

down or failure would not mean deregulation in production so much as the production of a specific fault — in other words, partial or total destruction. Fundamentally modifying research and development accordingly, we could then imagine some long-term planning of the accident.

Since this latter is innovated in the instant of scientific or technological discovery, perhaps we could turn things around and directly invent the 'accident' in order to then determine, afterwards, the nature of the famous 'substance' of the product or device implicitly discovered, thereby averting the development of certain supposedly accidental catastrophes?

This reversal in perspective of the original accident, which vaguely smacks of mythology or cosmogonic theories like the big bang, really does seem to be the same as that operating in the 'dialectic of war', that of the sword and the armour. It is, in other words, the perspective that shot to the fore with the strategic emergence of the 'war machine', in the immediate area around the ramparts of the citadel-state of Ancient Greece, which saw a contemporaneous political innovation, poliorcetics, the science of offensive and defensive siege warfare on fortified cities. Poliorcetics was to be the very origins of the future development of the art of war, that is, of the evolution of the production of mass destruction, throughout the ages, but most especially throughout the progress in weapons technologies.

The scientific and industrial production machine is doubtless merely an avatar or, as they say, blowback from development of the tools of destruction, from this absolute accident that is war, from this conflict pursued in all societies over the centuries, this 'great war of time' that never ceases to flare up out of the blue, here and there, despite the evolution in customs, the means of production and 'civilizations'. Its intensity never ceases to grow, either, with technological innovations, to the point where the latest energy, nuclear energy, at first appears as a weapon, at once armament and absolute accident in history.

9 The Original Accident

According to Albert Einstein, events do not happen, they are there and we merely encounter them in passing, in an eternal present; there are no minor incidents on the way, history is merely one long chain reaction. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Harrisburg. Chernobyl — simply instances of momentary inertia, the radioactivity of a place being analogous to the relativity of an instant.

Fusion, fission: the measure of power is no longer so much matter, but immateriality, energy output.

From now on, motion commands the event. After the 'earth worship' of the original paganism comes the terror worship of the original accident; this terror that is only ever a product of the laws of motion, as Hannah Arendt used to say.

In fact, it is urgent that we go back on the philosophical tradition according to which the accident is relative and contingent and the substance absolute and essential. From the Latin *accidens*, the word 'accident' signifies what arises unexpectedly — in a device, or system or product; the unexpected, the surprise of failure or destruction. As though this 'temporary failure' was not itself programmed, in a way, when the product was first put to use.

Actually, the arrogant primacy accorded to the production mode really does seem to have contributed to obscuring the old production mode/destruction mode dialectic (rather than simply consumption mode) in force in pre-industrial societies. Since the production of any 'substance' whatever is instantaneously production of a typical 'accident', then a break-

The positivist euphoria of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this 'great movement of progress', would surely have to be one of the most insidious features of the bourgeois illusion aimed at covering up the fearful progression, as much industrial as military, in the mode of scientific destruction.

And, more precisely still, aimed at concealing the philosophical and political reversal of this absolute accident now making all substance, whether natural or manufactured, contingent.

'In the twentieth century we learnt the atomic nature of the entire material world. In the twenty-first, the challenge will be to understand the arena itself, to probe the deepest nature of space and time,' writes the British astrophysicist and Astronomer Royal, Sir Martin Rees.¹

A little further on, extending this observation about the 'unknown quantity', Rees adds: 'More than fifty years ago, the great logician Kurt Gödel invented a bizarre hypothetical universe, consistent with Einstein's theory, that allowed "time loops", in which events in the future "cause" events in the past that then "cause" their own causes, introducing a lot of weirdness to the world but no contradictions' (p. 149).

By way of concluding these transhistoric words, Rees specifies further:

A unified theory may reveal some unsuspected things, either on tiny scales, or by explaining some mysteries of our expanding universe. Perhaps some novel form of energy latent in space can be usefully extracted; an understanding of extra dimensions could give substance to the concept of time travel. Such a theory will also tell us what kinds of extreme experiments, if any, could trigger catastrophe. (pp. 150-1)

This would be a cosmic calamity and not just a terrestrial one 'in which the concentrated energy created when particles

crash together could trigger a "phase transition" that would rip the fabric of space itself.'

According to the official astronomer to the Royal British Court:

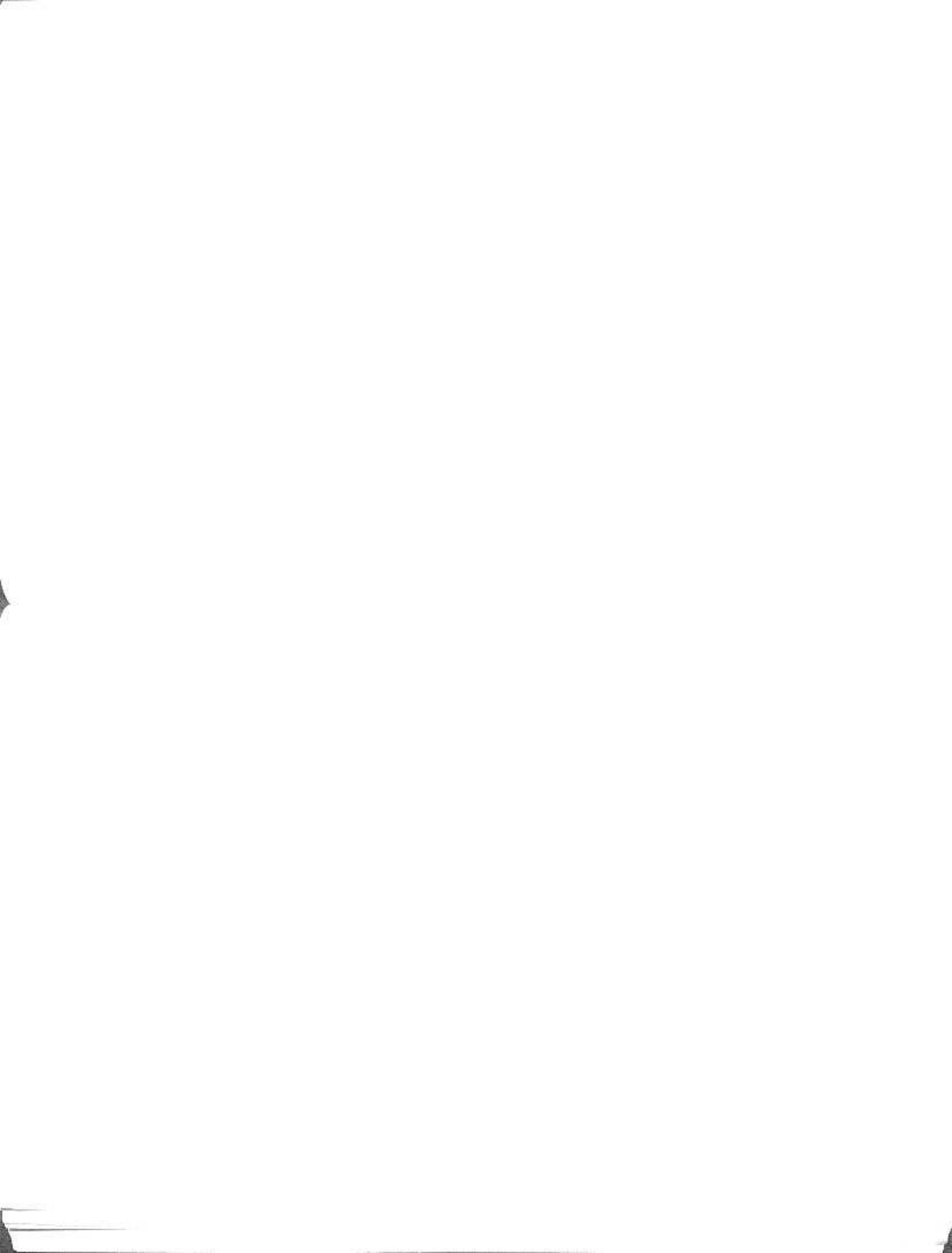
The boundary of the new-style vacuum would spread like an expanding bubble. In that bubble atoms could not exist: it would be curtains for us, for Earth, and indeed for the wider cosmos; eventually, the entire galaxy, and beyond, would be engulfed. And we would never see this disaster coming. The 'bubble' of new vacuum advances as fast as light, and so no signal could forewarn us of our fate.²

With this fantastic illustration of the dromosphere of the speed of light in a vacuum, we are at least in time to question the witnesses, those of Chernobyl, for instance, for in 1986 the time of the accident suddenly became for them, and finally for all of us, the 'accident in time'.³

Indeed, if the atmospheric currents at that period drove the contaminated clouds towards the west of the continent, the winds of history, for their part, drove its pollution towards the future, the setting sun of time.

And so, the past of the 1980s as a decade is intact, out of reach of the fallout from Chernobyl. But the future, on the other hand, is wholly polluted by the very long haul of nuclear radiation. If 'nature' is affected here and now, starting from that fateful day, it is the 'life-size nature' of future times that is already contaminated by the radionuclides of the year 1986.

The accident that occurred at the power station that day was well and truly an original accident. To prevent its becoming, tomorrow or shortly after, eternal, we are going to have to swiftly protect the area around the present against the future, as they once protected the area around the fortified city against the barbarians.



a lithospheric mantle that then becomes the ultimate megalithic wall, the last sarcophagus of humanity.

And so, against the Chernobyl time barrier where the architectonic resistance of concrete protects us from radionuclides left over from the year 1986, they are getting ready to shortly pit the antitelluric power of a cannon ball capable of perforating not only the resistance of an old building material, reinforced concrete, but the actual tectonic resistance of the geological plates that constitute the Earth's structure.

Against the tellurism of the 'great volcano' and its prehistoric ravages, the twenty-first century man of science is gearing up to pit the antitellurism of the military-geological atom, thereby turning nuclear energy into the all-purpose energy of a fanatical demurgery, the colossal ecological havoc of which was, after all, demonstrated by the Soviet catastrophe.

Radioactivity of the contamination of the future or radio-toxicity of a science without a conscience that is no longer merely the 'ruin of the soul,' but the ruin of the space-time of a unique material: that of this habitable telluric planet; this 'fullness' that still protects us from the cosmic void that some boast of conquering, while others, just as determined, are getting ready to pierce the mysteries, even unto the centre of the Earth, without giving a moment's thought to the risks run.

'The weapons scientists have become the alchemists of our times, working in secret ways that cannot be divulged, casting spells which embrace us all,' Solly Zuckerman reckons. 'They may never have been in battle, may never have experienced the devastation of war, but they know how to devise the means of destruction.'⁶

From the arsenal of Venice in the age of Galileo right up to the secret laboratories of the post-Cold War, via the Manhattan Project of Los Alamos, science has become the arsenal of major accidents, the great catastrophe factory toiling away in anticipation of the cataclysms of hypertexterrorism.

'He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person,' spelled out the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 24:8). What can you say about the supreme mischief that consists in hijacking not only planes and vehicles of all sorts, but in hijacking the 'great vehicle', the whole set of knowledge, in physics as in biology or chemistry, to achieve, ultimately, the greatest possible amount of terror?

Once more according to Martin Rees, since the middle of last century or, more precisely still, since the business of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the risk of a worldwide atomic disaster has risen to 50/50. But now, this familiar risk so often wheeled out to justify the endless relaunching of the arms race, is topped off with the growing threat, as we have just seen, of untimely discoveries of a magnitude that exceeds all rationality.

Listen now to the colourful tale of the bomb-disposal experts of the Soviet army, covering the period 1945-50.

Our unit was not going to be dissolved: we were going to clear the fields of mines; the land had to be handed back to the peasants. For everyone else the war was over, but for us bomb-disposal experts it went on. The grass was high, everything had shot up during the war, it was hard to hack out a path, when there were mines and bombs everywhere all around us. But the people needed the land and we went as fast as we could. Every day, comrades died. Every day, someone had to be buried.⁷

This is the account of a woman who was a soldier in the Corps of Engineers, talking to Svetlana Alexievitch, herself a witness to the nuclear accident of 1986 . . . But, at Chernobyl, it was no longer the bomb-disposal experts who were sacrificed, it was the Earth! To bury the ground - even the theatre of the absurd would not have dared such an apocalyptic pleonasm.

Currently, what is undermined and everywhere contaminated is science, the whole set of our knowledge literally poisoned by an arms race in 'weapons of mass destruction' that is infesting what we learn and will, if we are not careful, shortly decommission science, making it unavailable to do good.

Tomorrow, hot on the heels of Mother Earth, maybe 'science', this 'wisdom' deriving from a knowledge that was, though, the distinctive feature of *homo sapiens*, will also have to be buried.

'You make war with weapons, not with poison,' decreed the Roman law-makers. Driving this observation home, the then United Nations Secretary-General, Sithu U Thant of Burma, declared in June 1969: 'The notion of hostilities being out of control is incompatible with the notion of military security.'¹⁰

We know the rest, with the exponential development of biological and chemical 'weapons' that threaten humanity every bit as much as nuclear weapons do.

Relying on purely military arguments and not on moral considerations, the Secretary-General of the United Nations concluded with these words: 'The very existence of these weapons contributes to international tension without offering any obvious military advantages in compensation.'¹¹

Some thirty years on, the prophecy has been fulfilled by this terrorist hypertension that totally perverts international politics.

Indeed, if mass destruction is within reach of the socially excluded, the argument for deterrence evaporates and we are at the mercy of any and all catastrophes, catastrophes either deliberately triggered by clandestine groups or industrial or other 'major accidents'.

One forgotten example of this, among others, is the discovery made at Denver Airport, by a Democrat deputy, of a depot of 21,108 missiles, each formed by a cluster of 76 gas bombs, the whole lot at the mercy of a fire. The capability of

this hidden arsenal: extermination of the entire population of the globe.¹²

But let's get back to Russia and the splendid offer made to young victims of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe: 'Since 1995, a decree of the Ukrainian government has ensured that children from the contaminated zone have been offered seaside holidays all along the Crimean coast. Using magneto-therapy, aromatherapy, and so on, the cure proposed has the special merit of allowing these children of the final shore to discover the joys of the beach.'¹³

To make their summer stay as cheery as possible, the old naval and former top-secret military base of Kazachya Bay, a training centre for mine-carrying and -monitoring dolphins, has been reconverted into an aquatic circus, a Marine Land of the Big Night.

'God has acted wisely by putting birth before death; otherwise, what would we know of life?' wrote humorist, Alphonse Allais.

Since then, this humour that that other humorist, Pierre Dac, somewhat abused, has been turned on its head. For now the origin of life or, more precisely, of humanity's survival, is the all-out search for death. Not the death of the other, of the enemy or of some kind of adversary any more, but the death of all in the suicidal state of mutually assured destruction. If that is not the theatre of non-sense, it looks horribly like it. So much so that we would need to turn Alphonse Allais' aphorism around and write: 'The demon of nonsense has acted wisely by putting the end of life before the beginning; otherwise, what would we know of non-life?'

Indeed, as we have just seen, the knowledge at issue today, in the laboratories of 'advanced' research, no longer involves mere externalization, outsourcing, the fine-tuning of an eccentric unemployment, but extermination, the end of everything – in other words, life in reverse.

And so, little by little, foreknowledge of the end has invaded scientific thought, before extending to the political economy of a globalized world.

It is here and now that one of the most controversial questions in the history of knowledge is posed: the question of a possible doping of technological culture, meaning scientific thinking as a whole.

'Doping': no longer targeting the muscular prowess of the athlete's body as he or she is dragged kicking and screaming into the craziness of some boundless perfectibility, but targeting military knowledge regarding power, the death instinct; that militarization of science that has recently wound up in the ruin, not of the soul, but of a scientific spirit dragged along by the absurd perspective of the supremacy of the death principle. This began with the explosion of the atom bomb and has continued right up to the designing of the future genetic bomb via this information bomb that will have fuelled the comprehensive blasting of common sense.

With these 'zero sum games', Olympic games of a kind produced by a fatalism that taints technoscientific thought, we can more easily understand the accident in knowledge that today rounds off the accident in substances, in a world that is now a victim of terror, with the tacit consent of far too many savants.

As Jean-Pierre Vernant explained in August 2004: 'Modern sport is bound up with the idea of indefinite progress in the technics of the body, in the tools that the different trials can use and in the human being's capacity for excelling him- or herself and for always improving on their scores.'

Vernant concludes, apropos the Athens Olympic Games: 'The notion of a record has no place in the olympiad by its very nature. What matters is winning, not doing better than your predecessors, not only because we still don't have the technical means of measuring time exactly, but because the

idea that sport constitutes a form of activity that can be perfected indefinitely does not and cannot exist.¹⁴

Actually, the 'progressivist' belief in the possibility of social progress popularized by the Great Movement of the nineteenth century is behind all the competitions, whether political, economic or cultural, of the modern industrial age – right up to the unbridled competition that is the basis of the contemporary 'turbocapitalism' of globalization.

Whence the scale of the phenomenon of doping and performance-enhancement of the global economic system, way beyond the sports stadia and right into the more or less clandestine dispensaries of the transgenic biotechnologies. As one writer points out, drawing his inspiration very broadly from the concept of 'mimetic desire' forged by René Girard: 'With media coverage of competitions, all-out performance-enhancement is uncontrollable. If opponents were till now simple obstacles to the achievement of the "desire for victory", it is as the obstacles they represent that they are now valued. The "desire for an obstacle" has taken over and so what is now sought is adversity, not the adversary.'¹⁵

The writer goes on to say of this mimetic condensing:

In such conditions, the sports show will move towards being set to images, a process based on an entirely new dramatic art that will allow opponents to get 'burned'. [...] So it is likely that, as far as doping goes, the worst is yet to come. If nothing is done about it, a sort of pathological desire will soon structure the whole process of access to victory, sweeping opponents along towards their own destruction.

After the 'Olympic games' of Antiquity, the survival games of the human race in the age of nuclear deterrence have outrageously amplified this mimetic pathology. But here, what is about to get 'burned' or, more precisely, vitrified, is no longer the adversary who vanished into the East. It is adversity, with

these faceless and homeless terrorists hell-bent on collective suicide.

They say that in the United States law professors have been arguing, for some little time now, that 'if torture is the only way to avoid the explosion of an atomic bomb in Times Square, it is licit.'¹⁶

After all-out deterrence, the extension of the torture chamber is thus once more on the agenda for the day, the last day . . . For if everything is allowed in order to avert the end of the world, then it is the end of everything!

The end of law, including the law of the fittest, trumped by the law of the maddest: what is required is to urgently reopen the camps, all the camps, not only the camp at Guantanamo Bay, but those of Treblinka, Auschwitz and Birkenau, in order to finally get ready for what André Chouraqui used to call, not so long ago: the 'planetary shoah'.¹⁷

10 The Dromosphere

A quarter of a century ago, in 1978, Federal Germany road-tested a revelatory experiment: removing all speed limits on the autobahn. Organized conjointly by the government, the car manufacturers and the car clubs, this series of tests and sundry investigations was designed to get past old hat analyses of the causes of car accidents. Everyone suddenly put forward factors that had been overlooked: the state of road surfaces, atmospheric conditions, and so on and so forth. These private and public bodies suddenly seemed to join forces to deny that speeding was directly responsible.

According to this lot, speed was neither the sole nor even the main cause of road accidents and their seriousness; other factors carried greater responsibility in the carnage caused by automobile transport.

As we might suspect, the real reason for such an about-face lay elsewhere. According to the German car makers, 'To condemn vehicles designed to travel at 150 km or 200 km an hour to do only 130 is to condemn technical progress and thereby the position of German industry on the foreign markets, thus opening the floodgates to unemployment.'

In the face of this speech for the defence, the federal government decided to 'free up the autobahn'. Even though drivers were recommended not to exceed 130 km per hour, doing 200 km or 250 km per hour was not to be penalized any more, car drivers' self-discipline was to suffice . . .

Anxious French car makers of the day were to come up with a complementary argument: 'On the highway as in