The Society of the Spectacle Revisited:
Separation, Schooling, and the Pursuit of Dangerous Citizenship

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Abstract

In this paper we set out to accomplish several goals. Primarily, we seek to re-interpret Guy Debord's (1967) work *The Society of the Spectacle* in light of modern-day schooling, principally within North America (although we recognize the global connectivity inherent in any current discussion of formal education). In addition, we aim to utilize Debord's conceptualizations as a series of means and mechanisms by and through which to examine (1) various *threats* posed against the ideals of publicly supported schools and (2) *modes of resistance,* particularly what we term "dangerous citizenship," via which committed advocates might challenge the possible consequences of such threats, consequences including disciplinarity/ deterrence, anti-democracy, oppression, anti-collectivity, and inauthenticity.

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1. Introduction

What happened was this: I got an image in my head that never got out. We see a great many things and can remember a great many things, but that is different. We get very few of the true images in our heads of the kind I am talking about, the kind which become more and more vivid for us as if the passage of the years did not obscure their reality but, year by year, drew off another veil to expose a meaning which we had only dimly surmised at first. Very probably the last veil will not be removed, for there are not enough years, but the brightness of the image increases and our conviction increases that the brightness is meaning, or the legend of meaning, and without the image our lives would be nothing except an old piece of film rolled on a spool and thrown into a desk drawer among the unanswered letters. (Warren, 1946, pp. 118-119)

He wasn't the real thing, but he sure was a good imitation of it, which is frequently better than the real thing, for the real thing can relax but the imitation can't afford to and has to spend all the time being just one cut more real than the real thing…. (Warren, 1946, p. 140)

Now tricksters rule, sharps who can guess your weight and tell your secrets. The carnival has arrived in Smithville, just as it does in [Stuart] Smith's Heaven and Earth Magic, the sixty-six-minute animated film he made between 1957 and 1962. There he set dancing countless images clipped from the same sources as the illustrations in the Anthology [of American Folk Music] booklet; as on the opening side of "Songs", every image was less a representation of the real than a symbol of the imaginary, of the notion

that the imaginary could become real at any time. (Marcus, 1997, p. 109)

Robert Penn Warren and Greil Marcus present distinct, yet related notions of image, one of which (Warren's) indicates a certain pessimism with respect to "reality," the other of which (Marcus's) signifies a certain optimism in terms of "the imaginary". For Warren, image, rightly or wrongly, is what mediates and enhances the meanings of lived experience— between, that is, what is and what was, or what exists and what has existed. It negotiates the relationships between the present and the past. For Marcus, image (at least in his interpretation of the work of Stuart Smith) mediates the connections between present and future— between what is and what might become. For Warren, image attempts to (or might) "beat" reality; for Marcus, it attempts to (or might) "become" reality. For both, image advances its singular, pragmatic, and fundamental and necessary purposes.

Undoubtedly, images serve both positive and negative ends. The image surely and productively helps us to make sense of and to provide meaning toward our lived and experienced worlds. On the other hand, image functions to discipline and deter, to teach—if not even force—us to adopt and engage in certain thoughts and behaviors and to shun and avoid certain other thoughts and behaviors. Image, thus, is simultaneously a potentially liberating and conformative (and extraordinarily contextualized) conceptual entity. It—image— links, granting due accord to Warren and Marcus, the past, the present, and the future.

In any event, and perhaps especially because of its past-present-future (i.e., temporal) conjunction, image maintains a privileged place in contemporary Western/global society, especially with respect to (1) critical understanding and (2) critical action. Given today's numerous and multiple societal/ political/economic/cultural/scientific/philosop hical/pedagogical (etc.) circumstances, image

to a large extent characterizes and offers a lens through which to interpret the present state of affairs—the dominant status quo, for instance, if ultimately nothing else. As we argue, it does so in part via the comprehensive workings of the spectacle and spectacular society (including, as a social institution, schooling).

In this paper we set out to accomplish several goals. Primarily, we seek to re-interpret Guy Debord's (1967/1995) work *The Society of the Spectacle* (especially Chapter 1) in light of modern-day schooling, principally within North America (although we recognize the global connectivity inherent in any current discussion of formal education). In addition, though, we aim to (through, for example, the vantage point of our previous work; e.g., Vinson & Ross, 2001, 2003) utilize Debord's conceptualizations as a series of means and mechanisms by and through which to examine (1) various threats posed against the ideals of publicly and governmentally supported schools and (2) modes of resistance, particularly what we term "dangerous citizenship", via which committed advocates might challenge the possible consequences of such threats, consequences including disciplinarity/deterrence, anti-democracy, oppression, anti-collectivity, and inauthenticity (as we have previously discussed; see Vinson & Ross, 2003), but also and particularly those peculiar to the spectacular society (following Debord, 1967/1995).

2. Image and Education

In our prior work, most especially *Image and Education: Teaching in the Face of the New Disciplinarity* (Vinson & Ross, 2003; see also Vinson & Ross, 2001), we explore in essence the relationships among image, surveillance, and spectacle. Most directly, however, we consider the concept of image as *a* way of making sense of contemporary Western/global (namely and specifically US) schooling.

We maintain here that first, given several key recent socio-pedagogical developments, *image* has displaced any meaningful sense of lived *reality* in terms of understanding schools and education (and all that both encompass). We look primarily, in *Image and Education,* at popular culture (e.g., films) and the media reporting of statistics (e.g., test scores). We place this phenomenon—these phenomena—within the broader contexts of the increasingly visual nature of society (i.e., the need and desire to see and be seen; see, e.g., Dowd, 2002a, 2002b; Rich, 2000, 2003). Our questions, in effect, were why and what does this mean?

The why question we answer in terms of the merging or convergence of "surveillance" (following Foucault [1975/1979], the "panoptic" and "disciplinary" observation of the many by the few) and "spectacle" (following Foucault [1975/1979] and Debord [1967/1995], the disciplinary observation of the few by the many and the image-based mediation of all social/capital-induced relationships). (We relate these concepts to the union of "voyeurism" and "exhibitionism" and interrogate, within this light, such developments as two-way Webcams, "reality" TV, the USA Patriot Act, etc.). Both surveillance and spectacle, we argue, are visual means of discipline and deterrence (i.e., getting people to think and behave and to not think and behave in particular ways—and, as we suggest, are both meaningful only vis-à-vis questions such as who decides, why, and in whose interests, etc.) and, together, create the setting(s) within which image attains its extraordinary and somewhat recently constructed prominence. We suggest as both cause and effect of the outstanding place and eminent methodical milieu of image and its station the related conditions of technological change (e.g., 24/7 TV, security cameras, the Internet), globalization (e.g., multinational corporations), and standardization (i.e., what we call the "will to standardize" and the "standardization imperative"—in the USA see the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Race To The Top

and standards-based educational reform more broadly). Further, we take on as background and as potential interpretive frameworks the ways of understanding embodied within the disciplines of cultural studies (Storey, 1994, 1996, 1998), visual studies (Mirzoeff, 1998, 1999), film studies (Dyer, 2000; Freeland & Wartenberg, 1995; Hill & Gibson, 2000; Nelmes, 1999; Perez, 1998), and media studies (Gitlin, 2002; Keane, 1991; Luhmann, 2000; McLuhan, 1994; Sardar & Van Loon, 2000). We consider as well the associated social philosophies presented by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984) on the chronotope, Roland Barthes (1977) on the "rhetoric of the image", Daniel Boorstin (1961/1992) on the "pseudo-event," Jean Baudrillard (1995) on "hyperreality" and "simulacra and simulation", and Marshall McLuhan (1964/1994) on the thesis that "the medium is the message".

In light of these various and complex settings, we pursue as well the meanings of image-based discipline and deterrence with respect to (1) everyday life (e.g., Brown, 1973; de Certeau, 1984; Jackson, 1968/1990; Lefebvre, 1947/1992, 1968/1971; Perlman, 1969; Vaneigem, 1967/2002), (2) resistance (e.g., *dérive, detournement, la perruque,* critical media literacy; see Debord, 1958/1981; Debord & Wolman, 1956/1981; de Certeau, 1984; McLaren, Hammer, Sholle, & Reilly, 1995), (3) potential consequences (discipline/ deterrence, anti-democracy, oppression, anti-collectivity, inauthenticity; see, e.g., Baudrillard, 1995; Dewey, 1916/1966; Foucault, 1975/1979; Freire, 1970; Young, 1992), and (4) our overall and summary conceptualizations of image-power and controlling images (Vinson & Ross, 2003).

In the end, it is within and according to these introductory and hermeneutic environments that we reconsider the work of Guy Debord (1967/1995) in *The Society of the Spectacle* and its relevance vis-à-vis the theory and practice of contemporary public schooling (see especially Debord's chapter 1).

3. Separation Perfected: *The Society of the Spectacle* Re-examined

Guy Debord was unquestionably the best known member of the Situationist International (SI), a predominantly French association of often loosely affiliated radicals, thinkers, artists, propagandists, *provocateurs*, and agitators. Most active during the 1950s and 1960s, generally today the SI is remembered, if at all, for its participation in and apparent, or at least alledged, instigation of the Paris "events" of May 1968 (Jappe, 1993/1999; Marcus, 1989; Plant, 1992). The SI, however, especially in terms of the work of Debord (but also of Raoul Vaneigem, 1967/2002, & others), encompasses a more rigorous, comprehensive, and distinctive program than many scholars know.

Debord (1967/1995) presents his fundamental and most distinctive and significant view in the very first line of *The Society of the Spectacle:* "The whole of those societies in which modern [i.e., capitalist] conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (p. 12). For Debord, this implied as the principal and defining characteristics of modern, spectacular society: (1) image, (2) passivity/spectatorship/contemplation, (3) commodification, and, most especially, (4) separation. In effect, these attributes form within *The Society of the Spectacle* four interrelated and interdependent themes.

With respect to image, though arguing its importance, Debord (1967/1995) maintained that "the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (p. 12), one in which, in fact, the related "phenomenon of separation is part and parcel of the [negative] unity of the world, of a global praxis that has split up into reality on the one hand and image on the other" (p. 13). (Though, for Debord, there was no absolute

distinction between spectacle and "real" experience; that is, the image-reality dichotomy persists within both spectacle and concrete life). Within this setting, the dominant, capitalistic "autonomous image" represents the zenith, such that it maintains complete control over appearances, means and ends, needs and desires, and the fabrication of the good (most, if not indeed too, simplistically, think advertising). The spectacle necessitates a commodification of social life—humanity as a mass of seeing objects/objects to be seen—such that—given not only the power of image but also the interlocking and reinforcing demands of separation, capitalism, and passivity—having becomes appearing/appearance, being becomes appearing/appearance, and nature and virtue become appearing/appearance (in contrast, for example, to earlier, pre-capitalist periods when being initially became having). The visual (alienating and commodity-laden) usurps the active in its totality, the individual and the social, all serving/served by the economy.

In spectacular society, even individual and social "language [comprises no more than the] signs [images, representations, and appearances] of the dominant organization of production—signs which are at the same time the ultimate end-products of that organization" (p. 13.). For, according to Debord, the means and ends of the spectacle are one and the same—the power of consumption-based commodity capitalism. Here, the "prevailing conditions of production" rule, at least to some extent, vis-à-vis their re/production of/by the various mass information and entertainment media (i.e., media *qua* mediators rooted in image, representation, appearance, etc.), and their essentially "one-way" technologies of—and control over—"communication" (p. 19). The visual regulates in favor and as a result of the spectacle (mutually, via image, passivity, commodification, and separation), and, as such, life is lived—observed, really—from an objectified and impersonal distance.

In terms of passivity Debord (1967/1995) insinuates that for the spectacle "reality unfolds in a new generality as a pseudo-world apart [alienated from the individual and the social, in that all contact is image-mediated], solely as an object of contemplation" (p. 12). "The spectacle is by definition [therefore] immune from human activity" (p. 17); it "is the material reconstruction of the religious illusion" (p. 18), a focus on the "out there," and "a technological version of the exiling of human powers in a 'world beyond'…" (p. 18). In essence, what Debord asserts here is that in the society of the spectacle—a world of image, commodification, and separation—reality becomes the "absolute denial of life" (p. 18) and a system of gazing and objectification; it exists as but contents meant to be commodified by commodifiers, seen by seers, spectated by spectators, contemplated by contemplators, and non-lived by non-livers. "All that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (p. 12). For as, a la the spectacle, "the real world becomes real images, mere images are transformed into real beings—tangible figments which are the efficient motor of trancelike behavior" (p. 17). This, then, is a "reality" where "all activity [thus, for Debord, freedom] is banned" (p. 21).

The spectacle-commodity status boils down, in part, to Debord's (1967/1995) notions that the spectacle is (1) "the very heart of society's real unreality"; (2) "epitomizes the prevailing model of social life"; and (3) "serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system" (p. 13). For it, the spectacle, "expresses…the total practice of one particular economic and social formation" and is "that formation's agenda" (p. 15). It is "the chief product of present-day society…simply the economic realm developing for itself—at once a faithful mirror held up to the production of things and a distorting objectification of the producers" (p. 16). Though it, the present system, has the potential to eliminate all commodified leisure, labor, needs, and relationships, its stock and trade is convincing

people of the "necessity" for more commodities/commodifications (in terms, as well, of leisure, labor, needs, and relationships). This works in that life-becomes-image-becomes-object-becomes-visible-becomes-consumable. Again, life as non-life. "Life", as such, then involves merely the mechanical or robotic (mis)behavior of devouring images, accommodating unreal spectator-passivity, working for and because of consumer-commodity capitalism, and (re)producing alienating/alienated everyday experience.

It is, for Debord, this alienating/alienated experience that provides the link between the commodity and image/representation/appearance and spectatorship/contemplation/passivity and separation, what Debord [1967/1995] calls "the alpha and omega of the spectacle" [p. 20]). What matters most are the significances of (1) alienation; (2) the fact that "the reigning economic system is founded on isolation [and] at the same time…is a circular process designed to produce isolation; and (3) that "the origin of the spectacle lies in the world's loss of unity…" (p. 22). Debord here argues that "[t]he spectacle…unites what is separate, but…only in its separateness" (p. 22). The (post)modern human being "feels at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere… [and its] function in society is the concrete manufacture of alienation" (p. 23)—the separation of human beings from their work, from one another, and from their own social and individual lives. Regarding the commodity, in this "separated system of production… [the] product is separation itself" (p. 21). Regarding image, "[t]he spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image" (p. 24). And regarding spectatorship, "the [disunified and specialized] spectacle philosophizes reality, and turns the material life of everyone into a universe of speculation" (p. 17).

All in all, the picture Debord presents is one in which image, commodity, contemplation, and separation all are intermingled within the conglomerative perpetuation—the perpetration—of the spectacle. Representation (image) runs roughshod over lived (social and individual) experience; passive, spectatorial contemplation overwhelms meaningful engagement; commodification overruns action; and separation dangerously trumps communicative and human/e unity. This setting, real unreality/unreal reality, operates all in the name of the spectacle and its not so strange bedfellow of corporate, (post)modern capitalism. As we argue, this setup manifests clear and problematic consequences and threats for contemporary schooling (and, no doubt, for society as a whole as well).

4. Threats

We have examined previously a number of potential threats posed to schooling by the heightened status of gaze-based image as it maneuvers within the ubiquitous and powerful settings of the merged surveillance-spectacle complex. Namely, to reiterate, we have addressed the relevant dangers of disciplinarity/deterrence, oppression, anti-collectivity, anti-democracy, and inauthenticity (Vinson & Ross, 2003). Undoubtedly, within our re-reading of *The Society of the Spectacle,* these conditions remain real, current, dynamic, and robust.

Yet, there are nevertheless dangers more specifically connected to spectacular schooling—those directly rooted in the Debordian conceptualizations of contemporary, spectacle-based society—dangers that if better understood might assist those individuals interested in education to not only more fully comprehend schooling, but also to critique and challenge it as well. From our perspective (given spectacularization), the principal risks involve Debord's sense of (1) "separation", that is the alienating disconnection among individuals and their labor, individuals and other people, individuals and themselves, and individuals and their variously livable/lived lives; (2) the authority of image; (3) commodification; and (4) passivity.

Debord's critique and its attendant consequences appear, we suggest, principally via the mechanisms of standards based educational reform and various privatization schemes (e.g., vouchers, corporate sponsorship/influence, choice, certain charter programs, etc.). Although we previously have dealt with other critical repercussions—again, disciplinarity, deterrence, anti-democracy, oppression, inauthenticity, anti-collectivity, each of which continues to affect schools and societies—here our focus involves chiefly the SI's concerns with image, passivity, commodification, and separation.

The predominance of image rests first on the effects of the increasingly visual nature of (post)modern civilization. With respect to formal education this phenomenon displays itself essentially by way of appearance and representation. Successful schooling, therefore, actualizes itself according to far off seeing and being seen, a state of affairs no doubt remote from actual experience, let along participation. "Good" schools look good; "bad" schools look bad—regardless in both cases of what actually occurs within their walls and boundaries (i.e., their teachers, students, curricula, modes of instruction, assessment practices, etc.). Reality subsides under the multiple faces of media portrayals, principally those of Hollywood (e.g., such well known films as *Dead Poets' Society* and *Dangerous Minds,* among others) and the press (e.g., the reporting of high-stakes standardized test scores, school violence, and drug use, etc.). We "know" an effective school when we *see* one, even if we never *truly* see one.

Passivity reigns in that within this system no one *has* to (or, for that matter, logically would want to) engage the real life contingencies of education. Why bother? And who cares? If test scores increase, then why teach? Why learn? So what of authenticity? All is well. Why relate to others—to oneself, to one's purposes? The mere contemplators—those on the outside—and the lifeless spectators—those who observe from a disconnected distance—"know" anyway. If schooling is stultifying or even dead/death, so what? Of what meaning via the corporate, global, technological, standardized world? Better passive and (thus) pliable than critical and challenging(!?).

Commodification means that education and schooling become nothing more than what is to be produced, distributed, and consumed—bought and sold. They become things to be seen and objectified. Test scores become merely contributors to housing prices and property taxes, and housing prices and property taxes become merely contributors to test scores. Location, location, location, yes; but also schooling, schooling, schooling. The spectacle ensures that appearance and capitalism override any significant sense of the real and the bottom-line authentic. In its entirety, as we are by no means the first to point out, this situation promotes and reinforces the dominance of present, capitalist economics.

Separation suggests a distinction between the connected and the disconnected, the apparent and the invisible, the imaginary and the real. For teachers and students do a much, most of which is not reflected in the media or in test scores. The bulk of their efforts occur in isolation—as makes sense—individually, one person apart from the other. Test scores mean individual performance, both teacher and learner. Media representations reflect, at best, single school "achievements". In any event, instructors and students are not rewarded for cooperation or for their comprehensive and/or complex undertakings. Why should they be, given contemporary circumstances?

In the end these problematics, particularly when coupled with the threat of oppression and threats to democracy, authenticity, and the collective good, provide both a rationale for critical resistance and a framework for theorizing dangerous citizenship, the topic of the following section.

5. Dangerous Citizenship

So what to do? Against the problematics inherent in spectacular schooling we propose here an admittedly idiosyncratic notion that we term "dangerous citizenship". Certainly this construction builds on previous efforts in educational theory and philosophy, critical pedagogy, and research on teaching and learning. Nonetheless, in our view, its unique composition—its unique juxtaposition of several strategies and tactics—justifies its potentiality if not its plausible efficacy with respect to schooling and its position as spectacle.

As we construe it, as pedagogy, dangerous citizenship embodies three fundamental, conjoined, and crucial generalities: political participation, critical awareness, and intentional action. In terms of schooling and spectacle, its underlying aims rest upon the imperatives of resistance, meaning, disruption, and disorder.

Political participation implies partaking in the "traditional" rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. It does not intend, however, and should not be read to intend any sort of complacency or comfort relative to the dominant status quo. In fact, political participation might ironically insinuate *non*-participation. At its most simplistic political participation suggests such activities as (1) voting; (2) acting on the feasibilities of the freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, the press, and so on; (3) obeying (most) laws (e.g., those against drunk driving); and (4) undermining the actions of corporate-state government relative to, for example, abusing personal privacy and to contradicting the principles of justice, freedom, and equality (e.g., consider marches, demonstrations, petitions, etc.). Of course, somewhat paradoxically, non-participation may be as well a form of political participation—an important and necessary form—for instance in the actualization of not voting as an expression of voice and

nonviolent civil disobedience as a mode of civic joining in.

The second key component, *critical awareness,* builds on such constructs as Paulo Freire's (1970) *conscientization* and Maxine Greene's (1978) "wide-awakeness". Further it draws on the more recent scholarship of critical theorists and philosophers of media and education (e.g., McLaren et al., 1995). Overall, its point and purpose is to enable the range of interested stakeholders to see (1) how things are; (2) that things can be different; and (3) how things might or should be. It is grounded, in part, within Freire's conception of "reading the world" and Marx's construction of "class consciousness" (among other critical views).

The third and easily most complicated factor, intentional action*,* clearly could connote a range of useful activities. In our usage, however, and within the confines of the spectacle, intentional action refers most directly to those behaviors designed to instigate human connection, the true engagement with everyday life, meaningful experience, communication, and change. They seek, that is, a forceful combat against the mechanisms of image, passivity, commodification, and separation. Among these behaviors we advance the SI's techniques of *dérive* and *detournement* and de Certeau's understanding of *la perruque.*

Dérive, literally "drifting," implies "[a] mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: [it is] a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances…" (Definitions, 1958/1981, p. 45). According to Debord (1958/1981):

The dérive entails playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects; which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll [i.e., as implied by the *flâneur*].

In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think: from the dérive point of view cities have a psychological relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. (p. 50)

On *detournement,* literally "diversion," the SI wrote:

> Short for: detournement of preexisting aesthetic elements. The integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music [*per se*], but only a situationist use of these means. In a more primitive sense, detournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres. (Definitions, 1958/ 1981, pp. 45-46)

Detournement "involves," according to Jappe (1993/1999), "a quotation, or more generally a re-use, that 'adapts' the original element to a new context" (p. 59).

> It is also a way of transcending the bourgeois cult of originality and the private ownership of thought. In some cases the products of bourgeois civilization, even the most insignificant ones, such as advertisements, may be reemployed in such a way as to modify their meaning; in other cases, the effect may be to reinforce the real meaning of an original element…by changing its form. (p. 59)

For Debord (1958/1981) himself *detournement* suggested

> The reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble [via] the two fundamental laws of detournement…the lost of importance of each detourned autonomous element—which may go so far as to lose its original sense completely—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect. (p. 55)

Together *dérive* and *detournement* sprang from Debord and his colleagues' "dreams of a reinvented world" (Marcus, 1989, p. 170; see also Debord & Wolman, 1956/1981; Detournement as Negation and Prelude, 1959/ 1981) where one might "supercede dead time", a world of experiment and play, of "discovering that a world of permanent novelty could exist, and finding the means to start it up" (p. 168). According to Marcus:

> These means were two: [jointly] the "dérive," a drift down city streets in search of signs of attraction or repulsion, and "detournement," the theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts and their diversion into context's of one's own device. (p. 168).

Ideally:

> …to practice detournement—to write new speech balloons for newspaper comic strips, or for that matter old masters, to insist simultaneously on a "devaluation" of art and its "reinvestment" in a new kind of social speech, a "communication containing its own criticism," a technique that could not mystify because its very form was a demystification—and to pursue the dérive—to give yourself up to the promises of the city, and then to find them wanting—to drift through the city,

allowing its signs to divert, to "detourn," your steps, and then to divert those signs yourself, forcing them to give up routes that never existed before—there would be no end to it. It would be to begin to live a truly modern way of life, made out of pavement and pictures, words and weather: a way of life anyone could understand and anyone could use. (p. 170)

de Certeau's (1984) rendering of *la perruque* suggests a third appropriate form of intentional action pertinent to the workings of the spectacle. According to de Certeau (1984):

The operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside, or primitive peoples. They exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy. Take, for example, what in France is called *la perruque,* "the wig". *La perruque* is the worker's own work disguised as work for his [or her] employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. *La perruque* may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on "company time" or as complex as a cabinetmaker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room. Under different names in different countries this phenomenon is becoming more and more general, even if managers penalize it or "turn a blind eye" on it in order not to know about it. Accused of stealing or turning material to his [*sic*] own ends and using the machines for his own profit, the worker who indulges in *la perruque* actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit. In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create

gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his *work* and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family through *spending* his time in this way. With the complicity of other workers (who thus defeat the competition the factory tries to instill among them), he succeeds in "putting one over" on the established order on its home ground. Far from being a regression toward a mode of production organized around artisans or individuals, *la perruque* reintroduces "popular" techniques of other times and other places into the industrial space (that is, into the Present order). (pp. 25-26)

All in all these practices and perspectives—those of political participation, critical awareness, and intentional action—introduce a multiple yet conjoined set of technologies designed to confront and countermand the exigencies indicated via the spectacle: image, passivity, commodification, and separation. Political participation and critical awareness are the most direct yet the least complex; they do, however, offer some (if limited) means by which to challenge the spectacle. Political participation can—though not necessarily will—furnish a mode of struggle against separation, passivity, and commodification, depending, for instance, on whether, how, and why people vote and whether, how, and why they protest and/or interact in disparate and radical forms of civil disobedience (among other forms of engagement). Critical awareness—including critical media literacy—proffers the possibility, at least, of pursuing some sense of how things are and how things could be (for good or bad). This could encompass, for example, the statuses of image/representation/appearance,spectatorship/passivity/contemplation,commodification/consumer capitalism, and separation, as well as their variously threatening effects on, among other things, contemporary education/schooling.

Yet the most important and significant of these activities clearly is intentional action, namely, again, the tactics of *dérive, detournement,* and *la perruque.* Both singularly and in concert they indicate a fundamental counterthreat to the operations of the spectacular society in all its distinctive and sundry manifestations and problematic components and elements.

According to Plant (1992) the Situationist agenda involved primarily "the power to choose, to assign value, to control what is offered and that which is possible" (p. 31). Its

> theory was based on the assumption that both the objective and subjective ingredients of a new society are already present within the spectacle, so that all that is needed is a reversal of the perspective in which spectacular society is lived. They insisted that the construction of situations 'begins on the ruins of the modern spectacle…' (p. 31).

They, the SI,

> envisaged a future in which the creativity, imagination, technology, and knowledge developed within capitalist society would allow us to abolish work, satisfy desire, create situations, and overcome social and economic relations. [For] the [necessary] material conditions for a world of playful engagement, uncommodified leisure and unqualified pleasure had long been achieved. (p. 31)

Dérive, detournement, and *la perruque* accomplish all of this. *Dérive* by enacting and enabling a community of like-minded drifters, for example (these days) those teachers and students (and, perhaps, others) committed to perusing and pursuing, and willing to peruse and pursue, various testing-oriented Websites (including those created and maintained by powerful corporate testing companies) and classrooms enacting and implementing standards based education reforms

As such it challenges separation and passivity/spectatorship and encourages, instead, engagement with and partaking in reality (as opposed to contemplation and unreality).

Detournement, first and foremost, contests image and its fundamental predominance. What *detournement* does, more specifically, is dispute authorship and the ownership of specific representations and individual/social appearances. From the perspective of *detournement,* all images are open to "reinterpretation," that is their various elements are available for reconfiguration and their manifold rearrangements are exposed and unrestricted for redoing. Image, thus the spectacle, might face changing test questions, re-making movies, and/or re-rendering exploitative or at least ascendant and controlling denotations/connotations. All to its fundamental disadvantages.

Lastly, *la perruque* means re-confiscating time and space, using them both for our own formidable and ambitious purposes. As a browbeating of the official company view, *la perruque* offers the potential that our time is indeed our time, that it might be used for productive and counter-dominant activities. In that we are "all in this together" (anti-separation) and in that it menaces the corporate (consumer, commodity) status quo and requires (to some extent) the collusion of others, *la perruque* offers, in some ways, the ultimate challenge to the spectacularization of schooling and society.

Overall these methodologies make clear how the spectacle might effectively, if not finally, be challenged. For the possibilities, regarding *dérive, detournement,* and *la perruque* as against the pitfalls of image, passivity, commodification, separation, anti-democracy, anti-collectivity, inauthenticity, and oppression, produced in novel, playful, and creatively critical ways, we assert, are infinite.

6. Concluding Remarks

In the end, what we've attempted here is threefold. First we've sought to (re)negotiate the multiple and complex meanings of Debord's (1967/1995) *The Society of the Spectacle,* especially vis-à-vis schooling and contemporary postmodern society. Second we've aimed at delineating the potential consequences of spectacularization, namely those of image/representation/appearance and its dominance, passivity/contemplation/spectatorship and its overwhelming of reality, commodification and its threats to communal relationships, and separation and its challenges to connectivity and social/individual unity. Lastly we have tried to provide a way out, meaningful and pragmatic and critical alternatives to the functioning and power of the spectacle. For what it's worth, fundamentally, we hope to have incited and anticipated a new and never-ending realm of critical, dangerous, passionate, and non-complacent schooling, education, and society. If we have, then we also have, ultimately, been pleasantly and positively successful.

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