‘nihil’ which is – ‘nothing.’ What both images try to emphasize is the intensity of nothingness through extended gaze on endless movement. The reason why the long take takes more than two minutes to capture a same movement and a same distance is to prolong the effect of a routine. Is not a walking, for those who is gifted with the ability of legs to walk, a life’s routine? The walks, I argue here, is no mere everyday walks; it arrives as a *disenchanted movement*. No more care free attitude, only the heaviness of existence. In this slowness of life’s routine, existence is made unbearable. When feelings are bleached from the body, existence have become too much, *too rich*. Estike’s eyes are never on the road and never fully on the camera; they stay open, and in the duration of the shot, manifests the vacancy of an intellect. Is it possible for her to feel regret or remorse for the death of the cat? But the camera says these feelings are not important! What is more immediate in the image is the vacant looks which stays the same. The eyes neither condemn nor elicit sympathy; Tarr’s metaphysics asks us to reconsider the emptiness as the foundational aspect of our existence. Some of the choicest wordings regarding the oppression of *the richness of existence* can be found in Sartre’s *La Nausée* (*Nausea*, 1938). *Nausea*’s hero Antoine Roquentin is afflicted with a special type of sickness, the awareness of the absurdity of existence, which he sometimes call Nausea. Roquentin’s description runs: “I suffer in my wounded flesh which turns, walks, I walk, I flee, I am a criminal with bleeding flesh, bleeding with existence to these walls” (Sartre, 2007, p. 102). In *Nausea* mode, Roquentin detects the *fullness* of existence everywhere, “dense, heavy and sweet” (2007, p. 103). The gravity of Existence is cloying, while staying opaque at the same time. Getting back to Figure 6.4, Estike’s existence *shine* like nothing else; over the course of the time – stretched as it is as a long take – her existence arrives to my consciousness like an otherworld figure – a girl-being, radically silent, a harbinger of Grey Matter.

Figure 6.4 is one of the ideal moment where we can see the movement of Nietzsche's 'growth,' 'disintegration,' and 'passing away.' Tarr's cinematography moves but paradoxically stays inert at the same time. It shows the growth of time, but such growth only elicits the eternal recurrence of the same. In this recurring image, everything disintegrates; what is left is emptiness, the exhaustion of existence. What is passing away in the shot is not just the sense of time or human gesture. In long take, time *radiates* like nothing else. What passes away is the spatial movement of camera. *It passes*. It moves, and in its movement, it passes away, to give way and sway to whatever it is passing from. The tracking-out of the camera moves in such way that it moves while maintaining its perpetual distance with the girl's body. Estike has lost hope of the living. But her body does not realize this. (Perhaps, Estike's body can be called mere *automata*, since it is moving and covering space in the mode of pure reflex, innocent soul emptied out by her wide, blank stare). I hope I am making sense here. Obviously to phenomenologically describe a metaphysical structure of a brooding cinema like *Sátántangó* is no easy feat. What I analyze here can only be snippets of its immense duration. *Sátántangó*'s seven-hours-long format – to succinctly describe it – is akin to a cold, stretched, overpowering grey light, filled with the grace of human movement, the tragic of *simply* existing. Tarr's cinematography moves, then passes away *only to continually move to pass away*. Such passing arrives and ends in the state of lingering. (The phenomenology of lingering shot is fully analyzed in previous chapter). What disintegrates are the *way* of its passing away, or more importantly, the content of what the camera passes away in its movement.

The dialectic of Figure 6.4 and 6.5 steers according to the power of decadence. Observe Nietzsche's delightful words in *Twilight of the Idols*: "It is no use: we *have to go*

forwards, and I mean step by step further into decadence...” (2005, §. 43). One must go forward; each step taken by Estike on the empty road brings her to her eventual downfall. After coming to decaying buildings, she sits down and quietly puts the same poison she used for her cat – into her mouth. Afterward, she dusts off her clothes, brushes a bit her hair, hugs her cat, and then lies down on the mound, to sleep forever. As the camera comes closer to her face, the Narrator’s voice sounds her deep thought, “Everything that happens is good. Everything was, eventually, simple.” Remembering again the event of past days, she humbly realized that there is an “indescribably beautiful meaning bridging them.” In death, the beauty seeks sovereignty. In an interview about *The Turin Horse*, Béla Tarr says, “In the middle of the big sadness, you could find something which is truly beautiful” (cited from Jablonski, 2012). One can see the same idea also in *Sátántangó*, *The Man from London* and *Werckmeister Harmonies*. The appearance of beauty is arrived by creating a vast reality of wretchedness, and then to introduce in a most miniscule way, the monotonous grace of human movement.

As I have written above; it is *too easy* to label Tarr’s films nihilistic. No doubt, the death of Estike is a tragedy – it will soon reverberate throughout *Sátántangó*’s dull reality – but what we must recover in this dissertation is the way nihilism works in Tarr’s cinematic arts. There is something... wrong in just stating nihilism and letting it go *as* that; there is *something deeper* at work here. The slow grace of human and camera movement – beautiful and evocatively contemplative to my eyes – goes farther than mere nihilism. The images above – *Sátántangó*’s opening shot, the steps to a building in darkness, Estike’s automatic stride – they all isolate the truth at works in artwork. It is not for truth that Tarr produce his films. He seeks to *recover* for his thinking audience the *simple ordering* that governs any manifestation of truth.

Nihilist images do not overplay their complexities. It is enough to stay simple in the order of things to access the chaos of cosmos. After all, according to Roquentin from Sartre's *Nausea*, do not the simplest, at its core, give an indefinable quality of "too much content"? (2007, p. 130). "No," Tarr bemuses, when discussing about *Damnation*, "I just wanted to make a movie about this guy who is walking up and down the village and has seen this whale" (cited in Daly and Cain, 2001). Janos, the hero of *Damnation*, the simple guy who "is walking up and down the village," is irritatingly simple-minded. He is idealist, gullible, easy to help out people and yet with enough concern to feel guilt – just the right recipe for his eventual mental breakdown at the end of *Damnation*. Is it possible to see Janos' mental breakdown as a tribute to Nietzsche's mental break down before he finally dies at the age of fifty-five? There is no clear answer to this. The simplicity of Tarr's film, "about this guy who is walking up and down the village," resides in the life's everyday routine. As long take, this everyday tedium turns nihilistic to our mechanical eyes. And why should I *not* call the gaze, mechanical eyes? Are we not subjected every day to the fast-cutting videos embedded in Facebook or YouTube?

Does Tarr rage against the Creator? In regards to 'the end of the world' theme in *The Turin Horse*, he answers:

Yes, somehow this is an anti-Creation story. Somehow it's attempting to show a very simple—'okay, we are doing our daily life.' The same routine, but every day is different, and every day just becomes bleaker, bleaker, and by the end is just suffocating. That's all—in a very quiet and very silent way. No apocalypse... Nothing. Just the simple pain of living (cited from Levine and Meckler, 2012).

The end of earth, Tarr predicts, will be suffocating not because of the eventual destruction of everything but for the *simplicity* of the idea. Can there be any resistance toward the apocalypse? Perhaps the resistance resides in the continuous existence of man, in “just the simple pain of living.” Notice again the recurring word ‘routine’ by Tarr, which I have used in describing Estike’s walks above. A routine grows bleaker when shown in the form of long take. But such routine brings itself, to borrow a statement from Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*, “to look down from the fullness and self-assurance of the *rich* life into the secret work of the instinct of decadence” (2005, p. 76). In *Sátántangó* or in anywhere else, Tarr displays an uncanny taste in excavating beauty from the stranglehold of decadence.

For both Nietzsche and Heidegger, nihilism is always the uncanny force of decadence. When one writes about Béla Tarr’s cinema as nihilistic art, one must realize his narrative tastes; the ruins found in the landscape, the decaying inner condition of the man, the misunderstood dialogues, the unfulfilled desires and so on. The sense of decadence is slow moving in its impact but nevertheless, soul-crushing. It is like watching a silent, dying body of a woman that writhes slowly under the pressure of agony and time; one either looks away or stands transfixed. The choice of helping out the dying woman was never given an option in existentialist cinemas like Tarr’s; his camera works stand transfixed with the possible notion of existential images – that the images *optimistically* exist under the decay of unintelligible system, how beautiful life is! Sometimes, while operating under the guidance of *existence*, the camera goes dark for a while, blocked as it is, by the opaqueness of existing beings. Inert beings have become editing tools for Tarr’s long take video. A night (see Figure 6.2 above) can become like an inner, physical cut to his moving camera works.

Tarr's films are lucidly Nietzschean, of this I have no doubt. Recall Nietzsche's way of teaching his philosophy;

We teach estrangement in every sense, we tear open gaps such as never were, we want man to become more wicked than he ever was. Meanwhile we ourselves live as strangers to one another, concealed from one another. It is necessary for many reasons that we recluse and that we don masks – consequently, we shall do poorly in searching out our comrades. We shall live alone and probably come to know the torments of seven solitudes. If perchance our paths should cross, you may wager that we will mistake one another or betray one another (WP, §.988).

Does this not tell a lot about Tarr's atmosphere? By God, yes! Nietzsche's metaphysics are all over Tarr's cinemas; In *Werckmeister Harmonies*, Janos is "poor in searching out our comrades," Both the father and his daughter "live alone and probably come to know the torments of seven solitudes" in *The Turin Horse* (Why *seven* solitudes? Because one *type* of solitude is not enough to warrant a proper suffering!), Karrer in *Damnation* mistakes "one another or betray one another," The main protagonist from *Man from London* is a recluse, high in his tower, "live as strangers to one another, concealed from one another." Tarr teaches "estrangement in every sense." His characters are wicked and if not to one another then to the animals – the girl Estike poisoned the cat in *Sátántangó* out of ironic interpretation regarding warmth and companionship. Near the end of *Damnation*, Karrer betrays his friends to the police. However, such betrayal does not sit easily with Karrer's psychology, so when confronted by barking dogs, suddenly Karrer crawls like the dogs, and starts barking back at them. Here, the image has become pure nihilism. The rationale and lonely modern man, in the face sudden conscience, has a righteous access to his inner bestiality; to join another beast *as* a beast, to physically

descend down to earth on all fours, to taste the unity of the soil and one's salt. In Tarr's world, the pressure of the grey sky is almost unbearable.

But we need to push deeper our thinking; would it be correct to say Tarr's cinemas as a *phenomenology of nihilism*? Mere film *shows* events, but powerful cinema *describes* a reality. The description of reality, in the case of Tarr (something that perhaps can be seen in the Filipino filmmaker Lav Diaz), always shows black-white and grey world, peopled with struggling and misunderstood characters who living forlornly but in optimistic resistance towards death. *Sátántangó*, *The Turin Horse* and *The Man from London* are nihilist cinemas not only for the representation of immorality (or amorality); they are nihilists since they show the inability of man to escape from being miscast by their surroundings. These cinemas give us cold reminder of the alienation, not as powerlessness of the soul, but as the consummated strength of the bodies. Living voluntarily alone, these types continually weakened under the oppression of *the existence*. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes:

Philosophy, as I have so far understood and lived it, means living voluntarily among ice and high mountains — seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence, everything so far placed under ban by morality (2000, p. 674).

Nietzsche's strength of psyche – “living voluntarily among ice and high mountains” – is subverted in Tarr's cinemas; becoming instead of *voluntary disheartened* among the ice and mountain's gorge, finding strength instead in the loneliest of a number. What Tarr philosophize – according to him, his film is *too simple* – is the *phenomenology of contemplative nihilism*.

An ideal mode *of* and *for* thinking, according to Nietzsche, happens voluptuously when one is *in* isolation. The sense of loneliness, “living voluntarily among ice and high mountains,” far from society’s chatters, is imperative for one to achieve a better – stronger! – perspective regarding one’s existence. It is not for nothing that Sufi master like Ibn ‘Arabi implores human to find time to be with nothing but with himself, to stay beyond the grasp of civilization, to practice silence and *dhikir*, to go deeper into one’s abyss, to *become one’s abyss*. In isolation, in the deepest night, the great Sufi Master Ibn ‘Arabi’s soul suddenly able to wanders out, to touch the immense cosmos, to God. In *Risâlat al-Anwâr*, he says: “You should know that man has been on the journey ever since God brought him out of non-being into being” (1996, p. 57). In being still, secluded from hungry eyes, suddenly – the awareness of Being is called forth! Does not in isolation our thinking grows hungrier, develops wings and flies in tremendous direction into our inner abyss? Sartre’s penetrating words from *Being and Nothingness* can help us here: “In thinking, he thinks the universal, but as existing in this thinking, as assimilating this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated” (1943, p. 62). It is not only in isolation that thinking matures, but in the deepest of thinking, one becomes helplessly isolated from one’s surrounding. The isolation is not without its disadvantages of course; there is also the chance for lucid alienation, helplessness, and even dementia. Nietzsche, for example, ended up losing his sanity at the end. Is it possible to see ‘being alone’ as one’s interpretation of defense against humanity? Or, as one’s weakness for the inability to socialize? These are all nihilistic thinking. To be alone demands a psychological strength and in Tarr’s reality, is the kind that blooms and flowers one’s depth. Such bitter loneliness shown in Tarr’s – Karrer in *Damnation*, Janos in *Werckmeister Harmonies*, the doctor who shuts himself off from the world in *Sátántangó*, the daughter who stares detachedly from a window in *The Turin*



*Horse* – is essential for modern cinemas. There is restraint and pathos in their repose. In their loneliness, they become Heidegger's "steward of stillness" (2012, p. 16).

Even in nihilist-bleakish-greyish atmosphere, *Beauty* stands out from Tarr's compositional cinematography. Such sense of beauty vibrates in a subtlest manner, in the way space and the character juxtapose and complement each other. In a still long take, the smallest movement from human figure ripples out elliptical lines in dead space, distorting slightly the horizon of our world. As our eyes dart here and there, trying to follow the minutiae of the movement, suddenly the figure is not in his original place anymore; he has moved out, leaving nothingness in his wake. My eyes try to take the overall, wholesome composition of the figure/ background but something else distracts my gravity: The acute awareness of *time running* for a long time. This is especially so when the figure stops his movement and suddenly, the horizon of the world restarts its deadly radiance. If I am not careful, I will be lost in its boringness. The understanding that beauty exists in this frame, and that I am apprehending its vivacity, however, are not ones that keep me awake. It is the sense of *dread for temporal space* – this is what mesmerizes my soul, keep my intellect alert. Does not *dread for temporal space* name something uncanny? Imagine yourself in a park, early morning. Everything is quiet; the sky is exceedingly blue, while the trees stay still in their sluggish forms. Suddenly, you realize that everyone has gone back to wherever they have gone to, you are alone this deep blue sky, and in the midst of this, while time running quietly but slowly, the park grows immensely, its greens spreading over into the skyline. You have become acutely aware of how small you are in the growing stature of the park. Appreciative though you might be of the solace gifted by your surroundings, the beauty will not be complete without that uncanny feeling of being dread; that space continues *to be* space, that space haunts the finitude of your contemplation. The sense of

uncanny – *dread* for temporal space – in the image of a slow movement of a body in empty space, under the tenseness of long take; is this what Tarr after? Beauty, Heidegger believes, “grants entry into immediate sensuous appearances and yet at the same time, soars toward Being; it is both captivating and liberating” (N1, p. 196). Beauty here is like an open door where appearance and Being culminates together, transforming each other. Furthermore, “it is the beautiful that snatches us from oblivion of Being and grants the view upon Being” (N1, p. 196). Such strange power of beauty – to give us path towards Being without which, Being would be lost to our glance. A look of our eyes goes far and deeper and its luminosity, writes Heidegger, “reaches as far as the highest and farthest remoteness of Being” (N1, p. 196). To look is to scan the horizon for beings, and in the apprehension of beauty of beings, Being radiates out. If “beautiful allows Being to scintillate,” and that “it draws man through and beyond itself to Being as such” (N1, p. 197), then Tarr’s film aesthetics is an openness where Being and Man comes together in the contemplation of each other. Man contemplates in dread of the temporal space in the beauty of Being.



**Figure 6.6:** Estike lies quietly, and then dies in *Sátántangó*.

The image of Estike's long walks and the sudden subsequent image of stillness as her body found a mound to sit and dies (see Figure 6.6) is a tension between Eternal and Death, between Being and Nothing. Again, the filmic event runs gently; as if in deep respect for the powerlessness of living. Nietzsche once argued that in the tenseness between Still and Moving, one can find the repose of creativity. "The cause of creativity," Nietzsche writes, "is longing after immobility, eternity, '*Being*', or longing after destruction, change, *Becoming*" (WP, §.846). Take notice of the tautness between immobility and destruction in Nietzsche's text, on how Being is eternally Becoming (and vice versa) even in the destruction of life. After a long walk (as the camera walks too), Estike finds a place to stay immobile. While she is too young to understand life, it is enough that her spiritual existence seeks death in the quietest of moment. Tarr here displays acute understanding of the creative power that foregrounds creation, the Nietzschean "longing after immobility, eternity, '*Being*.'" In the dialectic between movement and stasis, Estike has become more *human* (if such thing is possible). To borrow Heidegger's words, "Being human is lifted into another dimension of happening" (QCT, p. 95). "This dimension of happening," of course, is the uncanniness of thing in the simplicity of the moment.

In Heidegger's vast literature, Being scintillate. Being fleets here and there, flashes here and there, but always in the briefest of the moment. It is there, and then – it is lost, drowned out by the frantic of life. Beings busily swallow it whole. Only deep contemplation, the understanding of the nightfall of beauty, can withheld and sustain its scintillating presence. I would like to quote a passage by Goethe here (a passage that is also quoted by Heidegger in his *Nietzsche*, Vol. 4, p. 191), so that we can perhaps take a glimpse of that fleeting Being:

Above all peaks  
Is repose,  
In the treetops  
You trace  
Scarcely a breath;  
The songbirds are silent in the wood.  
Only wait, for soon  
You too will repose

Goethe's poem above suggests forest where songbirds perch on its trees, but its atmosphere is about poses of beings in stillness. Even the "songbirds are silent in the wood." The breath, the wind that lurks in the treetops, the slowness of the tracking camera; they all brings together stillness. Tarr is an adept at this play of stillness. The majority of the film-grabs taken throughout this dissertation can attest to this. The combination between 'the slow' and 'the still' commands Tarr's aesthetic view. Goethe's poetry – "Only wait, for soon/ You too will repose" – seems an excellent note to the condition of willing-to-repose. The word 'repose' can offer many meanings; "to lie at rest" "to lay, to set down," "to place," "to reside," or "to remain or abide restfully without anxiety or alarms."<sup>43</sup> A restraint lurks in the carefree of "You too will repose." In restraint, Heidegger writes, "the human being becomes the steward of this stillness" (2012, p. 16). Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6 are not accidental. Even when Tarr is thinking "immobility", "eternity," or "destruction," we must take note the placement of Estike's death. She chooses a mound encircled by architectural ruins. Atop her head is a lone tree while dead leaves scatter

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<sup>43</sup> All meanings here are taken from <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/repose>.

beside her. The earth and the soil is very much grey. “She had no reason to be worried.” The narrator continues in the midst of her quiet death (the background has now been changed into long shot, showing building covered in haze): “She knew well that her angels had set out for her.” The trees, mound, desolate building, are there to give an enclosure to her repose. There is no honorable value to be gained here, for like Nietzsche, Tarr prefers the power of life over morality.

What Tarr wants to show, through his economic description of human motion and cinematic gesture, albeit hesitatingly, is the range of the condition of human inner self. Furthermore, this inner self is essentially nihilistic. How does the landscape of this inner self look? The landscape, according to Nietzsche, is an empty, open, wasteland. In ‘*What is Called Thinking*,’ again and again Heidegger brings up Nietzsche’s words, “*Die Wüste wächst: weh Dem, der Wüsten birgt!*” “The wasteland grows: woe to him who hides wastelands within!” (1968, p. 51). This original statement by Nietzsche can be found in a chapter designated ‘Among Daughters of the Desert,’ from Book IV of *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (1883-1885), translated into English by Walter Kaufmann as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* in 1966. Why does the image of wasteland come up again and again in Heidegger’s writings? It demonstrates an open passage where Being resides and moves. As a wasteland, it names the destruction of the world through the machination of thinking. A remarkable number of wasteland images occur throughout Béla Tarr’s repertoire. The wasteland is nothing apocalyptic as in horde of zombies running over the Israeli state, killing its denizens in *World War Z* (2013). Instead, it shows itself in the lonesome of man trailing on an empty field. The tracking shot following the backs of two men (forty-two minute later in *Sátántangó*) walking on bare road under the harassment of the heavy wind as papers and other rubbish throw themselves

all over the road, is *wasteland-like*. The camera continues shadowing their backs for no apparent reason than showcasing the desolation of their souls. After one hour and forty-four minute of *Sátántangó*, the doctor who, having found himself out of brandy, goes out alone, in the middle of night. Such loneliness displayed here is extreme; he even finds time to write in his diary, “Today I ran out...of the last drop...of fruit brandy.” His breathing heavy, the body is sick: “It looks like I need to leave...the house...” It is raining, cold and dark outside, but what can he do? Hope is all he has left, what *he is left with* in his self-isolation. His body housed the wasteland, and the wasteland grows in the craving of liquor. Again the camera languidly tracks his back as he moves out in search for his drink. We see his dark, bent back, hears the sound of his footsteps squishing the mud and the rain. “Woe to him who hides the wasteland within!” exclaims Nietzsche. The wind, the rain, the mucks, his sick body, the surrounded houses, the eventual forest, even the encircled camera; they all join together impeding his dark mass. The sequence itself is metaphysically haunting. What *might* it say? Perhaps: the wasteland, trapped in our human body, which seeks the annihilation of all, shouts an unheard voice; existence is confoundedly absurd!

The world, Heidegger discourses, “is not just out of joint but tumbling away into the nothingness of absurdity” (1968, p. 29). Everywhere, Heidegger continues, there “is trace and record of decay, the destruction, the imminent annihilation of the world” (1968, p. 29). Compare Heidegger’s earlier statement with another statement by Nietzsche from *On the Genealogy of Morality*; “man, full of emptiness and torn apart with homesickness for the desert, has had to create from himself an adventure, a torture chamber, an unsafe and hazardous wilderness” (2006, p. 57). In our depth, wasteland grows. The wasteland, both

desert and “hazardous wilderness,” is a paradox. It is what breeds in our depth while at the same time reproduce that dangerous desire for another wasteland on others.

I would like to end this rather depressing section with a question asked early on; how do we connect the uncanniness of Nietzsche’s nihilism (“the recognition of the long *waste* of strength”) and Heidegger’s nihilism (“it wills homelessness as such”) in the grounds of Tarr’s cinemas? Heidegger, extending Nietzsche’s thought, thinks nihilism is ‘most uncanny’ since “as the unconditional will to will, it wills homelessness as such” (1998, p. 292). The mysteriousness, the eeriness of nihilism is already at the door, or according to Heidegger, has already made itself *home* in our home. It is a permanent guest, resting in the state of neither-inside-nor-outside, and yet, still makes itself *presence* at will in our consciousness. Why is that so? How does this significant statement relate to the *ground* of Tarr’s films? Let us recall again Heidegger’s statement; that the essence of nihilism is the secret promise of Being. History of western metaphysics, Heidegger concludes, is the history of the forgottenness of Being. Nihilism is the culmination of this forgottenness. In our current time – the history that we are living now – beings rule supreme, but only at the point of neglecting the question of Being. Tarr’s cinemas, as *a form of slow cinema*, might be seen as the continuance of this oblivion of Being, and yet, as a form that *thinks existence* – existence that is as openly and modestly bleak – its slow culmination towards nihilism is strangely thwarted. It *promises* beings and Being at the same time, plus nihilism and negative-nihilism at the same time. Tarr’s magnum opus *Sátántangó* for example, is unabashedly nihilistic, but it is a site for cold strength, for hope. *Sátántangó*, a vast ocean of desolation, a wasteland, has in its deeper earth a thriving, thirsting aesthetic joy. Tarr’s cinemas give thinking new depth, new height. If, according to Heidegger, Being resides *as* time, Being *is* Time, then the 415-minute-film *Sátántangó*,

who is constituted from huge labors of long takes (mountainous blocks of slow-moment!), is *a praise to Being*. If I have to be bold, its Being is (if such thing is possible, but why not?) tinted with the colour of darkening grey. Stinking bogs are everywhere, but the sky is so clear! At the same time, what makes *Sátántangó* incredibly nihilistic is its uncanny showcase of temporality, which elicits dreadness for temporal space. The characters in *Sátántangó*, *Damnation*, or *Werckmeister Harmonies* are necessarily immoral, corrupt, and alienated to remind us of life, but this same reminder – immoral, corrupt, and alienated – is what in the end shown to be nihilistic in the audience's perception, which in turn block the audience's thinking to experience Being. "The essence of nihilism," Heidegger suggests, "is the history which there is nothing to Being itself." In nihilism, nothingness reigns over Being, which is akin to a haze that shrouds the buildings where Estike dies, after poisoning herself with the same poison she inflicts on her cat. The haze moves slowly, covering beings in such way that beings can *still* be seen, their profile lines *still* shine through the heavy haze, albeit fleetingly, vaguely. Nihilism wills homelessness. It is not for nothing that Béla Tarr again and again, *again and again*, shows tremendous penchant for people walking on empty, endless roads. Nihilism wills the presence of Nothing to the fore of entities in such way that the entities come to dwell in Nothing. In our interior, hides a long wasteland. Perhaps, the interior wasteland is what yields homesickness, just as much as it wills homelessness. Tarr's long take, the creative "image of eternity," observed in a simplest nihilist view, is Nietzsche's "long waste of strength." Estike flees from home, tries to find home in the hubbub of the bar, but finding none, goes to dwell in a space between man-made structure and open earth. She flees nothing but from inner self. The waste land claims all. But how could she know? The haze that is shown right after Figure 6.6, a haze that covers the ruins where Estike is dying, (who is thinking about the coming angels that will save her), is the Nothing that covers up everything, simplifying texture and figure into



the simple, rapturous, *mere existence*, which is what *really grounds* Tarr's later cinemas; *mere existence that long for simple isolation, eternally*.

## 6.5. Summary

Permitting Béla Tarr's aesthetics, Existence is a Grey Matter. In another word, the nihilism that Béla Tarr's filmmaking traverses are nothing like Nietzsche's pronunciation of nihilism as devaluation of values, or like Heidegger's nihilism as metaphysics of nonbeing. The slowness of the form; the repetition of the passing away of the cinematography; the beauty in "big sadness"; the emptiness of the soul in the cloying, opaqueness of the existence; open landscape of nothingness; long take of darkness; these are the signs that traverse Tarr's cinema – and if I have to be bold and oxymoronic – a type of greyish nihilism. As a rich visual fiesta of emptiness, soul-draining beauty, his films exhibit an inner form of nihilism, the *contemplative nihilism*. By calling contemplative nihilism, I rename Nietzsche's "nihilism proper" (WP, §.51). Tarr's films pursue Heidegger's idea of *the modern history of man as the pervasion of nihilism* but in the middle of this pursuit, I detect at core, Nietzsche's "nihilism as recognition of the long *waste* of strength" (WP, §.12A) working in tremendous silence, with such restrain. The silence is rich, meditative, the type that operates and energizes the whole feature of bleakness that many audiences negatively think as mere nihilism. 'Long take' being too easily identifiable with "long *waste* of strength" is perhaps what turns off potential audience.

## CHAPTER 7:

### HEIDEGGER AND BÉLA TARR: METAPHYSIC OF THE ESSENCE OF BEING

#### 7.1. Introduction

This penultimate chapter seeks to understand the relationship between Being and cinema and how polemics can be further understood – poetically – by reading the essential thinking of Heidegger, a German phenomenologist, and Béla Tarr, a Hungarian filmmaker. To start with, I will introduce Heidegger and the question of Being and why it is an important problem to his philosophy. Then we will go direct to Tarr’s *The Turin Horse*, to note the essence of Being, and the way it is unconcealed. I argue here that the metaphysic of Being is foremost in Tarr’s filmmaking. Several scenes from Tarr’s last film, *The Turin Horse* (2011), will be analyzed so as to demonstrate my argument.

#### 7.2 Heidegger and the Question of Being

The question of Being (*Seinsfrage*) has long been a central theme in the German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s metaphysics. In Heidegger’s ontological dichotomy, Being differs from beings; The first is the essence of beings’ existence, while the latter is the entities’ mode of appearing. The foolishness of the history of philosophy, argues Heidegger, is a continuous asking of “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” (2000, p. 8). Heidegger believes that philosophical research into Being and the Nothing is overlooked while beings continue to be celebrated. Philosophy has become fashion of a day, misinterpreted by the philosophers or else misinterpreted by the mass. The spirit of Nietzsche’s words, philosophy as “living voluntarily amid ice and mountain ranges” (2004,

§3), have lost its severity. According to Greek thinkers like Heraclitus and Parmenides, beings or entities are first called as *phúsis* (φύσις). This is a term which is translated in Latin as ‘nature,’ “to be born” or “birth” (Heidegger, 2000, p.14). *Phúsis* comes from the word ‘*phuein*,’ which means ‘to grow.’ It is the same name that the English word ‘physics’ is originated from. When *phúsis* is transformed into Latin ‘nature,’ and the word ‘nature’ is used and manufactured daily, the connection between what the early Greek really meant and our everyday use of it is lost. Why does the question of *phúsis* important to Heidegger? Heidegger believes that the employment of ‘nature’ rather than ‘*phúsis*’ in Roman Period and in Christian Middle Ages “was the first stage in the isolation and alienation of the originary essence of Greek philosophy” (2000, p.141). *Phúsis*, according to Heidegger’s interpretation of Greek thought, is akin to the emerging, blossoming of a rose, it is “what emerges from itself,” “the unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance – in short, the emerging-abiding-sway” (2000, p. 15). What is important in Heidegger’s thinking here is that by naming beings as *phúsis*, it names the event where the concealed Being can stand and take place. For example, in front of me, there is *bangku* (Malay word for chair). I know it exists; I am experiencing it as I write this. Its appearance takes a form of a universal form which is common in the world around me; as a place for sitting, for resting my body. This chair is made from wood and is brown in colour. By stating the woodness of the chair’s texture, I have declared to the world of my previous experience in handling or observing wood texture. While the chair’s main function is its usefulness for resting my body, but right now, it is a place where I put my office laptop, writing text for a paper to be presented in ‘CINE CRI 2015.’ I am sitting on the marble floor, waiting for my daughter to finish her Kumon homework, and I am typing on the laptop, with both of my arms resting at the edge of the chair’s sitting. The chair exists, but more importantly it *is* there. What Heidegger means when he says that the history of Western metaphysics is the oblivion of

Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) is that people are so busy with the appearance and the form of entities to the point that 'is' is lost by the crowding of entities into our consciousness. It is in the 'is' that Being can first be sensed its manifestness. What is forgotten is not the beings' existence, but the Being of beings. That the chair is there; its essence and presence forms as the *event* it is. This is the 'Question of Being' (*Seinsfrage*) which haunts Heidegger's philosophical writings. "Being," muses Heidegger, "remains inclined toward concealment, whether in great veiling and silence, or in the most superficial distorting and obscuring" (2000, p. 121).

*Phúsis*, as "the emerging sway, and the enduring over which it thoroughly holds sway" (2000, p. 16), is always threatened by *techne*, another Greek term which is interpreted by Heidegger as "the knowing disposal over free planning and arranging and controlling arrangements" (2000, p. 18). It is the form which the term 'technology' takes and transforms its meaning. As such, the scientific knowledge of things is another *techne*, pushed into the direction where the importance of philosophy is put aside. However, "philosophy can never belong to the same order of sciences." Most importantly: "Only poetry is of the same order as philosophical thinking" (2000, p. 28). "The abandonment of being," writes Heidegger "is cloaked in the increasing authority of *calculation*, *speed*, and the *claim of the massive*" (2012, p. 95). *Calculation* here refers to the "machinations of technology" whereby everything has become merely things to be organized and categorized, while *speed* is the consequences of our preoccupation with technicalities, of the representation between the highest and the lowest, the increasing "form of record-breaking performances," (2012, p. 96), the fastest (and thus, the compressed) way of sending text messages, the restlessness of the activity. The *claim of the massive* denotes how the opinion of the mass constitutes as the major and oppressive partition in the

calculation and speed of the disseminated information. Thus, in thinking of Being of beings, Heidegger trusts the power of poetry – more than science – in revealing the depth of the essence of entities. The technical wordings from scientific description of beings *cannot* make us experience the essence of Being, which always stands concealed by the phenomenon of beings. Let us take an example of a chalk. It is commonly used for writing or drawing on the blackboard. There are two ways of defining it; as ‘*ta onta*’ and as ‘*to einai*’; the first is the descriptive appearance of the chalk, that it is white, light, cylindrical and brittle while the latter, the chalk is the space where Being belongs to. In the descriptive makeups of a chalk, we know it is *there*. ‘*To einai*’ is the Greek term for the essence of things, or ‘*ousia*.’ It is not accidental that we are pursuing Heidegger’s thinking with Greek thinking intermingling in the sentences. The influence of Greek philosophy in Heidegger’s text, to borrow J. G. Grey’s introduction in Heidegger’s *What is Called Thinking*, is to make us “learn to think non-conceptually and non-systematically yet with rigor and strictness about the nature of Being” (2004, p. xxv).

My introduction here regarding Heidegger’s conception of metaphysics as the phenomenological research into Being is to give this chapter a foundational site for my next argument; that Béla Tarr – even though he does not philosophize in the same way Heidegger does with words – employ film to not only capture and elaborate the everyday beings enthralled with the world, but as a unique way of making visible the Being of beings, a visibility which can only be sensed by the thinking Dasein who seeks the question of Being as an originary statement living in this bleak world. To me, cinema, though wrought under the machination of science and technology, is first and foremost a depiction of reality as poetic images. No matter what happen behind the scene – of the group of people pulling and pushing camera, of the heated argument in finding funding – once the

film starts screening, what my aesthetic soul will first sense is always the overall structure (the narration, the shots, the unity of the theme) as one reality of poetic composition. This is an important reflection – or else I won't have the nerve and strength to even jot my reflection on cinemas. The analysis on the essence of Being in Tarr's cinema, which can only be done in contemplative mood, is in effect an existentialist critique. The analysis not only situates Tarr's cinema in the ontological realm, but also locates my bias in the enjoyment of cinema. To delve deeper into the mysteries of Being, let us take a look into Tarr's *The Turin Horse*.

### **7.3.    *The Turin Horse*: Metaphysic of Being**

*The Turin Horse*, (Hungarian: *A torinói ló*), 2011, is the last film directed by Béla Tarr. Co-directed with Ágnes Hranitzky and written by László Krasznahorkai, the film starts with an ominous introduction:

In Turin on 3rd January, 1889, Friedrich Nietzsche steps out of the doorway of number six, Via Carlo Alberto. Not far from him, the driver of a hansom cab is having trouble with a stubborn horse. Despite all his urging, the horse refuses to move, whereupon the driver loses his patience and takes his whip to it. Nietzsche comes up to the throng and puts an end to the brutal scene, throwing his arms around the horse's neck, sobbing. His landlord takes him home, he lies motionless and silent for two days on a divan until he mutters the obligatory last words, and lives for another ten years, silent and demented, cared for by his mother and sisters. We do not know what happened to the horse (Text taken from the film *The Turin Horse*).

The first scene of the *The Turin Horse* showcases the way back home of the horse and its owner (Figure 7.5). This is done in a most languid way possible, with the camera non-stop tracking the movements of the horse, while Mihály Vig's music grating at the background. Nothing much happens –other than the scene of two entities going back to their home. For other people, the scenario whereby “*nothing much happens*,” might sound turgid but to me at least – it is bliss! It is a wonderful confrontation between the stillness and the nothing, the banal and the absurd. My personal engagement with Tarr's filmmaking started many years ago; *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) was my first introduction to his cinematic aesthetics. Needless to say, I was floored by his heavy usage of long, black and white takes, and have followed his works ever since, including his earlier, lesser films such as *Családi tűzfészek* (*Family Nest*, 1977) and *Panelkapcsolat* (*The Prefab People*, 1982). The bleak atmosphere that oppresses his cinemas recalled my experience in reading Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* or Turgenev's *Father and Sons*, how human *exists* and cannot help but making the wrong choice in the freedom of existence. *The Turin Horse*, I believe, is the most minimalist film Tarr has ever done. In an interview, Tarr states:

The concept of the film is simple: we wanted to follow the question what happened to the horse after this incident. And although the film itself is not about Friedrich Nietzsche, the spirit of the incident lies over the film like a shadow (Kuzma, 2011).

The film ends with an upcoming apocalypse; everything stops working – the horse, the fire, the water. The end of the world is near, but it is not about showing people flailing around like Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* (2005), but rather, in the stunning stillness of people who is *quietly*, ready and weary of things. In an interview, Tarr describes: “The apocalypse is a huge event. But reality is not like that. In my film, the end

of the world is very silent, very weak. So the end of the world comes as I see it coming in real life – slowly and quietly” (Petkovic, 2011). The quietness of apocalypse is not about the event itself, but it is about the strength of the people in finding hidden resources in the stillness of living solitary life. Summing up Tarr’s cinema, András Bálint Kovács notes that the characters which peopled Tarr’s cinema are not just “socially outcast. They are the people whose energies are invested in keeping themselves from falling lower, in keeping this status with no opportunity to ever get any higher” (2013, p. 156). There is a sense of lethargic energy that blankets Tarr’s optimistic lenses. According to Kovács further, Tarr’s reality is an “existential situation from which there is no escape” (2013, p. 165). The characters are pushed by the necessities of life into the fringes of society, but still – *willing* to live. Kovács is correct when he points out that Tarr’s humanism is “not based on morality” (2013, p. 165). Something more is afoot. It is about human leading its existence but with its ethical compass pointing down deep, into the depth of our abyssal humanity. It is only thus that audience can retain their dignity in the face of the endless sufferings Tarr’s reality imposed on them; that is, to look beyond ourselves for the hidden well of our soul that is plagued by existence. In this paradoxical way, Tarr’s artistry frees the thinking audience, not to become even more down-trodden by the world, but to free him or her to the responsibilities as a person who owns his or her life, and who is responsible for his or her life. The effects of Tarr’s artistry can be shuddering at best; to be a free human and to be responsible for his freedom – this is the essence of Sartre’s writings, a task for humanist way of living with fellow human.

My main argument here is that Tarr’s cinema exhibits the essence of Being, and this is done in the choice of his framing and his approaches toward long take. ‘Long take’ here is defined as an uninterrupted, lengthy shot. For example, the first sequence of the man



riding the hansom pulled by the horse in *The Turin Horse* (which is around 4 minutes and 28 second), is a type of long take Tarr employs plenty in his filmmaking career. This shot, however, is quite long according to standard film shots. MTV music videos usually have 100 cuts and more for the same amount of time. The express cutting of video typifies a cultural consciousness of its generation; technology-driven beings obsessed with fastest (and compressed) way of doing things. Contemporary filmmakers like Béla Tarr, Tsai Ming Liang, Lav Diaz, Michael Haneke, Pedro Costa, Hong Sang-soo and several few others constitute the kind of visual thinkers who go against the grain, who produced thought provoking cinemas, the type of slow cinemas that mainstream audience balked at. But this is one of the reasons why the dissertation is written in the first place; to put into thought, in that slow, contemplative mood, the ways and paths of understanding these filmmakers' cinemas. The nothingness, the beingness, the poetry of cinematic language; they are rhythms of existence and the flickers from which only select few filmmakers obtain as their directives.

I would like to start our analysis of Tarr's *Turin Horse* by observing the scene found early in the film (see Figure 7.1). Here, we notice a place – a home – where a man is sitting with his body placed towards the window and the walls. Behind him are table and chairs, suspended clothes, and further back at his left, a woman who is his daughter, and who also sits with her body towards the walls. This scene came to be just right after the woman has finished cleaning up the table and other household chores. The whole nature of the scene is done in long take. Nothing happens for the next forty seconds. The camera simply – *lingers* here before the cut to the next scene. That nothing really happens! – this is actually the beauty and the dullness of life Tarr wants to exhibit to us.



**Figure 7.1:** The sitting of two figures. *The Turin Horse*.

In the continuously lingering of the camera works, my sight no longer simply capture and drinks the sight with perplexing attitude; the gaze has the quality of *a stare*. Sontag, in pursuing the aesthetics of silence, notes: “A stare has, essentially, the character of a compulsion; it is steady, unmodulated, ‘fixed’ (2002, p. 16). I am staring at the scene; but *onto* what? For *what*? These are important questions in understanding Tarr’s cinematic philosophy. The staring given to Tarr’s film is not just about the way the event is composed, but the film ‘fixed’ my stare as such into the depth of my personal, passive, and optimist relation with the film. In this relationship, a bridge – is crossed over. But the bridge overlooks an abyss. Contained within this abyss is the nature of where-ness and what-ness that cannot be properly defined and placed; the possibility of the ambiguous, artful consideration for whatever ‘*is*’. The stare becomes the location for my consciousness’ apprehension of the cinema. In the depth of the stare therein contains my fascination with things objected by mysterious stillness. In the lingering moment of the cinematography, my fixed stare perhaps resembles Sartre’s vertigo; an “anguish to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice, but of throwing myself over” (Sartre, 2003, p. 53). The long

take elicits within me an ever-present anxiety. It pushes my anxiety to the front of my being but rather than darkens its texture, it held my anxiety in an optimistic, passive light. (To be fair, sometimes watching a long take can become a game: “When will this shot going to end?” “Will by showing the chair, the next cut will come?” The dread of a long take is such that the diegesis in the cinematic world reminds me so much of the actual time spent in the real world).

“The camera,” muses Tarr, “is an observer that captures the atmosphere of a moment and reacts to life” (Kuzma, 2011). This observing camera, a passive onlooker, records the momentary and the fleeting, and having records so – continues to linger on and on. The lingering cinematography sometimes feel like an eternity, other times – a reality of its own. To what extent does this lingering effect has on its viewer? Boredom? Amazement? Both? Why must the camera – which Tarr notes, “reacts to life” – prolong its moment before cutting away into next scene?

To even answer these pertinent questions, I ask the reader to observe Figure 7.2, a scene captured almost at the end of the film. It is of a wooden door, an opening whereby the father and the daughter can have access to their horse. Prior to the image of the door – a sequential image done in the same long take – we see the man and the woman observing the horse. He took out the harness from the horse’s head, and then went out from the barn. She waited for a while, then, she too went outside. She moved away from the centre of the cinematography and then closed the door behind her. All in all, there is nothing special about this sequence. The whole thing happened around 2-3 minutes. But what is remarkable is the lingering shot of the wooden door, which, if my timing is correct, stands for about 40 seconds. After choosing to exhibit to us this particular door, the film refuses to cut into

another scene. It tarries... for a while. What is there to see? What are we to make of this extended exhibition of the door? Is it important for the camera to *still* linger on after having taken the image of the wooden door? Clearly the door stays inert, indolent to any pointing of the camera's lens.



**Figure 7.2:** The closed door. The horse is inside. *The Turin Horse*.

The lingering brush of Tarr's cinematography, even after showcasing us the entities, has two phenomenological repercussions. First, it lets things endure under the duration of our gaze. Secondly, it furthers the depth of the thing. These are done best when the cinema is exhibited in a minimalist setting. Sontag is right when she says that "the quality of the attention one brings to bear on something will be better (less contaminated, less distracted) the less one is offered" (2002, p. 13). In meditation, less is always more. Tarr's austere filmmaking is why it is; not to add more noise and distract our concentration, but to *lessen* an event so as enhance further our understanding, our appreciation for the truth of our existence. This can happen when the object of our appreciation is made in the denseness of stillness. Tarr seeks the truth of being by subjecting his characters and objects under the

flashing light of time. This is why long take is his personal response in capturing the essence of things.

In Heidegger's phenomenology, truth is something which does not occur as 'correct judgment' or 'correspondence between thought and object'; it happens in the sense of the Greek ἀλήθεια (*alētheia*), as unconcealment (2001, p. 57). In Heidegger's game of truth, thing is capable of covering and uncovering Being. Truth does not preside in 'objective knowledge' but preside in the inescapable relation of being with its world. I do not think that Tarr is seeking truth objectively in his later films, but rather to show things in their relation to time within a minimal narrative framework; that the thing is there, but is there *passively*. Things are, according to Tarr, heavy in their existence (Petkovic, 2011). The heaviness of Being is why the gestures of Tarr's characters move slow. The camera shows the things he wanted to be shown, but something other – an absurdity – comes and joins and intermingles within the shots. The showing of things has the sense of letting- be in their element – but this is the precise point of Heidegger's thinking. The advent of film and television have cut the distance and put us nearer to the objects shown on the screen. "Television," Heidegger pens, "epitomizes all removal of distance, and will soon pervade and dominate the gears and bustle of all interaction" (2009, p. 253). However, the nearness that is felt, he further argues, is what cuts man's personal nearness to Being. But Tarr's cinema is not your usual television. Tarr's long take, with its lingering tonality, reminds us again of our indifference to things. It brings the depth of things nearer to our contemplation.

Getting back to Figure 7.2, is it possible to think the timber door for what it is, as a type of usefulness, as an artifice to close and open a gap in the wall? "Usefulness," according to Heidegger, "is the basic feature from which this entity regards us, that is,

flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this entity” (2001, p. 28). The wooden door flashed at me, but what I absorbed from its composition is not about its worth as a usable entity; it is first a thing that exhibits timber-texture and fracturing lines. Under the auspice of a close-up, the wooden surface closed me off to the sight of the horse behind it, the insides of the barn, closed me off to what is going to happen to the horse. More, the lingering close-up of the wooden surface conceals me of its nearby walls, the landscapes, until it becomes an immediate concern (to me at least) for what it actually is – Being trapped under the guises of entities, within the contraction of time. The framing and the long take with its lingering immediacy – it is a phenomenological manifestness of a caged Being. While the close-up frames my view, the vertical and horizontal lines of the door grab my stare to the world of wonders. That it *exists* and exhibited as such! And framed as such! What a remarkable thing a *thing* can be!

Heidegger in an interview declares: “the fundamental thought of my thinking is precisely that Being, or the manifestation of Being, *needs* human beings and that, vice versa, human beings are only human beings if they are standing in the manifestation of Being” (Neske & Kettering, 1990, p. 82). Human is what makes Being a meaningful question. Being is what houses the language of man. Figure above shows grey texture of wooden panel, but the wooden panel houses another function other than a thing it is; a door to be opened and closed by a human. In Tarr’s cinematography, the essence of Being constitutes the absurdity of man’s relationship with beings around him. It is not about minimizing the framing of the entities but about maximizing instead the duration of the framing. The shot must be at a certain distance to capture the movement (or the stillness) of entities, and then simply stay ‘deep focus’ on the subjects for another minute or five, just for the sake of stating – “nothing really happens.” That the audience says “nothing really

happens” – that is just anxiety forming up words from its abyssal ground. It is, according to Heidegger’s philosophy, an anxiety in the ground of nothingness. In saying “nothing really happens,” what get lost and covered is this: *The nothing* is what *happens* in the situation. Human Dasein *feels* the nothing in everyday life, in the uncanny situation, not because we can sense out from our internal being, but that the nothing is already grounded in our existence as being-in-the-world. This is why Heidegger defines Dasein as “being held out into the nothing” (1989, p. 91). We experience cinema, yes, but filmmaker like Tarr, whose filmmaking posits the nothing and makes the nothing as the landscape of its frame, awakens our ‘holding-out-for.’ The film hooks my gaze – thanks to the attunement between my horizon and its horizon. Tarr understands the power of camera to show and tell, which is why he strains his camera with a longer duration, stretching the fabric of reality a little to the realm between absurdity and slowness.

Merleau-Ponty in an essay entitled ‘*Eye and Mind*’ pronounces colour as “the place where our brain and the universe meet” (1964, p.180). Ponty’s description places colour as *the way* from where our rich understanding of the world occur. Colour plays a very important schema in Tarr’s overall design; which is why he colours his landscapes in black and white. This in turn forms the passive atmosphere found in Tarr’s world. The monotonous colour enhances our concentration somewhat; bright colours after all, can be distracting. It is not accidental that Tarr colours his reality in grey tones; they make the existence of his world sterner. The black and white hues bring an extra dampness to an atmosphere that is already bleak with human existence. André Bazin argues in ‘*What is Cinema?*’ that “the aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare the realities” (1967, p. 15). Film, which is consisted of unifying sequences of photographs, is a reality that bounds man to its power. The overbearing reality of the

cinema is such that it stretches man's conception of time more than photography or paintings. The film, as a world and logic of its own, *enworlds* man, sucks him up into its own reality. It made us forget where we are. It transforms our space and makes it as its own *depth*. Just to be within language, writes Heidegger, is like moving "on the billowing waters of an ocean" (2004, p. 192). Film has the same power too; in its most powerful existential mode – Antonioni's *L'avventura*, Heneke's *Amour*, Dreyer's *Ordet* or Tarr's *Werkmeister Harmonies* – it shudder the ground where my aesthetic spirit is rooted. The ground shifts and ripples all over my body – all the while I am trying to gain a foot in my abyssal existence. The power of moving images moves me into a corner, a corner where thoughtful thinking abides. That my spirit moves faster than my thinking – this is the power of visibility over words.

Figure 7.3 below is captured from a scene where a woman is carrying a pail to a well located outside of her house, which is in an open landscape. The frequent shots of open landscape, the windy atmosphere, with *nothing* to concentrate on except for the activity of the woman carrying a pail can be quite jarring. In fact, it might even bore the popular gaze of its spectator. Why would a banal activity such as this, the movement of a woman, with her back turned from our gaze (as the camera steadily tracks her slow gesture), constitutes as a necessary cinema for our thinking being? Tarr's long take here shows to us again and again how important it is for human Dasein, to gesture forth towards the world, to take charge of our body and simply reacts to the world. The body is no mere inert form; it must transform the location where it is at by moving around, dominating whatever space it can muster. In pushing forward towards the well, her movement drowns my gaze. "Will she make it?" The movement is her solace, her personal shelter from the



coldness of the earth. A smallest of gesture in the face of nature, according to Heidegger, can “cause mighty things to appear out of a strange stillness” (1971, p. 18).



**Figure 7.3:** Outside, the woman try to fetch water from the wells. *The Turin Horse*.

Both Heidegger and Tarr believe that the best way to understand the world is through a destructive lens. Heidegger sees interpretation as a necessary ‘*destruktion*.’ Without this radical destruction, one cannot hope to understand and transform one’s own comportment with beings. Thus, the commitment towards existential analysis “has the character of ‘doing violence’ (*Gewaltsamkeit*), whether to the claims of the everyday

interpretation, or to its complacency and its tranquillized obviousness” (BT, p. 359). Tarr’s statement below also celebrates the nature of violence in the apprehension of the world:

The key point is that the humanity, all of us, including me, are responsible for destruction of the world. But there is also a force above human at work – the gale blowing throughout the film – that is also destroying the world. So both humanity and a higher force are destroying the world (Petkovic, 2011).

Even when Tarr’s camera takes shelter in the house, we can still hear the wind’s roar outside. The wind obstructs everything: It impedes the movement of the horse, the man, the woman. It envelops the landscape with an electrical dread. To go outside from the comfort of the house means to wrap the body in the amour of gesture. Under the wind’s violence, the woman’s gesture – her persistence, the ripple of her clothes – purge her being into the simple act of defiance. In an interview, Tarr states:

We just wanted to see how difficult and terrible it is when every day you have to go to the well and bring the water, in summer, in winter... All the time. The daily repetition of the same routine makes it possible to show that something is wrong with their world. It’s very simple and pure (Petkovic, 2011).

Existentially, the pureness of life is not about doing something good, of fighting monsters and saving people from accidents, but to gesture about in this world in “the daily repetition of the same routine.” There is a deeper explanation to this. Only by following in the same repetition can Being be appreciated for what it is, especially when a sudden event rushes towards the activity and sweeps us from our feet. For example, at the end of the film, the water stops turning up in the well. This renders the woman’s repetitive, daily movement towards the well meaningless. Since the objective of obtaining water is not being fulfilled,

the activity is purged of its eventual objectives; it has become “simple and pure.” The windstorm too helps in simplifying further the woman’s gesture; under its obstruction, her body movement becomes heavier and slower. Her kineticism is under harassed by nature. This creates a heightened awareness of her movement in my studious gaze. The slowness of her steps, which prolong the time it takes to fulfill her objective, and the long take, which captures the act without a cut – these fortifies even further the asceticism of the situation. To borrow Tarkovsky’s words (another great long take poet!), the woman “lives, exists, within her constricted, concentrated world, plumbing its depth” (1986, p. 151). For sure, Tarkovsky was talking about Bresson’s *Mouchette*, but his description can easily be applied here. The simplification of the gesture manifests a concealed beingness, not of a motion basking under the punishing wind, but of a performance of an inner life.



**Figure 7.4:** Man and woman eating potatoes. *The Turin Horse*.

Figure 7.4 shows another activity, this time of eating boiled potatoes, beside a table, inside the house, in dread silence. An existentialist clue to understanding the gesture can perhaps be glimpsed from Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus*: “A man is talking on the

telephone behind a glass partition; you cannot hear him, but you see his incomprehensible dumb show; you wonder why he is alive” (1955, p. 15). The glass blocks our hearing. We can only see the gesture of a man talking, but the meanings behind the gesture – is lost. The sudden insertion by Camus – “you wonder why he is alive” – shows the absurdity of the situation, that ‘meanings’ are what mark the realness of existence. The glass partition, which blocks while simultaneously lets the man’s gesture be seen, is what Sartre in his excellent review of Camus’s *The Stranger* reveals as one’s own consciousness. The glass screens and frames our perception but it is “something insignificant, a translucent curtain, a pure passivity that records all the facts” (Sartre, 2007, p. 91). The key to understanding Tarr’s long take cinematography here is akin to that “pure passivity that records all the facts,” a point of view which refuses to disconnect its images once it starts recording and displaying its reality. The cinematography continue onwards, and simply capture the facts for *what* they are – the banal activity of eating potatoes in darkness, in silence.

#### **7.4. Anxiety in the Face of Being and Nothingness**

The darkness inside the house becomes much more so by the end of the film. Things stop their equipmental ability; fire simply refuses to give light. No warmth for the house and its occupants. The cold is everywhere. Whether there is light outside or darkness inside, they are of the same value; under the stretch of Tarr’s canvas, they are the event for nothingness to take hold to. The openness of the landscape as a space for nothingness is so that we can be attuned with our personal depths. Tarr’s aesthetic strategy here recalls Heidegger’s statement, it is “on the ground of the original manifestness of the nothing can Human Dasein approach and penetrate beings” (1998, p. 91). The darkness that eventually encase *The Turin Horse*’s world does not cover up things but is that same nothingness – composed

as it is under the strict guidance of Tarr's lens – which gives us extraordinary room for our contemplation of Being of beings. The atmosphere is Silent. Apprehension. Waiting. In this stillness of the moment, I would like to evoke Blanchot's thoughtful writings:

Language can only begin with the void; no fullness, no certainty, can ever speak; something essential is lacking in anyone who expresses himself. Negation is tied to language. When I first begin, I do not speak in order to say something, rather a nothing demands to speak, nothing speaks, nothings finds its being in speech and the being of speech is nothing. The formulation explains why literature's ideal has been the following: to say nothing, to speak in order to say nothing (1981, p. 43).

In the grounds of beings, Nothing reigns. Blanchot thinks it is the Nothing that initiates and energizes everything, which is why language always has trouble evoking the Nothing. There is no *structure* to nothing. But we can still sense its presence, its fullness. When the man and the woman (Figure 7.4) eat quietly in the simpleness of the meal, in the austerity of the moment, the image above resonates with Blanchot's description of an ideal literature: "to say nothing, to speak in order to say nothing." This is strong example why film, when backed by a brilliant director, can show this unsayable nothingness. The question is not why they don't speak to each other or they have lost interest in conversing with each other; they are simply *too full* of nothingness to be able to fully articulate toward each other. Notice their surroundings, the oppressive darkness of stillness and the baying wind outside; these all contribute to their inner growth, the fullness of angst and emptiness.

Recall when Nietzsche says that "God is Dead": what he means is – according to Heidegger's interpretation – the "suprasensory world is without effective power" (QCT, p.

61). It implies the powerlessness of Western metaphysics (ever since Plato) to be having discourse on the truth of Being. *In the absence of suprasensory and its ruination, the nothing spreads out.* It is here where nihilism unfolds as the greater event for mankind. Heidegger sees nihilism as “the world-historical movement of the peoples of the earth who have been drawn into the power realm of the modern age” (QCT, p. 62-3). No one can escape nihilism. Heidegger argues further that those who think that they have escaped nihilism turns out to be the one who pushes forward its development most fundamentally (QCT, p. 63).

What this connotes is that our essence in living is made up of void, and this void is only intelligible in the face of where values are devalued. This is pessimistic thinking of the highest order. For instance, the opposite of nothing is something *something*. Without the nothing, would there be something? This means it is impossible to speak of something without implying ‘nothing’ instantaneously. To say ‘light’ suggests at the same time the ‘darkness’, without which light becomes meaningless. If in anxiety, according to Heidegger’s metaphysics, ‘the nothing’ is revealed, what about art which celebrates angst in silent? Nietzsche, with his extraordinary acumen for existentialist thinking, believes that it is only in art that one can gain power over nihilism. This is why he comments: “Art as the only superior counterforce to all will to denial of life, as that which is anti-Christian, anti-Buddhist, antinihilist *par excellence*” (WP, §. 853). Tarr’s filmmaking, which is nihilism made visual poetry, is a profound philosophy in every sense of the word. *The Turin Horse* is Nietzsche’s “superior counterforce to all will to denial of life.” The film encounters nihilism just as it moves to counter it. Tarr’s cinema might be considered nihilistic, but it is a strange, energy-giving, phenomenological nihilism.



**Figure 7.5:** First scene. *The Turin Horse*.

We can see the bleak atmosphere which afflict the present and future of his characters from the early short *Hotel Magnezit*, the sprawling epic that is *Sátántangó*, to his final film, *The Turin Horse*. Again and again the characters are beleaguered by their undoing (for no other reason) of having attempted to form relationship with each other. The rapport of Tarr's men and women is doomed from the start and more, is doomed to survive its aftermath. Unfortunate incidents occur suddenly, and most of the time, without proper rationale. One gets the feeling that any person who dies first – like the girl who dies in *Sátántangó* – can come out lucky; he or she *might* escape from this nihilist-metaphysical binding. I strongly suspect that the format of long take which is used excessively by Tarr and his creative gang is done not just to realize realism but to oppress and harass realism, to bleach out hope from his characters and paradoxically, to free their interiors to the openness of anxiety. There is a certain intensity of indifference that envelopes Tarr's characters, that ultimately seeps all over his landscape. Furthermore, *Turin Horse*'s heroes are made of outcasts – and like Nietzsche's final days – live at the brink of society.

Whatever hopes there are for tomorrow is delegated to living fully (and miserably) in the present.

*The Turin Horse* is remarkable in its display of deadening silence. Excepting for the sound of the landscape and other objects that move, the atmosphere stays mute, as if by staying so, the film can collect ways to thinking Being. I have argued so far that *The Turin Horse* is exceptional in its cinematic form in giving visual to Heidegger's philosophy. I would like to go deeper by noting that one of the most interesting visual phenomenologized by Tarr is 'the anxiety in the face of the nothing.' In *What is Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes:

Anxiety robs us of speech. Because beings as a whole slip away, so that precisely the nothing crowds around, all utterance of the 'is' falls silent in the face of nothing. That in the uncanniness of anxiety we often try to shatter the vacant stillness with compulsive talk only proves the presence of nothing (1998, p. 89).

If anxiety robs us of our discoursing ability, then *The Turin Horse* must be living in the perpetual state of anxiety. This is ironic since the characters themselves do not outwardly show any anxiety (like most mainstream acting). And yet, in the state of mute, authentic anxiety flashes brightly. This anxiety – which is actually despairing in the face of the end of the world – is quiet in its strength. Heidegger would fall in love with *The Turin Horse*, provided he can stay upright and not fall asleep in the course of its 146 minutes of slow moving and repetitive cameraworks. The characters stay mute most of the time, except for when a stranger comes to the house to seek shelter and later, when a group of gypsy comes for a sudden visit.



“Anxiety robs us of speech.” This like saying that speech robs anxiety too. The chattering of men has always been men basic needs and rights. They – or to use Heidegger’s German term, the ‘*das Man*’ – use their oral to keep a chattering-atmosphere to communicate so that in this way, other voices get to be dominated. In making noises, one can sometimes confuse others for having wisdom through incessant talking. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard – who is also a major influence in Heidegger’s existentialist thinking – has something interesting to say about the chattering of man. We can take a lesson from him:

What is talkativeness? It is the result of doing away with the vital distinction between talking and keeping silent. Only some one who knows how to remain essentially silent can really talk – and act essentially. Silence is the essence of inwardness, of inner life (2010, p. 43).

Observe the quiet workings of the man and his daughter as they busily pull and push the cart into the stable. Nothing comes from their mouth. Has nature robs their speech? It is cold outside and the wind is bellowing hard on their faces and bodies. Has it come to certain point in their lives that they have stopped caring to talk, to fight the wind for simple utterings? Or, would not it be economical to simply stay quiet under the harassment of nature, conserving energies for better use? These lonely people... they stay mute to give respect to their gesture, pushing and pulling cart and stabling the horse. Is it possible to see in their gesture, they are preserving their anxiety in the face of emptiness? Kierkegaard again: “But talkativeness is afraid of the silence which reveals its emptiness” (2010, p. 43). In silence they conduct their business and in silence they push away talkativeness, for their silence – is stronger and much more immense than talking away.

We must be reminded again of Kierkegaard's words above: Silence is the essence of inwardness, of inner life. What transpires in keeping silent is that, one can make the other understand "more authentically than the person who is never short of words" (BT, p. 208). The anxiety which robs and simultaneously enriches the man and his daughter when facing the unmoving horse is the aesthetics of calmness in the face of the storm. It is a readiness to succumb to despair but still – not yet despairing. "In anxiety," Heidegger remarks, "there occurs a shrinking back before—that is surely not any sort of flight but rather a kind of entranced calm" (P, p. 90). The affectation of calm is manifested in *Turin's* everyday business of living. It is the kind of living which is full of negligence and hardship. To look into the motivation of long take aesthetics, perhaps we can study a statement by the great Italian director, Michelangelo Antonioni:

I need to follow my characters beyond the moments conventionally considered important, to show them even when everything appears to have been said (cited in Bordwell, 2005, p. 154).

"To show them even when everything appears to have been said." This seems like the key words to appreciate the extended shots that keep on running on the screen. *The Turin Horse* is a pursuit of apprehending the fleeting moment of endlessness. It is as if to lament the lethargic of human existence. Fernando Pessoa has written beautifully about this existence in *The Book of Disquiet*:

To goldenly stagnate in the sun, like a murky pond surrounded by flowers.  
To possess, in the shade, that nobility of spirit that makes no demands on life. To be in the whirl of the worlds like dust of flowers, sailing through the

afternoon air on an unknown wind and falling, in the torpor of dusk, wherever it falls, lost among larger things. To be this with a sure understanding, neither happy nor sad, grateful to the sun for its brilliance and to the stars for their remoteness. To be no more, have no more, want no more... (2002, Fragment 45, p. 46).

*The Turin Horse* possesses abundance shots of human being in the state of torpor, stagnating nobly by making no demand but accepting the gifts of “the stars for their remoteness.” In Tarr’s film, one can see many tracking shots of people making their journey on the open road. The cast simply.... wanders on while the camera arrests their walking-ness in long shot composition. I would like to knit this idea of ‘wandering on’ and latch it to Buddhist tenet. Heidegger’s conception of phenomenology – nothingness, openness, clearing and so on – has close ties with Buddhism and Meister Eckhart’s Christian mysticism. In Buddhist teaching, there is the concept of ‘rebirth’ or ‘reincarnation’; a transformation from one life to the next. In Sanskrit language, it is called *punarbhava*. The wholesome and most universal view of this process is termed *saṃsāra*. *Saṃsāra* is a Buddhist concept in Sanskrit which means ‘circle of existence.’ According to Thanissaro Bhikkhu (2002), means ‘wandering on’ is called as *Saṃsāra*. This idea of ‘wandering on’ is an existential concept whereby you move on from one world to the next, continuing to creating another world since the world before has collapsed. Thanissaro says, “The worlds we create feed off the worlds of others, just as theirs feed off ours” (2002). In the molding of this world, we meet with other kindred spirits like ourselves, and in meeting we too cause suffering to others just as much to ourselves. This is the grieving circle of ‘wandering on’ which is escapable to a select few who have attained acute awareness of his or her conditioning as a human. Humans (or ghosts) exist to wander on without (essentially and existentially) realizing why they submit to this wandering. The suffering and

wanderings of one to another can be seen in the light of ‘anxiety’ in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (BT, pp. 228-235). Anxiety or dread is an underlying phenomenon that is very hard to define but still bothers us. Heidegger says: “In anxiety one feels *uncanny*” (BT, p. 233). We feel uncanny because we are not at *home* with our being. It is a realization of how finite we are in this world and how limited our lifespan is in this world. It is an existential ‘sorrow’ that we cannot put our finger on, but it’s the kind of sorrow in the face of ‘dying’ and ‘rebirth.’ Home-ness is part of being’s essence in its willing to stay and move in a place. In Heidegger’s final lecture course, *Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing*, given at University of Freiburg in 1944, he sees philosophizing as something we already ‘are within’ but which we are not ‘at home.’ Here, he gives a poetic definition of ‘home’ (the German word he used is ‘*Heimat*’): “the circumference that is historically enclosed and nourishing, that fuels all courage and releases all capacities, that surrounds the place where humans belong in the essential meaning of a claimed listening” (2011, p. 24). The definition is strange, yet it speaks of a home not as structural whereabouts but as a being we are already intrinsically (and simultaneously) belonged and forget. When Heidegger speaks of “claimed listening,” he is asking us to hear deeper to our anxiety in a sure mode of staying silent. Would we be able to go through “claimed listening” when we are encircled by the hubbubs of society with its clamors of contemporaneousness? Tarr’s silence in *The Turin Horse* asks us the same way too. Only amidst silence and loneliness can we listen well to our home-ness. The house which keeps and shelters the main protagonists in *The Turin Horse* is shown in its loneliness amidst the vast landscape. In it, the man and the woman stay put and preserve its place by staying quiet, so as to “nourish” and “release all capacities” our possible being-at-home. The wind outside the house may howl to the end of time (and brings promises of catastrophic), but the man and the woman, in the midst of all this, stays put to the “claimed listening.” The form of ‘staying put is’ nothing unusual – the

man withdraws to his bed while his daughter sits by the window and stares out – but what is strange is the manner which they do it; they can stay immobile for what looks like hours. This is not to say they simply *stay* put and become inert; there are flurry of movements inside the house, especially from the woman who has to make ready their meals, or preparing to fight the gale outside to fetch water, but there is a sense of lethargic in their choreography, like: “That’s it, I want to do this, and then I am done.” Or: “Let’s do this now so that I can keep *still* later on.” Whatever is happening outside the house simply keeps both of them bottled up.

While Heidegger and Kierkegaard gives raise to the problematic of anxiety or despair in their *text* as something which inheres in the human condition, ALLAH has already revealed in Al-Quran that human is created with the sense of anxiety in Al Ma’arij, 19-23.<sup>44</sup>

(١٩) إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا      Indeed, mankind was created anxious: (19)

(٢٠) إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا      When evil touches him, impatient, (20)

(٢١) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا      And when good touches him, withholding [of it], (21)

(٢٢) إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ      Except the observers of prayer (22)

Anxiety is *already* ingrained in the atoms of our bodily creation. As such it is not in our skulls where anxiety properly resides, it is in the manner of how and where we exist. To be human, is to exist in anxious, nobly. Kierkegaard, writing regarding the innocence of child in *The Concept of Dread*: “Though it causes him anxiety, it captivates him by its pleasing anxiousness” (1980, p. 42). Existential anxiety has an aesthetic quality to it, which

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<sup>44</sup> The English translation of the Al-Quran is referred from Saheeh International from <http://tanzil.net/#70:22>.

is why its essence is lifted and borrowed by literature, film and theatre. When man is made particularly anxious – for example, in a play – certain indefinable beingness reverberates from his appearance, as if a hidden mask has fallen away and he stood in the midst of the narration looking existentially renewed to be consummated by the audience. The display of man in anxiety in any film relates well to our perception since we have always been a restless creature. The higher the dread pitches its discordance, the better its arts come to reside in our soul. After all, as Kierkegaard asserts: “The more profound the anxiety, the more profound the culture” (1980, p. 42).

In Michael Haneke’s *Amour* (2012), after it was made known that one of the elderly couple has terminal condition and is only waiting for death, for the whole film, everything moves in exceptional and exquisite dread. There is no moment of happiness to uplift my spirit. Everything gets absorbed in the reeks that are dread; the conversation of the elder man with his daughter, the piano recital, the birds that flew in the corridors, the coffee even the walls are weighed down with the spirit of unrest. And yet, I have no desire of any ‘scenario of joy’ to actually lift my spirit up. There is no need. The *complete* composition of *Amour*, the quietness of the moment, the presentation of its dread, the waiting, is all enough to uplift me to the direction of sublime where true beauty of plastic arts reside. The same goes to *The Turin Horse* too. As a world of stagnating beauty, it is *complete*. The film and me; we are simply attuned to each other. The vibration of its slow disquietness vibrates in such a way that it reaches out and meets the broadcasting of my personal angst, which is already amped up throughout its viewing. The films both illuminate and darken the color of my soul. The final wait for the end of the earth at the conclusion of *The Turin Horse* brings the disquietness to the full vigour of agitated silence.

I have discussed before in the introduction above concerning Heidegger's concept of Greek *phúsis* as the event which places Being at its centre. The description of *phúsis* by Heidegger as "emerging sway, as appearing, as standing-in-the-light" (2000, p. 139) is apt; Tarr's camera is akin to that blooming dark rose, a lingering blossoming *enframing*. It shines whatever it captures in its frame. Heidegger's interpretation of essence of Being as "emergent shining" is very important for us to understand deeper how Tarr's camera works. In capturing event, the camera, with its steady movement of long take, puts beings in front of its emanating frame.

The camera frames the entities' mode of appearing, and consequently transforms the way they are presented to our consciousness. The wooden door (see Figure 7.2) has its rectangular structure cropped by another rectangular framing of the camera. Suddenly, its usefulness as something that closes and opens is momentarily forgotten. The close-up framing alienates the door for what it is. The *dooriness* of the door is thwarted. It has become an ashen representativeness of a textured façade. The door stops being *mere* door but becomes a mysterious event which brings forth my ambiguity. There is something that thwarts my understanding of the door but in its ambiguity, it pulls my thinking ahead to touch and caress its surface. Furthermore, the grey hue which colourizes Tarr's reality problematizes even more the light that shines forth from the entities' mode of appearing. Slowly, under the pressure of time, the meaningfulness of the door is in danger of slipping away from my understanding. *Being is risked in Tarr's contemplative cinema*. Being abides in its constancy. It shines forth as an emergence. The long take enhance the light of the Being but enhance it in such a way that it must trap it in its framing. The lingering effect of the camera, the duration it takes to show the entities, the stillness of the situation – they all contribute in giving further insight into what *is*.

## 7.5. Summary

When Heidegger states that “philosophy never makes things easier, but only more difficult” (2000, p. 12), the same can also be applied to serious cinemas. Personal films made by Béla Tarr (and others like him such as Lav Diaz, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Lucrecia Martel, Aleksandr Sokurov, Lisandro Alonso and Sergei Paradjanov) never make things easier for the public. Their films are difficult to understand and furthermore, tax and exhaust the spectator’s patience. In fact, the stories which are usually offered in these types of films are unusually dreary, tainted as they are by pessimistic view on life. But the *das man* (the ‘they,’ the public) wants something simpler and functional, something from which they can sink their teeth into easily. Think back the jeering Antonioni got when *L’Avventura* was first screened in Cannes in 1959; the film was years ahead of its own time, a film capable of philosophizing the anxiety of modern society, but the modern culture seem unable to comprehend its complexities. I mean, who would want to spend seven hours watching Tarr’s *Sátántangó*? Who would want to spend their precious five hundred and forty minute of time gazing away at Lav Diaz’s *Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino*? “We have... better things to do,” answers one, while he chats away in WhatsApp using the latest iPhone. The commitment oneself has for the world he lives in and the project which he is involved with – these things whittle away one’s patience for what is *slow*.

The difficulty in experiencing and understanding Tarr’s cinema happens since Tarr has a personal vision which clashes with the visual operative of mainstream movies. His reality excises oppressive, ambiguous dispositions toward his audience. But this oppression is not to be taken negatively. Like Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Tarr’s cinema sparks of a joy of being human, of the creative freedom of simply living a life! There is no



moral value to be processed in *The Turin Horse*; the film moves further away into the realm of the metaphysic of Being. The composition of Tarr's *The Turin Horse* is a phenomenological reading into the essence and depth of Being. The arsenals he employed to undertake this tough task – the long take, the lingering shot, the greyish colours, the silence, the repetition – are necessary to disclose the manifestness of Being. *Tarr's filmmaking is a metaphysic of Being made visible as art.* It allows being's space to temporalize in its simplicity. In its simplicity, it allows a reminder of the opposition between Nothing and Being, between what is beyond and what is near. "Going beyond beings," writes Heidegger "occurs in the essence of Dasein" (1998, p. 96). *The Turin Horse* is what I consider as both site and occurrence of going-beyond-beings par excellence.

## CHAPTER 8:

### CONCLUSION TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

#### 8.1. Conclusion

Heidegger sees phenomenology as both vital and central in understanding and investigating the world. Influenced by Aristotle, phenomenology is interpreted as a way of “letting the manifest in itself be seen from itself” (1985, p. 85). “As a research work,” writes Heidegger, “phenomenology is precisely the work of laying open and letting be seen, understood as the methodologically directed dismantling of concealment” (1985, p. 86). What this means is that there is something, an as yet undiscovered knowledge, buried within the surface of entities. What is trapped and stays buried, in the case of Heidegger’s philosophy, is the meaning of Being. It is the task of phenomenology, by radical destructive interpretation, to disclose, to unconceal the essence of Being that stays hidden under the cover of entities.

In this thesis so far, I have tried my best to capture, if not Bela Tarr’s filmmaking aesthetics from the phenomenological-ontological perspective of Heidegger, then the *existential attunement* of both thinkers in their idiosyncratic interrogation of everyday beings. Other than shared penchant for Nietzsche’s polemical and stimulating writings, both Tarr and Heidegger highly regard poetic images in unconcealing the heaviness of reality, or more importantly, as event for the truthfulness of art. Both thinkers develop their ideas from the concreteness of everyday life and both can be grouped under ‘metaphysics of existentialism’; existence is their life-long object of studies, what entranced them in the first place. The nature of time, its stretchedness *over* and *as* existence, is truly a jewel that

Heidegger and Tarr share, enthusiastically. Time is always a foregoing question in Heidegger's many-thick-volumes of existential inquiries. Being *is* time, and time is considered by Heidegger as "succession of nows." Time cannot be separated from any spatial understanding of Dasein, just as time is the transcendental horizon of Dasein as being-in-the world. Conversely, Tarr pursues time in his filmmaking like no other; employing big chunks of extremely long take, he studies entities for their appearances, and washes them with the suppleness of black-and-white colour. Tarr's films and Heidegger's text go *beyond* politics, but paradoxically, the typical appreciation of their works cannot escape the political stranglehold. Tarr's earlier films before *Damnation* record communist reality while Heidegger in his early career as academician is struggling with the influence of Hitler and Nazism. One can see the proliferation of literature on Heidegger's Nazism and anti-Semitism especially since his series of *Schwarze Hefte* (*Black Notebooks*) have already been released in German (with possibilities for English translations in the near future).<sup>45</sup> To be fair with the nature of the rather metaphysical questions posed in the dissertation, I try to stay clear of mundane politics since my core belief here is quite simple really; Heidegger and Tarr produce the kind of works that can be fully apprehended and appreciated when viewed for their existentialist, ontological and poetic interrogations.

If chapter one and two offers brief description of Heidegger's philosophy, his research on the meaning of Being, and the history of phenomenological research, chapter three develops further Heidegger's thinking on art, modern technology, dwelling and the nothingness. Artwork, according to Heidegger, is the Open where truth manifests itself as

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<sup>45</sup> The *Black Notebooks* are notorious for their anti-Semitic content, and have created further uproar in the philosophical circle in the Europe and in the United States. There are three volumes altogether in German, all edited by Peter Trawny (2014): *GA 94: Überlegungen II-VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, *GA 95: Überlegungen VII-XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)*, *GA 96 :Überlegungen XII-X (Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941)*, published by Vittorio Klosterman (*Frankfurt am Main*). For an extended engagement and multiple interpretations on Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* in English, please see I. Farin & J. Malpas (Eds.), (2016), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks 1931-1941*, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

beauty. The Open is the clearing and the event where earth and world meets, to strife harmoniously. The essence of modern technology is *Gestell* (*Enframing*), a mode where human existence is renewed and challenged as standing-reserve, orderable like nature and things. The notion of dwelling is given by Heidegger as an existential, primordial aspect of Dasein, without which we cannot have the capacity to build, to be at home in a place. Dwelling is a form of thinking that receives its gift from the fourfold – mortals, the earth, the sky and the divinities. The chapter ends with a review on the nothingness from the lecture, ‘What is Metaphysics?’ Human is anxious being, and Human Da-sein, Heidegger writes, is a being that held out into ‘the nothing,’ which is why uncanniness is felt in the first place and ‘why’ can be asked. Heidegger’s lectures ask us to ponder the strangeness of things around us; only thus can deeper thinking can gain grounds.

There are more than a few phenomenological points sketched out throughout chapter four. After reviewing some definitions on cinema, chapter four engages with several works with topic on phenomenology and cinema. Accordingly, certain film like Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954), John B. Brough argues, is capable of Husserlian *epoché* and is *phenomenological* in its own right. More importantly, films, “hone the phenomena and pare away the incidental to let essence shine through” (Brough, 2011, p. 198). The definition of slow cinema I offer in chapter one – “a film-work which celebrates plotless narration, utilizes lots of long takes and long shots, preponderously silent, plenty of ‘dead space’, austere reality and filled with estranged characters leading a life in *profound* boredom” – is given a full treatment by the end of the chapter four. By this, the review of slow cinema answers the object of studies found at Chapter 1, ‘(a) to set up a critical literature on slow cinema.’ The solitude of lone man in slow cinema, I argue, is *the way an individual moves under the heaviness of solitariness*. Slow cinema celebrates the

conundrum of boredom not because it is something negative, something to pass by, but rather, boredom, I believe, is what grounds and grows contemplative mood in its soil.

To reappraise the main statement from chapter one: This dissertation chiefly reads Béla Tarr's film aesthetics through Martin Heidegger's thinking on phenomenology. Five of Tarr's later films are selected for the analysis: *Kárhozat/ Damnation* (1988), *Sátántangó* (1994), *Werckmeister Harmóniák/ Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), *A Londoni férfi/ The Man from London* (2007) and *A torinói ló/ The Turin Horse* (2011). Furthermore, I argue in this dissertation that there *exist parallel existential interrogation between Heidegger and Béla Tarr*. Both Heidegger and Tarr observe the concreteness of existence through their own specific method (the first, writings; the latter, film images). But deep down in their existential interrogations, I believe they both were seeking the essence of thingness, and to do this, they formulate time into their own approach. Heidegger always writes about time in his writings, and believes that time is part of the Dasein's make up. Tarr employs long take furiously, extensively to capture his images.

Let it be noted again that the phenomenological discussion attempted here moves beyond empirical data collection or any scientific method but borrows heavily on poetic insight and far-reaching interpretation. There is no systematic empirical investigation that can capture the essence of experience, none. The essence of Being cannot be apprehended by scientific method nor mathematical calculations. Only through questioning, poetic thinking and radical interpretation can the essence of Being be understood. So when Sufi Syaikh Ibn 'Arabi claims in his magnum opus *Futuhāt al-Makīyya* that he had met with the prophet Muhammad through dreams, 1000 scientific empirical experiments would never be able to verify his claims, much less recreate his inner journey. Ibn 'Arabi knows this, which

is why rather than sojourn into empirical science, he writes poetically, *through phenomenological imagination as theophany*. To say *Futuhāt al-Makiyya* is less rigorous is an insult to the beauty and intensity of inner knowledge. There are no logical experiments that can be conducted that can measure my faith in God, much less authenticate the existence of God. When Gaston Bachelard attempts to psychoanalyze flame (*The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, 1938/ 1964), clearly this is something that no scientific empirical research can fathom. How could fire have a psychological state to work from? But through *phenomenology as poetic imagination*, this can be achieved. Essence of being is not easily captured; this is why great thinkers like Heidegger, Bachelard and Ibn ‘Arabi make great use of the art of poetry to describe the fleeting phenomenon.

In the process of thinking the inner abyss according to the paths created by Heidegger and Tarr, we must not be misled by the creative phenomenology done so far and forgot the crux that bind each chapter; which was the artistic thinking. Art is the glue that connects this thesis to both Heidegger’s and Tarr’s. If *Seinsfrage* (Question of Being) is the main theme of Heidegger’s philosophical proposal, then Tarr’s main theme is the *display* of *Seinsfrage* as film image. Unlike Heidegger who meditates on the realm of ideas when writing, Tarr has to deal with concrete things – planning, economic means, cinematography, scripts, collaborations, acting, sound design – when making his films. Tarr’s image-framing is always to extend his artistic sensibilities, to create a world that his inner world can travel confidently. This is why right from the start of chapter three, I delve into the definition of art, offer a summary of history of aesthetics, and then analyze Heidegger’s influential lecture *The Origin of the Work of Art* first before the rest of his lectures and publications. In attempting to read the ontological structure of both Heidegger and Tarr, the dissertation also pushes forward our understanding on what art is according to

these thinkers. However, the manner of what art can *be* differs from the usual investigation on aesthetics. Heidegger in the *Addendum of The Origin of the Work of Art* writes:

Reflection on what *art* may be is completely and decidedly determined only in regard to the question of *Being*. Art is considered neither an area of cultural achievement nor an appearance of spirit; it belongs to the *primal event (Ereignis)* by way of which the ‘meaning of Being’ (cf. *Being and Time*) can alone be defined (PLT, p. 85).

If the corpus of the dissertation is the phenomenological description and its skin is existence, then this is the soul of the dissertation; *art as primal event*. To speak about art is all together hard and easy. Hard, since the author’s vocabularies must be strong and rich to attempt the appreciation; easy, since it is something that is so intuitively understood. This is the reason why the writings here are quite difficult to draw out, sucking enormous time of my reading and thinking abilities.

Further findings on objects of studies introduced in Chapter 1, b) to observe Béla Tarr’s long take in the form of phenomenology of lingering shot; c) to find the connection between Béla Tarr and Heidegger through nihilism; d) that deep down, Béla Tarr pursues the essence of Being; are elaborated from Chapter 5 to 7, respectively. Chapter 5, the longest chapter in this dissertation, concentrates mostly on the phenomenological description of Tarr’s lingering shot. I argue here how Tarr’s long take exhibit mere existence that long for simple isolation, eternally. The stretchedness of time is felt more clearly when presented as long take rather than montage. But what is felt in the stretchedness of time, according to Saint Augustine (and cited by Heidegger), is the undefinable soul extending itself in the longevity of time. Bela Tarr’s long take, I believe, *is*

*the extension of soul that probes out, gauging the world.* Here, I ask the question of art from Heidegger's tumultuous nature between the earth and the world. The meeting together of the earth and the world in the filmwork brings together a horizon that is uncannily *entrancing*. By employing several vital scenes from Tarr's oeuvre, I demonstrate how Tarr is interested in the meeting of his character with the distant horizon *as* a form of long shot. Furthermore, his character is always placed in the middle of the composition, always lonely in the stark contrast of the openness of the landscape. The metaphysical rationale for this, I determine, is that Tarr sees human as the centre of things, and as such, is the *centre of what makes horizon of the world so meaningful*. The image that he has been trying to exhibit in his many years as filmmaker is the abstract depth of the human inner gravity. The earth, the world, human figure; these things are composed in Tarr's framing in a Heideggerian "unitary repose," a "resting-in-itself." *Tarr's aesthetics is the kind that posits the movement for its motionlessness*. Tarr's cinematic art arrests movement in the gravity of agitated stillness. I posit in the chapter that the abundant long shots established in Tarr's cinemas are the rapturous event between man and space, space and time, time and cinema. I conclude that the distance between the camera and the beings is a putting-up-a-distance, a manifestation of "being-away" essence of Dasein. As such, the "heaviness of being" that Tarr says in another interview is no longer man's own alone to bear; the lingering camera too, has become abundant in world-weariness, in the rapture of "heaviness of being."

Close at the end of Chapter 5, I try to project the nature of Dasein as dweller of the earth, but dwells in the art cinema. The resource for this section comes from Heidegger's evocative lecture, *Building Dwelling Thinking*. 'Dwelling' in this chapter no longer shows the physical dwelling of human body inside a house, but the nature of his thinking as he projects his thought towards things on earth. I ask: How does one dwell in cinema? The



simplest answer will be through contemplating the world picture, the meeting between our gaze and the projected film from the screen. I argue here how Tarr's cinema, the aesthetics of movement in its motionless, the exhibition of ecstatic rapture of agitated stillness, offers the kind of site that calls for deeper contemplative measure. His cinema, I conclude, is a phenomenological event that brings *the lostness in the nearness*. When I watch a film, it means that the film and I are near to each other (if it is too far, how can I make out the figure it displays?), but the spatial aspect of the nearness is destroyed when one's thought and imagination comes to reside in the content of the film. What is near is no longer the projective television, but the projected world, as my consciousness drinks the world whole. This is why dwelling in cinema is a given. Tarr's cinema, as a whole, problematizes the lostness in the nearness; the absorption level of my gazing is always thwarted by the strangeness of his filmmakings and the profound awareness of time passing by.

Early in Chapter 6, I ask several pivotal questions: How much nihilism is Tarr's cinema in the range of its visual decadence as existentialist art? What can we glean from its depth so as to understand its nihilistic quality proper to our task of understanding Tarr's filmic structure from Heidegger's thought? To attempt to answer these questions we must take shape a foundation first, and that is through the metaphysic of nihilism as laid out by Nietzsche in *The Will to Power* (1968). A diagram for my method here can be seen in Appendix B. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger believe that modern history of man is the pervasion of nihilism. An appreciation to Tarr's aesthetics hinges on the supposition of nothingness. Yet, the nothingness in his cinemas brings the understanding that beauty exists as a *dread for temporal space*. This dread is personal, mesmerizing and meditative. Using several key scenes from Tarr's longest film, *Sátántangó*, I demonstrate that Tarr's films are more than just simply nihilism but the kind that phenomenologizes nihilism. The sense of

bleakness and austerity in *Sátántangó* can depress the thinking audience, but they are the existential ingredients that make life *is*. The prolonging of time, space and amorality points to the inner Nietzschean ‘bleak wasteland’ but with the optimism for deep thinking on the uncanniness. I conclude that Bela Tarr’s filmmaking shows the condition of human inner self, but the range is essentially, *contemplative nihilism*.

This led us to the final analysis, Chapter 7: The metaphysic of Being in Tarr’s cinema. Is it possible that Tarr is interested in the beingness of things? I argue for this chapter that his filmmakings are a tome of fascination regarding Being. Like Heidegger’s thoughtful recollection of *Sein*, Tarr is intuitively interested in the manifestation of Being, which is why he tries to show the concreteness of things. To quote Tarr’s statement again (see Chapter 5.2): “But I am a filmmaker; I have just the concrete, definitive ashtray. And the question is how am I able to show you the ashtray” (Meade, 2007). The *how* is through extreme long take, numerous long shot and choice of grey tints. The long take, after showing a house, for example, refuses to cut, but lingers awhile, absorbing instead the movement of the stillness that is the house. The house is simple for what it is, but when framed as long take, different vista of horizon opens up. In this vista, one’s abyss and angst grow while simultaneously restrained by the horizon. The grey tint that washes Tarr’s lingering frame brings forth a phenomenological manifestness of a caged Being. Long take is a powerful technique in film language since rhythm of time – the stretchedness of Heidegger’s “succession of nows” – can be felt by the scrutinizing gaze. In Tarr’s films, hints of infinity caress the gaze, while the gaze – rests in the captivation to the openness of Being.

## 8.2. Recommendation for Future Works

There were several ideas that I have tinkered around in my series of sketchbooks and notebooks, but unfortunately, for reason of theme, space and time, were not fully expanded. For one, I think section 5.5 (Cinema as Art of Dwelling) promises so much phenomenological richness for future unearthing. I have attached in Appendix some of the initial sketches on the spatial relation between the audience (thinker) and film (what projects image). For another, I wish I could spend more time on Heidegger's lecture on modern age, 'The Age of the World Picture' (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*), originally given in 1938. Heidegger writes, for instance, "world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture" (QCT, p. 129). Several questions that *beg* to be researched include, a) How does film promulgate the idea of world-age-picture? b) The contradictory nature of modernization which creates a place for slow cinema as contemplative medium. However, I have tried my best to write a little about it, and Figure 3.4 (symptoms of modern age according to Heidegger) is condensed from my readings of the lecture.

Another item that can be lengthened is the analysis on 'time' in cinema. While my thesis *did* elaborate on the nature of time (boredom as long while, the nature of Dasein as Being and Time, temporal nature of long take, time and silence, extendedness of time in manifesting soul, and so on), I believe there are several ideas that can be touched upon, such as: a) How does Heidegger's conception on ecstases and raptures of time in *Being and Time* are manifested in Bela Tarr's films? b) In another track, the Russian filmmaker Tarkovsky engages for many pages in *Sculpting in Time* regarding the poetic rhythm of time in cinema; but how can we manifest or even understand this *Tarkovskian rhythm* in

Tarr's long take? It is unfortunate too that I am unable to give critical account, or if not, some minor thematic readings, of Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989). Deleuze's book, a study of the relationship between time and image, heavily influenced by Bergson, is quite influential in the international 'filmsophy' circle. Engaging with Deleuze's text means keeping myself abreast with current debates in Deleuzeian studies and contemporary filmsophy. (I still have not finished the book yet!). Furthermore, we must not exceedingly overlook the phenomenological studies done by Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992), a research that was heavily influenced by Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology and Husserl's transcendental ego rather than Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Initially, I wanted to fully engage with her theories; however I found out that her ideas – semiotic phenomenology, the sensuous bodily relationship between the audience and the physical film, embodied vision, dialectic intentionality – are not compatible with the grey tone that is set in Heidegger's and Tarr's metaphysic of nihilism. The *poetic uncanniness* which drives me first to Heidegger's writings is passed by in Sobchack's writings for a more rigorous study on spatial connection between human body and virtual space. Hopefully there will be ample time in the future for an intellectual rendezvous with Sobchack's studies, Insya-Allah. Even as I write this, there are several philosophers like Sartre, Nietzsche, Gadamer (personas that I have touched very briefly in the dissertation) that I am sure, can shed some radical insights and different interpretations on Tarr's cinemas.

This PhD research concentrates mostly on the ontological side – the *Seinsfrage*, the inner contemplation, nihilism – but there is the *political side* that should not be fully ignored when facing European filmmakings. Béla Tarr's earlier films like *Szabadgyalog/ The Outsider* (1981) and *Panelkapcsolat/ The Prefab People* (1982) evidently reflect social

problems, criticizing the helplessness of the Hungarian government to solve issues such as lack of low-cost housings, jobs shortage, and other public infrastructures. European and Russian directors like Béla Tarr, Miklos Jancsó, Jan Švankmajer, Darezhan Omirbayev, Denis Côté, Cristian Mungiu, Andrei Tarkovsky, Aleksandr Sokurov and many others, work against the grain, and sometimes have to face with political oppression and government ban, not to mention difficulties in sourcing funding and film distributions. This political side is not developed in the dissertation but it is a food for thought for future writings.

Other feature that should prove to be equally interesting is *comparative studies* between Tarr and other filmmakers according to selected topics. While this will take us away from the ongoing focus with Heidegger, and probably weaken the penetrating metaphysical analysis given so far, there are still some benefits in comparative studies. For instance, we can touch on several aspects that had influenced the selected filmmakers; politico-geography, nationalism, correspondence letters, historiography, shared philosophies, childhood psychologies, and so on. The basic question will be: How do we compare Tarr's filmmaking techniques with (insert director's name)? In June 2013, I have presented a comparative reading precisely on this matter, entitled, "Notes Regarding 'Long Take': Mizoguchi, Tarr and Kiarostami," in *International Conference of Performing Arts as Creative Industries in Asia* (PACIA 2013), Borneo Hotel, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Kenji Mizoguchi (Japan), Béla Tarr (Hungary) and Abbas Kiarostami (Iran) come from different backgrounds and each employ long take but how do they differ? The paper tries to sum up the stylistic differences and their average shot length. For the PhD dissertation, I did offer glimpses (but not enough to warrant a full study) of other filmmakers' style, such as from Lucrecia Martel, Lav Diaz, and Tsai Ming-liang (see Chapter Four).

Another aspect that can be quite refreshing is the *spiritual facet* of Béla Tarr's cinemas. Truthfully, when I submitted my first draft of PhD proposal to Universiti Malaya, the original title was '*The Movement and Oppression of the Soul: Ibn Sina's Philosophy and Béla Tarr's Long Take.*' Yes, the religion/ spiritualism were already thought up very early in the initial stage of PhD writings! At first, I wanted to pursue his long take in the range of Islamic medieval philosophical questioning on the *roh* (human spirit as immortal substance), but after reading Heidegger's bracing lectures, the interest was soon 'sabotaged' by Heidegger's questioning of Being of beings (!). Several questions with religious themes can include: What can we know and understand about the *intensity of transcendence* in the grounds of Tarr's cinema? Can we relate his film as meditation on Supreme Being? Which Sufi authors can help transforms our understanding of silent space which proliferates throughout Tarr's filmmaking? (I am thinking Ibn 'Arabi here). Is Béla Tarr's way of filmmaking manifests monotheism or a celebration for capitalist pluralism? How can we relate the proto-existentialist Indian-Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna's notion of *sunyata* (Sanskrit word that means 'voidness') with the emptiness entombed in Tarr's films? When Estike commits suicide in *Sátántangó*, she was hoping to meet her angels in heaven – we can push this scene to several notions, such as, a) The eschatological readings of Tarr's nothingness – is it *possible*? or b) How much can we drive the earth/angelic theme when faced with Henry Corbin's phenomenology of theosophy and angelology, when matched with the strange and dense work that is *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*? While my PhD writings do not tackle this spiritual question directly, the attentive reader will find hints of religious intimation throughout the chapters.

All the recommendations above ask for hard works and serious time, especially finishing up philosophical texts. *It is my earnest hope that this dissertation will open up doors for more phenomenological and ontological research and Heidegger studies in Malaysia.* With this – I end my dissertation with words taken from the poem *Socrates and Alcibiades*, by Heidegger's favorite poet, Hölderlin (cited in Heidegger, 1968, p. 20):

Who has most deeply thought, loves what is most alive,

Who has looked at the world, understands youth at its

height,

And wise men in the end

Often incline to beauty.

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## APPENDIX A

### Fauzi Naeim Mohamed's list of publications and paper presentations

#### Illustration Book

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#### Book Chapters

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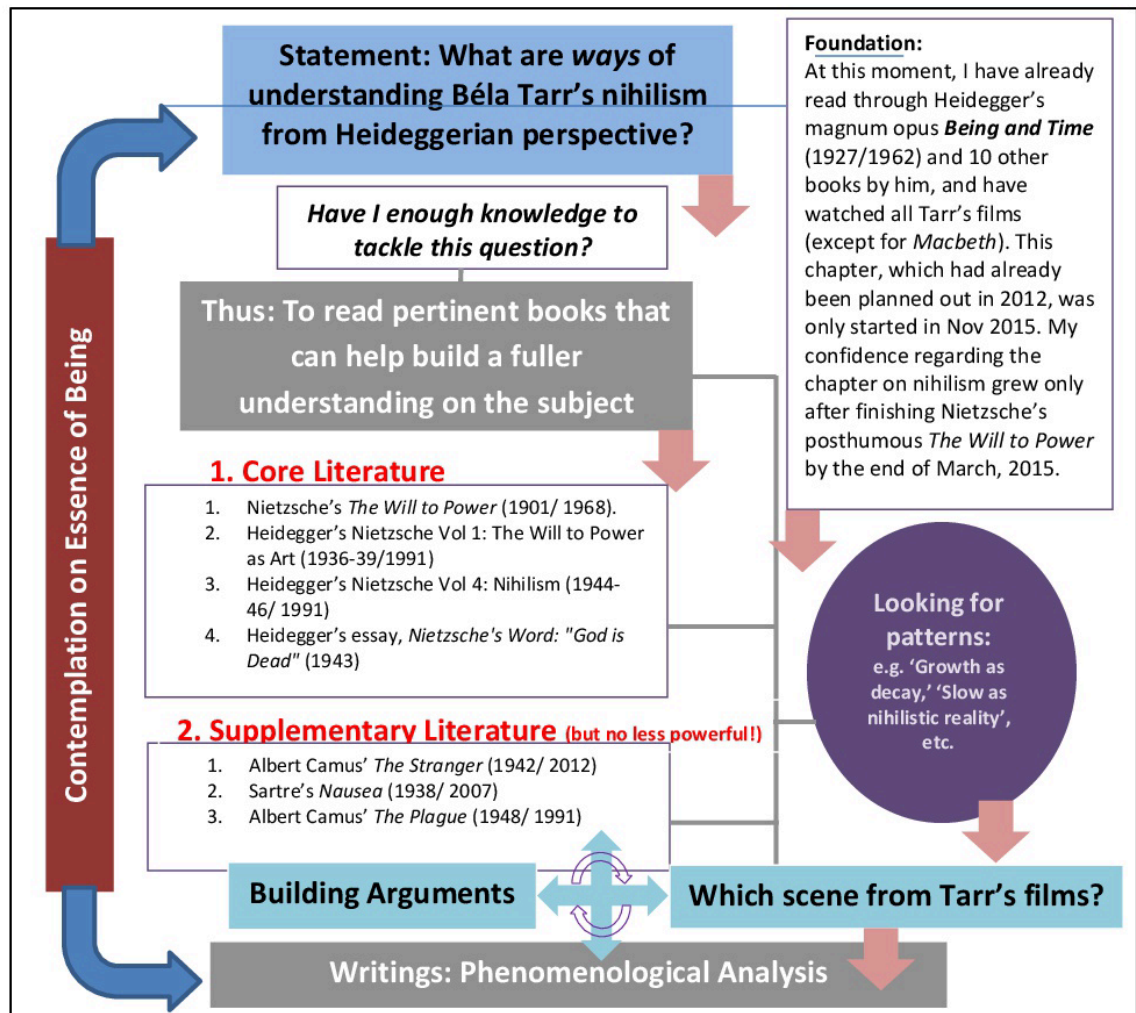
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## APPENDIX B

### Method Page: Phenomenological Readings (Diagram design by Fauzi Naeim)

How does one start a Heideggerian phenomenological reading on Béla Tarr's nihilist cinema? What is the requisite foundation toward this *particular* analysis? Below, I have tried to formulate in simple diagrams, steps and knowledge taken, in the pursuit to understand and *do* Heidegger's phenomenology. Hopefully attentive students and scholars will find the diagram useful. Please bear in mind that the method illustrated below comes from my personal experience while doing a specific chapter (se Chapter 6) for my PhD dissertation.



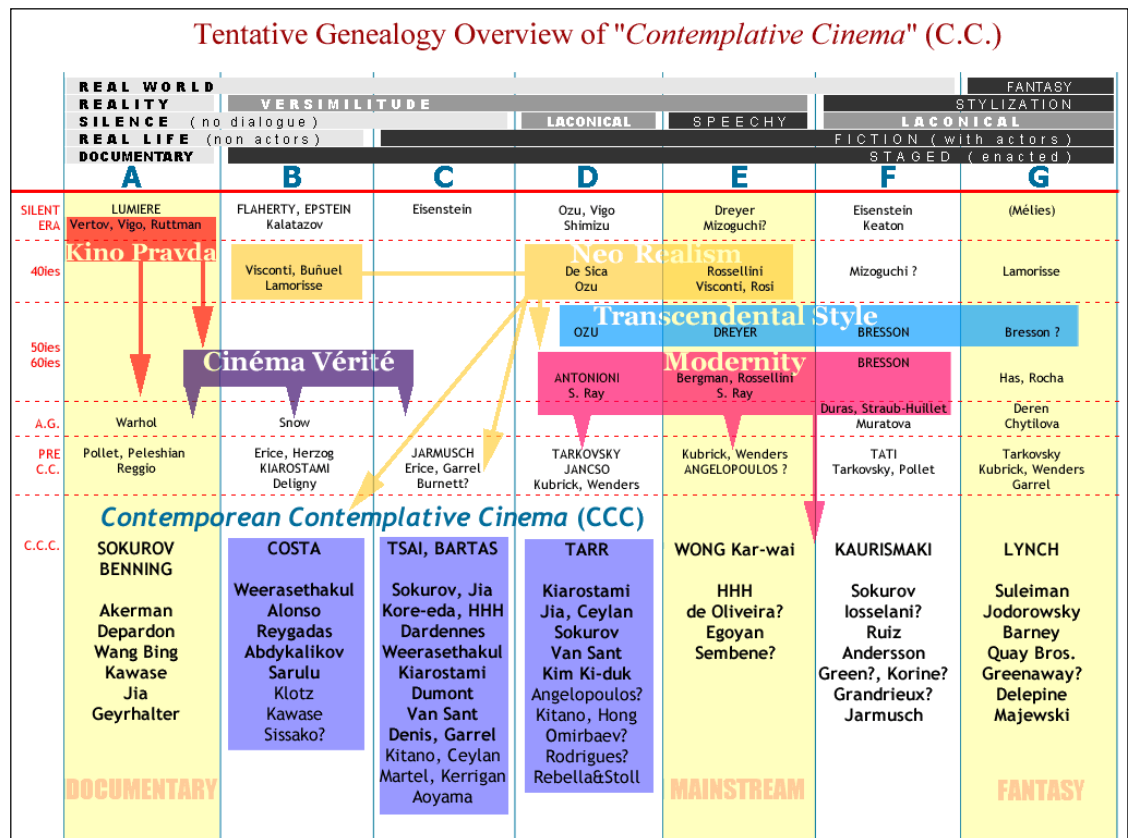
## APPENDIX C

### Béla Tarr's Filmography

- Családi tűzfészek / Family Nest* (1977), Hungary, 108 min
- Hotel magnezit* (1978), Hungary, 10 min – short film
- Szabadgyalog / The Outsider* (1981), Hungary, 122 min
- Panelkapcsolat / The Prefab People* (1982), Hungary, 102 min
- Macbeth* (1982), Hungary, 72 min - TV
- Őszi almanach / Autumn Almanac* (1985), Hungary, 119 min
- Kárhozat / Damnation* (1988), Hungary, 116 min
- Utolsó hajó* (1990), Hungary, 31 min – short film
- City Life* (1990), Argentina/ Netherlands, 251 min – segment documentary
- Sátántangó / Satan's Tango* (1994), Hungary/ Germany/ Switzerland, 450 min
- Utazás az alföldön / Journey on the Plain* (1995), Hungary, 35 min – short film
- Werckmeister harmóniák / Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), Hungary/ Italy/ Germany/ France, 145 min
- Prologue* (a segment in *Visions of Europe*) (2004), Austria/ Belgium/ Cyprus/ Czech Republic/ Denmark/ Estonia/ Finland/ France/ Germany/ Greece/ Hungary/ Ireland/ Italy/ Latvia/ Lithuania/ Luxembourg/ Malta/ Netherlands/ Poland/ Portugal/ Slovakia/ Slovenia/ Spain/ Sweden/ UK 140 min – short film
- A londoni férfi / The Man from London* (2007), France/ Germany/ Hungary – 139 min
- A torinói ló / The Turin Horse* (2011), Hungary/ France/ Germany/ Switzerland/ USA – 146 min

## APPENDIX D

**Béla Tarr (highlighted in purple) with his peers in ‘Contemporean Contemplative Cinema’ (CCC).**

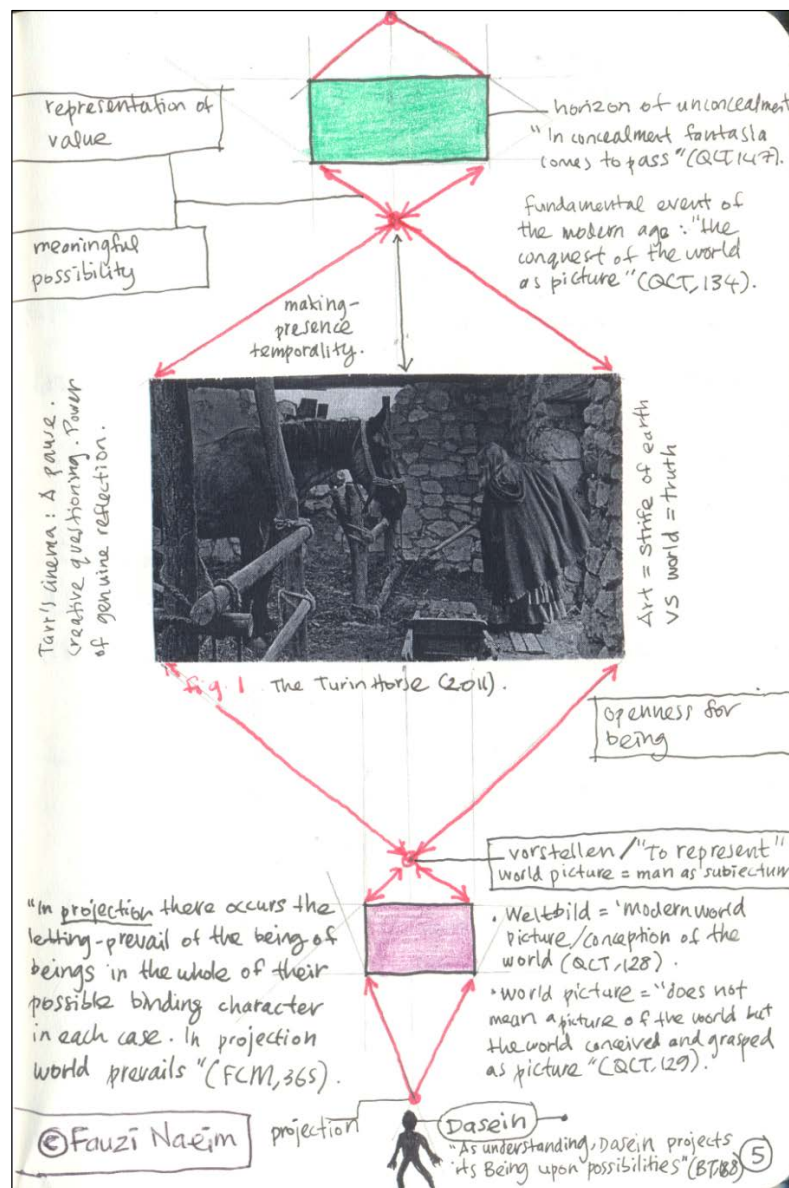


The image above is sourced from Harry Tuttle, <http://unspokencinema.blogspot.com>.

## APPENDIX E

### Sketches on Béla Tarr

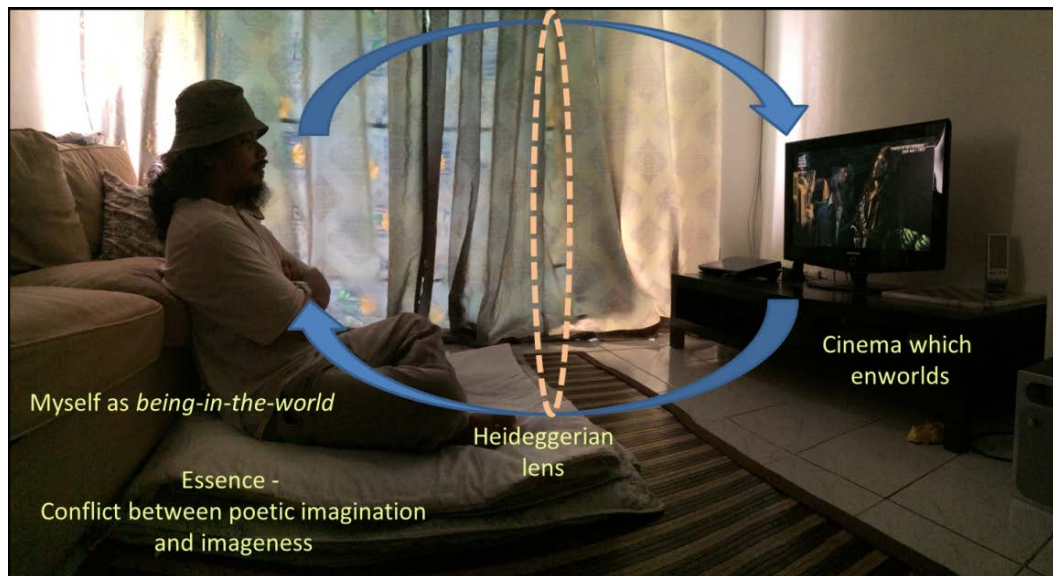
Earlier sketches on Tarr's cinema and its understanding through Heidegger's text, Tarr's cinema as openness for Being but film as "the conquest of world as picture" (QCT, p. 134). The key word in understanding the 'rectangular frames' and "red arrows" here are Heidegger's words: "As understanding, Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities" (BT, p. 188).



## APPENDIX F

### Sketches on Seeing

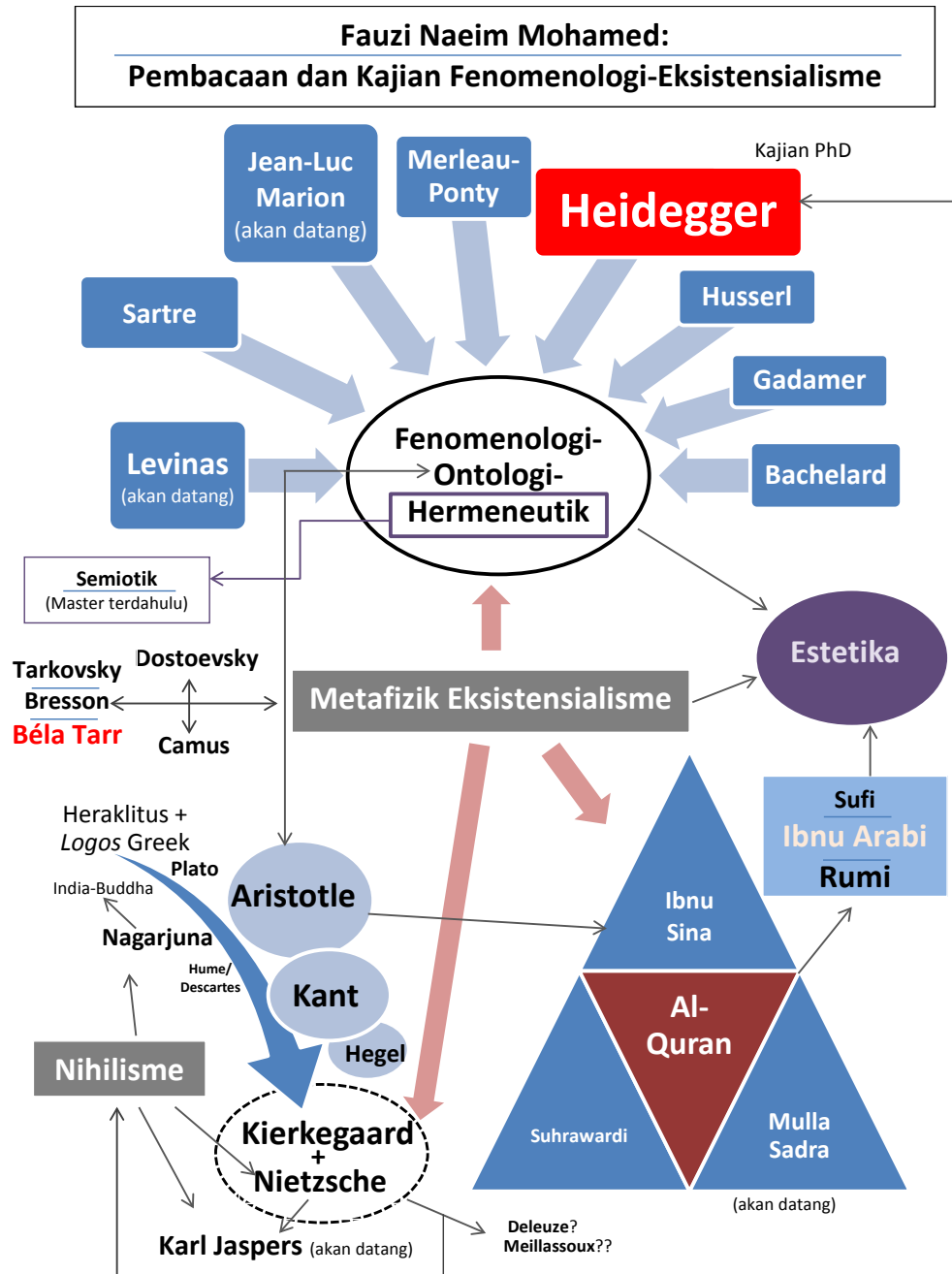
Early sketches in understanding the bodily and spatial relationship between thinking Dasein and cinema. Both projects *some* idea of the world. Seeing slow cinema is thought up as experiencing essence of Being. Investigating essence is inescapable from the conflict between poetic imagination and imageness. See section 5.5, Cinema as Art of Dwelling, for the discussion (and another related image).





## APPENDIX G

### Mapping of author's research and reading interest.



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