
Book review

Frampton, Daniel, *Filmosophy*, 2006. London: Wallflower, ISBN 1-904764-84-3

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Daniel Frampton's work *Filmosophy* can be considered one of the most recent analyses of Gilles Deleuze's theories on cinema, especially in its relationship to philosophy. But Frampton's book is more than that. It goes beyond the French philosopher in its argument that film, analogous to philosophy can be regarded not simply as an art form but as thinking itself, a system of thoughts, ideas and memories. He writes that 'Cinema believes in its objects just as we have a belief about our past. Film can thus possibly help us understand our own forms of memory and recollection.' (p. 19). That does not mean that film simply is *like* thinking but rather that it *is* a form of thinking itself.

In the first part of the book, Frampton aims to establish the theoretical framework for this theory. He writes that the basic and most obvious elements that show us thought processes in film are metaphors and illustrations. A simple analogy between film and thinking, however, regards Frampton as far too limiting and therefore suggests that we need a new concept of a *particularly filmic thinking*, a more poetical, non-linear concept of thinking in, of and about film.

Frampton subsequently discusses several traditions of film theory in the next chapters. For example he criticises Auteur theory for overemphasising the creator of a work and thus excluding the user experience. Frampton further argues that it is often falsely assumed that only the so called intellectual cinema has a capability of thinking. Defending mainstream cinema he claims that film thinking is realised in all kinds of films and genres. Frampton writes that theorists don't 'seem confident enough to allow 'thinking' into the plainest of films. The reason most writers hold this view is that they are not able to get past the idea of thinking as 'obvious' or 'ostensibly intentional'.(p.32)

Another tradition in film theory Frampton challenges is the comparison of film with human perception. He regards this perspective as limiting in so far as he thinks that

film is able to present things we could not naturally perceive. Cinema goes beyond our perception and it differs from it, it directly shows us *'film-thinking'* and its unique *'filmind'*. Each film reproduces cinema via references and homages to other films and by the way it influences the lives of the audience. Referring to his key writer Deleuze, Frampton states that 'cinema is beyond the bounds of representation; it is the image that is the real 'thing' present to the filmgoer.' (p.61)

Interpreting Deleuze's concept of the automaton, which the French theorist develops in the second half of *Time-Image*, Frampton characterises cinema as an autonomous thinking machine, with the film-being as the brain of this machine. Film-thinking interprets and changes our world, creating a film-world to which we relate not rationally but on the level of intuition.

In the second part of his book, Frampton points out that especially contemporary cinema needs new concepts of thinking as the modern technologies of image creation free narration from systems of reference and authorship.

Frampton describes his own concept of *filmosophical* thinking as an organic concept in which each image also reflects the thinking of the whole. Applying this ideas to Deleuze's later concept of belief, Frampton suggests that what we see is not only an image or character, but also the film's own 'belief' in and about this image or character. By disclosing this filmic belief, Frampton's concept of *Filmosophy* tries to regenerate the connection between the audience and the film, subsequently reconnecting us with the real world. He argues that 'Filmosophers want to believe the film, want to be swept into the film, want to engage with the drama as fully as possible. They want the horror to scare us, the comedy to make us laugh, the drama to make us cry.' (p.154) This engagement might be a conscious process when we start watching the film, but as soon the film develops we *feel* the film directly.

Frampton argues that a good film theory should not destroy a film by taking it into pieces and analyse individual theoretical and technical aspects as that approach is not able to capture the essence of a film, the thinking of the film. He suggests a development of ideas starting from reflexive, poetic philosophical concepts by Nietzsche and Derrida via the image of thought, as in Deleuze, towards a postmetaphysical film thinking and announces that 'at the 'end' of philosophy lies film.' (p.183) Frampton suggests that his concept of film-thinking shows the content beyond dialects and truth, which is based on an open judgement and creates a unique filmic truth.

In the final chapter Frampton goes on to discuss various forms of digital cinema and the way it influences and alters concepts of filmic thinking. Since cinema now seamlessly shifts and mixes between digital and photo-real images, it provides a

new form of reality, which provokes new experiences and subsequently new thinking and emotions.

Frampton argues that purely digital cinema is not as interesting as it still represents a world that visually differs significantly from our own. Therefore viewers rather connect with it in a rational aesthetic way. Nevertheless, we may proceed to a stage where digital images really look indistinguishable from photographed ones and the cinema 'will then truly become its own new world – able to show anything, be anything, go anywhere, think anything – and animators will be the new gods of this world.' (p.205)

A major part of digital cinema, however, is not primarily about creating entirely new worlds, but altering the image of our own world, adding fresh perspectives and variables. This version is the most interesting, because it still provides the audience with familiar elements and therefore we engage with this new images and thoughts on a more immediate level and not just on an aesthetic level.

In the last chapter, Frampton states that the aim of Filmosophy 'is to advance a new critical mode of attention', because 'to see films as thinking is to credit them with power and creative intention.' (p.211) As our world is undoubtedly shaped by media and our world view is influenced by the images we perceive from them - fictional or non-fictional - we need to be able to understand them.

In conclusion, Daniel Frampton's work offers an interesting new approach in discussing cinema in a wider context. It not only provides an excellent overview of philosophical film theories, but offers a perspective for looking at the relevance of cinema for our life and thinking beyond mere escapism.

The book also features an informative bibliography and index.