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VILEM FLUSSER Scribere necesse est vivere non est.

There is a similarity between the gesture of writing and navigating. Both draw lines over an empty surface. A surface of which Camões said: *run ca dantes navegada*. The Renaissance discoverers were ready to sacrifice if necessary their lives to navigation. Many have always been ready to do the same for writing. Why is this so? There are two methods to answer the question. One is to read texts in order to discover the gesture of writing that hides behind it. The other is to observe the gesture of writing in the making. The second method is introspective and therefore difficult to control, but it has the advantage of immediacy. This paper will follow the second method in its attempt to find out why writing is more important than living.

Writing is a gesture by which lines are drawn on a surface with the help of some tool, (a pen, a typewriter and so forth). The lines are drawn according to specific rules, and the material surface on which they are being drawn, (a sheet of paper and so forth), is changed by the gesture in order to serve a specific purpose. A gesture which changes existing material according to specific rules with the help of tools in order to give the material a specific purpose is called "work". He who writes is a worker, and writing is a "craft", an "art", or what the Greeks called a "techné".

But behind the technician who draws the lines there is an interiority which may be called "writer". Gestures are articulations of interiorities of moving bodies, and the gesture of writing articulates a writer. A writer is an attitude toward writing. The purpose of this paper is to surprise such an attitude during the gesture. Introspection reveals three different attitudes, "three writers", within me. I must hurry, however, to add that I can make such a distinction only if I step back from myself like now. During the concrete experience I have of my writing I can distinguish nothing of the sort, because the experience absorbs me. On the other hand I know even during the experience that I am looking over my shoulder while writing. In my interiority there always stands a critic behind the writer and influences the writing. The gesture of writing articulates both the writer and the critic. During the writing of the present paper I want the critic to be articulated. Thus, one step removed, I shall try to describe the three writers within me.

(a) I write to produce a text on the sheet of paper which is a mirror of my thoughts. I know that I cannot make the text mirror my thoughts immediately. I must first insert my thoughts within one of the languages at my disposal. Language is a mediation between my thoughts and my writing. A very dynamical mediation. My thoughts are changed in trying to adapt themselves to the language, and the language changes in trying to adapt itself to my thoughts. My writing will mirror the language changed by my thoughts which have been changed by the language. If I assume this attitude toward writing I shall have to work on three layers of raw material which interfere with each other: thought, language, and writing on paper. I shall be subject,

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while doing this, to three sets of rules: the rules of thought, the rules of the language, and the rules of writing on paper.

My purpose in this will be to produce a text in which my reader will recognize me. The text is meant to be a mediation between myself and my reader. If I assume this attitude, the gesture of writing becomes a gesture in search of my other. I know that I cannot reach my other directly. I must publish my text in order to reach him. But I am not, while writing thus, interested in the publicity, but in the privacy of my other. The public space is nothing but a necessary and unavoidable mediation between the private space of myself and the private space of my other. Through the text and through the publishing of the text I want to be with my other in private. So that we may live together. I want him to recognize me, accept me, refuse me, or change me within his own interiority. I want to dialogue with him within his interiority. I want him to use my text as a model for thinking and living. As my subjective model.

This attitude toward writing may be called "poetical", if by "poiesis" we understand the revelation of something hidden. If I take this attitude I work thoughts, language and paper in such a way that my hidden interiority be revealed to my other. Of course: my interiority is not only characteristic of myself, but also the product of more fundamental and general levels. My reader may recognize such levels in the text he is reading. But during the concrete experience of writing thus I feel to be articulating my private being. In fact, my writing is an imperative directed to my other: Take me as your model! This is why Rilke says of poetry that it shouts: Du musst dein Leben ändern! (You must change your living!). Now to write like this is more necessary than to live, because I cannot live without being recognized by my other.

(b) I write to produce a text on the sheet of paper which is a mirror of some problem in the world. A mirror of some "object". I know that I cannot make the text mirror the object immediately. I must first think about the object, then put my thought in a specific language, and then write the language down. All these complex mediations will change the object. If I take this attitude toward writing I shall have to work through the various intermediate layers between object and text in such a way that the structure of the object appear in the text through all the layers. I shall be subject, while doing this, to the rules imposed by the object, and shall have to manipulate the rules of thought, language and paper to adjust themselves to the rules of the object. And I shall have to suspend myself as much as possible during the process, in order not to interfere in the object.

My purpose in this will be to produce a text in which the reader will recognize the object. The text is meant to be a mediation between the object and the reader. But in fact I am not interested primarily in the

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reader at all, if I am writing thus, but in the object. I know that objects can be recognized, understood and manipulated only during the process of public cumulative discourse about them. What I am interested in is this public discussion of the object. I want to participate in it. It is the publicity of the process I am interested in. I know that the public space is necessarily and unavoidably a result of influences from private spaces. My text is being written in private and will be read in private. But it is in the public space that I mean it to be accepted, refused, or changed in order to recognize its object ever better. I want my text to be part of the public discourse. As one of models of objects, as an objective model.

This attitude toward writing may be called "scientific", if by "science" we understand the cumulative process of resolving problems. If I take this attitude I work thoughts, language and paper in order to discover some hitherto ignored aspects of a given object. By doing this I exist in the true sense of the term. Because to exist means to negate the objective world which surrounds us by recognizing its objects, understand them and change them. Now to write like this is more necessary than to live, because I cannot live without existing in the true sense of the term.

(c) The longer I write the more I feel that both attitudes so far described are somehow dishonest. It is, of course, obvious to me why I sometimes do take them. I take the subjective attitude because the pressure within my interiority sometimes becomes too strong for it not to be articulated in writing. And I take the objective attitude because the oppression which the problems of the world exercise on me sometimes becomes too strong for it not to be articulated in writing. But although I cannot avoid to write sometimes in those two attitudes, I understand ever better why they are somehow dishonest. The subjective attitude is dishonest, because I assume myself in it to be a sort of passive channel through which the interior pressure articulates itself. And I am no longer sufficiently naive to be able to believe this. And the objective attitude is dishonest, because I assume myself in it to float somehow above my own writing, above the object, above my thoughts, above the language, and to be able to control all of this from such a transcendence. I am no longer sufficiently naive to believe that this is possible. Now that I have lost these two naivetés I am painfully learning to assume a third attitude toward writing.

I write to produce a text on the sheet of paper which is a mirror of the concrete gesture of writing. Now this gesture is an articulation of my concrete being-in-the-world. It articulates the dialectics of such a being namely that it is totally determined by the world and at the same time totally free within it. This is so because "the world" is a function of "being", and "being" is a function of "the world". This dialectics is articulated in the gesture of writing, because the writer is a function of the text, and the

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text is a function of the writer. The writer does not become concrete unless he writes a text, and the text is not concrete unless it is written by a writer. Therefore the text, if written in this attitude of concreteness, must mirror my being-in-the-world, because it is a conscious articulation of it. If I take this attitude, I shall have to work the thoughts that I am and that are mine, the language that I use and that uses me, in such a way that the intention of my linguistically articulated thoughts, namely the world I have and the world that has me, be mirrored in the text which is my function and of which I am a function. The text will have to mirror the fact that I cannot and must not distinguish between subject and object of thought, of language, and of writing. By mirroring this, it will mirror the concrete reality which is my being-in-the-world of which it is a gesture. My task in writing will be calligraphic in the Chinese sense of the term: to write as beautifully as I can, and in the most beautiful language I am able of, the clearest thoughts I am capable of, to make shine my world through them.

My purpose in this will be to produce a text in which the reader will recognize my being-in-the-world. And, since the reader is with me in the world, a text in which the reader will recognize an aspect of his own being-in-the-world. In such a text there will be no sense in wanting to distinguish between the realm of the private and the realm of the public. Nor will there be any sense to distinguish between "poetry" and "science". Because there will be no sense in distinguishing between subject and object. The text aims at being an intersubjective model.

This attitude toward writing may be called "phenomenological", if by "phenomenology" we understand a method to articulate phenomena in their concreteness. I suspect that this is the attitude of every true writer in the past and at present. But I have no illusion: only the greatest of writers are able to sustain it. Most of the texts we have tend either to the subjective or to the objective attitude toward writing. This is so, because it is extremely difficult not to be either swallowed up in the process of writing, or to deliberately manipulate both the writing and the phenomenon one is writing about, thus transforming it into an object of writing. It is extremely difficult to have the text mirror the fact that writing is not a passion, nor is it an action, but something that might be called either an active passion or a passionate action. Namely a concrete gesture of concretely being in the world. But to try to fulfill this difficult task, to try to write honestly, is more necessary than living. Because I cannot live without seeking immortality, and immortality is continue to be in the world by being in it together with the uninterrupted chain of my others. Concretely speaking, there is no other immortality for the writer. *Scriber necesse est vivere non est.*