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Introductory Notes on Marcelo Mercado's

Über den menschlichen Kopf

Despite, or rather persisting through Flusser's radical disappointment with humanism, human inter-subjectivity remains an imperative. Ours is a world where information is fractured into innumerable automated processes creating a field effect which recalls a pre-literate age, yet, Flusser reminds us, is fundamentally structured by textual programs, and therefore phenomenologically different. "Technical Images" are produced and circulated, most of which are redundant, overwhelming the senses we used to rely on to orient ourselves in the world. Flusser warns of a return of uncritical idolatry, where populations are spellbound by technical images wielded by magicians, as in pre-literate times. Unlike in those times, we cannot have recourse to the profane emancipation of literacy, of detached objectivity and its universal humanism, this has been discredited by Auschwitz. Instead, to help guide his readers through the Universe of 'Technical Images" Flusser returns to the Talmudic distinction between true and false images, with the only true image being that of a human face. "Judaism forbade the making of images, and Christianity and Islam, each in its own way, have followed the same path. This is because images made by human beings obscure the "true image." The "true image" is any human face. It is the image of the absolute other, the "likeness of God." Each human being is, for me, the likeness of God, and "I" am the likeness of God for all others. Therefore, each human being is the other for me, and I am the other for all human beings, an image of the "absolute other" (God). Because each person is for me the true image of the absolute other, he is the only image, the only way I can or should conceive of God. All other images I make of God or anything else are false images and so forbidden. Every single person is my only medium to God, and I can only come to God if I go to Him through the other (each other one). All other media (all other images, representations, and ideas) are false media. They are idolatrous. The only true love of God is love of another, human love. So "thou shalt love thy God [the absolute other] with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and everything that thou hast" is synonymous with "love thy neighbor [another]."

To synthesize from his later interviews with Miklos Peternak and Laszlo Beke, rather than *subjects of God*, through the face of the other, mediated by networked computation, we become *projects for God*. In Marcelo Mercado's contribution of composite human heads in this issue, "Über den

menschlichen Kopf" (On the Human Head) we see the face itself as a storage medium, of the history of the species, the planet and the dataset. In mediated encounters with each other, Human being becomes, not a category, but much in Sylvia Wynter's sense, a praxis. Despite his deepest misgivings, doubts and shattered expectations, refusing all sentimentality or nostalgia, Flusser persistently inhabits some hope in humanity, proposing a post-human anthropology or neg-anthropology. "Eine neue, post-humanistische, «post-moderne» Anthropologie befindet sich im Entstehen. Nachdem wir uns als ein Nichts im Nichts aufgeklärt haben - als Knoten vernetzter Relationen, die nichts verbindet -, können wir überhaupt erst beginnen, dieses Nichts zu verneinen. Eine derartige negative Anthropologie (Neg-anthropologie) ist nicht etwa nur eine theoretische philosophische Sicht (ein negativer Glaube), sondern vor allem eine Praxis" (Vilem Flusser, Vom Subjekt Zum Projekt: Menschwerdung, p.18).¹

¹ [translated by BG] "A new, post-humanist, "post-modern" anthropology is emerging. Having come to understand ourselves as nothingness within nothingness—as nodes of interconnected relations that are unconnected by anything—we can only then begin to negate this nothingness. Such a negative anthropology ("neg-anthropology") is not merely a theoretical philosophical perspective (a negative belief), but above all a practice."