

Today I presented the outlines of the booklet that Jodi Dean and I are writing about 'blog theory'. I am at a conference on The Truth of Illusion at the [Einstein Forum](#) in Potsdam, south of Berlin. I spoke here before, at the Future of Character conference in summer 2007, where I heard Eva Illouz speak for the first time. I dedicated my lecture to Jean Baudrillard's 'vital illusion' notion and showed fragments of the ouinon.net [map of the French blogosphere](#) in the background (transformed into a mesmerizing ppt by Sabine Niederer).

I blogged Frank Hartmann's lecture, the [media philosopher](#) from Vienna. The [last interview](#) I did with him was in January 2004. Hartmann spoke about the rising power of audience rating, and rating in general. What if those who watch to be measured simply walk away? For the post-World War II generation of critical thinkers television was the perfect control medium. Hartmann refers to Günter Anders' early critique of television, *Die Welt als Phantom und Matrise*, in his magnum opus *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* from 1956 (also see Hartmann's German [online txt](#)). Instead of an increase of the critical attitude, as Adorno hoped, it is society that organizes itself according the laws of simulation and infotainment.

Hartmann reviewed two TV studies in German [Die TV-Falle](#) from Roger Schawinski and Walter van Rossum's case study of a 15 minutes German news show, *Die Tagesschau*. The book is called [Die Tagesshow](#). There is also a German feature film about this topic, [Free Rainer](#). The blurb reads: "Frustrated, because he is forced to produce bad TV-shows, a manager of a TV-station, enters the station and manipulates the ratings, to initiate a TV-revolution." I bring this wave of popular television criticism in relation to the 2006 Dutch account of the mainstream media coverage of the Middle East conflict *They Are Just Like People* by [Joris Luyendijk](#) (title of the German translation: *Von Bildern und Lügen in Zeiten des Krieges*, Tropen Verlag, 2007).

Media, so Vilem Flusser, are a "continuous stream of unlikely images." What is the use, so Hartmann, to deconstruct the technical media with a deterministic method a la Friedrich Kittler if we insist on illusion. Freedom is the freedom to object audience rating. Media art and media activism could show us help us in this effort to formulate media criticism. The problem that we face is the real, the hyper-real character of the televisual image. The impossibility to distinguish between Sein (being) and Schein (illusion). There is a pleasure, so Hartmann, to appear as a phantom, and intellectual are

called upon to acknowledge their pleasure in media appearances so that we can come to a second-order media critique. Hartmann delivered a legitimate 'global cultural studies' call, from continental Europe, to overcome the traps of 20th century media theory.