

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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YOU AND I MEET SIX INDIVIDUALS

A journey through the different
stages of spectacle

In this book, I, your mysterious guide, take you on a journey through various perceptions of culture. We visit different periods of time, and meet some very interesting people. Let me take you by the hand; our first destination is a very romantic place.

Introduction

Guy Debord

Intrigues us with a new concept

Responds to our question what
this 'spectacle' is

Explains the link between capitalism
and the spectacle

Sheds light on the influence of the
spectacle

Discusses the commodity

Theodor Adorno

and Max Horkheimer

Give us strange looks

Explain their concept 'the culture
industry'

Express their concerns over
sameness in art

Elaborate on the manipulation of
consumers

Discuss the negation of style

The Millennial

Responds to the spectacle

Presents a supposition

Explains the concept of
spectacle-fluidity

Intrigues us with a new concept

Introduces a master of the spectacle

Werner Herzog

Emphasizes one thing

Asks an important question

Discusses the creation of
doppelgangers

Stresses the power of the internet

Elaborates on our understanding
of self

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

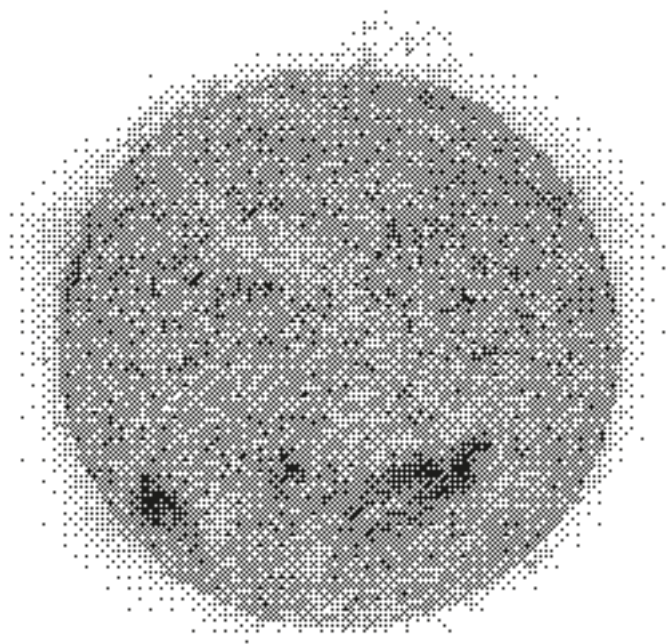
Colophon

The first part of our journey takes us to Paris, France, in 1967. We meet college dropout Guy Debord. Let's hear what he has to say ...

GUY DEBORD
INTRIGUES US WITH A NEW CONCEPT

Hear, hear,
 all,
let me tell you about

the spectacle!



When people ask me to speak of the spectacle,
I usually tell them this:

Envision a cloud. This is the spectacle.

Surround yourself with this cloud.
Step inside of it. It is all around you,
but you can't touch it, nor really see it.
It encloses everyone around you as
well, but you are all not fully aware
of its existence.

This is the first principle of the spectacle.

You see, we live in a capitalist society. That is a fact. The rise of capitalism and the rise of the spectacle are complementary.

Now pay attention; this concerns you!

The spectacle is not a consequence of capitalism, but rather an inherent feature. Above all, it demands passive acceptance of the fact that it exists.

The present phase of total occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the economy leads to a sliding of having into appearing, from which all actual 'having' must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function.

Commodities are pseudo-needs.

Pseudo-needs are

now all around us
mass-produced
mass-consumed

The spectacle is the moment when
the commodity has attained the total
occupation of social life.

Because of this, banalization
dominates modern society.

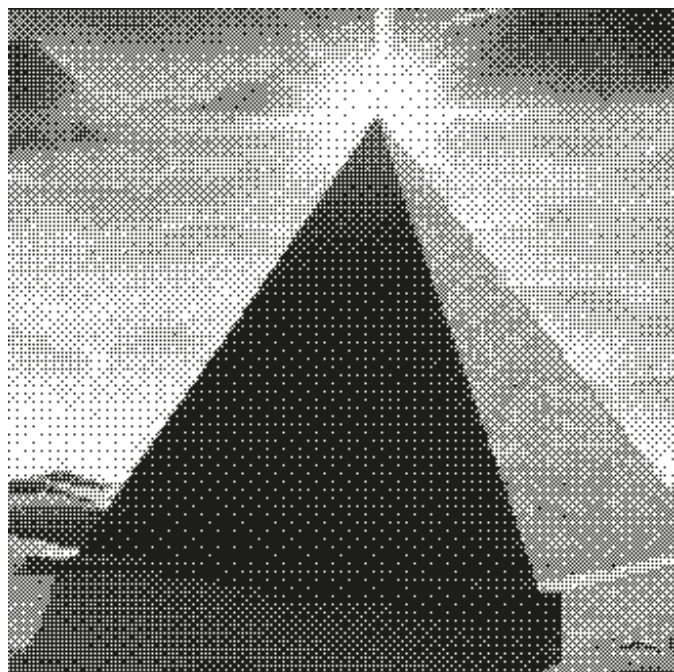
We take our new friend Guy with us on our journey to Nazi Germany, in 1944. Here we speak with Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who are respectively a public figure and an only child.

Who are you? Why are you here?

What? You want to hear about our
theories on the culture industry?

Why?

You don't like jazz, do you?
We despise jazz!



The culture industry is a movement.
Capitalism initiated that movement.

It has turned culture into mass culture
and art into a commodity produced for
the masses.

God, we hate it ...

Sameness is the most important characteristic of the culture industry. What was once art, is no longer art.

The business behind 'art' is used as an excuse to produce trash.

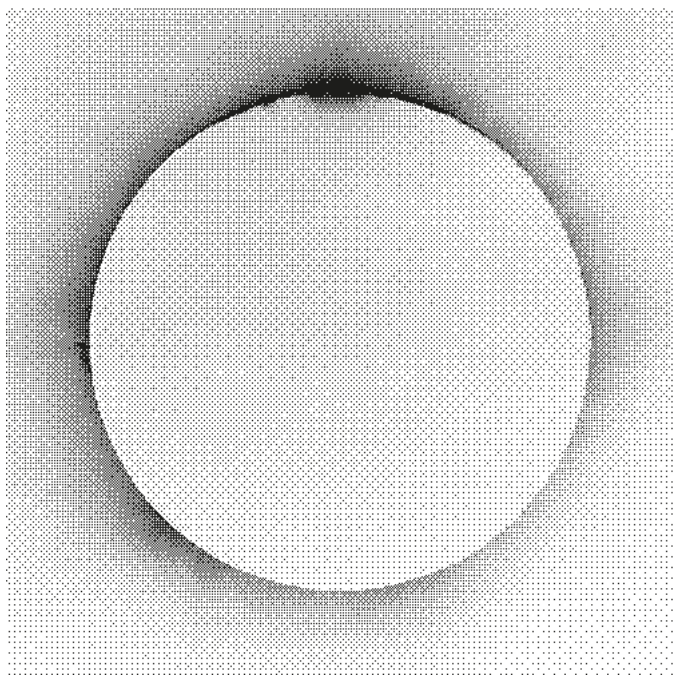
Standardization within culture results in forms that are compatible with the masses. The culture industry will tell you that those forms exist to meet the demands of the industrialized society, but in fact they are using them to manipulate consumers.

The culture industry reproduces real life in a way that art transcends reality. This trend of reproducing real life, a trend of naturalness, results in a certain unity of style. This unity of style is at the same time the negation of style, since style should be something to identify things by.

After saying goodbye to Theodor and Max, our journey takes us to the year 2017. We get to know a certain individual, The Millennial, who identifies as gender queer. They have to get something off their chest:

In today's society passive acceptance has shifted into active acceptance.

Once the people living in a society of the spectacle have reached a state of active acceptance, the spectacle ceases to exist.



I present to you, a supposition

If one knowingly grows up in a capitalist society, and one has never known any other economic system, we could state that they are spectacle natives.

Inherent to being a spectacle native is the ability of spectacle-fluidity.

Spectacle-fluidity is the ability of spectacle natives to see what the spectacle does.

Spectacle natives live in that cloud Guy describes, but they are aware of it, and know what it causes.

Therefore, spectacle-fluidity is the ability to transcend the spectacle.

Those who embody spectacle-fluidity,
live in a society of the meta-spectacle.

By realizing what the spectacle does,
and by learning to master it, we have
created the meta-spectacle.

To be a celebrity is to take part in the spectacle. A celebrity who gains fame by using his status in the spectacle, is a celebrity who departs from this status and enters the meta-spectacle.

Producing a music video in which the camera invades the privacy of celebrities, simultaneously thanking everyone you involuntarily installed in the video for being famous, and finally calling the video a comment on fame is probably the most meta-spectacle thing one can do.

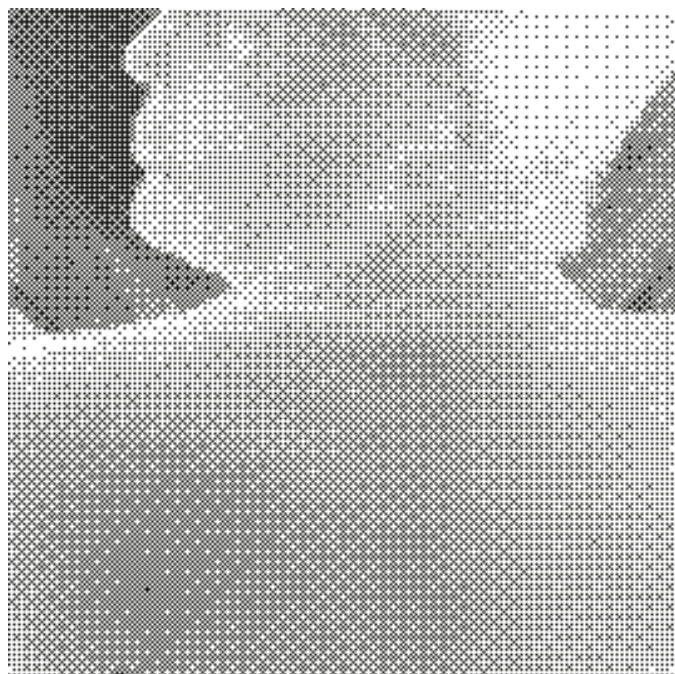
Who? — Oh, sorry, Kanye West.

The Millennial takes us and Guy Debord to a friend of theirs: shoe eater Werner Herzog. Werner analyzes the video The Millennial told us about: 'Famous', by megalomaniac Kanye West. The video depicts twelve celebrities, including Kanye, laying naked in a very large bed. The camera floats over their bodies in a voyeuristic manner.

Approximately halfway through the video a black screen pops up and expresses Kanye's gratitude towards the people starring in the film. 'Special thanks Bill Cosby, Caitlyn Jenner, Amber Rose, Ray J, Kim Kardashian West, Taylor Swift, Chris Brown, Rihanna, Donald Trump, Anna Wintour, and George Bush for being famous.' But before we start watching, there is one thing Werner would like to emphasize ...

WERNER HERZOG
EMPHASIZES ONE THING

Don't pay too much attention to my
German accent, please.



WERNER HERZOG
ASKS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION

Now – uh – question – uh – all the persons that you see in this video, are they all real? Is that the real Donald Trump? Or is it a – is it a – a fake Donald Trump?

WERNER HERZOG
DISCUSSES THE CREATION OF DOPPELGANGERS

Uh – uhm – yes, that’s an interesting thing, that the – uhm – internet can create doppelgangers easily.

Of course this gives you a Donald Trump, but you can tell, that’s not the Donald.

But it’s good to see it because you start to reflect upon – uhm – the kind of – uh – overlaying self and invented self.

And what's going on on – uh – Facebook is all stylized, invented forms. And I see it in my personal contact with the internet that there's a lot of doppelgangers pretending to be – to be me. Trying to speak in my accent, my voice. Answering things on Facebook or in Twitter and so. It's all imposters.

So our understanding of self has –
uh – in a way deeply and radically
changed. And it's very fascinating
what's going on out there.

Illuminated by the analysis Werner presented us with, The Millennial and Guy Debord say their farewells, and leave us be. This is also the moment where you and I part ways. I hope this journey through different analyses of culture has enriched the way you look at the world, and hopefully you are now more conscious of your surroundings. Because, you know, sometimes one lives inside a cloud, without realizing one does so ...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to

Guy Debord
College dropout

Theodor Adorno
Public figure

Max Horkheimer
Only child

The Millennial
Gender queer

Werner Herzog
Shoe eater

Kanye West
Megalomaniac

This book is based on

Society of the Spectacle
by Guy Debord

and

Dialectic of Enlightenment
by Theodor Adorno
and Max Horkheimer

as well as

From Spectacle to Meta-spectacle
my own analysis of the
concepts presented by
the sources stated above.

COLOPHON

Image in Werner's chapter and the images on the cover taken from the 'Famous' video.

Copyright: Kanye West

Image in Theodor and Max's chapter taken from the album cover of 'The Very Best Of Earth, Wind & Fire'.

Copyright: Earth, Wind & Fire

All other images, texts, and design by

Amijs Breunesse

Printing by

Lenoirschuring, Amsterdam

Binding by

Agia & Lith, Amsterdam

Proofreading by

Marie de Jong

Niels van Haften

Rose Nasrawi

and Simona Kicurovska

Publisher

Pigeon Random House, Amsterdam

ISBN 978 90 827205 0 1

