



COLECCIÓN CONOCIMIENTO CONTEMPORÁNEO

Pensar el poder: Derechos Humanos y herramientas comunicativas

Coords.

Victoria García-Prieto
Laura Manzano Zambruno

Dykinson, S.L.

PENSAR EL PODER:
DERECHOS HUMANOS Y
HERRAMIENTAS COMUNICATIVAS

PENSAR EL PODER:
DERECHOS HUMANOS Y
HERRAMIENTAS COMUNICATIVAS

Coord.
VICTORIA GARCÍA PRIETO
LAURA MANZANO ZAMBRUNO

Dykinson, S.L.

2022

PENSAR EL PODER: DERECHOS HUMANOS Y HERRAMIENTAS COMUNICATIVAS

Diseño de cubierta y maquetación: Francisco Anaya Benítez

© de los textos: los autores

© de la presente edición: Dykinson S.L.

Madrid – 2022

N.º 57 de la colección Conocimiento Contemporáneo

1ª edición, 2022

ISBN: 978-84-1122-080-4

NOTA EDITORIAL: Las opiniones y contenidos publicados en esta obra son de responsabilidad exclusiva de sus autores y no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de Dykinson S.L ni de los editores o coordinadores de la publicación; asimismo, los autores se responsabilizarán de obtener el permiso correspondiente para incluir material publicado en otro lugar.

ÍNDICE

INTRODUCCIÓN.....	10
VICTORIA GARCÍA PRIETO LAURA MANZANO ZAMBRUNO	
CAPÍTULO 1. LA PARRESÍA DE SÓCRATES: LIBERTAD DE PALABRA, FLORECIMIENTO ANÍMICO Y PODER	12
IGNACIO MARCIO CID	
CAPÍTULO 2. SÓCRATES FRENTE AL PODER DE ATENAS: ESTRATEGIAS Y CONSECUENCIA DE DIALOGAR CON LIBERTAD PARA LA VIRTUD	35
IGNACIO MARCIO CID	
CAPÍTULO 3. SUBLIMAÇÃO DA PROSPERIDADE E CONSERVAÇÃO DA MONARQUIA EM ALVITRE DE LUÍS MENDES DE VASCONCELOS, 1608	58
MARIA LEONOR GARCÍA DA CRUZ	
CAPÍTULO 4. NACIONALCHOVINISMO INSTITUCIONAL Y MELANCOLÍAS IMPERIALES EN EL DISCURSO DE ROCA BAREA: EL CONTUBERNIO NACIONALISTA ANTIESPAÑOL.....	68
MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ ILLANA	
CAPÍTULO 5. PODER Y REACCIÓN EN LA SEVILLA DEL XVIII: DISCURSOS Y CONTRADISCURSOS EN LAS FIESTAS DE PROCLAMACIÓN DE CARLOS IV	84
MARÍA-CARMEN MONTOYA-RODRÍGUEZ	
CAPÍTULO 6. DE LA PROPAGANDA SANDINISTA DE LOS OCHENTA AL ACTUAL <i>MARKETING</i> POLÍTICO DEL FSLN	102
BELÉN AMADOR RODRÍGUEZ	
CAPÍTULO 7. LA IRONÍA, EL INSULTO Y LA MENTIRA, FORMAS DE MANIPULACIÓN EN LA COMUNICACIÓN DEL DISCURSO POLÍTICO DESDE EL PUNTO DE VISTA DE LA PRAGMÁTICA.	121
ÁNGEL LÓPEZ GUTIÉRREZ	
CAPÍTULO 8. EL PENSAMIENTO ECONÓMICO DE LA CEOE Y SU ESTRATEGIA DE COMUNICACIÓN	136
DIEGO SÁNCHEZ DE LA CRUZ JORGE GALLARDO-CAMACHO	
CAPÍTULO 9. ESTRATEGIAS COMUNICATIVAS Y LOBBYING DE LA INDUSTRIA FARMACÉUTICA EN EUROPA.....	156
ANA BELÉN OLIVER GONZÁLEZ	

CAPÍTULO 10. LUCHA POR EL MONOPOLIO DE LAS RADIOCOMUNICACIONES ABORDO.....	171
RAQUEL ESTHER REY CHARLO	
CAPÍTULO 11. LA ECONOMÍA CIRCULAR COMO ATRIBUTO DE LA MARCA. SU EVALUACIÓN MEDIANTE <i>ECOLOGICAL</i> <i>NEUROMARKETING TEST</i>	186
ANTONIO GONZÁLEZ-MORALES	
CAPÍTULO 12. SINIZACIÓN Y SOFT POWER CHINO: LA COMUNICACIÓN PÚBLICA E INTERNET.....	205
GABRIEL TEROL ROJO	
CAPÍTULO 13. DE LAS IMÁGENES PREHISTÓRICAS AL USO DE EMOJIS. SÍMBOLOS E ICONOS EN LA COMUNICACIÓN MEDIADA POR COMPUTADORA.....	233
BORJA BARINAGA HÉCTOR PUENTE	
CAPÍTULO 14. SIMBOLISMO DEL PODER: LOS VIDEOJUEGOS COMO ELEMENTOS DE COMUNICACIÓN SIMBÓLICA PARA LA TRANSMISIÓN DE PROPAGANDA E IDEOLOGÍA DEL PODER.....	259
EGOITZ DE LA IGLESIA GANBOA	
CAPÍTULO 15. EXPERIENCIAS SOCIALES TRANSMEDIA: PLAYSTATION HOME COMO PRIMERA APROXIMACIÓN DE LOS METAVERSOS EN VIDEOCONSOLAS.....	279
MOISÉS ONETO MÁRQUEZ	
CAPÍTULO 16. REVOLUTION IN THE METAVERSE. READING VILÉM FLUSSER'S UTOPIA TODAY.....	296
MARCO MENON	
CAPÍTULO 17. LA INSERCIÓN DEL BESTSELLER EN LA LITERATURA CIENTÍFICA. UNA PERSPECTIVA INTERDISCIPLINAR Y MULTICULTURAL.....	313
MARÍA MUÑOZ-RICO	
CAPÍTULO 18. ALTERNATIVAS FICCIONALES AL PODER BIOPOLÍTICO: PERSPECTIVAS DESDE LA NARRATIVA RECIENTE LATINOAMERICANA.....	326
MIGUEL AMORES	
CAPÍTULO 19. COMUNICACIÓN DEL PODER A TRAVÉS DE LA ARQUITECTURA.....	338
MIGUEL ÁNGEL CALVO ANDRÉS	
CAPÍTULO 20. SEGURIDAD FRENTE A ECONOMÍA: IMPLANTACIÓN DE UN NUEVO SISTEMA, GMDSS.....	353
RAQUEL ESTHER REY CHARLO	

CAPÍTULO 21. LA RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL DE LOS MEDIOS EN LA INFORMACIÓN AMBIENTAL. UN ESTUDIO SOBRE LOS FACTORES QUE INFLUYERON EN EL COMPROMISO DE LOS PROFESIONALES DURANTE LA CATÁSTROFE DEL PRESTIGE	375
ISABEL LEMA BLANCO	
CAPÍTULO 22. LA GUERRA DE UCRANIA A TRAVÉS DE IMÁGENES. INSTAGRAM COMO HERRAMIENTA DE DIFUSIÓN DE LOS FOTOPERIODISTAS	388
MANUEL J. CARTES-BARROSO	
CAPÍTULO 23. HERRAMIENTAS TECNOLÓGICAS QUE CONTRIBUYEN EN EL DESENVOLVIMIENTO PROFESIONAL DE LOS COMUNICADORES CON DISCAPACIDAD EN EL ECUADOR.....	407
JULIA DOLORES ABIFANDI CEDEÑO	
BRENDA MIROSLAVA CARRIÓN RAMÍREZ	
MARÍA VIVIANA MURILLO PÁRRAGA	
NORMA ALLYSON ARMIJOS TRIVIÑO	
CAPÍTULO 24. EL PODER COMO DIALÉCTICA DE LA VIGILANCIA: ÉTICA DEL CUIDADO O ESTRATEGIA DE DOMINACIÓN.....	427
ELISA FERNÁNDEZ BASCONES	
CAPÍTULO 25. LA DICOTOMÍA ÉTICA ENTRE LA DEONTOLOGÍA FRENTE A LA TELEOLOGÍA	439
PAULA QUIJANO PEÑA	
CAPÍTULO 26. DESARROLLO DE SOFT SKILLS Y FORTALEZAS PERSONALES.....	447
ANA RODRÍGUEZ-MARTÍNEZ	
FRANCISCO JOSÉ LAFUENTE PÉREZ	
ELENA DOMPER BUIL	
CAROLINA FALCÓN LINARES	
CAPÍTULO 27. INVESTIGACIONES SOBRE EDUCACIÓN VIRTUAL DEBERÍAN CENTRARSE EN CÓMO APREHENDER A TRAVÉS DE LAS NARRACIONES MEDIÁTICAS.....	464
FRANK SOTO OCAMPO	
CAPÍTULO 28. LA ÍNFIMA PRESENCIA DE LA MUJER EN LOS MANUALES MÁS CONCURRIDOS DE LENGUA CASTELLANA Y LITERATURA	488
ÁLVARO CLAVIJO CORCHERO	
CAPÍTULO 29. O PODER DA COMUNICAÇÃO NA LECIONAÇÃO E NA APRENDIZAGEM NO ENSINO SUPERIOR.....	511
A. GUIMARÃES	
F. REBELO	

CAPÍTULO 30. IMPACTOS DE LA COVID-19 EN LAS COMPETENCIAS MEDIÁTICAS AUDIOVISUALES EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN COMUNICACIÓN DEL ÁREA ANDINA....	525
ABEL SUING	
CAPÍTULO 31. ESTRATEGIAS COMUNICACIONALES PARA EL APRENDIZAJE EN ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS CON DISCAPACIDAD VISUAL	540
HÉCTOR CÓRDOVA MEDINA	
WILLIAM SEGURA LOOR	
BRENDA CARRIÓN RAMÍREZ	
CAPÍTULO 32. LA COMUNICACIÓN COMO HERRAMIENTA EDUCATIVA FRENTE A CASOS DE ESTUDIANTES CON DISCAPACIDAD	559
MARÍA VIVIANA MURILLO PÁRRAGA	
BRENDA MIROSLAVA CARRIÓN RAMÍREZ	
JULIA DOLORES ABIFANDI CEDEÑO	
CAPÍTULO 33. CONFLICTOS AMBIENTALES Y DERECHOS HUMANOS. UNA PROPUESTA DIDÁCTICA CON PROFESORADO EN FORMACIÓN	576
LUIS SÁNCHEZ VÁZQUEZ	
CAPÍTULO 34. LOS MENORES EN LAS REVISTAS PERIODÍSTICAS	591
MARÍA-CONCEPCIÓN TURÓN-PADIAL	
CAPÍTULO 35. LOS MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN FRENTE A LOS LÍMITES CONSTITUCIONALES DEL DERECHO A LA INFORMACIÓN	606
DANIEL MARTÍNEZ CRISTÓBAL	
CAPÍTULO 36. EL DERECHO AL OLVIDO FRENTE AL DERECHO A LA INFORMACIÓN. EL CASO DE GOOGLE.....	621
TANIA BLANCO SÁNCHEZ	
CAPÍTULO 37. EL PODER DE LAS INICIATIVAS DE VERIFICACIÓN EN ESPAÑA	640
MARÍA LUISA CÁRDENAS RICA	
NURIA SÁNCHEZ-GEY VALENZUELA	
CAPÍTULO 38. LA PROTECCIÓN CONTRA LA DESINFORMACIÓN	655
LILIÁN GALVÁN BAUTISTA	
CAPÍTULO 39. COBERTURA SOBRE MUDANÇAS CLIMÁTICAS NO BRASIL: OS DIREITOS HUMANOS COMO TÓPICO DA REPERCUSSÃO DO IPCC-AR6.....	674
CLÁUDIA HERTE DE MORAES	

CAPÍTULO 40. EL IMPACTO DE LAS REDES SOCIALES EN LA LIBERTAD DE EXPRESIÓN DE LOS ECUATORIANOS.....	695
TERESA LÓPEZ MENDOZA	
ARIEL ABAD FIGUEROA	
CAPÍTULO 41. AS NOVAS DECLARAÇÕES DE DIREITOS DIGITAIS – UMA ABORDAGEM INICIAL	736
DORA RESENDE ALVES	
MARIA MANUELA MAGALHÃES SILVA	
CAPÍTULO 42. LA REPRESENTACIÓN ICÓNICA DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS EN LOS BANCOS DE IMÁGENES. LOS CASOS DE ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES Y SHUTTERSTOCK	754
JAVIER TRABADELA-ROBLES	
EDUARDO CARCABOSO-GARCÍA	
CAPÍTULO 43. LAS REPRESENTACIONES SOCIALES SOBRE LA CULTURA DE PAZ Y LA RESOLUCIÓN DE CONFLICTOS DESDE LA VISIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE PREGRADO	773
ROCÍO CALDERÓN GARCÍA	
JORGE ALFREDO JIMÉNEZ TORRES	
MARTHA VERGARA FREGOSO	
CAPÍTULO 44. PROCESOS DE DESARROLLO SOCIALMENTE INNOVADORES: ¿QUÉ PAPEL JUEGAN LOS ACTORES Y LOS LIDERAZGOS?	790
NÉSTOR VERCHER SAVALL	
CAPÍTULO 45. MIGRACIÓN INDÍGENA EN BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA. TEJIDO DE COMUNITARIEDAD DESDE LA COSMOVISIÓN PROPIA ..	808
MARÍA VICTORIA RUGELES GÉLVEZ	
CAPÍTULO 46. UNIVERSALIDAD, MUJER Y DERECHOS. LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LA REPRESENTANTE DEL CONSEJO INDÍGENA MEXICANO MARÍA DE JESÚS PATRICIO MARTÍNEZ EN LA DEMOCRACIA ELECTORAL MEXICANA.....	825
GABRIELA MORENO VALLE BAUTISTA	
CAPÍTULO 47. LAS MUJERES EN LA AUTOPERCEPCIÓN DE PARTICIPACIÓN EN ENTORNOS PÚBLICOS	846
YUDI JANEH YUCRA MAMANI	
CAPÍTULO 48. LA CRISIS DE LAS DEMOCRACIAS LIBERALES Y EL FIN DE LAS IDEOLOGÍAS	864
MARÍA DEL CARMEN SEGURA CUENCA	
ENRIQUE CONEJERO PAZ	

REVOLUTION IN THE METAVERSE.
READING VILÉM FLUSSER'S UTOPIA TODAY

MARCO MENON
University of Pisa

1. INTRODUCTION

This contribution is partially inspired by a “literary experiment” Robert Fitterman did in 2011. In the pages of the journal *English Language Notes*, the American poet attempted a very interesting and thought-provoking task: he “translated” some paragraphs of Vilém Flusser’s renowned essay *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (2000), substituting all the references to photography with references to web browsing. Instead of “camera,” one reads “web browser”; instead of “photographs,” one reads “websites”; instead of “seeing machine,” one reads “information-processing machine,” and so on (Fitterman 2011; cf. Place 2012). At first glance, Fitterman’s experiment might sound quite outlandish. Flusser’s essay on the philosophy of photography was indeed pioneering, but not at all focused on the World Wide Web, which became popular in the decade following Flusser’s death. But, as was already evident in the Czech thinker’s subsequent major work, *Into the Universe of Technical Images* (2011), most, if not all, of the concepts proposed in those books are part of a larger “digital worldview,” which allows such daring and ingenious “translation” attempts. It is my firm conviction that one should continue in this direction and try to adapt Flusser’s language to today’s circumstances. By doing so, one might realize how much his way of thinking was astonishingly far-sighted. In the spirit of Fitterman’s piece, then, the purpose of the present contribution is both straightforward and ambitious: it will engage with the thesis that Flusser’s ideas presented in *Into the Universe of Technical Images* can help articulate our present situation, in which we are said to be at the

doors of the “Metaverse”, or about to enter it. One might put this playfully by saying that the gist of this contribution consists in suggesting that *Into the Universe of Technical Images* might be now translated as *Into the Metaverse*. It is an attempt to read Flusser in the light of the current situation (and *vice versa*), trying to make the best out of his innovative and provocative ideas, in order to find some ethical and political orientation in a lifeworld that is radically changing.

The present contribution has three parts. In the first part, *Objectives and Methodologies*, I will focus on the notion of the Metaverse, explain its meaning and why it has now become so relevant, and show how it can be addressed by turning to Flusser’s concepts and theories. By doing so, I declare the main objective of this contribution and address its major methodological issues. In the second part, *Discussion*, I will introduce the concept of “unspectacular revolutionary” and show how it gives a meaningful ethical and political orientation for human action within digital environments such as the Metaverse. In the third and final part, *Results and Conclusions*, I will summarize what appears to be, from an ethical and political point of view, Flusser’s overall teaching concerning the present digital transformation.

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

I begin with the second notion referred to in the title, the Metaverse. As explained in Stylianos Mystakidis’s very recent and informative article, “the word Metaverse is a closed compound word with two components: *Meta* (the Greek prefix meaning ‘post’, ‘after’ or ‘beyond’) and *universe*. In other words, the Metaverse is a post-reality universe, a perpetual and persistent multiuser environment merging physical reality with digital virtuality” (Mystakidis 2022: 486). Such a post-reality universe “is based on technologies that enable multisensory interactions with virtual environments, digital objects and people” (Mystakidis 2022: 487). The concept has its origins in science-fiction literature, as Mystakidis explains:

The term Metaverse was invented and first appeared in Neal Stevenson's science fiction novel *Snow Crash* published in 1992. It represented a parallel virtual reality universe created from computer graphics, which users from around the world can access and connect through goggles and earphones. The backbone of the Metaverse is a protocol called the Street, which links different virtual neighborhoods and locations an analog concept to the information superhighway. Users materialize in the Metaverse in configurable digital bodies called avatars. Although Stevenson's Metaverse is digital and synthetic, experiences in it can have a real impact on the physical self. A literary precursor to the Metaverse is William Gibson's VR cyberspace called Matrix in the 1984 science fiction novel *Neuromancer*. (Mystakidis 2022: 492)

The concept has since then escaped, so to speak, the realm of science-fiction to break into our daily life and is about to become the next iteration of the Internet. The current development of the Metaverse, understood as the new paradigm of an immersive mixed reality, would allow users to "meet, socialize and interact without restrictions in an embodied form as 3D holograms or avatars in physical or virtual spaces," thus mixing virtual reality with augmented reality (Mystakidis 2022: 492-93). Or, as other scholars maintain, "The metaverse is a shared virtual space that allows individuals to interact with each other in the digital environment. Users exist in such a space as concrete virtual images, just like living in a world parallel to the real world. Such immersive technologies will shape the new form of immersive internet" (Lik-Hang Lee et al. 2021: 44). The question then is: what does such merging of virtual reality with physical spaces have to do with a Czech philosopher who wrote on photography and died in 1991; that is, before the publication of Neal Stevenson's novel and the existence of the technologies that are now giving us access to the Metaverse?

In order to explain this point, it is necessary to introduce a little bit of Flusser's intellectual context and work. Born in Prague in 1920, he fled Nazi persecution by moving to London and then to Brazil, where he spent more than 30 years becoming an important figure in local philosophical debates. After returning to Europe, he lived mainly in Italy and France, but achieved quite a bit of success in the German-speaking world, thanks to his ground-breaking works on media theory and photography (Finger, Guldin, Bernardo 2011; Bernardo & Guldin 2017). In truth, Flusser's efforts cannot be reduced to media theory. He was a

philosopher *tout court*, heavily influenced by the likes of Edmund Husserl and Martin Buber, and thus mainly concerned with the existential aspects of human communication that he investigated with a philosophical and phenomenological approach (Ströhl 2012). Attracted by all the technological and computer-related innovations of his time, Flusser was also already familiar with the notion of virtual realities and alternative worlds created by computer simulations, as one may gather from many of his articles and papers (cf. Flusser 1992). Among his most ambitious and speculative works, heavily influenced by the exciting novelties emerging in the field of information and communication technology, is the already mentioned *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, published first in German in 1985. This work depicts a possible development of the trends taking place in our time, when the two-dimensional code of images gains primacy at the expense of the one-dimensional code of linear writing. The passage from the predominance of writing to the predominance of images represents, according to Flusser, a radical change within the history of Western culture. In his view, the codes through which a society produces, saves, and transmits information represent the very structure of our experience of the world, as well as of our conception of space and time. While a culture in which writing predominates experiences time as linear progress towards a goal, a culture in which images predominate experiences time as an eternal return. This means that, if our society is returning to the predominance of images, after a long parenthesis characterized by the predominance of writing, then it is also experiencing a radical transformation of its worldview. In *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, Flusser thinks through the outcomes of the change underway. He brings a series of tendencies to their extreme consequences and, on such basis, conceives of a utopian telematic society made of *homines ludentes* engaged with one another in a creative dialogue.

Flusser's hypothetical and futuristic visualization of such a telematic society is aptly captured, among many passages of a similar kind, by the following lines. His philosophical imagination envisions a situation in which

people will sit in separate cells, playing with their fingertips on keyboards, staring at tiny screens, receiving, changing, and sending images. Behind their backs, robots will bring them things to maintain and reproduce their derelict bodies. People will be in contact with one another through their fingertips and so form a dialogical net, a global superbrain, whose function will be to calculate and compute improbable situations into pictures, to bring information, catastrophes about. Artificial intelligences will also be in dialogue with human beings, connected through cables and similar nerve strands. (Flusser 2011: 161)

It does not require a wild stretch of the imagination to see in this description a situation closely resembling the present one. Of course, we should replace Flusser's outdated ideas with notions more familiar to us and more related to the nature of our devices, but this is not too difficult an operation. For example, it is true that we do not live in "separate cells," but it is true that many of us live in small apartments; and during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us hardly left their homes. That is, even though we do not literally sit in cells like cyber-monks, we live in small, closed spaces, and we literally spend most of our time "playing with our fingertips on keyboards, staring at tiny screens, receiving, changing, and sending images." Maybe not everyone has a robot serving them their dinner, but many of us receive stuff via delivery services whose logistics is mainly automated. So yes, basically there are machines controlled by AI (i.e., robots), that "bring us things to maintain and reproduce our (more or less) derelict bodies." And finally, we can accept without any kind of adjustment the statement according to which "people are in contact with one another through their fingertips and so form a dialogical net, a global superbrain, etc.", for this is exactly our situation right now.

In the passage just quoted, Flusser also refers to pictures, or images. It is of the utmost importance to note that here he is referring to his original concept of the "technical image" (*technisches Bild*), which is radically different from what he calls the "traditional image." Technical images are practically all the images we are dealing with when we access social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and so on. Technical images, therefore, are all the images we would contemplate by wearing VR or AR devices that give us access to the Metaverse; they also include pictures, movies, videos, animations, 3D models, virtual

simulations, and so on. This is why the notion of the technical image is so important in any reflection upon the Metaverse. It is now necessary to explain what Flusser meant by the term technical image. He introduced the concept in the second half of the 1970s, but gave a more detailed definition of it in the mid-80s, when he also developed the first elements of his “digital worldview”. For the purpose of the present contribution, I take as authoritative the definition presented in *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, where technical images are called “computations of concepts,” models of evaluation, experience, and action that are projected onto a reality that has become existentially meaningless. The nature of these images, however, is effectively understandable only in light of the level of abstraction that the consciousness of Western culture has reached. A quote from the book might help clarify the last point:

Technical images arise in an attempt to consolidate particles around us and in our consciousness on surfaces to block up the intervals between them in an attempt to make elements such as photons or electrons, on one hand, and bits of information, on the other hand, into images. This can be achieved neither with hands nor with eyes nor with fingers, for these elements are neither graspable, nor are they visible. For this reason, apparatuses must be developed that grasp the ungraspable, visualize the invisible, and conceptualize the inconceivable. And these apparatuses must be fitted with keys so that we may manipulate them. These apparatuses are essential for the production of technical images. All the rest comes later. (Flusser 2011: 16)

This passage makes quite clear that, from a philosophical point of view, the most urgent aspect of Flusser’s discourse on technical images, paradoxically, touches not so much on the question of images themselves, as on the underlying conception of reality. More precisely: only if we consider our current fundamental beliefs (which emerge from the implosion or self-overcoming of a prior belief) is it possible to understand the specific differences that distinguish technical images from traditional images. The beliefs are related to the stage of cultural production in which information is codified in bi-dimensional surfaces covered with symbols signifying concepts (another good definition of “technical image”; cf. Irrgang 2017), and they are described by Flusser in terms of a “digital worldview” (*das digitale Weltbild*). The latter is to be distinguished from the traditional one related to that very long period in which human

beings transformed pieces of “nature” into “culture.” Whereas, in the case of the traditional worldview, one’s existential interest is focused on “things” (*Dinge*), to be understood as material objects in which information is “engraved”, “forced upon” or “recorded” (just think of the leather in which the shape of a shoe is cut, or the paper on which a story is written), in the case of the digital worldview, information becomes “pure,” or “immaterial.” The difference could be put in the following manner: “in-formed” things (*Dinge*) can be grasped, possessed, or consumed; while pure information or, as Flusser provocatively calls it, “non-things” (*Undinge*, cf. Byung-Chul Han 2021) are immaterial, elusive, and can only be encoded, decoded, reprocessed, saved and transmitted by electronic devices. They cannot be owned and consumed in the same way that “traditional” objects are owned and consumed. This is not to deny that such pure information is stored in electronic devices (namely, hardware), and thus are inescapably linked to “things,” but the latter no longer lie at the center of our existential interest. On the contrary, it is pure information (what we might also call software) that is invested with importance, increasingly attracting our attention. The non-things we are interested in are “the images on television screens, the data stored in computers, programs saved in robots, microfilms and holograms” (Flusser 1997: 187, my translation), to which we can add the digital media today we have access to thanks to our devices. Flusser traces the repercussions of this paradigm shift (from the primacy of “things” to the primacy of “non-things”) in every cultural sphere: from communication to art, from politics to economics. But its roots must be traced back in modern scientific discourse. Modern science reaches the highest possible degree of abstraction with quantum physics, whose fundamental achievements are interpreted by the Flusser from an existential perspective. In his view, the most significant achievement of contemporary physics consists in having irrevocably undermined our sense of reality. Indeed, the objective character of the world around us loses its credibility once things, as physics shows, are understood as nothing but a more or less thick set of particles that interact with one another in an unrepresentable, counterintuitive manner. Traditional codes (images and linear writing) are no longer be able to represent reality, as things are now “dissolved” into such invisible particles. These particles can

only be calculated and computed by electronic instruments. Thus Flusser concludes that “calculative thought has penetrated deeply into phenomena and these, by virtue of this invasion, broke down into particles” (Flusser 1997: 210, my translation).

3. DISCUSSION

At this point, it is of the utmost importance to clarify one aspect. Even though our present situation can be cast in Flusser’s terms by turning to the philosophical tools offered in *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, still it cannot be properly identified with the utopian dialogic society he writes about. The latter, in fact, is a normative concept, and our current society is just a pale resemblance of it (cf. Flusser 2011: 92). The main obstacle on the road to the actualization of such an ideal dialogical society is represented by the inherent tendency of all information to reach a state of entropy. Flusser appropriates the second law of thermodynamics and reinvents it in within his communicology (cf. Bozzi 2007: 162). He puts it in the following manner: The natural condition of a human being is that of a being exposed to death. Nature, which by a process of random combinations produces improbable information (for example, the human brain), also condemns this information to decay. However, human beings, according to Flusser, have a negatively entropic vocation. They oppose death, the tendency to decay, and try to survive in the memory of others (Flusser 2010). For this reason, they produce objects in which they embed information. These same objects, material vessels of information, are condemned to decay, and thus to the loss of the information. In order to counteract this overall tendency, telematics was invented. With this term, Flusser means all technology that automatically eliminates distance. It consists of a series of “nodes” that are both receivers and transmitters of messages; it is distributed, decentralized, and has an exclusively dialogic dynamic. In such a networked communicative structure, inter-human relations are certainly aimed at producing new information, but the specific feature of this structure is that message transmissions have as their purpose the relationship itself. I communicate with someone else because I care about them; I feel responsible towards them. Thanks to telematics, each one of us can potentially be

everyone else's neighbor. For this reason, according to Flusser, telematics becomes the technological premise of a cosmic dialogue that produces new information and new relationships. (This concept is very close to the Global Village Marshall McLuhan spoke about in the 1960s; cf. McLuhan 1964). Telematics is also, however, subject to the entropic tendency mentioned above. A telematic network is made of human and artificial "nodes" (memories); the latter are controlled by programs that automatically filter and, therefore, contribute to the production of information. The more automatic the processes of information production become, the more repetitive and redundant information becomes; the process culminates in a deadly boredom. This comes into conflict with the original intention of communication: to remain impressed in the memory. The human being must therefore also work against the tendency, now present in the technologies and devices that produce information, to generate entropy. This appears clearly in the following quote. The programs that control the technological devices by means of which we produce and transmit information

Are games in which possibilities occur randomly, programmed accidents. The difference between the apparatus and the universe is that the apparatus continues with its programmed tasks (e.g., with a photograph made by a fully automated satellite camera), and the universe runs past the programmed task toward heat death. For this is, in fact, the definition of automation: a self-governing computation of accidental events, excluding human intervention and stopping at a situation that human beings have determined to be informative. The difference between the apparatus and the universe is, accordingly, that the apparatus is subject to human control. But it cannot stay this way forever: in the longer term, the autonomy of the apparatus must be liberated from human beings. This is why the negative entropy of the apparatus changes to entropy. (Flusser 2011: 19)

At this point, one might ask: how are we supposed, in Flusser's view, to counteract the entropic tendency that affects human communication within contemporary technologically advanced "information societies"?

In fact, as we just have seen, according to Flusser, the spontaneous tendency to entropy also affects the communicative apparatus. We can see this every day, by direct experience. Just think of the sheer number of insignificant images and videos seen by millions of people every day.

One of the reasons why networks end up producing entropic information is that they remain subservient to discursive broadcasters. These are the great producers of mass culture, which spread misleading, manipulative, and repetitive information. In order to answer the question raised at the beginning of this paragraph, Flusser introduces the notion of the revolutionary to describe those who are committed to creating a social consensus in order to use telematic networks in a dialogical and creative way. Authentic revolutionaries are those who seek to awaken people from the slumber induced by the deluge of images that besiege us. They try to generate a consensus against the passive consumption of content. They do not, however, act “against images but against the current feedback consensus between images and people” (Flusser 2011: 66). It is not the images as such that must be criticized, but rather the narcotic relationship between the consumer and cultural products (Restuccia 2018 calls it “idolatry”).

How do these revolutionaries act? This is a very original aspect of Flusser’s thought. He argues that their “action is utterly unspectacular, for if it were spectacular [...] it would be self-defeating. [...] The people that are shouting and sounding alarms today [...] are in truth entertainers. [...] The true revolutionaries [...] do not appear in the images” (Flusser 2011: 66, transl. modified). The true revolutionaries do not conform to the images’ self-presentation, according to which they are windows on the world. On the contrary, they appear *by means of* images. Revolutionaries such as filmmakers, video-makers, photographers, and programmers manifest themselves thanks to their own artistic style, which disturbs the placid consent of the passive observer. True revolutionaries are “cultural hackers” (Krückel 2015). But what is their ultimate purpose?

Flusser speaks of democratic programming when referring to the dialogical practice of image and information production. In order to understand what he means, it is necessary to take up the question of the production of information by large broadcasters; that is, by the large apparatuses of the cultural industry. These apparatuses produce content and images in a centralized manner and disseminate them by means of discursive structures in which the broadcaster is distinct from the receiver. The latter is unable to reach the broadcaster, and at the same time

remains separate from other receivers. The final consumer of information is a passive, isolated and commodified individual, because everyone receives the same content. This situation has changed today somewhat, and indeed we talk of audience fragmentation. Broadcasters of cultural products have, moreover, multiplied and trends point to an even greater personalization of consumption. Today, networks connect individuals to each other and, therefore, the danger of a mass media totalitarianism seems to have vanished. In truth, the telematic networks remain subservient to the broadcasters, however much they have differentiated themselves. The dialogue that takes place in the networks in most cases is an empty chatter that produces mere feedback for the apparatus. The contribution of those who consume information is either passive (think of the collection of metadata) or predetermined (think of the set of “reactions” allowed on many social platforms). Even the comment function, which offers relatively more freedom of expression, is nothing more than an elaborate form of feedback. It lacks that dialogic participation in which individuals actively participate in the production of non-redundant information. But, in truth, telematic technologies offer a tremendous potential for this purpose. The problem is that the general consciousness seems asleep and content with passive use.

If the potential of these telematic resources were to become clear, they could become powerful tools to oppose the discursive society. The reason this hasn't happened yet is that the general agreement favors dispersal and puts assembly at a disadvantage [...] revolutionary engagement has to begin not with the centers but with the silly telematic gadgets. It is these that must be changed and changed in ways that suit their technology. Should this be successful, the centers will collapse of their own accord. (Flusser 2011: 85, 86).

The task of the real revolutionaries is to show this potential and create a consensus that leads to the “socialization” of content production. By this Flusser means a decentralized, dialogic, and shared form of production of information, something that perhaps comes close to the notion of “profanation” Giorgio Agamben (2006) speaks about. According to Flusser, this is the only form of democratic action possible in the universe of technical images.

In *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, the appeal explicitly moves within a peculiar political dimension. Flusser speaks of the democratization of apparatuses that must be programmed dialogically through the global conversation made possible by telematics. In that text, the already mentioned experimental photographers and video-makers fall into the larger group of so-called envisioners (the English rendering of the German term *Einbildner*). They find themselves in a quite puzzling situation because they “try to turn an automatic apparatus against its own condition of being automatic. They cannot create illusions without the automatic apparatus, for the stuff to be envisioned, the particles, are neither visible nor graspable nor comprehensible without the apparatus’s keys.” (Flusser 2011: 19-20). The only way to keep the control of the decision-making processes over automation, and thus contain the entropic process to which the apparatuses are destined according to their program, is through the activity of the envisioners who, no longer individually and in isolation, must ally with one another and fight against the slumber induced in the masses by the consumption of technical images. The problem is thus represented by the “consensus” that connects the public and the apparatuses, that “willingness to be deceived,” to passively indulge in the contemplation of mass cultural products. It is at the same time the effect and the concomitant cause of the numbing of the critical consciousness, which feeds the vicious circle of redundant information and thus accelerates the advancement of entropy.

The task of the envisioners is to fight this consensus in its communicative, aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions, to act as the Socratic gadfly against the common tendency of the mass public in order to awaken critical consciousness and generate a new consensus that provides the basis for a dialogic practice in interaction with the apparatuses. These figures of “cultural hackers,” as much invoked as imagined by Flusser, have first and foremost a negative task. They must counter the commodifying inertia of the communication apparatus and its amphitheatrical structures. They are therefore not only critics of the technical images, which we must learn to decipher and compute by training a new *Technoimagination* (Guldin 2007), but also, if not especially, saboteurs of the dominant discursive structures. Indeed, the first problematic

aspect is the shape of the circuits that connect consumers of information to the major broadcasters of the cultural and communicative apparatus. The communicative channels in postindustrial society

run from image to isolated person and back to image. This traffic between image and person, this feedback that threatens to become entropic, forms the isolating, homogenizing core of society. But there are threads that start to run another direction, namely, from one person to another, straight across the bundles of rays that bind images to people, dialogic threads that cross the horizontal, discursive media bundles. Dialogic threads (such as cable, videophones, or conferencing video) could open the fascist tissue of the rising society to the kind of web we are in the habit of calling “democratic.” (Flusser 2011: 64)

Flusser is referring here to the oldest and most resilient communicative structure, the net-like dialogic structure, which today is embodied primarily by telematics. As already mentioned, this technology is the necessary technical prerequisite to establish the “cosmic dialogue,” in which everyone is potentially the neighbor of every other human being globally. But it is not yet a sufficient condition for such a realization. Flusser’s utopia can only become true with a new consensus, which is the reason why

“the truly revolutionary engagement would be to turn this technical question into a political one.” (Flusser 2011: 64).

The democratic potential in the networks that connect human beings to one another, and not just to the broadcasters of technical images, must be activated consciously and strategically. In fact, in most cases, telematic networks, no matter how widespread and “popular,” remain subservient to the major discursive broadcasters as tools to draw on the feedback that serves the self-empowerment and self-improvement of the apparatus. In other words, if telematic networks are merely implemented by the apparatuses, they lead to nothing but a consolidation of a technocratic, depoliticizing totalitarianism. It is for this reason that, according to Flusser,

“To turn a technical question into a political one, it must be torn from the technician’s hands. Technology has become too serious a matter to be left to technicians,” (Flusser 2011: 65).

But to do so, the first move the envisioners must make consists in disturbing the artificial and somnolent happiness of the masses, breaking “the spell” that keeps them gripped to the vicious circle that feeds the apparatus:

Today’s revolutionaries, those who want to spin threads through the narcotizing discourse, decline to take part in this general consensus about happiness. They are muckrakers. They want to awaken this fading consciousness because they believe that the mindless happiness sponsored by the images is demeaning; that is, present-day revolutionaries are working toward something that only they want. They take action exactly against the general consensus between images and people, and they know they can achieve nothing as long as the others don’t go along. (Flusser 2011: 66)

What is interesting is how revolutionary envisioners actualize this commitment to disrupt the consensus of mass society. They do not fall into the vicious circle of technical images by showing themselves in them, by appearing in the media: their action in fact

“is utterly unspectacular, for if it were spectacular (visible in images), it would be self-defeating.” (Flusser 2011: 66).

True revolutionaries strategically renounce the visibility offered to them by technical images, for this would otherwise mean allowing themselves to be dominated by the very depoliticizing logic they are meant to combat. In fact, Flusser wants to avoid the paradox that the strategy to “defeat” the apparatus spills over into its opposite and ends up consolidating it or accelerating its entropic tendency. He warns that

“those who count as revolutionaries are really entertainers. They are spectacular, and the spectacle they present assists the images in dispersing us more and more effectively.” (Flusser 2011: 66).

Self-styled revolutionaries become entangled in a depoliticizing tendency precisely when they are convinced they are fighting it, while becoming functionaries of a “spectacle” that has only the appearance of being politically meaningful.

But what does Flusser mean when he states that

“The true revolutionaries, on the other hand, do not appear in the images. [...] but we can see them by looking through the images,” because “they

appear in the manner in which the images show themselves” (Flusser 2011: 66-67)?

From the chapter “To Signify” in the same book, we learn that technical images do not signify a state of affairs in the real world, but confer meaning, offering a possible model of experience and behavior, pointing to a direction (cf. Flusser 2011: 41-50). One can deduce from this that the revolutionary envisioners, eschewing the representational deception of technical images (which creates the illusion of being a “reproduction” of a state of things in the “real” world out there), show themselves in it as models of action, perception, and evaluation in discontinuity with the functionalist inertia of the apparatus. The technical images produced by these envisioners such as photographers, filmmakers, video-makers, and programmers, if this interpretation of Flusser’s thought is correct, are supposed to create short-circuits—dissonances that disrupt the consensus of happiness in postindustrial society and break the vicious circle that passively connects individuals to the apparatus. In this way, they transform images and net-like communicative structures into real *media* that connect people with people. The technical images produced by such revolutionaries would change the very substance of society:

“instead of the traffic between people and images, it would be traffic between people by way of images that would lie at the heart of such a society. And only then would the media earn the name that unjustly designates them today. For only then would they link person to person” (Flusser 2011: 68).

After all, it would not be an exaggeration if one were to summarize Flusser’s philosophical project with this formula: to point the way so that the communicators of postindustrial society would be able to make media worthy of the name.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Here we come to the main point raised by this contribution: What can Flusser’s insight into the universe of technical images teach us about our ethical and political orientation in the Metaverse? If the interpretation suggested above is correct, it appears quite clearly that, in an environment such as the one described above, our criteria of action must change

accordingly. Flusser's thesis is quite radical: the only existentially meaningful kind of action, which is ethical and political at the same time, is the one performed by revolutionary envisioners (programmers, digital artists, video-makers, or, to put it more generally, content producers; for a detailed discussion see Restuccia 2021: 269ff.) that can awaken the large public to the dialogical potentialities immanent in telematics. In fact, the greatest danger of an environment such as the Metaverse is that its users remain simply that: users, and not human beings; predetermined, in other words, in their behavior by the programs that control the apps and the devices they interact with. Even though the word "user" shows an active aspect (it's "user," and not "used"), it implies nonetheless a reduction of the existential scope of a human being. One could simply put this notion in Flusser's terms and oppose the "functionary of the apparatus" to the revolutionary envisioner. This would be the true starting point for the systematic translation of *Into the Universe of Technical Images* as *Into the Metaverse*, as I playfully suggested in the introduction above.

In conclusion, I point out what seems to be Flusser's overall teaching. He warns us against making the mistake of trying to adapt to the life-world molded by technical images modes of action belonging to the "old world." We are misguided if we continue to act as before (in communication, in politics, and in social action), using devices and networks as if they were mere tools. In fact, they are environments, with a specific dynamic that is radically different from that of the non-digital world. Such is the Metaverse. Flusser invites us to enter into it as partners in dialogue, not as paying spectators.

5. REFERENCES

- Agamben, G. (2006). *Che cos'è un dispositivo?*. Nottetempo
- Bernardo, G. Guldin, R. (2017). *Vilém Flusser (1920–1991). Ein Leben in der Bodenlosigkeit*. Biographie. Transcript
- Bozzi, P. (2007). *Vilém Flusser. Dal soggetto al progetto: libertà e cultura dei media*. UTET
- Byung-Chul Han (2021). *Undinge: Umbrüche der Lebenswelt*. Ullstein Verlag

- Finger, A. Guldin, R. Bernardo, G. (2011). Vilém Flusser. An Introduction. University of Minnesota Press
- Fitterman, R. (2011). Replacing References to Photography with References to the Web in Vilém Flusser's "Towards a Philosophy of Photography" (1983). *English Language Notes*, 49 (2), 161-163. University of Colorado
- Flusser, V. (1992). *Virtuelle Räume - Simultane Welten*. Arch+, 111, 18-85. Arch+ Verlag
- Flusser, V. (1997). *Medienkultur*. Fischer
- Flusser, V. (2000). *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. Reaktion Books
- Flusser, V. (2010). *We Shall Survive in the Memory of Others: Flusser Lectures*. Walther König Verlag
- Flusser, V. (2011). *Into The Universe of Technical Images*. University of Minnesota Press
- Guldin, R. (2007). Iconoclasm and Beyond: Vilém Flusser's Concept of Techno-Imagination. *Studies in Communication Sciences*, 7 (21), 63-83. Elsevier
- Irrgang, D. (2017). *Vom Umkehren der Bedeutungsvektoren. Prototypen des technischen Bildes bei Vilém Flusser*. Walther König Verlag
- Krückel, F. (2015). *Bildung als Projekt. Eine Studie im Anschluss an Vilém Flusser*. Springer
- Lik-Hang Lee et al. (2021). All One Needs to Know about Metaverse: A Complete Survey on Technological Singularity, Virtual Ecosystem, and Research Agenda. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2110.05352>
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. McGraw Hill
- Place, V. (2012). On Robert Fitterman's "Replacing References to Photography with References to the Web in Vilém Flusser's 'Towards a Philosophy of Photography' (1983)". *English Language Notes*, 50 (1), 217-222. University of Colorado
- Restuccia, F. (2018). Flusser against Idolatry. *Flusser Studies*, 26. <https://bit.ly/3lzA0Fl>
- Restuccia, F. (2021). *Il contrattacco delle immagini. Tecnica, media e idolatria a partire da Vilém Flusser*. Meltemi
- Ströhl, A. (2012). *Vilém Flusser (1920-1991). Phänomenologie der Kommunikation*. Böhlau