



University of Tabriz-Iran

Philosophical Investigations

Vol. 11/ No. 21/ Fall & Winter 2017

**Ontology of Time in Cinema
a Deleuzian reading of *Still Life* and *Prince Ehtejab*
with an emphasis on the concept of Time-Image***

Ali Fath Taheri

Associate Professor, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin

Faezeh Jafariyan**

PhD of Performing Art, Ferrara University, Italy (corresponding author)

Abstract

*Gilles Deleuze, the notable post-modern philosopher, in his two-volume cinematic books *Cinema 1: movement-image* (1986) and *Cinema 2: time-image* (1989) recognizes two major periods in history of cinema (classic and modern) in terms of representing movement and time respectively. Referring to various films of modern cinema especially post-war European cinema like Italian neorealism, *Cinema 2* speaks about the possibility of direct presentation of time in cinematic works. Explaining Deleuze's theories and his two formulations of direct presentation of time as 'pure optical situations' and 'sheets of the past', in this essay we try to give an analysis of the two most important films of Iranian history of cinema: *Still Life* (1974) and *Prince Ehtejab* (1974). Finally, we will conclude that these films are not mere representation of preexisting philosophical concepts, rather in contrast to linguistic thought, they provide some kind of visual and non-linguistic philosophical meditations of time, cinema of time.*

Keywords: Gilles Deleuze, time-image, *Still Life*, sheets of the past, *Prince Ehtejab*

* Received date: 2017/06/07

Accepted date: 2017/12/04

** E-mail: faezeh.jafariyan@student.unife.i

Introduction

Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), famous French thinker, is known as one of the most prominent figures of post-modern philosophy and contemporary continental trend. His works encompass wide areas including monographs about classic philosophy (e.g. Hume, Kant, ...) or writings on painting, cinema even psychology and politics, some of which, of course, are co-written with Félix Guattari (1930-1992), his psychologist colleague. Therefore, in line with other contemporary thinkers Deleuze can be considered as a philosopher who worked in interdisciplinary fields and talked about the necessity of a comprehensive attention to the divergent, expansible levels of human knowledge. It can be grasped in various areas of his philosophy and different concepts he uses in his thought.

During his professional career he has always tried to reconcile theories of philosophers such as Bergson, Nietzsche and Spinoza with concepts taken from other sciences like biology, physics and mathematics.¹ This reconciliation allows him to delineate a world entirely different from classic or even modern world of philosophy which is based on static essences. Thus, although many of academic thinkers tend to exclude his interdisciplinary works from the domain of philosophy, he following Bergson introduces himself a philosopher in contrast to mainstream.

By criticizing central themes of modernity including identity, subjectivity and representation, he based his philosophy on the notions of 'difference' 'becoming' 'multiplicity', throwing over any closed rigid systems and structures as other post-structuralist thinkers. Man needs a world which is open and expansive and provides the possibility of constant experience and endless questioning. This is what Deleuze sees as the vocation of philosophical thinking: the creation of the new.

He thinks "instead of just accepting the questions and terms within which a culture already operates, we need to look at (and transform) the assumptions, propositions, distinctions or differences upon which any system of thought relies" (Colebrook, 2002b, x1). In this respect, in contrast to closed systems and static essences, Deleuze talks about forces of life, when the world can think of other forms and creates the new. Thus, if we want to summarize his philosophy in one single word, it will be 'becoming'. It implies the denial of the transcendental which functions as a basis for our thoughts and concerns. In fact, for him, the transcendental is nothing other than undermining the transcendental by creating differences.

Against this view that the world is made of essences, Deleuze talks about experience, multiplicities, connections and linkages: everything is becoming. There are no fixed identities but only constant change and creations and life is nothing rather than this creation.

This idea leads him to another concept 'open whole' versus closed sets. For him, the best equivalent for life is open whole, the source of creative powers, transformations and becomings which never terminates or ceases. "The supposed real world that would lie behind the flux of becoming is not, Deleuze insists, a stable world of being; there 'is' nothing other than the flow of becoming (Colebrook, 2002a, 125). Consequently, life and reality take form through combination of infinite different possibilities. The importance of this notion in Deleuze's philosophy is to the extent that some call him 'philosopher of difference'.

Art and cinema in Deleuze's philosophy

As we explained, life, for Deleuze, is nothing rather than different forces and different manifestations. In this respect, life can appear in three general areas: philosophy, art and science.²

Deleuze calls each of these categories as powers of thinking that each has their own possibilities, capabilities and creations. In *What is philosophy?* (1991) Deleuze & Guattari explain these three categories as new possibilities of life, as new but different ways of thinking. "Philosophy, art and science need to be seen as distinct moments of the explosive force of life, a life that is in a process of constant 'becoming' (Colebrook, 2002a, 12). Philosophy by creating new concepts, science by looking for knowledge through observations and art by making impact and affection, each can transform life and encounter difference. If philosophy can make different concepts, or can give us this ability to think of this concept, art deals with difference in its own way such as different characters in a novel or different colors and patterns in a painting.

In his arguments about art, Deleuze speaks about different fields like music, photography, cinema, visual arts, literature and architecture, and in all cases he recognizes the main function of art to *make an impact*. Thus art has nothing to do with representation or judgment; rather it is the power to think in terms of the effects it exerts³.

Generally, art seeks to create new ways of thinking and affecting. Among arts Deleuze gives a special consideration to cinema in his two-volume cinematic books. According to him "cinema is the philosophy of our everyday life; it brings philosophy into contact with life" (Rodowik, 2010, xvi). Because only by cinema can we think of a way of seeing which is not dependent on the human eye. That is, cinema through its techniques like montage can offer a percept, which is not limited to a subject.⁴ Our everyday seeing of the world is from our interested perspective. We order the flow of perceptions into our world. We can see a desk or a chair inasmuch as we presuppose a world in which there exists some furniture. Cinema, however, can present images and percepts free from this organizing structure of everyday life. In other words, cinema for Deleuze, goes beyond representing stories and events and like philosophy is able to create new possibilities for thinking. He says: "The evolution of the cinema, the conquest of its own essence or novelty, was to take place through montage, the mobile camera and the emancipation of the view point, which became separate from projection" (Deleuze, 1986, 3).

Therefore, Deleuze suggests a new relation between cinema and philosophy, which is not a merely applying philosophy to film or using pre-existing philosophical concepts in film analysis. Rather he thinks that "we allow the creation of films to transform philosophy" (Colebrook, 2002a, 29). In his view, films can philosophize as such. That is why for Deleuze the question of 'what is cinema?' is equivalent with the question of 'what is philosophy?'⁵.

In fact, Deleuze's theories present a challenge to two dominant cinematic trends of the post-war period: realist and phenomenological approach of Andre Bazin (1918-1958), on the one hand, and the linguistic and psychoanalytical approach of Christian Metz (1931-1993), on the other. Since he has always tried to discover the specificity of each of art forms, the specificity of cinema for him lies in the fact that cinematic perception is

liberated from any subject's perspective; in contrary to phenomenological approaches which retain subjective or natural perception as the model of reference.

In Deleuze's opinion, cinema is not simply another way of representing information, but a kind of philosophical practice. Cinema is an art form which can convey thought. 'Cinema itself is a new practice of images and signs, whose theory philosophy must produce as conceptual practice' (Deleuze 1989, 280). Therefore, Deleuze's film theory goes against the traditional film theory according to which, images are representations of other (transcendental) worlds. Deleuze's definition of cinema is not based on the majority of films throughout history of cinema. For he seeks to define everything- thought, perception, cinema etc.- not according to what something *is* but how it *becomes*. "This means looking at something carried to its 'nth power'" (Colebrook, 2002a, 34). In other words, he attempts to define everything not by their already given forms but through their style of becoming. But what does cinema do? It connects a number of images in a sequence and then cuts the sequence and reconnects them. Like everyday perception, cinema organizes the flux of images into an ordered whole. Although sometimes instead of connecting images in a significant sequence, it can present images in purely optical form.

By disturbing the sequence of images, cinema is able to pose a challenge to the whole of life. Indeed, Deleuze tries to explain "how the technique of cinema that begins with a realism that strives to represent life eventually develops to alter the possible perception of life". (Colebrook, 2002a, 31). According to Deleuze, what reveals the potential of cinema is this liberation of the sequence of images from a single point of view, which in Deleuze's term in *Cinema 1* is 'any point whatever'. In other words, cinema is no longer an image-world in front of the gaze of a spectator-subject; rather it produces images, which are not reducible to any subjective perception. With the help of cinema, we are able to create new thoughts as we normally do in philosophy, but not through creating new concepts, rather cinema as an art form can create affections.

Movement-image and time-image

In his books *Cinema 1: movement-image* (1986) and *Cinema 2: time-image* (1989), Deleuze attempts to create concepts proper to cinema, that is, the singular concepts that can be applied to cinema and nothing else. Two main concepts he introduces are movement-image and time-image. By these two concepts, Deleuze makes a fundamental distinction in the whole history of cinema and "account for the mutation that occurred in postwar cinema and for the break that separated classic cinema from modern cinema" (Marrati, 2008, 2).

Movement is the first distinctive feature of cinema. Whereas other kinds of art like painting and photography produce fixed images, cinematic images illustrate the movement. Deleuze in his first book *Cinema 1* deals with the issue of movement and introduces it as the first essence of cinema. Cinema, for Deleuze, is not a set of images added by movement but a movement-image. And it is done by means of cinematic techniques like moving camera "where the play of camera angles moving across a visual field gives us the direct expression of movement, and there by opens thought up to the very mobility of life" (Colebrook, 2002a, 30). On the other hand, using Bergson's theory

about movement, Deleuze states that in cinema movement has two manifestations: one is the displacement of objects in the space; movement as “translation in space”, and the other is the transformation in duration or the whole.⁶ Therefore Deleuze adopts the position that movement has two aspects: “on the one hand, that which happens between objects or parts; on the other hand that which expresses the duration or the whole” (Deleuze, 1986, 11). Plan for Deleuze is the basic unit of movement in cinema. The movement of plan on the one hand changes the relative position of parts of the system and on the other hand, is the mobile section of a whole whose movement is expressed in the transformation of duration.⁷ Montage likewise maintains the continuities between plans. The plan is the movement-image and montage “is composition, the assemblage of movement-images as constituting an indirect image of time” (Deleuze, 1986, 30). Montage can give us an indirect image of time because it is inferred from movement-images and their relations. Hence, in classic cinema “time depends on movement, but through the intermediary of the montage, it flows from the montage, but as if it subordinates to movement” (Deleuze, 1989, 36). This concept of time implies that time is the number of movements. But in modern cinema, time finds its direct expression.

At the end of *Cinema 1*, referring to some formal characteristics, Deleuze talks about a crisis that affected the cinema in the post-war period, the crisis of the action-image. He explains that modern cinema after war experiences a crisis in action-image in which stable links between actions is are loosed, and the integrated system of time and space dominating classic cinema disintegrates in the new image. “In this new kind of image the sensory-motor links tend to disappear, a whole sensory-motor continuity which forms the essential nature of the action-image vanishes” (Deleuze 1986, 213). In other words, after the war we bear witness to a collapse of the sensory-motor schema of American films and pre-war cinema. In this situation, a new image came to exist. Deleuze describes this new image which finds its earliest examples in Italian neorealism as ‘purely optical and sound situation’. The main feature of these situations, is their viewing quality, that is, actions are replaced by ‘seeing’. In this new situation, no action is performed or no action has the power to make changes or have an influence on the situation. Thus in the new image characters do nothing except *seeing*. This is what Deleuze calls a ‘cinema of the seer’. In other words, in contrary to the old realism, in which the strong link between movement-images cause characters to react to situations, in neorealism characters learned to see and hear without any belief in changing the situation. That is, characters are “capable of seeing and showing rather than acting, and either remaining dumb or undertaking some never-ending conversation, rather than of replying or following a dialogue” (Deleuze, 1989, 20). This is because in a purely optical and sound situation, something intolerable, something too powerful or too unjust is grasped which transcends our sensory-motor capacities. Faced with such intolerable thing, characters can do nothing except seeing.⁸

Moreover, this new image, according to him, is linked to new forces namely time and thought. Deleuze explains this new mental image, with a new substance, which has a profound linkage to thinking in his second book *Cinema 2*. In his view, the strong sensory-motor situation of traditional realism is replaced by the optical and sound situations of neorealism. In the new image time is represented directly. Time flows in the whole of the image.

This is the image that enters the temporal relation. In other words, pure optical and sound image helps us to grasp time directly. Deleuze explains that time has been one of the essential elements of the cinematic image from the advent of cinema; nevertheless it finds its crucial role in modern cinema.

We should, however, take this point into consideration that as D.N.Rodowick mentions, movement-image and time-image do not follow a chronological time line as the former precedes the latter. In the introduction of *cinema 1*, Deleuze states that the cinema books do not intend to present a history of cinema. Rather these concepts relate to two different philosophy of history. “The movement-image unfolds according to a Hegelian and dialectical conception of history, while the time-image is Nietzschean and genealogical” (Rodowick, 2010, xvii).

But how can we grasp this cinema of time? In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze cites different cinematic examples. As mentioned, of course, he does not use films as tools for his philosophical theories. But he shows that such films are moments of the pure presence of time. Various films, repeatedly mentioned in cinematic texts, have been able to represent such power of image. In Iranian cinematic new-wave, there are two films that exemplify time-image in the best way.

Still Life

One of the most noticeable films of new-wave⁹ with regard to Deleuze’s theories especially the concept of time-image, is undoubtedly *Tabiat-e bi jan/ Still Life* (1974/1354) by Sohrab Shahid-Sales who was trained in filmmaking in Vienna and Paris and made many documentaries and short films. His filmmaking style is marked with a ‘Chekhovian naturalism’ that is, a minimalist formalism. In the sense that “the lucid narration, the unmasking of the real by a deliberate emphasis on the material endurance of the present, became the key operating force of Shahid Sales' cinema” (Dabashi, 2001, 29). Winner of the Silver Bear of the Berlin International Film Festival, *Still Life* is a passive narration of an elderly railway guard who lives in a remote junction with his wife. Film depicts patiently the uneventful, still life of the old couple, eating, sleeping, handling the railroad, drinking tea, smoking and again sleeping until the old man receives his retirement letter after thirty-three years. The letter serves as an interruption in the habitual course of their life. He has no idea what he should do hereafter. Nevertheless, they have to pack their humble staff and leave their house.

It can be said that the main theme of the film is time, a film about time. Time flows in all shots in its purest form. The old couple live in a remote, isolated place, a kind of any-space-whatever, namely spaces that are not specified and determined historically and geographically, spaces without certain locale identity which in Deleuze’s view, induce pure optical images. In sensory-motor situations, space is specified and linked to the actions happening there. Whereas in the optical and sound situations we confront, in Deleuze’s term, “any-space-whatevers, that is, disconnected or emptied spaces. One form of such any-space-whatevers is empty or deserted space which is recognizable in *Still life*. In empty spaces, the pure sound and optical situations come to exist.

The only movement that may be felt in the life of this old couple is the movement of the train which passes occasionally and of the old pointsman who is obliged to make way for the train. But even the movement of the train

has lost its motional quality in the still and immobile life of the couple after thirty years and resembles the flow of time or the movement of the clock hands that show time by their movement. The old couple, in fact, is not akin to those Deleuzian 'seer' characters who encounter with an intolerable through seeing. They are sheer embodiment of time, not the perceivers of time. This is visualized in the scene of winding the clock by the old man. It is the man who tunes the ticktack of the clock. In other word, here the time is not the interiority the old couple is within, rather they represents time-image themselves. In this any-space-whatever, it seems that they have no relation with external world except for a passing wagon which provides them with necessities.

The title of the film well accords with Deleuze's concept of 'still life'. He differentiates still life from empty spaces. The exterior shots of film display empty spaces which are based on the absence of a character or content, whereas still life, displayed mostly in internal shots of the house or the switchman booth, "is defined by the presence and compositions of objects which are wrapped up in themselves or become their own container" (Deleuze 1989, 16). Interior shots are full of compositions of objects and no wonder that a clock is among the objects of the still life. In a humble house with the minimum of living facilities, that the slow rhythm of life makes the presence of clock unnecessary, clock is nothing more than a symbol of the powerful presence of time. Still life is the pure state of the time, in which changes happen. Changes such as old man's moving from the railroad to house or movements of old woman to prepare the food, express time, a form of time which is unchangeable as such. Deleuze write: "The still life is time, for everything that changes are in time, but time does not itself change" ...it "gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced" (Ibid, 17). *Still life*, thus, presents time in the manner of Ozu, since precisely composed frames of objects and human is a prominent feature of his films.¹⁰ The repetitious actions of aged couple, such as sleeping, waking, opening the railroad, smoking, eating and sleeping again, thus, became a part of time, an unchanging form of time. Moreover, fixed shots and long sequences of insignificant actions like aged man's lighting the cigarette and smoking which last one minute or the sequence in which the old woman attempts to thread a needle to repair her son's uniform, lasting more than 30 seconds, presents us directly with duration. And this is what distinguishes these images from photographic images. "Through the succession of changing states" (Ibid, 17) these images represents duration, duration of each moment or each occasion, that is, the whole changes that occurs in a sequence. Time and duration is represented in the middle of routine actions of film, in the sense that the daily banality turns into the pure optical situation in which time is represented directly.

In most part of the film we hear nothing except for the sound of the train or of sheep passing the road, or sporadic conversations of the old couple. Silence is the only sound of the time. Film has a minimalistic approach in every respect, whether in terms of the plot, which narrates a simple story without ups and down, or in terms of the number of actors or in terms of the actions and conversations which keeps the minimum of the words or facial expressions in the communication. A faint smile on the face of the mother is the only sign of her happiness to his son's arrival. Few sentences that the couple exchanges are restricted to the daily necessities:

- Did you ask for tea and sugar?
- No I forgot.

Every unnecessary word such as 'Hi, goodbye, thank you' is eliminated. Talk is reduced to its minimum communicative function. Nevertheless, time is the only element that is presented lavishly. And this is the immediate strong presence of time which differentiates this film from short films. Furthermore, we learned from Deleuze that time-image does not imply the absence of movement and the direct presentation of time does not only entail the absence of movement through fixed shots and fixed camera. Rather time can also be presented through aberrant, abnormal movement. In other words, in cinema of time-image, movement is not eliminated but it lost its normal quality. Through the disposition of scales, for instance, this aberrant movement leads to the direct presentation of time. This can be seen in the extremely slow movements and steps of the old woman when she brings tea for her husband or the slow movement of the old man when he returns home or goes to the railway crossing. These are some kind of aberrant, out of scale movement which display pure time.

By receiving the retirement letter, the flow of time seems to cease; an interval between daily activities. Old man cannot sleep anymore; he walks in the room and smokes. And from this moment the old couple were impelled to think and what we are presented with is 'thought-image'. Thought-image, also a chapter of *Cinema 2*, reveals a different nature in modern cinema related to the slackened sensory-motor links of pure optical situations. In *Difference and Repetition* (1994), however, Deleuze explains another state of thought-image, that is, dogmatic image of thought in which thinking is equal to recognizing. (Deleuze, 1994, 131) In the sense that between thought and its object there is a harmony spontaneously. In ordinary situations when we perceive objects or events according to a priori patterns of experience there is no distance between thought and recognition. Thus here thought has lost its true nature; as we see in the repetitious life of old couple in which the quotidian actions and events become a habit and inhibit them from any thinking contrary to recognition process. True thinking, for Deleuze, happens only when an exterior force threatens or interrupts the regular course of events. Only in this moment thought is provoked and creates a new thing. Therefore "It is only when thought is constrained by a necessity coming from the outside that it starts thinking; its real enemies lie within. We think not by nature but by necessity: when something in the world does us violence, and violence in this context means the shock of an encounter with what we do not know and even less recognize" (Marrati 2008, 83). This shock for old couple is the retired letter the old man receives after 33 years, when he repeatedly asks:

- What does it mean?
- It means you are retired now
- What does it mean?

The arrival of the retired letter makes an interval in the life of old couple which has become a part of time after 33 years. This interval is the embryo of thought. A 20-second scene of old man sitting in the booth staring at the floor is the thought-image in its purest form, so is his looking at his image in the mirror for some seconds when he leaves his house after 30 years.

Prince Ehtejab

In classic interpretation of time in which time is measured by movement, the central presupposition is that the cinematic image is in the present because we experience it at the moment. It means that even in showing the past, the essential nature of cinematic image is present. For this reason, in a present movement-image time can be represented only indirectly through montage. On the other hand, our normal perception of time relates to the presence of the past images we recall for our future life, when for example, we walk through our hometown, we can find the way because we use our memory of the city, so past images surface.

In this sense, time is nothing other than the presence which comes to thinking and “connects the various moments of movement into a perceived whole. For this reason, we tend to specialize time, seeing time as a line connecting the various points of an action” (Colebrook, 2002b, 32). But in opposition to this view Deleuze states that image is never in the present. Each image has a past and future, which coexist with the present. There is no mere present without a “before” and an “after”. Deleuze writes: “it is characteristic of cinema to seize this past and this future that coexist with the present image” (Deleuze, 1989, 37). To conclude, time in modern cinema has lost its chronological meaning according to which, one instant follows another. Rather, it finds its purity as dose movement in the movement-image. “Bergson’s desire to extract from movement “the mobility that is its essence” is strictly united with Proust’s desire to attain “a little time in its pure state” (Marrati, 2008, 68).

In addition to pure optical situations that reveal time directly, there are two kinds of time-image or chronosigns (Signs of time) which Deleuze elaborates in *Cinema 2*: ‘the order of time’ and ‘time as series’ which the former is based on the coexistence or simultaneity of different times and the latter is based on the becoming or potentialization of forces. Those signs that concern with ‘the order of time’ are divided into two categories: ‘sheets of the past’ and ‘peaks of the present’. Here we intend to explain the first one, that is, ‘sheets of the past’.

Each moment of the present, according to Bergson, is an accumulation of past moments which coexist with the present virtually. The present is not separated from the past or does not proceed it but they coexist simultaneously. We can conclude that in all moments of our life we carry our memories and in each moment that we make a decision or gain a perception of something this virtual past affects us. The present, in fact, is nothing rather than “the infinitely contracted past” (Deleuze 1989, 99).

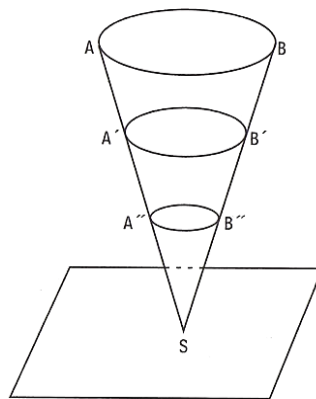


Figure.1: sheets of the past
(Bergson, 1919: 211)

Bergson uses the diagram above to describe his theory. As we can see in the figure, the present (point S) is concurrent with the different layers of past (AB, A'B', A''B'') which is contracted in the present moment. When we remember, we move from an actual present to a virtual past or a certain sheet of the past and bring a recollection-image into the present. Deleuze asserts that the past is not a mental state in which our memories are present and are actualized in us, rather it is pure time, a totality of time in which we exist. Therefore, the past is the moment which is preserved in the present. The present enters the past at each moment and the past coexist with the next present. Therefore, virtual past is time in general and each moment of time is accounted for different aspects of the past: “the past itself as a ‘dilated past’, the present as a ‘contracted past’, the future as a ‘projected past’” (Bogue, 2003, 137).

So images of dreams and recollections, particularly flashbacks are the best examples of this kind of time-image in cinema; when a circuit links the past to the present. In conventional narratives, flashbacks connect a certain part of the past to the present and memory-images of the past are integrated with the action-images of the present in a single narration. But only those recollections can enter consciousness which have a practical value, that is, avail the present moment and are able to be integrated into our sensory-motor schema. This is the nature of flashbacks in classic cinema, in the sense that only those parts of the past are depicted which clarify a vague point of the present and help the coherence of the story. In modern cinema, however, and in pure optical and sound situations or dreams when sensory-motor links slacken, the virtual past is presented without any order or linkage and “our mental world is filled with images from various moments of our past, all coexisting in a single domain” (Bogue 2003, 116). Flashbacks here abandon the coherence of the film and act as intervals or gaps.

The virtual past, the different layers of the past constitute the main structure of *Shazdeh Ehtejab/ Prince Ehtejab* (1974, 1353), a film directed by Bahman Farmanara (1942-) which is adapted from a novel by Houshang Golshiri (1938-2000) and is considered as one of the best Iranian new-wave films. The film is formed of past events interwoven with each other which push their way to the present. It is a nonlinear story of the life of the last survivor of the Qajar dynasty. Suffering from tuberculosis Prince Ehtejab remembers the past

events of his life in solitude and darkness. He is undergoing a mental collapse because of his traumatic past life and now experiences a collapse of sensory-motor schema. His profound despair makes him passive and unable to take any action. In present moment, the virtual past opens up and all past events or what Deleuze call 'sheets of the past' coexist. These are chronosigns, the signs of time-image that present a direct image of time. In chronosigns, past and present, virtual and actual are "undecidable or inextricable" (Deleuze 1989, 274).

Film begins with the present moment, when Prince returns home, Fakhri (his mistress) opens the door and he enters the house. While he is sitting in a dark room coughing, the first circuit of memory takes shape. He remembers a few minutes ago, before entering the house when he has met Morad, his former servant, waiting for him. The second circuit of memory takes form when Fakhri and Fakhronessa (his wife) enter the room. It dates back to the first days of Fakhronessa's entering the Prince's house but we can still hear the Prince coughing. Here, the past and the present somewhat reach to a point of indiscernibility. When Fakhronessa turns on the lights, the circuit of past embraces the present entirely and we see young and healthy Prince. Fakhronessa and Fakhri begin to wind up all the clocks each showing a different time. By ticking of the clocks it seems that different times begin and different layers of time start to coexist. After some other flashbacks, we see a scene which is an image of dream in which Prince talks with his dead grandfather. This is an imaginary scene, followed and preceded by recollection-images. Each recollection-image gives way to other recollections related to the more past events. Recollections of Prince get linked with recollections of other characters. Each flashback cuts to the other flashbacks. There is no boundary between dream-image and recollection-image. The film has a nonlinear narrative. Different events like various pieces of a puzzle are displayed disorderly to disclose little by little the past life of the Prince and his clan.

In some scenes, other characters recollect the past events like the recollections of Fakhri. Sometimes the present moment which includes the Prince sitting in a dark room and coughing, appears in the middle of the past moments and disappears again among recollections and dreams. Gradually from halfway of the film, flashbacks do not belong to anyone. It is not clear whose recollections are they, as if these scenes are recollections of the film itself. In this way, film represents pure past which is a non-subjective memory, belonging to no specific subject and characterized by Deleuze as "the pre-existence of a past in general; the coexistence of all the sheets of past; and the existence of a most contracted degree" [present] (Deleuze 1989, 99). Virtual past or the sheets of the past that constitutes the body of the cone is represented in the film through disordered and "acentred" recollection-images, an ocean of past images with no center of gravity which belongs to no certain mind. Different sheets of the past are put together irregularly. Scenes of the Prince's childhood, scenes of his meeting with Fakhronessa, scenes of his parents' burial, sequences of grandfather's life, sequences of his attempts to transform Fakhri to Fakhronessa, all succeed each other. And the present, that is, the apex of the cone, the meeting point of the cone and the plate, is the dark room of the Prince thinking of his past in solitude. This dark room and the sick Prince, which is open to the whole memory, is in fact, the most contracted

moment which retains the whole past in itself virtually. As explained, the virtual and the actual, the past and the present coexist in each moment and are inextricable but not indiscernible, that is, we are able to recognize past from the present. In most ordinary flashbacks, the past events or dream-images are separable and recognizable from the actual or real images, since they are in a structure in which there is an essential distinction between the virtual and the actual. Nevertheless, in some images these separability seems to fade into a point of indiscernibility “that is, the coalescence of the actual image and the virtual image, the image with two sides, actual and virtual at the same time” (ibid, 69). According to Bergson, this is the fundamental operation of time which leads to formation of a crystal-image. Since past is not the moment replaced by the present, rather it coexists with the present at the same time. In other words, time is divided into two parts, the past and the present. In *Prince Ehtejab* the different sheets of the past which are called silvers of time by Deleuze, eventuate in the crystal-image, that is, the scene in which Prince finds himself sitting in front of Morad, and Morad informs him of his own death, as he did before about the death of others: *Prince Ehtejab is dead*. Morad gives the news of a past which is present simultaneously because the Prince is sitting in the same room and with the same position.

“In fact, the crystal constantly exchanges the two distinct images which constitute it, the actual image of the present which passes and the virtual image of the past which is preserved: distinct and yet indiscernible” (Ibid, 81). The best example of the crystal-image is the mirror since the object and its virtual image reflected in the mirror are present at the same time. In this case, the traditional, twofold model of reality/image is replaced by the unity of the reality in the image. Thus the crystal-image renders time directly in its purest form and a new kind of sign come to exist which are hyalosigns, the signs of an image that is in the middle of actuality and virtuality. Like dead prince who seats, as usual, in front of Morad and becomes aware of his own dead. The actual and the virtual become indiscernible here. After the last sequence Prince dragged himself to a twisty cellar and enters the virtual realm.

Conclusion

Although applying external concepts to films is a non-Deleuzian work, and Deleuze’s main job was to make films philosophize independently, but his own concepts are in such a way that add nothing to films. They just provide an appropriate context that reveals the true essence of images. Concepts like time-image, pure optical situations, “any-space-whatevers”, sheets of the past, crystal image and etc. do not load images with external, a priori meanings. Rather they give us a better understanding of the images themselves, of their functions, their differences, their visual singularities. Thus, one of the most important conclusions that we can draw from Deleuze’s cinematic books is that he is the first thinker who gives us a way to approach films, as such without any priori theories.

Another crucial point that can be inferred from a Deleuzian analysis is that in contrast with other theoretical attitudes, here form and content of the films are inseparable, inextricable. While in other analytic approaches, form, at best, is a vehicle for content, in Deleuze’s discussion form is the content. His main concepts like perception-image, action-image, affection-image in *Cinema 1* or chronosigns, hyalosigns, noosigns (Signs of thought) in *Cinema 2*, all deal with the form, and unfold the film through form. So this is the reliance on the

form that expresses the exclusive features of the films, the singular nature that belongs only to them. Thus in Deleuzian analysis of cinema, form is the content and content is the form, since everything is fundamentally caused by movement and time.

In this respect, in analyzing two Iranian films: *Still life* and *Prince Ehtejab*, we laid emphasis on their form and by using some concepts of *cinema 2* we proved that in spite of their various structures, both films present time in its pure state, the direct image of time. In *still life* time is manifested in pure optical situations, that is, images which include minimum actions or movements. In such images time is revealed through absence of movement or abnormal movements, aberrant, out of scale movements like heavy steps of old couple. In *Prince Ehtejab* time is expressed through pure past. Past here is the representative of the time. Different layers of the past which are arranged disorderly in the film constitute pure past. Thus time is presented as the pure past and pure past is shown in a combination of flashbacks that make the main structure of *Prince Ehtejab*.

Notes

1. Rhizome is one of such concepts. The Rhizome is a botanical term refers to a progressive and external plant growth. A rhizome is a kind of plant, which does not germinate in soil, and it has a horizontal movement on the surface of the earth. Rhizome unlike arborescent movement is a temporal root, moving on the surface in different directions. Rhizome as Deleuze states has neither beginning nor end; it is always in the middle.
2. Here Deleuze is obviously influenced by Bergson's conception of life as a shell which 'suddenly bursts into fragments' (Bergson, *Creative evolution*, 109).
3. For example, the main theme of *Red Desert* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964) - neurosis and loneliness in modern world- is not just expressed but conveyed by making effects through using intensive colors, abstract patterns, mental and semi-subjective images.
4. When we are able to see inside of a beehive by means of camera lens or to witness the growth of a plant by acceleration techniques which we have never seen. Such cases illuminate the power of cinema in providing us with new perceptions.
5. For more details see: *Negotiations*, Gilles Deleuze, trans. Martin, Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press. 1995. P. 57
6. In *Creative Evolution* (1907) Bergson provides a more famous example: when we try to dissolve some sugar in a glass of water, we experience duration, the time of the sugar's dissolution and the qualitative transformation in a whole, that is, in the content of the glass; a qualitative transition from water which contains a sugar lump to the state of sugared water.
7. To clarify the double nature of movement, Deleuze exemplifies a scene of Hitchcock's *Frenzy* (1972). In this sequence, the camera follows a man and woman who climb a staircase and arrive in front of a door and the man opens it. Then the camera leaves them, coming down the stairs, rising up the external wall of the apartment up to the opaque window of the apartment. The movement of camera in this scene transforms the relative position of the sets, while this translation expresses a change in the whole, an impending event, that is, the woman's murder. (See *Cinema 1*, p.23)
8. Deleuze illustrates her point with examples drawn from *Umberto D* (Vittoria De Sica, 1952) and the sequence in which the housemaid is doing some routine household tasks, making coffee, cleaning, driving the ants away,

when she suddenly remarks her pregnant belly and remembers all the misery of her life. In the middle of a sensory-motor situation, she stops acting, turns to a seer, and an optical situation arises. (*Cinema 2*, p.2)

9. A pre-Revolution cinematic movement which was consisted of a new generation of filmmakers who sought to produce films in contrast with mainstream cinema and Film Farsi genre. Having had originated from Iranian modern literary fiction and the works of writers such as Gholām-Hossein Sā'edi, it started in 1969 with Mehrjui's *The Cow* and came to an end in 1979.
10. Deleuze cites an example of Ozu's *Late Spring* (1949), in which a vase is interposed between the daughter's half smile and the beginning of her tears. This is change, passage, in a form that does not change. (*Cinema 2*, p.17).

References

- Bogue, Ronald (2003), *Deleuze on Cinema*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Colebrook, Claire. (2002a), *Gilles Deleuze*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Colebrook, Claire. (2002b), *Understanding Deleuze*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Dabashi, Hamid (2001), *Close-Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Verso, London, New York.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1986), *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlison, Barbara Habberjam, London: Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1989), *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlison, Barbara Habberjam London: Athlone Press
- Deleuze, Gilles (1994), *Difference and repetition*, Continuum: Athlone Press, London
- Marrati, Paola (2008), *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy*, trans. Alisa Hartz, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rodowick, D.N (2010), *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy*; edited by Rodowick, University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis. London.
- *Prince Ehtejab* (Bahman Farmanara, Iran, 1974)
- *Still Life* (Sohrab Shahid-Sales, Iran, 1974)