THE EVIL DEMON OF IMAGES

Jean Baudrillard

The First Mari Kuttna Memorial Lecture

1984

THE EVIL DEMON OF IMAGES

Jean Baudrillard

Dedicated to the Memory of

Mari Kuttna

1934 - 1983

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THE INAUGURATION OF THE MARI KUTTNA MEMORIAL LECTURE ON FILM

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mari Kuttna was born near Budapest in 1934 and, after the death of her father during the war, came to Australia with her mother in 1947. She was educated at Sydney Girls High School and in her final examinations achieved the highest results in New South Wales for History and English -- although this was not her native language. In 1956 she graduated from the University of Sydney with First Class Honours in English and a University Medal, as well as a scholarship to the University of Oxford. In 1960 she married Michael Winton in England, where she was to live for the rest of her life.

Mari Kuttna turned from academic life to life as a film critic and translator, contributing reviews to *Sight and Sound* and to *Montage*, as well as writing a regular column for *The Lady*. Much respected for her criticism, she was a member of the exclusive London Society of Film Critics. She was appointed juror for several film festivals and was a member of the panel of judges for the British Film Institute. Mari was also a programme director for the Oxford Film Festival and, in 1982, for the Melbourne Film Festival.

In the midst of her preparations for the Melbourne Film Festival, Mari Kuttna became ill with cancer. Courageously she continued to work for the Festival and to write her film

criticism until her tragically premature death on 27 March 1983.

In 1984 Mari Kuttna's mother, Madame Barbara Gré, made a gift of $30,000 to the University of Sydney in memory of her daughter. The funds were to support teaching and research in film studies and thus to continue the work to which Mari Kuttna had dedicated herself.

PREFACE

On 25 July 1984 Professor Jean Baudrillard, of the University of Paris-Nanterre, gave the first Mari Kuttna Memorial Lecture.

The Memorial Lectures were set up as a result of Madame Barbara Gré's generous gift to the University of Sydney; they will enable distinguished filmmakers and film critics, theorists and historians, both from Australia and overseas, to contribute to our understanding of the cinema.

Professor Baudrillard's lecture, *The Evil Demon of Images*, was given to a large and enthusiastic audience which included Madame Gré, the Chancellor, Sir Hermann Black, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Ward; as well many friends came to pay their respects to Mari Kuttna and to her work, and, perhaps most significant of all, many young people who share Mari Kuttna's love of film.

The Memorial Lecture was preceded by a tribute given by the Chancellor and by a personal appreciation by David Stratton, former Director of The Sydney Film Festival. Edited versions of their presentations are included in this publication.

As Director of the Power Institute of Fine Arts -- in which the Kuttna Bequest is located -- I acknowledged the far-sighted generosity of

Madame Gré in encouraging students and scholars to develop an understanding of this most significant aspect of contemporary culture. I pledged the Institute to continue the work of Mari Kuttna. Death cut short her own work, but her mother's generosity will ensure the continuance of the ideals to which she devoted her life.

Professor Virginia Spate
Power Institute of Fine Arts
University of Sydney

DEDICATION

I have to thank a mother for a most generous bequest to this University in memory of a brilliant daughter who, alas, will come no more. It is an heroic generosity, made in the midst of her own private sorrow at the loss of a daughter in the bloom of her youth and in all the promise of a brilliant mind.

What is it that Madame Gré has done? In March this year, she made a gift to the University which will be used to develop that in which her daughter was so skilled: the engendering of the love and understanding of film. This happens to be the first public occasion on which you and I can thank Madame Gré for what she has done. She has created a perpetual remembrance by encouraging students of this University to develop their understanding of that art to which her daughter was dedicated, the art of film. As a result, students who, in the passage of time, will come to the Power Institute, will have their lives enriched and their skills and contributions in the area of film criticism enhanced and improved.

This gift has come as a consequence of a mother thinking of how an irreparable loss could be turned into some kind of human gain. That is what Madame Gré has done. She has given immortality to her daughter whose remembrance will be in all the generations of students who benefit from her bequest.

It is fitting that I, as Chancellor, should say that the University is immensely grateful to Madame Gré. It is appropriate that I should speak on behalf of those future generations who will be beneficiaries of that gift. The University is grateful; the oncoming generations will be grateful; and -- if I may speak to Madame Gré personally -- may your mind be at ease. The University will ensure that your daughter will always be remembered.

Sir Hermann Black
Chancellor of the University of Sydney

REMEMBRANCE

I have been asked to say a few words about Mari Kuttna because she was a friend of mine. I first knew her when she was already established in London as a film critic and as a popular and much admired member of what is a very closed circle -- the London Society of Film Critics.

Mari loved the cinema passionately. That love for cinema was manifested in the generosity of her criticism -- she would find warm things to say about gravely faulted films if she knew that they were sincere and well-meant. In diligent pursuit of her passion for film, Mari engaged in what was for a critic unusually extensive travel to festivals and film events in order to refine her knowledge of her art. Probably her favourite annual film event was the week of Hungarian films in Budapest, the city of Mari's birth. There she found that special pleasure of hearing films in her own first language and in meeting and speaking with Hungarian filmmakers. I fancy that she took a certain mischievous delight in disclosing to other foreign guests at the event what was really going on behind the scenes -- all the things that the officials did not tell us but to which Mari had access through personal contacts.

Around 1980 Mari's enthusiasm for film led her to the role of film programmer for the Oxford Film Festival, a job which she performed in the exemplary manner so characteristic of her. Then, late in 1982, Mari was appointed Programme

Director of the Melbourne Film Festival, an appointment which delighted me as it meant that, since I was still then Director of the Sydney Film Festival, we would be collaborating closely. Mari and I met in Budapest in February 1983 to begin the process, but I could see that she was not well. I did not realise at the time how ill she was (Mari did not reveal this to people), but one day I was sitting next to her on the bus while she pointed out all the places she had been to as a child. I think she probably knew she was not going to see Budapest again. Later, another meeting was arranged in London, but Mari was too ill to travel so we discussed the programming by telephone. This was the last time I spoke with her.

In 1983 the Melbourne Film Festival dedicated its programme to Mari. In Budapest this February, the leading Hungarian documentary director Pal Schiffer delivered an intensely moving tribute to Mari at the General Press Conference during the film event. He called Mari "a friend of Hungarian film." I would say more: Mari was a friend of film and of filmmaking. She was also a friend of Sydney University -- she loved the years she spent here. Madame Gré, I am sure that if Mari could know what is happening here this evening, she would be overjoyed. That her memory will be preserved and fostered through this bequest is, I believe, a most appropriate and wonderful legacy for her.

David Stratton
Former Director of The Sydney Film Festival

THE EVIL DEMON OF IMAGES

INTRODUCTION

The Mari Kuttna Lecture on Film will present to the Australian public those filmmakers and theoreticians of film whose work is the most exciting, innovative and challenging in the world today. Thus, it was most appropriate that Professor Jean Baudrillard be selected as the Inaugural Mari Kuttna Lecturer. In numerous works, including *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, Simulations* and *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, Professor Baudrillard has established himself as one of the world's pre-eminent theorists of the media. His writings on the image, on film specifically and the media in general, have raised the most profound and provocative questions for all those who speculate upon contemporary culture. Baudrillard theorizes the catastrophization of the modern -- the extinction of all referentiality, whether political, sexual, religious, philosophical or other, and the implosion of the discursive polarities (subject/object, private/public, imaginary/real, etc.) heretofore sustaining meaning -- in the advent of the mass media, which have installed a new reality: the hyperreal. For Baudrillard reality has been swallowed up in a 'black hole'. Simulation is the *modus operandi* of the hyperreal with models preceding and anticipating the 'real', volatilizing it and turning it into a 'special effect'. The media, television especially, have short-circuited meaning, thereby generating a state of

indeterminacy. Baudrillard argues that ours is a world of pure operationality, one for which the genetic and computer codes offer a perfect model. These and other of his ideas, to say nothing of his seductive writing style and nihilist stance, have found strong reception here in Australia, where such leading journals as *Art and Text*, *On the Beach*, *Tension* and *Local Consumption* have published major works by him and where, at FUTUR*FALL: Excursions into Post-Modernity (Sydney, 26-29 July 1984), it was clearly evidenced that his ideas have entered into the common currency of cultural debate about the post-modern.

Alan Cholodenko
Lecturer in Film Studies
Power Institute of Fine Arts

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Jean Baudrillard

A propos the cinema and images in general (media images, technological images), I would like to conjure up the perversity of the relation between the image and its referent, the supposed real; the virtual and irreversible confusion of the sphere of images and the sphere of a reality whose nature we are less and less able to grasp. There are many modalities of this absorption, this confusion, this diabolical seduction of images. Above all, it is the reference principle of images which must be doubted, this strategy by means of which they always appear to refer to a real world, to real objects, and to reproduce something which is logically and chronologically anterior to themselves. None of this is true. As simulacra, images precede the real to the extent that they invert the causal and logical order of the real and its reproduction. Benjamin, in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', already pointed out strongly this modern revolution in the order of production (of reality, of meaning) by the precession, the anticipation of its reproduction.

It is precisely when it appears most truthful, most faithful and most in conformity to reality that the image is most diabolical -- and our technical images, whether they be from photography, cinema or television, are in the overwhelming majority much more 'figurative', 'realist', than all the images from past cultures.

It is in its resemblance, not only analogical but technological, that the image is most immoral and most perverse.

The appearance of the mirror already introduced into the world of perception an ironical effect of *trompe-l'oeil*, and we know what malefice was attached to the appearance of doubles. But this is also true of all the images which surround us: in general, they are analysed according to their value as representations, as media of presence and meaning. The immense majority of present day photographic, cinematic and television images are thought to bear witness to the world with a naive resemblance and a touching fidelity. We have spontaneous confidence in their realism. We are wrong. They only seem to resemble things, to resemble reality, events, faces. Or rather, they really do conform, but their conformity itself is diabolical.

We can find a sociological, historical and political equivalent to this diabolical conformity, to this evil demon of conformity, in the modern behaviour of the masses who are also very good at complying with the models offered to them, who are very good at reflecting the objectives imposed on them, thereby absorbing and annihilating them. There is in this conformity a force of seduction in the literal sense of the word, a force of diversion, distortion, capture and ironic fascination. There is a kind of fatal strategy of conformity.

A recent example may be found in Woody Allen's film, *Zelig*: in trying to be oneself, to cultivate difference and originality, one ends up resembling everyone and no longer seducing anyone. This is the logic of present day psychological conformity. Zelig, on the other

hand, is launched on an adventure of total seduction, in an involuntary strategy of global seduction: he begins to resemble everything which approaches him, everything which surrounds him. Nor is this the mimetic violence of defiance or parody, it is the mimetic non-violence of seduction. To begin to resemble the other, to take on their appearance, is to seduce them, since it is to make them enter the realm of metamorphosis despite themselves.

This seductive force, this fatal strategy, is a kind of animal genie or talent - not simply that of the chameleon, which is only its anecdotal form. It is not the conformism of animals which delights us; on the contrary, animals are never conformist, they are seductive, they always appear to result from a metamorphosis. Precisely because they are not individuals, they pose the enigma of their resemblance. If an animal knows how to conform, it is not to its own being, its own individuality (banal strategy), but to appearances in the world. This is what Zelig does too with his animal genie -- he is polymorphous (but not perverse); he is incapable of functional adaptation to contexts, which is true conformism, our conformism, but able to seduce by the *play* of resemblance. Savages do no less when they put on the successive masks of their gods, when they 'become' their successive divinities -- this is also to seduce them. It is of course against this strategy of seduction that psychiatry struggles, and it is what gives rise to the magical infatuation of the crowds for Zelig (in German, *Selig* means 'blessed').

The remarkable thing about this film is that it leads astray all possible interpretations. There is thus also a seduction of interpretation, with the complicity of certain intellectuals, as well as a

polymorphous montage technique which allows it to ironically adapt to all possibilities.

More generally, the image is interesting not only in its role as reflection, mirror, representation of, or counterpart to, the real, but also when it begins to contaminate reality and to model it, when it only conforms to reality the better to distort it, or better still: when it appropriates reality for its own ends, when it anticipates it to the point that the real no longer has time to be produced as such.

It is not only daily life which has become cinematographic and televisual, but war as well. It has been said that war is the continuation of politics by other means; we can also say that images, media images, are the continuation of war by other means. Take *Apocalypse Now*. Coppola made his film the same way the Americans conducted the war -- in this sense, it is the best possible testimony -- with the same exaggeration, the same excessive means, the same monstrous candour ... and the same success. War as a trip, a technological and psychedelic fantasy; war as a succession of special effects, the war become film well before it was shot; war replaced by technological testing. For the Americans, it was above all the latter: a test site, an enormous field on which to test their weapons, their methods, their power.

Coppola does the same thing: he tests the power of intervention of cinema, tests the impact of cinema become a vast machine of special effects. In this sense his film is very much the prolongation of war by other means, the completion of that incomplete war, its apotheosis. War becomes film, film becomes war, the two united by their mutual overflow of technology.

The real war was conducted by Coppola in the manner of Westmoreland. Leaving aside the clever irony of napalming Philippino forests and villages to recreate the hell of South Vietnam, everything is replayed, begun again through cinema: the Molochian joy of the shoot, the sacrificial joy of so many millions spent, of such a holocaust of means, of so many difficulties, and the dazzling paranoia in the mind of the creator who, from the beginning, conceived this film as a *world* historical event for which the Vietnam war would have been no more than a pretext, would ultimately not have existed -- and we cannot deny it: 'in itself' the Vietnam war never happened, perhaps it was only a dream, a baroque dream of napalm and the tropics, a psycho-tropic dream in which the issue was not politics or victory but the sacrificial, excessive deployment of a power already filming itself as it unfolds, perhaps expecting nothing more than consecration by a superfilm, which perfects the war's function as a mass spectacle.

No real distance, no critical direction, no desire for any 'raised consciousness' in relation to the war: in a sense this is the brutal quality of the film, not to be undermined by any anti-war moral psychology. Coppola may very well dress up his helicopter captain in a cavalry hat and have him wipe out a Vietnamese village to the sound of Wagner -- these are not critical, distant signs; they are immersed in the machinery, part of the special effect. Coppola makes films in the same manner, with the same nostalgic megalomania, with the same non-signifying fury, the same magnified Punch and Judy effect. One can ask, how is such a horror possible (not the war, properly speaking, but that of the film)? But there is no response, no possible judgement. The

Vietnam war and the film are cut from the same cloth, nothing separates them: this film is part of the war. If the Americans (apparently) lost the other, they have certainly won this one. *Apocalypse Now* is a global victory. It has a cinematographic power equal and superior to that of the military and industrial complexes, of the Pentagon and governments. Nothing is understood in relation to war or cinema (at least the latter) unless one has grasped this indistinguishability -- which is not the ideological or moral indistinguishability of good and evil, but that of the reversibility of destruction and production, of the immanence of something in its very revolution, of the organic metabolism of every technology, from carpet bombing to film stock...

As for the anticipation of reality by images, the precession of images and media in relation to events, such that the connection between cause and effect becomes scrambled and it becomes impossible to tell which is the effect of the other -- what better example than the nuclear accident at Harrisburg, a 'real' incident which happened just after the release of *The China Syndrome*? This film is a fine example of the supremacy of the televised event over the nuclear event which itself remains improbable and in some sense imaginary.

Moreover, the film unintentionally shows this: it is the intrusion of TV into the reactor which as it were triggers the nuclear incident -- because it is the anticipation and model of it in the day to day world: telefission of the real and of the real world -- because TV and information in general are a kind of catastrophe in René Thom's formal, topological sense: a radical, qualitative change in an entire system. Or rather, TV and nuclear

power are of the same kind: behind the 'hot' and negentropic concepts of energy and information, they have the same dissuasive force as cold systems. TV is also a nuclear, chain-reactive process, but implosive: it cools and neutralises the meaning and energy of events. Thus, behind the presumed risk of explosion, that is, of hot catastrophe, the nuclear conceals a long, cold catastrophe -- the universalisation of a system of dissuasion, of deterrence.

The homology between nuclear power and television can be read directly in the images. Nothing resembles the command and control centre of the reactor more than the TV studios, and the nuclear consoles share the same imaginary as the recording and broadcasting studios. Everything happens between these two poles: the other core, that of the reactor, in principal the real core of the affair, remains concealed from us, like the real; buried and indecipherable, ultimately of no importance. The drama is acted out on the screens and nowhere else.

Harrisburg, Watergate and *Network* form the trilogy of *The China Syndrome* -- an inextricable trilogy in which we cannot tell which is the effect or the symptom of the others: is the ideological argument (the Watergate effect) only the symptom of the nuclear (the Harrisburg effect) or the informational model (the *Network* effect)? -- is the real (Harrisburg) only the symptom of the imaginary (*Network, The China Syndrome*) or vice versa? Marvellous indistinguishability, ideal constellation of simulation.

The conjunction of *The China Syndrome* and Harrisburg haunts us. But is it so involuntary? Without examining any magical links between

simulacrum and reality, it is clear that *The China Syndrome* is not unrelated to the 'real' accident at Harrisburg, not by a causal logic but by those relations of contagion and unspoken analogy which link the real, models and simulacra: the induction of the nuclear incident at Harrisburg by the film corresponds, with disquieting obviousness, to the induction of the incident by TV in the film. A strange precession of a film before the real, the most astonishing we have seen: reality corresponding point by point to the simulacra, even down to the suspensive, incomplete character of the catastrophe, which is essential from the point of view of dissuasion: the real so arranged itself, in the image of the film, as to produce a *simulation* of catastrophe.

It is only a further step, which we should briskly take, to reverse our logical order and see *The China Syndrome* as the real event and Harrisburg its simulacrum. For it is by the same logic that the nuclear reality in the film follows from the television effect and Harrisburg in 'reality' follows from the cinema effect of *The China Syndrome.*

But the latter is not the original prototype of Harrisburg; one is not the simulacrum and the other the reality: there are only simulacra, and Harrisburg is a kind of simulation in the second degree. There is indeed a chain reaction; but *it is not the nuclear chain reaction but that of the simulacra* and of the simulation in which all the energy of the real is effectively engulfed, not in a spectacular nuclear explosion but in a secret and continuous implosion, which is perhaps taking a more deadly turn than all the explosions which presently lull us.

For an explosion is always a promise, it *is* our hope: see how much, in the film as well as at Harrisburg, everyone expects it to go up, that destruction speak its name and deliver us from this unnameable panic, from this invisible nuclear panic of dissuasion. Let the 'core' of the reactor expose at last its glowing power of destruction, let it reassure us as to the admittedly catastrophic presence of energy and gratify us with its spectacle. For the problem is that there is no nuclear spectacle, no spectacle of nuclear energy in itself (Hiroshima is past): it is for this reason that it is rejected -- it would be perfectly accepted if it lent itself to spectacle like earlier forms of energy. Parousia of catastrophe: substantial boost to our messianic libido.

But that will never recur. What will happen will never be explosion but implosion. Never again will we see energy in its spectacular and pathetic form -- all the romanticism of explosion which had so much charm, since it was also that of revolution -- but only the cold energy of simulacra and its distillation in homeopathic doses into the cold systems of information.

What else does the media dream of if not raising up events by its very presence? Everyone deplores it, but everyone is secretly fascinated by this eventuality. Such is the logic of simulacra: no longer divine predestination, but the precession of models, which is no less inexorable. And it is for this reason that events no longer have any meaning: not because they are insignificant in themselves, but because they have been preceded by models with which their own process can only coincide.

For some time now, in the dialectical relation between reality and images (that is, the relation

that we wish to believe dialectical, readable from the real to the image and vice versa), the image has taken over and imposed its own immanent, ephemeral logic; an immoral logic without depth, beyond good and evil, beyond truth and falsity; a logic of the extermination of its own referent, a logic of the implosion of meaning in which the message disappears on the horizon of the medium. In this regard, we all remain incredibly naive : we always look for a good usage of the image, that is to say a moral, meaningful, pedagogic or informational usage, without seeing that the image in a sense revolts against this good usage, that it is the conductor neither of meaning nor good intentions, but on the contrary of an implosion, a denegation of meaning (of events, history, memory, etc.). I am reminded of *Holocaust*, the television series on the concentration camps...

Forgetting the extermination is part of the extermination itself. That forgetting, however, is still too dangerous and must be replaced by an artificial memory (everywhere, today, it is artificial memories which obliterate people's memories, which obliterate people from memory). This artificial memory replays the extermination -- but too late for it to profoundly unsettle anything, and above all it does so via a medium which is itself cold, radiating oblivion, dissuasion and extermination in an even more systematic manner, if this is possible, than the camps themselves. TV, the veritable final solution to the historicity of every event. The Jews are recycled not through the crematory ovens or the gas chambers but through the sound track and images, through the cathode tube and the micro-chip. Forgetting, annihilation thereby achieves at last an aesthetic dimension -- nostalgia gives them their final finish.

Henceforth, "everyone knows", everyone has trembled before the extermination -- a sure sign that "it" will never happen again. But in effect what is thus exorcised so cheaply, at the cost of a few tears, will never recur because it is presently happening in the very form through which it is denounced, through the very medium of this supposed exorcism: television. The same process of forgetting, of liquidation, of extermination, the same annihilation of memories and of history, the same inverse, implosive radiation, the same absorption without trace, the same black hole as Auschwitz. They want us to believe that TV will remove the mortgage of Auschwitz by raising collective consciousness, whereas it is the perpetuation of it in a different guise, under the auspices not of a *site* of annihilation but a *medium* of dissuasion.

What everyone fails to understand is that *Holocaust* is above all (and exclusively) a *televised* event or rather object (McLuhan's fundamental rule which must not be forgotten). That is to say, it is an attempt to reheat a *cold* historical event -- tragic but cold, the first great event of cold systems, those cooling systems of dissuasion and extermination which were subsequently deployed in other forms (including the Cold War, etc.) and in relation to the cold masses (the Jews no longer even concerned by their own death, eventually self-managing it, no longer even masses in revolt: dissuaded unto death, dissuaded even of their own death). To reheat this cold event via a cold medium, television, for masses who are themselves cold, who will only find in it the occasion for a tactile chill and a posthumous emotion, a dissuasive shiver, which sends them into oblivion with a kind of aesthetic good faith.

The cold light of television is inoffensive to the imagination (even that of children) since it no longer carries any imaginary, for the simple reason that *it is no longer an image*.

In this sense the TV image has to be placed in opposition to the cinema, which still carries an intense imaginary. Although it is contaminated more and more by TV, the cinema is still an image -- that means not only a screen and a visual form but a myth, something that belongs to the sphere of the double, the phantasm, the mirror, the dream, etc... Nothing of that in the TV image, which doesn't suggest anything and has a magnetic effect. The TV image is only a screen. More than that: a miniaturized terminal located in your head and *you* are the screen and the TV looks at you, goes through you like a magnetic tape -- a tape, not an image.

Thus, properly speaking it is *Holocaust* the television film which constitutes the definitive holocaust event. Likewise, with *The Day After* it is not the atomic conflict depicted in the film but the film itself which is the catastrophic event.

This film should inspire a salutary terror, it should dissuade by the spectacle of terror. However, I don't see anything as a result of this film. The slides at the New York Museum of Natural History move me much more profoundly : you can shiver at the ice age and feel the charm of the prehistoric, but here I feel neither the shiver nor the charm of nuclear power, nor even suspense nor the final blinding flash.

Is it a bad film? Certainly. But isn't it rather that all this is unimaginable? Isn't it rather that,

in our imaginary, nuclear conflict is a total event, without appeal and with no tomorrow, whereas here it simply brings about a regression of the human race according to the worst naive stereotypes of savagery? But we already know that state, indeed we have barely left it. Our desire is rather for something which no longer takes place on a human scale, for some anterior or ulterior mystery: what will the earth be like when we are no longer on it? In a word, we dream of our disappearance, and of seeing the world in its inhuman purity (which is precisely not the state of nature).

But these limits, these extremes that we imagine, this catastrophe -- can it be metaphorised in images? It is not certain that its mythical evocation is possible, any more than that of our bio-molecular destiny or that of the genetic code, which is the other dimension, the corollary of the nuclear. We can no longer be affected by it -- proof that we have already been irradiated! Already to our minds the catastrophe is no more than a comic strip. Its filmic projection is only a diversion from the real nuclearisation of our lives. The real nuclear catastrophe has already happened, it happens every day, and this film is part of it. It is *it* which *is* our catastrophe. It does not represent it, it does not evoke it, on the contrary it shows that it has already happened, that it is already here, since it is impossible to imagine.

For all these reasons I do not believe in a pedagogy of images, nor of cinema, nor *a fortiori* in one of television. I do not believe in a dialectic between image and reality, nor therefore, in respect of images, in a pedagogy of message and meaning. The secret of the image (we are still speaking of contemporary, technical images)

must not be sought in its differentiation from reality, and hence in its representative value (aesthetic, critical or dialectical), but on the contrary in its 'telescoping' into reality, its short-circuit with reality, and finally, in the implosion of image and reality. For us there is an increasingly definitive lack of differentiation between image and reality which no longer leaves room for representation as such.

This collusion between images and life, between the screen and daily life, can be experienced everyday in the most ordinary manner. Especially in America, not the least charm of which is that even outside the cinemas the whole country is cinematographic. You cross the desert as if in a western; the metropolis is a continual screen of signs and formulae. Life is a travelling shot, a kinetic, cinematic, cinematographic sweep. There is as much pleasure in this as in those Dutch or Italian towns where, upon leaving the museum, you rediscover a town in the very image of the paintings, as if it had stepped out of them. It is a kind of miracle which, even in a banal American way, gives rise to a sort of aesthetic form, to an ideal confusion which transfigures life, as in a dream. Here, cinema does not take on the exceptional form of a work of art, even a brilliant one, but invests the whole of life with a mythical ambience. Here it becomes truly exciting. This is why the idolatry of stars, the cult of Hollywood idols, is not a media pathology but a glorious form of the cinema, its mythical transfiguration, perhaps the last great myth of our modernity. Precisely to the extent that the idol no longer represents anything but reveals itself as a pure, impassioned, contagious image which effaces the difference between the real being and its assumption into the imaginary.

All these considerations are a bit wild, but that is because they correspond to the unrestrained film buff that I am and have always wished to remain -- that is in a sense uncultured and fascinated. There is a kind of primal pleasure, of anthropological joy in images, a kind of brute fascination unencumbered by aesthetic, moral, social or political judgements. It is because of this that I suggest they are immoral, and that their fundamental power lies in this immorality.

This brute fascination for images, above and beyond all moral or social determination, is also not that of dreaming or the imaginary, understood in the traditional sense. Other images, such as those in painting, drawing, theatre or architecture, have been better able to make us dream or imagine; other modes of expression as well (undoubtedly language makes us dream better than the image). So there is something more than that which is peculiar to our modern media images: if they fascinate us so much it is not because they are sites of the production of meaning and representation -- this would not be new -- it is on the contrary because they are sites of the *disappearance* of meaning and representation, sites in which we are caught quite apart from any judgement of reality, thus sites of a fatal strategy of denegation of the real and of the reality principle.

We have arrived at a paradox regarding the image, our images, those which unfurl upon and invade our daily life -- images whose proliferation, it should be noted, is potentially infinite, whereas the extension of meaning is always limited precisely by its end, by its finality: from the fact that images ultimately have no finality and proceed by total contiguity, infinitely multiplying themselves according to an

irresistible epidemic process which no one today can control, our world has become truly infinite, or rather exponential by means of images. It is caught up in a mad pursuit of images, in an ever greater fascination which is only accentuated by video and digital images. We have thus come to the paradox that these images describe the equal impossibility of the real and of the imaginary.

For us the medium, the image medium, has imposed itself between the real and the imaginary, upsetting the balance between the two, with a kind of fatality which has its own logic. I call this a fatal process in the sense that there is a definitive immanence of the image, without any possible transcendent meaning, without any possible dialectic of history -- fatal also in the sense not merely of an exponential, linear unfolding of images and messages but of an exponential enfolding of the medium around itself. The fatality lies in this endless enwrapping of images (literally: without end, without destination) which leaves images no other destiny than images. The same thing happens everywhere today, when production has no destiny apart from production -- overdetermination of production by itself -- when sex has no destiny other than sex -- sexual overdetermination of sexuality. This process may be found everywhere today, for better and for worse. In the absence of rules of the game, things become caught up in their own game: images become more real than the real; cinema itself becomes more cinema than cinema, in a kind of vertigo in which (to return to our initial problem, that of resemblance) it does no more than resemble itself and escape in its own logic, in the very perfection of its own model.

I am thinking of those exact, scrupulous set pieces such as *Chinatown*, *The Day of the Condor*, *Barry Lyndon*, *1900*, *All the President's Men*, the very perfection of which is disturbing. It is as if we were dealing with perfect remakes, with extraordinary montages which belong more to a combinatory process (or mosaic in the McLuhanesque sense), with large photo, kino or historio-synthetic machines, rather than with real films. Let us be clear: their quality is not in question. The problem is rather that they leave us somehow totally indifferent.

Take *The Last Picture Show*. You need only be sufficiently distracted, as I was, to see it as a 1950s original production: a good film of manners and the ambience of small town America, etc. A slight suspicion: it was a little too good, better adjusted, better than the others, without the sentimental, moral and psychological tics of the films of that period. Astonishment at the discovery that it is a 1970s film, perfectly nostalgic, brand new, retouched, a hyperrealist restitution of a 50s film. There is talk of remaking silent films, doubtless better than those of the period. A whole generation of films is appearing which will be to those we have known what the android is to man: marvellous, flawless artifacts, dazzling simulacra which lack only an imaginary and that particular hallucination which makes cinema what it is. Most of those that we see today (the best) are already of this order. *Barry Lyndon* is the best example: no better has been made, no better will be made, but *what* exactly? Evocation? No, not even evocation but *simulation*. All the toxic radiation has been filtered out, all the ingredients are present in precise doses, not a single mistake.

Cool, cold pleasure which is not even aesthetic properly speaking: functional pleasure, equational pleasure, pleasure of machination. We need only think of Visconti (*The Leopard*, *Senso*, etc., which recall *Barry Lyndon* in certain respects) in order to grasp the difference, not only in style but in the cinematographic act. With Visconti, there is meaning, history, a sensual rhetoric, dead moments, a passionate game, not only in the historical content but in the direction. None of that with Kubrick, who controls his film like a chessboard, and makes history an operational scenario. Nor does this refer back to the old opposition between finesse and geometry: there meaning was still in play, meaning was at stake. Whereas we are entering into an era of films which no longer have meaning properly speaking, large synthetic machines with variable geometry.

Is there already something of this in Sergio Leone's westerns? Perhaps. All registers tend in this direction. *Chinatown* is the detective story redesigned by laser. It is not really a question of perfection. Technical perfection can *belong* to the meaning, and in this case it is neither nostalgic nor hyperrealist; it is an effect of art. Here, it is an effect of model: it is one of the tactical reference values. In the absence of any real syntax of meaning there are only *tactical* values in a complex whole in which, for example, the CIA as an all-purpose mythological machine, Robert Redford as a polyvalent star, social relations as necessary references to history, and *technical virtuosity as a necessary reference to cinema* are all admirably combined.

Cinema and its trajectory: from the most fantastic or mythical to the realistic and hyperrealistic.

In its present endeavours cinema increasingly approaches, with ever increasing perfection, absolute reality: in its banality, in its veracity, in its starkness, in its tedium, and at the same time in its pretentiousness, in its pretention to be the real, the immediate, the unsignified, which is the maddest of enterprises (in the same way that the pretention of functionalist design to designate, as the highest degree of the object, the form in which it coincides with its function, its use-value, is properly an insane enterprise). No culture has ever had this naive and paranoiac, this puritanical and terrorist vision of signs. Terrorism is always of the real. Simultaneous with this attempt at absolute coincidence with the real, cinema also approaches an absolute coincidence with itself. This is not contradictory : it is the very definition of the hyperreal. Hypotyposis and specularity. Cinema plagiarises and copies itself, remakes its classics, retroactivates its original myths, remakes silent films more perfect than the originals, etc. All this is logical. *Cinema is fascinated by itself as a lost object just as it (and we) are fascinated by the real as a referential in perdition.* Previously there was a living, dialectical, full and dramatic relationship between cinema and the imaginary (that is, novelistic, mythical unreality, even down to the delirious use of its own technique). Today, there is an inverse negative relation between the cinema and reality: it results from the loss of specificity which both have suffered. Cold collage, cool promiscuity, asexual engagement of two cold media which evolve in asymptotic line towards one another : cinema attempting to abolish itself in the absolute of reality, the real already long absorbed in cinematographic (or televised) hyperreality.

Translated by Paul Patton and Paul Foss

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEAN BAUDRILLARD

Interview conducted by Ted Colless, David Kelly and Alan Cholodenko

Translated by Philippe Tanguy

A.C.: In your Kuttna Lecture, *The Evil Demon of Images*, you invoke the notion of the immorality of images, at one point declaring that "the image has taken over and imposed its own immanent, ephemeral logic; an immoral logic without depth, beyond good and evil, beyond truth and falsity..." My question is this: if this logic lies beyond good and evil, why is it not an amoral rather than an immoral logic?

J.B.: From the very moment that one goes beyond good and evil one can also play a sort of game with this 'amorality' itself -- somewhat perversely perhaps. So there is a two-fold development here: there is at the same time both a transmutation of values (a denial of good and evil, *à la* Nietzsche for example) and the game with the resulting amorality, a game which as it proceeds becomes more and more romantic, more and more pathetic. With this game one enters the domain of 'hypermorality', if you like. You play the game *with* amorality: you do not discard morality -- rather you retain it, but purely as one of the rules, as one of the conventions which are completely perverse but nevertheless necessary if the game is to proceed at all. In fact, in this sort of game the whole question of what one does with morality remains completely open.

I can perhaps try to explain this more clearly in the following way: once you go beyond the question of morality, of good and evil, you have indeed entered the realm of amorality but you have not for all that exhausted the question. The game can continue, to involve amorality itself. And this is why I prefer the word 'immorality'.

There is a play on words in the text -- morality, amorality, immorality -- which I think is absolutely essential here. The point is that amorality as a concept is not very interesting or challenging. The concept of immorality, on the contrary, is far more dramatic.

Take Nietzsche's treatment of God, for instance. What Nietzsche says is that God is *dead*. This is a far more interesting situation than if Nietzsche were to simply say "there is no God" or "God has never existed", etc. -- that would be mere atheism -- whereas to say that God is dead as Nietzsche does is to say something far more dramatic, and really something else altogether: it is an attempt to go *beyond* God. Similarly, the word 'immorality' as used in the text is an attempt to go beyond not just morality but also amorality. It is certainly an attempt to state the disappearance of morality, but also to situate the ensuing game at a level different from mere amorality itself.

A.C.: So Nietzsche is not a mere atheist.

J.B.: Yes, Nietzsche is not in the least an ordinary 'atheist'. He is not committed to the denial of the existence of God as an ordinary atheist would be. He is actually denying not that God exists but that God is alive. He is saying that God is *dead*, and that is a fundamental concept.

The concept is similar to my concept of 'challenge' in *De la Seduction*. This is the idea that the disappearance of something is never objective, never final -- it always involves a sort of challenge, a questioning, and consequently an act of seduction. In almost everything that I have written, there is this challenge to morality, to reality, etc. So Nietzsche, for example,

challenges the existence of God by issuing a challenge *to* God. It is just as uninteresting to say "God does not exist" as to say "God exists". The problematic for Nietzsche is completely different. He is challenging the 'liveliness', the being, of God. In other words, he is *seducing* God. Similarly, in my work what I try to do is to issue a challenge to meaning and to reality, to seduce them and to play with them...

T.C./D.K.: To play the devil's advocate, there does seem to be, in this text, both an ethical vocabulary, implying a position to be adopted, and a more or less urgent directive to come to grips with the indistinguishability between the real and the order of simulation. To an audience this might imply one of two modes of address:

On the one hand a soliloquy, maybe dispassionate, that nonetheless plays a part in the dramaturgy of the final act -- the eclipse of history, the vanishing of the real. In this case can we understand this text to be the words of a provocateur -- intervening to precipitate, or arrest, this devolution; or rather those of an analyst -- commenting upon and clarifying this action? In other words, does this text have a role to play?

On the other hand could this be an ironic aside, neither participating in the action nor critically detached from it, a knowing remark that clues us in but is, for all that, inconsequential?

J.B.: Well, congratulations on an excellent question. It deals with an important problem: the position of a text (and especially of a text such as this one), as well as the position being adopted in the text in relation to its object -- or at least the object as described by the text itself. In the sense

that the text attempts to move towards the end of something -- towards a sort of catastrophe, a *something lost* -- there is indeed an element of provocation, since the text must be situated within its own logic, within its own processes. There is provocation in that one wishes to accelerate this logic. One goes therefore in the same direction as the text -- but one accelerates, one goes much faster towards the end of the text. And one plays on the logic itself to be able (at least) to reach a point beyond it, so as to make the system reveal itself more clearly. It is more or less a strategic position that one adopts: one of precipitation, of acceleration, as demanded by the text itself.

Nevertheless, I do not for all that abandon in any way the position of the analyst. There is here perhaps an ambiguity, an ambivalence, which is quite fundamental. On the one hand we have a position which is strategically necessary, and on the other hand we retain the position of the analyst. This ambiguity probably remains throughout the text at every point. One is compelled to *produce* meaning in the text, and one produces this meaning *as if* it arises from the system (even if in fact the system lacks meaning) in order precisely to play that meaning against the system itself as one reaches the end. So there is a position here -- a third position -- which I would describe as that of *objective irony*.

Objective irony is not subjective irony: it is not an irony based on solipsism or on any separation of discourse from the subject. Objective irony is precisely the irony whereby one is able to turn the system, to make it work against itself, to play against itself. This creates an ironic effect within the text, since its position is bound to be ambiguous. In other words, one always in a sense

remains the subject of a discourse, any discourse, so one always in a sense assumes the position of an analyst. But then, one must also exert the same strategy to the *object* of discourse: in the same way that one works with the subject, one must also work towards the position of pure object, towards the 'vanishing point' of discourse itself.

Consequently I do not think that one has to choose one way or another. What the text involves, simultaneously, is both provocation and analysis. There is a simultaneous requirement to give meaning to the text (analysis) and to also give an end to that meaning (provocation). And what really differentiates this procedure from other processes of negation for example, the negative dialectic of Adorno is precisely what I call objective irony. That is, there is a movement within the text, from subjective irony as used by Adorno and others (based on the irony of the subject) to objective irony -- the irony of the object itself. What I try to do, if you like, is to try to get out of the subjectivity/objectivity dialectic, in order to reach a point where I can make of the system an object, a pure object, one with no meaning whatsoever. I try, in other words, to constitute the subject of discourse in turn as an object; I try to create a sort of distance (which is not a 'critical' but an 'ironic' distance) between the subject and the text -- and when this occurs, then of course the position of the analyst disappears.

And yet, while one remains within a theoretical type of discourse, within a discourse such as this one, one cannot exclude oneself from any of these positions. I do not have to choose -- and I would hesitate to choose -- between any of them. All three positions have their place in the game as it

proceeds -- and this is in itself, of course, the supreme irony of the text.

T.C./D.K.: You have titled this paper *The Evil Demon of Images.* In the *Meditations* Descartes refers to an evil demon that can conjure an inexistent world that includes the inexistent figure of Descartes himself. Descartes was able to exile that demon through corrosive doubt, confirming the world and its objects; here you have conjured that evil demon's return, exiling instead both doubt and the real. How would you describe the relation between this text and the Cartesian project it seems to invoke?

J.B.: In the Cartesian project there is at least the inauguration of a rational principle. It is from this rational principle that the whole question of doubt arises. This doubt comes from the subject -- as subject of knowledge, as subject of discourse.

Whether Descartes in fact succeeds in making the subject constitute itself, in its reality, in relation to a diabolical world which is full of superstitions and hallucinations and so on is a controversial matter. But the fact remains that Cartesian doubt is based on the promise of a world which can be confirmed only in terms of its own reality: there is doubt on the one hand and there is reality on the other hand; and there is the conflict between the two, which Descartes tries to resolve.

For me the question is totally different. When I evoke the principle of evil, of an evil demon etc., my aim is more closely related to a certain kind of Manichaeism. It is therefore anterior to Descartes, and fundamentally it is *ir*rational. There are in fact two principles at stake: on the one hand there is the (Descartes') rational

principle or principle of rationality -- the fundamental attempt, through doubt or anything else, to rationalise the world -- and on the other hand there is the inverse principle, which was, for example, adopted by the 'heretics' all the way throughout the history of Christianity. This is the principle of evil itself. What the heretics posited was that the very creation of the world, hence the reality of the world, was the result of the existence of the evil demon. The function of God, then, was really to try to repudiate this evil phantom -- that was the real reason why God had to exist at all. So in this situation it is no longer a question of doubt or non doubt, of whether one should exercise this doubt or whether this doubt could lead us to confirm or deny the existence of the world. Rather, it is once again the principle of *seduction* that needs to be invoked in this situation: according to Manichaeism, the reality of the world is a total illusion; it is something which has been tainted from the very beginning; it is something which has been seduced by a sort of *ir*real principle since time immemorial. In this case what one has to invoke is precisely this absolute power of illusion -- and this is indeed exactly what the heretics did. They based their theologies on the very *negation* of the real. Their principal and primary convention was that of the non-reality, hence of the non-rationality, of the world. They believed that the world, its reality, is made up only of *signs* -- and that it was governed solely through the power of the *mind*.

This idea of the world as being constituted only by signs is, if you like, some sort of magic thinking -- and indeed it was condemned as such. For it does entail that the 'real' -- and any sort of 'reality' -- that one sees in the world is quite simply an absolute utopia. The rationality that one has to invoke in order to make the world 'real'

is really just a product of the power of *thought* itself, which is itself totally anti-rational and anti-materialist. This is completely opposed to Descartes (whose rationalism leads eventually but directly to materialism). For me to invoke the question of doubt or of non-doubt and to either assert or to question the reality of the world would be completely futile. The principle fundamentally and from the very beginning is that there is *no* objectivity to the world.

But nevertheless one has to recognise the reality of the illusion; and one must play upon this illusion itself and the power that it exerts. This is where the Manichaean element in my work comes in. It is a question which, really, is purely strategic.

We can compare this position easily with that of Freud if you like -- with his juxtaposition of the principles of Eros and Thanatos. These two principles are at first absolutely opposed to each other. But there is also the crucial moment in Freud's work when, having desperately attempted to unify and integrate the two, he finally abandons the project and invokes instead the principle of their total irreconcilability. This is something that works very much to the advantage of the principle of Thanatos itself, since of course Thanatos is itself the principle of irreconcilability.

This is the key to the whole position: the idea is that of a most fundamental and radical antagonism, of no possibility existing at all of reconciling the 'illusion' of the world with the 'reality' of the world. And I have to say this once again: here the 'illusion' is not simply irreality or non-reality; rather, it is in the literal sense of the word (*il-ludere* in Latin) a *play* upon 'reality' or a

mise en jeu of the real. It is, to say it one more time, the issuing of a challenge to the 'real' -- the attempt to put the real, quite simply, on the spot.

There is here a fundamental distinction -- which it seems to me exists in the whole history of thought in general. There is the principle of the possibility of reconciliation on the one hand, and there is the recognition of total irreconcilability on the other hand. For me the reality of the world has been *seduced*, and this is really what is so fundamentally Manichaean in my work. Like the Manichaeans I do not believe in the possibility of 'real-ising' the world through any rational or materialist principle -- hence the great difference between my work and the process of invoking radical doubt as in Descartes.

A.C.: Did semiology arrive to save meaning precisely at a point when it was already lost? Is semiology a nostalgic, a romantic project?

J.B.: I do not really know about the nostalgia of semiology: one must believe in the first place that meaning did once exist -- and so you could then attempt to try to find it again, at least as a lost object ... Obviously I do not believe this, so the nostalgia might have been there in semiology but it would have been in my view totally unfounded. One thing is certain: semiology did attempt -- and does still -- to save meaning and to *produce* meaning as a sort of repudiation or conjuration of non-sense, and in that light semiology as a discipline does appear to be *evangelical.* And this is so in spite of the fact that today in semiology there is to a certain extent an awareness of production, of its own production of signs.

The problem arises in the way that semiology operates: in so far as it immediately establishes a

distinctive opposition between signifier and signified and between sign and referent, etc., from the very first point of departure what semiology tries to do is to *domesticate* the sign. By comparison, in the world which I evoke, the one where illusion or magic thought plays a key role, the signs evolve, they concatenate and *produce themselves*, always one upon the other -- so that there is absolutely no basic reference which can sustain them. Thus they do not refer to any sort of 'reality' or 'referent' or 'signified' whatsoever. So in this situation what we have is the sign alone; and it is the power which is proper to the sign itself, it is the pure strategy of the sign itself that governs the appearance of things. This position is vastly different from semiology -- as for instance in Lacan and in the *Tel Quel* school, where a primary role is given to the 'signifier'. In other words, for me the sign is, if you like, without recourse. There is no basic reserve, no 'gold standard' to the sign -- no basic reserve of reference from which the sign can be recovered or accommodated. On the contrary, *reality is the effect of the sign*. The system of reference is only the result of the power of the sign itself.

This is what Artaud meant when he talked about the 'savage power' of the sign, when he alluded to this 'cruel' capacity that the sign has to 'erupt' and so on. The framework here for an understanding of the effect of the sign is hardly a representational one. Rather, the framework is the fundamental antagonism between the sign and reality: here the sign is precisely that which operates against reality, not for it. From this point of view, there is really no semiology at all, properly speaking. No real *logos* (as is implied in the couple 'signified/signifier', etc.) is available. Instead, we have a sort of single brutal sign which exists in its purest state and which goes

through the universe, simply reproducing itself, constantly and forever. In the representational system, one cannot do this. One cannot go from one sign to another directly; one must mediate from one sign to another through meaning, through the duality 'signified/signifier' and so on. This is why I invoke the concept of destiny, the concept of the *destiny* of the sign -- whereas what semiology invokes is a concept of the *history* of the sign, the history of the sign as a domesticated product of meaning. This domestication process, of course, is also to be found in other disciplines -- in psychology, for example -- and to me it seems to be only a desperate attempt to seek salvation...

Having said all this, it is true that semiology has become much more sophisticated in the last few years. So today we have a semiology of poetry, for example, or of the speech act, of *langue* and *parole*. A lot of attempts are being made to go beyond the representational mode, which was obviously deficient. But in my opinion semiology will never be able -- to adopt the coinage of Nietzsche -- to go beyond its shadow. It will never be actually able to find the sign in its purest state -- in the way in which I, for example, try to do in *De la Seduction* and in the world of illusion.

T.C./D.K.: In an earlier essay ('Design and Environment or How Political Economy Escalates into Cyberblitz') you specified an historical moment when the object resigned its use value status by entering into a pure order of the sign function. In this essay your reference point is rather the media image. Has the media image supplanted the order of events and of objects in the same manner as the Bauhaus project of total design supplanted the realm of nature? And does the delirious proliferation of

the media image have a similarly specific historical moment?

A propos this, can you explain the qualitative difference between the media image and those other forms (theatre, architecture, painting, language) that were incapable of overwhelming the real to such effect?

J.B.: Yes, in a sense there is an historical shift. There is an historical evolution, which begins and also culminates with the phase where signs, as I said, lead from one another according to the logic of illusion. So this was indeed a first stage -- not necessarily a chronological 'first' stage but certainly a logical one. And then the phase of rationality followed, with the production of the reality-effect by the sign. It seems to me that towards the end of this stage the sign found itself being separated and being sent back towards its own transcendence and immanence. What followed therefore was the game of the dialectic of the sign, the game whereby reality would be posited against the immanence or transcendence of the sign. Consequently, there is indeed a sort of historical movement.

The movement reaches its apotheosis in the arrival of the media. Now, once again, the sign is all alone. But this is not to say that we are back at the first stage once more. The situation now is different. Now the sign seems to me to posit what I have called the 'principle of hyperreality'. That is, what we have now is the disappearance of the referent -- and it is in relation to this disappearance of the referent that there is a sort of omnipresence to the sign. The problematic of the disappearance of the referent was not an issue according to the first logic of illusion; rather, there was simply no referent. So in a

sense we are going back towards an anterior state -- but nevertheless with a difference.

Is this evolution an historical one? I do not think it is. It is, rather, a metaphysical one: the universe of the media which we are currently immersed in is not the magical universe or the cruel universe which we had at an anterior stage, where the sign was operational purely on the basis of its own functioning as sign. With the advent of the media, it seems to me that we have lost that prior state of total illusion, of the sign as magic. We are, in other words, in that state of 'hyperreality' as I have called it. Now we are dealing with a sign that posits the principle of non-reality, the principle of the absolute absence of reality. We went beyond the reality principle a long time ago, and now the game which is being played is no longer being played in the world of pure illusion. It is as if we are now in a shameful and sinful state, a post-illusion state.

We can try to put this another way, if you like: as we all know, philosophy is based on the negation of the real. There is at the heart of philosophy a primordial act regarding the negation of reality; and without that negation there is no philosophy. Now, it seems to me that throughout a certain period this negation was the privilege of philosophers. But today this is no longer the case. Today the negation of the real has penetrated inside things themselves, so much so that it is no longer the privilege of just philosophers but an axiom that belongs to all. What has happened is that the negation of reality has now been incorporated into 'reality' itself. In short, what we have now is a principle of non-reality based on 'reality' -- a principle of 'hyperreality' as I call it. The mutation is interesting, since it implies nothing other than

the end of philosophy. The philosophical principle of the negation of reality has now pervaded everyday 'reality' itself.

This is why I say that today we have a form of irony which is objective. Irony can no longer today be simply the subjective irony of the philosopher. It can no longer be exercised as if from outside of things. Instead, it is the objective irony which arises from within things themselves -- it is an irony which belongs to the system, and it arises from the system itself because the system is constantly functioning against itself.

Now to go to the second part of the question -- the Bauhaus question. The Bauhaus project of total design is certainly one of the important episodes in the evolution of simulation, which marks the passage of the sign from the dialectic of the real to the order of the sign itself. Nevertheless, the Bauhaus project does not go to the stage of seduction of the real, and there are radical differences between simulation and seduction. The Bauhaus remains at the stage of simulation. To say it once more: seduction seems to me to invoke an enchanted universe, whereas simulation invokes a universe which is totally disenchanted and , as I said, almost shameful.

And finally, the last part of the question: in my view there is no substantial qualitative difference between electronic media such as TV on the one hand and other forms such as language, painting or architecture on the other hand. In my opinion there is no real difference between them; they all operate at the same level, that of simulation. Of course one would have to discuss this at some length, and in any case I am not an expert in any of these areas. However, it does seem to me, for example, that simulation has

invaded theatre just as much as it has invaded painting, and that as a result neither of them have the power to exert total illusion any longer. Both the theatre and painting have entered the order of simulation and in fact they now typify simulation.

So all the forms can in fact be substituted one for another. They have all been contaminated by simulation, and so now they function in terms of 'communication' and 'information', which are nothing other than the by products of simulation. Neither architecture nor painting, for instance, have today any effects which are proper to themselves; instead, today they function merely as indications of the transformation of the world.

We must remember this: the aim of art was once precisely to posit the power of illusion against reality. There was a time when art was trying to make reality play a game which was different to the game that art itself was playing. In other words, there was a time indeed when art was always trying to force reality to play the game along different rules, when it was always trying to *seduce* the reality of things. But today this is no longer the great game that art is playing. All the art forms are now playing the game at the level of the simulation of reality -- and whether the particular art form be painting or architecture makes no difference whatsoever.

That is, there is no longer any great 'challenge' being posited by these art forms -- a challenge to go beyond the reality principle. For example, the very project of the Bauhaus (which incorporated, of course, all of the various art forms) was precisely and by definition the attempt to design the world -- and this attempt does not make any sense unless the world is being considered in

terms of the reality of its things. This is very different from the attempt to confront the world with the non-reality of its things, and really it is simply a sort of exercise of simulation. But all this is open to discussion and I would like one day to be able to analyse the issues in greater detail...

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