





My aim is to try to communicate with both sides of the brain of anyone reading this article, left and right.

As we know, the right brain houses feelings, recognises images, appreciates music and all non-verbal languages and understands the language of shouting, gesturing, stroking and touch. It generates such feelings as love, humour, aesthetic taste and everything we might class as a non-logical perception of the invisible; faith and mystery; a broader, more specific, more synthetic idea and a great capacity to handle simultaneous situations.

The left brain is the home of logic, calculation, business, military strategy, abstraction, war. The brain is the natural stage of the eternal conflict between two entirely opposing groups.

Several centuries before Christ, there existed hundreds of goddesses across the Mediterranean area, though they eventually died out. In the ancient societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, female sacrifices were quite exceptional and only began to be practised with the emergence of a written civilization.

The Old Testament revolutionised the course of history. Judaism, Christianity and Islam subsequently capitalised on patriarchy to establish dominion by men over women.

Following the Second World War, mass use of photography and later cinema and television sparked a new revolution. Television encouraged a move from solitary reading to gathering around the television set (McLuhan and the global electronic village). Contrary to popular wisdom, television-watching can be a positive way of reconfiguring the world. Images of Hiroshima, symbolising the high-point of several centuries of male domination, set the alarm bells ringing and its constant repetition may have saved the world from total destruction.

Likewise, the images of the earth taken from space have made us aware of the urgent need to protect and respect our planet. And we still do not know what lasting impact the 9/11 pictures will have on our collective imaginary. Images form part of the mental area, they are reproductions of the sensual world; they are

close to the world of appearances. The birth of the women's movement, human rights marches, ecological awareness and the emergence of new dress codes and new types of art, are all closely related to the development of television. The emergence of the computer, despite the criticism its implicit passivity arouses, has utterly altered our relationship with image and space.

The computer has made television interactive, resorting to the use of both hands and both sides of the brain, and cyberspace is a digital extension of human thought to another dimension. More than ever before we will need to unleash the incredible potential of both sides of our brain, which, as we already know, is the most powerful of all computers, the lightest and most transportable, the cheapest and most practical ever invented. What a shame, then, that we've lost the access code!

That which is real, visible and can be directly apprehended by the ordinary citizen on Planet Earth becomes confused with the most simplistic scenarios of the new world comic, in which each person's role is strictly and definitively established together with the natural corollary of the general infantilisation of the political and media discourse. The disappearance of the borders between real and fictional worlds is nothing new.

The «we didn't know» —heard after the Second World War— has become the «we don't understand» of our own age. Not knowing requires us first to give an account of ourselves in any eventuality. Not understanding refers back to the agreed impossibility of the move to action, all the more when the generations of deciders that move the threads of the world are constantly begging for pity and/or feeling self-pity (amnesty, pardon, regret, etc.) for the disastrous results of their former ideological commitments.

Between the veiled and bestialised woman slave and the woman slave commercialised in the west by the mafias (regarded with practically universal indifference by democratic regimes), the difference is merely one of «representation». The mafias are so deeply rooted in

the media-institutional systems and apparatuses that they run no risk of being bothered, and their influence over money management and distribution systems protects them from public curiosity or scrutiny.

The history of communication merges with the history of war. Each major advance in the control of the media stems from some organisation's need to take dominion over another. The Internet, like other earlier types of media, forms part of this situation. Designed merely as a support for communication, the Internet is generally governed by the classical principles of communication, i.e. by the notions of effectiveness, speed and economic profitability.

An unprecedented medium of communication, the Internet is however conceived and defined on the basis of outdated concepts and misleading metaphors imposed as if they were universal truths, which merely illustrate the weight and strength of the dominant customs. The best known and most problematic of these metaphors is the term «information highway» coined by former US vice-president Al Gore, a fitting tribute to his father who was instrumental in creating the Interstate highway system. Had Gore senior been a horticulturist, Gore Junior might have called the Internet «the great electronic garden»... This structuring of language based on dominant, traditional thinking has numerous consequences for the organisation, implementation and development of infrastructures, tasks generally assigned in most governments to the ministry for transport.

Although important issues regarding the nature of Internet contents could from the outset have been shunted to other ministries such as education, culture, the environment, family, etc., customs have so much weight that at times they prevent us from seeing even the clearest evidence, such as, for example, the supremacy of real clandestine and mafia networks in the most sophisticated virtual electronic networks. And so the perspective is completely inverted: the most technologically advanced country ends up deploying its army against an almost entirely virtual enemy.

Have the terrorists and mafia bosses become the most elaborate forms of power and of the effectiveness of the networked organisation? We can only sit back and observe the perplexity and fragility of the allied forces in the face of a scattered, evaporating, viral, virtual enemy.

## THE FEMALE PART OF THE WORLD

With the coming of the digital revolution and the general spread of the Web, we have the potential elements to bring about a true cultural revolution, enabling the emergence of contents that lie outside the traditional values of domination, monitoring, hierarchy, power.

In contrast to the predominant discourses of the «new lords» of the world and the cyberworld, we are seeing the emergence of new values. Values embodied in what we might term «the female part of the world». The important thing is to understand the cultural singularity of that «female part of the world» and its deep and organic adaptation to net culture. With the appearance of light video in the 1960s, women began to be released from the heavy technical and economic limitations of cinema and a dense, diversified, creative and committed output began to appear on the cinema and television scene. At that time, nobody could have imagined that this oeuvre would end up forming an integral part of the general economics of audio-visual production, however obvious it may seem today. And the same is true of the Internet and other technologies and digital media. In order to understand this development and to foster online content production policies, it is important to undertake:

- An analysis of the innovation conditions.
- An analysis of the values of the net culture.
- An analysis of the conditions under which contents «with a strong cultural added value» are produced on the web.

This «female part of the world» concerns both male and female authors, although it seems to be embodied more in women: it is worth noting that the creative, political, critical, radical part of artistic and cultural creation in the electronic communication networks often pertains to women, especially young women with no hang-ups about technology. The Internet not only makes it possible to communicate: it also allows us to converse, exchange, share, but also to affirm differences, singularities. It puts the user in the place of a potential producer; it makes it possible to give new sense to notions, laminated by consumerism, such as the importance of relations that are organic and conscious, that they are allowing certain communities to be protected, recognised and developed. Thus, the «female part» now stands in opposition to the «male part» only insofar as the image is opposed to the word, the right brain to the left, life to death, death to rebirth, madness to reason, faith to hatred, witchcraft to science, the computer screen to the page. Notions that are no longer opposed, but which are nonetheless only operative in their loops, their tensions, their interactions, thus implying recognition of that «female part» of the world and of the values that give it structure.

### A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

These values affirm the primacy:

- Of contents over technicity.
- Of the search for meaning over the effects of fashion.
- Of the need for critical perspectives over the fetishisation of the media.
- Of the inclusion of research and creation within the real framework of social life over classical economic strategies.
- Of the need to invent new models of production and economic development over the reproduction of existing models.

- Of chance and of the need to allow breakage and recognition over the certainty that inhibits the desire for change, of fluctuating communities over «items» that enclose.
- Of «common sense» over strategy.
- Of necessary uncertainty for a true autonomy over the certainty of a «proven» system.
- Of a multiplicity of codes over adhesion to one single one.
- Of un-repertoired experience over archived knowledge.
- Of decentering over centralism.
- Of the international over globalisation.
- Of the movement of the word over the immobility of the media language.
- Of an economy based on changes and mutations and, consequently, on vital needs. over an economy based on consumption excess...

A revolution in sensitivity and intelligence, which involves important and deep questioning; which we generally pirouette around: the incantatory discourse on innovation.

### DECEIT, MODERNITY, INNOVATION

What is innovation?

Innovation in a period of transition?

Transition is characterised by a shift from one situation to another: certain elements disappear, others appear and we have to remain open to changes about which we know nothing, preserving nonetheless the memory of our history, with its events of splendour and of drama.

Periods of transition are especially favourable for the renewal of concepts, knowledge and skills. It is not always easy, since an important part of our experience and knowledge is monetarily paralysed by the massive emergence of new data, new ideas, new perspectives, preventing us from distinguishing between deceit,

modernity and what may in the future be determining, structuring, decisive, founding. Violent and contradictory movements stir up every dimension of life in our societies: political, social, religious, economic catastrophe on the one hand, and scientific advances on the other. It is a movement that sinks many of our patterns, as a new order is sketched out. All around, individuals, groups, and still indistinct organisations arise, indifferent to the chronicle of the disasters foretold, which create the elements of the new cartographies. In those periods of simultaneous confusion and creativity, experimentation has to be a priority, infinitely more relevant as it is than the pedagogy of contemplation and consumption of works, of constituted knowledge, of the spectacle of the immediate present.

The former paves the way to the possible, to disordered actions, to surprises and to splendour. The second —proven, calming, seductive— condemns us to impotence and to nostalgia.

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF INNOVATION STAND AGAINST THE FUNDAMENTALISM OF THE MARKET

When a group of people decides to «innovate», where should they start? What should we change in the way we think, work, share and develop our plans and our projects? If we want innovation to be more than just a meaningless slogan, what should we question about our actions?

It is a question that cultural agents, creators, employers and traders, regional and national powers and transnational bodies should consider.

The ever-greater number of formal and informal meetings at an international level, the propagation of multiple networks of exchange and confrontation are, of course, ways of advancing. But we need to go further. How?

As well as the creator, it is also important to mobilise another three actors.

The producer. We need to multiply the situations that allow deployment of artistic and cultural experiments: talented artists, brilliant scientists, ingenious technicians, entrepreneurs, who have arisen out of the real convergence between the technical possibilities and the intuition of certain dreamers, available for one-off actions. However the producers (who unfortunately tend to be in short supply) are also indispensable. A producer, a real one, is the assembler, the guide, who out of his or her own conviction, beyond any explicit request from the market, from the lobbies, from fashion, from the advertising interests of the builders, manages the economic, human (artistic, scientific, philosophical), technical and legal resources needed for a work to be born, to spark criticism, to find its audience. A world without producers is dumb art.

The critic. It is necessary to persuade intellectuals to make a critique of the works, particularly those that use digital technologies. The existence of an extensive, diversified, contradictory critical corpus, open to eclectic thoughts is a guarantee, both for the creators, the scientists, the «deciders» and for citizens, that the world's evolutions will be appropriated. A world without critique is deaf art.

The audience. We think it is necessary to increase, by all means possible, the opportunities for citizens to get a closer understanding of the concerns of contemporary creators and researchers. The usual dynamics of dissemination, animation and training are not enough. Citizens are not mere consumers to be seduced, targets that have to be met, buttons that have to be pushed. This leads us to consider certain questions. Creators, like researchers, would be wrong to see in that demand merely a simple return to the past (without doubt merited but inescapably inert from the pioneers of cultural decentralisation), an exploitation of their approaches or a channelling of their views. Art without an audience is blind art.

## STANCES OF INNOVATION

Complexity. The notion of complexity already forms a part of the panoply of the modern human being. Yet the everyday present does not appear to demonstrate that its more basic principles have taken a hold in customs, in hearts, in laboratories, in assemblies. What has happened to our capacity to assume complex situations? Our elites are weathered in the management of complicated situations. But once the «living» interferes, our experts seize up. Lacking views, they regulate and let others de-mine the terrain.

Impermanence. What has happened to our capacity to imagine ephemeral situations, in this culture based on duration, perenniality, conservation? We intuitively know that what is partially true will no longer be entirely true tomorrow... In periods of transition, the force of an event vanishes, immediately upon the appearance of the next—which is related to the previous one but sets its sights further ahead.

The contradiction. What can one do when something can be true and false at the same time? How can we, without cynicism, learn to play in all the compartments at the same time?

Archaism. What has happened to our capacity, when we see ourselves supposedly fated to reach the vanguard of technological development, to respect archaic, old and fragile values? Our civilization «conserves» while other cultures «converse». Communication is the arrogant cliché of conservation and the greater the anxiety and the more open the book is, the more we communicate. All that is left to us is to recover the use of obsolete compasses like «the art of conversation». Otherwise, we will soon see museums opening that carefully conserve friendliness, availability and wordiness.

Indiscipline. What is important is not to invite «transdisciplinarity» or «interdisciplinarity» but indiscipline, the recovery of the part of each of us that is reserved for play, for humour, for difference, for impertinence. It is not only important to mobilise certainties and

knowledge but to unlearn in order to favour new visions. It is not only important to plan projects but generously to take in the improbable.

The conscience of points of view. How can we promote the singular experience that consists of allowing the exploration of multiple points of view of an issue, a concept, a work, a situation? Prioritising «spherical thought». In a sphere: in order to be inside, outside, in the centre, at the edge, far away, near, in the North, in the South, in any place in space and thus to be able to enjoy a moving, changing, open point of view on things. By projecting myself in all directions—in other words successively adopting various points of view—I explore the entire scope of the possible. I open the array of questions. I experience postures. The answers calm and reinforce a posture, the questions structure and open the path to new conceptual, poetic and linguistic architectures...

Sobriety. Clarity does not come from information: too dense, too noisy, too fluid, too fast, too frivolous. Instead it comes from difference (not desertion), from sharing (not from consumption), sometimes from separation (not from consensus). An excess of present is counterproductive.

Doubt. Conjunctions (of ideas, situations, persons, values, demands, weaknesses) favour more the continuous construction of the human adventure than the ideas themselves or providential men. It is important to promote situations that foster these conjunctions in order to be able to create favourable and dynamic conditions of doubt.

Opacity. You shouldn't give everything. Everyone has to work. I awaken the intelligence of those whom I invite to work, not of those I stuff. We are fed up and we are transparent and predictable. Let us be laconic and opaque, let us share our mystery.

The confrontation. We are heirs to a culture in which conflict is viewed as a fight, with winners and losers. It is hardly ever seen as a creative dynamic. In no way is the purpose to encourage a search for commitment or con-

sensus. The purpose is to offer the media up for heated, open, «elegant» confrontations leading to arbitration, in which intelligence and general interest prevail.

Memory and forgetting. In the final scenes of Ingmar Bergman's film «Shame» (1968), one of the characters says: «I remember I've got to remember something important but I've forgotten what». A few years before, Georges Bataille had said: «Today, mankind has lost the desire to give itself the face of splendour that belongs to it». In other terms, Maurice Blanchot also tried to define that loss, that radical absence that plunges contemporary man into bewilderment and anxiety. Some weeks before his death, the German playwright Heiner Müller called on the West to produce visions which could, through their strength and scope, overcome the apocalypse of the holocaust.

How can we rediscover the path of the «splendour that belongs to us»?

## INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE CHALLENGES OF CREATION AND RESEARCH

There's nothing new about artists using and questioning «new» technologies: In dance, Merce Cunningham long ago turned to information technology to create new choreographies and over 30 years ago composers were already experimenting with digital machines.

On what do artists who investigate interactivity and virtual worlds base their concerns? Not only are they unfazed by those «machines», despite being the first to try to define their limits and dangers, but they offer them a chance to reconsider the nature of the artistic gesture and the possible systems of relations between their personal artistic commitment (materialised in executed work) and the «audience», which is the potential recipient of the work.

## ARTISTIC CHALLENGES

The challenges of that research concern:

- The renewal of narrative modes (i.e. the exploration of other ways of conceiving and telling stories, of speaking about the world).
- The renewal of the protocols of conception (for conceiving interactive devices, the artist must face up to other logics external to his or her own. Although it is still the artist who gives meaning to the work and who legitimates the existence of and need for the work, s/he must share his or her intuitions with engineers, IT technicians, jurists, employers, etc.).
- Experimentation with other types of relationship between authors and audience: with interactive procedures, the role of the artist no longer consists only of offering the public a full and complete work but of offering a «context» to explore which leaves a true space of projection and of meaning to anyone wishing to explore the work.

## THE WORK

Nobody asks artists for anything explicit when they delve into themselves in search of a hypothetical signal, a forgotten breathing. That descent into the abysses inescapably excludes the Other. If that immersion is a sacrifice, the resulting work becomes a gift and a prophecy, by handing over the «result» of the sacrifice to the Other. Between the sacrifice and the profession the tension known as the artistic act comes into play. What happens with that tension when the Work is replaced by the product? When the prophetic function is absorbed by the market, what is left is consumerism.



## DIGITAL?

Everything seems to indicate that the European elite is not yet aware of the challenges of the digital revolution. Or rather, everything appears to indicate that these challenges are only viewed from an economic perspective. The expression «digital revolution» might seem overstated. Nonetheless, it refers back to certain features:

The epidemic-like form of propagation, with all that involves in terms of institutional paralysis and fringe initiatives. A disturbing parallelism between the way the AIDS plague spread and the way new technologies spread. The establishment begins by denying the extent of the phenomenon; later it confirms the facts and, in a third phase, it capitalises on the possible responses.

In parallel, alternative strategies of experimentation are introduced that stand out because they operate on the fringe and on the basis of values of cooperation, coexistence and community, breaking with the dominant values of power and control. In the world of electronic networks, the intelligence and generosity of the pioneers is besieged and subjected to the conquering strategies of the new economic El Dorado.

Will we end up letting the dynamic and creative potential of the networks (for cooperation and shared intelligence) get away, in the same way as we have let the potential represented by the emergence of television in 1950s get away?

## CONTINENTS

The generic term of globalisation involves a double movement: on the one hand, an intensification of flows of information, money, raw materials and people and, at the same time, the extension of these flows to the entire planet. The term, widely used by the media, employers and political leaders, often continues to be

somewhat mysterious for the average person in the street. We are witnessing the emergence of new continents, not just geographical, economic, cultural and demographic continents, but continents of another kind. For example, the continent of adolescence: despite their geographical distance, adolescents across the world feel culturally closer to each other than to their own parents. It is a population with its own linguistic, nutritional and cultural codes, with a system of common references but one which is separate to that of their parents. Or the continent of the middle classes: There are no significant differences between the middle classes of Shanghai, Paris, Montreal and Besançon; their concerns and their questions are expressed in the same terms. Or the continent of exclusion: exclusion through lack of money, lack of access to knowledge, exclusion of citizens through lack of knowledge, of information, of capacity to send and receive messages.

And thus notions and values are redefined and reorganised with no prior warning. If we are not aware of this in schools, cultural centres, companies, families... all that is left to us is impotence.

## TRANSMISSION OF THE VALUES AND DYNAMIC OF THE COMMUNITY

The ties. Ties of transmission between generations, between cultures, between disciplines appear to have broken down or been weakened. What values do parents transmit? What exchanges occur between peoples, outside the commercial sphere? What contacts exist between experts and citizens?

The economy. A community is not limited to commercial exchanges. Dialogue, active solidarity and social creativity also form an integrating part of the community. But this «relational economy» does not bring major returns and within the framework of society in general, these values are undervalued and even looked

down on. This is a pity, since these values are the only ones still capable of guaranteeing a true potential for social cohesion and resistance to barbarity.

Localness. The community is not restricted to the local level. Our discourse often tends to place the global and the local in opposition, favouring the latter. And yet we can closely identify with a person who is geographically very distant and in contrast, we can feel very distant from our own neighbours.

Awareness. The community is not just a set of ties that bind people. The Internet community is not restricted to ties between places, just as the school community is not restricted simply to the relations that exist between pupils, nor a residents' community to the people living on the same estate. The important thing is not the sum of the ties within a community, but our awareness of it, the vision we have of the constitution of an active community. In networks, some have that lucidity and others do not —just like in real life, in the street, in schools, in families. At heart, the conversation, more than communication, is an awareness that we share a common breath with the other; with all the demands that that involves, turning us into architects and not mere technological subjects.

Violence. Spectacular violence is one thing, but there are other forms, less visible, that undermine the community. Violence against language precedes violence against individuals. We speak a lot in this country about «*gens en fin de droits*» (people whose rights are about to expire): the expression is all the more shocking because it is so mundane, because we do not think of it as posing a problem, and yet it constitutes a flagrant and unsupportable contradiction within the democratic discourse itself. Each surrender in language is an unconditional surrender of the essential. Institutional violence: the institutions have a surprising capacity to produce arrogance and self-assurance, without anyone apparently being called into question, given that everyone capitalises on their own cowardice and renunciations. Violence against

the female part of the world: our entire system of thinking is based on values of domination, power and control. Network culture, shared intelligence and cooperative work bring into play other values, other views that are more complex, more trivial, more committed to a certain idea of the community destiny.

## THE NECESSARY CONTAMINATIONS

The apparent violence of the term is not neutral. What is important is not to highlight the risk of tainting and contagion, but the necessary risk of reciprocally covering up artificially separated realities.

Between generations. «New» communication technologies form part of the general changes that accompany the transition from one era to another. In that general movement of situations and ideas, the worst thing that can happen is that our old people are overwhelmed by the breadth of the changes which they cannot always manage to understand. At such moments, when the cards are being re-dealt, we need to avoid marginalising some and overvaluing others (the younger ones), so that we can preserve the transmission of memory, experience, heritage and particularly ideals, which have been seriously bruised by the events of the century. This should not prevent us from building bridges to give a new sense to the idea of the complex and living community which is built, era after era, capitalising on the knowledge acquired by the «giants who have gone before us», to paraphrase Newton.

Between trades. This idea is well illustrated by the example of the cinematographers in traditional cinema, repositories of an immense cinematographic culture who are now in competition with people working in computer graphics and synthetic image. The former have built on their culture and their scarcity of resources, the second use sophisticated techniques, but without knowledge transmitted

from the former, where can the latter discover a sense of lighting?

Between artistic disciplines. In this era of generalised convergence, the separation of the different artistic areas, although it makes it possible to perform singular research, cannot be built into a dogma. Each artistic discipline proceeds from an overall question about the world, and communication technologies lie at the heart of this unknown.

Between art and industry. The artist who works with electronic media is keeping ahead of change; it represents a powerful factor of innovation which the telecommunications, multimedia, audio-visual, IT and telephony industries could re-use to invent new forms. What is important is not to predicate a rapprochement in order to introduce fantasy into the corporation, but really to see the artist as an expert capable of taking part in innovative "prototyping".

Between the arts, human sciences and philosophy. A systemic approach, i.e. one that globally takes into account the different aspects of human activity, seems to us therefore to be *de rigueur* in all problems related to technology. We only need to translate it into facts, converting each formation into a chance for a crossover between disciplines.

Between creators, experts and citizens. In this same perspective, it is worth turning each act of training in electronic resources into an opportunity for specific encounters between researchers, experts and citizens, through forums, field studies, testimonies, etc.

Between the individual and the community. Identity, the otherness, the conditions of deployment of a relational economy, the myths and the symbolic universes must recover the lost place, in order to be able to raise true walls against fetishism, cultural and technological obscurantism, technical arrogance and the insolence of ultra-liberalism.

