

-Kitap İncelemeleri.Book Reviews-

Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History

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Staring at the past with cinema is looking at lost stories, uncharted minor histories, that are small memory fragments of lives lost and worlds forgotten. This effort allows us to reach an ethical awareness that is beyond what is expected. Recorded history as we know it does not offer a symmetrical relationship with the memory of the world at all. On the contrary, this relationship is constructed with an asymmetrical distortion in favour of the powerful. Hegemonic power consolidates its legitimacy through these asymmetries. The understanding of linear historiography may ignore alternative practices of looking at the past, and it reproduces inequalities repeatedly. David Martin-Jones, in his book "Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History", discusses the cinema's power to reveal the lost, forgotten, erased, unrecorded or even eradicated histories. Martin-Jones consults two primary conceptual references in his analysis: The first is Enrique Dussel's 'transmodern ethics', and the other is Gilles Deleuze's 'time-image'. Through these concepts, the author explains how doublethink works and, illustrates how cinema reveals the doublethink throughout history. The book's main idea is quite transparent: to reconsider and criticise the Eurocentric way of looking at the world history we assume that we know via utilising cinema's time-images. Martin-Jones launches an ethical and empathetic dialogue with the other by revealing doublethink, or as he puts it, "unthinking of doublethink" (p. 15). There are three main parts following the Introduction. Under each part, there are two separate chapters, a total of six chapters and a conclusion, which were designed by adhering to the taxonomy that Martin-Jones built based on his theoretical references.

The Introduction brings critical concepts for the readership to understand the book's main idea. Martin-Jones uses Deleuze's concept of time-image in a specific context and discusses its political potential through Jacques Rivette's film *Celine and Julie Go Boating* and *Ciro Guera's Embrace of the Serpent*. In both films, time-image crystallises time and paves the way for thinking about different temporal possibilities. Therefore, cinema has the power to crystallise actual time with crystal images and reveals the virtual possibilities of time. While doublethink hides lost pasts of history, cinema's crystal images could have the potential to reveal them and reach the memory of these lost worlds. More precisely, while doublethink transforms the virtual past into a single history/narrative, crystal image divides this history/narrative into other multiplicities/mazes, breaking the bending power of official history and reaching the world's virtual memory. For this very reason, Martin-Jones uses cinema's time-images against doublethink. Because knowing the other and being able to empathise with the other is possible by knowing the other's stories. The 'Other' may be a forgotten indigenous civilisation, or even it may be the planet itself as an ecological entity.

Thus, how we understand modernity also affects how we interpret history. How we interpret history affects how we see the world. The way we make sense of the world constructs our connection with the Other. In this sense, Martin-Jones emphasises that the Hegelian understanding of history surrounds us and reproduces the Eurocentric worldview. For Deleuze, Hegelian transcendental ontology reduces the multiplicities to the singularity.

Because historically, Hegel's philosophy is derived from the Eurocentric colonialist idea of progression. In other words, Hegel's understanding of history results from an idealised Eurocentric worldview. For the author, a problem in Western thought is Cartesian ethics, which reduces otherness to a sameness instead of defining the other in its own otherness, in its own time. The relationship between history and philosophy empowers each other symbiotically. Martin-Jones emphasises that Western history, Eurocentric idea, and Cartesian ego are siblings. The Cartesian ego is the ontological root of the Eurocentric idea that wrote the official World history. The author discusses the idea that we need philosophical decolonisation in order to criticise colonialist history.

In part "Entrances to the Past", the author builds his theoretical framework over Dussel and Deleuze. In Chapter 1, History/Ethics, Dussel is the first step of this study in the context of integrating ethics into a historical perspective. Dussel's approach to history explains the relationality between Western philosophy, colonial modernity and thus Europe and the Other. The implicit relationship between the Cartesian ego and Eurocentric expansionism hides inequalities in world history. The thinking I (Cogito) also reduces and swallows the other to the same I. Thus, the modernist paradigm covers up the colonial roots of history. Dussel's concept of transmodern ethics is necessary to build a transnational understanding of history and could be the first step against the doublethink for philosophical decolonisation. The scope of Chapter 2, Ethics/History, is the crystal image concept that Gilles Deleuze conceptualises under his time-image category. The concept of the virtual, one of the most critical concepts of Deleuze's philosophy, is quite critical for us to understand the concept of crystal image here. The virtual can be thought of as a time labyrinth that will enable us to consider alternatives to the actual present. We should think of the time-image in relation to the concept of doublethink. Martin-Jones emphasises that the Hegelian idea, the essence of Western-centered paradigms, reduces history to a single linear sequence. This linear sequence also crosses out the lost minor stories in history, reproducing doublethink repeatedly. Other histories, or other possibilities of history, are eradicated under the singular and dominant sequence, which could also be called official history. Therefore, hegemonic authority prevents our criticism/questioning of the present. That is why we need to witness the virtual labyrinths of history with time-images and understand the stories that have never been told by seeing them from other perspectives of other beings. We need to understand the world of cinema in a way to understand the memory of the world. Maybe this could save us from the traps of doublethink.

In the second and third parts, the author frames the discussion with his unique taxonomy conceptualised through contract theory. To create an ethical encounter with the crystal images of cinema, he discusses the world of cinema through four central contracts: natural contract, racial contract, social contract, and personal contract. Each of these contracts conceptualises an ethical encounter. The natural contract is encountering earthly pasts; the racial contract is encountering other pasts; the social contract is encountering political pasts; the personal contract is encountering bodily pasts.

The first of these, the natural contract, approaches the relationship of Anthropocene with the world from an ecocritical perspective. In Chapter 3, the films *Uncle Boonme Who can Recall His Past Lives* and *Nostalgia for the Light* are discussed in the context of the natural contract and as an invitation to an ethical encounter with the world's memory. Some of their scenes and shots have been interpreted by the author as 'any-space-whatevers' which are framed like an affective close-up. In Chapter 4, the films *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* and *Even the Rain* are discussed in the context of the racial contract. The focus of this episode is to confront the historical roots of racism and otherness by tracing colonialist modernity in films with the concept of 'opsign'.

The main focus of the third part is to create an ethical encounter with the Cold War era in the context of the social contract. Chapter 5 discusses colonialism and its imperialist extensions through the documentaries of *Act of Killing* and *At the Food of the White Tree*. Chapter 6 discusses neoliberal globalisation in the context of the personal contract with *the films of Carancho* and *Lady Vengeance*.

In his book, Martin-Jones revisits all films from the idea “that the coloniality of power functions by freeing itself of its past so that it can repeat its former abuses with impunity” (p. 208). Looking at the past with the crystal images of cinema will enable us to see doublethink and make us doubt the hegemonic narrative of history that has been reduced to a single sequence. Even though the histories of the Other are tried to be destroyed and erased, films continue to preserve their virtual existence in memories. ‘World of cinemas’, in a sense conceptualised by Martin Jones, can enable us to reach these memories and lost histories.

Our need to access lost histories and the memory of the world with cinema is not only essential to see doublethink in history but also to understand our present and be aware of the past while building the future, especially in the post-truth era, where misinformation is so dominant. It is still important today to see the neocolonial face of the neoliberal world. Because in the Bergsonian sense, the present still carries the traces of the past. We need hesitation and rethink to see how much our ways of making sense of the world depend on structured narratives. Moreover, we need such powers that can deterritorialize our structured beliefs about history. Martin-Jones shows us a new path by considering history with Dusselian ethics and Deleuze’s time-images in cinema and discussing the ‘world of cinema’ with his unique taxonomy. Through this taxonomy, this work may offer new methods for film studies and historiography. Therefore, we could say that cinema is not just cinema; on the contrary, it could be a valuable road map to living in a more ethical, equal, and sustainable world.

References

Martin-Jones, D. (2019). *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Past of World History*. London, Routledge