**Nudity of the Face and the Question of Spiritual Choice in Bergman’s Cinema[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Jūratė Baranova

Vilnius University,

Department for Continental Philosophy and Religious Studies

Universiteto St. 9/1, LT 01513, Vilnius

[jurabara@gmail.com](mailto:jurabara@gmail.com)

When Deleuze reflects on the qualities and powers of the affection-image and the close-up in *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image,* he relies upon different Bergman films: *Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika,* 1953), *The Winter Light* or *The Communicants,* (*Nattvardsgästerna;* 1963), *Persona* (1966), *The Shame* (*Skammen*, 1968), *Cries and Whispers (Viskningar och rop*, 1972), *Face to Face (Ansikte mot ansikte,* 1976), *The Serpent’s Egg* (*Das Schlangenei*, 1977), *Autumn Sonata* (*Höstsonaten,* 1978), and *Fanny* *and Aleksander* (*Fanny och Alexander, 1982*). Deleuze represents the cinema of Bergman as an example of the cinema of fear (*cinéma de la peur),* noting that the close-ups created by Bergman testify to the extreme nudity of the face: “a nudity of the face much greater than that of the body, an inhumanity much greater than that of animals” (Deleuze 1986: 102). According to Deleuze, the main affect in Bergman’s movies is Fear. The face in Bergman’s movies no longer reflects or feels anything, but merely experiences a mute fear. “Bergman has pushed the nihilism of the face the furthest, that is its relationship in fear to the void or absence, the fear of the face, confronted with its nothingness” (Deleuze 1986: 102).

The thesis will deal with the following question: what is the nature of this nothingness as a source of mute fear, taking the example of two Bergman movies: *The Winter Light* and *Through a Glass Darkly*. Why was pastor Tomas not able to save the fisherman Jonas from suicide? What is the source of the mute fear shared by Tomas and Jonas during their last conversation about the silence of God? The priest from Bresson’s film *The Diary of a Country Priest* (1951)also suffers from the silence of God. How differently? For reading classical cinema, Deleuze suggested a schema of the three stages of the spirit discerned by Kierkegaard, but he does not include Bergman’s cinema in this schema of possible spiritual choice. Our suggestion is that Bergman’s cinema can also be read through the schema of esthetic, ethical and religious stages. Are Bergman’s characters doomed to remain in an existential void or do they also have the possibility of spiritual choice? Our answer is: Bergman was searching for a way out from the labyrinth of mute fear.

Literature:

Deleuze, Gilles (1986) *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Trans*.* Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

1. The thesis is based on research included in the project “Philosophical Sources and Problems of Multimodal Education” financed by the Research Council of Lithuania (No. S-MIP-17-37) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)