

## Introduction

The first two sections of this special issue of *Flusser Studies* focus on the presence and relevance of Judaism in Vilém Flusser's life and work. The first section contains a series of eight texts by Vilém Flusser arranged in a chronological fashion that focus on the philosophical, cultural and existential legacy of Judaism within the Western world. The first seven texts were published in two different Brazilian journals of São Paulo and at two distinct moments of Vilém Flusser's life. The first three texts are from *Crônica Israelita* and were written in the 1960ies: "Judaísmo como anti-paganismo" (Judaism as Anti-Paganism), 16.9.1963; "Judaísmo como fonte do ocidente" (Judaism as a Source of the Western World), 16.1.1965; "Como filosofar enquanto Judeu" (To Philosophize as a Jew), 15.6.1969. The four texts that follow were published in *Shalom* in the early 1980s in connection with Edith's and Vilém's first trip to Israel: "Opção e conflito. Aspectos da existência judaica" (Choice and Conflict: Aspects of Jewish Existence), February 1980; "Uma questão de modelos" (A Question of Models), September 1980; "O sionismo está morto?" (Is Zionism Dead?), March 1981; "Do rito judeu: uma reflexão sobre a essência do judaísmo" (On Jewish Rites: A reflection on the Essence of Judaism), July 1983. The last text, "On Edmund Husserl" (published in *Review of Czech Jews*, n° 4, vol 1, 1987, S. 91-100), shows how deeply Judaism affected Flusser's thinking and writing as he sought to connect existential models to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. The Portuguese translation "Sobre Edmund Husserl" is by Mario Cascardo (UERJ Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

The second section begins with "Let's Besprechen: [On] Database Aesthetics Trial", a pictorial essay by Milena Szafir highlighting in a dramatic fashion the fragility of Jewish existence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The recent forms of anti-Semitism in the US and across Europe sadly show that the deep anti-Semitic strain in Western society is still an open wound.

In "Jude sein - Being Jewish - Ser Judeu" and „Spuren jüdischen Denkens in Vilém Flussers Werk“ (Traces of Jewish Thinking in Vilém Flusser's Work), Rainer Guldin explores some of the main interrelated nodal points of the Jewish dimension in Vilém Flusser's thinking and writing: Bodenlosigkeit, Heimatlosigkeit, nomadism, exodus, desert, sand, dune, tent, wind, bit, grain of sand, swarm, Sabbath, epoché, mysticism, nothingness, Pilpul, Talmud, polysemy, multilingualism, and translation.

In "Flusser e as ondas abissais" (Flusser and the Abysmal Waves) Moacir Amâncio shows that Vilém Flusser viewed Judaism not so much as a religion as such, but as a specific culture that allows him to treat the issue of evil in universal terms.

In “Construindo pontes: Ser judeu para os outros” (Building Bridges: To be Jewish for Others), Eva Batličková examines Flusser’s conception of two kinds of Jews – one being a Jew to other Jews and the other a Jew to the world. Flusser opts for second possibility. For him, then, to be a Jew means to build bridges. Writing is a way of building bridges between one’s own Jewish experience and universal philosophical thought.

In “Disillusionment: Vilém Flusser and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” Marc Lenot presents ten essays written by Vilém Flusser between 1967 and 1991 on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Five of them have been published in the present issue: “A crise israelense” (The Israeli Crisis), “Desilusão” (Disillusion), “Os Judeus em Israel” (The Jews in Israel), “Os Judeus no Mundo” (The Jews in the World), “The Jewish War”. Although Flusser clearly asserts his Judaism and his pride in being a Jew, he is at the same time very critical of Zionism and the State of Israel. He hopes that Jews and Arabs (a formula he prefers to Israelis and Palestinians, as less grounded in territories) can overcome the conflict, draw closer and construct a new, non-Zionist model together, free of Western influences. Although this might sound utopian, Flusser trusts the Jews’ ability to contribute to such a model.

Francesco Restuccia’s “Flusser against Idolatry” analyses the concept of idolatry as a thread connecting Flusser’s early writings on religion with the later ones on communication. Studying his sources and the main occurrences of the term “idolatry” in his writings can help us understand Flusser’s original conception.

And finally, in “Flusser’s Philosophy of Science,” Olaf Dammann offers two translations of unpublished manuscripts, “La création scientifique et artistique” (Scientific and artistic creativity) and “Wissenschaft, Weisheit (und Judentum)” (Science, Wisdom (and Jewishness)). Dammann suggests locating Flusser’s concept of science at the center of a triangle of reciprocal relationships between philosophy, art, and religion.

The third section of this issue contains fifteen photographic collages by Hans-Peter Dimke, who met Flusser in the early 1980s and played an important role both as a mediator and a friend. In a short introductory essay, “Die Verbesserung von Beobachtung, CollagenKünstlerTheorie“ (Improving Observation, CollagesArtistTheory) Dimke focuses on the relation between science and art. The artist theorizes by addressing the breaking point of modernity, which is characterized by a change from considering a work to be a conceptual, and considering it to be a physical object. Vilém Flusser analyzes the camera (the black box) in relation to administrative, economic, political, social apparatuses. Roland Barthes considers pictures from the double perspective of studium (the scanning process) and punctum (the captivating moment). In the present case, the artist’s theory

and the photo collages bearing the title Photo Shop Massacre are to be understood in their conceptual intention as an indication of the actual massacre that is taking place around us.

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