

WHY THEORY?

It is here that language and theory alter their meaning. Instead of acting as a mode of production, they act as a mode of disappearance, just as the Object has become the subject's mode of disappearance. This enigmatic game is no longer that of analysis; it seeks to preserve the enigma of the object through the enigma of discourse.

To be the reflection of the real, to enter into a relation of critical negativity with the real, cannot be theory's end. This was the pious vow of a perpetuated era of Enlightenment, and to this day it determines the moral standing of the intellectual. Today, however, this appealing dialectic seems unsettled. What good is theory? If the world is hardly compat-

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ible with the concept of the real which we impose upon it, the function of theory is certainly not to reconcile it, but on the contrary, to seduce, to wrest things from their condition, to force them into an over-existence which is incompatible with that of the real. Theory pays dearly for this in a prophetic autodestruction. Even if it speaks of surpassing the economic, theory itself could not be an economy of discourse. It must become excessive and sacrificial to speak about excess and sacrifice. It must become simulation if it speaks about simulation, and deploy the same strategy as its object. If it speaks about seduction, theory must become seducer, and deploy the same stratagems. If it no longer aspires to a discourse of truth, theory must assume the form of a world from which truth has withdrawn. And thus it becomes its very object.

The status of theory could not be anything but a challenge to the real. Or rather, their relation is one of a respective challenge. For the real itself is without doubt only a challenge to theory. It is not an objective state of things, but a radical limit of analysis beyond

which nothing any longer obeys the real, or about which nothing more can be said. But theory is also made solely to disobey the real, of which it is the inaccessible limit. The impossibility of reconciling theory with the real is a consequence of the impossibility of reconciling the subject with its own ends. All attempts at reconciliation are illusory and doomed to failure.

It is not enough for theory to describe and analyse, it must itself be an event in the universe it describes. In order to do this theory must partake of and become the acceleration of this logic. It must tear itself from all referents and take pride only in the future. Theory must operate on time at the cost of a deliberate distortion of present reality. In this one must follow the model of history, which has separated many things from their nature and mythical origin in order to reverse them in time. Today they must be wrested from their history and their end to recapture their enigma, their reversible path, their destiny.

Theory itself must anticipate its own destiny, because for every thought one must

expect a strange tomorrow. Theory is, at any rate, destined to be diverted, deviated, and manipulated. It would be better for theory to divert itself, than to be diverted from itself. If it aspires to any *effets de vérité* it must eclipse them through its own movement. This is why writing exists. If thought does not anticipate this deviation in its own writing, the world will do so through vulgarization, the spectacle or repetition. If truth does not dissimulate itself, the world will conjure it away by diverse means, by a kind of objective irony, or vengeance.

Once again, what is the point of saying that the world *is* ecstatic, that it *is* ironic, that the world *is* objective? It is those things, that's that. What is the point of saying that it is not? It is so anyway. What is the point of not saying it at all? What theory can do is to defy the world to be more: more objective, more ironic, more seductive, more real or more unreal, what else? It has meaning only in terms of this exorcism. The distance theory takes is not that of retreat, but that of exorcism. It thus takes on the power of a fatal sign, even more inexorable

than reality, and which can perhaps protect us from this inexorable reality, this objectivity, from this brilliance of the world, whose indifference would enrage us if we were lucid.

Let us be Stoics: if the world is fatal, let us be more fatal than it. If it is indifferent, let us be more indifferent. We must conquer the world and seduce it through an indifference that is at least equal to the world's.

To counter the acceleration of networks and circuits the world will seek slowness, inertia. In the same movement, however, it will seek something more rapid than communication: the challenge, the duel. On the one side, inertia and silence. On the other, challenge and the duel. The fatal, the obscene, the reversible, the symbolic, are not concepts, since nothing distinguishes the hypotheses from the assertion. The enunciation of the fatal is also fatal, or it is not at all. In this sense it is indeed a discourse where truth has withdrawn (just as one pulls a chair out from under a person about to sit down).