Paul Virilio
The Administration of Fear, trans. Ames Hodges.
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The Administration of Fear is an intensely personal work. In his preface, Bertrand Richard defines the 'fear' as a result of the postmodern condition: 'If there is fear … it is because the Earth is shrinking and space is dwindling, compressed by instantaneous time' (10).

This short but dense work is divided into three sections, each with a compelling title that serves to introduce the reader to the loose theme of the section. The book is written as a dialogue, or, more accurately, an interview (though Bertrand Richard calls it a conversation). The interview format is curious; in a way, it makes the text easier to comprehend. Richard's questions serve to clarify Virilio's comments. The work should more properly be seen as a kind of collaboration, in which Richard has a direct role: his questions and comments serve not only to clarify but to guide the conversation. Virilio's thoughts are ultimately structured—and perhaps determined—by Richard's questions and comments.

For Virilio, the 'administration of fear' refers to the fear that surrounds us, as well as the policies created by the State to manage fear, which ultimately threaten democracy. Virilio makes a (tenuous) connection between the occupation of France in the Second World War and the current state of fear: fear is the occupier today. In fact, Richard wonders if the comparison between the current state of fear and the Second World War is appropriate: 'can't you [Virilio] be accused of being overly dramatic?' (20) In response, Virilio states that 'Terror cuts to the quick: it is connected to life and quickness through technology' (21). That state of fear coupled with the speed of the modern world equals what Virilio calls a *Blitzkrieg*: 'It is a military and technological phenomenon that occupies you in the blink of an eye, leaving you dumbfounded, mesmerized' (15). Virilio makes a curious observation regarding what he calls the 'real propaganda' that is disseminated by the media, notably the one emanating from Steve Jobs, the now-deceased 'all-powerful' chief executive of Apple. Virilio does not see the world in positive ways, but it does seem strange that he should mention Apple's former CEO. If he is hoping to illustrate the power of global brands and those that control visual images and throngs of consumers in the throes of brand loyalty, then the reference makes sense. It is strange, though, because he makes the reference but then continues with a discussion of resistance and collaboration. It is almost as if those who might follow companies like Apple and their 'all-powerful' CEOs are collaborators with the administration of fear. Later, Richard asks Virilio whether he has gone too far in his claims and arguments. This is useful; it echoes the reader's responses to some of Virilio's ideas.

The two authors then discuss the relationship between occupation, resistance, and collaboration. While there is much to be said in favor of this way of writing (as mentioned above, it instigates a certain clarity and forward movement), the discussions still digress and deviate from the main topic. For instance, Virilio embarks on a rather confusing discussion of the relationship between science and philosophy, from the Cuban Missile Crisis preceded by the

development of the Doomsday Clock and the creation of the Atomic and Hydrogen bombs. Virilio concludes: 'this is the domination of the military-industrial complex: it is all the more frightening for political philosophy today because this philosophy has not thought about speed or speed articulated in space' (25). His conclusions and the questions he asks are fine and valid; his ways of getting to those conclusions and the place for asking those questions seem suspect. The reader gets to understand some of his ideas only later: the Cold War and the Arms Race were a period of a 'balance of terror,' but in the current age, there exists an 'imbalance of terror.' Virilio defines it 'as the possibility for a single individual to cause as much damage as an absolute weapon,' but also the 'making of fear' (28).

Furthermore, the atomic bomb has been replaced—or perhaps joined—by what Virilio calls the ecological bomb, referring to various catastrophic changes that will be brought about by global warming. He suggests also that the ecological bomb will result in a new genetically modified humanity, engineered to make less of an ecological footprint, to consume less resources (61). Most powerful, though, is the informational bomb, brought about by the almost instantaneous communication of local catastrophic events to a global audience: 'the same feeling of terror can be felt in all corners of the world at the same time' (30). He suggests that this constant feeling of terror can be attributed to the loss of geographical space in contemporary society due to the proliferation of communications technologies, but this has also contributed to the loss of the body (32–33).

Virilio makes it clear that he is not a technophobe: 'Our societies have become arrhythmic. Or they only know one rhythm: constant acceleration. Until the crash and systemic failure' (27). He is fighting against what he calls the 'propaganda of progress' rather than progress itself, which is related to the cult of speed (38). The constant speed of postindustrial society has caused the demise of rhythm, be it seasonal, liturgical, or something other. Instead, society runs at all times and without any sort of break. Virilio is aware, though, that he sounds like a technophobe, something which he denies throughout this work. Though his denials are constant, the tension between his tone and his claims (like the environment of fear which he reveals) is omnipresent.

One of Virilio's more compelling ideas has to do with the relationship between power and speed. Those who control speed, or the communications technologies and 'propaganda' that run on these networks of speed (and, of course, the arrhythmy mentioned above), have power. The 'fear' of the title, *The Administration of Fear*, is one that is ultimately hidden by the 'ideology of progress' (43).

Throughout this work, Virilio mentions the term 'the futurism of the instant,' which obviously refers to his previous work, *The Futurism of the Instant: Stop-Eject*, published in 2010. This work, then, can be thought of as an extension of the earlier book. In that book, Virilio discusses the phenomena of transience and speed, but in this book, he seems to explore the result of these phenomena, the cultivation of fear. His earlier book is often negative, with few solutions offered to the problems presented therein. This book reads in a similar way, though solutions are presented: Virilio makes a grand global call for a renewed rediscovery of philosophy: '"Where is being-in-the-world in the era where speed is at the limit?" This is the question we should be asking and the question we must answer' (56). The format of the book itself, even with its

problematic presentation of an interview, might illustrate Virilio's utopian solution. Ultimately, the book presents a dialog or conversation between active participants; they are asking questions precisely about 'being-in-the-world.' Their dialog introduces a rhythm into the book, something that Virilio claims is missing in the arrhythmy of the world. Also, it is in this work that Virilio revisits and expands the notion of rootedness: all humanity is now portable. Rootlessness defines the current way of being.

Virilio raises a particularly interesting question in terms of what he calls 'tele-technologies' as prostheses, that is, those communications technologies which promise to give us emancipation. He suggests that their augmenting powers make them impossible to refuse (consider those in the Western world who are mocked because of their lack of a cellphone). Thus, these technologies, prostheses of augmentation, are not emancipatory, but rather enslaving. It is impossible to be without them.

Ultimately, Virilio puts into practice the concepts which he outlines, making his reader pause with each of Richard's questions and comments, and with the format of the book as distinct chapters, each involved in what is seemingly a single conversation. This physically unassuming book is, in a way, powerful in that it demonstrates the enactment of rhythm into a world that is overcome and obsessed by the cult of speed, and ultimately under the oppressive power of the various bombs mentioned above. In order to overthrow these oppressors, Virilio implores the reader simply to slow down, something the reader must do in order to navigate the text successfully. And once the text is finished, the reader is afforded the opportunity not only to contemplate the ideas presented, but simply to rest.

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