

DAVID

One of the ways that the study of literature and the study of film differs from the study of

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technical things, and the reason I teach it, is that it belongs to everyone, that it's valuable for everyone. Not everyone needs to know about quantum mechanics. But I believe everyone should. And if they don't, I feel they're impoverished.

Know how to read a good story, enjoy plays, know how to enjoy the movies. So I feel that what I'm giving my students is, in some sense, something even more valuable to them because it will be something that they'll have with them for their whole lives and their whole careers. One of the things MIT students often do not realize, is that a very large number of them do not end up making their living in the areas in which they majored.

But all of them end up wanting to go to the movies. All of them end up with the capacity to read and enjoy literature. And I hope that coming out of my classes, they'll do those things with greater joy and with greater intelligence.

One of the things I hope all of you will have when you come out of this course, is a much more confident sense of how to look at movies, not to spoil your enjoyment of kicking back and looking at a stupid Schwarzenegger entertainment if you want to, not to make you feel guilty about that, but to make you be able to tell the difference between something like that and what I'll call a work of art.

Implicit in my film course is an admiration for a certain kind of achievement, and admiration for a certain kind of artist, and artist like Jean Renoir, the great filmmaker. If I were deprived of the pleasure of seeing Boudu again for the rest of my days, I would never forget that grass, that dust, and their relationship to the liberty of a tramp. The point of this exercise is to remind you of the immense power, the potency, of even a single camera move.

Think what that 180 degree pan suggests as Bazin brilliantly argues for us. So the conclusion then is that the visual style of a film, or of certain films anyway, can express a moral vision. And by moral vision, I don't mean moralistic, what's didactic right and wrong, but a vision of having to do with the values and assumptions you make about the nature of the world.

There's a moral vision implicit in the tentativeness, the hesitancy, the retarding impulse to dwell and linger on things in Renoir's camera, and in the basic habits of poetic realism that you will see brilliantly embodied in the film you're going to watch tonight, *Grand Illusion*.

Because I want to set up, as a candidate for their admiration, and alternative to Wall Street, an alternative to entrepreneurial genius. I admire Jean Renoir's genius, Or Orson Welle's genius, or James Joyce's genius universes more than I admire what entrepreneurs-- I respect what entrepreneurs do. But I am in awe of what great artists do, and of what great doctors do, while we're on the subject.

Which, I'm uneasy about the extent to which even within MIT's culture, we've become so preoccupied by what we might call commercial or financial success, instead of the kind of lasting success that great art, or the practice of medicine, or the practice of nursing, or dare I say it, the practice of teaching, might also embody.