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Preface

In 2009, the International Interdisciplinary Work Group for Philosophical Reflection (IiAphR) had the opportunity to meet the Flusser specialist and editor of *Flusser Studies*, Rainer Guldin, for the first time at a conference held on the topic *Topographien der Grenze* (*Topographies of the Border*) in the Museum for Applied Arts in Frankfurt am Main. During this first meeting – which occurred in the context of studies involving *interliminality*, a theme as significant for Flusser as for the IiAphR – Rainer Guldin was struck by the similarity in structure between Flusser’s thought and the IiAphR’s theoretical and practical approach. As a result, Rainer Guldin invited the IiAphR to design an edition of *Flusser Studies* with a topic chosen by the IiAphR. In the following months, the cooperation between Rainer Guldin and the IiAphR intensified through meetings, discussions and lectures initiated by both sides and held in Berlin, Münster and Lugano.

Inspired by the invitation to produce an edition on Flusser as well as the invitation’s coincidence with the 15th anniversary of the group’s founding, the IiAphR chose as its guiding motto: critical (self-)reflection as an ever-renewing dynamic. The shared focus of the edition’s content was quickly decided upon: Freedom and Reflection are two decisive elements in the theoretical as well as the practical work of the IiAphR, elements that offer new accounts of the *mundus flusseriani* and, as a result, demand new and creative forms of thought.

Under the title *Freedom and Reflection*, this current edition collects various aesthetic and theoretical contributions, which in large part emerged from a Berlin-based Flusser reading group. The reading group met to discuss Flusser’s ideas as well as the contributions to the edition, the development of which the group supervised.

Moreover, and to our great pleasure, we were able to include in this edition two international voices of the IiAphR, which, themselves, resonate nicely with elements of Flusser’s biography: a

submission by Eduardo Guerreiro B. Losso of Brazil, the country where Flusser found refuge and which became his adopted home for more than 30 years. Losso's piece is written in Brazilian Portuguese – one of Flusser's languages. And an artistic piece by Helga Pachnicke, who, like Flusser, was born in Prague. That we were able to include a total of three visual artists in this edition (the other two being Steffen Koritsch and Barbara Eitel) was also greatly satisfying for us. Considering the central role of aesthetics in Flusser's thought, we felt this to be particularly appropriate and even vital. For that reason, these two strains – the aesthetic and the theoretical – mark this edition's entryway, its gateway. Together, they outline the implied structural similarities between Flusser's technique and that of the IiAphR: like this Czech philosopher and communicologist, whose domain was not a single place defined by specific conditions but rather the world as a whole, the IiAphR is a group without any one fixed structure or interest but rather multiple, fundamentally open forms. The scenarios and meetings in which we find ourselves together change each time depending on a variety of factors: the selected topics – which are investigated with both a background rooted in philosophical tradition as well as an eye on the present state of thinking; the aim of our work – whether a financial intention, a desire simply to facilitate thinking, or both together; and the participants engaged by and with this work. In this manner, we have practiced for many years (in the sense of our self-organization) our own, independent research and interdisciplinary advancement of, in particular, young academics and the humanities (with an emphasis on Europe). We are fascinated by the meeting that happens *between* institutions (in particular universities and research institutions), fields of study, disciplines, but also between generations and nations, and our fascination finds a parallel in Flusser's apostrophization of the *between* and his emphasis on the worth of the *intersubjective*. Philosophy, formed by cogent and pressing questions, becomes an engine for this work and, through common research interests, creates an academic as well as extra-academic engagement across borders of discipline and country. Brought together in question and thought, the efforts of these diverse fields and institutions become productive, and they engage with contemporary issues and in critical self-reflection, thereby maintaining a philosophical drive in the present.

The concrete, detailed work on Flusser required manifold approaches, but they resulted in numerous philosophic-historical discoveries during the period of this work. As any good work does, it provoked critiques and, in some cases, estrangements. Perhaps it is exactly there that the value of a thinker rests – that s/he provokes thought – and s/he produces it permanently.

We happily took up the invitation to put together this edition and embraced the challenges it brought with it, and we hope that those are evident in our work. It was and remains an experiment,

one in which we find ourselves together with both Flusser and you, the reader. Our exit from this experiment remains uncertain and open. We think that Flusser would have appreciated that. We thank all the persons in charge for *Flusser Studies* and especially Rainer Guldin and Claudia Becker, Annie Goh and Daniel Irrgang from the Flusser Archive in Berlin, who supported us graciously. A big thank also to the Flusser Archive for the friendly ratification of the publication of the archive texts.

In addition, we would like to thank the various contributors to our Flusser Discussions: Sarah Ambrosi, Anna Fiehn, Judith Muster, Julia Sippel, and Thomas Dworschak, who provided thoughts and stimulating arguments as well as meeting places in support of our research; William Stewart, for editing the abstracts and for the English translations; and Susann Köppl, who continuously went out of her way to serve the Berlin Flusser-Circle. Apart from that, all that remains for us is to wish you an enjoyable experience as you enter this lively and diverse thought.

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