

THE CINEMA IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF ART A MEDIEVAL DISPUTATION¹

INTRODUCTION

CYRIL CUSACK: If walls have ears and windows seem like eyes, the ancient oak panelling and leaded panes of this Old Hall of Lincoln's Inn, where we are gathered by the courtesy of the learned Benchers, have stored up a memory of many a legal inquisition into strange territories of human thought and behaviour. If a tongue could be added to them, they could tell of very diverse causes heard and judgments given upon them. But surely they have seldom if ever witnessed a stranger occasion than this, when that very modern example of human ingenuity and skill, the Cinema, pleads its cause as an art through the medium of a medieval disputation. Such a subject might well seem very far removed from the thinkers of the middle ages and their method of enquiry might well appear ill-chosen to examine its claims. In the sphere of visuals it is surely a far cry from the modern film to the crabbed manuscripts and theological preoccupations of the thirteenth century.

Yet, after all, there is a certain fittingness in the occasion. The Cinema, with all that it stands for, is undoubtedly a great force in modern life, and opinion is very divided as to whether it is a force for good or evil, for the advancement of civilisation and culture or for its impeding and destruction. It is well, therefore, that it should be brought to the bar of judgement and, in that case, it is most fitting that its cause should be heard in this Old Hall of one of the oldest Inns of Court in this ancient city of London. For the Cinema is now on trial as to its claim to be an art, and even the highest form of art; and the canons of art, according to which it must be judged, are laws as firm and as ancient as the true laws of human behaviour. Moreover, little as I could lay claim to expert knowledge of the middle ages, from my own early association with the Dominicans during

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my school years I do know that the thought and method of those times are to be regarded with the greatest respect; so that it seems proper, after all, that the Cinema should be judged through their means.

In accepting the honour of introducing this disputation I see myself invited to hold a watching brief for the defendant, the Cinema, with which I am now so closely associated. Whether the defendant's claim, as put forward by Father Hilary Carpenter, can be upheld, I do not know; like you, I can but wait and hear. In any event I am sure of one thing, namely that the case will be investigated expertly and impartially by both sides. I can therefore confidently invite you to sit back with me, whether in your comfortable chairs at home or on the more austere furnishings of this Old Hall, to enjoy an intellectual feast which will undoubtedly be provided by the Dominican Fathers in their enquiry as to whether the Cinema is the highest form of art.

I gladly make way, so, for the Moderator of the Disputation, Father Kenneth Wykeham-George, O.P.

MODERATOR: In opening this disputation which we are going to conduct in the strict medieval scholastic form I do not think it will be necessary for me to give a detailed description of the method itself. It will perhaps be sufficient to remind you of one or two points which will help you to follow the arguments as they proceed.

In the first place a disputation is not the same thing as a debate. In a debate the issue is one of opposing opinions: the opponents are concerned primarily with their respective points of view; each uses the best arguments he can find to establish his own thesis and to demolish his opponent's. In a disputation on the other hand both parties combine to establish by analysis some objective truth. The thesis is expounded by the defender and attacked by the objector with a dispassionate adherence to the principles of truth and reasoning. Its purpose is to add if possible to the permanent equipment of the mind, that is to say, to add not to the stock of opinions but to the building up of truth in each individual mind. Though Defender and Objector may seem, during the argument, to be in opposing camps, in reality they are combining their forces in a common search for truth.

The basic structure of the disputation is the logical syllogism in which a conclusion is drawn from two related propositions along the lines of the axiom that two things which are equal to a third thing are equal to one another.

But before the actual argument takes place the Defender will give a brief statement of the thesis he is defending. He will define the terms of reference intended by his thesis, and then will outline the main argument or proof for it by giving the principal premisses from which he will draw his conclusion. This evening he is defending the thesis that 'the Cinema is the highest form of art'. Thus he will first of all explain what he means by the terms 'cinema' and 'art' and then he will elaborate the two propositions from which his conclusion 'the cinema is the highest form of art' should logically follow. I might add here that it will be part of his task in his exposition to foresee at least the more obvious objections to his own thesis and to provide his answer to them.

The Objector will begin by attacking the thesis with an argument in strict syllogistic form and will come back to the attack again and again in the manner that was characteristic of the medieval disputation. He will then shift his attack and become less formal: his arguments will now be longer and in a sense more personal, but the defender will still attempt to reduce each new objection to an elementary syllogism and to treat it with that dispassionate logic which is the only guarantee of accuracy of thought.

This evening others present will be invited to suggest objections to the thesis, putting them in strict syllogisms or in a more informal and personal manner.

The normal function of the Moderator in a medieval disputation was to insist on the meticulous observance of the accepted forms and courtesies of debate. This evening it is unlikely that I shall have to intervene in this sense, but as a lawyer myself I shall take the liberty of summing up the outcome of the defence.

Mr Cyril Cusack has already pointed out that this is a rather unusual occasion. It might have been expected that a medieval disputation would have revolved round some subject more obviously appropriate to the thinkers of the middle ages. But among all the quick changes of this unstable world, the things

that matter most are still solid and unchanging; and among them are the principles of truth and of basic human reasoning. Even in the medieval universities the schoolmen were forced to cope with a surprisingly wide range of topics in their academic world of theology, philosophy, science and the arts. They attempted therefore to establish a watertight method of rational investigation which would be equally valid for any subject matter. One of the finest examples of their hierarchic classification of the sciences was achieved by the English Dominican Robert Kilwardby, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his *De Ortu Scientiarum*.

Therefore, if that very modern example of human ingenuity, the cinema, is to be discussed in terms of art, it should be of interest to see if we can discuss it according to the basic principals of the medieval schoolmen.

As Moderator of this disputation I now invite the defender, Father Hilary Carpenter, to expound his thesis: *The Cinema is the highest form of art*.

THESIS

THE CINEMA IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF ART

DEFENDER: First, let us define our terms.

By 'the Cinema' I mean the whole production of a cinematograph film, from the preliminary script to the projection of the final result in visuals and sound combined; I have in mind the script writer, the technicians, the art director, the players, the sets, the cutting room, the editors, and dominating all the director. I am not taking note in this context of the distribution side which is more concerned with industry than art.

Art, according to Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas, is a good quality or virtue of the practical intelligence, a potentiality whereby a man is in a condition of soul to envisage the proper ordering of things to be made by him. This is, I suggest, a proper rendering of the classic definition: *Ars est recta ratio factibilium*.

A form of art is to be judged in each case by the beauty to be found in its objective expression; and here beauty is the outward sign of *integrity*, that is to say *goodness and truth*. This integrity must first exist in the artist himself, for a thing made is the reflection of its maker and the quality of the effect cannot

exceed (though it can fall short of) the quality of the cause. There must be in the artist, therefore, at least integrity of mind and even, basically, of the will; for the true artist not only gives birth to the offspring of his mind but also loves it.

Art, like proper human living in all its aspects, must be an expression of a man's soul, recognising (however unwittingly) the relation of things created to the Creator. To make a work of art is to catch the reflection of the beauty of God in the works of his hands, and to enshrine it; the creative quality in the artist is a dim and finite participation in the resplendent and infinite creative power of God.

There must be, however, a due use and ordering of the medium proper to the particular art-form concerned. This involves, on the part of the artist, a quality of mind that M. Jacques Maritain called *la logique ouvrière*. 'Notre Dame de Chartres', he adds, 'is a marvel of logic as much as is the *Summa Theologica* of St Thomas.' In this latter work St Thomas Aquinas himself lays down the basic principle of all art: 'The perfection of art consists in an act of judgment.' And this act of judgment is necessarily dependent upon standards which are themselves the outcome of intellectual integrity.

It is not without significance, therefore, that we find St Thomas including 'the beautiful' amongst the transcendentals as a connotation of 'the true'. If to produce a work of art is to produce a thing of beauty, and if the quality of an effect is necessarily the quality of its cause, then there must be in the artist that integrity denoted by transcendental truth, for transcendental truth is in this context nothing other than an integrity of being that recognises by a kind of connaturality its own relationship of absolute dependence on the Supreme Cause.

Further, every craftsman is a kind of artist; but an artist is more than a craftsman, and may well use craftsmen as his instruments. But though an artist is more than a craftsman, there is yet a high kind of utility in his art. *Art is not for art's sake*: for beauty is significant and therefore art in its highest form is most significant. By this I mean that true art proclaims truth and goodness in a vivid and vital way, and the artist thus communicates truth and goodness to his fellows through their minds and emotions combined. The more effective this communication the higher the form of art.

The true and indeed only medium of communication between rational minds is the imagination. Just as ideas are abstracted from material reality through the phantasmic pictures of the imagination, so ideas are conveyed to others through imagery of the same sort, whether by picture or word or both combined.

To be the highest form of art, therefore, the Cinema must be most apt to the requirements of the artist; it must be best suited to reflect the vision and integrity of the artist. It must lend itself without obstruction to his use and ordering of its materials. It must most readily and most effectively reflect truth and goodness, that is to say the infinite variety of being and reality, and it must reflect them in the most significant manner, that is to say in the manner that registers most effectively on the minds and emotions of all those who are brought within its range.

BUT the Cinema amply fulfils all these requirements: other arts fulfil some of them, but only the Cinema fulfils them all. This is so chiefly because its proximate and proper medium is light and sound combined. Light and sound are the most plastic and yet the most significant material of all, the 'phantasmic' material to which sense and mind react most immediately with emotion and thought. And above all, the unique quality of the Cinema lies in the control of light in an infinite range of mobility, a range as wide as that of sound which is subordinated to it, a control ready to the hand of the Director provided he be artist enough to use it and to accommodate to it all the other material and the craftsmen at his command.

THEREFORE the Cinema is the highest form of art.

And this should suffice to prove our thesis. If however any difficulties remain, these may perchance be cleared up in answering the objections.

OBJECTIONS

MODERATOR: The defender having completed his exposition of the thesis, the objector, Father John Baptist Reeves, will now propose objections in strict logical form.

OBJECTOR: Notwithstanding the excellence of your exposition, the Cinema is not the highest form of art; therefore your thesis is false.

DEFENDER: The Cinema is not the highest form of art, therefore the thesis is false. In these terms it pleases my Reverend colleague to object to my thesis. Let him be good enough to prove the antecedent proposition.

OBJECTOR: I will prove the antecedent proposition:

Photography is not the highest form of art

BUT the Cinema is photography

THEREFORE the Cinema is not the highest form of art

DEFENDER: Photography is not . . . etc.

As for the *Major Proposition*: Photography is not the highest form of art, let the major proposition pass.

As for the *Minor Proposition*: The Cinema is photography—

I DISTINGUISH:

The Cinema is photography used as a means to an end—

I GRANT.

The Cinema is photography pursued as an end in itself—

I DENY.

THEREFORE I deny the conclusion, that the Cinema is not the highest form of art, and I deny that it follows from the argument. And I will now explain briefly the distinction I have made.

Looked at from point of view of its medium, the Cinema is photographic and, indeed, it is from this medium that it derives its specific difference or essential character amongst the arts. But a medium is only a means to an end. In the Cinema the end pursued is not photography for its own sake; in any film there is a purpose, even if it only be mere entertainment, and photography is pressed into service for the attainment of this end. What that end is has an important bearing on our thesis; but for the moment it is sufficient to point out that the Cinema is not photography pursued as an end in itself. Therefore no difficulty remains.

OBJECTOR: But the Cinema is photography pursued as an end in itself; therefore the difficulty does remain.

DEFENDER: The Cinema is photography pursued as an end in itself. Be good enough to prove the minor proposition in its new form.

OBJECTOR: I will prove the minor proposition in its new form:
Photography whose sole concern is to record pictures is photography pursued as an end in itself

BUT the Cinema is photography whose sole concern is to record pictures

THEREFORE the Cinema is photography pursued as an end in itself.

DEFENDER: Photography whose sole concern . . . etc.

As for the *Major Proposition* the photography whose sole concern is to record pictures is photography pursued as an end in itself—I allow the major proposition to pass.

As for the *Minor Proposition*, the Cinema is photography whose sole concern is to record pictures—I DISTINGUISH: The Cinema is photography whose sole concern is to record pictures—

—pictures which are themselves significant—I GRANT.

—pictures which are without significance—I DENY.

Therefore I deny the conclusion, that the Cinema is photography pursued as an end in itself, and I will explain the distinction made.

I have distinguished between pictures which are significant and those which are without significance. By a significant picture I mean, in this context, one that conveys an idea, some intelligible notion that the mind can read through the medium of the picture—rather in the sense that every picture tells a story, except that here the story is visible only to the eye of the mind. The Cinema uses pictures to tell such a story; therefore I deny that these pictures are without significance. Thus the Cinema does not pursue photography as an end in itself and so no difficulty remains.

OBJECTOR: But the Cinema is photography whose sole concern is to record pictures without significance; therefore the difficulty does remain.

DEFENDER: The Cinema is photography . . . etc. Be good enough to prove the minor proposition in its new form.

OBJECTOR: I will prove the minor proposition in its new form: Photography designed solely to entertain is only concerned to record pictures without significance

BUT the Cinema is designed solely to entertain

THEREFORE the Cinema is photography whose sole concern is to record pictures without significance.

DEFENDER: Photography designed solely to entertain . . . etc.

As for the *Major Proposition* that photography designed

solely to entertain is only concerned to record pictures without significance I allow the major proposition to pass. As for the *Minor Proposition* that the Cinema is designed solely to entertain: I DISTINGUISH.

The Cinema is designed solely—

—to entertain with appeal only to the senses—I DENY

—to entertain with appeal to both senses and mind—
I GRANT.

I therefore deny the conclusion, that the Cinema is photography whose sole concern is to record pictures without significance, and deny also that it follows from the premisses.

I will explain the distinction made.

The distinction concerns the meaning of the word entertainment. It is commonly thought that entertainment excludes an appeal to the mind, that it is an escape from the need of thought, an escape indeed from reality. There is entertainment of this sort which does in fact appeal to the senses while the mind remains passive. But this is not true entertainment for intelligent beings. True entertainment should appeal to the whole man, to his senses first, it is true, but through them to that element in man which differentiates him essentially from the animal world and lifts him immeasurably above it. I readily grant, therefore, that the Cinema is designed solely to entertain, provided this latter word be understood in the proper and fullest sense in which it should apply to a rational being. But obviously pictures that are designed to entertain in this way are significant pictures, and the Cinema is photography used in its most perfect form to make such significant pictures. Therefore no difficulty remains.

INFORMAL OBJECTIONS

MODERATOR: The objector now abandons the strictly syllogistic mode of attack in favour of objections couched in less formal fashion.

1. OBJECTOR: Compared with other arts the Cinema has done nothing for the refinement of human nature. In the service of truth and beauty it has created no great work likely to be treasured by future generations as an immortal inheritance from our own. Art is degenerate in our days and the Cinema is their most typical product.

It is derived, through the old magic lantern, from the primitive shadow-graph—the silhouette of mice and rabbits cast by hands and fingers on the wall. It only differs from this by its use of modern scientific and mechanical inventions: cameras, projectors, sound-recording apparatus and the rest. These tie it to the economic organisation of modern industrial and commercial society. Not a single film could be made or exhibited if we had not many factories and powerhouses at work, and many technicians trained and organised. The art of the Cinema depends absolutely on such a society.

More than any older art it needs the financial backing of rich patrons. In the nature of the case financial backing can only come from speculators whose wealth is already bound up in the present economic system as a going concern. Unless that system is to come to a standstill they must have their money back with interest. For repayment they depend absolutely on the general public and box-office receipts. Thus it is inevitably the investor seeking profit and the crowd seeking amusement who control the Cinema. Neither cares supremely for truth and beauty. The actual Cinema shows what they do care for. If it attempted anything better it would perish.

So the Cinema, which has never yet produced any immortal work of art, never can produce any.

DEFENDER: The first informal objection can be reduced to a *sorites*—or composite syllogism:

An art that is controlled by economics cannot have truth and beauty for its aim

But an art that has not truth and beauty for its aim is not the highest form of art

Therefore an art that is controlled by economics cannot be the highest form of art

BUT the Cinema is controlled by economics

THEREFORE the Cinema is not the highest form of art.

I DISTINGUISH the first major proposition:

An art that is controlled by economics cannot have truth and beauty for its aim—

—where economic considerations are supreme—I GRANT
—where economics are controlled by the public conscience—

I DENY.

I DISTINGUISH the first conclusion in the same sense:

An art that is controlled by economics cannot be the highest form of art—

—where economic considerations are supreme—I GRANT

—where economics are controlled by the public conscience—I DENY.

Therefore I also DISTINGUISH the conclusion:

The Cinema cannot be the highest form of art—as long as economic considerations reign supreme—I GRANT

The Cinema cannot be the highest form of art—where economic considerations are controlled by the public conscience—I DENY.

The distinctions are clear. The media of truth and beauty should not be subordinated to economic considerations in any civilised community. If it is true that the Cinema is controlled by economics irrespective of the public conscience, they need not be so and should not be so. Therefore no difficulty remains.

2. OBJECTOR: The art of the Cinema is the choice or creation of scenes and actions to be photographed. They must be either natural or artificial scenes and actions. Nature can supply scenic movements of wind and water, plants and animals, or unstudied, unconsciously picturesque human behaviour. The choice of such subjects is photography pure and simple. Scenes and actions created artificially by human actors are theatrical. The artists to be credited with them are the actors and the dramatist. All the cinematographer does is to position actors so that they can be effectively photographed. If his art in this differs from that of the photographer it is merely as the art of the showman. Showmanship is not the highest form of art.

DEFENDER: The second informal objection can be reduced to the following:

Showmanship which merely exhibits the work of other artists is not the highest form of art

BUT the Cinema is showmanship that merely exhibits the work of other artists

THEREFORE the Cinema is not the highest form of art.

Passing over the major proposition, I DISTINGUISH the minor:

The Cinema is showmanship that merely exhibits the work of other artists—

—where the director lacks artistic genius—I GRANT

—where the director is an artist—I DENY.

The distinction needs no explanation. It is the genius of the director that makes a film.

3. OBJECTOR: All the nobler arts are religious in their origin and inspiration. Detached from their religious origin they lose inspiration and become decadent. Religion had no part in the origin of the Cinema, and has never been its real inspiration. Religious films use religion as a means to an end: to attract and entertain the masses who are indifferent to religion. Or they are purely religious propaganda. They can never themselves be an act of religious worship, or—like music, dancing, drama, painting, sculpture and architecture—a direct efflorescence of religious worship. Thus the Cinema was ignoble, because irreligious, from the start; and it can never recover from that bad start to become the highest form of art.

DEFENDER: The third informal objection can rightly be presented as follows:

- All the great arts are religious arts
- BUT the Cinema is not a religious art
- THEREFORE the Cinema is not a great art.
- I CONCEDE the major proposition, that all great arts are religious arts
- I DISTINGUISH the minor proposition:
The Cinema is not a religious art—
—that is to say, is not an expression of religious worship—
- I GRANT
—is not a fitting medium of religious truth and beauty—
- I DENY.

The distinction I have made divides the actual expression of religious worship in arts such as music, dancing, drama from the medium of the expression of religious truth and beauty in arts such as painting and sculpture. Amongst these latter I include the Cinema. Thus no difficulty remains.

OTHER OBJECTIONS

1. MODERATOR: I claim the privilege of proposing an objection, as follows:
- Every high form of art is a medium of beauty
 - BUT the Cinema is not a medium of beauty
 - THEREFORE the Cinema is not a high form of art.

DEFENDER: Every high form . . . etc.

Be good enough to prove the minor proposition, that the Cinema is not a medium of beauty.

MODERATOR: I will prove the minor proposition:

Every medium of beauty is a medium of truth and goodness
 BUT the Cinema is not a medium of truth or goodness
 THEREFORE the Cinema is not a medium of beauty.

DEFENDER: Every medium of beauty is . . . etc.

Be good enough to prove the minor proposition in both its parts.

MODERATOR: I will prove the minor proposition in both its parts:

As for the first part, that the Cinema is not a medium of truth:
 The whole art of the Cinema is to produce illusion
 BUT an art wholly concerned to produce illusion is not a medium of truth.

THEREFORE the Cinema is not a medium of truth.

DEFENDER: The whole art of the Cinema . . . etc.

As for the major proposition that the whole art of the Cinema is to produce illusion—I DISTINGUISH:

The whole art of the Cinema is to produce illusion—
 —in the sense that *ars est celare artem*—I GRANT
 —in respect of the idea portrayed—I DENY.

Therefore I deny the conclusion, that the Cinema is not a medium of truth, and that it follows from the premisses. I will explain the distinction made.

I have distinguished the implication of illusion in the art of the Cinema. It is a necessary quality of any art that it should hide its artistry. It is the business of the director of a film to produce an effect and so convey an idea without allowing those who see the film to be in any way conscious of the medium. It is true that the reality of the effect is an illusion, but the reality of the idea therein portrayed is not an illusion, provided that the integrity as well as the artistry of the director is maintained. Therefore the Cinema is a medium of truth.

MODERATOR: I will prove the minor proposition in its second part: the Cinema is not a medium of goodness.

The Cinema portrays evil passions
 BUT the portrayal of evil passions is not a medium of goodness

THEREFORE the Cinema is not a medium of goodness.

DEFENDER: The Cinema portrays evil. . . . etc.

I DISTINGUISH the minor proposition that the portrayal of evil passions is not a medium of goodness:

The portrayal of evil passions to incite them in others is not a medium of goodness—I GRANT.

The portrayal of evil passions to emphasise their evil is not a medium of goodness—I DENY.

Therefore I deny the conclusion that the Cinema is not a medium of goodness and deny also that it follows from the premisses. I will explain the distinction made.

The necessity of this distinction is obvious. The portrayal of some evil thing is not in itself evil. It is the purpose of the portrayal that can make it either evil or good. There is a way of portraying evil passions that can make them attractive and exciting. But there is also a way of portraying evil passions that can show them in their true light, repulsive and abhorrent—witness the world of difference (for example) between, say, *The Duel in the Sun* and the Italian film on Maria Goretti (*Cielo Sulla Palude*). Therefore the Cinema can well be a medium of goodness, even when it portrays evil.

Certain members of the audience expressed their willingness to propose objections, either formal or informal

2. FATHER J. A. V. BURKE, *Secretary of the Catholic Film Institute.*

The highest form of art is productive of the finest works of art

BUT the Cinema is not productive of the finest works of art
THEREFORE the Cinema is not the highest form of art.

DEFENDER: The highest form of art. . . . etc.

As for the major proposition, the highest form of art is productive of the finest works of art—I DISTINGUISH:

The highest form of art is potentially productive of the finest works of art—I GRANT.

The highest form of art is actually productive of the finest works of art—I DENY.

As for the minor proposition, the Cinema is not productive of the finest works of art—I COUNTERDISTINGUISH in the same sense:

The Cinema is not actually productive of the finest works of art—I GRANT.

The Cinema is not potentially productive of the finest works of art—I DENY.

As for the conclusion, the Cinema is not the highest form of art—I DISTINGUISH:

The Cinema is not the highest form, i.e. example, of art—I GRANT.

The Cinema is not the highest form, i.e. medium, of art—I DENY.

Therefore I deny the conclusion, that the Cinema is not the highest form of art, and deny also that it follows from the premisses. I will explain the distinctions made.

This important and very practical objection has called forth an equally important distinction. The operative word is 'productive'. If this is here taken to mean 'capable of producing' then I agree that the highest form of art is productive of the finest works of art; but if it is taken to mean 'what has actually been produced' then I deny the statement. Applying this radical distinction to the Cinema I am prepared to admit that the Cinema has not yet actually produced the finest works of art; but I maintain that it is capable of producing such. Therefore, for clarity's sake, I also distinguish the conclusion in respect of the meaning of the phrase 'form of art'. If by form of art is meant example of art, then I agree that the Cinema is not the highest form of art. But if by form of art is meant medium of art, I maintain that the Cinema is the highest form of art; and as this is the sense of my thesis, the present objection does not hold against it. Therefore there is no difficulty.

3. DR DENIS DOOLEY, *R.M.O. Charing Cross Hospital.*

The highest form of art requires that the director of that art should be supreme

BUT in the Cinema the Art Director is definitely not supreme

THEREFORE the Cinema is not the highest form of art.

DEFENDER: The highest form of art. . . . etc.

I DISTINGUISH the minor proposition, in the Cinema the Art Director is definitely not supreme:

In the Cinema the Art Director in the technical sense is definitely not supreme—I GRANT.

In the Cinema the Art Director in the logical sense is definitely not supreme—I DENY.

I will explain the distinction made.

In modern jargon 'art' has come to mean merely decoration and scenic effects. Thus in the film industry (as it is called) the 'Art Director' is a craftsman responsible for the sets and decor. But in the logical sense, that is to say, when words are given their true meaning, an art director is the creative genius who directs the use of the whole medium for the production of a complete work of art. In the Cinema the Art Director is not the director of the art of the Cinema. Thus no difficulty remains.

4. MISS BRUCE-LOCKHART, *film critic of 'THE TATLER'*.

In any true art-form the medium itself has an intrinsic integrity: it has truth and goodness and beauty in its own right. For a sculptor the nature of the stone itself is intrinsic to the beauty of the statue he makes. In a painting even the quality of the canvas, as well as the fineness of the paint, will modify the beauty of the result. In poetry the sense, rhythm and music of the words cannot be separated. Music, of all arts, according to Pater, most completely realises the artistic ideal of perfect identification between the form and the matter. None of this holds good of a film production. The whole material of the film is secondary and subordinate; the work of even the highest craftsmen in the studio hierarchy is subject to extraneous interference; the actors themselves are at the mercy of the director. There is no integrity in the medium of the Cinema; therefore it cannot be the highest form of art and does not even aspire to the condition of a true art-form at all unless or until a synthesis is effected among its component arts.

DEFENDER: The objection may be resolved into the following syllogism:

A true art demands integrity of medium

BUT there is no integrity of medium in the Cinema

THEREFORE the Cinema is not a true art.

I DISTINGUISH the minor proposition:

There is no integrity of medium in the Cinema—

—apart from the creative integrity of the director—I

GRANT

—granted the creative integrity of the director—I DENY.

I will explain the distinctions made.

Integrity is undoubtedly an essential in any true art. But this integrity is to be looked for ultimately in the *use* of the medium by the artist rather than in the medium itself. In some arts—as in music—the ready adaptability of the medium may make it an artistic ideal in one sense; but in another and more important sense the greatness of the artist is shown in his command of a difficult medium. This is notably true of the Cinema. There is no intrinsic integrity in the amazing variety of its medium, as the objector rightly observes; but the artist (in this case the director) can—if he have the ability—give to the film he creates that integrity and unity which makes it a work of art. The integrity of the film and its consequent artistic worth will thus be measured by the director's ability to control the medium for the interpretation of his own creative integrity. Therefore my distinction is clear and no difficulty remains.

5. MR RICHARD O'SULLIVAN, K.C.

That which panders to the lowest human tastes for the sake of gain is not the highest form of art

BUT the Cinema panders to the lowest human tastes for the sake of gain

THEREFORE the Cinema is not the highest form of art.

DEFENDER: That which panders. . . . etc.

I let the major proposition pass.

I DISTINGUISH the minor proposition:

The Cinema panders to the lowest human tastes for the sake of gain—in many individual cases—I GRANT

The Cinema panders to the lowest tastes for the sake of gain of its very nature—I DENY

Therefore I deny the conclusion and the sequence of the argument.

The distinction I have introduced is a factual one but is most pertinent to the whole question. Because very many films are produced for what is called 'box-office appeal', indeed even if all films had hitherto been produced for this end, it does not by any means follow that this must be true of the Cinema in itself. But in fact it is not true. The film *Monsieur Vincent* is an outstanding proof to the contrary; and there are many other such films even of a far less obviously religious type—*The Search*, for example. Therefore the objection of my learned friend is not sustained.

6. FINALLY, THE OBJECTOR, FATHER JOHN BAPTIST REEVES, O.P.

The whole art of the Cinema is imagery. Its appeal is an appeal to the imagination, its contribution to those who subject themselves to it is merely to divorce them from reality and to cause them to live in a dream world of unreality, a world of phantasms. This is no contribution to truth or goodness or real beauty; it is at best an escapism, whereas true art, as you yourself have maintained, is significant of truth and goodness as inherent in real things. Therefore the Cinema is no true art at all.

DEFENDER: This objection may be resolved into the following syllogism:

An art whose whole medium is imagination is no true art at all.

BUT the Cinema is an art whose whole medium is imagination.

THEREFORE the Cinema is no true art at all.

As for the *major proposition* that an art whose whole medium is imagination is no true art at all, I DISTINGUISH:

An art whose whole medium is imagination incapable of conveying truth and goodness is no true art—I GRANT.

An art whose whole medium is imagination capable of conveying truth and goodness is no true art—I DENY.

As for the *minor proposition*: the Cinema is an art whose whole medium is imagination: I COUNTERDISTINGUISH in the same sense:

The Cinema is an art whose whole medium is imagination capable of conveying truth and goodness—I GRANT.

The Cinema is an art whose whole medium is imagination incapable of conveying truth and goodness—I DENY.

Therefore I DENY also the conclusion that the Cinema is no true art and explain the distinction made.

The point of the objection lies in the Cinema's appeal to the imagination through imagery; but its validity depends upon the supposition that truth cannot be conveyed through imagination and imagery. If this were true, not only would an art whose medium is imagery be no true art, but there could not be any true art at all; for art is the communication of truth and goodness in terms of beauty from one mind to another. But, as I explained in my initial exposition of my thesis, there is no

other medium of such communication except imagery in the imagination. *Nil in intellectu quin prius in sensu* is a medieval scholastic dictum fathered by Aristotle; it means: there is nothing in the human intelligence which has not come there by way of the senses—first by the external senses of sight, sound, touch, and secondly by the internal senses of imagination and memory. Thus the world of phantasms, in the philosophical sense, is not a world of unreality, and imagery *is* capable of conveying truth and goodness and beauty. But there is no other medium so wholly at the service of imagination as the medium of the Cinema, as the objector himself has stated. Therefore he must also agree with me that the Cinema is peculiarly adapted to the requirements of art, and so no difficulty remains.

CONCLUSION

MODERATOR: The thesis was ably defended. The Defender did not go outside his original exposition of the thesis in meeting the objections. But although he did not have to shift his ground, on two occasions he found it necessary to distinguish his objector's conclusion instead of denying it. And as this conclusion was in each case a denial of his own thesis, it is evident that he found it necessary to be more exact in his statement of it. Thus in answer to the first informal objection he admitted that the Cinema cannot be the highest form of art so long as mere economic considerations remain supreme. And again in answer to an objection from, I think, Fr Burke, he had to admit that the Cinema does not in fact offer the highest *example* of art but, up to now at any rate, only the highest *medium* of art.

But none of the objections brought forward has disproved his thesis. Given the proper conditions necessary to its perfection the Cinema can be the highest form of art—or to put it more formally—the Cinema is essentially, and therefore potentially at least, the highest form of art.

One thing was made clear above everything else in the exposition and in the defence—namely the supreme importance of the director and his own moral responsibility in regard to the films he makes.

And so I bring this Disputation to an end.

BENEDICAMUS DOMINO

DEO GRATIAS