

## Part Seven - The question of *point de fuite*

Perspective and vision — The ‘vanishing point’ — Empirism, truth and imagination

### Short Panorama

Paul Virilio from a sociological point of view and Gilles Deleuze from a philosophical point of view point out that our contemporary European culture is constantly characterized as a sort of ‘syndrome of the vanishing point’. In practical terms this means that our culture escapes from any form of present and all the ‘facts’ and understanding of it are situated, more than in a future, in an almost invisible and unwatchable space –past or future. The consequences are that our ordinary life becomes a way of ‘living outside’ our environment. This is also why, as discussed before, For these authors the sensible perception has lost the predominant status that used to have in past societies.

If, as we see, the principle of reality refers to something immaterial and not visible, then our ‘vision’ of things becomes two folded: vision as ‘seeing’ and vision *stricto sensu*. And the later, since it deals with the non visible, gets entangled with the idea of perspective. This is why Virilio suggests that the traditional notion of perspective in pictorial terms is no longer useful to a society or an individual who does not have a fix image representing the World but a set of them constantly changing and never considered as a representation of any Universal concept.

Under these conditions it is also interesting to see how the traditional notion of empirism –as a perspective which obtains its legitimacy in considering that all true knowledge can only be such if grounded in the sensible perception of the physical system – gets mixed-up with the ideas of imagination and empiricism which, as Deleuze points out, have to do with the perception of images not always in a material form. Therefore the accent of the approach switches from the traditional senses to a ‘second order’ of senses or perception in which the language becomes the most extreme possibility of materiality.

## Target

The purpose of this lecture is to acknowledge and understand why the dominance of the visual within our culture brings strong consequences to our understanding of the environment and, more importantly, to the concepts we create to understand this environment.

## Key Questions

Why does Virilio say that war and cinema have developed together in modern times?  
Which are the consequences of this entanglement?

If we understand our ordinary life through abstract concepts which do not have any materiality –like ‘atom’, ‘depression’, etc-, why does quite a number of people believe that the material world –the matter stricto sensu- is more ‘true’ than anything else?

If you should be forced to express the discussed notion of ‘vanishing point’ (‘point de fuite’) within a film, how would you describe it? (Choose any film).

If the ‘picture outside the picture’ and ‘the picture without the picture’ are no longer representing the strong semantic sense of images, where do you believe we should find this perspective?