

data-handling techniques is seemingly tied to the indefiniteness of the knowledge with which these techniques are designed to deal.

Are all techniques of this kind actively engaged with the real world? It is extremely doubtful. The aim of science and technology would seem to be much more that of presenting us with a definitively unreal world, beyond all criteria of truth and reality. The revolution of our time is the uncertainty revolution.

We are not ready to accept this. Paradoxically, however, we attempt to escape from uncertainty by relying even more on information and communications systems, so merely aggravating the uncertainty itself. This is a forward flight: the pursuit race of technology and its perverse effects, of man and his clones, around a track in the form of a Moebius strip, has only just begun.

uncertainty
tech

uncertainty
- info
feedback
loop

Operational Whitewash

The uncertainty to which we are subject results, paradoxically, from an excess of positivity, from an ineluctable drop in the level of negativity. A kind of leukaemia has taken hold of our societies – a kind of dissolution of negativity in a perfused euphoria. Neither the French Revolution, nor the philosophy of the Enlightenment, nor critical utopianism has found its fulfilment through the supersession of contradictions, and if the problems they addressed have been solved, this has been achieved by casting off the negative, by disseminating the energies of everything condemned by society within a simulation entirely given over to positivity and factitiousness, by instituting a definitively transparent state of affairs. Ours is rather like the situation of the man who has lost his shadow: either he has become transparent, and the light passes right through him or, alternatively, he is lit from all angles, overexposed and defenceless against all sources of light. We are similarly exposed on all sides to the glare of technology, images and information, without any way

excess of positivity

leukaemia

nostalgic

in a perfect world

collaborate

defenceless
against light

whitewash
in 8/2007

of refracting their rays; and we are doomed in consequence to a whitewashing of all activity – whitewashed social relations, whitewashed bodies, whitewashed memory – in short, to a complete aseptic whiteness. Violence is whitewashed, history is whitewashed, all as part of a vast enterprise of cosmetic surgery at whose completion nothing will be left but a society for which, and individuals for whom, all violence, all negativity, are strictly forbidden. In these circumstances everything which is unable to relinquish its own identity is inevitably plunged into a realm of radical uncertainty and endless simulation.

found
aesth. ideal

We are under the sway of a surgical compulsion that seeks to excise negative characteristics and remodel things synthetically into ideal forms. Cosmetic surgery: a face's chance configuration, its beauty or ugliness, its distinctive traits, its negative traits – all these have to be corrected, so as to produce something more beautiful than beautiful: an ideal face, a *surgical* face. Even one's astrological sign, one's birth sign, can now be revised so as to harmonize star and lifestyle: once a utopian notion, the idea of an Institute of Zodiacal Surgery where a few appropriate manipulations would affiliate you with your chosen sign is now clearly realistic.

willful
surgery

Even the sex to which we belong – that small portion of destiny still remaining to us, that minimum of fatality and otherness – will be changeable at will. Not to mention cosmetic surgery as applied to green spaces, to nature in general, to genes, to events, to history (e.g. the French Revolution revised and corrected – given a facelift under the banner of human rights). Everything has to become post-synchable according to criteria of optimal convenience and compatibility. This inhuman formalization of face, speech,

surgical
conv. 1/2007

sex, body, will and public opinion is a tendency everywhere in evidence. Every last glimmer of fate and negativity has to be expunged in favour of something resembling the smile of a corpse in a funeral home, in favour of a general redemption of signs. To this end a gigantic campaign of plastic surgery has been undertaken.

plastic
surgery

Everything has to be sacrificed to the principle that things must have an operational genesis. So far as production is concerned, it is no longer the Earth that produces, or labour that creates wealth (the famous betrothal of Earth and Labour): rather, it is Capital that *makes* the Earth and Labour *produce*. Work is no longer an action, it is an operation. Consumption no longer means the simple enjoyment of goods, it means having (someone) enjoy something – an operation modelled on, and keyed to, the differential range of sign-objects.

Capital
makes
the
Earth
produce

Communication is a matter not of speaking but of making people speak. Information involves not knowledge but making people know. The use of the construction 'make' plus infinitive [in French, the auxiliary *faire* plus infinitive – *Trans.*] indicates that these are operations, not actions. The point in advertising and propaganda is not to believe but to make people believe. 'Participation' is not an active or spontaneous social form, because it is always induced by some sort of machinery or machination: it is not acting so much as making people act (an operation resembling animation or similar techniques).

making
people
speak
faire -

These days even *wanting* is mediated by models of the will, by forms of making people want something – by persuasion or dissuasion. Even if such categories as wishing, being able, believing, knowing, acting, desiring and enjoying still retain some meaning, they have all been monopolized,

induced
fashion

as it were, by a simple auxiliary mode. Everywhere the active verb has given way to the factitive, and actions themselves have less importance than the fact that they are produced, induced, solicited, media-ized or technicized.

There is to be no knowledge save that which results from having (people) know. No speaking save that which results from having (people) speak – i.e. from an act of communication. No more actions save those which result from an interaction – complete, if possible, with television monitor and built-in feedback. For the thing that characterizes operation, as opposed to action, is precisely that operations are necessarily regulated in the way in which they occur – otherwise, there would be no communication. Speaking – but no communication. Communication is operational or it is nothing. Information is operational or it is nothing.

All our categories have thus entered the age of the factitious: no more wanting – only getting people to want; no more doing – only getting people to do; no more being worth something – merely getting something to be worth something (witness advertising in general); no more knowing – only letting know; and, last but not least, not so much enjoying, not so much taking pleasure, as getting people to enjoy, getting people to take pleasure. This is the great problem of the moment: to take sexual pleasure serves no purpose – we are supposed to give sexual pleasure, whether to ourselves or to others. Such pleasure has become an act of communication: I am your guest, you are my guest – we exchange pleasure as part of a performative interactivity. Anyone who seeks gratification without communication is a pig. Do communication machines have orgasms? That is another story – but if we try to imagine orgasmic machines, we can do so only by reference to the

Operational
Communication
Info.

Performance
interactivity

Orgasmic
machines

model of communication machines. As a matter of fact, such orgasmic machines already exist in the shape of our own bodies – bodies coaxed into coming by the subtlest of cosmetic and pleasure-inducing technologies.

bodies coaxed
into
orgasms

Jogging is another activity in the thrall of the performance principle. To jog is not to run but to make one's body run. Though it is based on the body's informal performance, jogging strives to exhaust and destroy the body. The 'secondary state' induced by the activity corresponds exactly to this second operation, this mechanical derailing of the body. The pleasure (or pain) of jogging has nothing to do either with sport or with the body in its fleshly reality: it is the pleasure not of pure physical exertion but of a dematerialization, of an endless functioning. The body of the jogger is like one of Tinguely's machines: ascesis and ecstasis of the performance principle. Making the body run soon gives way, moreover, to letting the body run: the body is hypnotized by its own performance and goes on running on its own, in the absence of a subject, like a somnambulist and celibate machine. (An analogous machine here is Jarry's *quintuplette*, on which the dead carry on pedalling by themselves.) The interminable aspect of jogging, like the interminable aspect of psychoanalysis, is indeed endless, aimless, illusionless performance.

jogging

as
perfect

on
automated

as
function

It can no longer be said that the goal here is 'getting into shape', which was an ideal of the 1960s and 1970s. Fitness then was still functional: it represented a striving for market value, for the body's sign-value, its productivity or status. Performance, by contrast, is operational: it is orientated not towards the body's form but towards its formula – its equation, its potentiality as a field of operations, as something that we cause to function because, just like any machine,

it asks to be activated; because, just like any signal, it asks to be switched on. It is just as simple as that. Hence the deep vacuousness of the action's content. What could be vainer than all this running for the sake of exercising the faculty of running? And still they run . . .

The same indifference to content, the same obsessional and operational, performative and interminable aspects, also characterize the present-day use of computers: people no more think at a computer than they run when jogging. They have their brain function in the first activity much as they have their body run in the second. Here too the operation is virtually endless: a head-to-head confrontation with a computer has no more reason to come to an end than the physical effort that jogging demands. And the kind of hypnotic pleasure involved, the ecstatic absorption or resorption of energy – bodily energy in one case, cerebral in the other – is identical. On the one hand, the static electricity of skin and muscles – on the other, the static electricity of the screen.

Jogging and working at a computer may be looked upon as drugs, as narcotics, to the extent that all drugs are directly governed by the dominant performance principle: they get us to take pleasure, get us to dream, get us to feel. Drugs are not artificial in the sense of inducing a secondary state distinct from a natural state of the body; they are artificial, however, in that they constitute a chemical prosthesis, a mental surgery of performance, a plastic surgery of perception.

It is hardly surprising that the suspicion of systematic drug use hangs over sport today. Different forms of obedience to the performance principle can easily set up house together. Not only muscles and nerves but also neurons and cells must be made to perform. (Even bacteria will soon

difficult
key
at
cable

skin
electricity

harmless

make
perform
; dopamine

have an operational role.) Throwing, running, swimming and jumping have had their day: the point now is to send a satellite called 'the body' into artificial orbit. The athlete's body has become both launcher and satellite; no longer governed by an individual will gauging the effort expended with a view to self-transcendence, it is controlled by an internal microcomputer working by calculation alone.

The compulsion to operationalism gives rise to an operational paradox. It is not just that the order of the day is 'making something worth something': the fact is that it is better, if something is to be invested with value, for it to have no value to begin with; better to know nothing in order to have things known; better to produce nothing in order to have things produced; and better to have nothing to say if one seeks to communicate. All of which is part of the logic of things: as everyone knows, if you want to make people laugh, it is better not to be funny. The implications for communication and information networks are incontestable: in order for content to be conveyed as well and as quickly as possible, that content should come as close as possible to transparency and insignificance. This principle may be seen in action in the telephone relationship or in media transmissions – as also in more serious arenas. Thus good communication – the foundation, today, of a good society – implies the annihilation of its own content. (Note that even the term 'society' has lost its meaning: the only thing that is still 'social' is whatever can be manufactured as such, as 'sociality' or 'sociability' – ghastly sobriquets which perfectly express the thing to which they refer: such terms – as Francois George has said of 'sexuality' – put one in mind of some form of surgery.) And if good communication implies the annihilation of its own content, good

fully calculated for

good
communication
& annihil
itself

data-handling implies a digital transparency of knowledge. Good advertising implies the nullity – or at least the neutralization – of the product being advertised, just as fashion implies the transparency of women and their bodies – and just as the exercise of power implies the insignificance of those who exercise it.

What if all advertising were an apologia not for a product but for advertising itself? If information referred not to events but to the promotion of information itself *qua* event? If communication were concerned not with messages but instead with the promotion of communication itself *qua* myth?

Xerox and Infinity

If men create intelligent machines, or fantasize about them, it is either because they secretly despair of their own intelligence or because they are in danger of succumbing to the weight of a monstrous and useless intelligence which they seek to exorcize by transferring it to machines, where they can play with it and make fun of it. By entrusting this burdensome intelligence to machines we are released from any responsibility to knowledge, much as entrusting power to politicians allows us to disdain any aspiration of our own to power.

If men dream of machines that are unique, that are endowed with genius, it is because they despair of their own uniqueness, or because they prefer to do without it – to enjoy it by proxy, so to speak, thanks to machines. What such machines offer is the spectacle of thought, and in manipulating them people devote themselves more to the spectacle of thought than to thought itself.

It is not for nothing that they are described as 'virtual', for they put thought on hold indefinitely, tying its emergence to the achievement of a complete knowledge.

[automata & fact
1.2.22]

turning thought to
machine spectacle of
thought (i.e. automata)

giving up ideas to
machines

giving up
the man

spectacle
thought

Wiederholung d. eth. Theoreme

no illusions about the effectiveness of any kind of rational intervention. In the face of a process which so far surpasses the individual or collective will of the players, we have no choice but to accept that any distinction between good and evil (and by extension here any possibility of assessing the 'right level' of technological development) can have the slightest validity only within the tiny marginal sphere contributed by our rational model. Inside these bounds, ethical reflection and practical determinations are feasible; beyond them, at the level of the overall process which we have ourselves set in motion, but which from now on marches on independently of us with the ineluctability of a natural catastrophe, there reigns - for better or worse - the inseparability of good and evil, and hence the impossibility of mobilizing the one without the other. This is, properly speaking, the *theorem of the accursed share*. There is no point whatsoever in wondering whether things ought to be thus: they simply *are* thus, and to fail to acknowledge it is to fall utterly prey to illusion. None of this invalidates whatever may be possible in the ethical, ecological or economic sphere of our life - but it does totally relativize the impact of such efforts upon the symbolic level, which is the level of destiny.

[mit an capt. gedeutet]

Essential theoreme, definiert die inhärente Katastrophe

The Theorem of the Accursed Share

Hyperbolische Positivität & Katastrophe

The uninterrupted production of positivity has a terrifying consequence. Whereas negativity engenders crisis and critique, hyperbolic positivity for its part engenders catastrophe, for it is incapable of distilling crisis and criticism in homeopathic doses. Any structure that hunts down, expels or exorcizes its negative elements risks a catastrophe caused by a thoroughgoing backlash, just as any organism that hunts down and eliminates its germs, bacteria, parasites or other biological antagonists risks metastasis and cancer - in other words, it is threatened by a voracious positivity of its own cells, or, in the viral context, by the prospect of being devoured by its own - now unemployed - antibodies.

hunting -> to death by own antibodies

Anything that purges the accursed share in itself signs its own death warrant. This is the theorem of the accursed share.

The energy of the accursed share, and its violence, are expressions of the principle of Evil. Beneath the transparency of the consensus lies the opacity of evil - the tenacity, obsessiveness and irreducibility of the evil whose contrary

opazität all

energy is at work everywhere: in the malfunctioning of things, in viral attacks, in the acceleration of processes and in their wildly chaotic effects, in the overriding of causes, in excess and paradox, in radical foreignness, in strange attractors, in linkless chains of events.

The principle of Evil is not a moral principle but rather a principle of instability and vertigo, a principle of complexity and foreignness, a principle of seduction, a principle of incompatibility, antagonism and irreducibility. It is not a death principle – far from it. It is a vital principle of disjunction. Since the Garden of Eden, which Evil's advent closed to us, Evil has been the principle of knowledge. But if indeed we were chased from the Garden for the sin of knowledge, we may as well draw the maximum benefit from it. Trying to redeem the accursed share or the principle of Evil can result only in the establishment of new artificial paradises, those of the consensus, which for their part do indeed embody a true death principle.

To analyse present-day systems in their catastrophic reality, to consider not only their failures and aporias but also the way in which they sometimes succeed only too well and get lost in the delusion of their own functioning, is to come face to face at every turn with the theorem or equation of the accursed share, and to find its indestructible symbolic power confirmed every time.

Going over to the side of the principle of Evil implies making a choice in every sphere that is not only critical but also criminal. In any society, even a liberal one (such as ours!), this kind of choice cannot be publicly expressed. A stated position in support of the non-human or of the principle of Evil will be rejected by any value system (by 'principle of Evil' here I mean nothing more than the simple stating of a few hard truths concerning values, law, power,

usability
of evil para

reality, etc.). In this respect there is no difference at all between East, West, North or South. And there is not the slightest chance of seeing an end to this intolerant attitude, as opaque and crystalline as a glass wall, which no progress in the sphere of either morality or immorality has managed to modify.

The world is so full of positive feelings, naive sentimentality, self-important rectitude and sycophancy that irony, mockery and the *subjective* energy of evil are always in the weaker position. At this rate every last negative sentiment will soon be forced into a clandestine existence. Already the merest gibe tends to meet with incomprehension. It will soon be impossible to express reservations about anything at all. We shall have nothing left but disgust and consternation.

Fortunately, the evil genie has taken up residence in *things*: this is the *objective* energy of evil. No matter how we choose to describe whatever it is that seeks thus to find a way forward – the accursed share, or strange attractors, destiny, or a hypersensitive response to initial conditions – we shall not be able to avoid its ever-increasing strength, its exponential trajectory or the veritable pataphysics of incommensurable effects that it will generate. The excentric development of our systems is ineluctable. As Hegel put it, we are amid 'the life, moving of itself, of that which is dead'. Once certain limits have been passed there is no relationship between cause and effect, merely viral relationships between one effect and another, and the whole system is driven by inertia alone. The development of this increase in strength, this velocity and ferocity of what is dead, is the modern history of the accursed share. It is not up to us to explain this: rather, we must be its mirror in real time. We must outpace events, which themselves

going info of observable - give over to digital

evil
of
being

gibes

done
by
inertia

long ago outpaced liberation. The reign of incoherence, anomaly and catastrophe must be acknowledged, as must the vitality of all those extreme phenomena which toy with extermination while at the same time answering to certain mysterious rules.

It is in the nature of Evil, as it is in the nature of the accursed share, that it regenerates in proportion as it is expended. Economically speaking this is outrageous, much as the inseparability of Good and Evil can be outrageous from a metaphysical point of view. But if violence is thus done to reason, we must nevertheless acknowledge the vitality of this violence, the vitality of an unforeseeable inordinacy which carries things beyond their original goals and makes them hyperdependent on other ultimate ends (but which?).

All liberation affects Good and Evil equally. The liberation of morals and minds entails crimes and catastrophes. The liberation of law and pleasure leads inevitably to the liberation of crime (something which Sade understood well – and for that he has never been forgiven).

In the USSR perestroika has been characterized not only by ethnic and political demands but also by a surge of accidents and natural catastrophes (including crimes and accidents of the past, now disinterred). A kind of spontaneous terrorism has emerged in response to liberalization and the extension of human rights. All this, we are told, was already there – but censored. (One of the most deeply felt criticisms directed against the former Stalinist regime is that it deprived us of the many bloody events it censored, thus rendering them useless save as part of a political unconscious to be inherited by future generations; that it froze or deep-froze the titillating and bloodcurdling details of these crimes; and that, like the Nazis in the case

liberation
of crime

of the Holocaust (another almost perfect crime), it flouted the universal law of information.

But there is more to this phenomenon than the lifting of censorship: the fact is that crime, delinquency and catastrophe rush towards the screen of glasnost like flies towards artificial light (why, incidentally, are flies never attracted to natural light?). This catastrophic surplus-value arises from an enthusiasm, almost a passion, on the part of nature, and equally from a spontaneous propensity of technology to indulge its own whims as soon as the political conditions are ripe. Frozen out for so long, crimes and catastrophes thus make their joyous and official entrance. If they did not exist they would have to be invented, for there can be no question that they are ultimately the true signs of freedom and the natural disorder of the world.

The totality constituted by Good and Evil together transcends us, but we should accept it totally. There can be no intelligence of things so long as this fundamental rule is ignored. The illusion that the two can be distinguished in order to promote one or the other is absurd. (This applies to the proponents of evil for evil's sake as much as to anyone else, for they will end up doing good.)

All kinds of events are out there, impossible to predict. They have already occurred, or are just about to heave into view. All we can do is train our searchlight, as it were, and keep our telescopic lens on this virtual world in the hope that some of those events will be obliging enough to allow themselves to be captured. Theory can be no more than this: a trap set in the hope that reality will be naive enough to fall into it.

The essential thing is to point the searchlight the right way. Unfortunately, we don't know which way that is.

Soviet flouted law

liberation
of crime

Theory
as trap
for reality

We can only comb the sky. In most instances the events are so far away, metaphysically speaking, that they merely cause a slight phosphorescence on the screen. They have to be developed and enlarged, like photographs. Not in order to discover their meaning, however: they are not logograms, but holograms. They can no more be *explained* than the fixed spectrum of a star or the variations of red.

To capture such strange events, theory itself must be remade as something strange: as a perfect crime, or as a strange attractor.

PART II

Radical Otherness

Medusa *Medusa*

*The Medusa represents an otherness so radical that one
cannot look at her and live.*