

Introduction

The second issue of *Flusser Studies* consists of three different sections, consistent with the structure adopted in the first issue: texts written by Flusser, but as yet unpublished, scholarly essays on Flusser's work, and a final section reserved this time for two international projects, one dedicated to some aspects of Flusser's thinking on "Ueberflaechen" or "Superfaces" and the other using his philosophy of communicology as a theoretical starting point to investigate the ongoing digitalization of images and of television. In this issue, we tried to create some inner coherence by publishing texts with a similar thematic range in the hopes that this inner coherence may generate a series of varied but interconnected reading-paths.

Flusser's essay "Skin" – an essay we have published in two different versions, both put forth by the author himself – proposes to chart our relation to the world by using the metaphor of the skin as an active frontier, an existential interface, where the "world" and the "I" meet. The two texts "Haut" and "Skin" were probably written in the early '80s, one shortly after the other and probably the German version before the English one, and they belong to Flusser's attempt at formulating a philosophy of the superficial. It led Flusser to the writing of *Lob der Oberflächlichkeit, oder das Abstraktionspiel*¹ – around 1983 – which consisted of four chapters and was published posthumously in 1993 (*Lob der Oberflächlichkeit. Für eine Phänomenologie der Medien*, Bensheim, Bollmann 1993, p. 9-59). In the years that followed, Flusser elaborated on this unpublished text which resulted in *Ins Universum der technischen Bilder*,² published in 1985. In handwritten notes on the content of *Lob der Oberflächlichkeit* appears the title of a last fifth chapter that was not included in the final version: *Dermatologie* (Dermatology). Silvia Wagnermaier³ also refers to this possible supplement or fifth chapter, adding that Flusser probably never wrote it. Our guess is that although Flusser had written a whole series of texts dedicated to the subject, he most likely decided in the end not to add it to the existing typewritten text. Nonetheless, in the Flusser-Archive in Cologne one comes across a whole group of texts dedicated to a philosophical use of the metaphor of the skin. Apart from the two texts of this edition, the following are available for examination: *Von der Dermatologie und von Hiob*, *Von Hiobs Dermatologie* (two slightly different versions of the same text), *Ist ein Modell meines Leibes möglich?* and *Von den Möglichkeiten einer Leibkarte*, which has already been published.⁴

¹ Flusser wrote a parallel Portuguese version *Louvor da superficialidade*, consisting only of three chapters.

² There are two different German versions of this book. Again a parallel and unpublished Portuguese version was written, its title showing the existing thematic link between the two attempts: *Elogio da Superficialidade*.

³ Compare Silvia Wagnermaier, "zuführungen zum text vilém flussers," in: *Jahrbuch 2000 für Künste und Apparate*, ed. by Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln, p. 113-4.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 115-124.

Another text, *Vom Risiko aus der Haut zu fahren. Warum Dermatologie noch nicht Anthropologie ist*, was published in 1997 by the German e-journal *telepolis*.⁵

“Haut” and “Skin” might be read together with Michael T. Schetsche’s and Thomas Temme’s “Theory of a Superface” with which they share many philosophical dimensions.

Christopher Larkosh’s translation of the fourth chapter of *Filosofia da Linguagem*, published in 1966, on the other hand, undertaken especially for this issue, addresses the idea of translation and its connection to a theory of language. The text is referenced in Michael Hanke’s presentation of his *Vilém Flusser Nucleus Research Group*. As Hanke, too, points out, it has been reprinted by Anna Blume in 2004 and is generating some interest among those who are keen to learn more about the early Flusser.

Appropriately, next is Michael Hanke’s analysis of this first book in the context of Flusser’s philosophy of media. Hanke consults the available resources to present us with Flusser’s first intellectual influences and his emerging career as a writer and philosopher, including a short discussion of Flusser’s very first manuscript from 1957, *The Twentieth Century. In Search of a Subjective Synthesis*.

The other essay by Christoph Ernst, who has just published a study about the relationship of essayism to media-theory⁶, part of which is also dealing with Vilém Flusser, provides a close reading of Flusser’s concept ‘Bodenlosigkeit’ (groundlessness) with respect to the Husserlian concept of ‘Lebenswelt’ (life-world).

Finally, Michael Hanke presents in *Vilém Flusser Nucleus Research Group* a Brazilian research project intended to bring together interested researchers and students from different areas to study the contributions of Vilém Flusser to the study of media and communication by focusing on his so-called ‘Communicology.’ This group is seeking to contribute to the creation of an international academic platform of scholarly interest in Flusser’s life and work, a project that corresponds to one of the central goals of *Flusser Studies*.

Rainer Guldin / Anke Finger

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⁵ <http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/2/2194/1.html>

⁶ Christoph Ernst, „Essayistische Medienreflexion. Die Idee des Essayismus und die Frage nach den Medien,“ transcript Verlag, Bielefeld 2005.