Crawford College of Art and Design

Dialectics and Jean-Luc Godard

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of B.A in Fine Art.

March 2010

Words: 14296
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Dialectics, or the method of opposites to create a better understanding of a truth, has been practiced as far back as the Greek philosophers and remains utilized in the twentieth century. In ancient Greece dialectics were in the form of discussion consisting of opposing arguments, such as with Socratic dialectics. In modern philosophy (generally seen as starting with Descartes) Hegel took dialectics to a new level. Constructed through the integration of Socratic dialectics with European idealism, Hegelian dialectics are somewhat more formal consisting of a thesis and antithesis (contradicting each other) which when through their conflict create a synthesis. Hegelian dialectics were then contradicted by Marx who merged them with materialism (in contradiction to idealism) to form dialectic materialism. Further still, when Soviet film-maker Sergei Eisenstein had to make films based the Russian Revolution for the people of soviet Russia, he took cinema and dialectical materialism to form dialectical, or intellectual montage. Remaining in the world of cinema, the next step in this line of thought is Jean-Luc Godard. Godard took dialectical montage and the theatre of Bertolt Brecht to create a unique synthesis, a Godardian cinema. These films foundations are based on Hegelian (and in turn Marxist) dialectics, making them ever contradictory, ever engaging, ever questioning and constantly moving and changing.

Early dialectics come to the fore primarily in the form of dialogue between two or more people, the word dialogue itself coming from the Greek word 'dia' meaning 'through' or 'split' and the Greek word 'logos' meaning 'reason' or 'word'. It is a typical Socratic model and gives reason for the manner in which he used teach, not by lectures or paid lessons as with the Sophists who Socrates critiqued harshly, but by going to the market place and asking questions to whoever may want to speak to him. These dialectical discussions are also hugely relevant to our own knowledge of Socrates as we have nothing written by the man himself, but rather the writing of his disciples Xenophon and Plato who were subjected to his dialectical methods. The methods he employed are the same reasons that we are still looking at Plato's writing and the same reason he was executed. He claimed to have had no higher knowledge of the world, but was simply the “mid-wife” of new ideas. We can see evidence of his belief in the virtues of dialectics in The Republic. Dialectic, in fact, is the only procedure which proceeds by the destruction of assumptions to the very first principles, so as to give itself a firm base. The term “first principle” meaning the most authentic form of truth which can be achieved through dialectic discussion. An example of Socrates using

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1 Bertrand Russell, 1946, p. 98
2 Plato, 1955, p. 283
dialectics can be found in Plato's *Symposium*:

> 'What you say is plausible, my friend,' Socrates said. 'If this is right, then mustn't Love of beauty and not of ugliness?' He agreed. 'Didn't we agree that he loves what he needs and doesn't have?' 'Yes,' he said. 'It follows that Love needs beauty and doesn't have it?' 'That must be the case,' he said. 'Well, would you say that something that needs beauty and is wholly without beauty is beautiful?' 'No.' 'If this is so, do you still suppose that Love is beautiful?' Agathon said, 'It looks, Socrates, as though I didn't know what I was talking about.'

Though employed most effectively by Socrates, dialectic's were not invented by him. It seems the Pre-Socratic philosopher Zeno, a disciple of Parmenides, first practiced dialectics, and in Plato's text *Parmenides* it transpires that Socrates himself, as a young man, had been engaged by Zeno in dialectical discussion. We can see by this that dialectics were formed at the very foundations of western culture and have remained present and practiced in western philosophy, science, politics and art upto today.

Though addressed by Descartes in the seventeenth century, dialectics weren't dealt with hugely until Kant in the eighteenth century. A philosopher of great stature and arguably the most important philosopher since Socrates, he had many ideas on knowledge, logic and aesthetics. In his most influential text *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 'Kant diagnoses the failure of 'pure reason', trying to show that the attempt to employ concepts outside the limits prescribed by their empirical application leads inevitably to fallacies... The inevitable tendency of reason to transcend the limits of intelligibility Kant called the “Dialectic” of reason. It was this 'dialectic of reason' that influenced Hegel, a philosopher who had a completely new idea on dialectics and the implications they have on our understanding of the world.

Hegelian dialectics are somewhat more difficult to grasp as his writing can be about thought in general without specifically focusing on a premise, though in its simplest form, his idea of dialectics are based on a 'thesis', which is then contradicted by an 'antithesis', which then resolve to form a 'synthesis' (or as Hegel himself phrased them, 'abstract', 'negative' and 'concrete' respectively), which Hegel believed is the truest concept of thought, or 'absolute truth'. Roger Scruton goes on to explain in more depth the basis of Hegelian dialectics, 'a concept is posited as a starting-point. It is found at once that, from the standpoint of logic, this

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3 Plato, 1999, p. 44
4 Bertrand Russell, 1946, p. 97
5 Roger Scruton, 2005, p. 148
6 Roger Scruton, 2005, p. 172
concept must bring its own negation with it: to the concept, its negative is added automatically, and a 'struggle' ensues between the two. The struggle is resolved by an ascent to the higher plane from which it can be comprehended and reconciled: this ascent is the process of “diremption” (Aufhebung), which generates a new concept out of the ruins of the last. This new concept generates its negation, and so the process continues, until, by successive applications of the dialectic, the whole of reality has been laid bare⁷. When thesis and antithesis form a synthesis, this synthesis in turn become the thesis, or antithesis for something else, another synthesis. This gives us the view of thought as something that is ever changing, never static. This philosophy puts dialectics in a place of great ambition and through it man can eventually understand reality. Profoundly idealistic, Hegelian dialectics paved the way for Karl Marx, who was a student of Hegel, developed materialist dialectics which lead to the rise of communism making Marx one of the most influential philosophers on the twentieth century.

Marxism as a school of thought is a mixture of Hegelian philosophy of the mind and empiricist economics⁸, and his ideas were based around the synthesis of history and economy (we can see Hegelian dialectics at work here). He believed in materialism as opposed to idealism, and became consumed by revolutionary ideas on class struggle, in support for the proletarian masses to abolish the upper classes or the bourgeoisie. The term 'dialectical materialism' was not Marx's own term but rather that of Russian Marxist G.V. Plekhanov, and can also be known as scientific dialectics as their basis is in science, and in this sense differ to Hegelian dialectics which are based on a priori concepts and are generally idealist. Marxism and particularly dialectical materialism were adopted by leaders such as Lenin, Stalin and Mao. We can see in Mao's text his understanding of philosophical conflict throughout history:

> Idealism considers spirit (consciousness, concepts, the subject) as the source of all that exists on earth, and matter (nature and society, the object) as secondary and subordinate, Materialism recognizes the independent existence of matter as detached from spirit and considers spirit as secondary and subordinate... To eliminate the distinction between manual labour is one of the preconditions for eliminating idealist philosophy.⁹

So what relevance has this very brief history of dialectics have? What I am about to discuss is the manner in which aesthetics have not just been influenced by dialectics, but how aesthetics themselves took on another form of dialectics, in the work of French New Wave film-maker Jean-

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⁷ Roger Scruton, 2005, p. 172
⁸ Roger Scruton, 2005, p. 221
Luc Godard. We can see how art in the 1950s and 1960s became conceptual, claiming to have become the new dominant expression of thought, and for many intellectuals it overtook philosophy. An earlier translation of the theory of dialectics into aesthetic form than Godard's work is the Soviet film-maker Sergei Eisenstein who created intellectual, or dialectical montage famously used in his film Battleship Potemkin (1925). Eisenstein however formulated his theories based rigidly on dialectical materialism, and Godard, while still a Marxist, had a freer mindset and a zealous drive for radical experimentation.

I will discuss in this thesis the place of cinema, and specifically Godard's cinema, in the context of its philosophical value, treating his films as if they were philosophical texts, evaluating their use of dialectics, and their historical reference points. As critical theorist Fredric Jameson wrote in his text Signatures of the Visual, 'It is doubted whether any study of film can have this philosophical or historical value', meaning that of the novel, 'Lukacs' standpoint turns on the structural possibilities of the novel to solve its "form-problem" (that it can never really do so is of course another matter, closely related to the structure of capitalism). The significance of that "form-problem" then lies in the fact that it is a place in which aesthetics can be seen as another form of ethics (or even for a Lukacs that follows immediately on this one, another form of politics). This 'form-problem' when applied to the screen, works similarly as it does the novel yet many of the formal problems are solved by the medium of film, which 'glues all these things back together in another way, and seals up the crevices in the form'. This Aristotelian idea of the 'form-problem' allows us to make reference to the Problematia of Aristotle and the Socratic virtues of the question form as discussed by Nicole Brenez in the collection of critical essays on Godard, Forever Godard.

This belief in the virtue of the question, though Aristotle's philosophy, comes from being thought by Socrates, and understanding Socratic dialectics which are based around the practicing of dialogue. To jump back to the twentieth century and to the relevance of dialogue and the question form in the work of Jean-Luc Godard, the use of interview and interrogation, in numerous forms, both situated safely within the films and through the films Brechtian engagement with the viewers, are used to create new contradictions and dualities, and form a new aesthetic form of dialectics:

The human act must be understood as an act of a free being motivated by reason, and understood through dialogue. The same is true of texts, which can be interpreted only

10 Tony Godfrey, 2006, p. 13
11 Fredrich Jameson, 1992, p. 6
12 Fredrich Jameson, 1992, p. 6
13 Nicole Brenez, 2007, p. 160
through an imaginative dialogue with their author.14

Scruton's discussion on phenomenology talks about an 'imaginative dialogue' which I believe can be directly applied to film theory also, in the same sense Jameson believes the 'form-problem' can also be transposed. Accordingly, the relationship between what is on screen and the audience becomes a plain of importance in the consideration of Godard's interrogational devices.

Within the films themselves the interview and interrogational sequences are of huge importance. The characters become more real to us. The film stops being a fictional narrative, it stops being a fictional event of a fictional character and becomes a real event of a real person playing fictional character. The film becomes a historical document in itself. As Youssef Ishaghpour said in conversation with Godard, '...I think only cinema could narrate its own history while being and remaining cinema to the power of two: painting or music, even literature, can't do it. Because cinema is first and foremost a means of recording and reproduction15. Through the questioning and interrogating on-screen, a truth will emerge not within the answers given by the person we see being filmed but, as Jameson put it 'in the silence, in the fragility of insufficiency of the stammered response, in the massive and overwhelming power the visual image, and in the lack of neutrality of the badgering, off-screen interviewer.'16 Sontag also talks about the dialectics involved in silence:

...the art-work exists in a world furnished with many other things, the artist who creates silence or emptiness must produce something dialectical: a full void, an enriching emptiness, a resonating or eloquent silence. Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue.17

To sum up my aims, in this paper I wish to discuss the films of French New Wave film-maker, Jean-Luc Godard, from 1959 to 1968, in the context of their place in the history of the dialectical form, making direct parallel's to the many philosophers and intellectuals that have used dialectics. I will specifically look at the use of the interview and interrogation in this context.

14 Roger Scruton, 2005, p. 268
15 Jean-Luc Godard, Youssef Ishaghpour, 2005, p. 41
16 Fredric Jameson, 1992, p. 89
17 Susan Sontag, [www.ubu.com/papers](http://www.ubu.com/papers)
Chapter 1

Godard's common use of interview as a device from how we see it in Breathless\textsuperscript{18}(1959) to how it appears in La Chinoise (1968) and has adapted and evolved from a somewhat conventional interview (to express the auteurs ideas) to a more poetic Structuralist invention (to challenge and evoke active engagement with the viewer). Dialectics present themselves between 1959 and 1968 in many forms and in this chapter I will explain and discuss the interview and interrogation device, and their theoretical consequences in relation to dialectics and in relation to their philosophical context.

In 1959 we see the release of Breathless (À Bout de Souffle), Godard's first feature film and one of the earliest Nouvelle Vague films to have commercial success (Godard having collaborated with fellow Nouvelle Vague film-maker François Truffaut on the story). This film was driven by Auteur Theory, the idea presented by the writers of Cahiers du Cinema, that the over all meaning of the film is in the control of the director, as opposed to metteurs-en-scènwhere the over-all view of the film is in the control of the producers. Breathless was a fresh, new way of film making both technically and theoretically, and we can see much of Godard's own political views and philosophical and psychological opinions permeate through the imagery. In 1967 Godard released his film La Chinoise (The Chinese), a heavily political satire that challenges the viewers both in the unorthodox manner in which it is made, such as avoiding linear narrative, as well as challenging many of the viewers politics and often ethics, such as the controversial Maoist slogans dominating the movie. To compare this to Breathless, we see a huge change in Godard's politics, both in orientation and how politics became the dominant narrative, we also see how the dominance of auteur Theory has subsided and there is more room for Structuralist ideas, which took precedence in French art and cinema after May 1968 and the student revolts in Paris.

Godard's first feature film, Breathless is the most mainstream of all his work. Released in 1959 it is both a personal movie, as well as a homage to American film noir (the main character Michel Poiccard references Humphrey Bogart throughout the film). Although it is Godard's most conventional film, it is far from orthodox when compared to mainstream Hollywood of that time, and even when compared to previous Nouvelle Vague features such as Truffaut's The 400 Blows.

\textsuperscript{18} I will address the movie titles as according to their U.K. Release, though some titles in English do not directly translate into their french release title Sauve Qui Peut (La Vie), translated as Save Your Ass by Godard, but in U.K. the film was named Slow Motion, similarly, the U.K. release of the french title One Plus One, was named Sympathy for the Devil.
'Breathless was the knockout blow. If *The 400 Blows* was the February revolution, *Breathless* was October¹⁹. Although political subjects are more evident and potent in his later films (in his films post 1968 the aesthetic itself became a form of politics), *Breathless* is not without its strong political opinions and this is presented to us in its rawest form when Patricia attends a press conference where an erotic novelist in being interviewed by many members of the press. As well as being earliest evidence of Godard presenting the audience so brutally with an idea on sexual politics, its is also where my exploration of the interview as a 'brutal form' to get across his 'brutal idea'²⁰ begins.

The novelist, Mr Parvulesco, is being asked many questions about sexuality in a modern age, and these questions and answers can be interpreted as simply the logical answers such a character within the narrative would give, or they can be interpreted as something more enigmatic, perhaps Godard's own opinions, or perhaps an example of the opinions Godard is criticizing (Godard's work being of a Marxist film-maker, they 'show-up' or present the viewer with the truth rather than creating an idealistic world view). The first question Patricia asks, 'What's your greatest ambition?' is also the first question from the press that is not related to sex and also goes unanswered until she asks it again later. There is a duality to the nature of Patricia's first answered question, 'Do women have a role to play in modern society?', to which Mr Parvulesco answers 'Yes. If she's charming and wears a striped dress and dark glasses'. It can be perceived as being an insight to Patricia's emotions in the context of the narrative of the film as we know she has struggled to become a journalist and is also in turmoil as to whether she should sacrifice it all to go to Italy with Michel. In this sense Mr Parvulesco's answer becomes a mere flirtation and seems to flatter Patricia. Equally, the question can be applied to a larger notion, and seen as Godard's question to us, in which case the answer says a lot more about the level of which male driven media use women as a commodity in modern society and that 'women's contribution to the modern world can be measured according to their sex appeal'²¹

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²⁰ Jean-Luc Godard, 1968, *Sympathy for the Devil*.
²¹ Colin MacCabe, 1980, p. 85
'To make a film all you need is a girl and a gun', an aphorism Godard instituted in his working ethic, also comments on his belief that cinema is driven by male desire. Fully explored in later films such as *Two or Three Things I Know About Her...* (1967) and *Vivre Sa Vie* (1962), such thinking is typical of early feminist existential thinking brought forth by Simone de Beauvoir, especially with her work, *The Second Sex* and these ideas permeated also through the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, her long term partner. Perhaps the commodification of the female form was made more transparent to him through Marxist texts rather than existentialist work. In *Two or Three Things I Know About Her...* Godard's principle philosophy is that to survive in the city of Paris, one must essentially prostitute themselves. Godard shows up many immoral causes and effects on woman and in turn, their wrong doings toward men. 'From the outset of *Two or Three things* Godard once again blamed the moral corruption of a woman he loved on industrial modernism." Godard includes images of large scale construction work of seemingly objective composition, over which the soundtrack plays the recording of Godard whispering:

22 Richard Brody, 2008, p. 290
I examine the city, its inhabitants, and the bonds between them as closely as a biologist examines the relations between individual and the race in evolution. Only thus can I tackle problems of social pathology and formulate the hope for a genuine new city.23

Immediately marxist ideologies take the foreground and then Godard's more individualistic concerns take stage. While into a coffee cup, the whispering voice of Godard speaks:

But first, what is an object?
Perhaps it is a link enabling us to pass from one subject to another, therefore to live together.
But since social relations are always ambiguous, since thought divides as much as it unites since words unite or isolate by what they express or omit, since an immense gulf separates my subjective awareness from the objective truth I represent for others, since I constantly blame myself tough I feel innocent, since every event transforms my daily life, since I constantly fail to communicate, since each failure makes me aware of solitude, since, since I cannot escape crushing objectivity or isolating subjectivity, since I cannot rise to the state of being, or fall into nothingness, I must listen, I must look around more than ever.
The world...my kin...my twin.24

Though deeply personal, this soliloquy-like speech shows both how hurt and isolated he feels, and also how profoundly effected by existential thought Godard really is. When Godard asks what an object is and how does it effect us, it shows us his concerns with the relationship between objects and people and the social consequences of these relationship, a study that corresponds with phenomenology, which Heidegger claims to be the basis of his method.25 When Godard talks about how social relations are ambiguous, he is refering the ideas of de Beauvoir in The Ethics of Ambiguity where she talks about intersubjectivity, a concept that 'that accepts the singularity of the existing individual without allowing that singularity to justify an epistemological solipsism, an existential isolationism, or an ethical egoism'26, to which I can only assume means the individual's dominant concern with their own subjectivity, while maintaining an objective concern for the subjectivity of society without allowing individual desires or beliefs corrupt a collective moral code. This is an idea also dealt with by Sartre in his most influential text, to which Godard also references above, Being and Nothingness, 'since I cannot rise to the state of being, or fall into nothingness'.

Vivre sa Vie deals with similar themes to Two or Three Things I Know About Her... yet rather than a

23 Jean-Luc Godard, 1967, Two or Three Things I Know about Her...
24 Jean-Luc Godard, 1967, Two or Three Things I Know about Her...
26 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauvoir/
greater social concern, the stronger presence of a linear narrative told in a more conventional manner to *Two or Three Things*, gives us a more subjective view of male repression on women. The 'life' in question is that of Nana, played by Anna Karina who is forced to become a prostitute when her dreams of becoming an actress are shattered. Less confessional on Godard's part, the story is told without any moralising or social commenting, engaging the audience in the act of questioning. There is a specifically heavy focus on the power of dialectics, the three finest scenes of the film all dealing with dialectics on some level.

In the first of these, Nana goes to see a movie. The film is Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). Nana is moved to tears by the scene where Joan accepts her fate, death by the stake, foreshadowing the ultimate fate of Nana, as both herself and Joan die by the hands of men, though this is not the only device being executed in this scene. The context of the scene, the cinema, in turn makes the viewer aware that they are watching a film just as Nana is. As we, the viewers are being actively engaged in the film, questioning why is Nana with this unknown man, why did she choose this film, why is Godard showing us this film by Carl Dreyer, similarly we presume the same engagement from Nana and her discussion with the film she is watching. The editing between Nana and Joan creates beautiful parallels and powerful dialectics as if the two females are in conversation. The dialectics taking place here being the saintly devotion of Joan and moral corruption of Nana forming a synthesis of a new moral-code. Nana is not corrupt but also is not virtuous.

![Fig.3 Joan of Arc accepts her fate, *Vivre sa vie* (Image taken from DVD, Nouveaux Pictures, 2007)](image-url)
The second, is a sequence of montage with Nana's pimp Raoul speaking to her, telling her all about the rules and techniques involved in prostitution. Jump cuts from beds being made to money being exchanged, Nana on the phone to her taking off her shoes and turning off the bedside lamp. We see Nana's heels stalling on the steps of a stairs followed by a man, cutting to a man's hand taking cash out of his pocket, cutting to a bed quilt opening, cutting to hands washing with soap and so on through many male clients, as the conversation between Nana and Raoul continues over it:

People think prostitutes always have abortions. That's not true. They do try to avoid pregnancy, by chemical or other means. But when pregnancy is confirmed, abortions are rare.

The prostitute must always be at the client's disposal. She must accept anyone who pays.27

This montage sequence owes much to the theories of Eisenstein and his ideas of Intellectual or Dialectical Montage. Though Godard later claimed that he is more influenced by Eisenstein's contemporary, Dziga Vertov, the effect of Dialectical Montage has permeated most of Hollywood especially with directors such as Alfred Hitchcock who Godard claims to be the 'master of form' in Histoire(s) du Cinéma (1988-1998).

The third, and perhaps most relevant in relation to early feminist thinking typical of existentialist contemporaries of Godard is the conversation Nana engages in with an old man who turns out to be a philosopher. Her engagement seems at first naive and that perhaps she is just looking for a free coffee, but soon her questions and conversation becomes insightful and sincere. They speak of the relationship between will and thought, speaking and thought, love and existence. Much of the philosopher's ideas are typically existential:

27 Jean-Luc Godard, 1962, Vivre sa vie
With detachment. We balance, that's why we pass from silence to words. We swing between the two because it's the movement of life. From everyday life one rises to a life we call superior. The thinking life. But this life presupposes one has killed the everyday, elementary life.

One cannot distinguish the thought from the words that express it. An instant in thought can only be grasped through words.[28]

_Vivre Sa Vie_ marked a new direction in Godard's filming techniques, aiming for a newer and more intelligent aesthetic and style (his style changed immediately after _Breathless_, and he was never again to make a film in the same way, and though _Vivre sa Vie_ mark the beginning of yet another style that would develop over a number of films). The content of the film also became blatantly philosophical in a manner which Godard would 'openly define the New Wave as intellectual cinema' As we see above with Nana's conversation with the philosopher in the café, Godard truly is blatant about his ambitions. 'One cannot distinguish the thought from the words that express it', though the philosopher speaks of in relation to Plato, can correspond to Sartre's belief in the relationship between thinking and action and how existence is defined by the actions of a man, or his 'outward reality'.[30] In his first three feature films, Godard had attempted to work variations on themes by Sartre. Now, Godard's desire to make a sublimely tragic film that locates destiny in the essence of character would lead him to even more sophisticated contemplations of existential cinema.[31]

Most of the existential writers I have mentioned above have all dedicated themselves at one point or another to expressing their ideologies through means other than straight philosophical writing. Though _Being and Nothingness_ and _Ethics of Ambiguity_ are both purely philosophical texts, both Sartre and de Beauvoir have used the novel and drama as discourse to be analyzed and theorized as if they were purely philosophical texts. Similarly, with the work of Camus and Godard also fits into this category. His films between 1959 and 1967 are essentially philosophical essays using the language of cinema to discuss cinema, ethics, politics and existence. In the 1946 essay 'Literature and the Metaphysical Essay', de Beauvoir talks about such work and how the extracted philosophies are created and given meaning through the understanding of lived experience. She claims Heidegger and Husserl as the most influential (Heidegger himself used poetry in the manner to which I am discussing), however both these men pay tribute to another predecessor.

[28] Jean-Luc Godard, 1962, _Vivre sa vie_
[29] Richard Brody, 2008, p. 130
[31] Richard Brody, 2008, p. 131
When Friedrich Nietzsche wrote philosophy, what was produced was an ecstatic and sublime poetry that both abolished its own foundations and used the ruins to create a new intellectual cathedral. This concept can be described as pastiche, as described by Fredric Jameson, which he describes as using 'dead styles and artistic languages of the past as vehicles for new works'\textsuperscript{32}. Though he disputed most post-Socratic philosophy with exceptions such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's method is still grounded in the disciplines of logic and dialectics. His general contempt and often hatred for most philosophy from Plato to Kant comes from his belief that post-Socratic thinking was overly Appollonian in nature, as he himself championed the more artistic Dionysian lifestyle. His energetic tendency toward the Dionysian certainly fed his writing the fuel to light up and become more poetic. The Nietzschian world view and new set of morals, was based not on what is generally perceived as “good” and “evil” that are concerned with the next life, but go 'beyond good and evil' and are concerned with this life and the world around us. His Dionysian tendencies nurtured much of Nietzsche's belief in artistic activities, especially in relation to revolution.

Like Godard, in his youth Nietzsche didn't immediately attach himself to writing, and had other artistic ambitions in mind such as being a composer, a desire that most definitely resulted in his friendship with composer Richard Wagner. Similarly Godard had not found the language to which he could best express himself. Godard knew he had something to say but went through many media before he found his artistic voice was in film making. As a youth he painted and had an exhibition held organized by his mother, for many years he claimed he was going to be a great writer, and he spent much time in the cafés of Saint-Germain writing\textsuperscript{33}.

One of Nietzsche's most potent pieces of work written between 1883 and 1885 is called Thus Spake Zarathustra (Zarathustra being loosely based on the Persian prophet brought to Nietzsche's attention by Hermann Brockhaus, a specialist in the Zoroastrian religion and introduced to Nietzsche by Wagner)\textsuperscript{34}. Though Thus Spake Zarathustra is an antagonistic tale toward Christian beliefs, as a piece of literature it alludes to the styles of the New and Old Testaments. 'He dislikes the New Testament, but not the old, in which he speaks in terms of the highest admiration'\textsuperscript{35} says Russell who speaks of Nietzsche with very little admiration due to his nihilistic outlook, but does say that 'in justice to Nietzsche, it must be emphasized that many modern developments which have

\textsuperscript{32} Fredric Jameson, 1992, p. 112  
\textsuperscript{33} Richard Brody, 2008, p. 17-18  
\textsuperscript{34} Reference Nietzsche Website  
\textsuperscript{35} Bertrand Russell, 1946, p. 690
a certain connection with his general ethical outlook are contrary to his clearly expressed opinions.\textsuperscript{36} The manner in which the language of \textit{Thus Spake Zarathustra} alludes to that of biblical texts gives example to what I discussed above in relation to the method in which Nietzsche uses the ruins of abolished beliefs to build new ones, 'And Zarathustra spake thus unto the people: I teach you the Superman. Man is something to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man?'\textsuperscript{37}

The cinematic language Godard devised during the New Wave owes much to mainstream cinema, the very thing that it was counter-acting. Godard takes Humphry Bogart and turns him into the criminal, reckless protagonist of his first feature film. \textit{Breathless} uses the language of \textit{film noir}, but says something \textit{noir} could never say. \textit{Masculine Feminine} (1966) similarly alludes to melodramatic drama, \textit{Alphaville} (1965) a science fiction, and both \textit{Une femme est une femme} (1961) and \textit{Bande à part} (1964) have moments of the Hollywood musical but with a pathos and irony that can only come from such assimilation and retelling. However, though he is using film codes attributed to specific cinematic genres that most cinema goers would be comfortable with, Godard being a devout student of Bertolt Brecht uses estrangement devices to make this new cinematic code to alienate and actively engage the viewer (as opposed to passively engaging the viewer). In his final film of his cinematic period, \textit{Weekend} (1968), Brechtian Estrangement saturates the entire film, voicing Godard's frustrated cry at, and resignation from, the cinema world, as well as a war cry towards the bourgeoisie. The tale of a bourgeois couple leaving home for a “weekend” away, \textit{Weekend} quickly shows itself up to not being a conventional story. Multi- and inter-referencing being Godard's forte, throughout the film we have a couple describe the sexual act executed in Bataille's \textit{The Story of the Eye}, we meet Emily Bronte and C.S Lewis in the woods, to which the couple ask if they are part of the film. Beckett comes into reference as the couple stop and sit on the roadside like two tramps waiting for passers-by to find when one man eventually appears he simply rapes the woman (off screen) to her husbands content in not doing anything to stop it. We meet a Cezanne-like character, kidnapped by revolutionaries from a picnic much like that of a Cezanne painting. This is to mention but a few cultural and artistic references that dominate the film, and which often make little sense but engages the viewer and often distresses the viewer.

Though the extent of such referencing can make the film ultimately inaccessible in its totality, the initial alienation can soon become the dominant virtue of the movie; indeed, to understand the movie in its totality in the same way Godard intended may seem impossible, the beauty of it is that

\textsuperscript{36} Bertrand Russell, 1946, p.690
\textsuperscript{37} Friedrich Nietzsche, 1885, p. 3
with each multi- and inter-reference, the roads of interpretation that open become vast, and with each viewing of the film, different parts will make sense. This notion becomes even more relevant with his collage work, namely *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*. This cutting and pasting of cultural and artistic references (including cinema itself) to create a new cinematic language is what I feel puts Godard in a similar place to Nietzsche who also created his world view through the process of assimilation and using it in an antagonistic manner, and is no surprise to me that the project that immediately followed *Weekend* was a piece for television called *Le Gai Savoir (The Joyful Wisdom)*, a typically Nietzschean title.\(^{38}\)

Though it is not the only thing that situates Godard and Nietzsche in a place together, what is also interesting is how both grew up with strongly religious backgrounds. For Godard, both the Godards and the Monods were strongly Protestant families. He speaks of his childhood, 'It was one of those huge Protestant families that behave like a tribe with their own ritual, their own ceremonies... You were protected\(^{39}\). Nietzsche, who grew up in a small village outside Leipzig, had a very strong Lutheran upbringing, his father, uncles, and grandfathers were Lutheran ministers, and his paternal grandfather was even a Protestant Scholar of high recognition\(^{40}\). It is interesting how both in effect, replaced religion with something else. Devotion not only remained but increased as they both grew in age and in intellect, yet they were not devout Christians, both Godard's and Nietzsche's churches were of their own making. Though Godard's religion may have been cinema, and Nietzsche's literature, they both had their own churches within these disciplines.

Both Godard and Truffaut as critics had huge admiration for Alfred Hitchcock, describing him as the 'High Priest' of cinema. This high level of idolatry of such a mainstream and influential auteur soon became manifest in the publications of the extensive interviews that took place between Hitchcock and Truffaut. These interviews re-affirmed Hitchcock's place as auteur and artist, not simply a mainstream filmmaker. What transpires is the direct influence on the French New Wave, a then vibrant and fashionable cinematic movement, of a then out of fashion director. Truffaut's attitude in these interviews is simply that of awe and overwhelming admiration and clearly reflects his and Godard's shared love of Hitchcock. 'Both movie-crazy, thrilled by our brief preview of Hitchcocks latest work, we emerged into the blinding glare of daylight, almost bursting with excitement'\(^{41}\).

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\(^{38}\) Richard Brody, 2008, p. 316
\(^{39}\) Colin MacCabe, 2003, p. 18
\(^{40}\) [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/)
\(^{41}\) Francois Truffaut, 1966, p. 9

18
In conversation with Youssef Ishaghpour, Godard speaks about Hitchcock himself and why he is different to his contemporaries, 'but there was a period when Hitchcock made seven or eight films in succession that are perfect, that are emblematic, because they extended cinema itself, because they were based on the philosophy of cinema...'. So what is it that makes Hitchcock so 'emblematic' of cinema. What probably appeals most to Godard is two things, first, the combination of objects as signs that put together in an image signify specific meanings to an audience, secondly, montage, Hitchcock's understanding of how these images full of signs can cut to opposing images to create even more meaning. This can be best seen in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* to which Godard takes imagery from in *Histoire(s) du Cinema*. The wheelchair bound James Stewart uses his camera and his zoom lens to spy on his neighbours to pass the time, though through the act of looking through the lens, something darker becomes apparent, and a mystery needs to be solved, a mystery that can only be decoded by further looking. Godard's belief in the power and mystery of the image can be seen in *Les Carabiniers* in 1963. To quote Susan Sontag from the opening chapter of her influential collection of essays, *On Photography*:

...two sluggish lumpen-peasants are lured into joining the King's Army by the promise that they will be able to loot, rape, kill, or do whatever else they please to the enemy, and get rich. But a suitcase of booty that Michel-Ange and Ulysse triumphantly bring home, years later, to their wives turns out to contain only picture postcards, hundreds of them, of Monuments, Department Stores, Mammals, Wonders of Nature, Methods of Transport, Works of Art, and other classified treasures from around the globe. Godard's gag vividly parodies the equivocal magic of the photographic image.

If Hitchcock is the 'High Priest' of Godard's religion, then two other directors, who would constitute as priests or ministers, would be Orson Welles and Roberto Rossellini. Once when talking about Rossellini, Godard compared him to Socrates, saying 'Socrates was exactly the same kind of guy as Roberto, a guy they poisoned simply because he asked questions. He accepted everything; all he wanted was to talk to people. And he was totally intolerable in Athens because, as a result not of asking questions but of talking to people, he pissed everybody off, just by simply expanding on things, by going a little farther'. Rossellini's portrayal of Rome in films such as *Rome, Open City* (1946), is similar to Godard's portrayal of Paris in his earlier films.

42 Jean Luc Godard, Youssef Ishaghpour, 2005, p. 65
43 Susan Sontag, 1977, p. 3
44 Raymonde Carasco, 2007, p. 160
Also, when thinking of Auteur Theory, it becomes almost impossible to avoid imagining the stereotypical visionary director at odds with the oppressive studio producers whose motives for production are simply commercial, conflict with the director's artistic vision. This stereotype can be justly attributed to cinema giant Orson Welles, whose relentless drive and ambition for artist license marked him as a Hollywood maverick. Unfortunately, the film in which he had most freedom was his earliest masterpiece, *Citizen Kane* (1941), which despite the canonical position it holds today in cinema history, did poorly in the box office meaning Welles was never given as much freedom again. Turbulent with the film industry, Welles became incredibly resourceful by raising money through acting, radio work, theatre direction and so on, to spend on realizing his artist aspirations. This relentless energy and will to make art, both inspires and describes Godard. Welles' idea was that in theatre that the final aesthetic signature is a consequence of a collective endeavor, a collaborative piece of art. However, with film he claimed it to be the view of one person, the director, and it is his or her vision that should be the final projection on screen. This idea comes from the belief that because theatre is not solid, it is not concrete, every performance is different, that the responsibility of how it is understood and perceived is shared amongst everyone involved, however with cinema, because it is all on celluloid that the director can control everything, and that because it is permanent, the consideration of the piece must be arbitrated by one person, the director. In this sense Welles saw making movies as the same as the act of writing, and this corresponds to Godard's approach to film making as film essays, executed to extremes when Godard works with Gorin under the name of Dziga Vertov Group. Welles' technique of using theatre and cinema to influence each other through understanding their differences is in itself a form of dialectic. Godard too, used theatrical devices in his movies as they are the synthesis of Brecht and cinema, primarily Eisenstein as mentioned in the introduction, but also Welles (in a truly Hegelian manner).

As we can see above, this Hegelian concept of dialectics permeates the work of Godard, from existentialist philosophies to Hitchcock, Rossellini and Welles, a web of dialectical thought can be imagined through all the above bringing us to the work of Jean-Luc Godard. This becomes the creative drive also for Godard, and the point of his practice being to express the fact that everything is constantly changing, art, politics and philosophy are and always will be in a state of flux. For every certainty there is an uncertainty, and for every contradiction there is a synthesis. Godard never stopped changing his work or his outlook. Even his oeuvre is a collection of contradictions.
Chapter 2

Having looked at the art house period of Godard's films and their philosophical relevance, with particular focus on dialectics, I have only looked at philosophers after the rise of modern philosophy which is generally seen as from Descartes onwards, but dialectics as I explained in my introduction, have been in existence since the ancient Greek philosophers. 'The duality of art is an inevitable consequence of the duality of man', comes from Baudelaire's *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, and is discussed in relation to Godard's work in Youssef Ishaghpour's essay, *Jean-Luc Godard Cinéaste of Modern Life: The Poetic in the Historical*. Much is discussed on the nature of beauty in accordance to Baudelaire and how it applies to Godard's own aesthetic principles. It was written by Baudelaire that:

> ...beauty is always, inevitably, of dual composition, even though it produces a single impression... The beautiful is made up of an unvarying eternal element, whose quantity is excessively difficult to determine, and a relative, circumstantial element arising from the epoch, from fashion, morality or passion, one at a time or all at once.

Although discussed in great detail by Ishaghpour in his essay, nothing was mentioned of such qualities that Baudelaire talks about in the context of Godard's use of interview and interrogation. In this chapter I will discuss this notion of beauty in such a context, as well as the dialectical nature to the interview and interrogation composition, the art historical influences and cinematic influences. Godard here talks of the persecution a philosopher endures when people do not want to accept what is being said:

> I need to have a philosophical talk on the technical aspect and a technical talk on the philosophical aspect. Its like Socrates, who was just trying to talk to people. And then everybody got so completely angry that they obliged him to commit suicide. He was just trying to say 'Are you sure?'

45 Colin MacCabe, 1980, p. 160

The above was said at a time that Godard was still very much in obscurity having left France for Switzerland with his partner Ann-Marie Melville. His approach to film making had become extreme, militant and indigestible during his Maoist period, but as he described, when he was being polite, he was taken as sarcastic, and he feels critics reactions are unnecessarily passionate. His politeness and rigid aggression were used against Godard by critics, yet I feel these contradicting approaches soon synthesized to create a newer and more sophisticated visual language which we find in his films of the eighties such as *Slow Motion* (1980). However, what I find interesting is the parallel Godard makes between himself and Socrates. It creates an interesting discussion on the
nature in which Socrates asks questions, but is really interrogating the question itself. Similarly Godard makes films in a way that interrogates cinema. Furthermore, the ideas of Socrates are not presented to use in the form of his own writing, but through the dialogue between, and according to other philosophers. Plato and Xenophon are our main windows to the life and ideas of Socrates, as they would go to him at the market place in Athens to learn. Not unlike interrogational form, this Socratic template for the exchange of information, has resonated through western culture:

> The dialectic method is suitable for some questions, and unsuitable for others. Perhaps this helped to determine the character of Plato's inquiries, which were, for the most part, such as could be dealt with in this way. And through Plato's influence, most subsequent philosophy has been bounded by the limitations resulting from this method.46

Not alone does Godard use dialogues in his films as Plato uses dialogues in his texts, but there are many co-relations between how we understand Socrates and how we understand Godard. The dialectical nature of these Socratic exchanges can be easily compared to the dialectics presented to use in *Histoire du Cinéma*. The difference being one dialectic is through the logical discussions between two people, while the other, via images and sound. Dialectic, in the sense of the method of using questions and opposing answers to discover a truth47, fits naturally into dialogue form, or perhaps more aptly, logical, argumentative dialogue form bears fruit from the type of dialectic Russell is talking about above and is the mode in which Socrates taught. Socrates did not teach through lecturing or passing on of knowledge, but rather he asked his pupils questions, forcing them to think in a new way. Russell argues that:

> The matters that are suitable for treatment by the Socratic method are those as to which we have already enough knowledge to come to a right conclusion, but have failed, through confusion of thought or lack of analysis, to make the best logical use of what we know.48

To talk about Godard in this context we could talk about his methods of film making rather than the subjects he is dealing with; his treatment of cinema. He does not work in an orthodox manner. He takes conventional cinematic codes, takes them apart and re-assembles them in a way that creates a polyphonic effect and results in a different meaning. He disrupts illusionary strategies, dissects linear narrative and estranges the viewer by blurring the line between fiction and reality. These methods make us question hierarchical form. His methods subversively ask 'Is this the wrong way to make films?', 'Is this not cinema?', 'Is this a new visual language?'. He forces us to actively

46 Bertrand Russell, 1946, p. 97
47 Bertrand Russell, 1946, p. 97
48 Bertrand Russell, 1946, p. 98
engage with his images and find these answers, and like Socrates, Godard feels that it is the act of questioning that is important and inevitably irreversible.

Godard himself spoke of the controversy Socrates created in Athens. In 1980 he wrote on the parallels between Socrates and Roberto Rossellini. He says Socrates 'was totally intolerable in Athens because, as a result not of asking questions but of talking to people, he pissed everybody off, just by simply expanding on things, by going a little farther. He had nothing of his own; he took from others and adapted things'. In 1982 in *Godard and counter-cinema: Le Vent d'est*, Peter Wollen tabulates the seven deadly sins of Hollywood and the seven cardinal virtues of counter-cinema, one of which is pleasure (sin) and unpleasure (virtue). Although critical reactions are conflicting; Socrates having been persecuted; Godard, for a while championed, similar passions are aroused by both. As Godard is acting out toward conventional cinema, as did Socrates act out towards the Sophists. As counter cinema was a response to mainstream cinema; Wollen spoke of how it cannot exist by itself, and how it can 'only exists as a negation of mainstream cinema', as did Socratic philosophy undermine and criticize the Sophists. The Sophists were like teachers to the elite classes of Ancient Greek society, around the fifth century B.C., and the chief philosopher was Protagoras. However, they did not teach knowledge but the art of argument. Early Sophists were more genuinely interested in philosophical pursuits however in Socrates' time Sophists would only teach for money and this is what Socrates in Plato's texts harshly criticized the Sophists for, yet in a typically subversive manner. In dialogue with a Sophist, we see Socrates having respect for earlier Sophists and asks them if he feels he is greater than his elders because they never thought to charge for their teachings.

To talk about *Le Mépris* (1963) with this in mind can create some interesting discussion. In this film, Godard brings us to an Italian based American film studio that is in recession. His main character Paul, a writer, and his wife have just moved there and Paul is offered a job re-working the script for a film of *The Odyssey*. Paul does not want the job but he gives up his principles and does it for the money. The studios are like a ghost town, only a few workers and the tyrannical god-like producer lamenting the days of prosperity by saying such things as 'Only yesterday there were kings here'. We are shown the projection room and the filming that has taken place so far. We see Odysseus and Penelope, along with Minerva, Neptune and other gods, but in the form of Greek statues painted with hue colors. Fritz Lang plays himself as the director of the film of *The Odyssey*;

49 Nicole Brenez, 2001, p. 160
50 Alison Butler, 2007, Cinema Book, p. 92
51 Alison Butler, 2007, Cinema Book, p. 93
and when he says to the producer that it is man who created the gods, not the other way round, we see a bronze bust of Homer, placing him higher than the gods and characters we have seen already in the film within the film. _Le Mepris_ is a complex blend of biography, philosophy and a critical essay on Hollywood cinema that expresses respect through reference, and tongue in cheek criticism. If in the scene in the projection room we are to relate the producer Prokosch to Neptune, his wife to Minerva, Paul to Odysseus and so on, I would expect Homer not only in this narrative context is referring to Fritz Lang, but to Godard himself, the story teller, the poet. Godard puts the story teller in a place that transcends the commercially driven producers. This also presents itself in the second opening scene, a scene included by demand of the producers Carlo Ponti and Joseph E. Levine for more scenes that necessitated Bridget Bardot being naked. After much argument and legal complications, Godard added the scene to the film which, although beautifully shot, is cliché and intentionally superficial, yet was exactly what the studio's ordered. As Godard said, 'so i refused to do the scene, but I said to them: “You've given me an idea; I'm going to do something the opposite to what you want, which will please you nonetheless”’. This Socratic irony is similar to the type of dialogue we read between Socrates and the Sophists.

Although Godard says that this scene in _Le Mépris_ 'doesn't explain anything special and doesn't change the meaning of the film' it does however correspond to Godard's views on the image of the female as a commodity. Godard 'sees the forces that mould women into a stereotype and reduce them to impotence; more than any other single film-maker Godard has shown up the exploitation of woman as an image in consumer society'. This becomes very relevant to the parallels between Godard and Socrates, as for Godard 'this image is the very basis of consumer society, and cinema being a dominant force in a general consumerist psyche, the relevance comes from the fact that Godard chose cinema (and later video, and in true Godardian manner, eventually a synthesis of both), as opposed to any other medium for his work. Although Godard broke into video for television in the 1980s with his own production company Sonimage, his intentions were much different to when he was making _Le Mépris_. He felt that video primarily exists to be criticism due to the fundamental nature of the medium, 'Godard prefers video, that is to say, exactly the medium which can destroy the aura of works of art, but in this instance it is used to recover something of its meaning (and thus also the aura) through comparisons'.

52 Richard Brody, 2008, p. 168
53 Richard Brody, 2008, p. 170
54 Colin McCabe, 1980, p. 85
55 Colin McCabe, 1980, p. 85
56 Antoine de Baecque, 2001, p. 121
So what has this to do with Socrates? Godard's work is mostly appreciated by philosophers, critics, artists, and writers, many of which would happen upon or actively seek out his work in galleries or museums as much as they would at the cinema or on television, yet Godard is still working in the two arenas. This is because it is the market place in which he wants his work consumed. It is this juxtaposition of his work that gives it its potency. It is questioning the very institution it is part of. It is interrogating itself; its own environment and its social, political, artistic and emotional influences and consequences. These are much the same reasons Socrates went to the market place each day. Not to sell goods, but to ask questions, to interrogate. Socrates questioned his very surroundings down to the very basic fundamentals. Both Socrates and Godard challenged the people they spoke to in the market place, made them uncomfortable, made them work harder, inspired them.
Do you have to go through your ideas in brutal form, so that brutal form might be the form of the interview?\textsuperscript{57}

Or might that brutal form simply be 'the question'? 'The question' in the sense of a matter forming the basis of a problem requiring a solution\textsuperscript{58} takes on two dynamics, one constructive and one which possesses the power of displacement. In Godardian cinema there are three types of questions which take on these two dynamics. The first is the classical belief in the virtues of the problematic. This is most applicable to the parallels created between Godard and Socrates. It addresses the manner in which the question will encourage virtue rather than ignorance. This is intimately linked to the task in which Godard has set himself, and from this Socratic model he has retained much. He especially practices a critical eye towards society around him and identifies the problems associated with these surroundings, much the same as Socrates in Rome (which consequently led to his execution). As Bertrand Russell talks about Socrates saying 'he maintains that no man sins wittingly, and therefore only knowledge is needed to make all men perfectly virtuous\textsuperscript{59},

The second is the \textit{Problemata of Aristotle: the art of concrete question}. This type of questioning leads more to the interrogation of form and is reached more in solitude than in relation to people and objects. It produces a more experimental approach to questioning, it lays out a problem for us to work out without the need for experience or previous understanding. It has resulted in such Godardian metaphors as the act of playing tennis being the physical equivalent to dialectics. So in \textit{Week-end} when the proletarian family attack the bourgeois couple, tennis balls and rackets are produced to retaliate. Though the balls and rackets are rendered useless once the father appears with the gun. This scenario presents us with a question, with a problem for us to interpret and solve.

The third form is the materiality of the question. This is when the question is working within the narrative of the films and videos. They can be categorized into six forms. Interrogation, the lesson, interview, dialogue, the torture scene, the image question weave their way through Godard's oeuvre. Each of these forms have the common quality of encouraging dialogue. Plato expresses his philosophy through dialogue between characters in his texts. This way he can lay out his ideas in a manner that is digestible because of the archaic manner of its form, like a capsule to swallow so as

\textsuperscript{57} Jean-Luc Godard, \textit{Sympathy for the Devil}, 1968
\textsuperscript{58} Oxford American Dictionary
\textsuperscript{59} Bertrand Russel, 1946, p. 97
to absorb the medicine. Socratic dialectics engage and inform us in a simple and clear manner which means his philosophy is easily consumed by the reader. Similarly, Godard's dialectics, from its early questions between characters within a narrative in films such as *Breathless*, to two superimposed images in *Histoire(s) du Cinema* forming a dialectic between the two, have used the question to express ideologies and philosophies, though unlike Plato, Godard uses film and video rather than writing.

When Godard started using artistic form as vessels for philosophical thought, it was common amongst many contemporary existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, who along with writing philosophical essays and papers, wrote novels and plays to further convey his ideas. Similarly, with Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus use the novel and story telling to express ideologies. Amongst the most profound examples of this practice would be Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Described as the kernel of Nietzsche's thought, it is essentially a story of a Persian sage through whose mouth we grasp ideas of after life and of the *Ubermensch*, or Superman. This book gave fuel to existentialist thinking and gave new life to philosophy delivered in prose poetry.

However, what differs with Godard is that when Nietzsche, Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus use poetry, the novel, and drama to express their ideas, they also all write academic and conventional philosophical works. Nietzsche has *Beyond Good and Evil*, Sartre has *Being and Nothingness*, and so on, Godard does not. He uses the medium to question the medium. It was Cezanne who said 'If you want to be a critic, paint, within painting you'll find salvation'\(^\text{60}\). Godard does not criticize film and video, he makes film and video critically. One of the biggest crises in painting history happened in the twentieth century with Cubism. It questioned everything people believed to be fundamental about formal painting. It broke down elements of illusion, yet there was image, it made us aware of it dimensions, yet there was space, it was a painting, but it was about painting. Braque and Picasso, being the pioneers of Cubism, could only make such expressions through painting and collage, just as Godard expresses himself in the same manner on film.

Although Godard interrogates commercial cinema; and also harshly criticizes consumer society, he also accepts the fact that money is inevitably the main fuel of film making. His film did not artistically necessitate another scene where Bridget Bardot would be naked, yet Godard eventually accepted the fact it was economically necessary to include it. This can take us onto the idea of Godard's rather polemical attitudes towards mainstream cinema. Himself and New Wave

\(^{60}\) Tate Archive, Cassette Tape.
collaborator Éric Rohmer in the 1950s championed cinema as 'the art which inherited the mantel of classicism'\textsuperscript{61} and manifested itself immune to the paradoxes of modernism. Yet we can interpret \textit{Le Mépris} as a lament for this form of cinema, and his subsequent films such as \textit{Week-end, La Chinoise}, and the collaborations of Godard and Gorin within the Dziga-Vertov group, as a looking forward to a new cinema, which according to Godard, were not political films but rather his way of making films politically. Another example of the polemical nature of Godard's views on American Cinema would be his adoration and praise for Hitchcock, who Godard describes in \textit{Histoire(s) du Cinema} as a 'master of form', and along with fellow New Wave director and friend, Francois Truffaut (who published an in depth and detailed interview with Hitchcock in 1966), describe him as a high priest in the world of cinema. Yet in 1967 on a trip to Algiers, while answering questions for an audience of \textit{Le Grand Escroc}, Godard replied to a question on his views on American Cinema with:

\begin{quote}
It wouldn't be bad to ban the American cinema for a while. Three-quarters of the planet considers cinema for the angle and according to the criteria of the American cinema... People must become aware that there are other ways to make films than the American way. Moreover this would force filmmakers of the United States to revise their conceptions. It would be a good thing.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

This is not to say that he believes all American cinema to be bad and all French cinema to be good, in fact Godard was just as critical, if not more critical of European cinema, rather he detests films made with the primary intention being to make money, purely commercial cinema that appeals to the widest rage of audience to ensure profit. We can see throughout cinema history that the higher the budget of the movie, the higher the profit. People pay to see what cost the most money and when they can see all this money on screen in the form of movie stars or special or digital effects, they feel satisfied that they themselves have paid to see it (a recent example being James Cameron's \textit{Avatar}). The audience leave the cinema without being concerned about what they felt or thought during the film, but were simply satisfied to have been entertained.

So what is it that excludes Alfred Hitchcock and other film-makers such as Orson Welles, Stanley Kubrick, and Martin Scorcese from this? Though Hitchcock is one of the most successful directors to have worked in Hollywood and his films hugely commercial, his fundamental motive was not to create something that would make him the most money. Hitchcock was concerned with using the Hollywood system to explore to what extent his films could take his audience. Though his concern for spectator enjoyment was very important, his concern for creating his world view was just as

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{61} Colin MacCabe, 2001, p. 99
\textsuperscript{62} Richard Brody, 2008, p. 302
\end{flushleft}
prevalent. He never ceased to make films, probably because he simply couldn't. He was a master of form and of controlling his audience. He was concerned with art and cinema history, and with the future of cinema as art, as we can see in *Vertigo* (1958). He revised his cinematic language and went back to basics with *Psycho* (1960), and returned to his roots in London with this masterpiece *Frenzy* (1972). Like Godard and other film-makers of the New Wave, Hitchcock's life and cinema were closely intertwined and though his films were incredibly successful commercially, they were and still remain art, and Hitchcock himself an artist.

The same year Hitchcock released his very successful (both critically and financially) *Vertigo*, Orson Welles, another idol of the New Wave critics, released *Touch of Evil* (1958), directed and cast himself as the main villain alongside Charlton Heston and Janet Leigh. Unlike Hitchcock, Welles wasn't given the same liberties and control over the final film, especially in relation to casting and editing, and in 1998 it was restored and re-edited meticulously according to Welles notebook. However at the time, like Godard with many of his films like *Les Mepris*, Welles accepted that for the piece to succeed in distribution and to financially support it, he needed to compromise. We can see in Tim Burton's comedy biography of cult film maker Ed Wood, a meeting between Wood and Welles in which Welles jokes of the ridiculous request of the producers to cast Charlton Heston as a Mexican. From Welles we can see how it is often necessary for directors to compromise and to work on purely commercial projects to make enough money to make films, but this is not to say the product is always bad. Orson Welles often acted to raise money as in *The Third Man*, where he was notoriously absent for much of the filming, yet what he produced when on screen was a supremely memorable performance.

Similarly, Godard produced some work with the pure intention of making money, but to make money for other artistic endeavors. However, what is fascinating about it is that he does not try to hide this fact, on the contrary he uses the notion in the film itself. His emotional detachment comes through in the film in the most interesting of fashions. *Detective*, released in 1985, was made with the main aim of producing a film with movie stars to gross enough money to finish his deeply personal film *Hail Mary* (1985). From these contradicting opinions of admiration and disdain toward mainstream cinema, we can logically conclude that his philosophy on popular cinema is similar to his philosophy towards art; that Godard is not interested in art history but rather is interested in art in history. This approach is common in Godard's frame of thought. It can correspond to what I said earlier in relation to Godard not making political films but rather making films politically. A phrase to cover this entire strata would be that Godard's work is 'less about doing
something different than about doing the same thing, differently” which is what Serge Daney describes as Godard's utopia. A place (may it be metaphysical or physical) in which people are demanded to question everything and to not give up everything they know and do, but rather do the same things differently. The work does not show us how to move forward, it simply encourages it. With work like *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* we are not shown anything new, we are demanded to look back at what we all know and what we all find familiar, yet through juxtaposition and our understanding of society as it is to us now, what we have always seen as usual and familiar becomes something else, something different. Godard has not shown us anything new yet we have never understood any of it like he has made us understand it. But this is not anything new, Godard just does it differently. He is not a prophet, he is an inventor. 'Godard “invented” (indeed cobbled together) the current shape of our perception of images and sound”.

Godard in his early years was simply ahead of an inevitable curve, he was never entirely prophetic. Although we can see an accurate prediction of the events of May 1968 in films such as *Week-end* and especially *La Chinoise*, the ideals presented to us in the films do not bear fruit in the long run. '...when his films become more political, crafty though he was, he came up against the same naivety and dead-ends as many other “Maoists” of the age” Again, Godard was not a cinematic prophet, but he could have easily been labeled one by intellectual Marxist; most notable the group of Maoists attending Ecole Normale Supérieure (France's most prestigious liberal-art college) at that time, yet he deliberately avoided this label. 'If Godard, like Rossellini in his day, had given up his starting point (cinema) and had let himself be proclaimed a preacher or a prophet, his image would be more clear-cut. But he has consciously resisted being categorized in this way”.

So where does Socrates stand in relation to this? We do know that in his final speech that Socrates claimed to have the gift of prophesy but only in the belief that men that are about to die have been given the power to do so. 'And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power”. But what about Socrates as a prophet before this point? His biography as seen through both Plato and Xenophon, has the elements of a Christian martyr. He claimed to be guided by Godly voices or a *daimon* or a kind of conscience. He indeed anticipated both the Stoics and the Cynics as schools of thought, somewhat more successfully than Godard anticipated the student uprising in Paris in 1968.

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63 Serge Daney, 2001, p. 70
64 Serge Daney, 2001, p. 70
65 Serge Daney, 2001, p. 70
66 Serge Daney, 2001, p. 70.
67 Plato, *Apology*. 
This is only successful for Socrates in that virtue and contempt, respective to the Stoics and Cynics, were more successful than Maoism to the students of Paris. So perhaps it is also logical to comprehend Socrates, like Godard, as an inventor. An inventor of a new way of thinking, a new logic, based on the dialectics of the past, for in the same way Godard did not invent cinema, Socrates was not the first to use dialectics. In Plato's text *Parmenides*, Socrates is subjected to such treatment to which we attribute Socrates himself putting other through, but by the philosopher Zeno who was a student of Parmenides. Also in Platos's *Symposium*, Socrates speaks of a wise woman named Diotima, who taught him in the ways of love through the process of dialectics. As we can see, from Socrates to Nietzsche, Rossellini to Welles, Godard is truly the synthesis of all the above, but in turn becomes a new question for the viewers. The strongest dialectic perhaps is that between Godard and his audience, through dialogue and through the image-question itself.

In relation to dialectics, Godard's career has proven be within a Hegelian form, the films from the sixties being only the beginning of a series contradicting styles and subjects, each ones becoming the synthesis of a former. To only acknowledge the films from the sixties is to deny an artist appreciation for his greatest work. Immediately after his cinematic period of the sixties Godard went into collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin, a French Maoist who's relentless passion to create a completely new type of cinema based on politics. Godard who was already making blatantly Maoist films, now started directing films that seem to be the synthesis of the films of Soviet film-maker Dziga Vertov and structuralist theory that had emerged in the early seventies. These politically rigid and impenetrable (due to huge volume of information and opposing sounds and images) films were not successful, artistically or politically, however the process of making this work influenced Godard's practice and his partnership with Gorin would later prove invaluable. 'Above all, Gorin brought Godard a new philosophical perspective . Through their discussions, Godard was prompted to reconsider the cinema from a historical point of view. Prior to his partnership with Gorin, Godard's historicism was aestheticized: drawing on Langlois's synoptic approach at the Cinémathèque, Godard drew freely on moments from films he loved to make his current preoccupations converge with his cinematic passions. Gorin, however, brought theoretical rigor to Godard's absorption in the history of cinema working with him to correlate aesthetics with politics. The failure, or success in relation to Godard's development and understanding, of these films is the dominance of sound over image. First explored by Godard in 1969 with *British Sounds*, image and sound are in contradiction with each other as they seem not to relate. This dialectic, though unsuccessful, later formed a synthesis, the use of the synapse between sound and image to

69 Richard Brody, 2008, p. 349
create an effect not possible to create with the correlation of the two.

After much work and little success, Godard and Gorin would discard the adopted name of Dziga Vertov and return to a more conventional cinema with the film *Tout Va Bien* (1972), starring Jane Fonda and Yves Montand. This film seems to have come from the desire to make a film politically yet engaging the viewers through the use of a linear narrative, something completely absent in the Dziga Vertov films. It is the synthesis of Godard's Hollywood period of the sixties and the militant Maoist films of the Dziga Vertov Group.

Godard never stops making, from 1954 to today he has made at least one film or video a year with the exception of some time between 1972 and 1974. This was due to his serious motorcycle accident and his move from Paris to Grenoble with his partner (and from that moment on, the single most influential person in his life) Ann-Marie Miélville. This was Godard's escape to nothing, his place of silence and solitude where he could start fresh. 'The move was as much the refuge of a convalescent as a withdrawal from the turbulence of ideological exhortation'\textsuperscript{70}. It brings up the point in itself, the contradictions in Godard's nationality, in Paris he wasn't entirely French and when in Grenoble he is the Swiss man who is known for being a French film-maker.

Video took precedence in Godard's practice as it allowed him to make moving photographic notebooks with such ease that he could take it out into more rural and natural landscapes. He could practice image composition and camera movements with such ease, and even create story boards with video, and it was this that informed his work in the future from *Slow Motion* (1980) to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998). Godard when talking about these videos said 'These films, they're from before the work, not after. The elements of the salad, not the salad... It isn't even a sketch. It's the eraser, the paper to make the sketch'\textsuperscript{71}

Godard and Miélville soon started making work for television. It may seem like a regression to go from cinema to television, however for Godard, he did not feel this was the case. Cinema for Godard was always the same environment as the market place was for Socrates. This is where people feel the can naturally consume the best visual imagery, however in the seventies the television had become the most dominant source of moving imagery and had become hugely commercial, 'television had taken over for the cinema as the principle mode of audiovisual

\textsuperscript{70} Richard Brody, 2008, p. 374
\textsuperscript{71} Richard Brody 2008, p. 390
communication and for the press as the prime source of information\textsuperscript{72}. But also, Rossellini (who I have discussed earlier as being influential on Godard) also turned to television in 1962 and throughout the sixties made films that marked the major figures in the history of western civilization, including Socrates\textsuperscript{73}. The most successful of their television work is possibly \textit{France tour détour deux enfants} (1979), where the interview we see in his earlier films is transformed into something completely different. Godard interviews two school children asking them questions that seem inappropriate for children, mostly of political but also philosophical orientation.

His working with video and for television became the thesis to which the antithesis was his films of the sixties, and from which developed the synthesis of \textit{Slow Motion} (1980), Godard's return to the cinema but with a new aesthetic language learned through the use of video. Dealing with many issues dealt with in films such as \textit{Vivre sa vie} and \textit{Two or Three Things I Know about Her...} it approaches them with a blend of domestic and rural imagery, taking from the beautiful Swiss landscape. Images slow down, stop, speed up, go in reverse, desynchronize with sound, all devices not comprehended by Godard until his exploration with video. He creates film through the eyes of video. It has been described as Godard's second first film\textsuperscript{74}(his first first film being \textit{Breathless}).

Godard continued to make films in this way with many great films exploring themes such as cinema's place as art in history with his film \textit{Passion} (1982), and with films such as \textit{Dectective} (1985) he explores the interrogative qualities of video and cinema through a play on genre and use of film stars. \textit{Dectective} however was a film aiming to be commercial in order to raise money for a more personal film \textit{Hail Mary} (1985). As his films progress (continuously in this Hegelian manner) they continually become ever more personal but before they became truly great he began working on his biggest project to date, \textit{Histoire(s) du cinéma} (1988-1998).

The idea of \textit{Histoire(s) du cinéma} was conceived in Montreal while giving seminars, a decade before he would start making the videos. \textit{Histoire(s) du cinéma}, Godard's telling of the story of cinema, makes many political stances and raises many philosophical issues, however what I find is most important is the new visual language Godard develops through the appropriation of both Hollywood and European cinema as well as found footage and some newly recorded footage (especially in the later episodes). Dialectics play a huge part in these videos through the montage (montage in a Godardian sense, that being simultaneous ideas presented to use through opposing

\textsuperscript{72} Richard Brody, 2008, p. 377
\textsuperscript{73} Colin McCabe, 2003, p. 254
\textsuperscript{74} Richard Brody, 2008, p. 589
and furthermore when these sequences of montage are in conflict with the text that is layered on top of the images or by themselves in the black void used in between images to create a visual rhythm. All these visuals are given further meaning when the music and voices we hear are added to the layers of information being presented to us. When *Histoire(s) du cinéma* comes to an end in 1998 it marked the end of another period of Godard's career, however through the process of telling the story of cinema, this would allow Godard enter into a new cinema, a cinema full of nostalgia yet at the same time is looking forward.

The film is *Eloge de l'amour* (though part of it is made in with video), released in 2001, and it marks Godard's third first film. *Eloge de l'amour* is Godard's masterpiece in the sense that it is the synthesis of over forty years of film making. It is both nostalgic and fresh as much of it deals with history, yet Godard sees history through its traces in the present. I feel this sense of historicity is what makes this film so beautiful, as discussed in the Baudelaiare quote on the duality of beauty in chapter two. It is also the perfect blend of audience accessibility, of intellectualism, and of aesthetic richness that is possible through simplicity, as opposed to the complex layering of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

The texts from which *Eloge de l'amour* is composed are more exposed than in Godard's other films; they are less overwhelmed by music and less obscured by other texts or other sounds. The dominance of text marks a significant application of the hard-won method of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. *Eloge de l'amour* is, principally, the setting of texts in images and performances and situations that reveal the full extent of their emotional power and intellectual significance... The film is purified of complications, as if to bring to the fore the historical elements and artifacts, the controlled chains of associations and the layers of time, of which it is comprised.

We can see from the quote that emphasis is put on the text, more so than any of his other films. Godard spent a lot more time on preparatory work for *Eloge de l'amour* than any other film, with a particular focus on the story, which in the end became a synthesis of the earlier versions. Also a lot of work went into the casting, from which the screen tests themselves make it into the film. These screen tests posses the same composition of many of the interview and interrogation scenes in his films from the sixties. The media used also becomes dialectical, as the first part of the film is shot in stunning monochrome, then the narrative moves to two years earlier for the second section and the images burst with fiery, bleeding colors achieved with simple digital video technology. It is the perfect synthesis of film and video; a film of nostalgic black and white images of paris which

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75 Richard Brody, 2008, p. 589
76 Richard Brody, 2008, p. 605
Godard has not filmed since the sixties, and a digital video of vibrant colors that make the Brittany landscapes look like a fauvist painting. *Eloge de l’amour* is truly Godard's greatest piece of work in relation to the 'film/documentary/essay/poem' form.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{Fig. 5} Black and white film, *Eloge de l’amour*  
(Images taken from DVD, Optimum Home Entertainment, 2002)

\textbf{Fig. 6} Digital video creates a Fauvist landscape, *Eloge de l’amour*  
(Images taken from DVD, Optimum Home Entertainment, 2002)

\textsuperscript{77} Colin MacCabe, 2001, p. 99
Conclusion

The basic topic is simple: like Major Amberson, like Godard; like the millennium we confront a death which poses the most urgent questions about art and the film/documentary/essay/poem then pursues a series of possible deaths of art... But these elegies, these celebrations of the dead, do not look back but forward.  

These series of possible deaths, as signaled in the quote above, are not pessimistic, but rather, look forward. Godard's art has always found itself lamenting a past yet heralding a new era, floating between the recent past and the near future, a future that is nostalgic but with the knowledge of retrospect. This makes us question if we really understand something just because we lived through it. This seemingly endless cycle of death and rebirth of art could be deemed philosophically pessimistic. Bertrand Russell talks about pessimists exclaiming the futility of such paradoxical cycles. Russell quotes Ecclesiastes as a grounding for intellectual pessimism:

The rivers run into the sea;  
yet the sea is not full.  
There is no new thing under the sun.  
There is no remembrance of former things.  
I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun:  
because I should leave it unto the man that should be after me.

...all the rivers run into the sea,  
yet the sea is not full;  
Unto the place from whence the river come,  
thither they return again.

Godard of course did not share this philosophy. Even though the subjects his work deals with are often negative, critical or politically bleak, the films or videos themselves; the imagery, the poetry, the love of the medium, and in his more recent work, the love of love itself, resist and filter any pessimism, protecting the viewers from such feelings of contempt. Godard surely does immerse himself in the idea of cinema being dead and believes a new cinema can formed from the remains. In a sense, that we are sublimely positioned between the inevitability of death and rebirth, however, like Russell, Godard is not pessimistic. As Russell says in contradiction to the above quote from Ecclesiastes, that if it is to be 'regarded as a ground for pessimism, this assumes that travel is unpleasant'.

When I initially began working on this thesis, I had the intention of studying Godard's practice in

78 Colin MacCabe, 2001, p. 99
79 Bertrand Russell, 1930, p. 16
relation to the use of interview and interrogation as a reflection of Godard's personal philosophy and politics. As my research progressed I began myself asking 'what exactly is an interview', which brought me to the foundations of western thinking with the texts of Plato, and found that interview in these texts took the form of Socratic dialectics. I soon realized that dialectics have had a huge impact on Godard's work and practice. If interview and interrogation are a reflection of Godard's philosophy and politics, then dialectics are the driving force of these two. This thesis traces the lines of dialectical thought throughout history in the context of Godard's films and videos, and from this study I now believe that it is through dialectics that Godard has reached the point of film making that are essentially philosophical essays in image form.

Though Hitchcock's Rear Window (1954) can be seen as an analogy of empirical versus rationalist philosophy, or though Kubricks A Clockwork Orange (1971)\(^80\) takes from Plato's Republic, these films, like thousands of others, have elements and examples of philosophical thought. However, what I have concluded in this thesis is that the films of Jean-Luc Godard, though not initially, have transcended this. Through the theory of dialectics Godard's films have moved from exemplifying philosophy to actually becoming philosophy in its very form. Though Godard refers mostly to Marx, I have found that Hegelian dialectics are most applicable to his practice. He has never stopped re-inventing himself, and in doing so contradicting himself. His techniques, his philosophies, his politics, his aesthetics have no coherence throughout his oeuvre and it seems the only constant is that he is always changing.

Yet these changes are not erratic experimentation, they are hugely considered, concrete (even in Hegelian terms) decisions. They are the syntheses of numerous theses and antitheses including philosophers (Marx, Plato, Nietzsche), writers (Sartre, de Beauvoir, Camus), film makers (Hitchcock, Welles, Rossellini), and so on. Yet these changes occur also because of political climates and his personal life. I have concluded that Godard's entire oeuvre is a constant flux because of its intimate links with the theory of dialectics.

Eloge de l'amour was poorly received when it was first released and this rejection inspired an unfortunate regression for Godard artistry. His next film Notre Musique (2004), consists of three parts, the second based mainly in Sarajevo, and it deals with the Isreali-Palastinian conflict. Though Eloge de l'amour deals with many issues surrounding Jewish history and the aftermath of the holocaust from an anti-semitic perspective, it does so in a reflective and inquisitive manner (it asks

\(^{80}\) Christopher Falzon, 2002, p. 19-40
as opposed to preach), *Notre Musique* does not work in this manner. Richard Brody describes the film as follows:

*Notre Musique* is a diatribe under the guise of a mediation, a work of vituperative prejudice disguised as calm reflection, a work of venom dressed up as a masque. After the rejection of his best, loftiest, most conciliatory work, *Eloge de l'amour*, Godard took his rejection out on the old targets, Jews.\(^1\)

It seem the isolation Godard felt after the rejection of *Eloge de l'amour* drove him to get back in touch with the intellectual French youth as he did in the 1968 when he made *La Chinoise*. However, *Notre Musique* was much better received than *Eloge de l'amour* and this meant Godard became more than just and out of touch film maker and so praise was eventually awarded in an almost posthumous manner (as the style of *Eloge de l'amour* seems to have died in *Notre Musique*).

\(^1\) Richard Brody, 2008, p. 623
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