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**A Forgotten Publication Project:
Vilém Flusser's "The Fairy Tale of Truth"**

“So, said the rabbit angrily, you did not tell me the truth, don't
come before my eyes again.”

Vilém Flusser, *The Fairy Tale of Truth*

In the 1990s, the Bollmann Verlag planned to publish a complete edition of Vilém Flusser's oeuvre. After the editorial success of the first two books *Lob der Oberflächlichkeit. Für eine Phänomenologie der Medien* (In Praise of Superficiality. For a Phenomenology of Media) – first published in 1993, and reedited in 1995, as volume 1 – and *Nachgeschichte. Eine korrigierte Geschichtsschreibung* (Post-History: A Corrected Historiography) – published in September 1993 as volume 2 –, three more books followed: *Vom Subjekt zum Projekt. Menschwerdung* (From Subject to Project. The Making Of Man) – published in June 1994 as volume 3 –, *Brasilien oder die Suche nach dem neuen Menschen. Für eine Phänomenologie der Unterentwicklung* (Brazil or the Search for a New Man. For a Phenomenology of Underdevelopment) – published in October 1994 as volume 5 – and *Kommunikologie* (Communicology), published in 1996 as volume 4. At the end of the second volume, was added a list of the overall editorial plan, which comprised altogether 14 volumes to be published by Stefan Bollmann and Edith Flusser. It was to be called *Vilém Flusser, Schriften*. At this point, the fourth volume was still supposed to be *Lesen, Schreiben, Rechnen. Die Auswanderung der Zahlen aus dem alphanumerischen Code* (Reading, Writing, Calculating. The Exodus of Numbers from the Alphanumeric Code). There was no mention yet of the volume *Kommunikologie*. The other books on the list were: *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit. Glossen und Philosophiefiktionen* (The Fairy Tale of Truth: Glosses and Philosophical Fictions) volume 6; *Sesshafte und Nomaden. Für eine neue Anthropologie* (Sedentary People and Nomads: For a New Anthropology) volume 7; *Mittelmeergespräche. Religiosität und Freiheit* (Mediterranean Talks: Religiosity and Freedom) volume 8; *Telematische Kultur* (Telematic Culture) volume 9; *Warten auf Kafka. Philosophieren zwischen den Sprachen* (Waiting for Kafka. Philosophizing between Languages) volume 10; *Chaos und Ordnung. Wissenschaft, Technik, Kunst* (Chaos and Order. Science, Technology, Art) volume 11; *Bis ins dritte und vierte Geschlecht* (Onto the Third and Fourth Generation) volume 12; *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert* (The Twentieth Century) volume 13; and *Dialogische Existenz. Über andere und sich selbst* (Dialogical Existence. On Others and Oneself) volume 14.

In *Brasilien oder die Suche nach dem neuen Menschen*, Bollmann announced the publication of *Umbruch der Menschlichen Beziehungen. Schriften zur Kommunikologie* (Changes in Human Relations.

Writings on Communicology) in the spring of 1995 as volume 4. This was the first major change in the editorial plan. But more were to follow. *Lesen, Schreiben, Rechnen. Die Auswanderung der Zahlen aus dem alphanumerischen Code* (originally volume four) disappeared from the program and the new fourth volume was published in 1996 under the catchier title *Kommunikologie*. In the mid-1990s, the notion of communication was all the rage. The editor reaffirmed his plan to publish the 14 volumes by the end of the 1990s, but without mentioning the titles that were to follow.

On the German Wikipedia page dedicated to Vilém Flusser the list got clearly mixed up. Here, the editorial plan is down to nine volumes. According to Wikipedia after the first five books only four were to follow: *Telematische Kultur* (volume 6), *Warten auf Kafka. Philosophieren zwischen den Sprachen* (volume 7), *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit. Glossen und Philosophiefiktionen* (volume 8) and *Dialogische Existenz* (volume 9). There is no mention of the other originally planned five volumes.

The fact that *Kommunikologie* was the last volume to be published by Bollmann had a decisive impact on the reception of Vilém Flusser's work in the 1990s and beyond, especially in Germany. The epithet of "digitaler Denker" (*digital thinker*) that Bollmann used to commercialize Flusser's books, has stuck to him for years and is still used as an incentive for the buyer. *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit* (The Fairy Tale of Truth) disappeared from sight and has not been mentioned since. In my view, it is especially the playful inventive literary side of Flusser's writing that has suffered the most from this questionable editorial policy. However, let us be clear: Flusser is much more of an essayist and philosopher than a writer of literary texts. Contrary to his philosophical essays, the quality of his poetic texts and philosophical fictions varies greatly. This weakness becomes evident if one compares the different texts of *Angenommen. Eine Szenenfolge* (Flusser 1989)¹ However, in some of the texts that were to be included in "*Das Märchen von der Wahrheit*" (Flusser 2025e), Flusser reveals himself as an astonishingly inventive writer. I will take a closer look at five of them in the second part of this essay.

Das Märchen von der Wahrheit: Glossen und Philosophiefiktionen

Das Märchen von der Wahrheit (Flusser 2025e) volume 6 of Bollmann's complete works edition consists of two separate sections. The first section is a collection of twenty-seven philosophical fictions from the most disparate moments of Flussers writing career.² The second section contains

¹ One of the best texts in this collection is dedicated to the Bibliophagus convictus. A German, English and Portuguese version have been published in *Flusser Studies* 36 <https://www.flusserstudies.net/archive/flusser-studies-36-%E2%80%93-november-2023-special-issue-angenommen-suppose-suponhamos>.

² Since the first lines of "Kurz und gut" were missing in the original pdf I added a complete version of the text at the end.

practically all the texts of the daily satirical column *Posto Zero* that were published from January 22 to April 12, 1972, in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*.

Sixteen texts listed in section one, have already been published in a German, English or Portuguese version:

- “Gespenster (aus einem Vortrag des Erzengel Gabriel)”, published in a Portuguese version as “Espectros – Uma Conferencia do Arcanjo Gabriel”, in: *Ficções Filosóficas*, São Paulo 1998: 89-91.
- “Kurz und gut”, in: *zeitmitschrift. Journal für Ästhetik & Politik*, Düsseldorf 1990, 7/1: 16–22.
- “Ein heldenhafter Brief oder Hiobsbotschaft”, in: *Spuren. Zeitschrift für Kunst und Gesellschaft*, Hamburg, Nr. 41, April 1993: 5-6.
- “Die Fleischwerdung”, first published in a Portuguese version as “A Encarnação”, in *Flusser* 1998: 35–39 (a German version can be found in *Flusser* 2000a: 154-158).
- “Das Unterseeboot” (*Flusser* 1993a: 59–67). (the English version “The Submarine” can be found in *Flusser* 1999: 108-116.
- “Englische Geschichte” in *Spuren. Zeitschrift für Kunst und Gesellschaft*, Hamburg, Nr. 18, März/April 1987: 4-6.
- “Kommunikation” (in a translation by Edith Flusser) published in a Portuguese version as “Comunicação I”, in *Flusser* 1998: 51–55.
- “Kommunikation II oder die andere Seite der Münze” (in a translation by Edith Flusser), published in a Portuguese version as “Comunicação II ou a Segunda face da moeda”, in: *Flusser* 1998: 57–60.
- “Das Märchen von der Wahrheit”, in *Flusser Studies* 25.
- “Das Plädoyer” first published in a Portuguese version as “A Palavra da Defesa” in *Flusser* 1998: 41–44.
- “Ein erbauliches Gespräch” first published in a Portuguese version as “Diálogo Espírita Edificante” in *Flusser* 1998: 111–116.
- “Der Braunschweiger Löwe”, in: *Künstliche Intelligenz*, Barterode, 1989: 60.
- “Operation Gegenbär”, in: *Basler Zeitung* 261, 7.11.1989: 43.
- “Kulturanimation” first published in a Portuguese version as “Animação Cultural” in *Flusser Studies* 1998: 143–147.
- “Verseifung von Fetten” first published in a Portuguese version as “Sabonetes” in *Flusser* 1998: 149-152 (also published in German in *Flusser* 2000a: 160-163 and in *Flusser Studies* 36.³
- “Der falsche Frühling” (*Flusser* 2000b: 78-84) (a translation by Edith Flusser of the Portuguese original “Falsa Primavera” in *Flusser* 2011: 107-114).

The other eleven texts are published in this issue of *Flusser Studies* for the first time:

- “Die Festrede” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s) “Wesen aus einer anderen Welt”.
- “Die Gewalt der philosophischen Methode” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s).
- “Die Beschwörung” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s)
- “Kurzfassung des Endberichts der Forschungs Expedition. An die Akademie für Menschwerdung Cro-Magnon” (most probably written in the 1980s as part of the *Angenommen* project (*Flusser* 1989).

³ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-verseifung-von-fetten.pdf>

- “Ein Gallup Poll” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s)
- “Eine fromme Legende. Der heilige Franz und die Sprache der Tiere” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s)
- “Die Raupe” (probably written in the 1950s)
- “Echtheitszertifikat” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s)
- “Geschmackssache” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s)
- “Der Schoss der Venus” (probably written in the 1950s or 1960s)

Posto Zero

In November 2023, *Flusser Studies* published a special issue on Flusser’s collection of philosophical fictions *Angenommen* (Flusser 1989).⁴ In this issue we also published five texts from *Posto Zero*, in three versions: the original Portuguese “Bichos I-V”⁵, an English translation by Jessé Antunes Torres “Beasts I-V”⁶ and a German translation by Edith Flusser “Tiere I-V”⁷. In the issue, we also published three versions of another philosophical fiction: “Verseifung von Fetten”⁸, along with three other variants “Sabonetes”⁹, “Saponification des graisses”¹⁰, as well as an English translation by Rainer Guldin, “Saponification of Fats.”¹¹ In this issue of *Flusser Studies*, we have decided to publish all the remaining texts from *Posto Zero* both in their original Portuguese version and in the German translation that Edith Flusser did expressly for the book project *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit*.

According to *Flusser Quellen* (Sander 2002) the *Posto Zero* series consists of altogether fifty-four texts. There are two other lists of Portuguese and German texts that were put together by Edith Flusser, Vera Schwamborn, Klaus Sander and Miguel Flusser. These lists do not coincide, both with regard to the number of the included items and their sequence.

“Vilém Flusser, Posto Zero” (Flusser 2025f) contains a list of the fifty-eight Portuguese texts that Flusser wrote in the early 1970s and a compilation of two pages most probably done by Miguel Flusser. In these two pages, seventy-one texts are listed. But “Xadrez” is strangely absent, perhaps because on February 2, a second text, “Decadencias da cidade”, was published, which can

⁴ *Flusser Studies* 36 – November 2023 / Special Issue: Angenommen. Suppose that. Suponhamos. <https://www.flusserstudies.net/archive/flusser-studies-36-%E2%80%93-november-2023-special-issue-angenommen-suppose-suponhamos>

⁵ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-bichos-i-v.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-beasts-i-v.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-tiere-i-v.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-verseifung-von-fetten.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-sabonetes.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-saponification-des-graisses.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-saponification-of-fats.pdf>

be found in Miguel Flusser's list. The last text published by *Folha de São Paulo* on April 12, 1972, was "Musas I – A de pedra". There are a few more texts, which were published in the same newspaper in that time and are listed in the two pages, but they were not part of the *Posto Zero* series: "A longa Viagem I. América e China: os sonhos" (February 20), "América e China dos mitos" (February 21), "América e China dos mitos" (February 22), "Como avaliar os resultados de Pequim" (February 29), "Paz no Oriente Proximo. Os Judeus em Israel" (March 11), "Paz no Oriente Proximo. Os Judeus no mundo" (March 12), "Fosséis sócio políticos" (March 19), "O automóvel e o estado Soberão" (March 26) and "Os países subdesenvolvidos" (April 2).

"Vilém Flusser, Das Märchen von der Wahrheit" (Flusser 2025e) contains another list of fifty-seven *Posto Zero* texts, forty-eight of which were translated into German. However, the book itself contains only fifty-five texts. With regard to the texts listed in *Flusser Quellen* three are missing: "Um poema" published on February 20, 1972. The poem "Culpa" (Guilt) by the Brazilian poet and friend Dora Ferreira da Silva is accompanied by a short introductory comment; "Considerações transitorias" about the traffic situation in São Paulo, published on February 4, 1972; and "Ensino Superior" (February 22) even though it is mentioned in the accompanying list by Edith Flusser. Why these three texts were not included is not clear. On the other hand, the four texts "Musas II-V" originally intended for publication in *Posto Zero*, were added at the end.

At the end of the second page that precedes *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit*, there are some noteworthy details in German, most probably written by Edith Flusser. All the translations of the *Posto Zero* section were done by Edith Flusser with the collaboration of Vera Schwamborn and Klaus Sander with the exception of the German originals of the "Faschingserie I-IV" and "Die Musen I-V". This could mean that Flusser must have translated some of the texts from Portuguese into German before his return to Europe. It also raises the question if he intended to translate the other texts of the *Posto Zero* series into German in order to republish them. "Die Musen II-V" were not published even if they had already been forwarded to the editors. The first half of "Musen I" and "Musen II" were published together on July 2, 1972, by *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The second part of "Musen V (Anführungszeichen)" was published in Flusser 1990: 30-31.

Here is a complete list of the German translations, next to the Portuguese originals. The last four texts were not published by *Folha de São Paulo*.

- 21.1.1972 Der Anfang / COMEÇO (Beginning)
- 22.01.1972 Komplizierte Situationen / SITUAÇÕES COMPLICADAS (Complicated situations)
- 26.01.1972 Die Werte des Westens / OS VALORES DO OCIDENTE (Occidental Values)
- 28.01.1972 Flaschenscherben I / CACOS DE GARRAFAS I (Bottle shards I)
- 29.01.1972 Flaschenscherben II / CACOS DE GARRAFAS I (Bottle shards II)
- 31.1.1972 Unfälle im Ingenieurwesen / DESASTRES NA ENGENHARIA (Accidents in Engineering)

- 01.02.1972 Flaschenscherben III / CACOS DE GARRAFAS III (Bottle shards III)
 02.02.1972 Verfall der Städte / DECADENCIA DAS CIDADES (Decadence of the Cities)
 02.02.1972 Schach/ XADRÉS
 3.2.1972 Blicke im Park / OLHARES NO PARQUE (Glances in the Park)
 4.2.1972 CONSIDERAÇÕES TRANSITORIAS (no German translation) (Transitory Considerations)t
 7.2.1972 Wände / PAREDES (Walls)
 08.02.1972 Stöcke / BENGALAS (Sticks)
 09.02.1972 Generationen / GERAÇÕES (Generations)
 11.02.1972 Der Tod / A MORTE (Death)
 12.02.1972 Karneval-Serie I – Synthese / SINTESE. SÉRIE CARNAVALESCA I (Synthesis: Carnival Series I)
 14.02.1972 Karneval-Serie II – Masken / MASCARAS. SÉRIE CARNAVALESCA II (Masks: Carnival Series II)
 15.02.1972 Karneval-Serie III – Fest /FESTA. SÉRIE CARNAVALESCA III (Party: Carnival Series III)
 16.02.1972 Karneval-Serie IV – Asche / CINZAS. SÉRIE CARNAVALESCA IV (Ashes: Carnival Series IV)
 17.2.1972 Geschlecht / SEXO (Sex)
 18.02.1972 Frauen / MULHERES (Women)
 19.2.1972 Der Unterricht / ENSINO (Teaching)
 22.02.1972 ENSINO SUPERIOR (no German translation) (Higher Education)
 23.02.1972 Eine streng familiäre Serie I – Enkel / NETOS. SÉRIE RIGOROSAMENTE FAMILIAR I (Grandchildren: A Strictly Familiar Series I)
 24.02.1972 Eine streng familiäre II – Serie Onkel / TIOS. SÉRIE RIGOROSAMENTE FAMILIAR II (Uncles: A Strictly Familiar Series II)
 25.02.1972 Eine streng familiäre Serie III – Vetter ersten Grades / PRIMOS-IRMÃOS. SÉRIE RIGOROSAMENTE FAMILIAR III (First Cousins: A Strictly Familiar Series III)
 26.02.1972 Eine höchst emotionale Serie I – Ironie / IRONIA. SÉRIE ALTAMENTE EMOTIVA I (Irony: A Highly Emotional Series I)
 29.02.1972 Eine höchst emotionale Serie II – Die Passion / PAIXAO. SÉRIE ALTAMENTE EMOTIVA II (Passion: A Higly Emotional Sereis II)
 01.03.1972 Eine höchst emotionale Serie III – Gleichgültigkeit / INDIFERENÇA. SÉRIE ALTAMENTE EMOTIVA III (Indifference: A Higly Emotional Sereis III)
 03.03.1972 Gute Manieren / BOAS MANEIRAS (Good Manners)
 07.03.1972 Im Leben vorwärtskommen / PROGREDIR NA VIDA (Progressing in Life)
 08.03.1972 Gesunde Moral / MORAL SADÍA (Healthy Morals)
 09.03.1972 Anrichte und Küche / COPA E COZINHA (Pantry and Kitchen)
 10.03.1972 Ökonomie und Geschäfte / ECONOMIA E NEGOCIOS (Economy and Business)
 11.03.1972 UM POEMA_(no German translation) (A poem)
 15.03.1972 Heidentum I / PAGANISMO I (Paganism I)
 16.03.1972 Heidentum II / PAGANISMO II (Paganism II)
 17.03.1972 Heidentum III / PAGANISMO III (Paganism III(Paganism I))
 18.03.1972 Heidentum IV /PAGANISMO IV (Paganism IV)
 21.03.1972 Die Größe / GRANDEZA (Greatness)
 22.03.1972 Tiere I – Ameisen / FORMIGAS. BICHOS I (Ants: Animals I)
 23.03.1972 Tiere II – Schimpansen / CHIMPANZÉS. BICHOS II (Chimpamzes: AnimalsII)
 24.03.1972 Tiere III – Einhörner / UNICORNIOS. BICHOS III (Unicorns: Animals III)
 25.03.1972 Tiere IV – Das siebenköpfige Ungeheuer / O BICHO DE SETE CABEÇAS. BICHOS IV (The Seven-Headed Animal: Animals I)
 28.03.1972 Tiere V – Menschen / GENTE. BICHOS V (Leute: Animals V)
 29.03.1972 Hölle I / INFERNO I (Hell I)
 30.03.1972 Hölle II / INFERNO II (Hell II)
 31.03.1972 Hölle III / INFERNO III (Hell III)
 01.04.1972 Hölle IV / INFERNO IV (Hell IV)
 04.04.1972 Hölle V / INFERNO V (Hell V)
 05.04.1972 Berühmte Männer I – Nero / NERO. HOMENS FAMOSOS I (Famous Men I)
 06.04.1972 Berühmte Männer II – Der Piltdownmensch / O HOMEM DE PILTDOWN. HOMENS FAMOSOS II (The Piltdown Man: Famous Men II)

07.04.1972 Berühmte Männer III – Herr Soundso / FULANO DE TAL. HOMENS FAMOSOS III
(So-and-So: Famous Men III)

08.04.1972 Berühmte Männer IV – Homers Vater / O PAI DE HOMERO. HOMENS FAMOSOS IV
Homers Father: Famous Men IV)

12.04.1972 Die Musen I – Die aus Stein / A DE PEDRA. MUSAS I (The One of Stone: Muses I)

Die Musen II – Die Neun / AS NOVE (The One of Stone: Muses II)

Die Musen III – Die Intellektuellen / AS INTELECTUAIS (The Intellectuals: Muses III)

Die Musen IV – Münder / AS BOCAS (The Mouths: Muses IV)

Die Musen V – Gänsefüßchen / AS ASPAS (The quotation marks: Muses V)

I would now like to discuss briefly five texts from *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit: Glossen und Philosophiefiktionen*: “Das Märchen von der Wahrheit” (The Fairy Tale of Truth) (Flusser 2018), “Echtheitszertifikat” (Certificate of Authenticity) (Flusser 2025a), “Die Raupe” (The Caterpillar) (Flusser 2025b), “Berühmte Männer II – Der Piltdownmensch” (The Piltdown Man: Famous Men II) (2025e and 2025f) and “Kurzfassung des Endberichts der Forschungsexpedition. An die Akademie für Menschwerdung Cro-Magnon” (Short Version of the Final Report of the Research Expedition. To the Cro-Magnon Academy for Humanization) (Flusser 2025c). All these philosophical fictions can be considered intellectual experiments, a term that Amos Morris-Reich (2025) is using for his book “*Nazî Fantasy*” *Vilém Flusser and History as Site of Experiment*.¹²

The Fairy Tale of Truth

In May 2018, *Flusser Studies* published a special issue dedicated to Vilém Flusser as a writer¹³, which contained the short text “Das Märchen von der Wahrheit”¹⁴ This philosophical tale is written in a style remindful of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. Some of the elements are typical for a fairy tale: the presence of talking animals, a dwarf, the triple repetition. The story is ambivalent to say the least. With the cultural changes that have happened in the last decades the tale would be considered problematic, possibly politically incorrect. The sexual innuendo is undeniable, because of the nature of the stolen object, the repeated blushing of the little girl, and the ambivalence of the words, giving away, stealing, lending, and playing. However, as the reader can judge for her/himself, at the same time, the fairy tale contains narrative complexity and some reflections on the nature of truth that are worth considering.

The fairy tale is about a little girl (*Mädel*) who lost her little wreath (*das Kränzchen*). The girl wept, so the birds (*Vögelchen*) asked her why she was weeping. She answered that she was sad

¹² See my review in this issue of *Flusser Studies*.

¹³ <https://www.flusserstudies.net/archive/flusser-studies-25-may-2018-special-issue-flusser-writer>

¹⁴ See *Flusser Studies* 25 (<https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/das-maerchen-der-wahrheit.pdf>).

because she had lost her wreath. The birds suggested that she asked the rabbit (*der Hase*), who was good at finding lost objects. So, she went to the rabbit and told him about her problem. The rabbit asked her how she had lost the wreath and if she had looked enough for it before coming to him. Why should I have looked for it, answered the girl, since *Hansl*, little Hans, had carried it away. The rabbit did not like her answer. You did not lose it, someone stole it from you. You did not tell me the truth. And he sent her away. The girl wept and the birds came back a second time and asked her what was going on. I am sad because someone stole my wreath, answered the girl. No problem said the birds. Go to the magpie (*die Elster*) who steals back all stolen objects. So, she went to the magpie and told her that Hansl had stolen her wreath. How did he steal it from you, asked the magpie. I lent it to him, and then I fell asleep, and he did not give it back to me. But did you tell him that you wanted it back? asks the magpie. The girl blushed and said: No, I told him he could play with it. This angered the magpie. So, he did not steal it, you gave it to him as a present (*verschenken*). You lied to me, get out of my sight. The girl started weeping again, and the birds appeared a third time. To their repeated question the girl answered. I gave away my wreath, and now I am sad. The birds suggest that she looked for the little dwarf (*das Zwerglein*), who gave back all the things that had been given away. The girl went to the dwarf. I gave Hansl my wreath, please give it back to me. How did you give it away, asks the dwarf. I told him he could play with it, fell asleep and when I woke up, he was gone and the wreath with him. But did you really give it to him as a gift? asks the dwarf. No, said the girl blushing, I only wanted to lend it to him. And did Hansl want it? No, said the girl blushing even more, he only wanted to play with it. The dwarf did not like what he heard. You did not give him the wreath as a gift, you lost it. You did not tell me the truth. Out of my sight. The girl cried, but this time it did not make any sense, since the birds did not come back anymore. “Da weinte das Maederl, aber das hatte keinen Sinn mehr, denn es kamen keine Voegelchen mehr und das Maerchen ist zu Ende” (Flusser 2018).

A wreath (*das Kränzchen*) generally has a rounded shape, it can be a decorative garland, a chaplet, a crown or a ring. Symbolically it can stand for eternity, hope, commemoration. A laurel wreath is a symbol of triumph. Its round circular form is also a commentary on the impossible search of truth, which has no beginning and no end. What the reader learns about the truth is that it is the product of a constantly shifting and changing narrative. We get to know more and more about the situation, and why the girl weeps. But in the end the story turns back on itself. The wreath is irredeemably lost, and we do not really know what the truth is. Truth is about finding and losing, being honest and lying, giving away and stealing. The rabbit is good at finding lost objects. The magpie steals stolen objects back and the dwarf gives back all the things that were given away as a gift. The birds are patient but, in the end, they disappear, because the truth despite all the efforts was not found. Perhaps they would reappear in a second attempt. But then perhaps all the fairy

tale of truth is about is the impossibility to find the real truth. Was the wreath lost, stolen or given away? The implication is that each new attempt is going to reveal more lies and that even a second and third attempt will not bring us any closer to the truth. Finally, Flusser's story is also a parody, if not a satire, of fairy tales as such which play an essential role within German culture. The insistent use of diminutive forms – *Mäderl, Kränzchen, Vögelchen, Hansl, Zwerglein* – could be read as a textual signal that points in this direction. In this sense, the sexual innuendo could be an essential part of the intended satirical rendering of the fairy tale.

(In)Authenticity

Even though “Echtheitszertifikat” (Certificate of Authenticity) (Flusser 2025a) is crossed out in the list that precedes *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit* (Flusser 2025e) it was included in the selection. This parodistic text is remindful of the satirical fairy tale “The Fairy Tale of Truth” (Flusser 2018), with which it shares a gender specific dimension. The author of the certificate is an unknown professor of archaeology. Ironically enough, his signature at the end is illegible, which makes the document useless as a certificate. Flusser has used this strategy in many other philosophical fictions, perhaps as a way to signal the absence of any authority that could validate the narrative.

The unknown archaeologist is describing an object from the private collection of Mr. Jefferson H. Pomerancenbleet in Chicago (Illinois). A *Pomeranze* (*Citrus aurantium*) is a bitter orange prized for its fragrance and aroma. It is used in the production of perfumes, colognes and fragrances. The German term originated in the Biedermeier period at the beginning of the 19th century and generally referred to young, naive country girls whose rosy cheeks resembled the color of ripe bitter oranges. *Landpomeranze* is still used occasionally today as a derogatory term for women with a rude behaviour, clumsy and awkward in appearance and demeanour, mostly from a rural environment. The suffix *bleet-* could be linked etymologically to the English word *to bleat*, to make a loud noise, that is used for the cry of a sheep or a goat.

The object in question is a copper cylinder in the form of a female figure in an obscene (sic!) position. According to the anonymous professor it is a whip handle in the shape of Ishtar, the ancient Mesopotamian goddess of love, war, and fertility. In the description, the narrative keep moving back and forth between authentic and inauthentic. The object is (1) authentic because it is a Phoenician work from the 7th century BC, but (2) inauthentic because it is a copy of a Babylonian work of art which is itself a copy of a Sumerian piece. It is also (3) inauthentic because the Babylonian original was made of gold, but (4) authentic because the older Sumerian figure was made of copper and (5) because the representation of Ishtar corresponds to traditional parameters. On the other hand, it is (6) inauthentic because it did not serve any devotional purpose but was used as a

whip handle. However, it is (7) authentic because the representation of the goddess demonstrates a sense of form as well as spatial awareness on the part of the artist. The goddess unfortunately is monumental in size and not suitable for the miniature form of this item, which makes it inauthentic (8). General appraisal: Mr. Pomerancenbleet is entitled to incorporate this object into his collection because it consists only of authentic objects, however it does not serve science or art but simply a capital investment and is thus inauthentic. As in “Das Märchen von der Wahrheit” true complete authenticity is not to be found but is always tainted by inauthenticity. Contrary to the fairy tale, where each new step leads us further away from the truth, here we move back and forth between the authentic and the inauthentic to the very end. Authenticity is inseparable from inauthenticity.

The Caterpillar

“Die Raupe” (The Caterpillar) (Flusser 2025b) explores the animal world in its connection to the human species and is thus a precursor of the “Beast I-V series”, some of texts in *Angenommen* (Flusser 1989) and *Vampyroteuthis infernalis* (1987)¹⁵ The narrator is a biologist reflecting on the question of human identity (*Persönlichkeit*) in comparison to the life of insects, more specifically of caterpillars. He is working for the Institute of Biology and studying seven species of insects. In the certificate he is addressing his questions to an unspecified “Doctor of Theology.” With regard to later texts this early attempt lacks in narrative complexity. However, it shows the very starting point of Flusser’s philosophical fictions and the direction that this narrative vein took in the ensuing years, which culminated in his wonderful and much more accomplished *Vampyroteuthis infernalis*.

Human life proceeds without any major rupture or change, from the cradle to the grave, so the narrator tell us. Obviously, there are hidden physiological forces that can suddenly erupt, but a more superficial eye can detect only three stages: conception, birth and death. The situation with insects is completely different. The life cycle of a caterpillar is animated by major changes: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Can we therefore assume that the adult insect has the same personality as the caterpillar? Is the butterfly, for instance, responsible for the Gargantuan appetite of the caterpillar?

In his fables, Flusser treats animals as if they had a spiritual life of their own, they are never considered mere soulless machines. The boundaries between humans and animals are permeable. They are much closer to human beings as one would normally think. The Bibliophagus convictus,

¹⁵ For the role of animals in Flusser’s philosophical fictions see Rainer Guldin, “A Modest Proposal for the Saponification of Fats: On the Role of Satire in Vilém Flusser’s Work”, in *Flusser Studies* 36, November <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/guldin-saponification.pdf>: 11-19.

the *Vampyrotheuthis infernalis* and the caterpillar also allow for a new often satirical perspective on human society. The meaning of the experiment the narrator is describing in his text “lies more in the field of theology than biology.” This is why “I have preferred to consult you as a pastor and theologian (*als Seelsorger und Gottesgelehrter*). As a scientist I will maintain a cool demeanour and remain silent about my personal feelings and hopes.” (2025b: 1). As the text shows, this is more wishful thinking than anything.

The narrator analyses the remains of fragments that were found on the capsule of the Sputnik III, which had landed in Novaya Zemlya, an archipelago in northern Russia situated in the Arctic Ocean. The first artificial satellite, Sputnik, was launched into an elliptical orbit by the Soviet Union on 4 October 1957 and fall back into the atmosphere on January 4, 1958. A third satellite of its kind, Sputnik III, was launched in 1958 and burned up while re-entering the atmosphere. This means that the text was probably written in the late 1950s. From the information provided we are to assume that the narrator is Russian, and as a communist also an atheist. This creates a conflict between the communist atheist, the biologist, the doubting believer and, as we will discover later on, also the person with an artistic sensitivity. Flusser’s narrators are always caught up in unsolvable contradictions.

Under the microscope the eggs reveal an extremely complex nucleus structure, as if they were coming from a yet unknown future of geological evolution. The eggs are different from those of present-day species like those of the Carboniferous or the Permian geological period. After a few days, seven hairy green larvae slowly develop. They do not look any different from other larvae but behave quite differently. A subtle human-like bond seems to exist between them, like between sisters and brothers. However, as further developments soon show, this bond is more of an aesthetic than ethical nature. The caterpillars help each other and show kindness to one another. They perform ceremonial dances full of attentions and courtesy that remind one of the bridal dances of birds, and the chivalrous fights of male mammals, which are not “without a certain ridiculousness in such ugly animals.” (*ibid.*2) Then caterpillars start to excrete long slimy filaments of saliva, but do not use them to build a cocoon, as is to be expected from their species. These strands are more of a social nature, like a visible “materialised etiquette” (*materialisierter Knigge*). The animals begin pirouetting like horses of the Spanish school in Vienna. In the meantime, they keep spewing more slimy filaments that start filling the space in which they have been put. The strands that start interlinking and criss-crossing each other have different colours: Red, blue and silvery. It is not uncommon in nature, adds the narrator, that birds build nests and ants anthills in a collective effort and that these endeavours appeal to our human sense of aesthetic refinement and beauty. However, what the caterpillars are doing is completely different. “And suddenly I realized that they were creating a work of art.” (*ibid.*) The caterpillars are engaged in creating a work of art in the

human sense of the term. At this point, the distancing perspective of the biologist meets the emotional response of the aesthete, a being sensitive to art. As a biologist he cannot “detect any biological function in the emerging structure. ... it did not lead to pupation but only prevented the caterpillars from moving and made their feeding more difficult, it was downright hostile to life. From a biological perspective it was a pathological outgrowth on the bodies of the caterpillars and in this sense a work of art ... What emerged from the mouths (I almost said: from under the fingers) of the caterpillars was the expression of a creative spirit striving for form and freedom. It lacked that organic, self-evident quality that characterizes the beautiful creations of nature ... it captivated with its problematic nature ... It struggled for perfection without achieving it.” (ibid.) What follows is the description of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a work of art “in the Wagnerian sense of the word (*ein ganzes Kunstwerk im wagnerschen Sinne des Wortes*) integrating visual and acoustic effects, rhythm, dance and colour. “The entire fabric formed a translucent, irregularly shaped and pulsating sphere, which from a distance resembled a mobile.” The rhythm corresponding to a “*Zweivierteltakt in allegro, ma non troppo*” (ibid.) was mathematically correct, emanating in waves from the center of the sphere and diffusing over its entire surface: a soft motif in blue, followed by a second mischievous motif in red and green, overshadowed by a purple tone that faded out in lamenting violet radiations. Interestingly enough, Flusser came back to this idea – minus the music and the rhythm – during the events of the *Casa da Cor* in São Paulo (1987-1989).¹⁶ The *Colorarium*, as it was called, was based on an idea by Karl Gerstner and Vilém Flusser. It would have had a spherical structure and consisted of tubes connected by knots containing light bulbs coloured in different hues. The individual bulbs could be programmed, and complex processes could be fed into the model. (Guldin 2023a).

The narrator speaks about the fascination that this structure exerted on him and his team of collaborators. “The strangely unearthly, even angelic impression, the whole thing evoked in me” was due to the “sexless beings” that created it. It was “not a compensation of libido, but perhaps of hunger.” In fact, the caterpillars completely refrained from eating in this period, practicing a sort of “gastronomical chastity.” (Flusser 2025b:2) In this early text, art is opposed to science and to life itself. By creating their wonderful work of art, the larvae nearly starve themselves to death.

After a few weeks, the structure starts to implode slowly, moving through different stages that the narrator compares to the history of the arts in the west: a classical stage, which is at the same time the climax, is followed by a baroque stage, full of flourishes and artistic entanglements, and a romantic period only to end in complete decadence. The filaments turn into formless slime and the caterpillars look exhausted and emptied out. A few days later, they start building their

¹⁶ For this see *Flusser Studies* 35 – May 2023 <https://www.flusserstudies.net/archive/flusser-studies-35-%E2%80%93-may-2023-special-issue-vil%C3%A9m-flusser-colour>.

cocoons, from which a fortnight later seven white, unsightly male butterflies emerge armed with gigantic proboscises and pincers, and pounce on each other with furious frenzy. None of them could be saved from the murderous fraternal feud that ensued.

The text ends with a series of questions. How could the ridiculous and pompous but highly creative caterpillars turn into primitive killing butterflies? Should they not have become beautiful butterflies instead? If they allow us to a look into the future of the protoplasm, how was such a relapse to be explained theologically? Was there a rupture in between caterpillar and butterfly during which their soul and spirit got lost? Were they simply exhausted from their collective creative act? Or was their death a punishment for their creative arrogance? The last sentence is tongue in cheek: “I anxiously await your reply.” (ibid.3)

The last two texts, I will now turn to, link the question of scientific and philosophical truth of the first two essays to the relationship between humans and animals that is at the center of “The Caterpillar.”

Menschwerdung: The Piltdown Man, the Cro-Magnon and the Neanderthal

Das Märchen von der Wahrheit contains two related stories, one in each section of the book: “Kurzfassung des Endberichts der Forschungs Expedition. An die Akademie für Menschwerdung Cro-Magnon” (Short Summary of the Final report of the Research Expedition. To the Cro-Magnon Academy for Humanization) (Flusser 2025d) and “Famous Man I: The Piltdown Man” translated by Edith Flusser into German as “Berühmte Männer I Der Piltdownmensch” (Flusser 2025c) This text was published in *Posto Zero* on April 6, 1972, as “O homem de Piltdown: Homens famosos I”.

The Piltdown Man was a paleoanthropological fraud. Although there were doubts about its authenticity from its very discovery in 1912, its falsity was only definitively demonstrated in 1953. Charles Dawson, an amateur archaeologist claimed that he had found a section of a human-like skull near Piltdown, East Sussex and that this was the missing link between man and apes. The finds included a jawbone, skull fragments, a set of teeth, and primitive tools. The skull fragments were reconstructed, and it was argued that they belonged to a human ancestor from 500.000 years ago. The new human species was called *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, referring to its discoverer Charles Dawson. In 1953, it was found that the reconstructed skull consisted of a combination of an altered mandible and some teeth of an orangutan and the cranium of a small-brained human .

In his text, Flusser focuses less on the scientific accuracy and apparent authenticity of the find, than on the changing political and cultural associations that went with it. When the discovery was made in 1912, both the conservatives and the left claimed it to support their own political agenda. The right stressed the greatness of the United Kingdom and the importance of a long-

lasting national tradition. The Piltdown Man was a justification for Rudyard Kipling's notion of "The White Man's Burden", which was used to proclaim the superiority of the white race to justify world-wide colonialism. On the other hand, the Fabian Society, an independent left-leaning think tank, used the discovery to question the belief that God had created mankind, advocating that man was the outcome of Darwinian evolution. "Coincidentally, Darwin was English, which unconsciously suited even the Left." (Flusser 2025c) As in the "Fairy Tale of Truth" and in "Certificate of Authenticity" there is no argumentative rock bottom to be made out here, neither on the right nor on the left. On the contrary: both parties fell for a forgery. "The Piltdown Man is not a human skull with the teeth of an ape, but a human skull to which the teeth of an ape had been added. In a word: a joke by students." (ibid.)

The short text also contains a thought-provoking twist. The supremacist white ideology and the left lost interest in the end because the discoveries of earlier versions of men were found outside Europe. These did not go back to hundreds of thousands, but to millions of years. With the discovery of more and more remote apelike remains the political agenda shifted. It was no longer an Englishman but an African straight out of Rhodesia that caught the attention. This inspired "the Black Power movement, which naturally assumes that the man from Rhodesia is black and therefore beautiful." (ibid.) In this way, "white supremacy" and "Black is beautiful" unexpectedly join hands, based on an ideological understanding of history and race. If we consider the extreme political and cultural polarization that has built up over the last few years – Cancel culture and Critical racism theory on the one hand, and populist nationalism and conservatism, on the other – Flusser's politically incorrect statement from the early 1970s is quite refreshing.

The other text, "Kurzfassung des Endberichts der Forschungs Expedition. An die Akademie für Menschwerdung Cro-Magnon" (Flusser 2025d) also deals with the origins of man and the science of anthropology. The Cro-Magnons were the first early modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) to settle in Europe. They migrated from western Asia and slowly occupied the continent more than 50.000 years ago. Their name comes from the skeletons discovered in 1868 at the Cro-Magnon rock shelter, in Dordogne, by the French palaeontologist Louis Lartet. The Cro-Magnons or European early modern humans interbred with the indigenous Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*) who went extinct about 40.000 years ago. The first Neanderthal fossil was discovered in 1856 in the Neander Valley, Germany. They were initially considered to be a lower race because of their long and low skulls with a heavy and rounded brow ridge as well as strong teeth and jaws. In 1864, the Irish geologist William King recommended to classify Neanderthals and modern humans as two distinct genera by comparing the Neanderthal's braincase to that of a chimpanzee, arguing that they were incapable of moral conceptions. The French palaeontologist Marcellin Boule suggested two different lineages, a more evolved one descending from the British Piltdown Man (sic!) to the

French Cro-Magnon, which culminated in modern Europeans, and a less evolved dead-end lineage leading from the German Heidelberg Man to the Neanderthal. Probably because of this, for a long time, calling someone a Neanderthal was an insult. In Flusser's philosophical fable this clear-cut opposition gives way to a more balanced interpretation.

The Neanderthal was used as a mirror, on which was projected that which one did not like about oneself. However, when scientists learned about their cultural sophistication and abilities, their public image changed. In 2007, it was discovered that some Neanderthals carried genes leading to red hair and light skin. They stuck together, cared for the sick, and shared their prey among themselves. They were also strong and intelligent and knew the safest hiding places and the most profitable hunting grounds. *Homo sapiens* reached Europe around 40.000 years ago, and just 10.000 years later, the Neanderthals were gone forever. However, contrary to earlier theories, they were not exterminated by modern humans. Neanderthals and modern humans must have interbred when they lived concurrently in Europe and the Middle East. Today, some people still carry traces of this interbreeding in their genes. After decoding the Neanderthal genome, it was found out that one to four percent of our DNA comes from Neanderthals.

Flusser's essay was most probably written in the early 1980s in connection with *Angenommen* (Flusser 1989). But there is also a link to his last project *Menschwerdung* (Flusser 1993b) published posthumously. The perspective chosen by Flusser is that of a narrator (*Erzähler*) from the prehistoric human species of the Cro-Magnon reflecting on the search for other foreign human species. Ironically enough, he argues like a modern anthropologist, which goes to show how science especially when it comes to the description of human beings and human culture, cannot be easily separated from earlier forms of narrative. Myth and science, as Michel Serres would put it, blend into each other. Another irony is to be found in the title. The research report has been written for the "Akademie für Menschwerdung" (The Academy for Humanization), that is, for a moment in time that is still thousands of years away. The narrator's impossible perspective blends the past with a future he could not have known yet. Furthermore, the "Short Summary" is a hybrid text, on the border of science and fiction. It has been signed by the leader of the expedition, a magician wearing a buffalo mask, and by the narrator himself: a proto-scientist and storyteller. The other participants are two hunters, a female plant-gatherer, a fire maker and two stonemasons. The expedition equipment consists of five dogs, seven spears, three throwing wedges, two flints, four arches and seventeen arrows. The expedition is financed thanks to the proceeds from three hunting ventures (skins, teeth, bones of cave bears). The chosen route of the expedition moves along the Dordogne, a river in southwest France, over the glaciers of The Massif Central, into the valley of the Rhone pursuing its course, over Lake Geneva and the other alpine lakes to Lake Constance, along the Rhine to the swamps, over the glaciers of the Ardennes into the Marne valley, over the tundra to the Saône

river, and from there back to the glaciers of The Massif Central and the Dordogne. The aim is the exploration of other human species.

The expedition operates with a working definition of what it means to be human. A hypothesis in the modern sense. The guidelines provided for the identification of human species are upright posture, freely dangling hands, possession of tools and articulation of speech-like sounds (Flusser 2025d: 1). However, these criteria are soon discovered to be insufficient. Since most species they meet have to be excluded. Only one species they come across in the lower valley of the Rhine near Neanderthal meets the criteria. The expedition also has to deal with the difficulty of distinguishing clearly between their own species and others. In the valley of the Saone, they come across a group whose religious primitivity repulses them. So, they decide to consider human the species to which they feel sexually attracted. As in “The Caterpillar” the distancing point of view is thus enriched by a strongly emotional and aesthetic dimension. Flusser ironically points to the difficulties human beings have when it comes to think about themselves. In his view, we are still in a prehistoric position when it comes to understanding who we truly are, that is, we are still caught up in the process of *Menschwerdung*.

When the Cro-Magnons finally manage to communicate with the Neanderthal, they discover that these are afraid of them, even if they seem to have been waiting for such an opportunity for a long time. They consider them enemies because, as they argue, in ancient times the Cro-Magnons penetrated in the territory where they were living as hunters and forced them out of it. Even the Dordogne, which is the very cradle of the Cro-Magnons had once been one of the native grounds of the Neanderthal. “We suggest that the academy assesses this ... If we are indeed their enemies then this must color our perception of these people.” (ibd.: 1) When they first meet the Neanderthals, they do not perceive them as human-like beings. “I do not say humans, because at first these creatures made an almost exaggerated, animal-like impression on us. Later on, this impression faded for some of us, but the expedition leader never lost his aversion, especially toward the sorcerer of the Neanderthal group. He could never help but call him a ‘monkey’ (*Affe*) and regard those members of the expedition who had friendly relations with these people as ‘degenerate’ (*entartete*) representatives of our cause.” (ibd.2)

This impression is due in part to their head posture. The Neanderthal never lift their head, and being smaller than the Cro-Magnon, they tend to look like dogs (*hundeartig*) eying the others from below. However, the members of the expedition find out that this is not a form of submission but due to their constant ruminating (*Grübeln*). They let their heads dangle because they are bigger and because they harbour thoughts that are completely foreign to the Cro-Magnons, and which they pursue continuously. The faces of the Neanderthal also look animal-like to the Cro-Magnon. They have receding foreheads, strong brow ridges, long and broad noses and are chinless. “Later

on, we discovered that they had a similar reluctance towards us, and that some of them never overcame this impression. Our small dangling heads on long, narrow bodies, our monkey-like arms, and our lack of noses seemed idiotic to them.” (ibid.) Flusser shifts back and forth between the two perspectives in an attempt to disavow any false sense of superiority. The relativity of one’s view of others is also emphasized by the changes that occur in time, that is, by the constant revisions that emerge from the dialogical interaction. When the two species finally manage to look into each other’s eyes (*der erste Blickwechsel*) some of the Neanderthal suddenly seem to recognize the Cro-Magnon. They look to them as if they come from a distant past, as if they are long lost parents. The Cro-Magnon, on the other hand, have the impression that they have met strange but kindred spirits. “There is no question of an objective report.” (ibid.: 3)

After seventeen days of permanence, only friendship and hostility developed between the two groups of humans, but no form of reciprocal sexual attraction whatsoever. “In this respect, these interactions can be compared to our relationship with dogs. ... this has prompted us to recognize in the group of Neanderthals a foreign form of human beings. But the comparison with dogs is flawed because a genuine symbolic exchange of ideas has been established between us, which has led to mutual recognition among some of us.” Communication was made possible thanks to hand gestures and dances. Their “hands are elegant, eloquent and smooth. They soon started to learn our words and touchingly tried to repeat them after us. They never really managed to move beyond a childish babbling. We on the other hand had difficulties to decode their singing. ... the way they expressed themselves was more primitive than our language, but their structure was better suited to carry messages. ... In the end, we agreed on using drums as a common code ...” Their “culture can be seen as primitive. Their drawings are childlike, if not childish, and they hardly use any colours. ... But there are signs of a further development that could surpass by far our own technology. And their music appears to be far more refined than ours. We have recorded their polyphonic compositions as best as possible to allow further study. Our subdivision into male and female ... does not seem to exist for them. They also seem to recognize the divine in animals less than we do. On the other hand, they seem to revere the sacred in children.” (ibid. 3) As with the fusion of authenticity and inauthenticity, there is no sense of superiority which is not accompanied by a complementary sense of shortcoming.

Contrary to the majority of the members of the expedition, the leader does not want to maintain the contact with the foreign group arguing that it will threaten their identity with dangerous foreign influences (*Fremdgut*). He also insists on the higher development of Cro-Magnon technology and their greater body strength. Any further study of the Neanderthal must only help to get them out of the way more efficiently. The report ends with two contrasting conclusions. The majority argues that the Neanderthals represent a new human species worth studying closer. For the

leader of the expedition, on the other hand, the Neanderthals are only a side-branch of human evolution, ultimately dead-end. They are less like children and more like animals, something that can be deduced objectively (sic!) from the form of their faces. Any further contact has thus to be vehemently recused. And any future expedition should treat them as objects for hunting. The magician's signature comes first, despite the fact that he is not the narrator of the story.

The Cro-Magnons articulate two attitudes that are very much in tune with present day considerations, when it comes to understanding other cultures. The magician wearing a buffalo mask represents the dark side of an objectifying science appropriating reality in order to destroy it. No wonder he considers the magician of the other group as his first and foremost enemy. The use of words like *Affe* and *entartet* shows his closeness to racist discourses and Nazi ideology. The mask itself could point to the unavowed link of modern science to magic practices.

The other members of the expedition opt for a reconciliation between the two groups, even if they wrongly assume that the Neanderthals are a new human species that has evolved from their own. The child metaphor, furthermore, implies a questionable evolutionary scheme drawing a parallel between ontogenetic and phylogenetic evolution. The narrator is opposed to the magician. Even if he writes the report in the name of the whole expedition team he is clearly on the side of the majority of the members. The fact that he is the one to tell the story, and not the magician, perhaps points to fact that there is still hope when it comes to human evolution as a whole and that the majority seeking understanding and reconciliation will prevail in the long run. The deepest irony of the text lies in the fact that prehistoric men argue like modern human beings, which exposes any false assumption of cultural or historical superiority.

Conclusion

In Flusser's philosophical fictions there is always a conspicuous narrator that combines different points of view, ranging from science, to philosophy, art, and religion. It is never an objective perspective as the personal interests and feelings of the narrator keep intruding into the story. The five texts analysed here are no exception to this rule. It is through these narrators that Flusser introduces fictionality into a supposedly scientific objective take on reality. The parodistic, ironical and satirical side of his philosophical fictions questions the authority and credibility of the author, of any author. The fundamental discursive hybridity of the narrator's perspective corresponds to the composite nature of the text itself and the choice of the subject matter. In my view, this is one the main legacies of Flusser's thinking, a point of view that would have to be applied to all his texts, not just his philosophical fictions, even if the situation here is slightly different. This tongue in cheek attitude pervades all of his writings and requires a reader that can engage dialogically with the text

never simply taking it at face value. It is a pity that this view of Flusser's philosophy is still struggling to get the necessary attention. In this sense, it is a pity that *Das Märchen von der Wahrheit. Glossen und Philosophiefiktionen* was ignored for such a long time. Let us hope that these texts will eventually find the readers they were intended for. Habent sua fata libelli.

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