

What I baptized DROMOSCOPY twenty years ago¹ now applies to the whole of our experience and knowledge, the fruits of a now-remote era, one so slow that these gains seem to flee in turn, discredited by the mad race of contemporary events.

Whence the inertia of the present tense, known as *presentism*, which is nothing more than the illusion of acceleration in communications, the telescoping of a fleeting teleobjectivity that tends to replace established objectivity, the same way the dromoscopic illusion of the automobile disturbs and seriously perturbs the roadside, making an immobile environment appear mobile by providing those in the vehicle with the comfort of an on-the-spot fixity that only an accident along the way will jog them out of, a head-on collision suddenly re-establishing the facts.

In this instance, the fixity of the obstacle rears up like some Justice of the Peace of the shift in perspective, and the tree or wall are only ever features of what the obstacle of the geographical finiteness of a unique habitat represents, further down the track, for a species of animal every bit as much 'rural' as 'human'. It is a habitat that no transgenic engineering will make us leave, despite the postmodern ranting about some virtual space, a surrogate sixth continent for a neocolonialism every bit as illusory, in the end, as the conquest of astrophysical space by the adepts of NASA's 'manned flights' in the 1960s.

Indeed, what astronomical illusion did yesterday's moon missions embody? What conquests, what 'fallout' was it a matter of, then, if not that of a space indefinitely travelable but uninhabitable!

In other words, the fallout of a cosmic vacuum bearing no relationship to biospherical space, where what is travelable is simultaneously inhabitable, where circulating and settling are one and the same 'abode'.

To so unduly privilege exotic feats to the detriment of any 'dwelling' – now there's a crazy act for you, an action of panic

detritorialization that only 'the balance of terror' between East and West could provoke in the face of the probabilities of an atomic war making the Earth definitively unfit for life.

And so, the so-called 'conquest of space' was merely confirmation of Bossuet's observation, the cause of such 'exotic' progress only ever having been the effect of terrorist deterrence between communism and capitalism. As a naval officer recently put it: 'Surely a successful military manoeuvre is a catastrophe averted just in time.'

Nothing is ever gained without something being lost, and, therefore, technical progress is only an agreed sacrifice; proof of this was offered to us yet again by the launching of deep-space astronautics during the Cold War years.

At this period in history that at one point saw the threat of the Soviet nuclear missile installation on Cuba (1962) put the all-too-precarious balance between the two great blocs at risk, planet Earth confronts a major hazard whereby, according to the astrophysicist, Sir Martin Rees, 'the odds are no better than fifty-fifty that our present civilization on Earth will survive to the end of the present century...'⁵

This was confirmed by the historian Arthur Schlesinger, former special assistant to President John Kennedy, who claimed in his memoirs on the subject of the Cuban Missile Crisis that: 'This was not only the most dangerous moment of the Cold War. It was the most dangerous moment in human history.'⁶

So this is it, the successful manoeuvre: the conquest of space resulting from the catastrophe of the sacrifice of the planet averted just in time, in the duel between East and West. Strangely, such a 'military' manoeuvre seems to be enjoying a comeback, with the Pentagon installing the first missiles of a future 'anti-missile belt' during the summer of 2004, in a rush to see them in place for the presidential elections of 2 November 2004. And this was done without any conclusive experiment verifying the effectiveness of the system. Similarly,

in his election programme the incumbent president, George W. Bush, did not budge from the course set at the beginning of the year for astronautics. And so, when the International Space Station (ISS) is complete, a new craft is set to effect its first manned mission in 2014, before taking Americans back to the moon some time between 2015 and 2020. As for Bush's Democrat opponent, John Kerry openly slammed these pointlessly costly objectives and offered no set goal and no set calendar for space exploration.⁷

Heralding a reversal in perspective, Nietzsche wrote: 'Love your furthest away as you love yourself.'

In the United States, this azimuthal projection seems to be back in pride of place with the saying: 'To annihilate the enemy close to you, you have to first strike the one further away.'⁸ Whether a preemptive strike at the end of the Cold War or a preventive war on terrorism today, the same 'forward-scatter' logic has long been at work.

Dromological logic of a race for 'all-out' supremacy that causes our nearest and dearest to disappear in favour of the furthest away, all that is furthest away, all the exoticisms, in other words, every manner of exodus!

A race beyond Good and Evil that renounces all the 'on-this-sides' only to wind up, ultimately, at this topological reversal whereby the *global* now represents the interiority of a finite world, and the *local*, its exteriority, that great suburban belt of a history without geography – a *chronosphere* of present time, 'real time', that has replaced the *geosphere* of life's arena.

This, admittedly, is the conclusion of Bossuet's sage little phrase: 'People bewail effects, but make the most of causes.' There is one qualification, though: it is the 'weak' who bewail the disasters of technological progress and the 'powerful' who most readily make the most of causes.

The excluded are exiled on all sides; for them the globalized foreclosure ends in equally all-out exclusion. No need

here to wheel out once again the great transcontinental migratory flows of dire poverty.

What can you say, for example, about these old retirees that never stop travelling around the world trying to see it all before signing off, while no one at all bewails the idle young who have already seen it all before beginning to live?

In the end, the progressive pressure of the dromosphere is nothing but a headlong rush that leads to this externalization – outsourcing – that is only ever the postmodern term for extermination. Revelation of a finiteness in which, globality disqualifying all locality, Hegel's *schöne Totalität* appears for what it is.

After two millennia of experiments and failures, of accidents of all kinds, with globalization the third millennium inaugurates the paradox of the failure of success for it is the success of Progress that provokes disaster. An integral accident of a science now deprived of a conscience, whose arrogant triumph wipes out even the memory of its former benefits.

This is a major event in a long history of knowledge whose tragic nature globalization both reveals and conceals at one and the same time.

After that, it is not so much error, some system failure, or even large-scale catastrophe that brings the boom in knowledge to a close, but the very excessiveness of the feats achieved in the face of the limits of a cramped planet. As though, in the course of the past century, the promotion of technoscientific progress had doped science, as certain banned substances do the body of the athlete. So here it is no longer the congenital weakness of the various branches of knowledge that is the limit, but indeed the power of a science that has become a 'hyperpower', in this race to the death represented not so long ago, with the arms race, by the militarization of science.

A fixed limit, this one, for it is the product of a galloping success that no one really contests, but that brings down

knowledge still based, only recently, on the humbleness of an experimental know-how, a minor branch of learning at the origins of scientific reasoning, that has now become major due to the inordinate scope of its impact, of its panic-inducing results.

Here again, the example of doping in sport is useful, it would seem, to the demonstration: what value, in fact, can progress have when it not only denatures but literally exterminates the person or people who are, they say, its 'beneficiaries'?

Disaster of a contagious progress that the limits of the world can no longer bear, any more than the set of living beings can. In fact, and contrary to the failures of experimental know-how, the disasters of progress can no longer be overcome as the failings of a totally new knowledge were, in the past, in that age that is not as distant as all that, where the modesty of genius still allied 'science' and 'philosophy'.⁹

But let's go back over the phenomenon of the acceleration of reality, so perceptible today in the retooling of nations' foreign policy.

In recent years, the United States has decided to see international conflicts as internecine wars, between states considered more or less rogue. But in this extroverted world, rapid deployment of US armed forces has hoodwinked and abused the United States in the most peculiar way about the reality of its hegemony.

Just as adaptation of the eye is a function of the car driver's speed, the optical point expanding in the distance with acceleration of the vehicle, today the geostrategic perception of America as a hyperpower has moved beyond the limits of the United Nations to embrace the curve of the globe.

For the Americans the dromosphere is thus no longer a metaphor of progress but an avowed fact of their geopolitical perception in which topological reversals become more and more frequent.

Recently, a wit asked himself this question: 'How can American society, so wealthy and so multicultural, project itself in such a monolithic way? There is a lot of talk of an American empire, but it's an empire behind a barricade. The Americans are in bunkers.'¹⁰

Yet the answer is simple, even simplistic. This monolithic state is no longer that of a 'totalitarian' power comparable to those of the recent past; it belongs to the definitive closure, the foreclosure, of the world.

This 'globalitarian' perception is thus indeed that produced by the dromosphere tightly embracing the ultimate curve of the terrestrial star. Here dromoscopy reaches its apogee since its horizon is no longer the line that once separated sky and earth, but only the geodesic curve that distinguishes the full from the empty. 'Biospherical' fullness, of this 'exospherical' finiteness, this intersideral milieu that even conditions terrestrial volume, since 'any limit comes from outside' and the spherical form of celestial objects comes from their perpetual motion – in other words, how fast or slowly they rotate.

In the face of this 'big bang' that no one seems to be turning a hair over, the famous monolithic bunker is never more than a cloister: the cloister of history.

Having attained the perfection of its orbital circulation, the dromosphere thus brings to a close the age of political revolutions in order to peck into the Pandora's box of transpolitical revelations. This is perhaps the essential part of André Malraux's intuition about the twenty-first century.

By way of confirmation of this 'historic tellurism', let's hear it from French columnist Thomas Ferenzi, in an editorial devoted to the expansion of the European Community:

Europe is also internal politics. Once European politics and national politics start to overlap more and more, can we feasibly separate them when it comes to voting, without going so far as to pit a Europe of the Left against a Europe of the

Right, at the risk of caricaturing Europe altogether? Don't we have a right to expect a certain continuity? ... What is at stake in such controversies is French politics in its European dimension.¹¹

What our editorialist doesn't see is 'the crisis in the concept of dimension.'¹² The crisis in these whole dimensions, at once geometric and geopolitical, that today leads to the fractalization of the concept of identity (national, communal) and so to this 'critical space' where nothing is whole any more, apart from this 'astropolitical' sphere that no one dares conceive of, except perhaps the Little Prince! This is, in the end, the age of revelations that succeeds the age of clapped-out rotating revolutions that the past century literally exterminated through the extravagance of its accelerated 'progressivism'.

In a prophetic interview, Alain Rousset, the president of the regions of France (ARF), declared: 'Society is anxious. It no longer seems able to project itself into the future, to imagine that tomorrow might be better than today. We need to reflect on how to get back to the idea of progress. This idea is one of those most closely tied up with the Left, for the same reasons as justice.'¹³

What Rousset is referring to here, as we might suspect, is obviously not only the parliamentary left, for the obstacle of finiteness far outstrips the democracy of political assemblies. In the jargon of the Department of Civil Engineering, for instance, trees and anti-noise barriers and even security ramps along the highways are currently known as 'lateral obstacles'. What can you say of the -- this time head-on -- obstacle constituted by the geodesic curvature for those who still claim to be 'going with the flow of history'?

These are upholders of a historical materialism that turns its nose up at any geophysical materialism, even if very evident. Internationalism of the proletariat yesterday, turbo-capitalism of the single market today, the day comes when the star can

no longer bear the disaster of progress, the collateral damage that results, as we have seen throughout this book, from the acceleration not only of the history of humanity, but of all reality.

In fact and for the first time perhaps in such a tangible way, for each and every one of us the perimeter of life is strictly circumscribed by the void. The old fullness of the biosphere has been overtaken, now, by this negative horizon that defines both the world and what is out of this world at once.

'Outside is always inside,' crowed the architects of yesterday's triumphant modernity. From now on, outside is exodus, the exosphere of a space unfit for life.

By way of confirmation of this admission of failure, note the astronomical search for exoplanets way beyond the solar system. For telluric planets, as they say, to describe terrestrial-type stars that are at once small and solid.

Not an easy quest, since no extrasolar planet likely to harbour life has yet been spotted, all those so far catalogued only ever being gigantic bubbles of gas too scalding hot to favour the chemistry necessary for a zone of habitability conducive to the emergence of life.¹⁴

Despite this, the *Astrophysical Journal* announced, at the end of the month of August 2004, that American researchers had just come across one! But we were later to learn that the three exotic planets in question had a mass fourteen to twenty times greater than that of our dear old Earth. Yet again, in this 'super-earth' race, the United States were hoping to revive the old myth of the 'frontier', a Far West that has nothing to do any more with the 'forward-scatter' model of the pioneers of transhumanity at all costs. It is now all about a transhumanity exiling itself in quest of a vaster earth, the promised land of a new 'New World', one no longer lying westwards across a continent, but over our heads, in the firmament!

After the collapse of the New York skyline in 2001, something else had to be found urgently to stretch out ever further

the American dream, the myth of a destiny manifest in the United States. The preacher, Billy Graham, expressed this clearly in his sermon of 14 September 2001: 'But now we have a choice: whether to implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually as a people and a nation – or whether we choose to become stronger through all of this struggle – to rebuild on a solid foundation.'¹⁵

After the Soviet Union, is the United States in turn going to implode and disintegrate before our very eyes like the Twin Towers?

Or are we going to see the exotic refounding not only of America, but of the United Nations?

At the end of the road, is humanity going to wind up finally taking off, becoming an Unidentified Flying Object, as New Age pundits or the survivalist sects springing up like mushroom rooms all over the United States would have us believe?

If globalization is certainly not the end of the world, it is nonetheless associated with a sort of 'voyage to the centre of the Earth', to the centre of real time that has so dangerously replaced the centre of the world, that space, undeniably real, that always used to organize the intervals and time limits for action – before the age of widespread interaction.

Everything, right now! Such is the crazy catch-cry of hyper-modern times, of this hypocentre of temporal compression where everything crashes together, telescoping endlessly under the fearful pressure of telecommunications, into this 'teleobjective' proximity that has nothing concrete about it except its infectious hysteria.

Let's not forget: too much light and you get blindness; too much justice and you get injustice; too much speed, the speed of light, and you get inertia, polar inertia.

Following on from the ancient observation of the impact of atmospheric pressure on meteorology, surely it would be appropriate to pinpoint, finally, the havoc now wreaked by dromospheric pressure, not only on history and its geography,

but on the political economy of a democracy now subject to the DROMOCRACY of machines, machines for producing systematic destruction, that are now indistinguishable from war machines.¹⁶

By way of illustration of this insanity, we might cite one last anecdote. In the United States they are apparently bottling the planet: derived from some old NASA research, the ecosphere is a simplified version of our ecosystem. It is also the latest gadget, the very latest folly in the realm of interior decoration. Locked in a glass bubble like a fishbowl, this model of the atmosphere has a lifespan of two years. An optical illusion, whoever acquires it becomes master of a scale model of the world.