Introducing Cinematic Humanism: A Solution to the Problem of Cinematic Cognitivism

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A Cinematic Humanist approach to film is committed inter alia to the following tenet: Some fiction films illuminate the human condition thereby enriching our understanding of ourselves, each other and our world. As such, Cinematic Humanism might reasonably be regarded as an example of what one might call 'Cinematic Cognitivism'. This assumption would, however, be mistaken. For Cinematic Humanism is an alternative, indeed a corrective, to Cinematic Cognitivism. Motivating the need for such a corrective is a genuine scepticism about the very notion of the cognitive. Using historical reconstruction, I reveal how 'cognitive' has become a multiply ambiguous, theory-laden term in the wake of, indeed as a consequence of, Noam Chomsky's original stipulative definition. This generates a constitutive problem for cognitivism as both a research programme and a set of claims, and as such poses a trilemma for philosophers of film, art and beyond. I propose a Cinematic Humanist solution to the problematic commitments of cognitive film theorising and, in so doing, gesture towards a methodology I am calling 'philosophy of film without theory'.

Keywords: Cognitivism, cognitive film theory, Chomsky, cinematic humanism, philosophy of film without theory.

Cinematic Humanism is both an example of philosophy of film *without theory* and a commitment to a particular set of tenets about film. These tenets include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i)   Some fiction films illuminate the human condition and thereby enrich our understanding of ourselves, each other and our world;

(ii)   Such understanding requires our sensitive, reflective, and critical engagement;

(iii)   Such sensitive, reflective, and critical engagement requires appreciating the relations between a film's aesthetic and non-aesthetic features;

(iv)   Fiction films are a medium that can be used in and for philosophical investigation.

With such tenets, Cinematic Humanism looks to characterise a fundamentally cognitivist approach to the content and value of film, where cognitivism about film is the view that film can be a source of knowledge. As such, Cinematic Humanism might reasonably be called 'Cinematic Cognitivism'. Furthermore, given the third tenet, which points to an important relation between a film's cognitive value and its cinematic value, Cinematic Humanism appears to offer the kind of full-blooded cognitivism found in the works of, say, Matthew Kieran (2004) on art, or James O. Young (2001) on literature.

Cinematic Humanism is not, however, an example of Cinematic Cognitivism, rather it is an alternative—indeed, a *corrective*—to it. The need for a corrective is motivated by scepticism about the very notion of the cognitive. For the terms 'cognition' and 'cognitive' are, in fact, theory-laden terms of art, and questionable ones at that. Appreciating this immediately generates two specific problems in the philosophy of film. In the first instance, if justified, scepticism about matters cognitive generates potential worries for the leading methodology of anglophone analytic philosophy of film: *cognitive film theorising*. Secondly, it raises questions about the fundamental assumptions that shape and direct debates about *cognitivism* in film (and beyond).

In this paper, I explore two scepticism-provoking ambiguities relating to the notion of the cognitive and diagnose their source in a pair of stipulative definitions made by Noam Chomsky. These are, I reveal, responsible for changing the meaning of the word 'cognitive' into a questionable piece of philosophical jargon. Having identified and articulated these concerns, I introduce Cinematic Humanism as an alternative to Cinematic Cognitivism. I also propose that the methodology of Cinematic Humanism—which I call an example of philosophy of film '*without theory*'—offers a viable way to resist the problems attendant on much of Cognitive Film Theorising, without being driven (back) into the arms of its methodological rival, Film Theory.

1. *The cognitive compromised*

Contemporary philosophy currently brims over with things *cognitive*: cognitive processes, cognitive abilities, cognitive mechanisms, cognitive agents, cognitive responsibility, cognitive virtues, cognitive gains, cognitive bloat, cognitive ooze, cognitive bleed, cognitive angst, cognitive dissonance, cognitive sandwiches and so on.[1] But just what is it to characterize something as cognitive? At first blush it looks like 'cognitive' is an adjective used to mean *of* or *pertaining to* knowledge, as 'hedonic'

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[1] At the 7th Dubrovnik Philosophy of Art Conference (2018) James O. Young gave us cognitive *toxicity*, Dustin Stokes championed cognitive *penetration* and there was repeated reference to cognitive *gaps*.

means *of* or *pertaining to* pleasure. Things are not, however, quite so simple. For there are two key ambiguities at play in the contemporary philosophical use of the notion of the cognitive: a Scope Ambiguity and a Level Ambiguity. With the Scope Ambiguity there are inconsistencies as to what kind of knowledge is supposedly cognitive; with the Level Ambiguity there are obfuscations and equivocations as to whether or not the notions of cognition and the cognitive pick out *person-level* features, properties, or activities, or *sub-personal* ones. Moreover, such Level Ambiguities further compound the various ambiguities of scope. Before diagnosing the source of these difficulties, I take a look at each, in turn.

1.1 *The scope ambiguity*

The philosophical scope of the cognitive is, it would seem, as narrow or generous as the scope of knowledge itself. If one has a narrow philosophical conception of knowledge—say one limited to non-Gettierized justified true belief—this engenders a comparably narrow use of 'cognitive'. On such a view only that which is, or relates to, propositional knowledge can be correctly characterized as cognitive. According to Jukka Mikkonen it is just such a narrow scope of the cognitive that is the default position in Literary Cognitivism. "The traditional cognitive line of thought maintains that literature conveys propositional knowledge." (2013: 9)

Yet Cognitive Pluralists, such as Dorothy Walsh (1969), Catherine Wilson (1983), Eileen John (1998), Gordon Graham (2005), and Iris Vidmar (2013), have a broader, more diverse appreciation of what counts as knowledge. On their, and others', views knowledge is by no means limited to the merely propositional. Rather knowledge is also one or more of knowledge-what (something's like), non-propositional know-how, acquaintance knowledge, conceptual knowledge, understanding and, indeed, almost anything that is thought- or ability-enriching. The very elasticity of the potential scope of the cognitive makes it possible for some, more liberal, Literary Cognitivists to champion literature for its capacity to do any or all of the following:

> educate emotionally, train one's ethical understanding, call into question moral views, cultivate or stimulate imaginative skills and/or cognitive skills, 'enhance' or 'enrich' the reader's knowledge, 'deepen' or 'clarify' her understanding of things she already knows, 'fulfil' her knowledge or help her 'acknowledge' things, give significance to things, provide her knowledge of what it is like to be in a certain situation, that is, offer her a 'virtual experience', often of situations she could not or would not like to encounter in her real life, and so on… (Mikkonen 2013: 9–10)

Simpatico to such a view is Peter Lamarque:

> Who would deny that art is often involved with "exploring aspects of experience," "providing visual images," "broadening horizons," "imagining possibilities," "exploring and elaborating human ideas"? If this is cognitivism, then I too am a cognitivist. (2006: 128–129)

Yet this cognitive largesse is short-lived as Lamarque maintains his debate-shaping anti-cognitivist position by continuing, "But I don't think this has anything essentially to do with truth or knowledge or learning" (Lamarque 2006: 128–129). In so doing, he shuts the door on any hoped-for pluralism: the scope of the cognitive shrinks back once again to its default propositional borders.

If one looks to contemporary epistemologists for clarity on the topic, their philosophical focus on knowledge is almost exclusively on propositional knowledge. As a result, it is practically impossible to ascertain whether or not non-propositional knowledge is or may be deemed cognitive. Recent forays into the area of know-how by Jason Stanley & Timothy Williamson (2001) and Stanley alone (2011) argue resoundingly that knowledge-how is but a particular mode of presentation of what is fundamentally propositional knowledge. This so-called 'intellectualist' view of know-how is increasingly dominant, obscuring the extent to which non-propositional know-how might *also* be, characterised as cognitive. This difficulty continues in the work of leading virtue epistemologists, such as John Greco and Ernest Sosa, who characterise a virtuous knower as one whose *propositional* knowledge and belief-forming mechanisms are reliable. In Duncan Pritchard and Sven Bernecker's 2011 *Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, there are 900 pages containing sixty so-called 'state of the art' articles, every one of which is dedicated to the consideration of propositional knowledge. If, as is claimed, this book displays contemporary epistemology at its most comprehensive then there is no questioning, let alone avoiding, the hegemony of what, elsewhere (2013: 140ff.) I call "the propositional presumption" of epistemology. Unsurprisingly, in practice the notions of the cognitive and the propositional are regularly used interchangeably.

This need not, of course, prevent a philosopher of art who wishes to characterise both propositional and non-propositional knowledge as 'cognitive' from doing just that, and indeed a number of leading analytic aestheticians do so. Support though, for any such 'cognitive pluralism' is not to be found in contemporary epistemology. Indeed, for pluralists about knowledge who work in the philosophy of art it now looks like epistemology is not so much a possible resource for pluralist perspectives, but rather a philosophical area in potential need of them. The valuable direction of travel is perhaps *from* the philosophy of art *to* epistemology, and not vice versa. Were this Scope Ambiguity to be the only ambiguity at play with the cognitive, then I, for one, would willingly take up the cognitivist cause in the hopes of bringing to bear insights offered by so-called 'cognitive pluralists about art' on epistemology. Unfortunately, the second ambiguity—the Level Ambiguity—makes this tempting option not just problematic, but intractably so.

1.2 *The level ambiguity*

Level ambiguities about the relation between knowledge and the cognitive turn on confusions as to whether or not knowing and cognizing both occur at the personal level or one occurs at the personal level and the other occurs at the sub-personal level. As the demarcation between epistemologists and philosophers of mind blurs—as a consequence of the naturalizing ambitions of contemporary analytic philosophy—many philosophers in both areas work with a notion of cognition that is less a way of *characterising* our knowledge, and instead something that, supposedly, *explains* it. Instead of knowledge and cognition both being potential philosophical explananda, cognition is offered as an explanans for the explanandum that is knowledge. Moreover cognition, qua explanans, is conceived of as wholly sub-personal: cognitive sub-personal processes, mechanisms and states are theoretical constituents of a particular view of what the mind is, and how it works. One of the key commitments of this view is that to be minded is to engage in sub-personal information-processing over representational states. In other words, however (potentially) pluralist you might be, *au fond* such niceties disappear as knowledge bottoms out in sub-personal propositional knowledge. Appreciating this shift, helps to explain Stanley's insistence on the propositionality of all knowledge, including know-how, thereby showing that the level ambiguity and the scope ambiguities are internally connected. If cognition is now a sub-personal theoretical posit designed to explain person-level knowledge, then it is not, and cannot be, synonymous with knowledge. When and where did all this happen?

2. *Just say 'yes' to the history of philosophy*

There are four people whose historical confluence is crucial to turning 'cognitive' into, at best, a theory-laden term of art, and, at worst, a misdirecting piece of jargon. The four are Alan Turing, Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts, and Noam Chomsky. Their work in, respectively, computing, neuroscience and A.I., and linguistics, is crucial to the creation, and location, of the perfect storm that changed the meaning of 'cognitive' and in so doing put the cognitive into cognitive science.

2.1 *Going cognitive*

The early clouds of this perfect storm gather with the analogy Turing draws between humans and machines, "We may compare a man in the process of computing a real number to a machine which is only capable of a finite number of conditions" (1938: 231). In other words, in considering ourselves as thinkers, as computers, we can think of ourselves as computing machines. In Turing's wake comes neurophysiologist and soon-to-be Head of MIT Cybernetics, Warren McCulloch who, together with colleague Walter Pitts, runs with Turing's suggestion in the provocatively titled paper 'A logical calculus of the ideas immanent in ner-

vous activity'. Here McCulloch and Pitts argue for an in-principle marriage between the firing of neurons and propositional representation.

> The "all-or none" law of nervous activity is sufficient to insure that the activity of any neuron may be represented as a proposition. Physiological relations existing among nervous activities correspond, of course, to relations among the propositions... (1943: 117)

McCulloch and Pitts' paper ends with a powerful vision of the potential of their proposal. "Thus both the formal and the final aspects of that activity which we are wont to call *mental* are rigorously deducible from present neurophysiology..." (1943: 132). That is to say, personal-level thoughts are (according to this theoretical proposal) *inferable* from sub-personal propositionally construed neuronal firings. Confirming this radical suggestion and thence exploiting such a claim is cognitive science's *raison d'etre*. It is the Holy Grail cognitive science has been chasing ever since its inception as a discipline born of a view of the mind as a localizable intercranial proposition-encapsulating neuron-firing computer. Indeed, by 1950 Turing is confident that computers can be made to "mimic the actions of a human computer very closely" (1950: 438). He suggests one way to bring this about:

> Instead of trying to produce a programme to simulate the adult mind, why not rather try to produce one which simulates the child's? ... Our hope is that there is so little mechanism in the child-brain that something like it can be easily programmed... We have thus divided our problem into two parts. The child-programme and the education process. (1950: 456)

The temptations of such a research project are clear: In the "child-machine... one might have a complete system of logical inference 'built in'" (1950: 457) And there's a footnote here: "Or rather 'programmed in'" (1950: 457, fn1.) This, then, is Chomsky's cue, his springboard. For throughout the 1950s Chomsky synthesizes the ideas of Turing and McCulloch and Watts to develop his own claims that what it is to know how to speak a language *just is* to have such an innate sub-personal propositional-based language-constituting programme or mechanism. By the time he unleashes his castigating review of Skinner's 'Verbal behaviorism' in 1957, Chomsky is not simply engaging in methodological criticism he is simultaneously unveiling a brand new approach, and set of theoretical presumptions, applicable not just to language, but to all of our intelligent and intentional behavior:

> One would naturally expect that the prediction of the behavior of a complex *organism (or machine)* would require in addition to information about external stimulation, *knowledge of the internal structures of the organism*, the way in which it *processes input information* and organizes its own behaviour. (1957: 27, emphases added)

Chomsky presents his Universal Grammar as the first of these innate information-processing internal structures, proposing that we are born with a so-called 'Universal Grammar', whose individual 'initial state' incorporates a postulated fundamental structure of *all* languages. This

language faculty or organ then grows into its mature 'steady state'. Both the initial and the mature steady states are mental states represented in the mind/brain that are constitutive of the information-bearing, propositional representations and rules that we process, or compute. All this happens at the sub-personal level, "far beyond the level of actual or even potential consciousness" (1965: 8).

So we arrive at the critical move that spawns, and still shapes, today's ambiguity-ridden notion of the cognitive, namely: Chomsky's stipulative theoretical definition:

> I have been speaking of "knowing English" as a mental state (or a stable component of mental states), or a property of a person in a certain mental state, but… What is it that is known? Ordinary usage would say: a language—and I have so far been keeping to this usage, speaking of knowledge and learning a language, eg. English. But… this way of talking can be misleading… To avoid terminological confusion, *let me introduce a technical term devised for the purpose, namely "cognize"* with the following properties… The particular things we know, we also "cognize"… Furthermore, *we cognize the system of mentally-represented rules* from which the facts follow. That is we *cognize the grammar that constitutes the current state of our language faculty and the rules of this system* as well as the principles that govern their operation. And finally, *we cognize the innate schematism, along with its rules, principles and conditions.*
>
> In fact, I don't think that "cognize" is very far from "know"… *If the person who cognized the grammar and its rules could miraculously become conscious of them*, we would not hesitate to say that he knows the grammar and its rules, and this conscious knowledge is what constitutes his knowledge of language. Thus *cognizing is tacit or implicit knowledge*, a concept that seem to me unobjectionable… *cognizing has the structure and character of knowledge*… but may be and is in the interesting cases inaccessible to consciousness. *I will return to the terms "know" and "knowledge", but now using them in the sense of "cognize"… The fundamental cognitive relation is knowing a grammar.* (1980: 69–70, emphases added)

With this strategic announcement Chomsky separates knowledge and cognizing, making the latter a theoretical notion that is a constitutive part of a (naturalised) theory about what it is to know, or to know how to speak, one's first language. Moreover, by announcing his intention to return to using the terms 'know' and 'knowledge' *in ways that now mean* (or are synonymous with) this theory-laden notion of cognize, Chomsky and his heirs in the philosophy of mind, linguistics and cognitive science do not just equip themselves with their key theoretical posit, they commit to a practice that cannot but generate and embed the kinds of level and scope ambiguities that are constitutive of today's philosophical and cognitive science 'research'. By the time Chomsky's gives the 1969 John Locke Lectures at Oxford, Universal Grammar's central notion of cognition as unconscious, sub-personal propositional tacit knowing, is now the model on which most, if not all, scientific and naturalized philosophical attempts to understand not just language, but human intelligence and mindedness *tout court*. Chomsky success-

fully baits his hook with the familiar (person-level) concept *knowing*, then switches its meaning to a new (sub-personal-level) theoretical concept *cognising*, before reverting to the original nomenclature of knowledge to exploit person-level intuitions and conceptual connections relating to our more familiar notions of knowledge, language and mindedness.

One might think, however, that the concept *know-how* would be excluded from, or immune to, such deliberate theoretical repurposing. One might think it reasonable to characterise what it is we know, when we know how to speak our first language, as a kind of non-propositional know-how, an ability, and thus it is in some way untouched by theoretical proposals that reconceive person-level *propositional* knowledge as sub-personal propositional cognising. But non-propositional know-how offers no escape from Chomsky's 'bait-and-switch' maneouvre. For it turns out that there is no such thing as the non-propositional know-how of language.

2.2 *Reconceiving competence*

Having turned accessible personal-level knowing into inaccessible sub-personal cognizing, Chomsky makes a second, related stipulation that does not simply consolidate, it exacerbates, the dual-level ambiguity inherent in the notion of the cognitive. He first separates the notions of *competence* and *performance*. "We thus make a fundamental distinction between *competence* (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language and *performance* (the actual use of language in concrete situations)" (1965: 4, emphasis added). Chomsky then drives a theoretical wedge between such competence and performance, announcing: "...one might have the cognitive structure that we call "knowledge of English" fully developed, *with no capacity to use this structure*" (1975: 23, emphasis added). That is to say, that what it is to know English no longer means, entails or is constitutive of being able to speak English and understand other English-speakers. Instead, Chomsky proposes, or better he theoretically stipulates, that:

> ...it is possible in principle for a person to have a full grammatical competence and no pragmatic competence, *hence no ability to use a language appropriately*, *though its syntax and semantics are intact*. (1980: 59, emphasis added)

With these stipulations Chomsky confirms his philosophico-theoretical claim that one can be linguistically competent in English, in other words you can *be* in a sub-personal cognitive state, yet unable to actually speak a language. To know-how to speak and understand English is no longer one and the same as having the ability to speak and understand English. Just as theory-laden *cognising* usurps (propositional) knowledge, *competence* usurps know-how. Only grammatical not pragmatic competence (a newly minted theoretical distinction) is required to know (or know-how) to speak or to understand a language. Moreover,

grammatical competence is, unsurprising, sub-personal, propositional and—by Chomsky's own lights—cognitive. Sub-personal cognition now supposedly *explains* personal level knowledge, understanding and ability. Yet, at the same time, the use of these notions and terms trades on our non-theoretical associations and assumptions about knowledge, understanding and ability.

3. *The double irony of so-called 'cognitive competence'*

Unperturbed by the implausibility (and dubious coherence) of this, Chomsky offers a further justification for the value of his newly minted, theory-laden terms:

> …my concept 'knowledge of a language' is directly related to the concept 'internalization' of the rules of grammar"… [and I have] tried to avoid, or perhaps evade the problem of explication of the notion 'knowledge of language by using an *invented technical term, namely the term 'competence'* in place of 'knowledge'. However, the term 'competence' suggests 'ability', 'skill' and so on, through a chain of associations that leads directly to much new confusion. *I do not think the concepts of ordinary language sufficient for the purpose at hand; they must either be sharpened, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, or replaced by a new technical terminology.* (1975: 315, emphasis added)

With 'competence' joining 'cognising' as the twin pillars of Chomsky's new technical terminology, matters are poised for a third theoretical posit: 'cognitive competence'. Cognitive competence supposedly picks out sub-personal propositional knowledge whilst making no commitments to any person-level propositional knowledge, know-how or abilities. Not only that, but this product of Chomsky's double bait-and-switch is now tied to the denigration of our standard vocabulary, newly reconceived as 'folk psychological talk' and, as such, inadequate. 'Cognitive', 'competence' and 'cognitive competence' become key theoretical terms: tools of choice for naturalizing philosophers eager to 'improve' upon our ordinary language which has now been shown, supposedly, to be incapable of rising to the latest philosophical demands. But if any contemporary use of the term 'cognitive' and 'competence' cannot but consolidate theory-laden views where does this leave philosophers of art, or film? And what of cognitive film theorists? Are they unaware of the metaphysics of mind and language that are constitutive (thanks to Chomsky) of these notions or do they deliberately embrace it? And for those philosophers of art and film who might be cautious of making such commitments in the metaphysics of mind—what to do?

4. *A trilemma*

Do philosophers of art use the term 'cognitive' with all the ambiguities and attendant sub-personal commitments exploited by philosophers of mind or metaphysics-first epistemologists? If not, must they? Can a notion of the cognitive that is not theory-laden in the way outlined in the

previous section be identified and/or maintained? Do the silos of specialism in philosophical academia perpetuate nomenclature confusions or offer ways to transcend such worries, and if so, how? To what extent are, or might, these *intra*disciplinary conundrums be ramified by *inter*disciplinary engagement? Philosophers of art, including film, are, I suggest, facing a trilemma as to how best to respond to, and engage with, these theory-laden notions. Should the terms 'cognising', 'cognitive', and 'competence' (i) be embraced; (ii) be used but in only tandem with caveats and clarifications that modify and/or mollify concerns relating to scope or level ambiguities; or (iii) be eschewed altogether?

The first option—to continue unruffled, undaunted—can be seen in the standard practices of the majority of contemporary anglophone analytic philosophers whose work involves or overlaps with the philosophy of mind and naturalized epistemology. It is also the preferred approach of so-called 'cognitive film theorists.' For cognitive film theorists these theory-laden notions are key to their methodological *modus operandi*. Perhaps they have found a way to diffuse the scepticism that I propose compromises the very notion of the cognitive. To evaluate the merits of this diffusion, I first consider why cognitivism has been, and continues to be, so important to the creation and maintenance of cognitive film theorising.

4.1 *1996 and all that*

In 1996, Noel Carroll and David Bordwell's edited collection of articles, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* brought together a range of critical challenges directed at the then dominant methodology of film studies—Theory. The editors' own contributions to the volume led the attack: the claims of Theory were not simply false (where coherent), but the Theoretical methodology was, itself, inadequate. Carroll invited the purveyors of Theory to justify their approach and rise to the scholarly responsibility of engaging in dialectic debate about their *modus operandi* and its products. The invitation has remained unanswered; the gauntlet unrun.

Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies opens with the editors' individual articles articulating and cataloguing the limitations of Theory, or as they sometimes call it 'Grand Theory'. At the same time, both David Bordwell and Noel Carroll champion their insistence on high standards of clarity, rigour, and rationality to which cognitive film theorising is to be accountable. Bordwell contrasts the cognitivists' own, "middle-level research programmes… based in evidence" (1996: 29) with the 'ethereal speculations' (1996: xiii) and "sedimented dogma" (1996: xvii) of Theory. He characterises the various manifestations of Grand Theory—be they Marxist, psychoanalytic, semiotic, structuralist, poststructuralist, postmodern, or feminist—as resulting from an "esoteric merger of antirationalist philosophy, unorthodox psychoanalysis and the frequently changing views of an official philosopher of the

French Communist Party" (1996: 14). The purveyors of Theory traffic in ideas that meet "no canons of reasonable inference" (1996: 23) and their theories are little more than "a bricolage of other theories" (1996: 25). Bordwell's historical reconstruction of Theory's highways and byways, from subject-position theory through to cultural studies, charts the "deep continuities of doctrine and practice" (1996: 13) that began in the 1970s and continue unchallenged up to this Post-Theory confrontation.

As well as cataloguing the failures, follies and inadequacies of the results of Theory, Carroll identifies methodological "impediments to film theorizing" (1996: 38). These range from the misconceived overextension of psychoanalytic theory (overextended because the standard clinical use of psychoanalysis is limited to explaining just those deviations that are recalcitrant to 'normal' understanding) to engaging in *ad hominem* attacks on any critic who refuses to acknowledge the supposedly ever-present politico-ideological dimension of a film; from using a notion of interpretation in such a way as to transform distinct films into the homogenous products of a "standard-issue sausage machine" churning out (readings of) films that look and smell the same (1996: 43), to inventing concepts of questionable use, such as "the male gaze" (1996: 45); and from incorrectly insisting that content-free formalism is the inevitable consequence of any attempt at political or ideological neutrality, to offering "arguments for suspecting science [that] are as feckless as those for suspecting truth" (1996: 59).

Carroll announces his hopes of engendering a "methodologically robust pluralism" (1996: 63); one that would encourage and enable cognitivists and Theoreticians to engage with each other, sharing agreed standards and protocols of reasoning; together facing the tribunal of empirical evidence. Such academic engagement fails to come to pass. Critical challenge as a route to pan-theoretical corrective is not, and was not, to be. Instead, Carroll's vision of robust pluralism gave way to the very thing he had hoped to avoid: "coexistence pluralism" (1996: 63). The result was—and indeed continues to be—not so much a live-and-let-live mutual respect, but a live-and-rarely-if-ever-mention disparagement.

The lack of any serious reaction from Theoreticians was perhaps unsurprising given Bordwell and Carroll's choice of language was not designed to cushion their critical onslaught. Calls to scholarly engagement are problematic when paired with declarations that the leading Theoretical emperors are not wearing any clothes. The dust jacket illustration of *Post-Theory* displayed a photograph of Laurel & Hardy 'teaching': surely little more than a pointed accusation of the clownlike hopelessness of Theory, and a motivating invitation for real, rather than buffoon, teacher-scholars to step up to the academic plate.

In extolling the virtues of cognitive film theorising Carroll announced that the new methodology would deliver rigorous argument

and clarity where Theory was awash with impenetrable, obscure prose. It would offer the authority of legitimate scientific investigation, where Theory just stumbled around, committing every sin in the Analytic Philosophers' Handbook. Carroll didn't hesitate to name and shame those whom he took to be the key culprits of Theory: Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, and Roland Barthes. Nor did Carroll's condemnation stop there: he attacked profit-hungry over-productive university presses that pandered to the 'arcane peregrinations of Theory' by publishing anyone who had the audacity to draw not just from the well of their founding fathers, but from the writings of Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, '*maybe* sometimes" Jacques Derrida, and the list—like the 'juggernaut of Theory'—went on. (Carroll 1996: 37–40).

Since then, the division between these two camps has deepened: cognitivist film theorising blossoms in the soil of the naturalized analytic philosophy which is now the default paradigm of the contemporary analytic philosophical academia. Theory carries on unabashed and unabated, for the most part ignoring challenges to its ideological cornerstones, seemingly unperturbed by the fact that its prose style is incomprehensible to the uninitiated. The actual ongoing philosophical battle, as Carroll anticipated in 1996, is not, however, *between* these mutually exclusive methodologies, but *for* the undecided readership who have yet to make up their philosophical mind and/or who are still to be inculcated into the practices and norms of one or other of these camps.

Yet although Bordwell and Carroll target the trio of Althusser, Lacan and Barthes as the miscreant source of Theory's problems, they too have their own equivalent Triumvirate in Chomsky, Fodor, and Quine whose philosophical commitments—of method, substance and nomenclature—they embrace. For in rejecting Theory (with a capital 'T') as unscientific gibberish, cognitive film theorists turn to the representational and computational theories of mind that are constructed out of sub-personal semantic theories of content, 'cognition', 'competence' and intentionality. Furthermore, even when their work seems not to require any such commitments to such philosophies of mind, they are now exploiting the conceptual-theoretical resources and vocabulary sourced in, and constitutive of the metaphysical underpinnings of their methodological orientation. In other words, cognitive film theory is no less dependent on its own fundamental theoretical commitments as Grand Theory was, back in 1996. Yet for many, the very idea of sub-personal propositional knowledge, sub-personal notions of cognition and content is at best wrong, and at worst incoherent.

4.2 *Myths, broken dreams and cul de sacs*

The catalogue of unresolved charges filed against the various presumptions that shape the cognitivist metaphysics of mind includes the Chi-

nese Room Argument against the very idea of sub-personal semantic content (Searle 1980), the category mistake constitutive of attempts to *localise* powers (Ryle (1949), Kenny (1989) and Kenny (2009)), the Homunuclus and Merelogical Fallacies that mistakenly predicate of brains what can only be predicated of people (Kenny (1989), Bennett and Hacker (2003: 68–108)); the unfathomable challenge of showing how moods, skills and understanding might be sub-personally represented (Haugeland (1978: 22)); the impotence of sub-personal 'competence' to be, to replace or to explain public standards of correctness; the frame problem; accusations of scientism, etc., the list goes on. Yet cognitive film theorists such as Greg Currie, David Bordwell and Carl Plantinga not only embrace but readily acknowledge the importance of the very same theory-laden notions of cognition and competence laid out above together with the very representational theories of mind they enable and nourish.[2] They are undeterred by those, like Norman Malcolm, who regard the idea of understanding or explaining mindedness and intelligence using so-called 'cognitive processes' as nothing but a case of "replacing the stimulus-response mythology with a mythology of inner guidance systems" (1971: 392). They are undaunted by those, like Herman Philipse, who describe cognitivism as yet another misguided attempt to turn philosophy into science, the history of which he characterises as a "boulevard of broken dreams" (2009: 163). They are uninterested in the pronouncements of leading cognitive science apostates, such as Rodney Brooks (whose 1970s MIT team built one of the first robots to move around an 'ordinary' environment) who now acknowledges that computer "intelligence" is a primarily a matter of computational brute force rather than anything that involves meaning or is, in any way, comparable to understanding. Brooks recently announced:

> I believe that we are in an intellectual cul-de-sac, in which we model brains and computers on each other, and so prevent ourselves from having deep insights that would come with new models… The brain has become a digital computer; yet we are still trying to make our machines intelligent... When you are stuck, you are stuck. We will get out of this cul-de-sac, but it will take some brave and bright souls to break out of our circular confusion of models. (2012: 462)

They are entirely undeterred by Rorty's observation that, "[f]rom a Wittgensteinian perspective, the approach taken by Chomsky and his fellow cognitive scientists look like that taken by the man who searches for his missing keys under the lamp-post, not because he dropped them near there but because the light is better" (2004: 221).

That said, there has been a move by Greg Currie to step away from the (potentially problematic) nomenclature of the 'cognitive'. Unlike his fellow cognitive film theorists, Greg Currie has declared the label 'cog-

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[2] See Currie's continued commitment to a Chomksy-informed understanding of matters cognitive. "Our speech-production runs… much slower than the cognitive processes that enable us to think and draw inferences from our thoughts" (2010:15).

nitivism' to be "of limited usefulness", even "burdensome". He suggests a better name would be "rationalism" (2004: 170). Though his preferred approach still welcomes "help from the empirical sciences" the crucial idea captured by rationalism is that it maintains a "commitment to reasoned and reasonable ways of thinking" whilst avoiding the requirement of maintaining allegiance to any specific theory of mind (2004: 170). This seems like a promising suggestion, perhaps one ready to acknowledge if not all the list of above-mentioned challenges, then at least some of the Scope and Level Ambiguities involved in the notion of the cognitive, and attendant assumptions of Cognitivism. Yet let it be remembered that Chomsky regards his Universal Grammar to be a case of what he calls Cartesian Linguistics: a 'Chapter in the History of *Rationalist* Thought' (2009). Currie's suggestion is perhaps more accurately appreciated as an attempt to re-brand Cognitive Film Theory, whilst holding on to its fundamental commitment—ie. the principle that cognition is subpersonal information-processing. In the preface to his 1995 *Image and Mind, Film and Cognitive Science*, Currie acknowledges that his book "owes much, in spirit at least, to the linguistics of Chomsky" (1995: xxiii). Nothing has changed; or is likely to.

4.3 *Back to the trilemma*

What to do, then, if one does not want to use the notion of the cognitive, or any related cognitivist methodology; if one wants to avoid the pitfalls of Scope and Level Ambiguity, and wishes to 'opt out' of the problematic cognitive-informed picture of the metaphysics of mind? The second option of the trilemma is to continue to use these notions, but suitably accompanied by the appropriate caveats, clarification and disambiguations. This is, indeed, a viable option. It does, however, come with its own difficulties: how best to engage with colleagues, interlocutors and philosophical adversaries who are neither interested in, versed in, nor see the need for, such clarificatory preliminaries? Is it practically possible to regularly and repeatedly rehearse questions about the meaning and implications of what, to many, are seemingly innocuous terms?

That leaves the third option: eschewing the cognitive. Perhaps it is time to acknowledge the merits of Gilbert Ryle's prescient advice. The "proper policy" when faced with the question *Is imagining a cognitive or non-cognitive activity?* is to "ignore it. 'Cognitive' belongs to the vocabulary of examination papers" (1949: 244). But can we do without the term and its associated notions?

5. *Doing without and doing away with the cognitive*

Resisting the use of questionable theory-laden notions such as cognition, the cognitive and cognitivism, is not easy. These notions pervade almost all of the various philosophical sub-disciplines that make up today's naturalized analytic philosophy. They are also part of the cur-

rency of contemporary cognitive science and so would appear to be pre-requisites for any interdisciplinary engagement. Furthermore, just as evidence shows that fMRI imagery is taken, by non-specialists, to be more explanatory powerful,[3] so too, there seems to be a rhetorical authority that comes with the terminology of cognition. In the financial marketplace of contemporary academia it is all too easy, even for the sceptic, to embrace the rhetoric power of terms like 'cognition' which project a seemingly scientific robustness attractive to those non-specialists who often, and increasingly, hold the purse strings of 'research' grants. This may well be a sociological aspect of the slippery slope that goes some way to explaining the appeal of scientism. Nonetheless, individual philosophers of film, of art, and beyond, must still decide whether or not they wish to use the terms 'cognition', 'cognising', 'cognitive' and 'competence' and take responsibility for their role in maintaining and contributing to what these terms have come to mean. Cognitive film theorists once recoiled from the 'arcane peregrinations' that is the language of 'Theory', yet their own cognitivist picture of the mind is no less a product of a highly specialised practice of talking and writing into which its adherents have been inculcated. This is confirmed, unwittingly, by Stephen Stich, the cognitivist philosopher who originally articulated the theory-laden notion of the (supposed) sub-doxastic mental state.

> Though talk of [sub-personal] states representing facts is difficult to explicate in a philosophically tolerable way, it is surprisingly easy to master intuitively. *Even the barest introduction to work in artificial intelligence and cognitive simulation quickly leaves one comfortable with attributions of content or representational status to the states of an information processing theory.* (1978: 510, emphasis added).

Scientism comes, I suggest, with its own arcane peregrinations.

The historical reconstruction and arguments above are sufficiently worrisome, I believe, to justify why it is important to remain uncomfortable with what is ultimately a misguided picture of philosophising about knowledge, know-how and understanding, and to resist using the language that engenders it. For as Peter Hacker reminds us, "According to Chomsky, someone who cognizes cannot tell one what he cognizes, cannot display the object of his cognizing, does not recognize what he cognizes when told, never forgets what he cognizes (but never remembers it either) has never learnt it, and could not teach it. Apart from that, cognizing is just like knowing! Does *this* commend itself as a model for an intelligible extension of a term?" Bennett et al (2007: 138). I think not.

In resisting the language of the cognitive and its sister notion of competence, one is not merely turning away from scientistic jargon, but opening the door to the possibility of rehabilitating the value of

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[3] See Weisberg et al. (2008) on the so-called 'seductive allure of neuroscience explanations.'

our ordinary, rich, person-level vocabulary and concepts: knowledge, know-how, experience, understanding, insight, judgement, explanation, appreciation, wisdom, reflection, consideration, taste, exploration, practice, imagination, etc. These are not the impoverished notions of some primitive folk psychology in urgent need of philosophical overhaul. They are the tools of our human trade and traffic, the raw material of some of our finest art, and the wherewithal with which we live our lives. Just saying no to the use of all things cognitive is not only a *solution* to the trilemma posed but an *opportunity* for the philosophy of film, and art, to find a different way forward in the 21st century: an opportunity I characterise as *humanist*.

Cinematic Humanism offers an alternative to the methodology of cognitive film theorising without being forced back into the no less questionable theoretical claims of (Grand) Theory and its heirs.[4] Cinematic Humanism is, instead, an example of a non-cognitive-involving way of doing the philosophy of film *without theory*, as well as a commitment to a set of tenets about the non-trivial value of fiction films. As a methodology it resists employing naturalized theories in the philosophy of mind, avoids the associated theory-laden vocabulary and jargon, and refuses to participate in the downgrading of the philosophical value of our ordinary language. The challenge Cinematic Humanists face is to discern and articulate the similarities, distinctions and reticulations that constitute that understanding of ourselves, each other and the world achieved in and through our sensitive, reflective and critical engagement with films. I would hope that supporters of what might be termed 'Cinematic Cognitivism' find much to support in the tenets of Cinematic Humanism, for—representational and computational theories of mind apart—there is a not insubstantial set of shared commitments. I further hope that by encouraging scepticism about the very notion of the cognitive Cinematic Humanist approaches offer ways for debate about 'cognitive' value to move beyond current stalemates. Cinematic Humanism is, and will continue to be, a solution to the constitutive problem of Cinematic Cognitivism by reminding us that it is at the personal and interpersonal levels, and not the sub-personal level, where our philosophical understanding of what it is to be human is to be found. It is at the personal and interpersonal level where the meaning, insight and value of our cinematic achievements are to be recognised, appreciated, and cherished.[5]

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[4] I take 'film-philosophy' to be one such heir: an iteration of Theory triggered (in part) by the cognitive film theorists' original 1996 criticisms.

[5] I am particularly grateful to the organisers of the 7th Dubrovnik Philosophy of Art Conference for inviting me to present an earlier version of this paper. My thanks also to Peter Lamarque, Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, and audiences and colleagues in York, Hatfield, Tampere, and Dubrovnik for helpful comments and discussion.

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