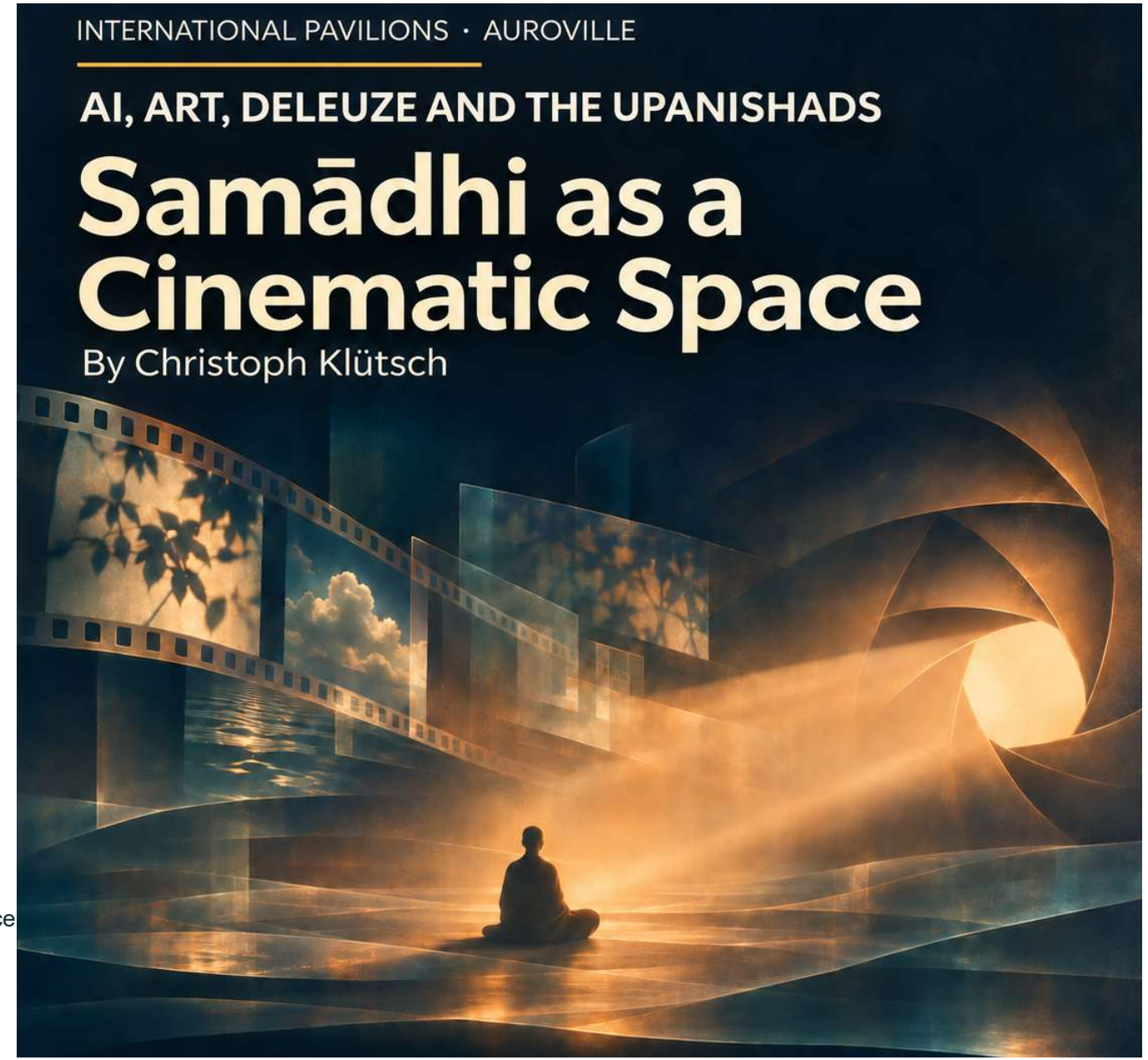
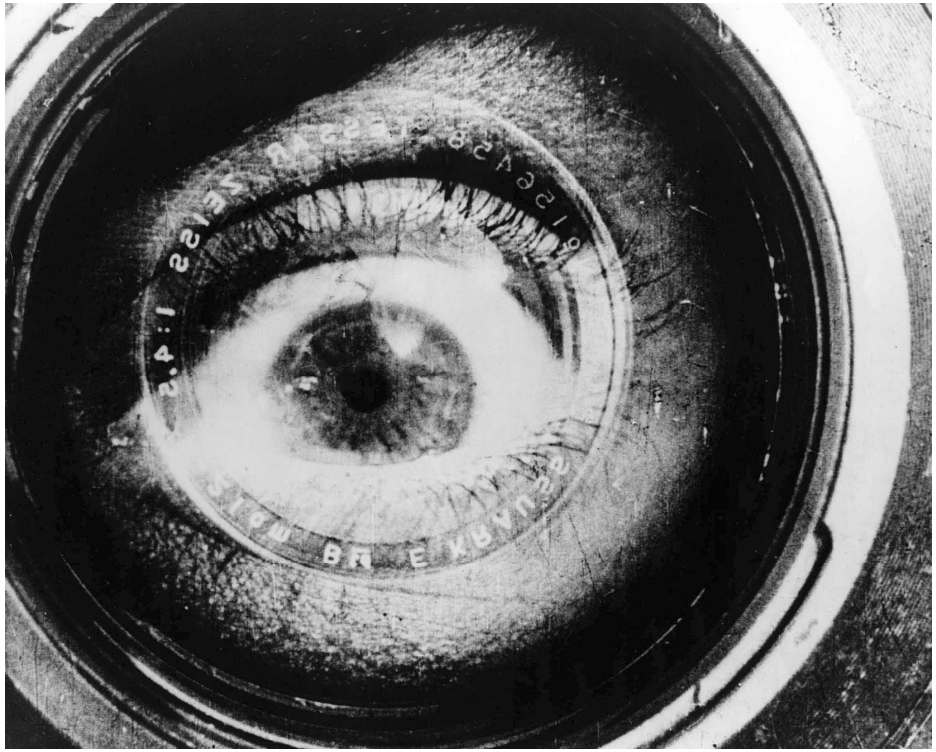


Samādhi as cinematic space

Man with a Movie Camera

Dziga Vertov · 1929



Who produces the visible world?

Camera, montage, urban activity and spectatorship enter the visible event. Perception becomes distributed across people and machines. This challenges an independent observer standing outside the processes observed.

Black-and-white silent film, 35 mm

TV Buddha

Nam June Paik · 1974



Witnessing or feedback?

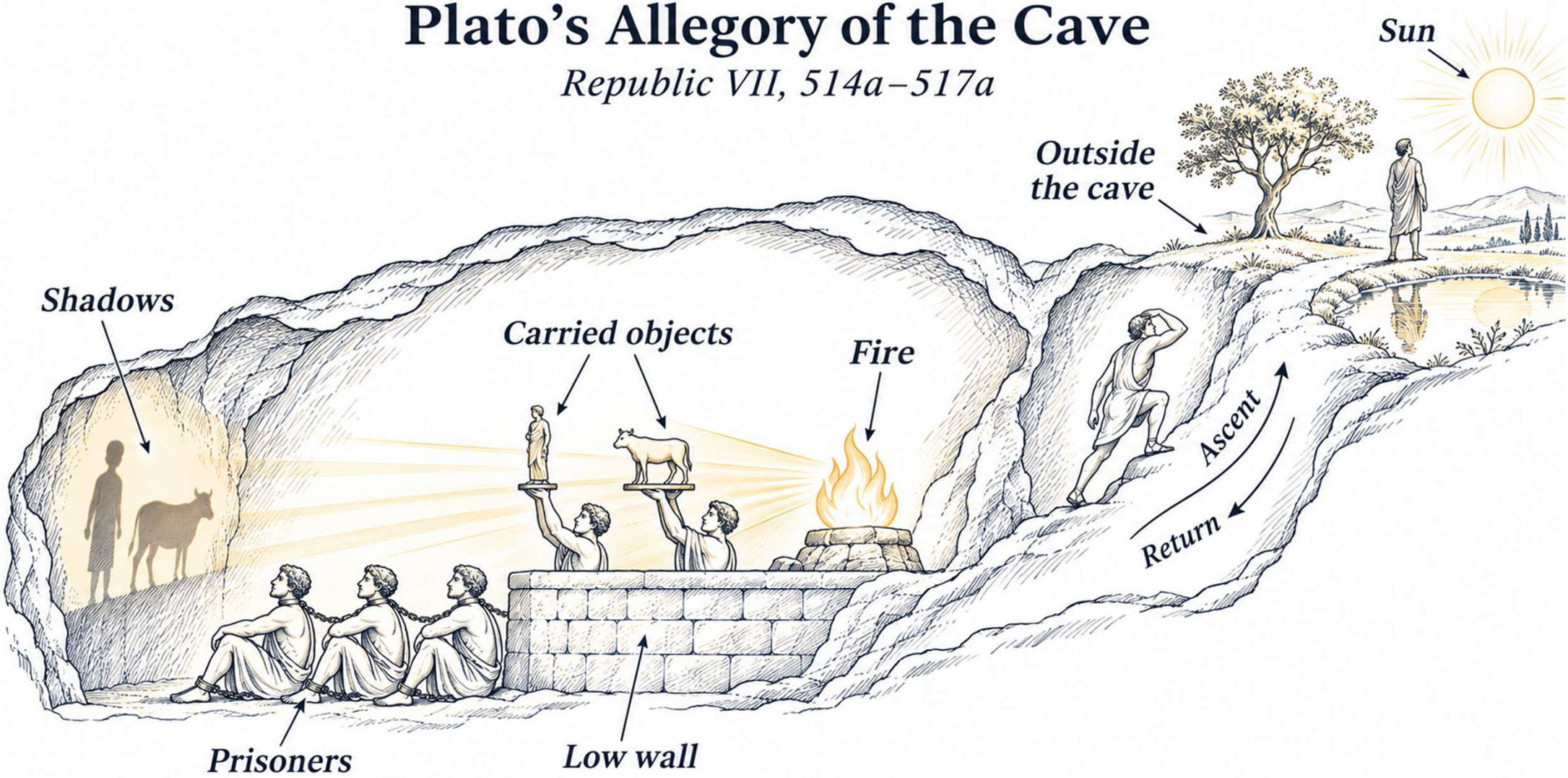
A Buddha faces its live televised image. Alongside the Upanishadic two birds, this asks whether watching oneself constitutes witnessing or another loop of identification. Contemplation and technological feedback remain in tension.

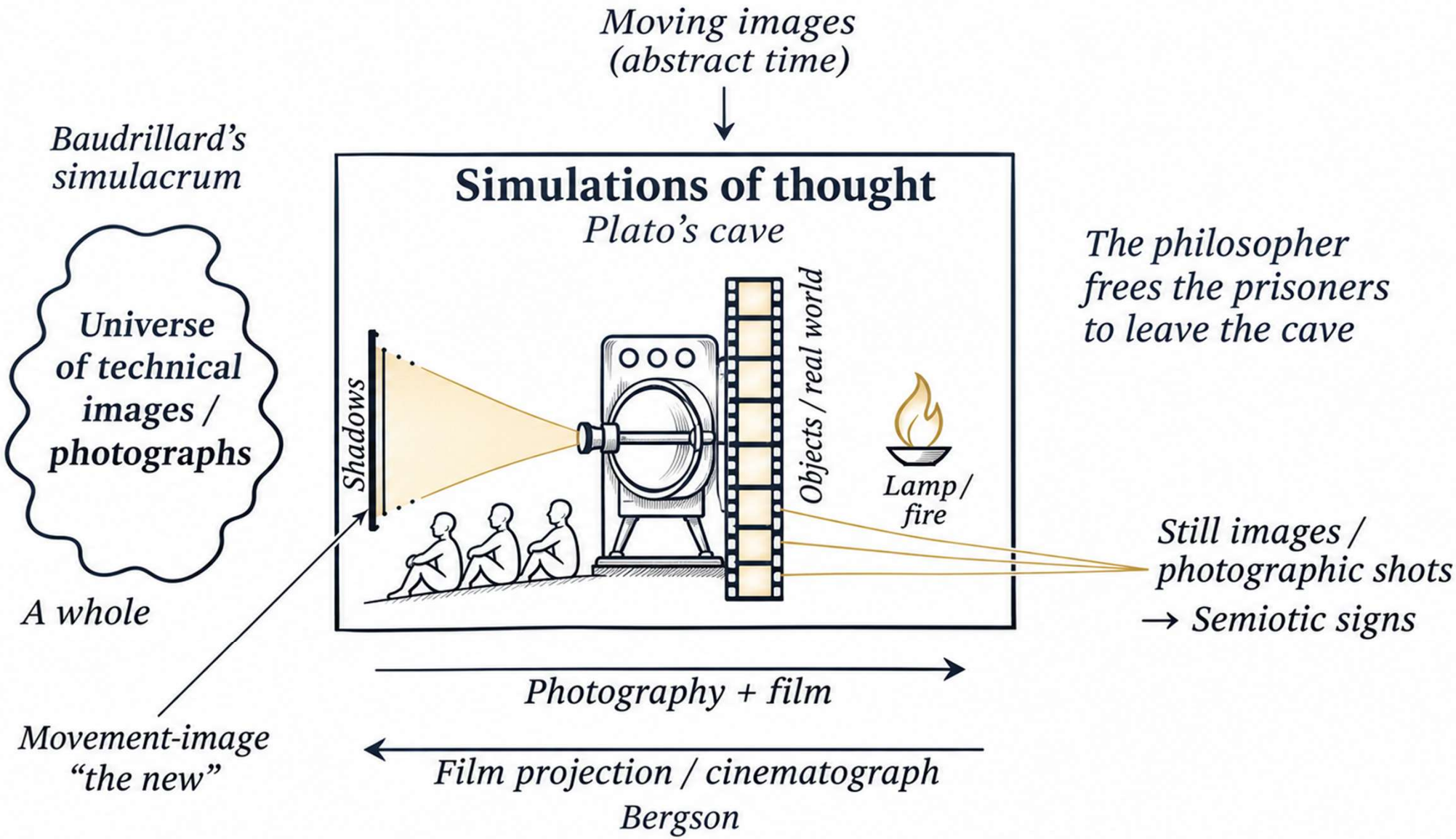
Buddha statue, CCTV camera and television



Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Republic VII, 514a–517a




Moving images
(abstract time)
Baudrillard's
simulacrum
Simulations of thought
Plato's cave
The philosopher
frees the prisoners
to leave the cave
Universe
of technical
images /
photographs
Shadows
Objects / real world
Lamp /
fire
Still images /
photographic shots
→ Semiotic signs
A whole
Photography + film
Movement-image
"the new"
Film projection / cinematograph
Bergson

Nooshock (from *nous,* the Greek word for mind or intellect) is the violent jolt that shatters the sensori-motor scheme and forces the brain to think.

“It is only when movement becomes automatic that the artistic essence of the image is realized: producing a shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system directly. Because the cinematographic image itself 'makes' movement, because it makes what the other arts are restricted to demanding (or to saying), it brings together what is essential in the other arts; it inherits it, it is as it were the directions for use of the other images, it converts into potential what was only possibility. Automatic movement gives rise to a spiritual automaton in us, which reacts in turn on movement.' The spiritual automaton no longer designates - as it does in classical philosophy - the logical or abstract possibility of formally deducing thoughts from each other, but the circuit into which they enter with the movement-image, the shared power of what forces thinking and what thinks under the shock; a nooshock. Heidegger said: 'Man can think in the sense that he possesses the possibility to do so. This possibility alone, however, is no guarantee to us that we are capable of thinking.':! It is this capacity, this power, and not the simple logical possibility, that cinema claims to give us in communicating the shock. It is as if cinema were telling us: with me, with the movement-image, you can't escape the shock which arouses the thinker in you.”

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, chapter 7, “Thought and cinema”

Samadhi or Yogic trance retires to increasing depths according as it draws farther and farther away from the normal or waking state and enters into degrees of consciousness less and less communicable to the waking mind, less and less ready to receive a summons from the waking world. Beyond a certain point the trance becomes complete and it is then almost or quite impossible to awaken or call back the soul that has receded into
them; it can only come back by its own will or at most by a violent shock of physical appeal dangerous to the system owing to the abrupt upheaval of return. There are said to be supreme states of trance in which the soul persisting for too long a time cannot return; for it loses its hold on the cord which binds it to the consciousness of life, and the body is left, maintained indeed in its set position, not dead by dissolution, but incapable of recovering the ensouled life which had inhabited it.

Sir Aurobindo Synthesis of Yoga XXIV p. 520f.

Shock and spiritual automation

- In Samadhi as well as in cinema we are in state of trance
- Both are spaces without the ego, there is no thinker, it's a motion of thoughts, sensations, awareness – spiritual automation
- We need a shock to get out into thinking
- Sri Aurobindo suggests that Samadhi is only one deep form of mediation which needs to be integrated into wake consciousness
- Deleuze says that the Nooshock forces us to think in a meaning full way to think about the whole as such (Godard 4th wall)

Participation and witnessing



One eats. One watches. Who is the observer?

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.1–2; Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4.6–7.

The gradations of consciousness

ASCENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS ↑ ↓ DESCENT INTO NATURE

Sachchidananda	Existence, consciousness-force, delight
Supermind	Integral truth-consciousness and knowledge by identity
Overmind	Cosmic unity expressed through distinct powers
Intuition	Immediate contact with truth
Illumined Mind	Spiritual vision and illumination
Higher Mind	Luminous spiritual thought
Mind	Conceptual and dividing knowledge
Life / Vital	Life-force, desire, emotion and dynamism
Physical / Matter	Embodied existence and its material basis

A schematic ordering in Sri Aurobindo’s account. Positions indicate relations in consciousness, rather than spatial locations.

What persists across changing experience?

Three changing conditions

Waking presents an outward world.

Dreaming presents an inward world.

Deep sleep suspends differentiated dream experience and desire.

The inquiry into the Self

Turīya

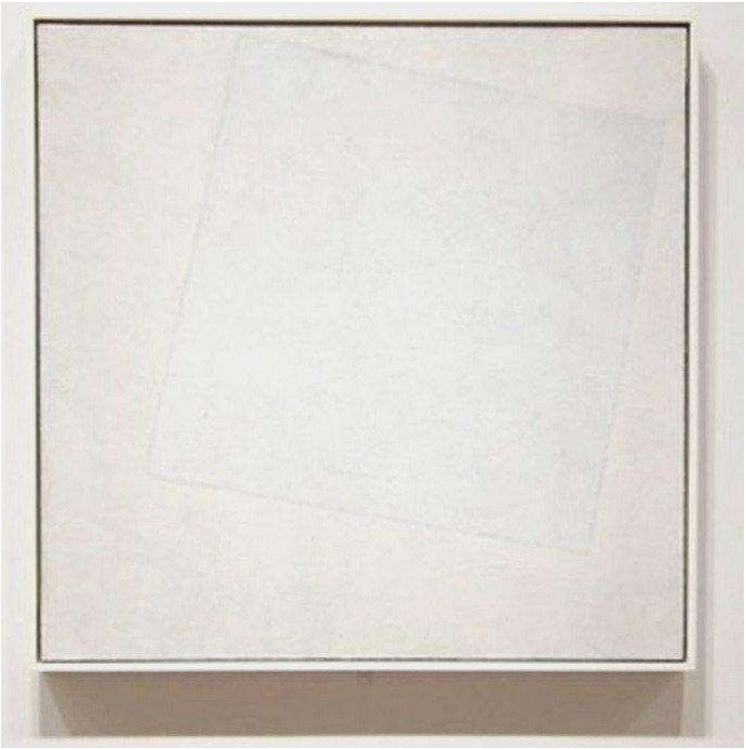
The “fourth” points to the peaceful, nondual Self distinguished from these conditions.

In Advaita, its realisation concerns the reality underlying all three.

Deep sleep and liberating knowledge have different meanings within this inquiry.

White on White

Kazimir Malevich · 1918



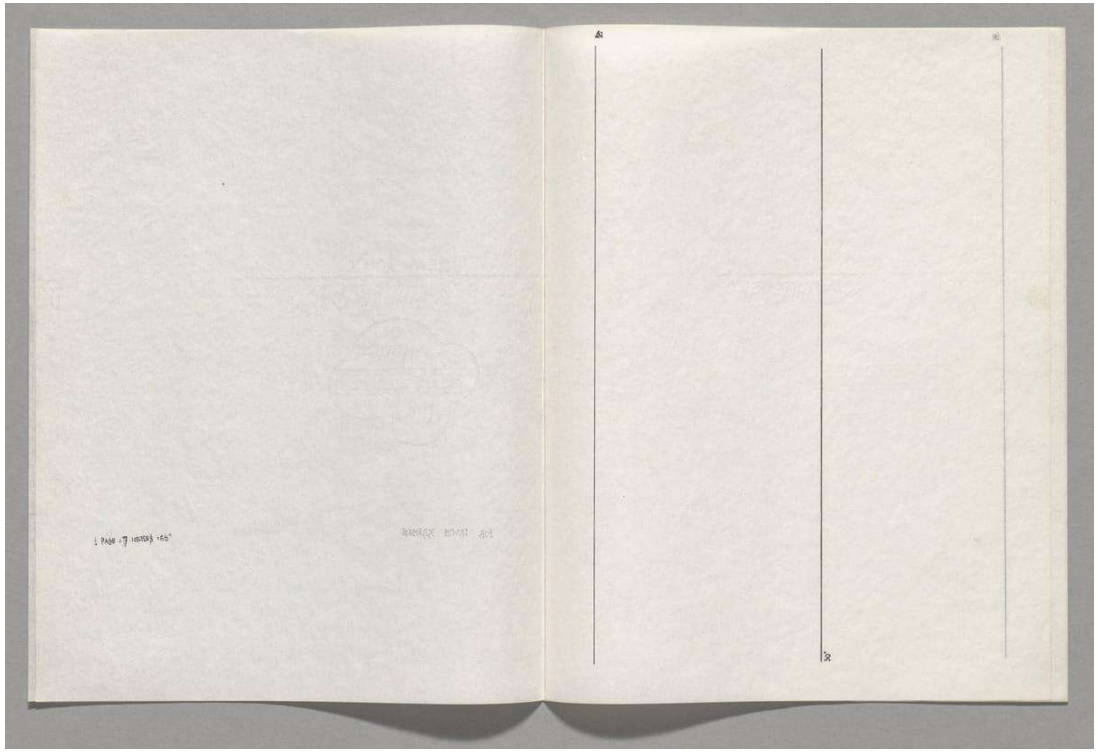
Near-emptiness and subtle difference

The square nearly merges with its ground. Tone, texture and orientation persist. Apparent emptiness can contain subtle differentiation, offering a question for the language of pure consciousness.

Oil on canvas

4'33"

John Cage · 1952 / score 1952–53



Silence opening onto daily life

Withholding intentional musical sound brings environmental sounds into attention. The listener’s relation to ongoing events changes. Silence becomes an opening onto the world, organised by duration and framing.

Composition and performance / ink-on-paper score

Thinking within the cinematic event



Images · projection · bodies · memory · duration

U.A. Walker, New York

Hiroshi Sugimoto · 1978



Duration becoming apparent emptiness

An entire screening accumulates into a luminous screen. What looks empty results from many images. This offers an analogy for asking whether indistinguishable contents imply an absence of experience.

Gelatin silver print