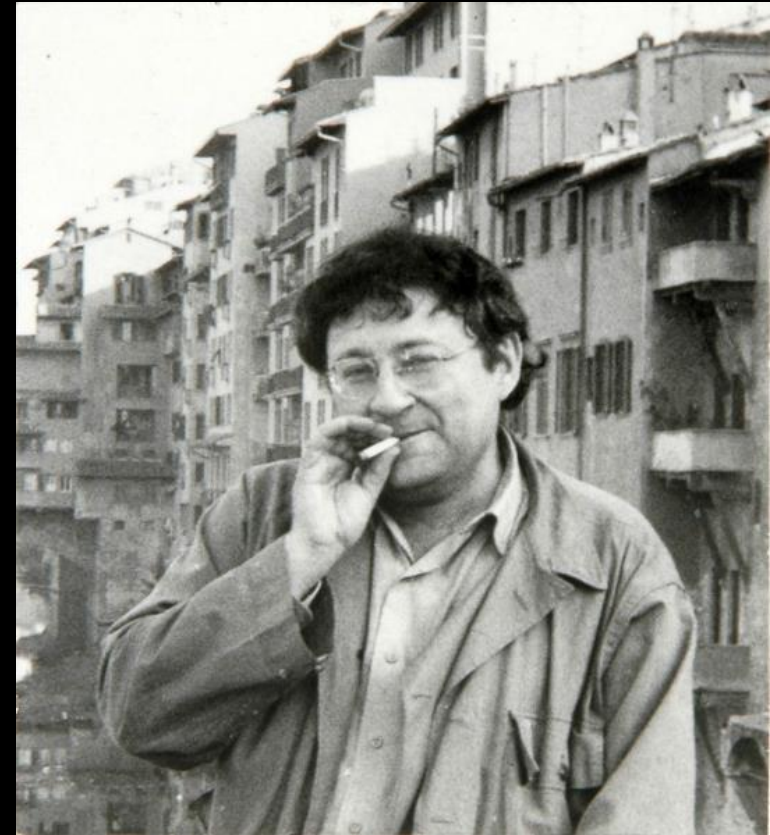
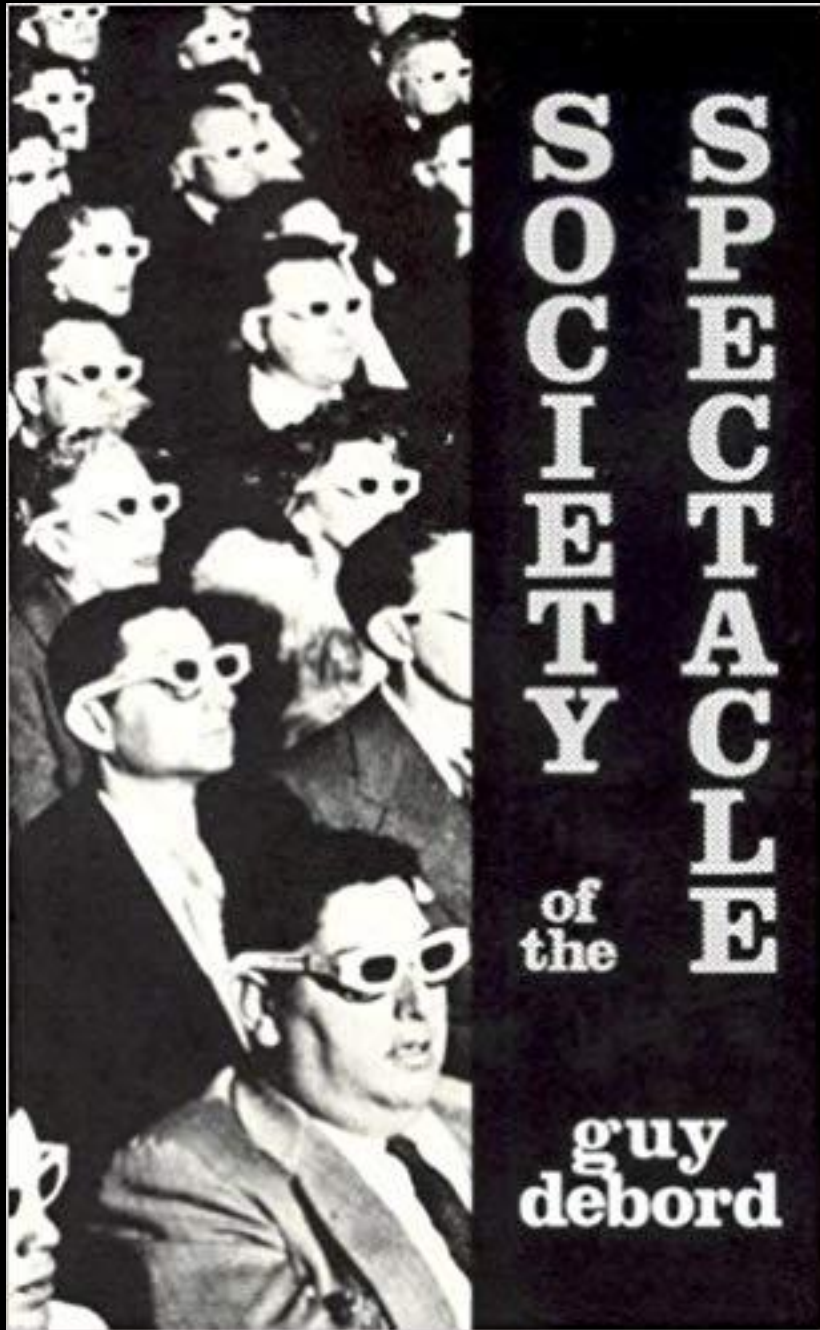




Society of the spectacle

EN122 Modes of Reading



Guy Debord (1931-1994)







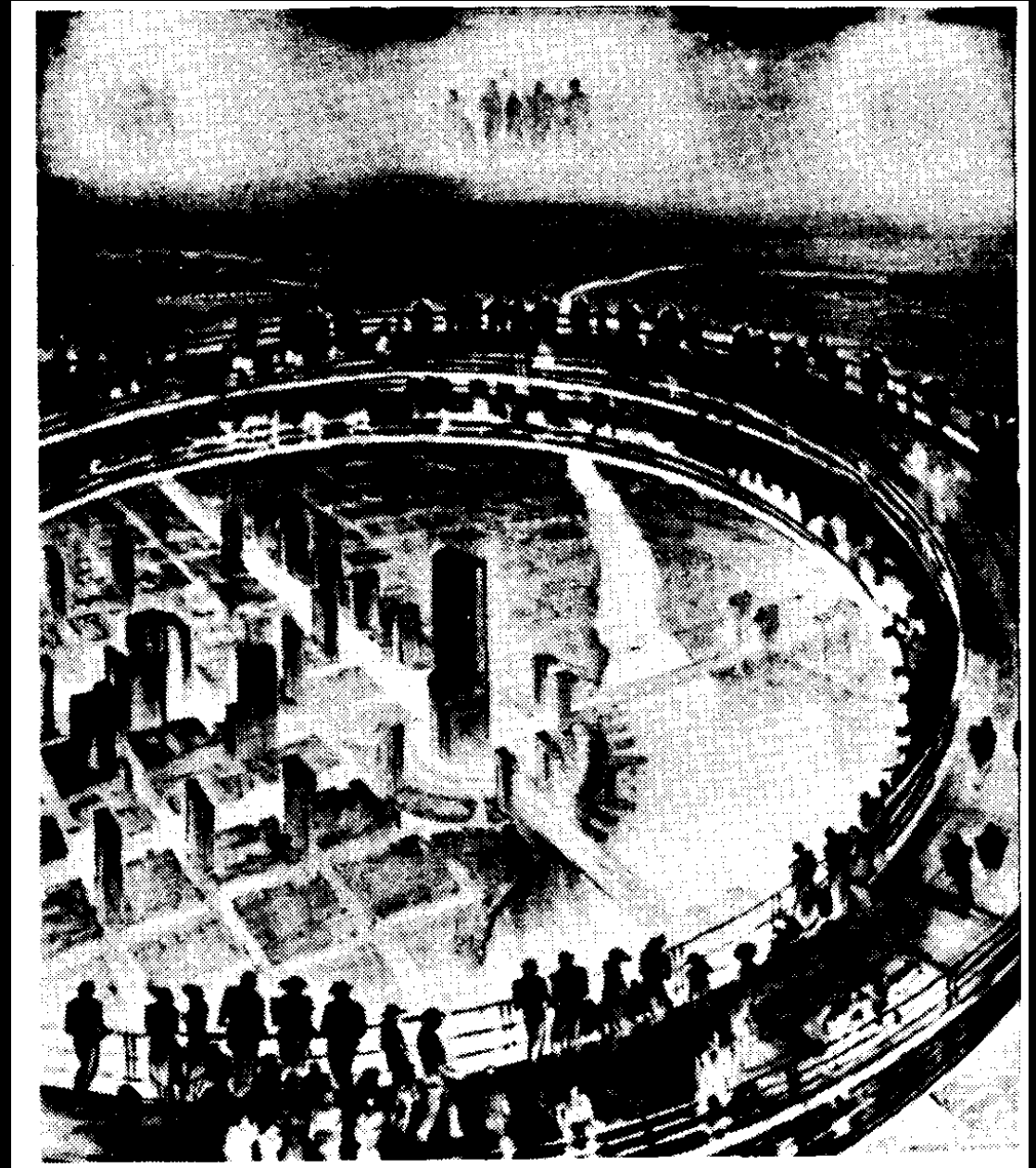
The Society of the Spectacle, Guy Debord (English overdub)

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‘Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation’ (Thesis 1).



‘The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production reign announces itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*.’ (Debord, Thesis 1)

‘The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an immense collection of commodities’

- Karl Marx, *Capital vol. 1* (1990 [1867], 128)



‘A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. ...

the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas’

Marx, ‘The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof’

‘The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things’
(*Capital*, 164-65).



‘So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond.’ – Marx, Capital vol. 1



‘The spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people mediated by images.’



Apple MacBook Air





‘The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active man appears in that his own gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him.’ (Thesis 30)



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‘[The commodity relation] stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can ‘own’ or ‘dispose of’ like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic ‘qualities’ into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process.’

Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (MIT Press, 1971 [1922], 100.

‘The specialization of images of the world is rediscovered, perfected, in the world of the autonomized image, where the liar has lied to himself.’ (Thesis 2)



‘the commodity contemplates itself in a world which it has created’ (Thesis 53).



‘It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society’ (Thesis 6).








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The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.

Theodor W. Adorno - [QUOTESTATS.COM](https://www.quotestats.com)





‘To photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude’ – Susan Sontag

‘The creative in photography is the latter’s responsiveness to fashion. *The world is beautiful* - that precisely is its motto. Therein is unmasked a photography which is able to relate a tin of canned food to the universe, yet cannot grasp a single one of the human connections in which that tin exists; a photography which even in its most dreamlike compositions is more concerned with eventual saleability than with understanding. Since, however, the true face of this photographic creativity is the advertisement or the association, its legitimate counterpart is exposure or construction.’

As Brecht says: “A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional. The reification of human relations—the factory, say—means that they are no longer explicit. So something must in fact be built up, something artificial, posed.””

Walter Benjamin, ‘A Short History of Photography’

“To speak of reality becoming a spectacle is a breathtaking provincialism. It universalizes the viewing habits of a small, educated population living in the rich part of the world, where news has been converted into entertainment... It assumes that everyone is a spectator. It suggests, perversely, unseriously, that there is no real suffering in the world.”

— Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

