

performs on the masses, or the inverse simulation held out by the masses for power to be swallowed up in.

### *Neither Subject Nor Object*

The mass realises that paradox of being both an object of simulation (it only exists at the point of convergence of all the media waves which depict it) and a subject of simulation, capable of refracting all the models and of emulating them by hypersimulation (its hyperconformity, an immanent form of humour).

The mass realises that paradox of not being a subject, a group-subject, but of not being an object either. Every effort to make a subject of it (real or mythical) runs head on into the glaring impossibility of an autonomous change in consciousness. Every effort to make an object of it, to treat and analyse it as brute matter, according to objective laws, runs head on into the contrary fact that it is impossible to manipulate the masses in any determinate way, or to understand them in terms of elements, relations, structures and wholes. All manipulation plunges, gets sucked into the mass, absorbed, distorted, reversibilised.

It is impossible to know where it goes; most likely it goes round and round in an endless cycle, foiling every intention on the part of the manipulators. No analysis would know how to contain this diffuse, decentered, Brownian, molecular reality: the notion of object vanishes just as "matter," in the ultimate analysis, vanishes on the horizon of microphysics — it is impossible to comprehend the latter as object once that infinitesimal point is reached where the subject of observation is himself annulled. No more object of knowledge, no more subject of knowledge.

The mass brings about the same insoluble boundary situation in the field of the "social". No longer is it objectifiable (in political terms: no longer is it representable), and it annuls any subject who would claim to comprehend it (in political terms: it annuls anybody who would claim to represent it). Only surveys and statistics (like the law of large numbers and the calculus of probabilities in mathematical physics) can account for it, but one knows that this incantation, this meteoric ritual of statistics and surveys has

no real object, especially not the masses whom it is thought to express. It simply simulates an elusive object, but whose absence is nevertheless intolerable. It "produces" it in the form of anticipated responses, of circular signals which seem to circumscribe its existence and to bear witness to its will. Floating signs — such are surveys — instantaneous signs, intended for manipulation, and whose conclusions can be interchanged. Everybody knows the profound indeterminateness which rules over statistics (the calculus of probabilities or large numbers also correspond to an indeterminateness themselves, to a "Plimsoll line" of the concept of matter, to which again hardly any notion of "objective law" corresponds).

Besides, it is not certain that the procedures of scientific experimentation in the so-called exact sciences have much more truthfulness than surveys and statistics. In any discipline whatsoever, the coded, controlled, "objective" form of inquiry only allows for this circular type of truth, from which the very object aimed at is excluded. In any case, it is possible to think that the uncertainty surrounding this enterprise of the objective determination of the world remains total and that

even matter and the inanimate, when summoned to respond, in the various sciences of nature, in the same terms and according to the same procedures as the masses and “social” beings in statistics and surveys, also send back the same conforming signals, the same coded responses, with the same exasperating, endless conformity, only to better escape, in the last instance, exactly like the masses, any definition as object.

There would thus be a fantastic irony about “matter,” and every object of science, just as there is a fantastic irony about the masses in their muteness, or in their statistical discourse so conforming to the questions put to them, akin to the eternal irony of femininity of which Hegel speaks — the irony of a false fidelity, of an excessive fidelity to the law, an ultimately impenetrable simulation of passivity and obedience, and which annuls in return the law governing them, in accordance with the immortal example of Soldier Schweik.

From this would follow, in the literal sense, a *pataphysics* or science of imaginary solutions, a science of the simulation or hypersimulation of

an exact, true, objective world, with its universal laws, including the delirium of those who interpret it according to these laws. The masses and their involuntary humor would introduce us to a pataphysics of the social which ultimately would relieve us of all that cumbersome metaphysics of the social.

This contradicts all received views of the process of truth, but perhaps the latter is only an illusion of judgment. The scientist cannot believe that matter, or living beings, do not respond "objectively" to the questions he puts, or that they respond to them *too* objectively for his questions to be sound. This hypothesis alone seems absurd and unthinkable to him. He will never accept it. He will never leave the enchanted and simulated circle of his enquiry.

The same hypothesis applies everywhere, the same *axiom of credibility*. The adman cannot but believe that people believe in it — however, slightly, that is, that a minimal probability exists of the message reaching its goal and being decoded according to its meaning. Any principle of uncertainty is excluded. If it turned out that the refractive index of this message in the recipient were nil, advertising would instantly collapse. It

only surveys on that belief which it accords itself (this is the same wager as that of science about the objectivity of the world) and which it doesn't try too hard to verify, in terror that the contrary hypothesis might also be true, namely that the great majority of advertising messages never reach their destination, that the viewing public no longer differentiates between the contents, which are refracted in the void. The medium alone functions as an atmospheric effect and acts as spectacle and fascination. THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE, McLuhan prophesied: a formula characteristic of the present phase, the "cool" phase of the whole mass media culture, that of a freezing, neutralisation of every message in a vacuous ether. That of a glaciation of meaning. Critical thought judges and chooses, it produces differences, it is by selection that it presides over meaning. The masses, on the other hand, do not choose, they do not produce differences but a lack of differentiation — they retain a fascination for the medium which they prefer to the critical exigencies of the message. For fascination is not dependent on meaning, it is proportional to the disaffection of meaning. It is obtained by neutralising the message in favour of the medium, by

neutralising the idea of favour of the idol, by neutralising the truth in favour of the simulacrum. It is at this level that the media function. Fascination is their law, and their specific violence, a massive violence denying communication by meaning in favour of another mode of communication. Which one?

For us an untenable hypothesis: that it may be possible to communicate *outside the medium of meaning*, that the very intensity of communication may be proportional to the reabsorption of meaning and to its collapse. For it is not meaning or the increase of meaning which gives tremendous pleasure, but its neutralisation which fascinates (cf. *Witz*, the operation of wit, in *L'Echange Symbolique et la Mort*). And not by some death drive, which implies that life is still on the side of meaning, but quite simply by defiance, by an allergy to reference, to the message, to the code and to every category of the linguistic enterprise, by a repudiation of all this in favor of imploding the sign in fascination (no longer any signifier or signified: absorption of the poles of signification). None of the guardians of meaning

can understand this: the whole morality of meaning rises up against fascination.

The political sphere also only survives by a credibility hypothesis, namely that the masses are permeable to action and to discourse, that they hold an opinion, that they are present behind the surveys and statistics. It is at this price alone that the political class can still believe that it speaks and that it is politically heard. Even though the political has long been the agent of nothing but spectacle on the screen of private life. Digested as a form of entertainment, half-sports, half-games (see the winning ticket in American elections, or election evenings on radio or TV); like those old comedies of manners, at once both fascinating and ludicrous. For some time now, the electoral game has been akin to TV game shows in the consciousness of the people. The latter, who have always served as alibi and as supernumerary on the political stage, avenge themselves by treating as a *theatrical* performance the political scene and its actors. The people have become a *public*. It is the football match or film or cartoon which serve as models for their perception of the political sphere. The people even enjoy day to day, like a home movie, the fluctuations of



their own opinions in the daily opinion polls. Nothing in all this engages any responsibility. At no time are the masses politically or historically engaged in a conscious manner. They have only ever done so out of perversity, in complete irresponsibility. Nor is this a flight from politics, but rather the effect of an implacable antagonism between the class (caste?) which bears the social the political, culture—master of time and history, and the un(in)formed, residual, senseless mass. The former continually seeks to perfect the reign of meaning, to invest, to saturate the field of the social, the other continually distorts every effect of meaning, neutralises or diminishes them. In this confrontation, the winner is not at all the one you might think.

This can be seen in the shift in value from history to the humdrum, from the public sphere to the private sphere. Up till the 60's, history leads on the downbeat: the private, the ordinary is only the dark side of the political sphere. At best a dialectic plays between the two, and it is to be hoped that one day the ordinary, like the individual, will shine over history, in the universal. But

in the meantime, the withdrawal of the masses into their domestic sphere, their refuge from history, politics and the universal, and their absorption into an idiotic humdrum existence of consumption is only to be lamented (happily they work, which preserves for them an "objective" historical status, while awaiting a change in consciousness). Today, there is a reversal of the downbeat and the upbeat: one begins to foresee that ordinary life, men in their banality, could well not be the insignificant side of history — better: that withdrawing into the private could well be *a direct defiance of the political*, a form of actively resisting political manipulation. The roles are reversed: it is the banality of life, everyday life, everything formerly branded as petit-bourgeois, abject and apolitical (including sex) which becomes the downbeat, with history and the political unfolding their abstract eventuality elsewhere.

A staggering hypothesis. The depoliticised masses would not be this side of the political, but beyond it. The private, the unnamable, the ordinary, the insignificant, petty wiles, petty perversions etc., would not be this side of representation, but beyond it. In their "naive" practice

(and without having waited for analysis of the "end of the political"), the masses would sentence the political to annihilation, they would be spontaneously transpolitical like they are translinguistic in their language.

But take care! Out of this private and asocial universe, which does not enter into a dialectic of representation and of transcendence towards the universal, out of this involutive sphere which is opposed to all revolution from the top and refuses to play the game, some would like to make a new source of revolutionary energy (in particular in its sexual and desire version). They would like to give it meaning and to reinstate it in its very banality, as historical negativity. Exaltation of micro-desires, small differences, unconscious practices, anonymous marginalities. Final somersault of the intellectuals to exalt insignificance, to promote non-sense into the order of sense. And to transfer it back to political reason. Banality, inertia, apoliticism used to be fascist; they are in the process of becoming revolutionary — without changing meaning, without ceasing to have meaning. Micro-revolution of banality, transpolitics of desire — one more trick of the "liberationists". The denial

of meaning has no meaning.

### *From Resistance to Hyperconformity*

The emergence of silent majorities must be located within the entire cycle of historical resistance to the social. Resistance to work of course, but also resistance to medicine, resistance to schooling, resistance to security, resistance to information. Official history only records the uninterrupted progress of the social, relegating to the obscurity reserved for former cultures, as barbarous relics, everything not coinciding with this glorious advent. In fact, contrary to what one might believe (that the social has definitely won, that its movement is irreversible, that consensus *upon* the social is total), resistance to the social in all its forms has progressed *even more rapidly than the social*. It has merely taken other forms than the primitive and violent ones which were subsequently absorbed (the social is alive and well, thank you, only idiots run away from writing and vaccination and the benefits of security). Those frontal resistances still corres-