Introduction

The second part of this issue consists of seven open contributions. In "Thinking Plurality. Vilém Flusser and Michel Serres: A philosophical convergence", Rainer Guldin compares Vilém Flusser's and Michel Serres's notion of plurality. For both philosophers, thinking is not a linear progression that moves straight ahead along a simple line, but a journey full of meandering and surprising twists and turns, which can lead back on its tracks. Both authors reject a view of reality based on a single centralized point of view, an umbilical vision of the world, as Serres called it. They both question systematic thinking and favour theoretical plurality and openness. In Flusser's view, synthesis brings points of view together that often radically differ from each other. For Serres synthesis is a cluster of differentiated but organized relations. Flusser's and Serres´s thinking is non-linear, non-hierarchical and always open-ended, a proliferation of fixed points to infinity. For both thinkers these different points of view are equally valid.

Christian Gänshirt's, "Von Vilém Flusser's *Gesten* ausgehend. Zur Phänomenologie des Entwerfens und seiner Werkzeuge" draws on Vilém Flussers phenomenological approach and speculative thinking to envision a theory of architectural design. It focusses particularly on the last book he published during his lifetime, *Gesten* (Gestures) 1991. Gestures are discussed in terms of primary means of visual expression, which in many ways become starting points for design processes. Flusser's general theory of gestures facilitates a theory of architectural design based on a phenomenological analysis of its tools and processes. By going back to some of Flusser's writings on tools, machines and apparatuses and their repercussions, new design practices and digital design tools can be understood as the unforeseen consequences of design decisions, permitting us to better understand and deal with them.

Wilfried Nöth's "Flusser on Writing: The Toronto Heritage and the Paradoxes of Writing after the End of Writing" presents the following five topics: a comparison of Flusser's prophecy concerning the future of writing with Plato's prophecy about the end of oral culture after the invention of writing; Flusser's conviction of the superiority of alphabetic over logographic writing and its roots in the Toronto School of Media Studies (Ong, McLuhan, Havelock); Flusser's views concerning the fundamental antagonism between iconic and symbolic signs: the influence of the Toronto School's theory of the transformation of the consciousness of oral cultures through writing; the performative paradoxes of writing after the end of writing.

In "An Improbable Science Fiction", Jessé Antunes Torres explores Flusser's thoughts on the literary genre of science fiction, as understood by Suvin and Jameson, and the employment of

fiction in science, an idea that can be traced back to Vaihinger's scientific fictions. He believed science fiction could be more than a mere empty diversion, a "turning aside from the original course", and could actually become a window for us to see our future. In "Science Fiction", he frames his topic more as a grey zone between science and imagination than as a literary genre. Fiction as epistemology. In this understanding of the term, the philosopher also links science fiction with the question of technical images, for he believes we are more likely to find it in synthetic images and computer algorithms than in texts. The present essay goes on to throw some light on the relationship between science fiction and real science, as well as between science fiction and the future.

Tom Bieling's "Experiment und Versprechen – Über die Entgrenzung des Denkens" deals with the speculative impulse that is inherent in or precedes every experiment, presumably every thought. The hoped-for promise of an answer, a solution, a proof, is thus built on an idea of mental outgrowth. It is characterised by not-knowing, from which it takes its course (cf. Busch et al. 2020). The starting point of this paper is the experiment Vampyroteuthis infernalis (Flusser / Bec 1987) as a model of a fabulatory, creative epistemology (Bozzi 2007), which at the same time functions as a symbol of human existence in postmodernity. Part scientific treatise, part parody, part philosophical discourse, part fable, this work presents itself as an im/possible form of speculative research and exploratory speculation at the same time. Flusser thus provides fruitful impulses for the persistently discussed approaches of experimental and practice-based research in the formative disciplines, such as design, art or architecture, which are discussed in this paper as well as a possibly related disruption of knowledge hegemonies.

In "Técnica, espaço e abstração: uma visão do Instagram em perspectiva Flusseriana", Estela Loth Costa attempts to mobilize Flusserian propositions as a means of reflecting on contemporary phenomena such as Instagram. It begins with the issue of photography and its relationship with technique. Lúcia Santaella's idea of cyberspace will be used to position Instagram as part of a universe that reconfigures the notions of the here and now, enabling news of places visited and moments experienced to be published in real-time. Instagram is then seen to be an apparatus and part of a broader escalation of abstraction, toward a space of null dimension.

Finally, in "Reflexões Acerca da Ética do Artificial - Do Paradigma de Simon ao Paradoxo de Flusser", Víctor Stefan Pires Geuer develops a critical dialogue between Herbert Simon's and Vilém Flusser's ideas about design by focussing on Simon's *The Sciences of the Artificial* (1996) and a collection of Flusser's writing on design, *Codified World – towards a philosophy of design and communication*, (Rafael Cardoso, ed., 2006). The essay begins with an analysis of the relationship between the concepts of artificiality and project-design, contrasting the Simonian postulate of problem solving with the paradoxical Flusserian notion of obstacle for removing obstacles. Simonian utilitarianism,

and his discourse of technical neutrality are questioned by Flusser's ideas about the need for a post-industrial design ethics. If Simon's utilitarian approach concentrates on the technical efficiency of artefacts, Flusser's existentialist perspective focuses on the communicative and dialogic aspects of objects, emphasizing the issues that revolve around the freedom and responsibility inherent in every creative act.

Rainer Guldin, Lugano May 2022