

VILÉM FLUSSER

Luiz Beltrão: "Sociedade de massa

(Comunicação e Literatura)"

This book consists of two rather independent parts. The first one is an attempt to define mass society. The second part is an attempt to define the position of the writer, (and the intellectual in general), with regard to mass media. In the first part three stages of social structures are presented: the "traditional" society, the "pluralistic" society, and the "mass" society. Many authors are cited, long quotations are presented, but no original, (or even interesting), information is given. One has the impression that this part of the book is a sort of resumé of a course given by the author at the University of Brasilia. It may have some didactic interest, but it contributes nothing, (in my opinion), to present discussions concerning mass society problems. The second part tries to point out the choice and the challenge presented by the mass media to writers. I do not believe that the author has thought sufficiently about the problems. This part, too, is full of quotations, and one has the impression of a show of the author's erudition. The true problems of freedom in a mass society, of manipulation of the media, of the alienating effect of media, of censorship in the media, and so forth, are either discussed very superficially, or else shown under a point of view which to me seems to be mistaken. This part, too, is a sort of sketch for lectures.

The book leaves a painful impression. Because it represents the enumeration of a great amount of rather disconnected information, one cannot escape the feeling that the author wants to show off his "culture", without contributing anything important to a problem which is so very important at present, and has so many specific, (and painful), aspects in the Brazilian situation. In short: the book seems to be a product of a mentality one should hope to be surpassed by Brazilian culture. An "underdeveloped" mentality, given to large statements without true messages. I do not think it should be published, (unless as an example of "underdeveloped alienation").

PS: I beg you to keep this critique in secret.