Research Article

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The Possibility of Object-Oriented Film Philosophy

Abstract: The debate surrounding the definition and specificity of cinema continues in contemporary film philosophy and theory. This article challenges the traditional approach of medium specificity and proposes Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) as an alternative framework for understanding cinema. Drawing on OOO's core principles, the article argues that films, like all objects, are autonomous entities with their own reality. Their meaning is not inherent, but rather emerges through the "performative" interaction between the film object and the viewer. This interaction generates "sensual qualities" that constitute the film's aesthetic experience. The article contends that focusing on the performativity of cinema, rather than seeking a fixed definition, offers a more productive approach to philosophizing on film. It allows for a deeper understanding of how films function as objects and the ways they generate meaning in relation to viewers.

Keywords: Object-Oriented Ontology, medium specificity, autonomy of art, cinema performativity

1 Introduction

At the beginning of the second millennium, cinema as an art form and a set of artistic practices is no longer taken for granted. The discourse on cinema – encompassing theory, philosophy, and criticism – is often permeated by the ominous notion of *The End of Cinema*.[1] Is this truly the end? Has cinema lost its status as one of the glorious arts of the twentieth century? Does the most frequently cited quote in cinematic scholarship – "[...] that of all the arts, the most important for us is the cinema,"[2] lose its historical relevance?

And yet, cinema persists. In fact, if we momentarily set aside our habitual and strict intuitive definition of cinema (whatever it may be), we can clearly state that cinema, albeit in various forms, flourishes. VOD, TV series, short videos, video essays, vines, video art, experimental cinema, and non-Western films are watched, attended, and consumed worldwide. So why do some scholars proclaim these apocalyptic notions concerning the seventh art? Perhaps the answer lies within the unknown comrade's former quote on why cinema is so important. Beyond its propaganda aspect, the force of cinema, according to Lenin supposedly, lies in the simple reason that most viewers in the given historical context were illiterate, which allow me to extend this presumption further – the more context (discourse) we have about an object (cinema), the less forceful the object becomes. This suggests that the pessimistic notions present in some contemporary discourse on cinema should be directed not at the object – cinema itself – but at the theory or broader discourse about cinema. After a hundred years of reflection on cinema, it is fair to say that the only legitimate "end" we could discuss

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1 Grusin and Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Ends of Cinema*, 4.
2 Commonly attributed to Lenin, though no sources confirm his authorship.

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pertains to our notions of cinema, not cinema itself. Considering that film theory or film philosophy has never actually provided a universally agreed-upon definition or essence of cinema, this is a liberating moment.

From this assumption, an implication follows – we should reinvestigate our theoretical notions of the essence or definition of cinema and its contemporary transformation. In other words, we should try to align our ontological presumptions *towards* cinema rather than the other way around. This is the task I will undertake in this article. I will proceed in three steps.

First, I will explicate the basic ontological notions of one contemporary philosophical school of thought that belongs to the broader movement known as Speculative Realism. This school of thought is Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO). While there are four distinguished authors working under the umbrella term OOO – Levi Bryant, Graham Harman, Ian Bogost, and Timothy Morton – I will concentrate on the most prolific writer in the movement, Graham Harman. Consequently, in this article, I will use the term OOO interchangeably with Harman's version of it. Second, I will explore the connection between OOO and art. Finally, with the preliminary conception of object-oriented cinema, I will revisit the contemporary medium specificity debate and argue *against* the specificity of cinema. The thesis I am defending in this article is that films should be treated as autonomous objects, not as instances of a medium. I use the notion of autonomy in the same sense as Harman:

> By autonomy, I mean that while all objects have both a causal/compositional backstory and numerous interactions with their environment, neither of these factors is identical with the object itself, which might well replace or dispense with much of its backstory as well as its environment.

And because cinema is a historical *object*, by implication it is undefinable.[3]

2 Object-Oriented Ontology

Although the work concerning the development of OOO began in the late 1990s, the official birth of the broader ontological realist movement known as Speculative Realism, of which OOO is a part, occurred at a conference held at Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2007. At this conference, the four well-known defenders of realist ontology – Quentin Meillassoux, Ray Brassier, Ian Hamilton Grant, and Graham Harman – made their case for metaphysical realism. The similarities and differences among these four realist authors are covered extensively by Harman himself, so I will not delve into them here. Instead, I will provide a summary of OOO and its potential ontological implications for our understanding of film and film philosophy in general.

The first and most important thesis of OOO is that objects are autonomous entities. Knowledge is always partial and situated, and the aim of philosophy is not to produce knowledge. The three approaches alien to philosophy for gathering knowledge, according to OOO, are undermining, overmining, and duomining.

(a) *Undermining* involves reducing various objects to their most basic constituents. The search for basic elements in early Greek philosophy or the modern scientific view of reality through equivalents of atoms and elementary particles falls under undermining. OOO does not endorse a harsh anti-scientism, but by treating objects as not fully exhaustible by any possible human means, it sees the world as one where objects interact only in a partial, *sensual* manner.

(b) *Overmining* is more prevalent in contemporary continental philosophy, which views objects in light of their *effects*. "[...] overmining theories that reduce things to their impact on us or on each other, denying them any excess or surplus beyond such impact."[4]

(c) *Duomining* is the combination of undermining and overmining. One example Harman provides is the approach found in his realist colleague Meillassoux's work: "He holds that the primary qualities of things

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3 Harman, *Art and Objects*, XI.

4 Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*, 49.

are those which can be mathematized and denies that he is a Pythagorean, insisting that numbers do not exhaust the world but simply point to a sort of "dead matter" whose exact metaphysical status is never clarified."[5]

In OOO terms, knowledge is left to science, certain strands of philosophy, and various crafts. While OOO does not endorse the often-found suspicion by continental philosophers towards science, it establishes a clear boundary where objects, even an object like philosophy, can maintain their autonomy while fully acknowledging the human need for solid and effective knowledge. Thus, OOO does not agree with certain scientistic trends in philosophy or in general culture, where the legitimacy of philosophy is judged by its resemblance to hard science.

The second thesis proposed by OOO is more oriented towards continental philosophy in general and can be summarized as the negation of correlationism. Correlationism, as defined by Meillassoux, is "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other."[6] Essentially, OOO rejects the metaphysical premise that there are two basic kinds of entities – human beings and everything else. In Harman's later work, this ontological dualism is identified as *modern onto-taxonomy*.[7] Yes, human beings are more complex than some other objects and may be more relevant to morality, ethics, sociology, or other human-related domains. However, this does not grant them a different ontological status. The difference in ontology typically results in viewing non-human objects as less real. To escape this humanistic deadlock, defined here as correlationism, OOO starts with flat ontology. The benefit of flat ontology is that all objects enjoy the same degree of autonomy, even if a lightning bolt, for example, exists only for a fraction of a second. While flat ontology is a good starting premise for philosophical realism, when it comes to defining the object in OOO terms, there are four different modes of the being of the object. To illustrate the four poles of reality, let us consider Harman's often-provided schema (Figure 1):

The four tensions of the object, resulting in the notion of the *quadruple object*, are as follows:

(a) Real Object – Real Qualities (RO-RQ): This pairing highlights the fundamental differences between objects, which differ not only from us but also from each other. This concept should not be understood as a process philosophy or a continuum of becoming. Objects are finite and destructible, yet not reducible to various effects, withdrawing from any kind of human or non-human translation. Philosophers who have identified the gaps between these different aspects of being include Leibniz, who articulated the tension between a real object and its real qualities. Harman refers to this pair as essence.

(b) Real Object – Sensual Qualities (RO-SQ): Harman identifies the clearest expression of this tension in Martin Heidegger's famous tool analysis in *Being and Time*. A real, yet withdrawn, object is translated into sensual apprehension via an outer layer, accessed by human or non-human objects through a specific kind of causation, resulting in thought or action. The RO-SQ tension is the field where aesthetics "happens." Harman identifies this as space.

(c) Sensual Object – Real Qualities (SO-RQ): Every sensual object, although never fully given – or, as Harman calls it, always in a state of "withdrawnness" – still provides itself with a list of finite qualities that constitute the identity of the object. If the object loses these real qualities, it ceases to be that object. In other words, the real qualities of the object provide the necessary conditions for its intellectual, eidetic apprehension. This object exists only in relation to other objects, yet it is not a result of phenomenological or other kinds of construction – "a perfectly accessible object whose features are withdrawn from total scrutiny."[8] Harman calls this the object's eidos.

(d) Sensual Object – Sensual Qualities (SO-SQ): Sensual objects exist only in relation to other objects (and while not being a relation, they are still objects, even if their existence is brief) and are present but involved

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5 Harman, "Undermining, Overmining, and Duomining," 43.

6 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.

7 Harman, *Art and Objects*, 132.

8 Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 35.
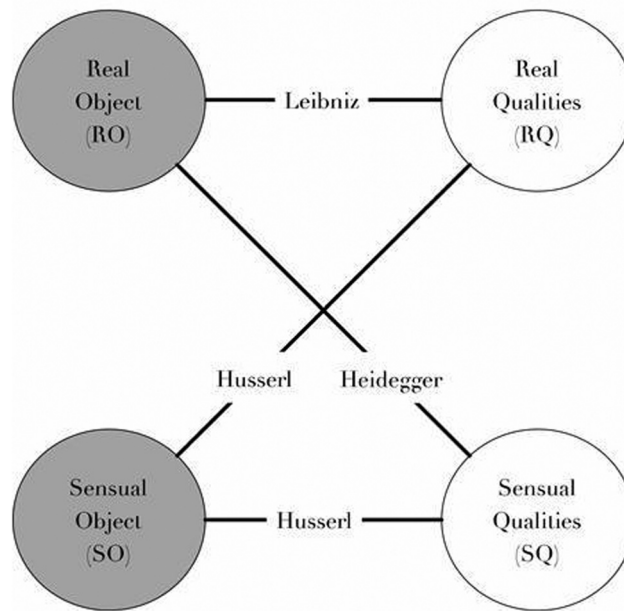
Figure 1: The fourfold structure emerges. Illustration taken from Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 50.

within a mist of accidental features and profiles. This sensual object refers to an object that is causal and inhabits a shifting list of qualities from one moment to the next, which Harman identifies as time.

The most fundamental thesis that Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) declares is that objects are the fundamental building blocks of reality. However, this does not entail a hierarchical system between objects and reality. If it did, it would imply that there is something more to reality than just objects and that something should become more important for philosophical inquiry than the objects themselves. On the contrary, objects are reality. All objects enjoy the same status of autonomy from a more fundamental, flux-inspired reality or transcendent reality:

> Objects need not be natural, simple, or indestructible. Instead, objects will be defined only by their autonomous reality. They must be autonomous in two separate directions: emerging as something over and above their pieces, while also partly withholding themselves from relations with other entities.[9]

OOO sees itself as continuing a lineage of philosophical thought that gained recognition in the 20th century but has not yet explicated the metaphysical consequences of its endeavour. This line of thought includes, in terms of importance, Heidegger, Husserl, and Latour. OOO treats Heidegger as the most important thinker of the twentieth century. This is due to the famous, yet often incorrectly interpreted, tool analysis found in Division I of *Being and Time*. Heidegger investigates the existential modes of particular objects – tools. His phenomenological analysis shows that we encounter objects not in a conscious, objectifying way, but as part of a larger, praxis-oriented system. The distinction here is between objective presence and handiness. Tools become a handy example because of their nature to break. Only when they lose their handiness do they enter our attention as something objective. This means that the objective presence, the fundamental way philosophy has treated objects in their existence, is derivative of the pragmatic orbit of tools and equipment. In this sense, tools and other objects are always withdrawn from our contemplative gaze. Harman argues that the popular interpretation of tool analysis, and even Heidegger himself, should have gone one step further. The ability for tools to break indicates a deeper level of reality than the pragmatic orbit. Tool analysis is relevant to all objects. By stating simply that all objects are withdrawn and their being is never exhausted by the different

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9 Ibid., 19.

perspectives human beings or other objects can generate, OOO provides a metaphysical account of objects, and thus reality in general. In the OOO framework, the question of identity, essence, or specificity of an object becomes meaningless. Because of its broad, metaphilosophical nature, OOO cannot provide an account of a particular, concrete object. Yet, there is one tension where OOO can be productive – not by giving a definition of an object, but by showing how a specific relationship functions, which exists only for human beings: art.

3 Aesthetics as First Philosophy

OOO has generated fierce, sometimes even distasteful criticism. However, the basic explication of OOO's metaphysical principles provided above is not meant to cultivate the OOO conception, but to broaden the contemporary understanding of the importance of aesthetics. This means that I am not interested in the workings of OOO as a unified and general theory of being. I am more interested in OOO as a philosophy that can potentially help open new perspectives for understanding an object of art. As Edgar Wind expressed:

> There is one – and only one – test for the artistic relevance of an interpretation: it must heighten our perception of the object and thereby increase our aesthetic delight. If the object looks just as it looked before, except that a burdensome superstructure has been added, the interpretation is aesthetically useless, whatever historical or other merits it may have.[10]

As mentioned above, aesthetics investigates the primary link that exists between two objects – a piece of art (RO), which generates various sensual qualities (SQ), and another RO, human beings, who participate in those qualities. Early Harman names this relationship vicarious causation or *allure*. Yet we know that there is an almost infinite number of actual or possible RO-RO connections resulting in SQ. So, what means do we have to identify art? The only means we have is to notice our theatrical involvement, or in more familiar terms, our performativity. Harman explicates this thesis by analysing a trivial metaphor: "a teacher is like a candle."[11] He describes the dynamics of performativity even in such a simple and trivial example of an artistic object:

> In the metaphor "a teacher is like a candle", the teacher becomes an RO withdrawn object that leaves behind insistent candle-qualities. And since these candle-qualities cannot attach themselves to a withdrawn teacher, and cannot reattach themselves to their original candle without collapsing into a merely literal statement, there is only one remaining option. Namely, it is *I the reader* who am the real object that performs and thereby sustains the candle-qualities once they are stripped from the usual candle-object.[12]

Essentially, according to Harman, *all art is performative.* This does not place philosophy on the same level as art, but it does mean that aesthetics, for OOO, becomes the first philosophy. The two basic principles that OOO proposes when dealing with art are formalism and theatricality. "Where we agree with formalism is in its view that the artwork, like any object, must be treated to a large degree as an autonomous unit cut off from its surroundings."[13] Formalism works to avoid the pitfalls of reducing the artwork to social, political, or economic contexts or to the wits and talents of its creator. As a dominating tendency in the twentieth century, formalism is probably partly responsible for the already mentioned "death" of cinema. Theatricality, for OOO, means:

> OOO certainly agrees that an artwork ought to be closed off from the ulterior personal interests of the beholder, and that the work cannot be exhausted by the beholder's attempts to describe or conceptualize it. It does not follow that there need not be a beholder at all, as if there could still be artworks after all aesthetically capable creatures were exterminated by plague or war. In fact, the human is not primarily part of the artwork's situation, but is an ingredient of the work no less than paint or marble.[14]

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10 Wind, *Art and Anarchy*, 66.
11 Harman, *Art and Objects*, 7.
12 Ibid., 29.
13 Ibid., 33.
14 Ibid., 58.

A possible counterargument can be made here regarding the broad conceptualization characterizing the object of art. If performativity is the defining feature of artwork, how does one distinguish artworks from everyday objects? The logical conclusion here is that the difference is in degree, not in kind. If aesthetics exists because of the beholder and the artwork, it means that everyday objects have the possibility of becoming aesthetic objects. This conclusion does not diminish the premises of OOO but opens a field for future research regarding OOO and the art world.

Every object of art is performative, and the aesthetic–sensual qualities of the artwork come from the participating human being. Harman never discusses the possible implications of his ontology of art for the theory of media. However, if the aesthetic qualities are fulfilled only by the participating human being and the essential conditions for this participation are set by the artwork itself, the classical, most influential understanding of the medium, provided by Marshall McLuhan – medium as an extension of ourselves – is reversed upside down. In the case of artistic media, the ontological ground for the medium becomes *objects*, which extend themselves through *us*, human beings. This relationship between artistic objects and human beings belongs to aesthetics because it is a performative relationship.

How does this performativity work? Harman proposes that the most significant insight of OOO is that humans never have a direct access to objects and that objects between themselves do not exhaust each other in a direct way. However, when two real objects meet, the interaction between them is not straightforward. This partial interaction can be described as vicarious causation, whereby the interaction between the two objects is modified by the presence of a third object, which is a human being.

> The key to vicarious causation is that two objects must somehow touch without touching. In the case of the sensual realm, this happens when I the intentional agent serve as vicarious cause for the fusion of multiple sensual objects: a fusion that remains only partial, encrusted with residual accidents. But in the case of real objects, the only way to touch a real one without touching it is through allure. Only here do we escape the deadlock of merely rolling about in the perfumes of sensual things, and encounter qualities belonging to a distant signalling thing rather than a carnally present one. The only way to bring real objects into the sensual sphere is to reconfigure sensual objects in such a way that they no longer merely fuse into a new one, as parts into a whole, but rather become animated by allusion to a deeper power lying beyond: a real object.[15]

Aesthetics becomes the first philosophy because of the asymmetrical relationship between two real objects and the specific sensual qualities that this relationship generates. In early Harman, the generation of this qualities is named *allure,* while in later writings the naming is changed to performativity.

Harman's aesthetic theory follows in the footsteps of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, authors who have written extensively and mostly about the visual arts. Harman's interpretation and implications for OOO are idiosyncratic and can be seen as controversial. As it would be beyond the scope of this article to address the validity of this interpretation, I will treat it in non-controversial terms. The obvious question here is whether this theory can be extended to other arts, namely cinema, and what possible theoretical implications it has for the ontological status of different artistic media.

4 The Possibility of OOO Film Philosophy

The cultural milieu in which various strands of Speculative Realism resonated can be described, for lack of a better term, as constructionist. The issue with constructionism is not the sometimes-naïve belief that reality is constructed, as it is rare to find a major philosopher who holds such a view. Rather, constructionism typically pertains to a specific aspect of reality – the given. The given represents the knowable, intersubjective reality, or what Harman terms "sensual objects and their sensual qualities." Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) introduces the refreshing insight that objects are never fully exhausted by their relations to other objects, including non-human entities. OOO emphasizes gaps and absences over positive definitions of objects. This ontological,

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15 Harman, "On Vicarious Causation," 220.

rather than epistemological, perspective allows OOO to transcend the modern onto-taxonomy, treating all objects as autonomous, equal, real, and existing in a quadruple mode of being. Due to this democratic nature, OOO is not suited to the Aristotelian task of identifying differences in kind or engaging in metaphilosophical inquiries such as "what is cinema?" However, if we shift our focus from discourse to reality – namely cinema – the inability to engage in metaphilosophical questions becomes less significant.

Luka Arsenjuk argues that an OOO film theory or philosophy cannot exist because it lacks a conceptual account of the ontology of cinematic time:

> I believe that the nonexistence of an encounter between OOP and film theory is not simply a matter of chance. It cannot, for instance, be explained away by some accidental lack of interest for cinema among OO philosophers. Nor can an ignorance of recent philosophical trends by film scholars be posited as a reason. The absence of the encounter—this is the claim I wish to advance and explore here—stems instead from a set of fundamental impediments (a denial of the reality of images, the exclusion of time and movement from aesthetic experience) that render the standpoint of OOP incapable of producing constructive effects in the domain of film theoretical research.[16]

Given that OOO is still evolving, I see no necessary obstacles to providing a more nuanced account of time consistent with OOO principles. This has already been attempted, albeit differently, by A. Kleinherenbrink, who argues that aligning OOO with a Deleuzian conceptual framework can yield an ontology of time continuous with OOO metaphysical principles.[17] My perspective diverges slightly from this approach.

As noted earlier, one intriguing aspect of viewing cinema through an OOO lens is its potential to offer novel interpretations of cinematic artworks while deepening our understanding of them. From the existing literature, two primary ways in which OOO can engage with cinema emerge:

Explicating the unknowability and autonomy of objects in cinema, a fitting example is Levi R. Bryant's analysis of science-fiction films where various objects create obstacles and gaps that drive the narrative and character development. Bryant's reading of the film *Total Recall* exemplifies this approach: "The central question of the film will be whether oxygen is indeed a bright object from which it is possible to achieve escape velocity, or whether oxygen is a black hole, forever trapping the dim objects or mutants within its gravity."[18]

Explicating the specific conditions for the performativity of a moving image medium. Harman suggests that live television and cinema do not share the same ontological status:

> [...] OOO does not view cinema as an art filled with objects, but as an art filled with viewpoints – though objects occasionally erupt from the perspectival rubble, resulting in theatrical involvement. But since live television begins with theatre in a way that Fried would surely disdain, the gap here is produced when the theatrical agent is distanced from the object of his or her involvement, with humour as the most medium-specific case. Despite Noël Carroll's misgivings (1996), the gap between cinema and live television does seem to be ontological in character.[19]

The ontological difference here pertains to viewer engagement – our performativity in relation to the moving image differs. This can be extended to newer forms of moving image experiences such as VOD, vines, and filmed podcasts. Essentially, the sensual quality of cinema emerges in the relationship between the artwork and the viewer, with the identity of cinema existing only in the moment of viewing.

5 OOO and The Medium Specificity Debate

The first attempt to define art in terms of medium specificity appears in the work of German thinker and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. In his treatise on poetry and fine arts, *Laocoon* [1766], Lessing, following

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16 Arsenjuk, "On the Impossibility of Object-Oriented Film Theory," 199.
17 Kleinherenbrink, "The Two Times of Objects," 539–51.
18 Bryant, "Object-Oriented Ontology and Science Fiction Cinema," 257.
19 Harman, "Object-Oriented Ontology," 408–9.

the modern taxonomical urge, establishes the specificity of certain artistic mediums. He identifies poetry as suited for representing time and painting as suited for representing space. His significant modern insight lies in acknowledging that some practices are better suited for representing certain things: "the signs of art must [...] bear a suitable relation to the thing signified."[20] While such claims may seem outdated today, it is crucial to understand what such theoretical movements accomplish:

(a) They prescribe an ahistorical essence for arts based on their materiality and actual or potential artistic practices. While explicitly rejecting the ancient mimesis theory of art, Lessing merely replaces the naïve (according to him) understanding of nature with more modern and scientific notions of space and time.

(b) They establish a normative direction for valuing art. By providing the ontological specificity of art, Lessing simultaneously sets criteria for evaluating artistic production in certain media. Poetry that does not engage with temporality and visual arts that do not engage with space are excluded from the realm of good art.

Early film theorists, motivated by cinephilia, similarly sought to define the specificity of the cinematic medium. To counter accusations that cinema was merely an attraction for the feeble-minded or to defend cinema's autonomy from photography or theatre, early theorists like Bela Balasz, Rudolf Arnheim, and Sergei Eisenstein proposed various functions or specificities of cinema. For Balasz, it was the close-up; for Arnheim, cinema was the most sophisticated means for cognitive visual expression of the perception of external reality; and for Eisenstein, it was the laws of dialectical thought governing film construction, leading to the theory of dialectical montage. Despite their differing convictions about cinema's ontology, these attempts to define medium specificity aimed to establish cinema's autonomy and artistic status.

The most influential account of cinema's specificity came from French film critic and theorist Andre Bazin. Bazin's efforts to situate cinema historically and teleologically towards a fuller representation of reality and his introduction of the notion of indexicality defined the debate until the end of the twentieth century. However, with the advent of digital images – unconnected to photographic realism and thus to reality itself – the notion of indexicality lost relevance. Noël Carroll's critique of defining cinema's specificity presents three main arguments:

(a) Empirical counterexamples. Any proposed specificity of cinema can be contradicted by examples that are intuitively recognized as *film* yet do not fit the given theory.

(b) Normative implications. Descriptions of medium specificity inherently imply how artworks should be created, ultimately reflecting stylistic preferences: "[...] despite talk of purism, the so-called medium appears always to turn out to have been the result of preferential stylistic gerrymandering."[21]

(c) Irrelevance to creation and interpretation. Medium specificity has no bearing on how artworks are created, understood, or interpreted. It is the artwork itself that provides defining features, not the medium:

> In demanding the purity of the medium, the medium specificity proponent acts as though the medium were valuable for its own sake or intrinsically valuable, rather than being only instrumentally valuable. But that flies in the face of what it means to be a medium in the first place.[22]

Contemporary proponents of specificity introduced the distinction between vehicular medium and artistic medium, referring to the material basis of the medium and the possible artistic practices it allows. The most recent thesis suggests that cinema's specificity is not clear-cut but instead involves a practice that differs not in kind but in degree:

> [...] due to its distinctive properties, a vehicular medium or combination of media can achieve an effect in an artistic medium better than other currently available vehicular media, including those associated with other artistic media, and this does not seem to me to be objectionable. For we often say that a tool has a specific use in the sense that due to its particular physical

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20 Lessing, *Laocoön*, 78.

21 Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures*, 7.

22 Ibid., 47.

characteristics, it can be employed to do something that other tools cannot in the full knowledge that, in the future, new tools might be invented that can do this thing better still.[23]

From an OOO perspective, the usual attempts to define cinema are forms of undermining or overmining – considering cinema in terms of its material basis or produced effects. In OOO terms, every artwork mediates itself through human beings, with the aesthetic qualities of art existing only in the relationship between two real objects: the artwork and the human being. The enterprise of defining any art through OOO is unachievable but opens a field for future research on the ontology of cinema's performativity.

6 Conclusion

This article argues that film theory should move away from attempts to define cinema and instead focus on the ways in which films function as objects. It proposes Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) as a framework for understanding cinema in this way. Traditional film theory attempts to define the essence or specificity of cinema on the basis of its materiality or practices. This can be seen in the work of early film theorists and in the contemporary debate on medium specificity. To theorise film within the OOO framework, while providing a negative answer to the existence of cinematic medium specificity, still provides an additional rationale for viewing cinema, emphasising the autonomy and "alienness" of objects from human understanding. In OOO terms, films are autonomous objects that produce "sensual qualities" through their interaction with viewers – *performativity*. The meaning and aesthetic impact of a film arise from this interaction, not from any inherent qualities of the medium of film itself. The proliferation of hundreds of new filmed materials and objects does not mean the death of cinema, but on the contrary, the growing importance and vitality of it. Because films are objects and their meaning is not fixed, a single definition of cinema is impossible. Therefore, the article concludes that it is more productive to focus on how films function as objects and how they interact with viewers than to attempt to define cinema definitively.

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23 Turvey, "The Medium Matters! In Defense of Medium-Specificity," 16.

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