

Isn't it true that the ongoing cinematization of existence occurs in spite of our desire to actually see what is produced? Our joy, our stimulation, lies *almost* entirely in the (anticipation and moment of the) absolute captivation which video inaugurates. We capture images, and are captured by capturing images; eventually, we only recognize ourselves and others through such images.

“Reality” television has a similar structure of addiction. It is more important to record something than to have something to record. We can push this further: the total flow of television doesn't just erase pre-existing images and replace them with its own; it captivates *through* a procedure of subjectivization. The television watches us: as the audience becomes the image, (once properly alienated from themselves,) they thereby gain an “objective” understanding of themselves, but only at the cost of forgoing self-ownership. From this null perspective, we only have generic, faceless subjects, undead subjects who live entirely through images, imaginary subjects recording what is seen with the ‘objectivity’ of the camera lens.

Now perhaps the camera is rightly called “objective” if only that it is the objectification of the Other perspective as such, but in fact, it is more accurate to say the camera subjectivates, annuls objectivity in a secret way, that is, by dominating the imagination, by causing the subject *to believe himself imaginary*. The camera holds everything in its grasp, and thus cannot exist without suffocating existence, depriving viewers access to fresh air or alternate perspectives, and perhaps to press this metaphor a little too hard, these images squeezes the air of original words out from our lungs, replaces interpretation with advertising. Toxic air and clean become indiscernible as lies from truth.

If enlightenment amounts to a sensitivity to truth above material concerns, television forces the “truth” of consumerism to its vulgar limit: what materializes before our eyes is not the product, but a fantasy in which the desire of the product reigns, i.e., the desire of the commercial is to instill desire within us. How? At first glance, by hypnotism (both sublime and subliminal,) or, more simply, by an apparent hallucination which would evoke “positive” (profitable) associations... but upon further reflection, we perceive that the apparently immaterial fantasy of enjoyment (the proper operative field of the commercial product) has actually been concretized in the marketed-image.

The surrealist consumer-utopia of commerciality is the same non-reality in which an empty Oneness has taken the place of the many, where addiction has replaced truth and where submission has taken the place of struggle. In the marketed-image, which is a reflection of our voluntary unconsciousness, we have found the “truth” of our speculative non-lives— that the truth was long ago replaced by a simulation. Captivated by the time of the spectacle, there is no longer *actual reality*, only a flux of repeated images. This is strictly worse than Magritte: the problem is not that this image isn't (say) a Coke, it's that (so to speak) *it is* a Coke, that is, it's nothing, the pure semblance of property which is already its theft (lack). When the mass media, particularly television, become totalizing instruments of the state irrationality, they are no longer harmless diversions, but the medium of an aggressive assertion of dominance. The development of society is documented by the media, but we must realize this is not about image, or influence, but about something much simpler—this is about *power*.

The media is not just the “internal” representation of social reality (from the standpoint of a particular culture, perspective, etc.); rather, the media externalizes our desires as discoveries, modulates our separation from the real. Ultimately, we are ex-centered; the spectacle of images mediates our relationship to reality, this mediation is what separates us while connecting us. Television is an enlightenment which only further enslaves. That is not to say: “quit watching TV!” or even “quit watching stupid TV!” Rather the point is to realize the hypnosis which has *almost* taken hold. This is to say: we must slacken the ropes which bind us.

Which is not to be free; such an unbinding this only re-binds us tighter to the machine which would drain us of autonomous life and sun light. The point is we *are* free to choose; the problem is not in television, or the spectacle as such, it is in us, in allowing ourselves to become spectators. The question is ultimately what kind of society do we want: is it one of docile spectators to an imaginary “reality” of television (and consumerism, etc.), or would we rather an emancipation from all forms of slavery and bondage? Shouldn’t we seek to unlock the infinite latent possibilities of the present “reality” rather than get captured by shadows, absences and obscene pleasures?

Political consciousness is not to be incapable of that (perceived) lack which would bind us to our socio-economic position, but to affirm a fidelity to fidelity — responding to subjectively-investigating interpretations, and not to advertising. As opposed to the binding of addiction and nationalism, political thought binds only in the service of un-binding totalitarianism, and un-binds only in the process of binding subjects to truth, human beings to liberty, and so forth...

Television admits of a single, fatal flaw: the nirvana of satiated consumeristic desire which it evokes so insistently is a *complete fake*, founded on the very lack it denies: this is Nietzsche’s subtle distinction between “wanting nothing” as in (a) not wanting anything, or (b) actively wanting *nothing*. The nihilism implicit in television’s dumbed-down reality (as though the actual situation doesn’t *really* matter at some level) is the critical confession of an empty prophecy, a soothsayer whose lies are always the same, that is, whatever it is you *don’t* have, that’s what you need. In opposition, we don’t need to turn off our televisions; we need to reject the very notion of a “well-ordered” reality, we need to *challenge* television to be more daring. The problem is not the media but its misuse.

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