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Awareness of Fictionality and Cinematic Perception: Rethinking Plato's Critique of Mimesis through Film Spectatorship

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Abstract: Film spectatorship combines awareness of fictionality with responses to what is seen and heard. Spectators know that events on the screen are fictional, yet cinematic form can still organize attention and expectation through viewpoint, narrative, sound, and rhythm, eliciting emotional and bodily responses. This experience provides a new basis for reconsidering Plato's critique of mimesis. Plato's account of the psychological power of mimesis remains illuminating: images exert force through the organization of perception even when spectators retain awareness of fictionality. Immediate responses during viewing, however, must be distinguished from changes in the order of the soul and in character, which also depend on the formation of viewing habits and their longer-term effects on judgments about reality. Spectatorial agency emerges in the capacity to recognize cinematic form, one's assigned viewing position, and one's own responses, thereby making renewed judgment possible.

Keywords: Plato; mimesis; awareness of fictionality; film spectatorship; cinematic perception

1. Introduction

Plato's critique of mimetic art in the Republic can be analyzed at three connected levels: epistemic, emotional, and ethical. At the epistemic level, mimetic art addresses the appearance that an object presents, but mimesis itself gives the imitator no knowledge of the object's use, quality, or true condition. At the emotional level, mimetic poetry appeals to the easily excitable element of the soul, allowing spectators to take pleasure in the grief of others while temporarily relaxing the governance of reason over emotion. At the ethical level, emotions repeatedly nourished through spectatorship may return to ordinary life, enabling feelings and appetites that ought to be restrained by reason to become increasingly dominant and eventually to affect habit and character [1]. Plato's concern, then, extends beyond art's capacity to produce convincing illusions. He also asks how mimesis organizes knowledge of the world, activates emotion, and shapes the soul through repeated exposure. Reducing his theory of mimesis to a rejection of deception obscures the connections among epistemology, psychology, and ethics within his critique [2].

Cinema concentrates these questions in a particularly vivid form. Apparatus theory has long recognized a structural relation between the movie theater and Plato's cave. Jean-Louis Baudry treats the projector, darkened theater, screen, fixed viewing position, and moving images as an interconnected apparatus, invoking the allegory of the cave to explain how cinema assigns the spectator a position, produces perceptual continuity, and generates an impression of reality [3]. Apparatus theory thus shows that the resemblance involves the production of images, the position of the viewing subject, and the formation of an impression of reality. Yet the cave analogy primarily explains how cinematic images acquire such an impression. It does not fully explain why screen characters, events, and situations can still affect spectators who understand the mechanisms of projection and

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narration. The prisoners in the cave take shadows for the whole of reality; film spectators generally know that the screen world is produced through performance, cinematography, editing, and sound design. This difference requires a more precise account of what it means to be subject to the power of images.

The spectator's recognition of fictionality has likewise become a central problem in film theory. Christian Metz emphasizes that a film spectator knows that he or she is watching a film in a theater, identifying this knowledge as the first distinction between the filmic and oneiric situations. Film creates a powerful impression of reality without completely depriving the spectator of an awareness of the mediating situation [4]. Aesthetic debates over the paradox of fiction further show that people can feel pity, fear, or anxiety for fictional characters without believing that those characters actually exist. The debate concerns whether such emotions are genuine, whether they are rationally grounded, and what role imagination plays in producing them [5, 6]. Work on film spectatorship places the same problem within the institution of fiction and the conventions of viewing, asking how spectators participate in narratives while accepting the rules of fictional representation [7]. Together, these approaches establish that knowing something to be fictional can coexist with perceptual and emotional responsiveness. Awareness of fictionality changes the conditions under which images exercise their power; it does not abolish that power.

Apparatus theory explains how cinema produces an impression of reality, while theories of fiction examine how spectators participate in narratives they know to be fictional. Bringing these approaches into contact with Plato's reflections on knowledge, emotion, and the order of the soul allows the force of cinematic images to be reconsidered. I argue that film spectatorship relocates Plato's concern from the deception of appearances to the organization of perception and affect, while limiting the inference from immediate response to character formation. The discussion first distinguishes the allegory of the cave from Plato's critique of mimetic art, then examines the audiovisual organization of spectatorship, the spectator's awareness of fictionality, and the possibility of reflecting on the mechanisms of images.

2. Why Images Are Dangerous: The Questions within Plato's Critique of Mimesis

Plato's discussions of images and mimesis occur in several different contexts in the Republic. The allegory of the cave in Book VII is principally concerned with education and the redirection of cognition. Bound from childhood, the prisoners can see only shadows cast by firelight on the wall and take those shadows for the whole of reality. Once released, a prisoner must turn around, leave the cave, adjust to the light, and eventually look toward the sun. Education therefore consists in turning the soul away from visible things and opinion toward the intelligible realm and its grounds [1]. The account of mimesis in Book X, by contrast, directly examines the relation among imitator, object, and knowledge. The cave explains how a spectator can remain governed by visible things, whereas Book X asks whether the maker of an image possesses knowledge of what is represented. Relating these discussions enables images to be examined in terms of cognitive position, epistemic authority, and their effects on the soul. This relation is an interpretive construction, however, rather than a theory of images already completed by Plato.

The example of the couch in Book X defines the epistemic limits of the imitator. Plato distinguishes the Form of a couch, the couch made by the craftsman, and the couch depicted by the painter. A user can judge the quality of a couch through practical experience, and the maker can thereby acquire correct belief about it; the painter possesses only the skill of rendering its appearance. A painted couch can neither be used nor demonstrate that the painter understands its purpose, quality, or principles of construction. The distance between mimesis and truth thus has two dimensions. The painted couch is an image of a particular object as it appears from a given angle, and the painter lacks the practical knowledge available to the user and the maker [1]. Plato's

criticism therefore raises a specific question: does the ability to represent an object confer the epistemic authority to speak about it?

The mimetic exploitation of appearances poses a related but distinct problem. The same object appears to differ in size when viewed from near and far; a straight object looks bent when placed in water; and painting can produce comparable effects through perspective, color, and proportion. Measuring, counting, and reasoning can correct distortions of sense perception, whereas mimetic images can use those distortions to increase their own credibility [1]. The danger of an image is therefore not confined to its being mistaken for the object itself. Even when a spectator knows that an image is only an image, its appearance may still influence judgments about persons, events, and the world. At this point, the cave and the critique of mimesis become comparable. The cave illustrates how the soul remains attached to visible things, while Book X explains how mimetic art can use visible appearance to acquire power over judgment.

Books II and III adopt a conditional attitude toward mimesis. In discussing the education of the guardians, Plato requires poetry to represent gods, heroes, and death appropriately, while permitting the young to imitate courageous, pious, and self-controlled figures. His concern is with the habits formed through sustained imitation: repeated imitation of a certain kind of speech and conduct may eventually produce a corresponding character [1]. Book X offers a markedly harsher assessment. The poet becomes an image-maker without genuine knowledge, and mimetic poetry is excluded because of its effects on the order of the soul. Books II and III ask which forms of mimesis civic education can accommodate; Book X concentrates on the epistemic limits and psychological consequences of mimetic poetry. Taken together, these discussions show that any judgment of mimesis must consider what it represents, how it represents, and what habits its repeated reception produces [2].

The psychological effects of mimesis must also be understood in relation to Plato's theory of the soul. Book IV distinguishes reason, spirit, and appetite. Spirit occupies a relatively independent position: when properly educated, it can ally itself with reason and help restrain appetite, and therefore cannot be assimilated without qualification to irrational emotion [1]. In discussing tragedy in Book X, Plato does not map the effects of poetry onto each of these three elements. Instead, he focuses on the conflict between rational restraint and the impulse to grieve. A person may strive to control sorrow in ordinary life, yet sympathize in the theater with a character's lamentation, anger, and suffering and take pleasure in this emotional participation. Plato fears that grief, anger, appetite, and laughter repeatedly nourished in spectatorship will return to ordinary life and gradually weaken the rule of reason over the soul [1]. His concern is the long-term effect of repeated viewing on the order of the soul. To describe this process as "emotional catharsis" would import Aristotle's theory of catharsis and redirect Plato's argument.

Plato's critique of mimetic art can therefore be organized around three connected questions. Does the imitator possess knowledge of what is represented? Do images use visible appearance to influence the spectator's cognition and judgment? Does repeated viewing alter the relations among reason, spirit, and appetite? The following discussion turns chiefly to the latter two questions, examining how cinema works through perceptual form and whether its effects are sufficient to support Plato's concern about the order of the soul. The epistemic authority of the imitator remains an essential background to that inquiry.

3. The Organization of Perception under Awareness of Fictionality: How Film Directs the Spectator

Knowing that screen characters and events are fictional does not place every aspect of viewing under the spectator's voluntary control. Spectators continue to interpret plots, infer causes, and evaluate characters, and they may reject the perspective a film encourages. At the same time, framing, viewpoint, editing, sound, and rhythm organize the information available for interpretation, giving some objects greater perceptual salience and making some emotional responses more likely than others. Carl Plantinga's

account of film experience shows how cognitive judgment, narrative understanding, sensory stimulation, and bodily response jointly contribute to emotion [8]. Cinema can therefore direct spectators without requiring them to mistake fiction for fact. Awareness of fictionality and responsiveness to a film coexist.

Framing, viewpoint, close-ups, and depth of field first organize attention. In an actual environment, a spectator can turn, move, or alter the distance of observation; a cinematic image already embodies choices about space. The frame admits some things into view and leaves others offscreen. Camera position determines the point from which a scene is seen. Close-ups heighten the salience of a face, action, or object, while depth of field and focus regulate the relation of attention between foreground and background. Cinema does not eliminate interpretation, but the spectator begins with information already selected and ordered by the film. When the camera approaches a face, different interpretations remain possible, yet the face can scarcely be ignored as the center of the scene. Cinematic form thus distributes attention, determining what enters perception first and which relations the spectator must subsequently infer.

The shower murder in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) concentrates these operations of attention. As Marion enters the shower, the image, the sound of running water, and relatively steady camerawork together establish an enclosed and private space. The translucent curtain divides the room into foreground and background. Marion remains sharply visible in the foreground as a blurred figure gradually appears behind her. She does not notice the intruder, but the image places the spectator where the danger can be seen. This temporary visual asymmetry allows the spectator to know that danger is approaching without being able to warn the character. Once the curtain is pulled aside, the film cuts rapidly among the murderer's silhouette, the raised knife, Marion's screaming mouth and widened eyes, her outstretched hand and exposed shoulder, and the falling water. Close-ups fragment the body, while the bathroom ceases to form a stable spatial whole. The spectator receives a succession of intense visual fragments but no continuous, comprehensive view of the attack.

This spatial fragmentation also changes how violence is represented. Although the blade and Marion's body appear together in several extremely brief shots, no continuous image clearly shows the knife entering her body. The editing alternates between action and reaction, prompting the spectator to supply causal relations across adjacent shots. A raised knife, a scream, a downward movement, and a twisting body are understood as successive stabbings. Violence not directly shown becomes continuous through perceptual synthesis. Editing withholds the complete action while intensifying its felt effect. The power of the sequence lies in the way it guides spectators to connect fragments, infer events, and construct from incomplete images an experience of violence more complete than any single shot provides.

Cinema also organizes emotion over time. Plantinga situates cinematic emotion within narrative understanding and affective trajectories, showing how spectators' responses change with their grasp of character relations, narrative information, and dramatic situations [8]. Until the shower scene, *Psycho* has placed Marion at the center of its narrative. Spectators follow her as she steals the money, drives away, evades the police, and checks into the Bates Motel; they then see her enter the shower after deciding to return to Phoenix. Her decision opens the prospect of beginning again, while the shower briefly releases the tension generated by her flight. The film has thus established expectations about Marion's future actions, only to sever that trajectory with her murder. As the threatening figure appears, expectation becomes suspense; when the curtain is pulled aside, suspense becomes shock; after Marion dies, spectators must reconsider who or what will organize the story. None of these responses requires a belief that Marion exists. They arise because an established concern for the character and a set of narrative expectations have been violently disrupted. The emotional force of cinema depends here on the spectator's continuing understanding of a fictional situation, not on a misrecognition of the image as real.

The editing rate within the sequence compresses this transformation. Before the attack, the shots remain relatively steady and the running water supplies continuity. Once the curtain is drawn back, shot duration contracts sharply as viewpoint and scale change in rapid succession. Before spectators can fully identify one image, it has been displaced by the next. The pace slows again after the stabbing. Marion's hand slides down the tiled wall, her body pulls the shower curtain loose, blood runs toward the drain, and the circular drain is visually linked to her lifeless eye. Continuous running water set against a body becoming still turns high-intensity shock into a delayed sense of numbness and disturbance. Emotion follows a designed temporal trajectory from calm to threat and eruption, then into the emptiness after death. Editing does more than connect narrative material; it regulates the rise, duration, and dissipation of emotion.

Sound provides another continuity for violence that the image never fully displays. Michel Chion calls the expressive and informative contribution of sound to an image "added value": once sound intervenes, an event on screen acquires a new intensity and meaning [9]. At the beginning of the attack, high-pitched strings enter abruptly. Their short, piercing, repeated figures form a rhythmic relation with the movement of the knife and the cutting of the shots. Although the blade rarely makes unambiguous contact with the body within a single image, Marion's screams, the running water, the strings, and the sounds of impact bind the dispersed visual fragments into a sustained assault. The water continues after the attack, its ordinary mechanical sound contrasting with Marion's unresponsive body and extending the felt violence beyond the cessation of movement. This sense of violence is a perceptual synthesis produced through the sound-image relation. Spectators know that the knife never actually entered the actor's body, yet they understand the fragments supplied by editing and sound as a continuous injury. The power of images that concerned Plato can therefore arise from the selection and combination of perceptual material, without depending on a confusion between fiction and fact.

The organization of attention and time ultimately acquires a bodily dimension. Plantinga emphasizes the sensuous character of cinema: images, sound, movement, and rhythm can elicit muscular tension, held breath, or withdrawal, while interacting with the spectator's understanding of the narrative situation to constitute emotional experience [8]. In the shower sequence, the figure behind the curtain must first be understood as a threat and Marion as a person being harmed; the sudden high register of the music, the rapidly approaching movement, and accelerated editing then intensify bodily tension. Situational understanding amplifies bodily response, and physiological arousal makes the danger feel more immediate. This process partly supports Plato's claim that mimesis can strengthen emotion, but it also places a limit on his argument. The spectator's fear depends on narrative understanding and cannot simply be reduced to emotion bypassing reason. Bodily tension during a single viewing is likewise insufficient to establish that character or the order of the soul has changed. Moving from immediate experience to long-term ethical effects requires an account of how repeated viewing produces stable affective habits and alters judgments in ordinary life.

Psycho demonstrates that cinema can organize attention, emotion, and bodily response while spectators retain awareness of fictionality. This experience supports Plato's observation that mimesis has psychological force, but it does not show that the tension produced by a single viewing necessarily alters character or judgment. The immediate responses generated by cinematic form must be distinguished from their ethical consequences.

4. Knowing It Is Fiction: The Spectator's Dual Awareness

The shower sequence in *Psycho* shows that awareness of a film's fictionality can coexist with emotional response. Here, awareness of fictionality refers to the spectator's recognition that the events presented on screen are not occurring in current reality and therefore do not call for real-world assistance, flight, or intervention. This definition does not deny that a film may draw on actual events; it specifies a boundary between what

appears on screen and the spectator's present reality. "Viewing response" encompasses the attention, expectation, evaluation of characters, emotional experience, and bodily reaction that arise during spectatorship. Spectators know that Marion has not actually been killed, yet they tense as danger approaches and remain shaken by her death. "Knowing it is fiction" therefore names a dual awareness in which judgment about reality and responsiveness to the film proceed together. Spectators retain an awareness of fictionality while continuing to be affected by the film's viewpoint, narrative, sound, and rhythm.

Contemporary aesthetics generally formulates this phenomenon as the paradox of fiction. The paradox consists of three propositions. First, spectators respond emotionally to fictional characters and events. Second, they know that those characters and events do not actually exist. Third, genuine emotion appears to require a belief in the existence of its object. The first proposition describes a familiar aesthetic experience, the second attributes awareness of fictionality to the spectator, and the third establishes a belief condition for genuine emotion. Together, they generate a difficulty: if spectators do not believe in the existence of fictional objects, can their responses to those objects still count as genuine emotions?

Colin Radford acknowledges that readers are moved by the fate of Anna Karenina but maintains that genuine pity requires a belief that its object exists. Readers know that Anna is only a fictional character and nevertheless grieve for her; in Radford's account, this response lacks a corresponding belief about reality and is therefore inconsistent and irrational [5]. Kendall Walton approaches the difficulty by revising the scope of "genuine emotion." His example is Charles watching a horror film. As a green slime advances on screen, Charles experiences a racing heart, muscular tension, and an impulse to escape, yet he does not believe that the slime actually exists and does not flee the theater. Walton calls this bodily and psychological state "quasi-fear." Within the film's game of make-believe, it is fictional that Charles fears the slime; outside that game, he is not afraid of an actual monster [6]. Radford regards the response as an emotion unsupported by an appropriate belief, whereas Walton accepts the occurrence of bodily and psychological changes while denying that they constitute genuine fear of a fictional object.

For a reconsideration of Plato's critique, the choice between the labels "genuine emotion" and "quasi-emotion" is not decisive. "Emotional response" can serve as a broader term for activities that actually occur during viewing, including character evaluation, narrative expectation, subjective feeling, and physiological arousal, without prejudging whether they satisfy every philosophical condition for genuine emotion. Murray Smith's account of the "institution of fiction" further shows that film viewing takes place within established conventions of production and reception. Before a film begins, spectators generally know that it is fictional and that images and sounds are to be used to understand characters and events without assuming the responsibility to intervene that belongs to an eyewitness [7]. Awareness of fictionality thus shapes how spectators participate in a film. They preserve judgment about their actual situation while forming expectations and evaluations in response to the viewpoints, causal relations, and character situations established on screen.

Going to a movie is generally voluntary, but particular emotional responses are not wholly subject to the will. Spectators may choose to watch a horror film, yet they cannot freely switch off muscular tension or a racing heart when a shock occurs. They may stop watching, but they cannot simply decide to feel no sympathy for a character. Voluntary entry explains why an act of viewing usually begins as a choice; it does not establish that every response during viewing is under the subject's control. Awareness of fictionality supplies knowledge of the boundary between image and reality, but it does not provide an ability to suspend perceptual and emotional response at will. Spectators neither take screen events for facts unfolding beside them nor thereby escape the direction of cinematic form.

This dual awareness introduces a specific revision to Plato's critique of mimesis. Film spectators differ from the prisoners in the cave first of all in their judgments of fact. The

prisoners take shadows for the whole of reality, whereas spectators generally know that the screen world is constructed through performance, cinematography, editing, and sound design. The force of the image therefore does not require a misidentification of fiction as fact. Even when factual judgment remains intact, cinematic form can activate attention, expectation, emotion, and bodily response. This experience supports Plato's observation that mimesis can nourish emotion while restricting the inference from immediate response to ethical consequence. Tension, sorrow, and physiological arousal during viewing demonstrate the psychological efficacy of images, but they do not by themselves show that the spectator's character or the order of the soul has changed. Repeated viewing, habit formation, and altered judgments about reality are intervening conditions between immediate experience and enduring character.

5. Reflection in Film Spectatorship and Its Limits

Awareness of fictionality enables spectators to distinguish screen events from current reality, but knowing that "this is a film" does not yet amount to knowing how images affect them. Reflection becomes possible when spectators attend to the relations among camera viewpoint, visual selection, narrative arrangement, and their own responses. Such reflection can coexist with emotional experience. A spectator may be moved by a character's fate while also recognizing how a film directs attention and expectation. The metaphors of mirror, window, and threshold describe this possibility through three different emphases: identification, framing, and the passage between spaces.

The metaphor of the mirror first illuminates identification and self-projection in film spectatorship. Metz argues that the cinematic screen differs from an actual mirror. Spectators do not see their own bodies on the screen, but they identify with the position of looking arranged by the camera and screen. What the camera sees is seen from the corresponding position; when it moves toward, approaches, or passes an object, the spectator's gaze shifts with it. This alignment with the camera constitutes what Metz calls primary cinematic identification. The spectator can therefore experience the viewpoint offered by the film as his or her own act of looking and acquire a sense of perceptual mastery over screen space [10]. The mirror metaphor shows that awareness of fictionality does not prevent spectators from understanding persons and events along directions established by the camera. It marks the boundary of reality but does not by itself reveal how a viewing position has been produced.

The window metaphor emphasizes the framing, selection, and extension of reality. In comparing painting and cinema, André Bazin describes the frame of a painting as centripetal, drawing the spectator's attention inward, and the cinema screen as centrifugal, allowing screen space to appear to continue beyond its edges [11]. This centrifugal quality presents a cinematic image as part of a larger world, but framing and composition still determine what enters the image and what remains offscreen. Reflection therefore requires attention both to what an image shows and to the choices through which it shows it, including why a film presents one portion of reality and omits another.

The threshold metaphor further stresses the passage between actual and cinematic space. Dudley Andrew understands the frame as a threshold that separates the spectator's actual space from the cinematic space unfolding on screen while also allowing a relation to be established between them [12]. Spectators can concentrate on the story world, or turn to the ways in which shots, editing, and sound construct that world. A threshold provides only the possibility of such a shift. Most narrative films seek to conceal their construction and sustain attention to characters and events. Only when a film interrupts this continuity do its mechanisms and assigned viewing positions become salient. Awareness of fictionality is a precondition for reflection; formal interruption makes the image's construction visible and allows spectators to reconsider their own position and mode of response.

Michael Haneke's *Funny Games* (1997) offers a concentrated example of how cinematic form can trigger such reflection. The film follows two young men who enter a family's vacation home and subject its occupants to sustained terror and violence.

Throughout the narrative, it repeatedly violates the boundary between screen and spectator. The assailant Paul suddenly looks into the camera, winks, and asks whether the spectator believes that the victims will survive. His words consequently address both characters within the story and spectators outside it, making the latter aware that they too have been incorporated into a "game" organized around violence. An even more conspicuous interruption occurs later. Anna seizes a shotgun and kills Peter, apparently opening the possibility of successful resistance. Paul picks up a remote control, rewinds the film to the moment before the shooting, and then prevents Anna from taking the gun. This act cancels the victory just achieved and openly displays the film's control over narrative progression. The spectator's desire to see the victims fight back thereby becomes an object of scrutiny. Haneke compels spectators to confront the fact that they recoil from violence while also awaiting its escalation, an act of resistance, and a conclusion that fulfills generic expectations. Catherine Wheatley accordingly analyzes *Funny Games* through the relation between reflexivity and spectatorial ethics, arguing that the film exposes itself as a constructed product while forcing spectators to face their own position as consumers of images [13].

Funny Games makes spectators aware of its narrative manipulation without ceasing to exert emotional control. Direct address, narrative rewind, and the frustration of expectation expose cinematic mechanisms while continuing to generate anxiety, anger, and helplessness. Spectators may know that the film deliberately refuses a successful act of resistance and still hope that the victims will escape. They may recognize the director's challenge to their desire to watch and remain affected by violent situations and narrative suspense. The film even uses an especially forceful formal control to lead spectators toward a predetermined self-doubt. The result deserves caution: *Funny Games* employs cinema's manipulative power to make that manipulation perceptible. Formal awareness can change the meaning of an emotional response, enabling spectators to feel fear or anger while recognizing how those feelings arise, but it cannot simply cancel the emotion.

Mirror, window, and threshold reveal the roles of identification, framing, and spatial passage in film spectatorship. *Funny Games* further shows that spectators can reflect on a film's influence while remaining subject to it. For Plato's critique of mimesis, knowing that an image is only an image does not demonstrate that the soul has completed a turn from appearance toward knowledge. The spectator must also recognize how an image arranges viewpoint, organizes emotion, and affects judgment. At the same time, the direction exercised by cinematic form does not eliminate the spectator's capacities for interpretation and reflection.

6. Conclusion

The experience of film spectatorship shows that Plato's suspicion of mimetic art retains explanatory force, although its grounds require reformulation. The force of images does not depend on spectators mistaking fiction for reality. Even when they know that screen events have not actually occurred, spectators remain responsive to a film's organization of attention, expectation, emotion, and bodily reaction. Plato's insight into the psychological efficacy of images can therefore be retained, while his inference from immediate emotion to damage in the order of the soul requires further conditions. Being affected by an image does not by itself establish that character has changed.

Awareness of fictionality likewise grants no automatic or complete autonomy. Spectators can examine and revise judgments formed through images only when they also recognize how viewpoint, narrative, and sound arrange their viewing. Leaving the cave therefore means more than departing from images; it also means recognizing their operations while remaining among them. Film spectators are directed by images, yet they retain a capacity to reflect on that direction. The reconsideration of Plato's theory of mimesis through cinema ultimately rests on this limited but genuine spectatorial capacity.

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