

Andreas Ströhl*

Dialog. Vilém Flusser's Negentropic Acrobatics Above Bottomlessness

Flusser's concept of dialog cannot be comprehended from a media theoretical point of view only. A more fruitful approach emerges from within the context of Flusser's own model of culture that forms an epicycle intended to lend meaning to human life by creating information. This approach also encompasses a consideration of the influence of Judaeo-Christian traditions. We need to understand the changes the concept of dialog has undergone on its way from Martin Buber, for example, to Vilém Flusser.

Life is absurd in the face of its bottomlessness. Therefore, strategies are developed to make it more livable. In celebration and play we tend to forget death as a menace. Most of all, however, human beings try to overcome the futility and loneliness of a life toward death by means of dialog with other human beings. Recognition of the other as a „Thou“ is both the condition of a dialog and its result. Flusser revives and secularizes the concept of relationships of mutual recognition, a motif at the core of Jewish-Christian thought. Buber allows two ways for the „I“ to realize itself, in experiencing the world or, alternatively, in relation to a „Thou“. Flusser, however, insists on the exclusivity of the creation of the „I“ in dialog. Another significant shift of the concept of dialog from Buber to Flusser is that Buber interprets dialogs among humans as merely metaphorical. To him, true meaning is only possible through a dialog with god. Flusser, however, rejects the necessity of a final transcendental rationale. Thus, he secularizes Jewish-Christian tradition: it becomes an immanent task to take over responsibility for other human beings by means of dialog.

Dialogs realize free relationships of recognition and appreciation. Today, we are threatened by discursive massification. Therefore, dialogs need to be technically and socially implemented. Discursive structures and their technical materialization ought to be changed into dialogical channels. Again, Flusser's utopia proves to be profane: The only chance for survival and viability lies in the collective memory of culture set up by dialogical networks.

Key Words: dialog, absurdity, Martin Buber, death

*Film-Fest München, Germany, Andreas.Stroehl@filmfest-muenchen.de