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Play and Its Subversive Power in the Writings of Guy Debord, the Situationists and Vilém Flusser

In memory of our mutual friend, Gianfranco Sanguinetti (1948-2025)

At first glance, Vilém Flusser and the Situationists occupy entirely different intellectual planets, separated by a profound geographical, biographical, and philosophical chasm. Neither personally nor epistemologically do they appear to share a common history. Yet, beneath this surface-level divergence lies a radical, unexamined convergence: both Flusser and Guy Debord independently identified the fundamental alienation of late twentieth-century society as a closed system of automated programming, and both arrived at the same antidote: subversive play[1]. Where Debord diagnoses the omnipresent tyranny of the *Spectacle*, Flusser unmasks the cybernetic hegemony of the *Apparatus*. By mapping Flusser's philosophy of communication onto the Situationist International's revolutionary praxis, this essay argues that their figures of resistance as "revolutionary players" are conceptual twins executing an identical, profaning assault on techno-political control.

To date, scholars have largely ignored this structural mirror. To our knowledge, Siegfried Zielinski is virtually[2] alone in having indirectly suggested a bridge between Vilém Flusser and Guy Debord, noting that: "The situationalist [*sic*] gesture, the profound inner dialectic of separation in the real and connectivity in the imaginary and the symbolic, inscribed in the advanced system of telematics, shaped Flusser's thinking about technology-based communication relations in Western civilization[3]." Clearly, their differences are obvious: neither Debord nor the Situationists possessed any appetite for formal phenomenology or academic communication theory, which form the bedrock of Flusser's thought. Furthermore, the material conditions of their lives kept them isolated; Flusser did not return to Europe until June 1972, two months after the official dissolution of the Situationist International. Living in Merano and later in the Luberon, he remained insulated from

[1] We chose not to enter here in the discussion of the differences between game and play, which vary greatly between authors (see Mathieu M. Triclot. "Game et Play." In *Dictionnaire des sciences du jeu*, edited by Gilles Brougère and Emmanuelle Savignac, 164–169. Toulouse: Érès, 2024. https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04625761 (30/07/2026).

[2] We can also mention this essay bringing together Debord and Flusser, on the theme of urbanism: Igino Silva Junior, Marcela Almeida, and Flávio Schiavoni. "The Great Urban Games: Rationalization of Play, Leisure and Capitalism." Paper presented at the XII Seminário Internacional de Investigação em Urbanismo, São Paulo & Lisbon, June 2020. https://upcommons.upc.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/5c45321b-0cce-4eb7-aaed-e7fcc23ede5b/content (20/07/2026). Thanks to Andreas Müller-Pohle for pointing out this text to us.

[3] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the two authors of this essay. Siegfried Zielinski, "Epilogue. Between Languages and Without Discipline: A Twentieth-Century Intellect Drafted for the Twenty-First Century" in *Understanding Flusser, Understanding Modernism*, edited by Aaron Jaffe, Michael F. Mills and Rodrigo Martini, 314–328. London-New York-Dublin: Bloomsbury, 2022, citation p.317.

the Parisian turmoil surrounding the SI. Conversely, Situationist disruptions had no echoes in Brazil, where the domestic protest movements from March 1968 onward developed independently of the French May 68. No trace of direct contact, either in Flusser's extensive correspondence or in his personal library, links him to Debord[4].

Precisely because of this historical non-communication, their theoretical alignment on the ontology of play is all the more striking and urgent to analyze. This essay aims to demonstrate that the conceptual convergence between the *Spectacle* and the *Apparatus* logically demanded a shared ludic solution. We will explore the creative and subversive power of play by first exposing the theory and practices of the Situationist International, before shifting to Flusser's systematic reflections on apparatus and programs. By filtering both positions through two foundational theorists of play, Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois, we will ultimately establish how their shifting definitions of play delineate the ultimate battleground of modern individual and collective emancipation.

1. Play as Subversion in Guy Debord and the Situationists (1957-1972)

"First of all, we think the world must be changed[5]". Thus begins the *Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale* (*Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Conditions of the Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency)*, a 1957 French text that outlines the program of the Situationist International (SI). First and foremost, the Situationists wanted to bring passion to their own existence and that of the community; they proposed a radical change in human lifestyles and behaviors, alongside collective artistic creation. Their ambition was to offer a thorough alternative to the dominant culture across all fields. To achieve this, they relied on research and experimentation as tools for criticism and for disseminating their ideas, while seeking to unite the most innovative artists and intellectuals from various countries to foster collective action.

[4] The only tenuous link that can be found is anecdotal and related to Abraham Moles: Flusser and Moles had been in correspondence since 1970, had met in São Paulo and met again in France in August 1972; they were in close contact until they fell out in 1988 (See https://flusserfrance.eur-artec.com/2024-vampyroteuthis-infernalis/index.html 20/07/2026). Moles had repeated setbacks with the Situationists and their friends between 1963 and 1967: Moles having sent a rather condescending letter to the Situationists at the end of 1963, the latter replied with an insulting letter, then disrupted a conference of Moles and Nicolas Schöffer in March 1965 (with a leaflet entitled "The Turtle in the Window"); then their Strasbourg sympathizers pelted Moles with tomatoes during his inaugural lecture on October 26, 1966 and again during a meeting with Jean-Jacques Lebel in March 1967 (see André Bertrand & André Schneider, *Le scandale de Strasbourg mis à nu par ses célibataires, même*, Montreuil: L'insomniaque, 2018, p. 104-105 and 187-189). But it does not appear that Flusser was aware of these attacks which occurred prior to his relationship with Moles; he never mentioned them.

[5] Guy Debord,.*Œuvres*, Quarto, Paris, Gallimard, 2006, p. 309.

From its inception, the movement expressed itself "in opposition to all regressive forms of play, which represent a return to infantile stages — invariably linked to reactionary politics — [favoring instead] the experimental forms of revolutionary play[6]".

Play and situationist practice

The true revolutionary is the one who plays. The Situationists had to use play to create a new (counter-)culture, as it was the only way to dismantle and overcome the existing system. In his reading notes of *Homo ludens,* Debord transcribed a paragraph where Huizinga affirms that "[s]ocial life is endued with supra-biological forms, in the shape of play, which enhance its value", that play fosters the interpretation of the world and of life, and that culture "has the play-character, [and] that it proceeds in the shape and the mood of play[7]." Next to this paragraph, Debord adds: "application to a new culture: we are the primitives of a new culture[8]."

The creation of a new civilization was seen as the only remedy against the dominant power of authority. But what actions were to be taken? The Situationists believed the revolution had to be made, and this revolution had to be playful. Because the revolution had to stem from the collectivity, the field in which the Situationists had to act was "culture", tearing down the old culture while simultaneously creating a new one.

Art was to be considered an instrument of action within the framework of the Situationist operation, deploying its power of representation and creation within the social sphere. In this way, art and politics converge toward a single goal: the overthrow of the system. These two elements must not be separated; instead, art and politics must remain balanced and merge directly into everyday life to eventually be transcended. How could this balance be maintained? Through play.
Play occupies a central place in the thinking of Guy Debord and the SI because play is "a struggle and a representation: a struggle for a life measured by desire, and a concrete representation of such a life[9]."

The history of the SI can be represented by the allegory of the Russian matryoshka doll: inside you always find something else — other rooms, other fragments — until you reach the "germ", which is play. The playful element permeates both the theory and, above all, the practice

[6] *I.S.*, 1, June 1958, p. 13. All issues of the journal are available online in French on this site: https://www.ubu.com/historical/si/index.html (06/07/2026).
[7] Johan Huizinga *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture.* Translator unknown. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949 [1938], p. 46.
https://web.archive.org/web/20150328040138/http://art.yale.edu/file_columns/0000/1474/homo_ludens_johan_huizinga_routledge_1949_.pdf (30/07/2026).
[8] Guy Debord. *Homo ludens* (n.d.). FGD, Guy Debord collection, Naf 28603, "Philosophie, sociologie" reading sheets, reference 42, Paris, BnF.
[9] *I.S.,* 1, June 1958, p. 10.

of the SI. It is not that games are simply at the heart of their practices; on the contrary, the techniques developed by the Situationists are all derived from play itself. The phenomenon of play also pervades the "totality" of the movement: it is structural to the group and central to its evolutionary process. It is the generative and supporting element. While the concept of play has been widely explored through Johan Huizinga's theories in *Homo ludens*, as a fundamental phenomenon of human existence, it functions similarly within the Situationist movement. The history of SI can be viewed as a collective work: simultaneously script, editing and staging. From 1957 to 1972, its members contributed, each in their own way, to a project directed by Guy Debord, the only member present from start to finish. Texts, actions and correspondences form the fragments of a work in motion, akin to a theatrical performance designed to reveal the human condition and open up a playful dimension.

The game and the fields of action

The stage for the group's action is the playful space, which carries a dual dimension: it is real, yet it simultaneously constitutes a parallel world. Drawing on a passage about the 'mirror-image' from the German philosopher Eugen Fink's book *Play as a Symbol of the World*[10], we can say that the reflected image of the SI existed because it unfolded in the real world as a reflection of an "other world". This image remained isolated from outer space during the movement's early period; it was only later introduced into the city, the space of the multitude and of everyday life. It is precisely within the city that the playful dimension breaks into and disrupts everyday reality through creative activity.

The theatrical aspect is not merely cosmetic; it goes hand in hand with the group's various activities. This is evident in the theory of the construction of situations, or in the practice of scandal as a social gesture. The alienation effect caused by these actions aimed to raise human awareness, used by the SI as an antidote to the passivity of the spectator.

If we look at the action against the general assembly of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) in Brussels in 1958 or the student revolt known as the "Strasbourg Scandal" in 1966 (cf. note 4), we see how scandal serves as a "gesture" addressed to society and a means of communication. According to Bertolt Brecht, the social gesture "is the *gestus* relevant to society, the *gestus* that allows conclusions to be drawn about social circumstances[11]". The practice of scandal

[10] Eugen Fink.*Play as a Symbol of the World*. Translated by Ian Alexander More and Christopher Turner, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2016. EPUB, chapiter two, paragraph 7- "Play and the Other Regions of Human Life. Plato's Blending of Being and Nothing".
[11] Bertolt Brecht. *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic*. Edited and translated by John Willett, Radha Krishna, New Delhi, 1978, p. 104-105.

encompasses poetry. To stage poetry is to liberate language, allowing it to enter "everyday life" as a means of expression and play. The realization of poetry involves creating both events and their respective languages, deploying a power of direct communication. Its most successful manifestation within the SI was visible during the May 68 revolution in Paris.

According to the official definition, the constructed situation is a "moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed through the collective organization of a unitary ambience and a play of events[12]". The constructed situation does not merely imply the construction of moments of life; it "is at the same time a unity of behavior in time," because "[i]t is made up of gestures contained in the setting of a moment. These gestures are the product of the setting and of themselves. They produce other forms of settings and other gestures[13]". In *Means without end. Notes of Politics,* the philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes the gesture as the exhibition "of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such" which opens the way to man's "ethical dimension[14]"; the gesture "is not the sphere of an end in itself but rather the sphere of a pure and endless mediality[15]". The constructed situation is, therefore, the representation of a gesture that displays and transmits a message.

Representation is a fundamental element in the history of the SI because it serves as the vector for disseminating their ideas. Across all practices deployed by the SI — from the construction of situations to unitary urbanism, and from diversion (*détournement*) to drift (*dérive*) and psychogeography — the principle of representation is recurrent. It is defined as "the activity and operation of representing by figures, signs and sensitive symbols, or by various processes, even non-material, objects or aspects of reality, abstract facts and values, and all that is thus represented[16]".

All SI activities shared a single objective: to overthrow the system in order to liberate humanity by highlighting a new way of living and thinking. Their journal served as a tool for debate and for criticizing the economic, cultural and political systems. Communication and language were top priorities for the Situationists; they sought to appropriate the very tools used by the authorities. Criticism went hand in hand with practical procedures. The dissemination of their ideas was carried out through actions in popular and highly effective formats, such as leaflets and comic strips.
The Situationist operation was meant to culminate in the realization of the theory of the construction of situations — that is, the creation of deliberately chosen moments of life, through collective organization and a playful combination of events. Only in this way can individuals experience their

[12] *I.S.*, 1, June 1958, p. 13.
[13] *Ibid.*, p.11.
[14] Giorgio Agamben. *Means Without End: Notes of Politics*, translated by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, Theory out of Bounds, Volume 20, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London, 2000, p. 57.
[15] *Ibid.,* p. 58.
[16] Treccani Dictionary Online: http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/rappresentazione/ (31/05/2026). Cf. Le Robert dictionary https://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/representation (31/05/2026).

existence consciously. The original methodology of the SI resulted directly from the application of this theory. The construction of situations creates a direct relationship to theatre: it is composed of gestures. Ultimately, it finds its true origin in play, because play "is always also characterized by the aspect of portrayal, by the moment of meaningfulness, and it is in each case transformative[17]".

The game and the revolution

The actions of the SI aimed to transform society. The Situationists wanted to live in an "other world", but they knew that acting was not enough to change the world; it was first necessary to understand it. While the practice of playing serves to understand and interpret the world, play is also an antidote to human alienation. When children play, they learn about the word and its meaning; when adults play, they experience ecstasy and distance themselves from the harsh realities of life. The Situationists were deeply aware of this dual nature of play, but they also understood that they were not alone in this realization. Capitalist society made entertainment available to the masses: a passive entertainment that served merely as a distraction, transformed into wealth for the ruling class. This passive leisure generated neither creativity nor freedom, reducing individuals to alienated consumers. The cultural and leisure industries were (and still are today) a tool for organizing and controlling people's free time. To control time, whether devoted to labor or leisure, is to control the masses.

The Situationists sought to destroy the world of the spectacle and all the structures supporting the system. But how could they achieve this? By playing. The timelessness of play brings humanity back to the primitive dimension of experience, creation and freedom. Play has a profaning function; it restores the object "to the common use of men[18]". Therefore, the true revolutionary is "the one who plays". They wanted to restore play to its primary function: generating shared values within society and bringing people together in a permanent, voluntary and free exercise of existence. In this sense, they were indeed "the primitives of a new culture".

Debord wrote: "We didn't invent anything. We adapt ourselves, with a few nuances, within the network of possible paths[19]." Moreover, many SI techniques stem from the "systematization" of pre-existing practices, such as the drift (*dérive*), the practice of scandal or the diversion (*détournement)*. This "systematization" should not be viewed negatively; on the contrary, it presupposes the rigorous study and reworking of valid activities or theories, which are in turn transformed into

[17] Eugen Fink. "Oasis of Happiness: Thoughts toward an Ontology of Play". Translated by Ian Alexander Moore et Christopher Turner. *Purlieu: A Philosophical Journal*, Volume 1. Issue 4. (Spring 2012), pp. 20-42 [quote p. 35], https://fr.scribd.com/doc/193441826/Eugen-Fink-Oasis-Of-Happiness (29/07/2026).
[18] Giorgio Agamben. *Profanations*. Translated by Jeff Fort. Zone Books, New York, 2007, p. 73.
[19] Debord, *op. cit.*, p. 552 in note.

something entirely new. It is about putting things back into play and redefining the rules. After all, is not play itself the expression of freedom within rules? The Situationist "serious game" opened a breach in the world, allowing members to develop original ideas and new strategies, bringing a new way of thinking and conceiving life within everyone's reach.

Playing means "to be-in-the-world[20]". It concerns human presence and active participation in life. The relationship between the Situationists and the world manifests itself through play, because "[h]uman play is […] the symbolic activity of bringing to presence the meaning of world and life[21]". The capacity to bridge different disciplines allows for understanding and acting within real life, which is not divided into isolated, non-communicating sectors. For the Situationists, knowledge was also a matter of experimentation: one learns not only from books, but through lived experiences and daily encounters.

Their model was "total communication". Language, the very element on which they focused, was considered another means of resisting the oppression of power -- provided it was brought into play, as was the case for the entire organization of life and the tactical means they employed. Creating events and "their language" is an essential step in making poetry. Poetry is "the anti-matter of consumer society, since it is not consumable", and it is priceless[22]. Poetry accomplishes the revolution because it acts as an antidote to the violence inflicted by the ruling class on human beings. It is an element of both peace and rebellion, a game of creation and freedom.

Michel Foucault posited that the poet stood "at the other end of the cultural space", yet remained contiguous to it thanks to "its symmetry". He designated the poet as the figure who manages to uncover "the buried kinships between things, their scattered resemblances[23]." The poet perceives the essence of things and represents them through poetic language.

The members of the SI belonged to a community capable of deactivating societal apparatuses, demonstrating a new utility for them, transforming them "into pure means[24]", and thus returning their use to individuals. What is the source of poetry's power? Poetry belongs inherently to the world of play; "*Poiesis*, in fact, is a playful function[25]." It manifests itself fully in the playful space of the mind. According to Huizinga: "[I]n any flourishing, living civilization, above all in archaic cultures, poetry had a vital function that is both social and liturgical[26]", serving as a means of communication with a profound power of suggestion.

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[20] Concept of Martin Heidegger (*In-der-Welt-sein*) elaborated in his book *Being and Time*, taken up and used by Eugen Fink in his essays on play, and frequently cited by Flusser.
[21] Fink, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
[22] *I.S.*, 8, January 1963, pp. 31-32.
[23] Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage Book Edition, New York, 1994, p. 49.
[24] Agamben, *op.cit.*, 2007, p. 87.
[25] Huizinga, *op.cit.*, p. 119.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Play — that enigmatic phenomenon known throughout the world, yet mostly relegated to the sphere of mere pleasure or to the world of children — manifested itself within the Situationist movement in all its gravity and power. As Debord famously wrote, "the game was not somewhere else[27]".

2. Vilém Flusser's play, from communication to creative rebellion (1958-1991)

Simplifying slightly, we can distinguish three different approaches to play in Flusser's work. They do not follow a strict chronological sequence but frequently overlap: an essentially phenomenological approach to the description of the game; an explanation of society through play as a form of communication; and a call to play as an act of rebellion against society and its apparatuses.

The concept of play is already present in *The Story of the Devil*, which Flusser wrote in 1958. In this work, the child devil, playing with a spinning top or building blocks, questions the balance of the world and its "composing elements[28]". In 1965, Flusser taught a course at the Brazilian Institute of Philosophy, where, influenced by Wittgenstein, he developed the idea that language is a game[29]. However, Flusser's first major text on play was an essay he published on December 9, 1967 in *O Estado de São Paulo* and on July 31, 1968, in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. These two versions differ slightly; the German text has been translated into English[30] and the Portuguese into French[31]. In this text, Flusser structures games — whether chess[32], language or the natural sciences — according to their elements (repertoire), their rules (structure) and their combinations (competence). He distinguishes between open and closed games, introduces the concepts of poetry (which expands a game's repertoire) and philosophy (which diminishes it), and emphasizes the necessity of faith in the rules. At the conclusion of this analytical description, he adds: "Play is his answer to the

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[27] Guy Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti.*The Real Split in the International. Theses on the Situationist International and Its Time*. Translated by John McHale. London-Sterling-Virginia: Pluto Press, 2003 [1972], p. 71.

[28] Vilém Flusser. *The History of the Devil*. Translated by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes. Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014 [1958], pp. 24-35.

[29] On this theme, see Francesco Restuccia. "Leggere Flusser".*Flusser Studies* nº 25, May 2018 (https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/leggere-flusser.pdf 20/07/2026) and Cesar Baio. "O filósofo que gostava de jogar: o pensamento dialógico de Vilém Flusser e a sua busca pela liberdade". *Flusser Studies* nº 15, May 2013. https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/baio-o-filosofo.pdf 20/07/2026).

See also Günter Gebauer. "Redundante und informative Spiele. Flussers Konzeption mit Blick auf Wittgenstein Sprachspiele". In *Play it again, Vilém! Medien und Spiel im Anschluss an Vilém Flusser*, edited by Hermann Haarmann, Michael Hanke & Steffi Winkler, Marburg, Tectum, 2025, pp. 29-47.

[30] https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-games.pdf (20/07/2026). English translation by Nancy Roth.

[31] https://flusserfrance.eur-artec.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/1967_Jeux.pdf (20/07/2026). French translation by Marc Lenot.

[32] On Flusser and chess, read the entry "Chess / Schach / Xadrez" by Anita Jóri in the collective work Zielinski, Siegfried, Peter Weibel, and Daniel Irrgang, eds. *Flusseriana*. Karlsruhe & Minneapolis: ZKM & Univocal, 2015. Flusser, a great chess player, had in his library the reference manual *Lehrbuch des Schachspiels* (1952) by Jean Dufresne and Jacques Mesies

stolid seriousness of life and death. As a player he resists this stolidity. And he becomes more of a rebel the more games he plays and the more he cheats. He sets himself apart from the apparatuses he deceives in the course of his playing by means of his ability to open games." Ultimately, "history itself is only a game, and he can find others".

Play as communication

At the end of 1969, Flusser wrote a philosophical self-portrait entitled "In Search of Meaning" in its English version[33]. In the chapter "Present Phase", he notes that discovering how "[t]he theory of communication implies the theory of decision and the theory of games" was like "a rupture of dams" for him. "Suddenly, I saw a whole new field of action extending before me […] To see the world as a set of games, and to see it as a player who knows he is playing, is to see aesthetically". In short, Flusser does not seem to be interested in the game for its own sake; rather, he views it as a vector of communication that gives meaning to society as a whole. As Nancy Roth observed: "[I]s there any kind of communication that is not [a game]? Flusser's answer is, in a word, no[34]." Consequently, most scholarship on Flusser and play adopt this prism of communication and the telematic society. For instance, in the volume *Play it again, Vilém!,* alongside an essay titled "The Game of Life[35]" we read: "According to Flusser, games can be understood as models of the functioning of culture[36]". Similarly, Rainer Guldin's essay comparing the ideas of Flusser and of Anatol Rapoport on games notes: "We see reality as a programmed game in which we ourselves represent chess pieces, players played[37]."

Play is an alienation, Flusser goes on to say in *Fenomenologia do Brasileiro: em busca de um novo homem* (*Phenomenology of the Brazilian: In Search of a New Man*, untranslated into English), written in 1970, but published only in 1998. Football, lotteries, and carnival ("the sacred game") cause individuals to forget the economic and social conditions of the Brazilian's life, yet they also endow it with a certain authenticity. In the final chapter, Flusser evokes various game strategies: playing to win, playing not to lose, and playing to change the game. In this third case, the player stands "above the game", maintaining sufficient distance to remain conscious of the playful aspect of his activity.

[33] Vilém Flusser, "In Search of Meaning (Philosophical Self-portrait)", in *Writings.* Edited by. Andreas Ströhl., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 197-208. Quotes p. 205. https://monoskop.org/images/a/a7/Flusser_Vilem_Writings.pdf (30/07/2026). Flusser wrote also a Portuguese and a German version of this text.
[34] Nancy Roth, « Games and Play: On Being Human in the Universe of Technical Images », in *Understanding Flusser, Understanding Modernism, op. cit.*, p. 61, https://nancyannroth.com/?page_id=2672 (20/07/2026).
[35] Title of Florian Rötzer's essay, "Spiel des Lebens", *Play it again, Vilém!, op. cit.*, pp. 73-85.
[36] Gunter Gebauer, *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[37] Rainer Guldin, "Vom Nullsummen- zum Plussummenspiel. Zur Bedeutung Anatol Rapoports in Vilém Flussers Spieltheorie», *Ibid* pp. 87-111, quote p. 98.

In the game of science, it is the scientist (rather than the technician) who enacts this third strategy; in the game of language, it is the poet[38].

Chapter 13 of *Post-history*[39], written in 1982, is entitled "Our Game". Here, Flusser describes play as an illustration of social structure. He uses the example of the film director who, while programming his own apparatus (the film), is himself programmed by the meta-apparatus of the film industry and the economy, forced to remain a mere functionary: "he is a programmed programmer, a played player. He transcends history but transcends it in function of programmed events. He is a functionary; he is not emancipated[40]." Programs are games, and individuals are merely pawns on the social chessboard. Yet, here too, Flusser leaves room for an opening: "to overturn the chessboard[41]". This opening, however, leads into a void: "in such a situation, we would not emancipate ourselves from the game: we would fall into the wholly insignificant, trans-ludic abyss that hides underneath the games. It is in order to avoid such a fall that we are *Homines ludentes*[42]." Playing, even within the constraints of the apparatus, at least offers an escape from nothingness — a form of resigned alienation, not unlike that of the Brazilian consumer described earlier.

It is in *Into the Universe of Technical Images*[43], written in German and Portuguese in 1985, that Flusser pushes this identification between the communication society and play to its furthest limit. "Society as a dialogical cerebral web must be regarded as a social game, and the information such a society produces must be regarded as moves in a sort of chess game[44]." For Flusser, society rolls the dice, generating dialogue and information. Individuals, emancipated from manual labor, could engage in a collective game, thereby generating new experiences and information. Yet, acutely aware of the utopian nature of this vision, he adds: "I believe this is the utopia that engages the unspectacular revolutionaries[45]." Chance has structured the brain in such a way that it can thwart chance itself; thus playing has become strategic: a game of hazard turned against hazard. Flusser revisited its theme in 1991 in an essay for an exhibition catalogue in Ludwigshafen am Rhein[46]. The

[38] See Eva Batlicková. "A insustentável leveza de pensar: Jogos, joguinhos e jogaços de Vilém Flusser". *Flusser Studies* nº 3, November 2008 (https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/insustentavel-leveza-pensar.pdf 20/07/2026).

[39] Vilém Flusser. *Post-History*. Translated by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes. Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013,. This chapter is in pp. 99-106.

[40] *Ibid*, p. 103.

[41] *Ibid*, p.106. The original French text adds that to overturn the chessboard is also a form of playing chess (Vilém Flusser, *Post-histoire*, Paris, T&P Work Unit, 2019, p. 99).

[42] *Post-History, op. cit.*, p. 106.

[43] Vilém Flusser. *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. Translated by Nancy Ann Roth. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Chapter 11 is titled "To Play".

[44] *Ibid*, p.93.

[45] *Ibid.* p. 86.

[46] "Mit dem Zufall gegen den Zufall spielen" in the catalogue *Zufall als Prinzip. Spielwelt, Methode und System in der Kunst der 20. Jahrhunderts*, at the Wilhelm Haack Museum in Ludwigshafen am Rhein [Heidelberg, Braus, 1992, pp. 9-13]. Text reprinted in the newspaper *Der Wiesbadener. Das Magazin für Kultur und Lebensfreude* (Wiesbaden, nº 23, Winter 1991, pp. 44–46) and in the catalogue of the 1993 *John Cage* exhibition at the Theater, Stadthalle Gütersloh (Marienfeld, Rhode

conclusion of this essay is telling: "Although postmodern consciousness is a mirror of archaic consciousness, the outcome of the game, namely our defeat, has not changed accordingly. And yet, there is one change: as history progressed, there was no room for freedom, and all freedom movements were rotten from within. In prehistoric times, […], freedom was the vain attempt to rebel against fate. It was a sin. And today, in the post-historical era, freedom is an equally vain attempt to rebel against chance and evoke the improbable. It's creativity, and it's a lot! — easily the post-historical synonym of sin. Freedom, I mean. Playing can thus be a space of freedom[47]."

Play as a creative refusal

Thus, throughout his writings, Flusser increasingly emphasized the possibility of playing against the rules, against the apparatus, and against society itself. This is achieved by rebelling against seriousness, engaging in a multiplicity of games, inventing alternative narratives, positioning oneself above the game through critical distance, knocking over the chessboard with a kick, or actively opposing chance. In his 1967/68 essay "Games", he evoked the act of cheating: "[a]nd he becomes more of a rebel the more games he plays and the more he cheats". In doing so, he anticipated what Jean-Marie Lhôte in *Le symbolisme des jeux*[48] termed the anti-game: "the confusion, the chaos, the brutal gesture of the angry player who sweeps away the pieces of the chessboard with the back of his hand." Where Lhôte argued that "one cannot imagine in the middle of the game the rook jumping over the pieces, the bishop moving out of the diagonal", Flusser had countered in "Games": "if, for example, we added an elephant between the rook and the knight."

It can be a question of changing the rules, but also of altering the purpose of the game. This occurs, for example, when two chess players, confronted with a complex problem, join forces to solve it: they attempt to transform an antagonistic, zero-sum game into a collaborative game, a positive-sum game: "What matters is no longer really to win, but rather to succeed in exploring all the possibilities. The two adversaries joined forces against the problem: the "polemic" turned into "dialogue"[49]. As Rainer Guldin writes: "The goal is to transform a zero-sum game, where there is always a winner and a loser, into a sum-plus game where both players benefit from the flow of the game and the outcome[50]." He adds: "By refusing to follow the rules of the game, you have access

Druck, 1992, pp. 30–31) https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-zufall.pdf (4.11.2026).

[47] See also the conclusion of Andrea Soto Calderón, "Juego e imaginación en Vilém Flusser", *Flusser Studies* nº 13, May 2012 (https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/calderon-juego-imaginacion-vilem-flusser.pdf 20/07/2026).

[48] Paris, Berg, 1976; Flusser had this book in his library. Quotes on pp. 94 and 95 in the 2010 edition. Not translated in English.

[49] *Into the Universe of Technical Images, op. cit.*, p. 100.

[50] Guldin, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

to a second-degree freedom, the freedom to intervene in the game to add new elements or to rethink the rules yourself[51]." That's creativity.

Noting that Flusser used football as a quintessential example of play[52], Gunter Gebauer speaks of "those unpredictable players who take all kinds of positions and let the opposing defense sink into chaos, strikers like Garrincha, Helmut Rahn, George Best or Thomas Müller. … What they accomplish doesn't fit into any football textbook. No one could ever imitate them – their game is footballing "madness". They are the true inventors of a football game that is constantly renewing itself[53]." Aren't these players, refusing to conform to football manuals, comparable to the experimental photographers who play against the camera?

Indeed, it is in the conclusion of *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*[54](written in German in 1983 and, in an expanded version, in Portuguese in 1985) that Flusser develops his call to play against the apparatus and rebel against the rules in the most complete and radical way. After developing his concepts of apparatus and programs using photography as an illustration, Flusser describes photographers as apparatus functionaries whose "acts are programmed by the camera[55]". However, he notes that alternative approaches are possible: "First, one can outwit the camera's rigidity. Second, one can smuggle human intentions into its program that are not predicted by it. Third, one can force the camera to create the unpredictable, the improbable, the informative. Fourth, one can show contempt for the camera and its creations and turn one's interest away from the thing in general in order to concentrate on information. In short: Freedom is the strategy of making chance and necessity subordinate to human intention. Freedom is playing against the camera[56]."

This search for freedom -- which, as he specifies shortly later, is the work of so-called "experimental" photographers, those who "know that they are playing against the camera" -- is central to the necessity of a philosophy of photography (photography functioning here as an example and a metaphor for society as a whole). This philosophy is vital because, he concludes, "it is the only form of revolution left open to us[57]." Flusser, having begun with a simple description of play before focusing on its societal meaning, arrives here at a vision of the game as an act of rebellion, It is undoubtedly in this specific text that his thought aligns most closely with the Situationist conception of play.

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[51] *Ibid*, p. 103.
[52] See also Rodrigo Duarte, "Fußball und Kunst. Zwei Aspekte des Flusserschen Spiels", in *Play it again, Vilém!, op. cit.*, pp. 261-272.
[53] Gebauer, *Ibid*, p. 46.
[54] Vilém Flusser. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. T translated by Anthony Mathews. London: Reaktion, 2000,.
[55] *Ibid.*, p.80.
[56] *Ibid.* p. 80.
[57] *Ibid.* p. 82.

3. The rules of the game world: Huizinga and Caillois.

The similarities between Flusser and the Situationists are particularly compelling to analyze in relation to the ideas of the two foundational figures in the field of play who, to a certain extent, inspired them both: Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois[58].

Johan Huizinga and *Homo Ludens*

Huizinga coined, or at least popularized, the expression *homo ludens* in a 1933 lecture, and later in his seminal book *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, written in Dutch in 1938 and translated into English in 1949.

In his 1967/68 essay mentioned above, Flusser uses the expression *homo ludens* for the first time (if I am not mistaken). Although Huizinga's book was not included in Flusser's "travel library[59]" (which contained two other books by Huizinga, one on Erasmus and another one on the decline of the Middle Ages), we know he had read it, as he mentions its German translation in an unpublished manuscript bibliography from 1958[60].

As for the Situationists, they drew heavy inspiration from Huizinga and his work (and we have already mentioned Debord's reading note, note 8). According to them, it is during leisure time that *homo faber* is transformed into *homo ludens*, the creator of culture, because "culture arises in the form of play, […] it is played from the very beginning[61]." Play is thus conceived as an elevation of the human condition.

According to Huizinga, play is characterized by its autonomy: it unfolds within a defined spatio-temporal framework and obeys an internal logic that gives it an intrinsic meaning. Play is therefore an act that "proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner[62]", transporting "the participants to another world[63]". However, contrary to Huizinga's position, the Situationists believed that play had to "invade the whole of life[64]". Instead of creating an alternative existence confined to a limited time and space — as a

[58] There are other contemporary game theorists and theories, but in this essay, we focus mainly on Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois for our analysis, as they are pioneers in game studies and since their works were published around the same time as those of the two authors and the movement.
[59] https://attachments.are.na/185811/81ba2234aae3864e896fc055a5d8dcfa.pdf?1389358868 (20/07/2026).
[60] It was Nancy Roth who discovered this mention of Huizinga in Vilém Flusser, *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert. Versuch einer subjektiven Synthese*, unpublished typescript. See Nancy Roth, "Games and Play: On Being Human in the Universe of Technical Images," in *Understanding Flusser, Understanding Modernism, op. cit.*, p. 59.
[61] Huizinga, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[62] *Ibid.,* p. 13.
[63] *Ibid.* p. 18.
[64] *I.S.*, 1, June 1958, p. 10.

separate, casual element — play was to be fully integrated into everyday life, interacting with it dynamically.

Huizinga views competition as a core building block of the game, and he is often reluctant to expand his analysis of play beyond traditional boundaries. For instance, regarding the sophist/nihilist Gorgias, he writes: "We have no wish to go into the deep question of how far the process of reasoning is itself marked by play-rules, i.e. is only valid within a certain frame of reference where those rules are accepted as binding. […] Let others puzzle this out![65] ", showing no desire to explore the link between the rules of thought and the rules of the game. Similarly, in his fascinating discussion on wigs, he briefly evokes *a contrario* the young Englishmen of the eighteenth century who preferred a natural, free and long hairstyle as a nonchalant protest against the artificial formalism of the wig. Yet, there too, he hesitates to explore the link between games and dominant culture any further: "To follow this tendency in other cultural fields would be an attractive and important task, and many connections with play would certainly come to light. But an investigation of this sort would lead us too far[66]."

Huizinga appears thus unwilling to explore individual play as a form of protest or a refusal of the rules. Yet, this very link between play, culture and rebellion is essential for both Flusser and the Situationists. The latter favor a collective practice based on cooperation and the "communal creation of ludic ambiances[67]". The only form of competition they recognized is that of the *potlatch* —a ritual practiced by indigenous tribes of the Pacific Northwest based on the reciprocity of competitive gift-giving.

The playful realm also belongs to a sphere of "mystery" and "diversity" created through the use of masks and cross-dressing, allowing the individual to become "another being[68]". Indeed, Huizinga writes that play is a free activity, distinct from ordinary life, which captivates the player entirely. "It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means[69]."

It is within this atmosphere of mystery and disguise that social relations are born. Play generates social bonds and community because it possesses intrinsic meaning, always involving some form of struggle or stake.

Huizinga notes that: "The outlaw, the revolutionary, the cabbalist or member of a secret

[65] Huizinga, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153.
[66] *Ibid*, p. 185.
[67] *I.S.*, 1, June 1958, p. 10.
[68] Huizinga, *op. cit.,* p. 13.
[69] *Ibid.,* p. 13.

society, indeed heretics of all kinds, are of a highly associative if not sociable disposition, and a certain element of play is prominent in all their doings. A play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over. Of course, not every game of marbles or every bridge party leads to the founding of a club. But the feeling of being 'apart together' in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game.[70]"

For Huizinga (a point on which both the Situationists and Flusser agree) revolution shares fundamental affinities with celebration and play. Much like a festival, it marks a rupture with everyday life: ordinary time and obligations are suspended, opening a space of freedom where collective values are shared and existence shifts into another dimension. It possesses a distinct atmosphere, intimately bound to a specific place and time (*hic et nunc*), which renders it inherently irreducible and impossible to replicate identically.

Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games (Les Jeux et les Hommes)*

In *Man, Play and Games,* Roger Caillois affirmed in 1967 that play creates neither wealth nor goods, standing in direct opposition to both labor and the seriousness of life, and that. For this reason, he argues, play must remain strictly separate from reality: the existence of clear boundaries is an indispensable condition for preserving its function.

While the first part of this premise aligns fully with the Situationist project -- insofar as the SI considers play a radical rupture with the logic of profit -- the second diverges sharply. For both the Situationists and Flusser, play was meant to permeate all aspects of existence, including revolution. They conceived revolution as a celebration and a game, releasing the joy of the emancipated individual and sharing it with others within a specific spatio-temporal framework, yet fully embedded in reality. Consequently, for them, the revolution had to be inherently playful from its inception.

In his study, Caillois formulates an interesting taxonomy, dividing games into four distinct categories: *Agôn* (competition, where success depends on the player's skills), *Alea* (chance and luck, an abandonment to fate), *Mimicry* (disguise and identification) and *Ilinx* (vertigo, the destruction of perceptual stability, and pure sensation)[71].

It is indeed possible to map the techniques and practices of SI, and, to a lesser extent, the ideas of Flusser, onto this classification, provided it is not applied too schematically and allows for

[70] *Ibid.* p. 12.
[71] Roger Caillois. *Man, Play and Games*. Translated by Meyer Barash. Urbana-Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001, pp. 11-26.

fluid interactions, reinterpretations, and overlaps between categories.

Although the element of competition had to be eliminated from play according to the Situationists, as we have already seen, *Agôn* can represent the struggle against authority and the ruling class. In this sense, the desire to triumph manifests itself in collective struggle; here, *Agôn* becomes the revolution. In his own more individualistic manner, Flusser similarly adopts this theme of play as a revolution.

The practice of drifting (*dérive*) falls squarely within the category of *Alea*. Its methodology is intimately linked to chance and the abandonment of habits, allowing individuals to directly experience the environment and fortuitous encounters. *Mimicry* corresponds to cross-dressing and disguise. The mask destabilizes the social role of the subject, liberating the authentic essence of the individual. However, the mask serves another function: leading man out of ordinary life and into the ludic sphere. The mask of primitive cultures opened up the playful space of ritualistic play.

The game of vertigo, *Ilinx*, is best represented by diversion (*détournement*). The temporary disruption and destruction of stable perception provides a profound staisfaction. The destabilizing and subversive effect that permeates this technique is highly comparable to vertigo. This ludic vertigo can also be linked to the practice of experimental photographers as defined by Flusser.

For Caillois, one does not play against the machine; rather, one plays as the machine dictates, within the limits it allows. He illustrates this with the interplay between mechanical gears: "It is the play [*le jeu*] that remains between the various elements that allows the operation of a mechanism [72]." Much like Huizinga, Roger Caillois considers play to be defined by essential boundaries that isolate it from everyday life. It is a "separate[73]" activity, inscribed in a specific space and time, and governed by precise rules. When these boundaries dissolve and the logic of play invades reality, it loses its primary function of entertainment, resulting in what Caillois describes as the "corruption of the game[74]". These limits are therefore not merely spatial or temporal: they safeguard the division between the game world and the real world -- an essential condition for the very existence of play.

This question of limits is also manifested in the scholarly urge to define, schematize and classify play. While these attempts offer valuable analytical tools, they risk confining play within a rigid conceptual framework, thereby attenuating the creative, subversive, and profane dimensions, championed by both the Situationists and Flusser. By seeking to fix what is inherently fluid and multiform, such taxonomies can strip play of its intrinsic power, even if play itself relies on rules.

Unlike Flusser and the Situationists, Caillois does not view rupture or rebellion as elements of play — quite the contrary. Regarding the laws of perspective or the rules of musical composition

[72] Roger Caillois. *Les jeux et les hommes. Le masque et le vertige*. Paris : Gallimard, 1967[1976], p. 12 [translation from the French text, absent from English text].
[73] Caillois, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 6.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

or versification as conventions that operate "like the rules of the game he plays[75]", Caillois argues that failing to respect them destroys the game entirely: "There is something arbitrary about these rules, and the first comer, if he finds them bizarre or embarrassing, has the right to reject them and to paint without perspective, to write without rhyme or cadence, to compose outside the accepted chords. In doing so, he no longer plays the game and contributes to destroying it, because as with the game, these rules only exist through the respect we have for them. However, to deny them is at the same time to sketch out the future criteria of a new excellence, of another game whose still vague code will in turn become tyrannical, will tame audacity and will once again prohibit sacrilegious fantasy. Every rupture that breaks an accredited prohibition already outlines another system, no less strict and no less gratuitous[76]."

Furthermore, in contrast with Flusser and the Situationists, for whom play can and must transform the world, Caillois views play as fundamentally unproductive and self-contained. He asserts that "play has no other meaning than itself," adding: "The game is ruined by the nihilist who denounces the rules as absurd and conventional, who refuses to play because the game is meaningless. His arguments are irrefutable[77]." He also writes that play "is condemned to found nothing or produce anything, because it is in its essence to cancel its results, instead of work and science capitalizing on theirs and, more or less, transforming the world[78]". This stands in direct opposition to the vision held by the Situationists and Flusser. For them, play possesses a much broader ontological meaning, constituting a radical opening to the world and to others because " [h]uman play is […] the symbolic activity of bringing to presence the meaning of world and life[79]".

Conclusion

As demonstrated in the preceding pages, numerous correspondences exist between the Situationist vision of play and that of Vilém Flusser. These similarities can be examined along three core axes: creation, revolt and profanation.

In both contexts, play is an eminently creative activity that opens up new horizons, encourages experimentation, and leads to unexpected breakthroughs. It goes hand in hand with the exploration of untrodden paths. True creativity involves not only playing, but, above all, refusing to conform to established rules in order to autonomously reinvent them — a principle for which both Flusser and the Situationists provide numerous examples.

[75] Caillois, *op. cit.*, 1967, p. 16.
[76] *Ibid*, pp. 16-17.
[77] Caillois, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 7.
[78] Caillois, *op. cit.*, 1967, p. 22.
[79] Fink, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

For both, play also carries a revolutionary dimension, functioning as a form of revolt against social programming. Both emphasize its subversive power, particularly within the realm of art. Play stands in direct opposition to prefabricated art and to kitsch, which fails to generate new information (reminiscent of the concepts of Abraham Moles[80], already mentioned in note 4). For Flusser, more precisely, this play against the apparatus is metaphorically directed against pre-programmed photography, allowing for the emergence of experimental photography. For the Situationists, in a manner more political than artistic, play is a "struggle against authority and the ruling class[81]". It is a matter of liberating humanity by overthrowing the system to establish a radically new way of living and thinking.

Consequently, play operates as an act of profanation and a quest for freedom. As early as 1967/68, Flusser argued that human dignity resides in liberation through play. In 1983, the final sentence of his book *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* — which calls for the "only form of revolution left open to us" — resonates powerfully with that of the famous 1966 Strasbourg pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student Life: considered in its economic, political, psychological, sexual, and particularly intellectual aspects, and a modest proposal for its remedy*[82], an anonymous tract primarily authored by the Situationist Mustapha Khayati:"For proletarian revolt is a festival or it is nothing; in revolution the road of excess leads once and for all to the palace of wisdom. A palace which knows only one rationality: the *game*. The rules are simple: to live instead of devising a lingering death, and to indulge[83] untrammeled desire."

Conversely, as has clearly been apparent in the preceding pages, the primary divergence between the Situationists and Flusser regarding play lies in its collective versus individual dimension. The Situationists place unconditional emphasis on collective play, communal games, and celebrations that involve all participants. For them, the desire to triumph manifests itself through collective struggle; play must inherently be shared. Much like Huizinga, who notes the limits of isolated play, they favor collective stimulation, agreeing that "[s]olitary play is productive of culture only in a limited degree[84]." Furthermore, for the SI, playful action is a means to transcend theatre by erasing the traditional boundaries between actors and spectators. The representation becomes a moment of reality, merging completely with everyday life. The revolutionary moment is thus envisioned as a great celebration of the emancipated individual, a point of fusion where utopia and

[80] See Abraham Moles, « Qu'est-ce que le kitsch ? », *Communication et Langages*, nº 9, 1971, pp.74-87, https://www.persee.fr/doc/colan_0336-1500_1971_num_9_1_3856 (20/07/2026).
[81] See above the notion of the *Agôn* in Caillois.
[82] Anonymous English translation: http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/4
[83] In the original French "jouir sans entraves": the word « jouir » has two meanings, to enjoy, and to come (sexually), hence the double entendre of this phrase.
[84] Huizinga, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

reality meet. In this collective game, it is the masses who reclaim their voice and put forward their desires.

In Flusser's work, by contrast, the focus is almost exclusively on the solitary game of the creator acting against the rules. Flusser privileges the individual isolated in front of the system and the apparatus, rarely addressing collective or societal play. At most, he evokes (see notes 49-51) the collaboration of two chess players confronted with a complex problem, who then cease to be rivals and work together to find a solution by uniting their intellects. Only once, if we are not mistaken, in *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, does he evoke a collective commitment of men, emancipated from labor to bring forth new experiences and information; yet, even then, it appears to be a mere accumulation of individualities rather than a truly collective game. Similarly, Flusser speaks only of the active player, the participant, leaving potential spectators unmentioned and excluded from the ludic process.

For both the Situationists and Flusser, play is not merely the engine of human creativity; it represents a potent vehicle for emancipation and resistance, insofar as it fulfills a profaning function capable of diverting established customs and challenging dominant norms. Although they never crossed paths and no historical trace of contact between them has been uncovered, their approaches present striking convergences, both in their conceptualization of play and in the political and existential scope they attribute to it. Nevertheless, a fundamental point of divergence remains regarding the collective or individual nature of play. This question, which touches upon the very conditions of liberation and creation, remains a vital subject of reflection, discussion, and debate across philosophy, aesthetics and the social sciences.

To conclude, Flusser has traditionally been read through the lens of post-historical media theory, cybernetics, and communication structures. Debord and the Situationists are usually read through the Marxist lens of political economy, alienating spectacles, and revolutionary praxis. This essay has attempted to show that Flusser's "Apparatus" and Debord's "Spectacle" are, to some degree, conceptual cousins, and that both thinkers arrived at the same antidote to these systems: subversive play. While they came from completely different geographic and philosophical planets, their ideas converged, demonstrating that the problem of technical alienation demanded a "ludic" solution, no matter the starting point. This essay shows that, however, their mechanics diverged on the issue of collective versus individual play as a resistance strategy: for the SI, collective play must contaminate reality collectively, while for Flusser, the isolated consciousness of the individual player trying to outsmart a pre-programmed black box is predominant. This leaves the reader with a question on contemporary digital resistance: how can resistance to modern algorithms be better achieved, through collective mobilization or through individual, subversive hacking?

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