

the boom in automation of postindustrial production, the anguish now clearly palpable does not seem to be linked to such exclusion from employment, nor to the 'incivility' plague or domestic violence either, but, more profoundly still, to anguish over the failure, also definitive, of the Progress in knowledge that until this moment so strongly marked the age of industrialization.

In fact, the very first expectation of 'revolution' went hand in glove with the expectation of a progress at once philosophical and scientific that was itself to be swept aside by the hurricane of war; of a total war of which the militarization of national economies, over the course of the twentieth century, already flagged the devastating magnitude. The only thing it allowed to survive in people's consciousness was this feeling of fear — and often of hate — that today marks societies of abundance.

On this score, over to Karl Kraus once more: 'Ever since humanity bowed to the economy, all it has left is the freedom of hostility.'⁷

In 1914, the date of this premonitory phrase, it was still only a matter of a deadly rough draft of a new 'war economy' that was to bring down the nations of Europe alone. But in these early days of the twenty-first century, which is our century, it is a matter of the conclusion of this political economy of disaster.

From now on, as every one of us senses, fears and dreads, the world is closed, foreclosed, and ecology has suddenly become the third dimension of politics, if not its very profile.

After the city-state and the nation-state, the outsize federation of the European Community and other groups like it is merely the pathetic mask of a geopolitical bankruptcy that goes by the assumed name of globalization — an integral accident in a political economy that has just reached the geophysical limit of its field of action.

7 Unknown Quantity

'Luck is like us,' George Bernanos once wrote. Indeed, if once upon a time life was still a theatre, a stage with its transforming sets, daily life has now become sheer luck, a never-ending accident, with its many new developments, the spectacle of which is inflicted on us at every moment via our screens.

Actually, the accident has suddenly become habitable to the detriment of the substance of the shared world. This is what the 'integral accident' is, this accident that integrates us globally and sometimes even disintegrates us physically.

And so in a world from now on foreclosed, where everything is explained by mathematics or psychoanalysis, the accident is what remains unexpected, truly surprising, the unknown quantity of a planetary habitat totally uncovered, overexposed to the eyes of all, from which the 'exotic' has suddenly disappeared to the advantage of the 'endotic' championed by Victor Hugo when he explained to us that 'it is inside yourself that you should look at the outside'¹ — a terrible admission of asphyxiation, if ever there was one.

'The ego is originally all-inclusive, but later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present sense of self is thus only a shrunken residue of a far more comprehensive, indeed all-embracing feeling, which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world around it.'²

Originally Freud was perhaps right, but, in the end — and that's where we are ecologically — when our feeling embraces all once more due to the fact of the temporal compression of sensations, we'd better watch out, for this will then be the

great reduced, incarceration in the tiny cubby hole of a once 'oceanic' feeling for the world, suddenly reduced to claustrophobic suffocation.

'This, in any case, is what is bitterly admitted by astrophysics: 'The rupture with the whole slew of great cosmic events is one of the causes of the malfunctioning of human societies.'³

For proof of this astronomical fracture caused by globalization, let's now look at a phenomenon of eccentric pollution, brought to light (and how!) by a society for the protection of the night sky.

Because of the scale of light pollution caused by over-powerful electric lighting, two thirds of humanity are now deprived of true night.

On the European continent, for instance, half the population is no longer able to see the Milky Way, and only deserted regions of our planet are still really plunged into darkness at night. This has reached the point where it is no longer only the night sky that is threatened but indeed the night itself, the great night of interstellar space; that other unknown quantity that, nonetheless, constitutes our only window on the cosmos.⁴ The situation is such, furthermore, that the International Dark-Sky Association has just launched a surrealist petition to get the night listed on the world heritage list as a heritage of humanity!

'The World is deeper than the Day thinks,' wrote Nietzsche, while it was still a question of sunlight. But already, here and there, and often everywhere at once, contemplation of a screen not only replaces contemplation of script, the written word, the writing of history, alone, but also contemplation of the stars. So much so that the audiovisual continuum has superseded the - substantial - continuum of astronomy.

In this 'disaster writing' of space-time, where the world becomes accessible in real time, humanity is struck with

myopia, reduced to the sudden foreclosure of a seclusion triggered by the accident in time of instantaneous telecommunications.

From that moment, to inhabit the integral accident of globalization is to block, to choke off not only the view, as Abel Gance hoped, followed by the filmmaker apostles of cinemascope, but also the daily life of a species that is nonetheless endowed with the motion of being.

At this stage of incarceration, terminal history becomes a *huis clos*, a hearing in camera, as camp detainees so rightly put it: 'Our horror, our stupor, is our lucidity.'⁵

Everything is there, already there, already seen and soon, even, already said. All that's left after that is to wait the long wait for a catastrophic horizon that outstrips the geographic horizon of the rotundity of the earthly star.

And so, the local accident located here or there is trumped by the great accident, the global accident that integrates, one by one, the whole set of minor incidents along the way that once characterized societal life. This 'great lockdown' then puts an end to banishment, only to promote a sequence that is causal, this time, since, from now on, 'everything arrives without the need to leave', to go towards the other, the distinctly other, as we once went towards a landscape's horizontal limit in days gone by.

Here, and whether Nietzsche likes it or not, it is no longer God, the Father, who dies, it is the Earth, Mother of the living since the beginning of time. With light, the speed of light, matter is being exterminated. The telluric accident of the earthquake is succeeded by the seism of a timequake involving this worldwide time that erases all distance.

In this abrupt telescoping of successive events that have become simultaneous, it is expanse and duration that are erased.

After having been disintegrated by means of the nuclear bomb, matter is now being exterminated by means of

acceleration, the specular bomb of screens, those mirrors of time that cancel out the horizon.

Within the enclosure of its terrestrial environment, reaching the threshold of an interstellar void that, far from having conquered, humanity dreads, "The ultimate experience is an experience of what is "outside everything", when that everything excludes everything outside."⁶

At the point we are coming to in the twenty-first century, what is looming is therefore not so much the end of history as the end of multiple times. Suddenly, with the extermination of the distances of the local time of geophysics, faced with the light years of a purely astrophysical time, 'man has in a way joined the omega point, which means there is nothing other than man any more and there is no outside any more outside him.'⁷

Here is the ultimate figure of philofolly, that is to say, of the accident in knowledge whereby 'man affirms all by his very existence, embraces all including himself within the closed circle of knowledge.'⁸

Then, within the limits of this closure, something outrageous lies in wait, not as in 'the exile of madness' experienced by the deviants locked up in the asylums of the nineteenth century any more, but in the exodus of the philofolly of the high and mighty; those mad scientists once stigmatized by Swift, rendered powerless by the maniacal outrageousness of discoveries that aren't so much superhuman as fundamentally inhuman.

How else, other than as a major clinical symptom, can we interpret the fact that more than ten million people in France have become hooked on video games, frequenting networked gaming rooms the same way a person would go into an opium den, logging on to the Internet the same way you would get yourself a fix?

A panic phenomenon of dependence, the vogue in 'on-line games' has given a new dimension to what psychiatry used to

call a loss of the sense of reality, driving adults and adolescents into a groundless parallel world, where each individual gradually gets used to inhabiting the accident of an audiovisual continuum, independent of the real space of their life.

At this stage of cybernetic seclusion, presented as the crowning achievement of Progress, where the most trifling bit of information and the most trivial event zip around the world in an instant, globalization puts paid to 'revolution' just as it does to the classic 'world war'. For, thanks to the ubiquity of television, the slightest incident can become 'revolutionary' and the most piddling attack relayed on a loop can take on the gigantic proportions of a worldwide conflagration!

That is finally the effect of this omega point humanity has reached, a 'meteorological' effect that reproduces the one where a butterfly beats its wings in an Amazonian rainforest and causes a hurricane in Europe – just as the El Niño phenomenon is now playing havoc with the climate of the globe.

In this sense, as Maurice Blanchot pointed out in relation to the Age of Enlightenment, 'Shutting in the outside means setting it up as an interiority of expectation or exception; this is the requirement that leads society to cause madness to exist, meaning to make it possible.'⁹

This is precisely what is happening to our globalized societies, where the local is the exterior, and the global the interior of a finite world, exclusively defined by the existence of networks of instantaneous information and communication, to the detriment of any geopolitics, since the real time of (economic, political) exchanges wins hands down over the real space of the geophysics of the world's regions.

By accelerating, globalization turns reality inside out like a glove. From now on, your nearest and dearest is a stranger and the exotic, a neighbour. The deregulation of transportation is topped by the derangement of a foreclosure that triggers exclusion of the 'close' to the momentary advantage of any

'far-off' whatever that you happen to stumble across in the telescoping of civilizations.

The expectation horizons of a past three centuries old that is now over – those of total revolution and total war – have been outpaced by the anguished expectation of the (eschatological) Great Accident of which industrial accidents and terrorist attacks are only ever prefigurations, symptoms of a complete reversal in the orientation of humanity.

But this very latest attack is inseparable from the accident in time,¹⁰ since the acquisition of the speed of light shatters the plurality of social times and favours a generalized synchronization of action, interactivity then outpacing customary activity. Teleaction that eliminates not only the long durations of familial and social relations, but also those of the political economics of nations in tandem with their military strategy.

Whence the recent drastic overhaul of the substantial war (Clausewitzian, if you like), boosting this anonymous and fundamentally risky accidental war, that hooks up declared hostilities to industrial or other accidents, thereby promoting a fatal confusion between attack and accident.

Global terrorism is, in fact, like fate and its 'strokes of luck', good or bad, the force of destiny completing the force of the traditional army equipped with weapons of mass destruction, inherited from the age of world war, now over.

But listen to Victor Hugo: 'I have defined and delimited the "state of siege": if anarchy is the arbitrary in the street, the arbitrary is the anarchy of power.'¹¹ From now on, the 'state of siege' is globalization, this foreclosure that transforms, or soon will transform, every state into a police state, every army into a police force and every community into a ghetto

And so, globalization's closed-field effect is nothing less than the progressive strangulation of the legitimate state of representative democracy, the society of strict supervision taking over from the society of local seclusion. After the

standardization ushered in by the industrial revolution, synchronization (of opinions, of decisions) has come to set up an ultimate model of tyranny: the tyranny of this real time of forced interaction that replaces the real space of action and its free reaction within the expanse of a world that is open . . . but only for a little while longer.

If interactivity is to information what radioactivity is to energy – a contaminating and disintegrating capability – then the integral accident in time causes conflicts in the *socius* and its intelligibility to accumulate, making the whole world opaque little by little. After the accident in substances, meaning matter, the time of the accident in knowledge is upon us: this is what the so-called information revolution really is and what cybernetics really is: the arbitrariness of anarchy in the power of nations, the different powers of a community not only thrown out of work by automation but further thrown out of whack by the sudden synchronization of human activities.