



Open Sky

Paul Virilio , Julie Rose (Translator)

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“One day the day will come when the day will not come.” Bleak in its analysis of the social destruction wrought by modern technologies of communication and surveillance, but passionately political, *Open Sky* is Paul Virilio’s most far-reaching and radical book for many years. Deepening and extending his earlier work on speed perception and political control, and applying it now to the global ‘real time’ of the information superhighways, he explores the growing danger of what he calls a “generalized accident,” provoked by the breakdown of our collective and individual relation to time, space and movement.

But this is not merely a lucid and disturbing lament for the loss of real geographical spaces, distance, intimacy or democracy. *Open Sky* is also a call for revolt—against the insidious and accelerating manipulation of perception by the electronic media and repressive political power, against the tyranny of “real time,” and against the infantilism of cyberhype. Paul Virilio makes a powerful case for a new ethics of perception, and a new ecology, one which will not only strive to protect the natural world from pollution and destruction, but will also combat the devastation of urban communities by proliferating technologies of control and virtuality.

Open Sky Details

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From Reader Review Open Sky for online ebook

Karlo Mikhail says

An amazing indictment of recent technological advancements that chain people to new and intensify current oppressions rather than liberate them from existing conditions. A brilliant exposition of the dangers posed by the transformation of human perception and social relations in the context of the ever-speedening pace of everyday life made possible by new communication and surveillance technologies. And yet also deeply flawed, particularly in its technological determinism, the taking of globalization's claims (ex. withering away of national borders, dissolution of the state, pure virtual economy) on face value, and the tendency to disregard uneven development. For all its flaws, still a refreshing book prescient of many contemporary developments.

Kristen Kim says

I wasn't really a fan of this book. Virilio seems like a smart dude, and he had some valuable cautionary tale type things to say but IMO he came off so prematurely pessimistic that it turned me off. Also for the first couple of chapters i was like WTF is this guy talking about?! Maybe it's the French to English translation? I don't even know.

Cole Stratton says

Virilio attempts to describe some of the dangers hidden but inherent in our digitally dominated world. Lacking the language to adequately describe how technology is altering our experience of reality, he instead relies on a prose that is poetic, metaphorical, philosophical, and loaded with neologisms. This prose, in addition to being translated from French, does not lend itself to easy understanding. The sense one gets, however, is a very real concern for the overlooked implications of a massively mediated world. Virilio sounds an alarm that is too often muffled by the naively hopeful optimism of Progress.

Daniel Liddle says

Fun and Funky!

This book was a wonderful, clear read. Anyone interested in the conjunction between neurophilosophy and the underlying logics of the transition from Newtonian to relativistic physics should give this book a try.

Scot says

Quite possibly the most important book you could read today. At times difficult to understand and at other times difficult to bear, this work is recommended for anyone trying to grasp the reality of the world today.

Virilio offers no solutions but instead simply lays out where we are, leaving the reader to step into the madness and see for themselves.

Mia Ruyter says

The horizon is now vertical.
Two-point perspective is obsolete.

Morgan says

Too many short (one sentence) paragraphs, too much jumping around without fleshing out ideas, too much moralizing.

Oliver Bateman says

"One day
the day will come
when the day won't come"

So there ya go. Now then--four stars and a "favorite?" How can such things be? Well, if you're the type of person who reads these things (I'm not), here goes:

- 1) There are probably five or six truly brilliant insights in this book, often presented in the profound/pseudo-profound sentences that comprise the bulk of an entire Wesley Morris film review. e.g., "real time" will triumph over space and distance, our vision will be altered by various means (biotechnology, improved hardware), "glocalization" will render us sedentary nodes at computer terminals, cybersex may result in the extinction of the human race, and so on.
- 2) And yet...and yet this entire book is just too poetic and precious for its own good. I pity the translator here; perhaps the original was beautiful and the garish Anglo-Saxon/Latinate fusion of the English language simply couldn't convey that. But even in the original, 150 pages to make the aforementioned points when one isn't even covering one's philosophical trail (by battling against other critics or offering any solutions to the problem being described) strikes me as expanded beyond necessity.
- 3) Virilio seems to regard this shift as a fait accompli, and from the perspective of several years later, he's been proved right. I'm genuinely fascinated to see how the children of today evolve into the college students I'll be teaching tomorrow.
- 4) Finally, the chapter "From Sexual Perversion to Sexual Diversion" deserves a book of its own, one that is longer than 150 pages. "With cybersexuality," Virilio writes, "you no longer divorce, you disintegrate." As someone who has disintegrated too many online love affairs to count, who has explored (if not enjoyed)

every debauchery available on the World Wide Web, perhaps that someone will be me. Even if the chapter doesn't quite fit with what comes before or after, I'm glad Virilio included it...but I wish he'd written more.

In short: an essential book, a brilliant book, but not a good one. Lots of jargon, lots of McLuhan-izing, no real engage with the big-time critical theorists who have already paved the way in this area...and such a slow read, for the most part. But my goodness there are a few beautiful parts.

Anna says

Sunday: Of the books purchased today not the most scintillating but it was in tough company. The others were off the charts.

Tuesday: In response to Mia's review, below--

On such a serious topic, your review feels dismissive. Though you gave it five stars so I don't think you were meaning to be dismissive. Words like "now" and "obsolete" don't give any hints as to consequence or value of those meanings. As if humans could live with a vertical horizon and as if two-point perspective is an option among a series of types of perspectives. I'm only at the beginning but he seems to be talking more about Renaissance perspective in general, with one vanishing point, or two, or however many. To say that Renaissance perspective, however many points, is obsolete, is also to ignore what was before even that, which Virilio does not do. In other words, 2D rendering is not absolute or fundamental.
