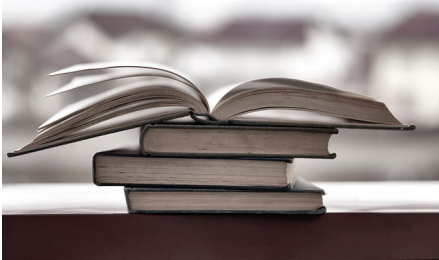


POLITICAL THEORY

Spectacular environmentalism

Environ. Pol. <http://doi.org/cx2c> (2018)



Credit: ENIGMA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Many scientific discussions tackle topics that were debated in the past, and old ideas can bring new useful avenues to current discussions. However, scientific memory is often deficient. This is particularly so in the social sciences and humanities, in which complex and nuanced ideas abound.

Ryan Gunderson, from Miami University, United States, analyses the writings of Guy Debord, a philosopher of the twentieth century, and retrieves and reshapes ideas that are useful for contemporary environmental policy. He uses the concept of spectacle, a way of framing issues that distracts attention from real-life problems and solutions. Spectacles alienate individuals from their own lives, by turning them into passive observers. In turn, spectacular reassurance strategies are trends that lower environmental concern while allowing environmental damage to continue. Gunderson identifies three main such strategies: justifications for harm (for example, that the cost to reduce damage is too high), communication (using 'green' imagery that disguises an action's underlying damage) and reform (policies and life choices that do not tackle the underlying causes of damage). These concepts grant critical reconsideration of contemporary environmental strategies, for these to become more substantive and effective.

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