

Mobility extended

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Abstract

Mobility today comprises not just being mobile in a traditional sense. It is linked with a range of sociocultural facets to be considered in connection with it, alongside with the specific contemporaneous mythology that led to its rise. All that will be lined out in the following, opening up new perspectives and directions for further research.

Keywords: Mobility today, flight into virtual space, speedful standstill

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Mobility and Movement

If we understand the notion of mobility in a wider context, it becomes evident that it does ground upon another idea still more encompassing, the one of movement; the latter representing an image deeply rooted in our occidental way of how to conceive world at all.¹ In its final terms, to be mobile equals the ability to move – things, persons, informations, thoughts, and entire imageologies even. If we understand mobility as movement, related to it are other conceptions which have influenced us until the present, namely progress, development, and evolution. In peculiar evolution relates to movement, irrespective of the domain where such an evolvment is going to happen, in the biological or the human realms of history. By its essence, evolution is understood as progress, as a move from the more simply, more primitive towards the more complex, sophisticated, in one word: more developed forms. Going one step further, we can formulate it still more straight-forwarded: Movement is progress, and not to move therefore means standstill, stagnation; in the end, a loss of history at all. Because we are addicted

to a myth of movement, a tale of cosmological properties we believe in with certainty of faith yet.² Despite all criticisms, facing the collateral damages we had to experience in our attempts to let the myth become reality.

Which is a thesis not so exaggerated as it might look at first sight. Since the myth of movement, altogether with the demanding claim in its wake, namely not only the possibility but the obligation to move, is a myth in disguise (so the related thesis). It comes to us in many shapes, shapes which actually embody many kinds of mobility, at the same time. In evolutionary terms, it owns the capacity to cover a whole array of outcomes, from more 'primitive' since relatively simple forms to sophisticated, rather camouflaged ones.

To take an example for the former, let's take the increasing demand for immediate individual mobility, no matter if taken as a direct one of the person itself – the mobile individual in its car, in its aeroplane to holiday, etc. – or as an indirect one of life form, in changing my locations, my work places, my

¹ S. Giedion, Die Herrschaft der Mechanisierung. Ein Beitrag zur anonymen Geschichte, Hamburg ²1994, 33-37.

² To the notion and properties of the mythic cf. H. Blumenberg, Arbeit am Mythos, Frankfurt 1996, 39 f. And R. A. Rappaport, Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity, Cambridge 1999, in: Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 110. 1999, 293 f.

social relations. Even my life style, a characteristic that was formerly thought of as embodying a constant in the individual's existence, an attitude inextricably belonging to the person, to be a mark of the individual in question. Meanwhile, we've got mobile even in this. Or to take more advanced outcomes of such a myth, the still lasting belief (with certainty of faith) in technological progress, and related to that, the belief in individual progress: that it might, and must be possible to enhance individual freedom through an unfolding of technical means; correlated, that the individual has more possibilities to liberate itself than ever before, brought about by technological-based mobility, from cars to internet devices. On the top of that, it became even possible to expand our individual range of being mobile at all. As such, our mobility achieved a new evolutionary level, namely to move towards new worlds. Worlds not confining the individual to physical boundings any more, in that they offer not merely new freedoms but a new scope of freedom. Because we succeeded to extend our mobility beyond the classical physical space. We were able to create new spaces by our own, virtual ones inside which we can move ad libitum, and at any time we want; an aspect to come to.

Just to show some perspectives. In pursue of a myth of movement, all this means mobility today. Not just as a utopian projection like before, mobility today seems to be unrestricted. We generated worlds in movement. Mobility as liberation process, as a new since ontological Anything Goes. Which also reveals the dissolutive capacities inherent to mobility: Mobility not only equals surrender of spacely as well as timely distance, but too the annihilation of space and time, especially since the era of the so-called Industrial Revolution. Of course, there remain spaces and times (e.g. the landscape, even if it turned into a junked one) as factual entities, but this is not the point here. The point is that they've got dissolved, in the course of such "widened" mobilities' spreadout – and probably get dissolved with accelerating speed today.³ Space in that it became increasingly fragmented and today, even moved into a status of virtuality; time in that the Eigenzeit of things, their specific time they need to grow and prosper in a natural

manner, has been swept aside and been replaced by an artificial time of industrial and market-related processes. The absolute nature of time and space had to be dethroned, in order to establish the absolute nature of velocity, of speed, an absolute speed, Virilio says.⁴ All other things became a *ceteris paribus*, namely relative. Such a move had consequences: "Formulated in rational terms, taking relativity serious means an objective trespassing beyond the status of visibility inherited from the Era of Enlightenment...it means to indirectly declare that relativity is absolute and necessary, and truth irrelevant and limited."⁵



Figure 1. Speed⁶

The other albeit related facet of such a widened mobility consists in its seeming opposite: standstill. A standstill that is camouflaged, too, since it appears as continuous progress, and in its wake, becomes visible as speed – of constant technological progress going on at a high rate, of speedy (and fragile) social interactions, of an ever accelerating speed of information handling, and so on. We've got acquainted to such speedy developments, so that we don't notice them any longer in a conscious manner; meanwhile, they seem to just simply happen, since they are going on all the time. Every day new technical inventions are coming up, new pushing-the-limits-further that we don't even realize them. This kind of mobility became normal, incorporated itself as a constituent part of our daily life. Like the market did, the triggering force behind that specific Gestalt of being mobile nowadays. A kind of mobility that seemed to have become a new constituent of the human condition as such – man is no longer the *Homo Faber* only, but the *Homo Movens*.

³ E.g., as described in W. Kaschuba, *Die Überwindung der Distanz. Zeit und Raum in der europäischen Moderne*, Frankfurt/Main 2004.

⁴ P. Virilio, *Speedful Standstill*, Frankfurt/Main 2002, 89.

⁵ Virilio, *Speedful Standstill* (wie Anm. 4).

⁶ Photograph of the author, after a painting from P. Linnenkamp, *Time Square*, NY, 2008.

An overall situation emerged that Paul Virilio described as Speedful Standstill: the truth of phenomena is always confined by the velocity of their appearance.⁷ So, can be added, we need a critical threshold to realize speed as such, as speed. Below that threshold the real speed of real changes remains in the dark, cannot be noticed any longer.

What is realized remains acceleration of speed, i.e. psychologically translated, when speed itself is speeding up. Before such events of a speeding up, the things seem to be stuck on the same evolutionary niveau; we realize that a new niveau of overall development has been reached only when we realize that things changed drastically, in opening up a different setting inside which we are to live then. For instance, after the accumulation of inventions in the IT-sector (an accumulation at “normal speed”, taking place inside one evolutionary level, or niveau) led to an accelerated information processing and after that, to the emergence of the Internet. Only then we realize what really happened; runs the authors thesis at least.

Speed of inventions and their speeding up, respectively, is another kind of mobility typical for our times. But such a kind of “speedy mobility” is not at all confined to inventions. Also other phenomena seem to obey to this rule, e.g. the most diverse processes of growth – of megacities, of pollution, of crime, and so forth – and of changing spaces. It leads to the next domain to be considered, the relations that exist between mobility and formatting.



Figure 2. Speedfull Standstill. The world as vector ⁸

Mobility as Format

Another facet of contemporaneous mobility is its formatting character, an aspect of crucial importance when trying to comprehend the meaning of being mobile in recent days. Like the relationship between mobility and movement, this too owns obvious as well as less obvious shapes. One of the

most obvious and first is the formatting of mobility itself since the onset of Industrial revolution; elicited by the need to handle and to transport large quantities in time – material of every kind, goods, matter (which too became a good), people (who too became material). To fulfill such a purpose, a formatting of time, of transport facilities, and finally of space is necessary. During its realization, formatting of space turned into a facet of this new since formatted kind of mobility which became more and more obvious, too. And which had manifold emergent consequences, due to its re-shaping of the classical place of man as a cultural being in Western civilization, the urban space.

In its first phase, it was a re-shaping caused by the need to transport those huge quantities mentioned en bloc, as compact mass, so to say – the railway, with its concomitant spatial needs: forming of urban space to allow for the proper placement of railway stations, cargo terminals, lines for material transport (incl. people). The purpose was to transport masses as compact entities either between or within urban centres (the tramway, etc.). Then, in a second phase, the masses to be transported had individualized, a second transport system came into being in parallel with the first one, a literal automobile one. It was the time of forming space through individual mobility: The highways cutting both the urban and country landscape, the urban road system determining the whole urban spatiality. So-called junk landscapes emerged, entstretching between the urban centres, a chaotically growing agglomeration of industrial buildings, road crossings, gasoline stations, suburbias; and garbage.

In such cases the formatting aspect of mobility becomes quite evident, is plain to see because embodying our world we live in. But also other aspects emerged as formats with mobilities' rise, first and foremost a normed form of living, with the concomitant time regimes: Living in the suburb detached from the urban centre, I have to calculate the time needed to arrive at work; inside the conditions of my suburban frame – a formatted space, too – I can perform only some activities, others remain excluded from the very beginning (e.g., going to theatre). Accordingly, in the urban centre there exists too a predefined range of activities possible, others are excluded eo ipso. And so forth. The general point is that increased transport mobility of goods and people formatted the cities, transformed

⁷ Virilio, Speedful Standstill (op.cit. 4), 145.

⁸ Photography of U. Gehmann, facade of a postmodern artefact, Karlsruhe, Germany.

them rigidly into the urban space as we know it, and became acquainted to as a consequence. Once they came into being, the diverse formats which were necessary for the transport of huge masses generated other formats grouped around them (the suburb, the plant, etc.), result of an embracing division of functions dispersed in physical space. What had been said about England can hold valid for the general case: “Uniformity in substance was matched by novelty in completion in a harness...”⁹



Figure 3. World as functionalized abstraction¹⁰

The space I inhabit is no *living* space in an encompassing sense any more (compared to a ‘classical’ city before Industrial Revolution), but a *functionalized* one, allowing for certain activities only, activities which had been largely predefined by a mobility-induced spatial design. Seen by its intention, it embodies an almost algorithmic procedure that was able to create formatted spaces. Whereby the individual shape of such a space does not inflict the format – the shapes may vary, the format remains the same, an effect which can be coined as embodying a “pseudo-variety”. It refers to a situation described in biological systems, in the theory of Autopoiesis: The mode of organization remains constant despite expressing itself, in the realm of the concrete, through a variety of alternative structures possible. The pattern is the same, independent of its varying individual structurings;¹¹ a key feature of formats. Accompanied by a feeling of humiliation, the fourth offence at human kind – after the ones of a Kopernikan turn, of Darwinian evolution theory,

⁹ A very instructive illustration of the systemic effects sketched here is the rise of occidental metropolises during the course of Industrialization. James E. Vance, *The Continuing City. Urban Morphology in Western Civilization*, Baltimore–London 1990, 284-286, 297-301, 317 f., with special regard to mobility. And USA, 328ff. Literal quotation: 326.

¹⁰ Photograph of U. Gehmann, future townplan, devoted to needs of ensuring mobility, Karlsruhe, Germany.

¹¹ It is not the place here to deepen this peculiar but important aspect. This is done in U. Gehmann, *Formatting and Loss of Space*, in the description of the Journal’s section *Spatial Concepts*.

and of Freudian psychoanalysis – namely a “fundamental limitation of social phantasy” brought about by such kind of realizations.¹² Realizations which stay essentially utopian but nevertheless, which always remain confined to the necessities of functional belonging, at the same time; in all its contradictoriness, an aspect coining for today’s techno-evolution.

But effects like these were just the quite obvious ones, as mentioned. The ‘novelties’ quoted enstretched not only to the forming of physical space. They apply also to an ever increasing technological progress, accompanied by its concomitant acceleration of speed in almost all processes of daily life which then turned into the speedful standstill. And they caused also other formats, despite their influence for a formatting of life not so apparent ones. Those novelties led to another *kind* of mobility, a mental and social one that was unprecedented. It became a mobility such widespread that it even could find entrance in the ductus of everyday saying, reflected in the postmodern sayings about “patchwork identity”, the individual adopting a set of different social “roles” which remain disconnected from each other, and between which it can switch constantly.¹³

To draw some evolutionary lines, the first new kind of mobility described above – formatted mobility for the transport of masses, leading to a formatting of physical space, both inter- and intra-urban – led to the emergence of a second one, social mobility. It was mobility both in physical and mental terms that emerged here. In physical terms, I, the individual, can switch between different places; I can

¹² W. Glaser, *Soziales und instrumentales Handeln*, Stuttgart 1972, 188.

¹³ In relation to urban space, it was first described by Georg Simmel, in: K. Bücher et al., *Die Großstadt. Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung*, Dresden 1903. Then, in its “patchwork identity”-variants from Modernism to Postmodernism, and down to the present state, reflected in its general terms in Siegfried Giedion, *Raum, Zeit, Architektur. Die Entstehung einer neuen Tradition*, Basel 2007.

With regard to the postmodern habit related to mobile sociality and urban space, in P. Noller, *Globalisierung, Stadträume und Lebensstile. Kulturelle und lokale Präsentationen des globalen Raums*, Opladen 1999.

With regard to the nowadays “posttraditional” mobile community in R. Hitzler, A. Honer, M. Pfadenhauer, *Posttraditionale Gemeinschaften. Erlebniswelten*, Wiesbaden 2008.

And with regard to the destruction and loss of space, M. Augé, *non-places. introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, London–New York 1995.

change my inhabitation, my work place, and my cities. In physical and mental terms alike, I can switch between different social groupings, belonging to several of them simultaneously. And meanwhile, since the advent of a third kind of mobility, I can do so not just in physical, but also in virtual space, in being mobile inside the Internet world. A new kind of space, next to the traditional kinds of 'natural' and 'urban' space (in traditional terms: *Natura* vs. *Cultura*), and which too does embody a new kind of format. It represents a kind of mobility that led to the rise of new spatial concepts, and to the dissolution of the former communal space, in enabling a new kind of spatial, and in its wake, a new kind of sociocultural morphology.

These facets of mobility in a wider sense reveal that mobility does encompass more than just driving my car; much more, in the meantime. Exemplarily, we can take Stanislaw Lem's *Summa technologiae* to illustrate the impacts that mobility in 'classical' terms had already: In its Darwinian struggle for survival, he says, the car didn't just replace the stage-coach but gave birth to the autobus, the truck, the bulldozer, the tank and a dozen of similar devices.¹⁴ Techno-evolution, inter alia a mobility-triggering one, is seen as a self-organizing system programmed from within which achieved to acquire everything the universe has to offer for its own disposal.¹⁵ Following his line of thought, the new mobility, that third kind mentioned, goes even further, in trespassing everything known before. Because it does affect space itself, the former cosmological frame inside which Being Mobile was in the habit to happen. Now, space as such adopted a new format: it became not only a moveable entity, but meanwhile, is also moving in itself. We have to look at the difference very carefully, for comprehending what really happened. In the sense of the authors' thesis outlined above, that we only realize accelerations of velocity to happen but no longer velocity itself, a novelty came into being, mobile space. Again: not a space *inside which* mobility takes place, but which *is* mobile. What confronts us here is a new dimension of Being, in a sociomental as well as spatial way. Despite we've got acquainted to it since it became part

of our everyday life; an astonishing phenomenon worth to get examined.

Mobility as Virtual Achievement

It is that third kind of mobility, a literally virtual, but nevertheless real one in sociomental, and even more astonishing, also quite real technical terms. In being real and virtual at the same time, it strongly resembles the utopian.¹⁶ Since this new mobility is going to happen in a new space also, a space made possible by new technologies, and remaining only possible through their assistance, in depending on them entirely. It is the virtual space mentioned, despite slight variances in meaning synonymous with cyber space, Web 2.0, or similar connotations. Here, the causal relationship between mobility and space runs the other way round: it was a space that generated a new mobility, not a new mobility generating new spaces. For the first time in the history of life, a completely *artificial space* came into being – in addition to the 'traditional' spaces of nature and culture. Despite its seeming banality caused by our acquaintance to it, this is a fact which has not to be kept out of sight.

Never before was such an endeavour possible, even thinkable. Inside the terms of understanding which held valid for traditional space, the maximum imagineable, the maximal point of conceivable departure was to construct spaces which move in space. Spaces such refined that each of them embodied a *Lebenswelt* by its own, e.g., in case of the luxury liner crossing the ocean; an artificial space being mobile, able to move in space. This was the traditional maximum of how far mobility could stretch, both in terms of conception and reality. With regard to conception, the assumption of space as Space, as an immobile, absolute entity inside which everything is going to happen remained the ultimate frontier of a spatial concept. For a long time, this equalled the ultimate cosmic barrier not to be superseded; again, in mental and real terms alike. Even in cases where it became utopian. Translated into the mythological, moving cities for instance, embodiment of the effort to make urban space moveable, to turn the core domain of man as a cultural animal into a mobile object, too, thus making it suited to the new self-understanding and the new conditions of a *Homo Movens*. But even here, in these cases of ultimate

¹⁴S. Lem, *Summa technologiae*, Frankfurt 1976, 28. The title is a reversion of Thomas from Aquinas' famous work.

¹⁵ Lem, *Summa technologiae* (op.cit. 14), 29.

¹⁶ To the latter, see *Utopia revisited* in the journal's section of *Sociohistorical Analysis*.

liberation, it remained a space in Space, an artefact enclosed by something *higher* as the final boundary, for the human effort and utopia alike.

By the Virtual Space, such a boundary has been surrendered. We have to take a glance at the different niveaux of this process, for understanding the longing towards a being mobile that intended to reach universality. Because what had been formerly thought of as to embody the ultimate liberation from physical confinements wasn't so; and what begun with *Neuromancer* went further still.¹⁷ We can examine this in taking the urban as an exemplary case, serving as the topos of a cultivated humanity. This topos, materialized in the city, "...is more than just configurations of buildings and infrastructure – it is also the ways in which humanity occupies it. The exchange of ideas and goods underlies civilisation, and their market-places are the city. This makes the city not just the most compelling environment to live in, but essential to understand."¹⁸

To tentatively pinpoint an evolutionary line in form of a morphological genealogy, the first niveau was to increase urban flexibility, in making its topoi where concrete life is actually taking place, the human habitation, more mobile – it became fluctuant, an oscillating texture of ever changing habitats: the so-called instant city. Started by the Archigram group in the 1960s, Instant City (the group's original project) was seen "...as a technological event, whose mobility would allow it to travel to underdeveloped towns and cities, as an attempt to 'advance' such places...Since then, the term "instant city" has...come to signify those cities that bring dramatic change in the wake of their construction or evolution."¹⁹

From the very start of this evolutionary movement to be pinpointed here, we see its mythological intentions with regard to being mobile. Namely to perform a technological-guided (i.e., as hope at least: controlled) evolution towards the better; a conception still well in line with the prevailing mythology

outlined earlier.²⁰ But the intended start proved to be insignificant, opposed to evolution; due to the role of movement in what had been before, essentially, a stationary environment. At the beginning of an unplanned but factual development, the environment remained stationary, but not the human settlements on its grounds. They became increasingly flexible, moving, built and re-built at different places. The slum, the caravan town, and quite recently, even buildings formerly conceived as a symbol for solidity, the skyscraper; turning into a new species of building tall, in becoming the 'instant' skyscraper of nowadays booming Asian cities, to be erected and destructed quite easily, a format on the run, so to say, adapted to the needs of turbo-capitalism.

All that comprised the first niveau. Both space surrounding and inhabited remained stationary, despite frequent changes of their objects. On the second niveau, mobility had accelerated (see earlier, on acceleration and velocity): Although the environment of human habitation, the space surrounding, remained stationary still, the inhabited one could be changed now *in* itself; to be shaped by those populations of free-moving individuals, leading to a (theoretically endless) variety of forms which could be changed just by conscious re-arranging. Which was new, and created a new morphology of the urban: the arrangement of buildings could be reshaped any time, thus allowing for mobile city ensembles. With this move, the former "essentially stationary" environment of the urban space was no longer stationary, it became fluid instead, mouldable in itself. Contingent with the contemporaneous conception of the individual, this new urbanity consisted in a fluid pattern of "atmospheric units" to be assembled/re-assembled *ad libitum*. Named New Babylon by its inventors (the group Constant), this new format of deliberately placed units: modules, but individually designed – was posed against the uniformity and homogeneity of the 'classical' modern city, the metropolitan area until today. Urban space, now in itself mobile, became a symbol for "an uprising of the citizen"²¹ a revolt against the formatted asphalt jungles of our times which embody our sec-

¹⁷W. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, New York 1984; Ace Books. To cultivation: a notion rich in ideas and associations, therefore well suited to illustrate the coming. Going back to the mythic-grounded occidental dichotomy between *Natura* and *Cultura*, it meant *agriculture*, to wrest a space habitable for humans from the natural wilderness. In this sense, the new agriculture turned virtual.

¹⁸From H. Wright, *Instant Cities*, London 2008, 9.

¹⁹Wright, *Instant Cities* (op.cit. 18), 8 and 9, to the stationary environment.

²⁰ See earlier, on the occidental conception of evolution as anagenesis, a move towards the more developed.

²¹ After G. E. Debord, cited in R. Eaton, *Die ideale Stadt*, Berlin 2001, 225.

ond nature, man's meanwhile *Natura Naturata* spreading everywhere. In the counter-conception to such circumstances of living, one can sense the power of the later virtual worlds to come. Together with the whole range of being in a loss: When one looks at its forms, at the language they tell, one gets aware that it actually plays no role where those elements of the new modular life are (or could be) placed. It could be anywhere, even in cyberspace. It could be also in a desert. The surroundings, the old space of a world versioned 1.0 standing for the former reality became irrelevant. Space turned into a non-place, transformed into any utopia located anywhere, and hence, nowhere.



Figure 4. New world (s)²²

Which stands for the third evolutionary niveau we meanwhile reached; way of life and mythic promise alike. The world depicted here is no real world any longer. It hasn't to be so. Since the new America is the world of instant spaces, for instant communities. Not just a new spatial, a new social mobility has opened up: the liberty of the free access. It equals the liberty of free leaving, first and foremost. I, the former citizen, can move wherever I want to. That means also to move away. To a distant There when the pressures of a closed Here become too demanding. I can leave my neighbourhood, my place to live, even classical space, and settle down anew, anywhere; timely restricted, without obligations. Because I am obliged to nobody, except to myself. It is a *sociality en passant* that developed here, enabled by the new mobile spaces allowing for their inhabitants a new kind of mobility.

Evolved a new, "mobile" sociality adapted to, and living for new, "mobile" spaces? Or went it the other way round? That exactly such a kind of non-social sociality (seen from a traditional perspective at least) sought the space suited to it, as its new universe to play social? Hard to answer, the causality of such an unprecedented mobility isn't clarified yet, due to the

freshness of the phenomenon in historical terms. Up to that point described here, we had mobile individuals in stationary spaces, but not both of them, space and individual, on the move. In other words: we are in lack of comparisons. Because the spaces portrayed up to now became soon afterwards truly mobile, in going virtual. They were no longer New Babylons fixed on the old, still earthly ground, that ancient world 1.0-space they had to accept unwillingly; their offspring, the new New Babylons, could be located anywhere in the cyberspace – the new universe of potentialities any Archigram or Constant group would have dreamed of. Although the difference between new and new New doesn't matter, from the perspective of what has been really reached in both cases: a factual annihilation of spatiality in the traditional sense.²³

From that perspective, and from that of a myth of a *Homo Movens*, the new embodiment of a mythological forerunner, namely the (romantic) myth of the free-willing, free-acting individual, it makes no difference inside which worlds such an annihilation takes place – in world 1.0, our ancient reality, or in the new Americas of a world 2.0, that believed new ultima Thule of the (new) human kind. In both cases, the old meaning of being spatial as such vanished, since for the new conception of mobility portrayed here, space shrunk into the importance of a *quantite neglieable*. It has to be considered yet in a techno-physical respect (we need ground, we need wireless LAN's, and so on), sure, but not in an existential one. It became *de facto* irrelevant. Because movement counts, the state of staying mobile, not the spatial states inside whose it is going to happen, incidentally. So at least the myth of a new mobility is telling, a tale of truly cosmological properties: that we don't have to rely on space any longer, that we can move unrestricted, in creating our spaces by ourselves alone, not having to rely upon the old cosmic confinements of a *Natura*, *Cultura*, or whatever. Such outdated stuff we don't need anymore, morning had broken; the true liberation of the human kind came within reach. What is told here with certainty of faith is the new myth of utopia, the magic ruse (achieved by technological progress) to tear out from the Being, and to *make* Being, by ourselves.

²² Eaton, *Die ideale Stadt* (op. cit. 21), 225, New Babylon. Copyright: Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys (c) VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2009.

²³ To this, see *Formatting and Loss of Space* in the section of *Spatial Concepts*.

This is another facet of a new mobility; astonishing not just from its claim, but first and foremost, that such a claim succeeded. In generating an entire new *type* of space, the virtual one mentioned earlier. A space which is a chimera if envisaged in classical, used-to ways of understanding, resembling what may be called a materialized utopia on immaterial grounds: being non-graspable but real, being spatial but non-perceptible in its total, endlessly extendable without spatial dimensions; all that features not applying to the “classical” spaces we were used to. Moreover, it has turned to become the new social space, superseding the old ones of market place, public square, park, and all the other forms of a communal space we knew up so far. It led to new forms of communal life, and hence, to a new mobility. Not hindered by the old geographical distance, main obstacle for the older mobilities, I can move freely between the most diverse locations (embodying spaces by their own) at any time I want to do so – without moving myself, that’s another amazing feature. Isn’t this utopian? Because those “diverse” locations are no concrete physical entities any more, no Topoi in the classical sense, they are virtual; but nevertheless reality, as said. So, I move *imagined* between those 2nd order-Topoi, although I actually arrive at them *concretely*, at least in social terms: in my World of Warcraft guild, my Second Life “space”, and so on. Perhaps the most astonishing kind of mobility we ever experienced.

In prolongation of a myth of movement causing worlds in motion mentioned above, the virtual space is no longer solid as a classical precondition for being ‘space’ at all; but pure motion, in *itself* mobile, thereby representing an embodiment of mobility as such: constantly changing its immaterial topographies which are not surrounded by an immobile absolute entity, classical space. Space became mobile as a total – another astonishing facet of a new mobility. Space itself turned into a moving agens; this is utopian in a literal meaning, a non-place in every direction of the word’s meaning.²⁴

What the psychomental, conceptual, and social consequences of such mobility will be in the next future, it can only be guessed. Earlier, we examined the

absoluteness of the relative (see Virilio); now, when looking at this space and at this kind of being mobile, the question has to be posed what this could mean, in practical psychomental terms. Virilio again: The loss of earthly distance, which means a loss of the world of bodily and spatial experience, also means the loss of measure, of reliable (since enduring) points of reference.²⁵ Both time and space get psychologized, become ego-centered conceivings. Homo Movens is tele-present, sure, but where such a being *really* is? “Starting from which place, from which position? Living-present here and there at the same time: where I am when I am everywhere?”²⁶

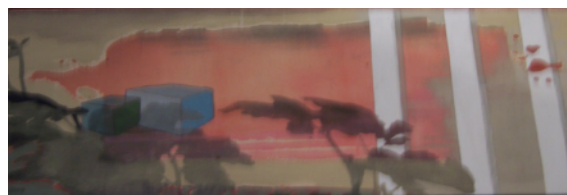


Figure 5. Utopian location in an ego-centered perspective, anywhere²⁷

To close with considerations about the mythology behind all that: When I, the occidental individual seemingly liberated from the confinements of classical physics, can move wherever I want, and even more important for sustaining such an illusion of total freedom, whenever I want to do so, the ancient eschatology of Judaeo-Christian origin came true: to surrender the world as bodily existence. With this, the ancient myth of quite the same origin, the cosmological holy tale that mind has to triumph over matter²⁸ finally came true also, turned into the realities it had dreamed of for such long. Mobility became a direct personal claim, subjected to the individual’s wish solely, an individual that can move now ad libidum. Moreover, in creating the single topographies of such space, I can create *space*, in replacement of God. The Homo Movens evolved into a new version of Homo Creator, a new cultural species. It denotes a new since concrete quality of human life, the one of universal mobility on virtual grounds. The focused facet of the mentioned utopian

²⁴ From the Greek Ou-Topos [ου-τοπος], the non-place, the one which not just simply isn’t there now, at the moment, but which also proves to be *unsuitable* for human beings.

²⁵ Virilio, *Speedful Standstill* (op.cit. 4), 132f.

²⁶ Virilio, *Speedful Standstill* (op.cit. 4), 147.

²⁷ Property of U. Gehmann; painting by Amei.

²⁸ To this myth in its modern shape, plus its outcomes, U. Gehmann, *Modern Myths*, in: *Culture & Organization* Vol.9, 2003, 105-120. And *Prometheus Unleashed*, in: Y. Gabriel, *Myths, Stories, and Organizations*, 2004, 165-177.

effort, in making properties formerly reserved for an entity essentially independent from the human action, namely space, to become too the object of the human deed.

The sole object – having been started with a new conception of mobility as such, of what “to be mobile” at all really denotes. In order to understand this liberation process in its relevant anthropological dimensions, we have to rely upon our imagination, on the image-generating capacity of such an effort. Since we are confronted with an effort (labelled ‘utopian’) that was enabled to create an entire new imageology, or expressed in the diction of our cultural ancestors, with a Logos of images unknown before. Images which didn’t remain just “pictures”, just hazily conceivings of a what-has-to- happen, but which should have been realized, as the forces of a new shaping of reality; and by that, of our understanding of what it means to be *real* at all, in the former’s basic terms. Because it equalled the advent of a new reality: the mobile one.