Speed and Slowness: Dromology and Technical Images

Thomas Hauer[*]

Associate Professor, VSB-Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic

[*]**Corresponding author:** Dr. Thomas Hauer, Associate professor, VSB-Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic, Tel: +374 10 23-72-61; E-mail: thauer777@gmail.com

Abstract

Today man is constantly exposed to attacks of two dominant forces of the contemporary world, which organize and structure its logistic of perception: speed and technical images. Paul Virilio, the "high priest of speed" deals with the impact of speed on the contemporary world in his texts. Virilio's theory shows the far-reaching extent to which the speed conquered all and everything over the centuries: transportation and production, peace and war, men and women, urban and rural areas, work and leisure time, arts and commerce. Virilio clearly shows us how the principle of acceleration of the word has taken root in professional and private lives of individuals and societies in both good and bad sense, and how it has changed and continues changing our standards, values, perceptions and mentality. Vilem Flusser speaks of "technical images" in general. Technical images furnish the space of our everydayness in a similar way as an architect furnishes a room with new furniture. Technical images work by supplying a reality where it is needed. Technical image is an abstraction of the third order. The technical image is an image produced by apparatuses. Our new arrangement of the world, new after the end of the age of linear writing, depends on two things – on apparatuses and on their programmes.

Speed and Slowness

To say today that speed is obsolete is an untruth as obvious as that which consists in praising slowness [1]. Speed, we are still captured by speed. At the beginning of human history, there was only slowness – slowness of life of agricultural society. Speed was created by people - merchants, soldiers, industrialists, scientists, engineers, computer scientists, bankers, etc. The present-day Identification with the speed may lead us to many different conclusions. The speed of our world is full of contradictions, the accelerated world conceals quite a few paradoxes. Most speed phenomena seem reasonable at first glance and usually it is actually the case. This applies particularly to those devices and equipment that we use every day - from cars and Velcro over Fast Food and email, to our computer and particle accelerators. Their formation is understood as a response to the clearly defined need, their further development as a useful improvement. In today's life, it is only speed that counts, and nothing else. The question how much speed one needs and what rate of acceleration is tolerable for the economy, society and environment, remains unanswered. Speed began to gain positive value in the late 19th century. Dromology by P. Virilio seeks to analyze the ways that were crucial for the development of speed. He asks how the principle of acceleration in Central and Western Europe arose and explains the origin and method of spreading "various triggers of speed". Virilio's theory shows the far-reaching extent to which the speed conquered all and everything over the centuries: transportation and production, peace and war, men and women, urban and rural areas, work and leisure time, arts and commerce. Virilio clearly shows us how the principle of acceleration of the word has taken root in professional and private lives of individuals and societies in both good and bad sense, and how it has changed and continues changing our standards, values, perceptions and mentality.

The development of high technical speeds would thus result in the disappearance of consciousness as the direct perception of phenomena that inform us of our own existence. Cinema is not a seventh art but an art that combines all of the others: drawing, painting, architecture, music, but also mechanical, electrical works, etc [1]. Dromological research by Paul Virilio present a critical analysis of the consequences for our perception and logistics caused by polar inertia, inertia of absolute speed. Speed changes the field of our perception because it transforms the habitual understanding of ontological characteristic of reality, i.e. time and space. „Speed treats vision like its basic element; with acceleration, to travel is like filming, not so much producing images as new mnemonic traces, unlikely, supernatural. In such a context death itself can no longer be felt as mortal; it becomes, as in William Burroughs, a simple technical accident, the final separation of the sound from the picture track [1]. What is much more important for Virilio's concept of aesthetics of disappearance is the role of unconscious disappearing of objects from our field of perception, aesthetics of disappearing, one of the consequences of dromology, is based on studying cinematographic effects coming from the area of art, film, television and video. "What is given to see is due to the phenomena of acceleration and deceleration in every respect identifiable with intensities of light" [1]. Philosophic background of Virilio's theory is neither G. Marcel's French existentialism, nor postmodernism, which is unequivocally refused by Virilio, mainly as far as architecture is concerned, surprisingly it is phenomenology in M. Merleau-Ponty's interpretation. "Postmodernism is a notion that makes sense in architecture, through the work of Robert Venturi and so on. Since I am teaching architecture, to me, postmodernism is a suitcase word, a syncretism" [2].

Virilio summarizes his teacher and mentor Merleau-Ponty's influence on him as follows: "First of all, I was a pupil of Merleau-

Ponty, of Jean Wahl and of Vladimir Jankelevitch, to name three French philosophers who were teaching at the Sorbone at that time". The one to which I felt most attracted was quite naturally Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and his Phenomenology of Perception [2]. In many of his texts Virilio emphasises that speed is not a phenomenon, but a relation between phenomena. The difference between contemporary society and societies of the past consists in the fact that earlier speed used to be mainly connected with transport, now it concerns relations within information. "The question of speed is central. Speed and wealth go hand in hand. To give a philosophical definition of speed, we can say that it is not a phenomenon, but rather the relationship between phenomena. In other words, it is relativity itself." [3]. Virilio's influential book - Speed and Politics, analyses new problems resulting from the fact that the development of industrial capitalism has reached the stage in which wealth and power in society have been interconnected with ever increasing speed. In view of Virilio's statement that wealth is an aspect of speed [3], it has become necessary to consider speed and all its aspects and consequences through a prism of a new discipline – dromology. In an interview with J. Armitage, Virilio comments on this: "Dromology originates from the Greek word dromos". Hence dromology is the science of the ride, the journey, the drive, the way. To me this means that speed and riches are totally linked concepts. And that the history of the world is not only about the political economy of riches, that is, wealth, money, capital, but also about political economy of speed. If time is money, as they say, then speed is power. You see it with velocity of the predators, of the cavalry, of railways, of ships and maritime power. So all my work has been about attempting to trace the dromocratic dimension of societies from ancient Greek to our present-day societies. All societies are pyramidal in nature. The higher speed belong to the upper reaches of society, the slower to the bottom. "The wealth pyramid is the replica of the velocity pyramid" [2]. Dromologic revolutions cause artificial acceleration of speed in the form of steam or combustion engine, or, nowadays, nuclear energy and they immediately form both e.g. waging wars and kinds of communication. Vehicles of speed create new tracks and nodal points (ports, roads, airports, telecommunications etc.) through which things, goods, money, weapons, people or information will start flowing within a different structure. A territory is space across which speed, technology, politics, economy and everyday life flow by means of vehicles of speed (transport, communication, etc.). Nowadays, both politics and the city are victims to nodal points through which transport of things and transfer of information flow [4].

We live in the epoch of direct substitution of clear perception by the perception coming from the media hypertext sphere. Therefore, the term substitution in Virilio's theory works in the same way as the expression simulakrum for Baudrillard. The substitute does not hide the truth about something, but it hides the fact that there is nothing. However, above all, the basic principle of Virilio's dromologic research is inadvertent movement of objects, located out of the reach of perception; the object can only be made perceivable, apparent and comprehensible on the basis of special operations. Virilio quotes Michelangelo: "They paint in Flanders to fool our external vision... the beguilements of the world have robbed me of the time accorded me to worship God" [1]. Michelangelo perceived the power and role of illusion in art, pure imitation of nature or a concrete model disquieted him. Aesthetics of disappearing changes time into sequential and information blurs. It often happens that we are absent-mindedly "staring" into space. We call it blank moments or momentary escape of mind from the current "reality". Piknolepsia (from the Greek

pyknos, frequent, plentiful), is one of the main terms in Virilio's aesthetics of disappearing. In the context of medicine, piknolepsia is children's paroxysmal disease manifested by rhythmic electric discharge in brain and quick arrival. Clinical symptoms include sudden stopping the activity in progress, usually without losing the previous attitude. The fits are often accompanied by rhythmic motion of eyelids or lips. Usual duration is 5-10 seconds. Several fits like that can happen daily.

Virilio does not consider Piknolepsia a disease, on the contrary, he views it as mass phenomenon of the contemporary period, as one of the main consequences of inertia of absolute speed. Virilio defines piknolepsia as "mass phenomenon" and describes the present-day postmodern subject, which is in constant fit of moderate epilepsy, as piknoleptic. The contemporary technological prosthetic devices (television, the Internet, computers, tablets, so called smart phones, etc.) result in information transfer by the terminal velocity of light, inertia of absolute speed. Therefore, the dominant form of contact is telepresentation (from the Greek telé-distant, vize-vision). „Like the war weapon launched at full speed at the visual target it's supposed to wipe out, the aim of cinema will be to provoke an effect of vertigo in the voyeur-traveller, the end being sought now is to give him the impression of being projected into the image [1]. According to Virilio, telematic vehicles pervading the contemporary film industry function by creating illusion, artificial reality, artificial day thus altering our own reality and our perception of what is real. "Film what doesn't exist, the Anglo-Saxon special effects masters still say, which is basically inexact: what they are filming certainly does exist, in one manner or another". It's the speed at which they film that doesn't exist, and is the pure invention of the cinematographic motor. Melies liked to joke, "The trick, intelligently applied, today allows us to make visible the supernatural, the imaginary, even the impossible" [1]. Virilio works with the term optical clones denoting a number of images of contemporary man. In this way he points out that in the present-day society, man is not only the owner of his own body, but also of his image.

Dromocratic Teletopy of Networks

After piknolepsia subsides, man subconsciously resorts to using technological prosthetic devices, which are supposed to help him see the world like in the childhood. "The film industry will enter into crisis when it ends production of the false day, when it pretends to verisimilitude" [1]. For example, a lot of photographers confirm that their photographs are result of craving for re-establishment of piknolepsia. "To produce prostheses of subliminal comfort is to produce simulators of day, even of the last day, metamorphosis of the objects of industrial production where the ensemble of economic realities would be the relay for the cinematic function" [1]. The arrival of speed has also brought about irretrievable change in visual aspect of women, who started to adapt to the current society demands and technical progress. "The disappearance of the woman in the fatality of the technical object creates a new mass language, a faithful reflection of the fascist language of the old futurist elite of the beginning of the century," "the heat of a piece of iron or wood is, from now on, more exciting for us than a woman's smile or tears" [1]. The first notification was manifesting masculine features in woman's clothes. The less impression of a fragile creature a woman gave, the more desirable she was considered. A typical representative of this fashion era is indisputably Marlene Dietrich. Women lost their fatality while fighting speed. Men, former hunters, nowadays collectors of luxurious vehicles,

exchanges their ideal of femme fatale for fatally fast means of transport.

Nowadays, according to Virilio, film production is confronted with decline caused by man's constant urge to travel. Film becomes a mere stage set as a substitution for landscape. One of the crisis manifestations is banality and triviality of topics. If a film depicts the same everydayness as advertising, it acquires the same value. Aestheticizing of tragic events is another manifestation of the decline of film. Television broadcast anesthetizes its audience showing it the horrors of war, holocaust or terrorist attacks, events thus becoming mere television programme. "The cinematic motor has accustomed us to finding the mystery of movement in this transitory world natural, to no longer wonder how acceleration of amorous gesture can suddenly become murderous, how the Pavan dance of a falling or propelled body can become fatal. At the same time this vulgarized violence of movement, revealed by the distortion of vision, shows us its inconsistency; the violence of speed dominates the technical world but remains nevertheless, as in the time of the Sphinx, the basic enigma." [1]. The world is flooded with progress and development. What is invented now, at the particular moment, is obsolete in the next one.

By means of the phenomenon of speed and disappearing, Virilio explains those peculiarities and shifts in human thinking and assessment. It is the speed that he "accuses" to be the carrier of power arousing the desire in people to get this power. Virilio quotes Rilke's idea, "what happens is so far ahead of what we think, of our intentions, that we can never catch up with it and never really know its true appearance". Thus the speed becomes the core of aesthetics of disappearing.

In modern society, moral values, aesthetic standpoints and substantiations solving various social dilemmas and conflicts were linked both to real space and historical time. Space and time are basic ontologic categories. Dromologic analysis considerably changes its content. It discovers their new dimension emerging thanks to the absolute speed of information translation. In other words, continuing modernization, which is according to Virilio one of the consequences of speed, constructs its new dimensions of space and time: dromologic teletopy and dromospheric chronology. Surprisingly, it is possible to live, communicate, do business, become rich, love, acquire higher share in power and even wage war in these new dimensions of time and space. Another floor of society's life emerges. Nowadays, speed of development in society is more and more linked mainly to dromocratic teletopy, i.e. the ability and readiness to get connected. As Jean Baudrillard observed, the classical esse est percipi has been replaced by to be is to be connected. Not from a historically determined territory, but from anywhere wheresoever – and the last two expressions cannot be further specified. It is a new floor in what the Greek called oikos. Old floors have not disappeared, they are only inhabited in a different way and mainly – they will be inhabited in a different way and life will be different there. Wealth and power are an aspect of speed. The distribution of wealth and power, which, to a large extent, unfortunately also means the distribution of happiness and health, is increasingly subjected to chronopolitics based in dromocratic teletopy of networks. With the arrival of mass industrial production of speed (means of transport, the media...) we move more and more in the virtual world, thus moving away from the real world. Virilio puts it simply that "collective thinking established by various telematic vehicles aimed at destructing original perceptions". "In 1934 Walter Benjamin interrogates this photographic object, incapable of registering a barracks or a pile of garbage without transforming them. Transforming everything abject about poverty, it's transformed it also

into an object of pleasure" [1]. In the world of mediated images heralded in the media, the original model loses its trustworthiness. Virilio thus points out frequently less visible negative impacts of the virtual sphere expansion. Loss of trust in "eye reality", i.e. in what we can see with our own eyes, and ever higher dependence on illusory view constructed by means of technological devices. As the author states, to hypnotize the masses, it is necessary to speak mainly to eyes. "Abel Gance loved quoting Napoleon: To magnetize masses, you must a bove all talk to their eyes, and he affirms that the future of the movies is a sun in each image" [1]. Virilio also ponders on how technology affects human conscience and sensory experience when conscience as direct perception of phenomena disappears due to high technical speed which destroy time and space.

We find ourselves in a situation comparable to the time of our ancestors, when new railways tracks were built and railways were extended, when the migration routes were changing according to new diggings of fossil fuels and other raw materials, when urban agglomerations emerged around coking plants and ironworks. Nowadays, networks are extended and handling information is getting faster. Undoubtedly, it will have epoch-making importance for the process of transferring ethical standpoints, like the events of that time. Speed of development in society is more and more linked mainly to dromocratic teletopy, i.e. the ability and readiness to get connected. What moves at the speed of light in networks are – technical images.

Ontology of Technical Images

Vilém Flusser, a native of Prague and a media theorist, states in his three key texts Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie, has been translated as (Towards a Philosophy of Photography), Ins Universum der technischen Bilder (Into the Universe of Technical Images, 1985) and Die Schrift: Hat Schreiben Zukunft? (Script: Does Writing Have a Future,) - that technical images become a dominant cognitive metaphor of the contemporary society and that a new social culture is being formed in connection with their creation, transfer and consumption. The term technical image (according to the Vilém Flusser, its first form was photography, and the last form by now have been images projected in all possible forms of screens, monitors and displays, including holograms), can be understood as a term referring to the beginning of a new age, which is coming after the age of linear writing. Historically as well as ontologically, compared to the previous tradition, these technical images mean rupture, a breakthrough. Creating technical images was the necessary consequence of the link of texts to sensuously perceptible reality from which texts were abstracted earlier. Technical images have been an item of philosophers' interest since the time when W. Benjamin, a German cultural critic published the essay Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, 1936), which is now commonly known. Unlike W. Benjamin, who focused on the theory of social and aesthetic issue of the original work and its copy in the age of serial reproducibility, Flusser concentrated on the technology of reproducibility of any work in the environment of so called new media which were just emerging. Just as Benjamin, Flusser recognized the first technically reproducible work in photography, however, unlike him (or the photography theorists such as - A. Bazin. S. Sontag, či S. Kracauer), he used his analysis as a tool of prediction of the future society development

At the beginning of Flusser's philosophy of technical images, we encounter a cultural-sociological model where the author in five stages indicates the changes in relationship between man and the world,

depending of the kind of the medium dominant for the particular historical epoch. This model is a ladder with five rungs. The mankind has climbed this ladder step by step – from the concrete to higher and higher abstractions. It is a model of cultural history and the alienation of man from the concrete experience of reality, a model in which man puts agents/tools - an image, text, technical image - between himself and the world.

First rung: Animals and "primitive" people are immersed in an animate world, a four-dimensional space-time continuum of animals and primitive peoples. It is the level of concrete experience.

• Second rung: The kinds of human beings that preceded us (approximately two million to forty thousand years ago) stood as subjects facing an objective situation, a three-dimensional situation comprising graspable objects. This is the level of grasping and shaping, characterized by objects such as stone blades and carved figures.

• Third rung: Homo sapiens sapiens slipped into an imaginary, two-dimensional mediation zone between itself and its environ ment. This is the level of observation and imagining characterized by traditional pictures such as cave paintings.

• Fourth rung: About four thousand years ago, another mediation zone, that of linear texts, was introduced between human beings and their images, a zone to which human beings henceforth owe most of their insights. This is the level of understanding and explanation, the historical level. Linear texts, such as Homer and the Bible, are at this level.

• Fifth rung: Texts have recently shown themselves to be inaccessible. They don't permit any further pictorial mediation. They have become unclear. They collapse into particles that must be gathered up. This is the level of calculation and computation, the level of technical images [5].

Linear texts thus occupied a dominant position as a carrier of vital information only for about four thousand years. It is the only time when we can speak of "history" in the strict sense. In the existence of mankind, linear texts played only a transitional role, in this sense, "history" was only an interlude, an episode. "The difference between traditional and technical images, then, would be this: the first are observations of objects, the second computations of concepts. The first arise through depiction, the second through a peculiar hallucinatory power that has lost its faith in rules. This essay will discuss that hallucinatory power. First, however, imagination must be excluded from the discussion to avoid any confusion between traditional and technical images" [5]. Flusser's model then describes a line – an image, text, technical image –, while a traditional and technical image quantitatively differ. In the following part of the text, we will show this principal dissimilarity. Traditional images (such as cave paintings in Lascaux) are abstractions of the first order, if they abstract from the concrete world, while technical images are abstractions of the third order, they abstract from texts which abstract from traditional images which abstract from the concrete world. The last part of this sentence is important, because it suggests that in the case of technical images (from a photograph to a computer image), we deal with abstractions of the third order, not with images in the usual sense. Technical images make it possible to handle phenomena so that they can be perceived according to the apparatus programme or the intention of the apparatus user. Neither texts nor traditional images "can" do this. The new possibility to provide virtual, fundamentally cybernetic environment for our everydayness has become a reality. This is what Flusser conveys us in his philosophy of technical images with the urgency of his own. Technical images furnish the space of our everydayness in a similar way as an architect furnishes a room with new furniture. Technical images work by supplying a reality where it is needed A neutral pile of points, a calculable pile, which must be "put together so that the world could be grasped, imagined, understood again the consciousness could become consciousness of itself again" is the subject of formation into technical images. "The world in which they find themselves can no longer be counted and explained: it has disintegrated into particles-photons, quanta, electromagnetic particles. It has become intangible, inconceivable, incomprehensible, a mass that can be calculated. Even their own consciousness, their thoughts, desires, and values, have disintegrated into particles, into bits of information, a mass that can be calculated" [5]. And this is what technical images are used for – putting reality together again. Our new arrangement of the world, new after the end of the age of linear writing, depends on two things – on apparatuses and on their programmes.

Technical images as visualized concepts

Technical image as an abstraction of the third order shows two qualities which differentiate it from abstractions of the first order (images) as well as from abstractions of the second order (texts). The technical image is an image produced by apparatuses. As apparatuses themselves are the products of applied scientific texts, in the case of technical images one is dealing with the indirect products of scientific texts. This gives them, historically and ontologically, a position that is different from that of traditional images. Historically, traditional images precede texts by millennia and technical ones follow on after very advanced texts. Ontologically, traditional images are abstractions of the first order insofar as they abstract from the concrete world while technical images are abstractions of the third order: They abstract from texts which abstract from traditional images which themselves abstract from the concrete world. Historically, traditional images are prehistoric and technical ones 'post-historic' (in the sense of the previous essay). Ontologically, traditional images signify phenomena whereas technical images signify concepts. "Decoding technical images consequently means to read off their actual status from them" [6]. And as apparatuses are the products of applied scientific texts, it is the case of the indirect products of scientific texts as far as technical images are concerned. This gives them, historically and ontologically, a position that is different from that of traditional images. The affirmation that the technical image is, after all, created by man, is defensible only in this context. Man creates it, but only to the extent enabled by the apparatus programme. It is about two things: the apparatus and the apparatus programme. Both the apparatus and the programme are established in texts - scientific texts. The apparatus can only be produced according to scientific texts, the same is true about the apparatus programme [7]. Scientific texts are basically complex concepts. And there in lies the key difference between traditional and technical images. "The difference between traditional and technical images, then, would be this: the first are observations of objects, the second computations of concepts" [5]. Simply speaking, the technical image is, in fact, a visualized concept. A camera as well as a photograph are the result of a complicated scientific institution, a computer, a monitor, a display, etc. are the results of a very complicated instruction conveyed by scientific concepts. Apparatuses, like the means for creating technical images, need functionaries-creators of fictions. This reverses the original relation "man/apparatus" and man works as a function of apparatuses. He orders apparatuses what the apparatuses themselves ordered him. "Around

these transmission points sit functionaries who press the keys of apparatuses, especially those that compute images. For these images model the behavior, perception, and experience of all other functionaries. The functionaries instruct the images about how the images should instruct the receivers. The apparatuses instruct the functionaries how they are to instruct the images. And other apparatuses instruct these apparatuses about how the functionaries are to instruct." [5].

Creating technical images was the necessary consequence of the link of texts to sensuously perceptible reality from which texts were abstracted. The development of science in the twentieth century drew an abstract concept from an illustrative idea in an unexpected way. However, if two texts become incomprehensible, there is nothing more to explain. And right during this big crisis of texts, technical images were invented in order to make texts comprehensible again. "During this crisis of texts, technical images were invented: in order to make texts comprehensible again, to put them under a magie spell - to overcome the crisis of history" [6]. The order in the contemporary society is created by technical images which work in a different way than the traditional images and require a new way of acquiring and handling. What is an image for Flusser? For Flusser, images are surfaces with a meaning. They refer to something in space-time continuum "outside over there", something they are supposed to make comprehensible for us as abstractions (as abbreviations of four dimensions of space-time continuum into two dimensions of a surface). Flusser uses the term imagination for this specific ability to abstract surfaces from space-time continuum and to project them into space-time continuum again. Therefore, images work by mediating the relationship between the world and man. Man "exists", it means that the world is not immediately accessible for him, therefore the function of images is to mediate the world for man. However, whenever they do this, they put themselves "between" the world and man. Images were supposed to be maps, but they become obstacles. Instead of presenting the world, they obscure it and man finally begins to live in the function of images he himself created. He stops decoding images and he projects them undecoded to the world "outside over there". The principal consequence of this is the fact that the world suddenly appears to be a complex of images, factual configurations. Flusser calls this reversing of the function of an image "idolatry" (idiolatry) and describes how it takes place. „The technical images currently all around us are in the process of magically restructuring our 'reality' and turning it into a 'globál image scenario'. Essentially this is a question of 'amnesia'. Human beings forget they created the images in order to orientate themselves in the world. Since they are no longer able to decode them, their lives become a function of their own images: Imagination has turned into hallucination [6].

What do technical images mean, if they are not pictures in the usual sense? They are models. "They are models that give form to a world and a consciousness that has disintegrated; they are meant to "inform" that world. Their vector of signification is therefore the reverse of that of earlier images: they don't receive their meaning from outside but rather project meaning outward. They lend meaning to the absurd". [5] Some technical images fulfil the vision, according to which reality could be fundamentally taken apart into points and then assign a concept to each point. Apparatuses incorporate the 1-0 structure because they simulate the structure of our nervous system. There, too, we are dealing with a mechanical (and chemical) turning on and off of streams of electrons between the nerve synapses. From this standpoint, digital codes are a method -the first since human beings began to codify- of giving meaning to quantum leaps in the brain from the

outside. We are faced with a self-concealing loop. The brain is an apparatus that lends meaning to the quantum leaps that occur in it, and now it is about to turn this meaning-giving function over to apparatuses of its own accord, then to reabsorb what they project. "So the new codes are digital basically because they are using simulated brains to simulate the meaning-giving function of the brain" [8-16]. Like traditional images show reality, technical images produce-form reality. Traditional images are mirrors of reality, reality is, on the other hand, a "mirror" of a technical image or scientific concept or scientific text. The image shows one fact, technical images produce so many facts as the apparatus programme allows them. Our presence therefore differs from the age of linear writing (the age of text), among other things, by the fact that is characterized by the "inflation of reality" produced by technical images and technical devices. This has significant cognitive consequences because technical images do not represent-show anything of the world (although they pretend that they do so), but project something in it.

What is described by technical images is something thrown from inside to outside. Here we come to the essence of the problem. What does a technical image mean is an incorrectly formulated question. Although they appear to do so, technical images don't depict anything; they project something. The signified of a technical image, whether it be a photograph of a house or a computer image of a virtual airplane, is something drawn from the inside toward the outside. And it is not out there until it has been drawn out. Therefore technical images must be decoded not from the signifier but from the signified, not from what they show but from what they show for. And the question appropriate to them is, to what end do technical images mean? "To decode a technical image is not to decode what it shows but to read how it is programmed" [5]. Therefore, a technical image is a tool whose function is - as with any intermediary tools or machines – to change reality. But what is reality? Material tools (a power plant or a car) change material reality. A technical image changes symbolic reality, it changes meanings, but as reality becomes reality only after meanings are assigned to it, a technical picture changes reality itself. Reality ceases to be text for man and becomes an image and image. The world and things "visualized" by a technical image are things created by human intellect, not visualized by it. Technical paintings thus put us into a situation in which our traditional efforts – to represent reality adequately - do not make sense. Reality is "surplus", it is produced by apparatuses and the creators of fiction. Since the beginning of every process of discovering reality is perception, a technical image is able to change the field of perception and force each individual to a particular way of perceiving reality, allows to handle events so that they are perceived according to the apparatus programme or the intent of the person who uses the apparatus. Neither texts nor images "can" do this. Disputes about the importance of reality thus move from the level of abstraction of the second order (texts) to the level of abstraction of the first order (pictures) and abstractions of the third order (technical images) are the means to it. In practice, this "transcript", transfer of line of reasoning from the level of text to the level of a technical image takes place wherever the electronic networks reach. Today, we argue, we recognize we make decisions, assess, etc. not "through" text but "through" images.

Conclusion

This paper critically analyses the theories of French cultural critic Paul Virilio and German media theorist Vilém Flusser. Reading

Flusser and Virilio is like walking a labyrinth. But their "dromology of technical images" makes more explicit two very important consequences. First, technical images are meaningful surfaces. Created by programs, they are dependent on the laws of technology and the natural sciences. They do not represent objects; instead, they represent texts, such as ideologies or scientific laws. In the category of technical images, we find photography, film, video, computer graphics, holography, and virtual reality. Vilém Flusser states in his key texts, that technical images become a dominant cognitive metaphor of the contemporary society. In the second, Virilio's texts deal with the impact of speed on the contemporary world. The development of means of transport used by people for the purpose of movement – from horse carts, railways and cars to planes, culminated by the arrival of digitalized audio-visual hypertext, the last "vehicle" that replaces its drivers' physical movement by total inertia. How does that historical succession starting with metabolic vehicles such as a horse, ships, railways, cars planes to the latest ways of tele-transfer, tele-presence and audio-visual vehicles, influence our present-day concept of the world? Dromologic research of "man's status in the world" shows that man – his perception, his language as well as his thinking is substantially changed by the speed of information translation.

References

1. Virilio P (1991) The Aesthetitics of Disappearance, trans. P. Beitchman, New York: Semiotext(e), USA.

2. Armitage J (2000) Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond, London: Sage Publications, UK.

3. Virilio P (1999) The Politics of the Very Worst, trans. M. Cavaliere and S. Lotringer, New York: Semiotext(e), USA.

4. Virilio P (1986) Speed and Politics, trans. M. Polizzotti, New York: Semiotext(e), USA.

5. Flusser V (2011a) Into the Universe of Technical Images, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: London, UK.

6. Flusser V (2000) Towards a Philosophy of Photography, Reaktion Books, UK.

7. Finker R, Guldin G (2011c) Vilém Flusser, An Introduction, University of Minnesota Press, USA.

8. Flusser V (2011b) Does Writing Have a Future, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: London, UK.

9. Armitage J (2001) Virilio Live (Selected Interiews), London: Sage Publications, UK.

10. Benjamin W (1969) The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken), USA.

11. Flusser V (2013) Post - History, First Edition, Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, USA.

12. Flusser V (2002) Writings, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: London, UK.

13. Virilio P (1994) The Vision Machine, trans. J. Rose, London: British Film Institute, UK.

14. Virilio P (1995) The Art of the Motor, trans. J. Rose, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, UK.

15. Virilio P (1997 a) Pure War , 2nd edn. New York: Semiotext(e), UK.

16. Virilio P (2000) Polar Inertia, trans. P. Camiller, London: Sage, UK.