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**From God's Death and Nothingness to the Re-Creation of the  
World: Vilém Flusser's Intertextual Games**

**Introductory remarks**

It seems that each sentence about the thought of Vilém Flusser is somehow inept – it demands further explanatory sentences, introduction of additional motifs, and deployment of yet another argumentation. His thought is dense, abundant in topics and dictionaries, intellectual intrigues and provocations. He is one of the few authors in the history of philosophy whose aphoristic style captivates, allures and poses a question to a commentator: whether to quote in full or to abridge and distort. Each repetition is at risk of simplification and trivialization. Therefore, if we decide to write about Flusser we must face this risk and accept the associated mood. Because whenever we think that we finally know what Flusser *really* means and we can retell it in our own words, we are racked by doubts whether things are perhaps much more complicated than we think anyway...

The article concerns just a few motifs of Flusser's philosophy, centred on the concept of nothingness, such as "God's death," ontological horizon, conversation and establishment of being. Actually, the focus is on the fundamentals of the theory of being – and an attempt at its reconstruction, always taking into account the risk of failure of such a research project. It is based on fragmentary statements, which, however, form a certain coherent whole crowned with a utopian vision of the information society. A researcher who studies Flusser's intellectual adventures wishes deep inside to find a certain universal order, no matter what, even if s/he is delighted with their intended disorderliness, dispersion and passion for a game between the maintenance of discourses, institutions, and existing visions of the world and their transformation (Flusser 1992: 217). Moreover, s/he would also wish to draw these adventures up, for one's own purposes, according to the vectors that will reveal their similarities and differences compared with the textbook pantheon of the Western philosophy: Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ingarden, Sartre or Levinas.

This article has originated from such sinful curiosity, as well. Thus, the writing-method consisted in a close reading and an analytical interpretation of selected texts by Flusser, with a double assumption. Firstly, that they represent a coherent argumentation line, and secondly, that

they consist in a game of references to philosophical languages and images from the past and the present. In other words, my analytical interpretations are directed at comparison and the different texts are discussed as inter-texts – full of more or less concealed allusions, transformations, polemics, or congenial convergences with texts and ideas of other authors. Flusser weaves his thought from various problems, and ideas how to solve them, usually not referring to his opponents directly; he is intellectually restless, like quicksilver, as the Germans say. One can sometimes have the impression that in a subsequent text he unravels what he has woven together in a previous one, in order to start anew.

### 1. Variations on God's death: a story and a video clip

"On the Horizon of Eternity" (*Im Horizont des Unendlichen*) is the title of a literary portrait of us – contemporary people – authored by Friedrich Nietzsche. A snapshot of us leaving the land in panic and chaos, boarding a ship. There is a kind of a post-battle landscape behind us – ruins of cities and bridges burnt in conflagration. In front of us, there is a vast sea and the endless horizon line. And yet another photograph, but with a different scenery, a bit more theatrical, resembling a postcard from holidays in Greece: a bearded man stylized as an ancient Greek, wearing a chiton, strolls on a sunny day around the crowded Athenian marketplace with a lantern in his hand and shouts: "I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!" This is already part of a certain tradition of madmen: as we know, one of them, more than two thousand years before, in the crowded streets of the same city and on an equally beautiful day was also looking for ... a human.

I can imagine that today it could be a screenplay for a good music clip or a video. Nietzsche would just need a computer, a digital camera or a smartphone. Then, he would be able to piece together these two images, add one more for the finale (I will discuss this later), and combine them with a fragment of Richard Wagner's compositions available online, and finally, upload the result to You Tube. Such a scenario is conjured up by my imagination: unconstrained visual thinking, shaped by photography, film and television from the youngest age. Just to remain in the Nietzschean climate – more by Luchino Visconti's movie *Death in Venice* (1971) than by its literary original – Thomas Mann's short story from 1912.

Most probably, Nietzsche himself would welcome such a visualisation. After all, he considered truth to be "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms" (Nietzsche 1999: 146) and he found their source in imagination. This is an individual and unique place for poetic figures, , able to capture our intuitions, vague perceptions, conditions and moods of agitation, fear, joy – and to save them all from the fatal cold, , emanating from logically

ordered notions. We can observe such a function of imagination in the famous image of God's death mentioned here. This is its third, final scene:

"The insane man jumped into their midst [of the people who did not believe in God, J. P. H.] and transfixed them with his glances. "Where is God gone? " he called out. "I mean to tell you! We have killed him – you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon?" (Nietzsche 1924)

It sounds like a lamentation of prophet Jeremiah professing a cruel punishment, which Yahweh shall inflict on his people for leaving, betraying and offending him. Following my original visual intuition, I try to imagine further how the author of *The Joyful Wisdom* would depict such a monstrous crime today, using a digital camera. We might say that in a video clip he would represent it as one more variant – the final one? – of the ship of fools (German: *Narrenschiff*) in the convention of an apocalyptic horror movie. He would probably use fragments, so-called samples, of authentic rap music video clips presenting strange individuals spinning around in an orgiastic dance, injecting heroin, vomiting after excessive drug use, aggressive, engrossed in violence: bloody fights, rapes, murders and acts of necrophilia. Since if there is no God...

A visual, poetic language. A substitute subject, not me – Nietzsche, but someone else, a maniac, mumbles something about God's death, drinking up the sea, a sponge and the horizon. How can we connect and order these motifs logically? It is possible, although to the detriment of the force of expression of this fragment, one of the most dramatic in the whole history of philosophy. Let me explain: the horizon wiped away means here a loss of belief that there are certain conceptual frameworks or discourses about the objective and universal truth, which would be common to all people (Heidegger 2002: 195; Taylor 1989: 17). Plato's theory of ideas and Aristotle's concept of final causes or the reasons for being have such a status – all of them are explanatory constructs and conceptual apparatus sucking the sea in the Nietzschean story. The symbols and at the same time the instruments of a powerful and proud subject who acquired this truth due to them, drank it down the hatch, and is convinced that the world is cognizable, being is rational and our individual life has a predetermined sense.

As we will see, Vilém Flusser's thought follows Nietzsche's images – and I am just trying to imitate (clumsily) both of them. I am at liberty to do this, because all three of us share the same fate: we are no longer given the immediacy of meaning. We live at the bottom of the sea drunk up by man resembling the subject described above – yearning for communion with the entire being which has its place in transcendence flooding the whole existence – everything what is – like a sea. As a result of this audacious and actually god-killing event, we live in the world governed only by a chance, we move along the paths running nowhere and no horizon stretches

in front of our eyes. This image resembles strongly the scenes from an apocalyptic science fiction movie or a video clip. A question arises: why does this appear in the philosophical argumentation? The answer seems simple: All three of us (I still speak daringly on behalf of Nietzsche and Flusser, as well) realize that without mirror reflections and visual representations of things we are unable to think about them and to comprehend them fully. "Man who creates images is a kind of a mirror himself" (Flusser 2009: 179). We realize this also due to the fact that we are all heirs to Immanuel Kant in a way – the main dismantler of metaphysics.

Kant was the first to recognize a particular form of the mind's activity, which he described as a free *game* between the intellect – with its rules of representing objects and subordinating the observed data to concepts – and imagination. Imagination is regarded as responsible for freedom from establishing truth and from the law of non-contradiction in achievement of various subjective representations, models or images (Kant 1987: 150-152). In view of such a structure of our minds, learning the truth is no longer getting to know the essence of things, but is associated with representation of their images in which the perceiving subject-player is involved (Gadamer 2006: 102-116). In this way, I justify the idea for a video clip. I replace the sequence of three literary images with technical images, but of course still only theoretically. I assume that the intellectual content cannot be separated from spatial, pictorial forms. I also want to be an efficient player and to free myself from the pressure of linear thinking which, in the case of an academic scholar, would have to mean compliance with the rules of scientific discourse and logical reasoning. Breaking these rules, I am inclined towards the *joyful wisdom - die fröhliche Wissenschaft*.<sup>1</sup> It seems that in its historical influence this science rehabilitates an image as a vehicle for knowledge – both linguistic and visual forms of representation – after its age-long degradation in the culture of writing. The pictorial turn and the iconic turn in the humanities at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> c are the offspring of this orgiastic joy and they contribute largely to the subversive narrative strategies used at the beginning of these considerations. However, it does not mean that these strategies are completely safe and well thought of nowadays, especially by such institutions as a university. Vilém Flusser's experiences belong to the ones that show how big is the price for independence in science. They still resemble the case of Nietzsche – a nomad expelled from the academic profession.

## 2. Horizon and nothingness: from the genealogy of ideas

Flusser who explained that the phenomenon we habitually call reality revived the metaphor of the ontological horizon, the same that vanished out of sight of the Nietzschean protagonist, in the

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<sup>1</sup> On Flusser's understanding of science, see R. Guldin et al. 2009: 93-110.

1960s: it “emerges, appears to the intellect, and organizes itself into a cosmos; in sum, it becomes realized in the form of the various languages. Conversely, the unreal chaos of becoming, that set of potentialities we are accustomed to referring to us as instincts, inarticulate experiences, and sensorial impressions – in sum, the subconscious – emerges, organizes itself, becomes intellect, and objectifies itself, that is, it becomes realized, in the form of various languages. In other words, the various languages are the forms in which the potentialities of the Self and the Non-Self are realized, or the Self and the Non-Self are the ontological horizons (the borderline situations) of language as a whole” (Flusser 2018: 101).

Let us explore a bit the genealogy of the ideas, which enabled Flusser, similarly as Nietzsche before, to catch *in flagranti* the human hand – “various languages” – at work on the creation of the world. Thus, the point is not the history of these ideas but the discourses about them, which permeate particular works. It seems that the path to this scandalous unmasking looked more or less like that:

When Diogenes of Sinope, with a lantern in his hand, was looking for a human being in the streets of Athens in broad daylight, it did not occur to him that gods did not exist. On the contrary, he knew that it was them who set the circumstances and the criteria of human existence, such as, for instance, commitment to truth and its parrhesiastic preaching. Parrhesia is a Greek word which means, “to tell everything,” translated as sincerity and free-spokenness. It demands courage rather than a social or institutional status of a person using it. Furthermore, it cannot be achieved by copying language models – its aim is to become free from them and in fact to go beyond the language medium and to touch the truth directly, communicate with oneself and to convey the truth faithfully and clearly (Foucault 2010: 41-60). We would associate this communication with the communion of saints. Nevertheless, all these criteria demand the adoption of a whole set of guidelines-axioms. These are the following: There is one universal language, shared by everyone irrespective of place and time, and one reality described by this language. As a result, there is also a rationality that is one with the order of things, with human thinking, acting and speaking. All these spheres overlap and form one whole. Metaphysics is its articulation and it drinks up the whole sea of (the meanings of) reality and turns them into meaningless objects lying in the seabed. It emerges from theoretical contemplation, which is a self-sufficient, and autotelic activity of the mind: the more intensive it is the more pleasurable it should be, as Aristotle assured (1999: 174).

The language of theoretical contemplation is the language of ontic logos – the Platonian-Aristotelian vision of the universe in which the nature of each kind of things is determined by their place in the whole and is located outside them – within forms or ideas. The dictionary, which refers to them, is the final dictionary that is such, which extinguishes completely the

rational desire for their sense, because it is identical to their sense, speaks about the things *themselves*, and presents the truth *itself* and only the truth. Its signs – words, texts – have stable designata and an uninterrupted referential relation. They give an answer to the question "why?", about the reason and the cause of being – the fact that it is and what it is. Being is subordinate to the principle of sufficient reason, has its justification owing to which it is rational or intelligible. Being is what it is – it cannot be absent. The dictionary of metaphysics – such names as "being", "thing", "truth", "good", "beauty", "oneness" are not notions but judgements referring to the reality itself (Krapiec 1991).

And this is it. In this way we have reached the end of the genealogic reconstruction of discourse about the concept of the world's nature which must have been shared by mad Diogenes and the artificiality of which and the participation of the human hand in which are unmasked by the protagonist of the Nietzschean story – in fact he announces a scandal. This is pure madness – our sight no longer reaches the horizon, someone has wiped away its line as a drawing on a blackboard! Just like that. The world no longer has any mysteries, it is identical to the mind, and there is not any rest, no outer part.

However, the result of this unmasking work on the time-honoured concept of nature reveals that the objects left in the seabed, sucked out by the (metaphysical) mind, gain new content and meaning, this time originating from the entire language, not from the entire being, from the medium and not from the objects themselves. Thus, as Flusser explains, the Self and the Non-Self are the horizontal lines we are unable to cross and to exhaust the meaning delineated by them, running away from them and approaching them at the same time in a frantic rush on our yachts illuminated by LED camera lamps. These lamps, formerly lanterns, are exactly the languages with which we articulate both the orderly arrangements of things, traditionally called the cosmos, and the disorderly ones which in the cited fragment of *Language and Reality* are supposed to denote the already modern concept of the subconscious (I'll repeat: "instincts, inarticulate experiences, and sensorial impressions – in sum, the subconscious"). Plato was wrong and should be ashamed, as well as Aristotle and all saints! There is no contradiction between the conceptual element, that is the objective and the universal, and the non-conceptual element, that is the subjective and the idiosyncratic; there is no such relation as between the copy and the original, the fictitious and the real, the external and the internal, the arbitrary and collective and the natural and single. Everything exists and is real only as far as it is linguistic – metaphorically speaking: created with the human hand. Language can articulate everything (the entire meaning) and nothing at the same time.

### 3. Why is there nothing rather than anything?

The metaphor of the horizon line on the endless sea refers us to the source of the meaning of our life and, in general, to everything we call reality. However, the point is that the horizon, which delineates the entire being, is no longer the same horizon, which indicates the infinity of its (human) meanings.

The notion of the ontological horizon is redefined within the framework of a much broader historical process. In modern times, the emergence of a conviction that there are intermediaries in the form of notions/languages between a subject and the reality – myself, the world and God – destroys the existing order of human and divine things, reveals the conventionality of metaphysics as one of the historical languages. This cultural process, known to the philosophy historians as the nominalistic turn, was recognized fully from the linguistic side no sooner than by Nietzsche and next in the 20<sup>th</sup> c philosophy and its so-called turns: hermeneutic and linguistic. As a result, the relation between the signifier and the signified was disturbed. The referentiality of language was replaced by intertextuality (or, as we will see, intermediality) – a question about an object refers us not to its place in the cosmic order but to its meaning which emerges within the framework of the whole current human knowledge about it. In other words: to the currently available sum of cultural representations of this object. The entirety of being is replaced with the infinity of its meanings. Thus, the horizon line in the landscape of our daily life, the landscape after a battle, which ended in the murder of God, can be only an image of infinity now. The horizon, behind which the supersensual world should stretch out, absorbed by the numerous objects chaotically scattered over the dry seabed, can only emanate emptiness and nostalgia now. It will never again delineate the entirety of being – it can only be a mirage, a promise of an eternally unquenched thirst for castaways on a post-sea desert. A promise to create and to rediscover the meaning at the same time.

How is it possible to determine the intensity of such a thirst anyway and, consequently, the proportions between creation and discovery of our sustenance? The problem lies in the languages and means of expression we have at our disposal to inform ourselves and the world whether we have already exceeded the boundary line or not yet, and how far we are from the end of the scale, how satisfied we are or, respectively, how exhausted the world is.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Here is an explanation of this situation proposed by Charles Taylor in his monumental work entitled *Sources of the Self* (from 1989, let us remind that Flusser's *Post-History* was published in Portuguese in 1983): "We find the sense of life through articulating it. And moderns have become acutely aware of how much sense being there for us depends on our own powers of expression. Discovering here depends on, is interwoven with, inventing. Finding a sense to life depends on framing meaningful expressions which are adequate" (Taylor 1989: 18).

If everything depends on us now, on what we say to each other, how we communicate, then the distinctions of the true-false type finally become a question whether we trust each other. Vilém Flusser says: "Faith no longer means 'belief' but trust. And knowledge no longer means to have indubitable information, but information worthy of trust" (Flusser 2013: 11-12). Hence, uncertainty, a situation when man feels that the world is collapsing around him, faces existential problems (meaning of life) and identity problems (who am I?), and yearns even more for security and for strong foundations on the basis of which he could reach the world directly again and trust it. Descartes begins his first Meditation in the following way: "I was convinced that I must once for all seriously undertake to rid myself of all the opinions which I had formerly accepted, and commence to build anew from the foundation, if I wanted to establish any firm and permanent structure in the sciences" (Descartes 1996: 6).

Since the time when representations of things appeared between the mind yearning for sense and the things themselves, the mind has seen the truly numerous views on the world, among which it has to find the most relevant and credible ones. Since things have ceased to be a part of the cosmic order breaking their connections with transcendence their very nature can only be found only within them. — We have reason to feel an unquenched thirst for certainty and for the meaning of our existence and the whole world, and to ask, "why is there anything rather than nothing?" (Leibniz). For the first time in history, the vision of nothingness became real, along with a need to justify the existence in general. The need which had been totally absurd in the earlier metaphysical world – let us call it this way. Prior to that, only the questions about the *raison d'être* of the things existing were asked. Now, the things existing become blurred – wiped away with a sponge, obscured by their own representations, due to which we feel increasingly insecure, uncanny (German: *unheimlich*)<sup>3</sup> and estranged. If we should believe in one of the oldest and the most insightful diagnoses of our modern condition, we are doing like that because we are accompanied by "continual fear, and danger of violent death" and our life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1651: 78). Let us remember, however, that such philosophical views on reality, on a highly abstractive level, have their confirmation in the history of events radically changing the shape of the world existing so far – in social revolutions, the industrial revolution, world wars and the Shoah.

The people described by Nietzsche and Flusser – we would already call them post-modern, including also ourselves – are among these (taking into account the obvious generational differences) on whom the aforementioned events left their mark. These events made us painfully aware that nature depends neither on the existence of forms and ideas, nor on the existence of individual objects, as Descartes, Hobbes and Leibniz, quoted above, could still think. Nature

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<sup>3</sup> See the existential and ontological analyses of uncanniness (German: *Unheimlichkeit*) in: Heidegger (2001: 233-235).



simply *does not exist* at all – and if it does, only as discourse – "in the form of various languages" (just to quote once again the words from *Language and Reality*). Hence, it would be better to ask now "why is there nothing rather than anything?" The question itself is absurd and internally contradictory (nothing is?), but – as we will see – it will ultimately prove accurate, because it is directed at reality as an absurd game of chance, a "happening" (Flusser 2013: 23). Nothingness is the original point of reference for us – for the "Self" and the "Non-Self"; the Self and the Non-Self are revealed to us on the horizon of nothingness.

The conclusion is: there are two types of nothingness or in other words: nothingness has at least two meanings. It appears to indicate the effects of rationalist developmental trends of the Western culture – absorption of being as the entirety of objective things (the sea metaphor) by a strong, lasting, monologic and autonomic subject. In view of this apocalyptic vision, it is reasonable to ask why something (still) exists rather than nothing. However, the situation changes at the moment when being as the entirety is replaced with language as the entirety – the infinity of meanings. And the latter one – from various perspectives which shall be discussed below – cannot be stabilized, originates from something inexpressible, is not organized by any concealed structure. Hence, the linguistic world cannot be exhausted – drunk up once and for all. Nothingness is no longer exuded in it from below the empty shells of things – it only arouses an unquenched desire to fill them up. It is an absurd reason for their existence – no longer justified by being, but by non-being. This is the reason why a language can articulate everything and Nothing at the same time and the reason why we ask an absurd question: why is there nothing rather than anything?

#### **4. Conversation - with Lévinas and Kant in the background**

Anyway, what does it all mean? Is our bearing of responsibility for the entire existence and struggling to establish its meaning in conversations and stories enough to restore trust in each other and in the world around? Is it possible to overcome the incessant fear and loneliness on this seesaw of the eternal recurrence of the same – that is nothingness?

To restore trust means to begin listening to the Other once again – to prick up one's ears and listen, as Yahweh recommends and warns the ones who will not listen to him that he will turn their country into a desolate wasteland (Jeremiah 25, 11). Trust has a moral dimension: it is connected with faithfulness to identity – of people and things – ensuring that the world will be more or less the same tomorrow as it is today. And this is not simple. Faithfulness does not consist in asserting one's position and refusing to listen to the words of other people. No, for at least two reasons. Firstly, because the world we live in is shared with others – it is always

common in a sense. Secondly, because it is usually difficult for us to find out on our own who we really are, since we typically do not articulate ourselves clearly enough, the moral sense of our actions, how we understand good, our ethical choices, inclinations and intuitions. This is why we need to start conversing, that is to speak and listen about everything important to us.

The same is with our face about which Emmanuel Lévinas wrote: the face also speaks and is a challenge to the Other, demands him to abandon calculations and to open to the unknown and the infinite – to transcendence. And it is difficult to say anything about transcendence. In the face we can see only something unspecified, which attracts and disturbs, and which we can express "neither in terms of contemplation nor in terms of practice. [The transcendent] – Lévinas further explains – is the face; its revelation is speech. The relation with the Other alone introduces a dimension of transcendence, and leads us to a relation totally different from experience in the sensible sense of the term, relative and egoist." (Lévinas 1979: 193).

We are destined to search for transcendence in immanence, which is truly absurd and paradoxical – to look for a way out of the programmed, functional and catalogued reality. In the conditions of undermined trust and loss of communication with others, we become egoistic individuals who calculate profit and loss, and what they value most is to liberate themselves from other people and to reach alone the objective sphere, the universal, what Lévinas calls "the same" and contrasts with "the Other." It seems that for Flusser it is not so much important to unmask "the same" through showing how it blocks access to calls from the Other – a difference, in other words: what is real, but he rather intends to show how it happens that "the same" participates in creation and establishment of the real. He recognizes this mechanism as "apparatus" which operates similarly as a black box. It revealed its true application for the first time during Shoah: "There, for the first time in the history of humanity, an apparatus was put into operation that was programmed with the most advanced techniques available, which realized the objectification of man, together with the functional collaboration of man" (Flusser 2013: 6-7). The goal of an apparatus is to implement programs – all of them similar to Auschwitz – Gulag, nuclear war, Vietnam war etc. Irrespective of their ideology they aim to exterminate all their functionaries, including the programmers themselves. "Exactly because they objectify and dehumanize man" (ibid.: 9).

A similar diagnosis of the Western cultural condition has been suggested by Lévinas. He posits a division into immanence (internality) – the linear, cause and effect thinking and the categories of entirety, identity, program and system –, and transcendence (externality) – linked to contingency, the elusive, infinite and improbable. A famous book by Lévinas: *Totality and Infinity* was published in 1961, whereas Flusser's book *Language and Reality*, less famous, written in Portuguese, still gradually discovered by a broader global audience, was published in 1963. The

concurrence of dates cannot be coincidental. The point is the generational experience and coming to terms with the whole humanities, a vision of the world developing in the West from the ancient times. Uprooting – being not at home – provides an occasion for both authors to reflect on language and identity. They both concluded that the general terms we use not so much connect and relate us to each other as divide us. Paradoxically, they make us feel never fully ourselves and at home, we are strangers everywhere and our condition is originally nomadic. Imagination comes to the nomad's rescue, this particular faculty of mind whose task consists in a kind of fanaticising and unrestricted combining of various data perceived into a certain whole / forms / images.

Let us return to Kant once again. As we remember, he taught that images and conceptual patterns were products of imagination. Owing to them, notions refer to phenomena and imagination itself is something third between the senses and the intellect – a strange and mysterious force. In *Critique of Pure Reason* the transcendental schematism of our understanding is called "a hidden art in the depths of the human soul" (Kant 1998: 273). The art of imagination builds the bridges between the mind and the heart, between the concepts and the sphere of sensations, and does all these with a particular operation of the mind, that is the faculty of judgement. If this faculty is not dominated by objective notions – cognitive purposes –, it becomes an "object to itself as well as a law to itself" (Kant 1987: 153) – a typical example is the pure faculty of aesthetical judgement. However, it is similar in any other case: the faculty of judgement means openness to a conversation in which the conversation itself is more important than its subject, it is virtually inexhaustible and infinite, even though in practice always limited by time and circumstances, it is an exchange of opinions on the phenomena, which are endlessly rich in meanings. These phenomena include messages in the form of pictures – similarly as a human face they stimulate the faculty of judgement and demand to be translated into a text. In general, they do not serve a purpose of (theoretical) cognition – acquisition of concepts. Since it is not a process of information transfer lasting in time, as a spoken or written language, an image is a one-off event which, exactly due to this reason, affects even stronger our precognitive faculties, forms or types of rationality connected with imagination, sensitivity, empathy, tact and taste. Initiating these faculties, an image is not opposed to verbal/conceptual representations, but it rather stimulates them, provides impulses for conversation, which follows dispersed thinking, so to say – multilevel and multidimensional, non-conclusive by nature, repeated time and again. An image makes me a linguistic phenomenon and at the same time an extra-linguistic one, falling outside any communication, paradoxes and contradictions. It is them which seem to be closer to the truth of existence and enable me to be at home – or to return to myself – even if it means,

negatively, to someone who is always unspecified and unfulfilled in a sense, and surely not the one perceived by others, and sometimes, in solitude, even by myself (Flusser 2002: 187).

Let us notice how far we departed from what we call parrhesia after the ancient Greeks – the point is no longer the courage to be sincere and truthful and to inform everyone about it, without taking into account the consequences of own statements. The focus is on a situation when I do not know the truth, I do not have direct access to it and thus I am unable to enter into any sincerity pact with myself. I can express my understanding of myself only in a conversation about what is really important to me, that is about how my *understanding* of myself and/or the people, things and phenomena around me is different from perceiving them, by means of an available network of notions. It sounds schematically, emanates cold and hardly resembles the words of a fool from a video clip.

## 5. Establishment of the world

Let us remind the quotation from *Language and Reality*, cited at the beginning of the second part of our discussion and concluded with the statement that the Self and the Non-Self are the ontological horizons of language as a whole. Here is the next part of this fragment:

"This fundamental hypothesis has as an immediate consequence the elimination of the Self and the Non-Self from the territory of all discussion, because they are extra-linguistic hypotheses and therefore nondiscussable. (...) The Self and the Non-Self are the two faces of that *nothingness* that, according to existential thought, establishes (*Herstellt*) Being. The following situation arises: the set of languages, this set of realized potentials, emerges from the nothingness of the Self and Non-Self and expands toward the same nothingness. It has its origin in nothingness and seeks this nothing. The great conversation in which we participate, and which is reality as a whole, comes from nothingness and is about nothingness. (...) Nothingness, far from being an empty and negative concept, becomes a superconcept, synonymous with unutterable" (Flusser 2018: 101-102).

So, how is it, actually? After all, we have previously claimed that everything, the Self and the Non-Self, exists and is real as long as it is in a language that is as far as it is subject to discussion and negotiation. Now we learn that these territories are out of discussion. Is the author inconsistent then? No, because in the unity of myself with the world, which is named by language, there is a convergence of opposites. I can appear only in one language and am extra-linguistic at the same time. The principle of identity applies neither to me nor to the world based on a "happening." So, who am I?

I exist – subjectivity exists – only within the framework of a great conversation,<sup>4</sup> the sources of which – meanings – originate from something extra-linguistic that is from nothingness. The reverse side of a language is non-language as something inexpressible. There is no other possibility. This is the triumph of the convergence of opposites. We have agreed that nothingness is the original point of reference for us – for the “Self” and the “Non-Self.” In nothingness or through it we are given over to each other in the majority of our daily acts, mostly in those of a moral character. If we took a closer look at them and tried to describe them phenomenologically, we could see how much we rely in them on imagination to which Kant paid so much attention, as we remember, and which rejects the principle of non-contradiction. Its task is to accustom us to the coincidental and the unpredictable, to make us comprehend and orientate ourselves among these, and consequently to take decisions and make choices with respect to these. In the context of contingency, that is something incomprehensible and unspecified each time - ergo: imagination provides us with access to a *lack of content, nothingness* and brings us close to the mystery of practical reason contained in the decision-making moment. At that time we go through “nothing,” we refer to us – absent, not realized, facing *a choice from nothingness*. Every time a choice is a unique act of translating a general law into a specific case. Every time it refers to *me who is not yet*.

This continuous process of *néantisation*, as Jean-Paul Sartre would put it, should be typical of the operation of consciousness itself: intentionally organized, it annihilates its objects: another person in the same way as a tree or a computer. Man instils nothingness in them and hence becomes affected by non-existence himself (Sartre 1966: 23-24). Becoming aware of something, I realize that I am not this thing. In this way, I introduce nothingness into a dense, opaque and unconscious abyss of being. However, Flusser does not want to repeat these guidelines of Sartre's philosophy – although he speaks about designing and constructing oneself and the world, he understands these acts in a different way. Unlike Sartre, he does not perceive freedom as a feature of consciousness, not as a monologic and egocentric act, but a communicative one, directed at another person. In his opinion, the heroism of creating oneself originates from a will to overcome resistance mounted to us and our projects by the senseless matter in order to fulfil it and make it sensible, which means: more bearable to us, which in turn signifies: more communicable. Sartre did not find any such counterbalance to the absurdity of existence. Hence, Flusser's veto which he expresses in the quoted fragment, for instance by clarifying a verb "establish" in brackets: (nothingness) "establishes" (in Portuguese in the original) with the German counterpart "*berstell*" (the American publisher wrongly uses capital letter in a German verb) and not with the French one.

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<sup>4</sup> "A self exists within what I call 'webs of interlocution'" (Taylor 1989: 36).

It can be guessed that creation or establishment of Being referred to here is connected with Heidegger's ontological difference (note the word "Being" written with the capital letter), that is distinguishing between a being and being: being "is not" – does not exist – in the same way as specific beings are and exist. In this sense, being is non-existence – nothingness. Flusser seems to accept such reasoning. Nothingness in the ontological sense, such as in the story presented at the beginning, is the sea drunk up, empty space formed after the cognitive approach to reality, after updating its ability to be cognized. In other words, after the intellectual approach to forms which explain ontically and justify realistically – organize, determine and update – specific beings. A form is the end at which potentialities of being aim and to which they are subordinate (Krapiec 1991). After the nominalistic turn, in the philosophy called epistemological or simply the philosophy of subject or of consciousness, the metaphysical form became an object, as we have already mentioned. Nevertheless, it has remained a form which emanates nothingness, it emerges under various names, as Flusser reminds and explains that objectively the focus is on "an object itself", "completely other" and "Non-Self"; and subjectively – on "spirit", "subject", and "Self" – all these are attempts at naming something which cannot be articulated (Flusser 2018: 103). In any case we deal with something – always there is "something," it cannot be called another way – which all the time has more to say/express than it has already said/expressed. In this sense, nothingness is something, which has not been expressed yet or cannot be uttered.

"Establishment" assigned to nothingness is associated with language/conversation. We exist, the world exists – appears, emerges – only within the framework of *a great conversation*. Conversation opens Flusser's thought to the cultural context and connects linguistic meanings with language applications in which the information function is identified with the performative function. Ultimately, the point is causation – presentation as accomplishment of something, the conversation itself that, is presentation of oneself and objects, speaking to and listening to the Other as a way of human existence. The world is only there where it is shown and presented (Flusser 2018: 119), so where it is established. And such a world can neither be created once and for all, nor destroyed and absorbed forever – drunk up at a gulp to the bottom.

## 6. Experiment with Ingarden

Let us make a small thought experiment and ask what would happen if the world's existence could be separated from the contingency of its appearance to us, in other words: what would happen if our minds were able to control contingency? This is a rhetorical question. We would have to be "strong" and precisely "pure subjects," probably those, which phenomenologists had in mind, claiming the ability of direct access to the *things themselves*. First of all, Edmund Husserl,

but only the early one, not the later one. As we know, in analysis of consciousness he pays attention to its cultural roots for the first time not earlier than in his late lectures in Vienna and Prague in 1935, published in 1937 in Belgrade as *Die Krise der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. He introduces there the term of *Lebenswelt* (life-world) – the world lived by us, which became, as he claims, the "forgotten meaning-fundament of natural science" (Husserl 1970: 48). This concept makes him able to understand that the purpose of knowledge is not "objectivity" but "inter-subjectivity" (Flusser TS 1), that the conceptual framework, as objectivization and scientific idealization, obscures the world with a "veil" of ideas – the world in which we feel, experience, and cooperate with others in politics, economy, arts etc. every day.

Roman Ingarden, a Polish phenomenologist and a student of Edmund Husserl, on principle never noticed an influence of this "veil" in his analysis of perceptive experience. In his article from 1946 entitled *Człowiek i czas (Man and Time)* he writes: "Thus, as a human, I am *transcendent* with regard to my experiences. And exactly this what is transcendent with regard to them is my real 'true' being" (Ingarden 1987: 44). He tries to combine the modern concept of subject with the classical substantial mind. The first one is nothing but a procedural mind measured by the force of functionalism, intensification and instrumental efficiency. Ingarden writes vividly: "I am the force which – living in the body and using the body [...] – taming this body once, turns all the body's capabilities for reinforcement of itself" (ibid.: 68). On the other hand, the self-control of the classical substantial mind – as we have mentioned before – overlaps with the rules of the order of things itself, the entire being itself – visualised as the sea in our opening story. This argumentation seems to apply the classical dualist thinking, according to the opposites: act/force and capability/body, form and matter. However, the problem lies in the fact that Ingarden wishes to see these inseparable components of being as autonomous. The force discussed here is supposed to be independent – transcendent – and dependent on this order (the entire being) at the same time, as its creator. We read: I am the force, which "can last and be free only if it gives itself voluntarily to establishment of good, beauty and truth. Only then it exists" (ibid.: 68/69). Hence, we return to the word "establishment." How can we establish being? As we remember, according to classical metaphysics, being is justified by being itself, and its transcendent "values" – good, beauty and truth – are nothing else than the reality existing actually, that is transcendent towards consciousness, that cannot be established!

The situation is different with a weak subject (let us call it like that) which was the focus of Husserl's attention at the time of *The Crisis*. As we know, being extends its borders up to the horizon exactly in front of this subject and does not give it a chance to reach and find there the true – beautiful and good – "Self" and "Non-Self." Everything it can do is to present and talk about both. Thus, "Self" and "Non-Self" exist as long as they appear – communicate. Flusser

concludes on this basis that language, as the "great conversation," creates "reality as a whole": "the great conversation that we are, and that is reality as a whole" (Flusser 2018: 103). This conversation does not have any common universal grammar – it is both everyday chatter, direct and media-based, and science. Information emerges and is accumulated in the conversation (ibid.: 106) – in the faculty of judgement which is a tool of entropic communication and does not agree to a zero-one solution of matters. Conversation transforms the world into a linguistic phenomenon and at the same time does not provide the language with a chance for its full articulation – it is eternally unsatisfied, constantly active inside and outside – towards itself and others. Ultimately, it emerges from nothingness that is from the inexpressible and from silence.

## 7. Language and silence: confrontation with Heidegger

Let us begin with a short association: In his famous book *After Babel. Aspects of language and translation* from the 1980s, George Steiner introduces a notion of the dialectic of "alterity" which means: "the genius of language for planned counter-factuality," an ability that is "overwhelmingly positive and creative" (Steiner 1998: 237). "The impulse to concealment and fiction" (ibid.: 242) is supposed to be inscribed into the language, human speech. Explanation: "Language is centrally fictive because the enemy is 'reality', because (...) man is not prepared to abide with 'the Thing which is'" (ibid.: 237). In this case, Nietzsche becomes necessary. Steiner quotes him: "A comparison between different languages shows that the point about words is never their truth or adequacy: for otherwise there would not be so many languages."<sup>5</sup> Steiner's comment: "Or to put it simply: there is a direct, crucial correlation between the 'un-truthful' and fictive genius of human speech on the one hand and the great multiplicity of languages on the other" (ibid.: 243).

The point is that our speech conceals more than expresses: it always has more to say than it has already said, hence nothingness is something which has not been expressed yet or cannot be expressed. It seems that Flusser speaks about the same thing: "language, as a whole, is a process of realization that tends to overcome itself," that is towards something extralinguistic. He continues:

"Language, his realization of potential, expands toward the supra-real and ceases to be language in this advance. The amorphous shutting off of potentiality, from which language emerges, gives way to the superconcentration of indiscursability, in which language loses itself. These are two different types of silence, although they both mean nothingness. This is, on one hand, the silence of the not yet articulated, the silence of the animal and the cretin, and, on the

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<sup>5</sup> A fragment from *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, (Steiner 1998: 243).



other hand, the silence of the no longer articulable, the silence of St. Thomas, Wittgenstein, and the Buddha" (both quotes Flusser 2018: 104).

Thus, silence is always personalized in a way – different for everyone. It is possible to be silent in many ways and in many languages. First, silence is a counterpoint to a conversation. Contrary to a phenomenologist's claim, it is not subjective energy that constitutes my being, but nothingness – something inexpressible, out of which a conversation emerges and aims towards it (ibid.: 103). Silence as nothingness enables Flusser to overcome the dualist thinking according to all opposites known so far between words and objects, thought and language, intellect and senses, text and image, things concealed and on the surface... As a result, silence enables him to appreciate contingency – to lay the ground for event ontology, which he will associate with technical images and information society. He writes: "Technical images, as opposed to traditional images, do not mean scenes, but events" (Flusser 2013: 97). Scenes are the entirety of being, whereas events are everything accidental. Technical imagination is salutary for a human-nomad.

Event ontology has clear connotations with Heidegger, but – as we will see – differs from *Ereignisontologie* (Heidegger 2003) in crucial moments. It promotes contingency: an event can only be approximated, but not captured, specified or determined. Thus, rationality becomes here a feature of meanings revealing themselves not through *being*, given to a specific subject, but through *events* in the historical everyday world. Similarities come to mind by themselves. For the author of *Sein und Zeit* being is also something inexpressible and silent. Analogously to Flusser's phrase, it can be said that we have emerged from being (nothingness) and we are heading towards it – albeit with difficulty and constantly falling into everyday life. Refraining from such falling into the arms of "self" (*das Man*) demands a particular attitude from us, such a form of existence (being of the Self) which consists in care and listening to its "call" – the call of being guilty, that is always not at home, not oneself, not self-contained. This call appeals to existence, that is to *Dasein*, through conscience. But ultimately to what purpose? A philosopher answers: "to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self" (Heidegger 2001: 318).

This is pompous rhetoric, shrouded in the air of mystery and magic – because *the ownmost potentiality* cannot be cognized in the same way as being, so it must belong to everyone and to no one at the same time. The call for being is neither a form nor a conversation fragment, not even its interlude – it is a silent challenge of conscience, a soundless and wordless signal, no specific information at all. Heidegger combines silence with the ontological perspective – this is the way we get in touch with being, an attitude of contemplation and calm, a detachment from everyday life with its utilitarian and functional activities, and a desire for something unspecific and elusive... Being [*das Sein*], something completely different from a being [*das Seiende*], is supposed to be a pure "source" which provides "rooting" but, what is curious, not to everyone. It is non-

egalitarian because the place for being can be prepared only by the Germans (and ancient Greeks). Only German poets and thinkers are supposed to succeed – to return to the Nietzschean metaphors – to drink up the sea, reach the horizon and see that behind it there is nothing else than a beautiful Schwarzwald landscape. Even though the idea of being itself cannot be associated with any particular language – such as Chinese, German or French – although this idea should be universal and aimed potentially at everyone, it is ultimately reserved only for the two national narrations, how we learn clearly from *Black Notebooks*. However, there is something which worries Heidegger and obscures the lantern of its intellect: that the Germans are prevented from access to and drinking up this alleged source of being by "a rootless foreign", a nihilist, the creator of a global technology destructive to listening for a "call" of being, to source-based life habits. This elusive stranger seduces and deforms the Germans and separates them from their own concealed identity. These strangers are Jews (Heidegger 2015; Trawny 2015: 53-54).

Flusser is innately resistant to such horrendous thinking. He is protected against it by something which Joseph Brodsky (1997), a poet with similar life experiences, calls exile. Thus, the situation is just the opposite: only the experience of a "rootless foreign" can demonstrate what is one's own. The condition of exile, associated with suffering and oblivion, provides a chance for man to be liberated from a cause-and-effect chain of events and from the rational theory of the society proposed by the totalitarian systems according to the rationality criteria adopted by them. A chance for freedom, for subversive life habits, and hence for being a counter-revolutionist. For a nomad and a migrant, what is source-based is not ontological – it does not pertain to being and rootedness in it – but ethical. It does not relate to home and its mysteries, or to the universal "history of being," either. For him transcendence means "nothingness" which cannot be "forgotten" (in Heidegger's manner) because it always comes to the fore – becomes reality – in a conversation. He lives in the limelight. The mystery of his existence is only the mystery of being with others, overcoming – together with them – the superstitions existing in them/us about ugliness of others in order to turn them into something beautiful together. Such an intent is supported by the Western religious experience with its trust in man as God's image (Flusser 1992: 263-264; 2013: 12).

## **8. The absurd game with apparatus and the social utopia**

The linear thinking, which introduces us into the objective sphere, is a trap for a nomad. Thus, a trap is both politics and history as a concept of the past consisting of cause-and-effect events. Both of them have lost their sense, similarly as the rational approach, which is monologic by nature and is an idealist escape from the human imagination and the faculty of judgement.

The hybrid, intellectual-imaginative thinking, to describe it briefly, upheld by Flusser, presents this senselessness in the Nietzschean style. Yes, he admits, we murdered God – "we killed Him" (Flusser 2013: 14) – in specific historical acts whose prototype is Auschwitz. Their aim was to turn a person into an object and this is betrayal, offence and the final killing of God – his image in man. The crisis of religiousness is supposed to be the crisis of the whole Western culture in general: "Auschwitz is not a violation of Western models of behaviour, it is, on the contrary, the result of the application of such models. Our culture allowed its mystifying mask to fall at Auschwitz and revealed its real face. The face of a monster that objectifies man" (ibid.: 7). A monster which drank up the sea, turned man into an object and killed God in him – the acts symbolized by Auschwitz became "normal," whereas a will to love the Other and trust him became abnormality and madness (ibid.: 14-15). How can we return to the order of things from before Auschwitz – fill the sea with water again and defeat the metaphysical monster? How can we cope with this mega-problem, not having even the critical mind (German: *Kulturkritik*) since it is not sensible to unmask ideologies and hidden intentions of programmers because their products become increasingly anonymous and independent of them (ibid.: 24-25). It looks hopeless. What can we do to be liberated from functionalism? How can we escape this nightmare? How can we, being inevitably programmed, avoid being deluded and cheated by "apparatus"? How should we avoid crossing the thin line between a situation when apparatus helps us and when it presages destruction? Flusser replies that we should learn to think apolitically, which means: to put ideologies "within parentheses" and to accept human existence as "an absurd game of chance, as a 'happening'" (ibid.: 23). We read that: "Freedom is conceivable only as an absurd game with apparatus, as a game with programs. It is conceivable only after we have accepted politics and human existence in general to be an absurd game" (ibid.: 26).

Since the time of existentialists, fashionable still in the 1960s, absurdity is connected with impenetrability and strangeness of the world, with existence without reason and with inhumanity and mechanicalness of our gestures and behaviour (Camus 1960: 11). Flusser thinks similarly, when he associates absurdity with our entanglement with the programmed world and inability to leave it. In his opinion, the programmatic ontology, recorded in statistics or punched cards at that time, should lead directly to invention of computers and to transforming us into digits and the society into a cybernetic system consisting of functionaries and apparatus. Even though the post-industrial society – he continues – has not been fully achieved yet, it already has its own model heroes, such as (let us not forget that the action is going on in the 1960s) "Eichmann as model functionary, Kissinger as model programmer, and Auschwitz as post-industrial society" (Flusser 2013: 33).

Once again: how can we leave this nightmare? Should we play certain roles in it ourselves? Such a question already assumes certain subjectivity and autonomy. Thus, what is the point of all this? The point is to start a game with programs, to give life a meaning dialogically in the information society. The notion of a game returns once again in this discussion. It is the key to solution of the discussed problem – owing to the game as a presentation a new truth is given to the things represented – the truth, which liberates from oppression. Flusser admits that there is something magical in this – not the prehistoric magic, based on faith, but post-historical – based on programs. Two or even three argumentation layers overlap here (the distinction is purely analytical). One layer is linguistic. Magic is connected with the performative function of the language – with programs as languages and cultural practices: "'Program' is 'prescription': writing is prior to it. It is post-historical magic, and history serves it as pretext" (ibid.: 97). History as a pretext to fill in the meanings of objects by a subject, just like empty vessels, in a game between texts and images, concepts and imagination. Linguistic presentation becomes a way of being for objects themselves. This ontological layer of argumentation overlaps with the ethical one. Whoever takes part in this game will have a chance for more freedom, for more favourable and brave perception of the world's variety, open to the things, which are new and improbable. Program is a synonym of apparatus, which operates as a black box – it is never fully clear what is going on inside and what will go out of it – neither its programmer nor its user (so-called functionary) knows that. Thus, the mechanics of apparatus goes beyond the dualism of contingency and necessity, but also individualism and collectivism. After all, this is the world of our specific experiences – every day we are subject to the functional-structural relations and own preferences at the same time, we balance between identity and difference, the public – that is the institutionalized and formalized – and the individual. The problem lies in proportions, but not only – also in the moral duty to talk and reach an agreement among functionaries of the apparatus producing such technical images as photographs and their variations in the form of films, videos, holograms etc. This moral and communication imperative is backed up by the historiosophic and eschatological prerequisites, concealed here under a collective name of magic. Let us remember about the notions of the end, horizon and nothingness. Apparatus is supposed to make our experiences transparent and textual information – imaginable, which should set us free from "conceptual madness" as a result, just like texts were supposed to liberate us from "hallucinatory madness" caused by traditional images before (ibid.: 95).

Ultimately, these historiosophic-eschatological prerequisites give rise to the utopian vision of the information-dialogic society based on the acceptance of technology. Contrary to previous experiences with it, this acceptance, which is actually a heroic gesture, consists in the belief that, in spite of everything, "the post-industrial society will not necessarily be a totalitarianism of

apparatus, but possibly a society that elaborates programs in function of consensus" (ibid.: 34). It will be neither the apocalypse, nor the paradise in which man shall find eternal happiness and reveal the goodness of his nature, which was predicted by the scenarios of Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Karl Marx, inspiring such ideas in the contemporary social thought as e.g. Jürgen Habermas' concept of the ideal speech situation. Against this background, Flusser's vision of the information society seems less speculative, more realistic, and perhaps due to this – heroic, intravenous and close to life:

"We will live a dreadful, traumatic, psychedelic existence. However, for this reason we will not 'necessarily' exist, either. Pure information we will be playing with shall be directed at other people in order to be transformed by them. We will create pure information for other people. Our being will transform from 'being-before-the actual state' into 'being-for-other.' We will no longer be 'objective' but 'intersubjective.' Dialogic. The pure information society shall be a game of everybody with everyone, in which constantly new information shall emerge, always something improbable" (Flusser 1998 A: 131).

Nevertheless, we shall be able to escape the trap of being programmed only as projects of own construction of ourselves and alternative worlds produced by the media, the projects having "technical imagination," that is the ability to decode technical images. This imagination must be the basis for the contemporary counter-revolution. However, this imagination is just another borderline situation, the horizon line that shall never be crossed by us – which does not mean that we should not aim at it. Aim and yearn for a game with "nothingness" – "absent structure" (Flusser 2013: 98) which will set us free from oppression, from a threat of the incessant progress of culture, that is its programming, cataloguing and dehumanizing. The game for liberation stimulates us to the absurd game with apparatus – the game for freedom and creativity – and as a result for the survival of the human race on Earth – the game that initiates progress-delaying strategies. We cannot be revolutionists any longer, Flusser says, we can just be saboteurs – sabotage some programs by other. This is why each emancipation activity is subversive: terror, alternative technologies, green movements, homosexual parades, and so on. These are reactions to progress and everything we are afraid of in connection with it: online hate, digital surveillance, cataloguing, economization of public institutions. Everything that acts progressively contributes to the end of the game discussed here. "Delay and hesitancy are the only methods in order to postpone the end of the game: so neither Cesar nor Spartacus, but Fabius Cunctator" (ibid.: 128).

Fabius Cunctator (Latin: the Delayer) is a symbol of uncertainty which, however, has an advantage over the decisiveness of strong individuals, such as Caesar and Spartacus: unlike them he finally wins (radical critics of Fabius are defeated in the Battle of Cannae with Hannibal). He is an adherent of cautious tactics and appreciates uncertainty about which the exiled poet (Brodsky

1997), quoted above, says that it enables man to maintain vigilance and is less bloodthirsty as a rule. Thus, the focus is on postponement of the end of the game, on emancipation in stages, fragmentary and never complete, just like us – never fulfilled. We can talk only about such emancipation in the society in which access to information is infinite and unlimited. Therefore, each attempt at its supervision/restriction has features of totalitarianism – no matter whether right or left-wing, religious-ethnic or neoliberal, undertaken – as e.g. today in Poland – by the authors of the *national media* programme or by the authors of ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement) – avowed adherents of open science, open access to publications etc.

Thus, Flusser's social utopia is inhibited by people, nomads-players, insecure and thus more vigilant and less bloodthirsty, and, as a result, more creative than their fellows in the programmed reality. They are supposed to create "new concepts out of imagination, and new imagination out of these concepts" and to do it "in the cosmic dialogue with all people around the world." It is supposed to be "the first really free human society" supplied with freedom by apparatus – freedom to "give meaning to life dialogically" (Flusser 1998 B: 94). We are talking here about the information society in which texts and technical images, as well as music and traditional images in their mutual influence guide our consciousness to an ever higher level, make our imagination increasingly conceptual, precise and disciplined, and turn the universe of technical images into a more and more accurate mathematical and logical world of imagination. This imagined universe is supposed to fill in the gap, which emerged after the disintegration of the modern world, accessible to the linear thinking, into dispersed spot elements – light beams in the TV and computer screens. Within it, science will become a kind of art, and art will become a kind of science. The humanity will move between science-fiction and fiction-science from one incredible adventure to another, even more inconceivable (ibid.: 94-95).

## Final remarks

Vilém Flusser draws on the oldest cultural archetypes, which are processed by philosophy with a dualism of form (spirit) and matter (body) almost since its beginnings. In the mythological imagination this dualism is easily translatable into a vision of the world's history as a stage and a battlefield of confrontation between the eternal forces of light and darkness, good and evil, Eros and Thanatos – god of love and god of death. It is reminiscent of Gnosticism – a belief that man is a stranger in the world and was thrown here as a penalty for his faults or sins – and of Manichaeism, a heresy presenting the world's history as a continuous fight between good and evil and liberation of the soul from the darkness of the body to the kingdom of light. *The eternal recurrence of the same* – as Friedrich Nietzsche would put it, followed by Flusser who notes that "If

one considers the Basic concepts: image, apparatus, program and information, one discovers an internal connection between them: They are all based on the 'eternal recurrence of the same'" (Flusser 2006: 76-77).

The author of this words moves brilliantly among all the philosophical and cultural contexts mentioned here – he alludes and refers to them in open and concealed quotations, writes intensely intertextual texts, demands his readers to think along with him and to talk, to share the joy of discovering these texts and to find new and related ones. The significance of his thought originates in the words with which he thematizes and interprets the world, changing it at the same time and establishing again. The eternal recurrence of the same. His focus is not on any *heavenly kingdom* on Earth, it can even be a *dreadful, traumatic, psychedelic existence* – it is important that freedom remains on the horizon as openness to the incredible, to conversation, to nothingness as the beginning of eternity.

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