

Introduction

The eleventh issue of Flusser Studies contains most of the contributions to the first Portuguese international colloquium dedicated to the work of Vilém Flusser: *Do diabólico ao simbólico: a filosofia de Vilém Flusser*¹, *From the Diabological to the Symbolical: Vilém Flusser's Philosophy*. The colloquium was held at the Faculdade de Letras at the University of Lisbon on the 3rd and 4th May, 2010. Among the speakers were professors and doctoral students of the University of Lisbon (UL), the New University of Lisbon (UNL), and the Luso-Brazilian Institute of Philosophy (IFLB). Gustavo Bernardo (UERJ) and Rainer Guldin (USI) also participated in the colloquium. Louis Bec had been invited as a special guest by the Nouvelle Librairie Française – Instituto Franco-Português of Lisbon. We would like to thank Frederico Duarte from the Nouvelle Librairie Française for making the participation of Louis Bec possible and for organizing the event ARTAXONOMIQUE ET HYPOZOOLOGIE on the 4th of May 2010 at the Instituto Franco-Português.

The title *From the Diabological to the Symbolical: Vilém Flusser's Philosophy* intended to create a most encompassing vision of Flusser's life and work: from his escape from Nazism and Auschwitz in 1939 to the last years of his life as a well-known media and communication theorist; from his constant preoccupation with the diabolical from *A historia do diabo* (1965) to *Vampyrotheutis Infernalis* (1987); and with the symbolical from *Lingua e Realidade* (1963) to *Die Schrift. Hat Schreiben Zukunft* (1987), *Does Writing have a Future?*

We have opted for the publication of three unpublished, quite intimate and at the same time very revealing texts by Vilém Flusser: two letters written on the 1st of October, 1971, and on the 29th of December, 1979, to Miguel Reale and Dora Ferreira da Silva, respectively; and a text addressed to another important dialogical partner, this time in Europe, Felix Philipp Ingold, in which Flusser explains the contents of *A historia do diabo*, explicitly linking it to his communicology developed in the course of the 70es.

In “A Luso-Brazilian walk through the library of Vilém Flusser Dirk-Michael,” Dirk Hennrich takes a look at the library of Vilém Flusser, which is preserved in the Flusser-Archive in

¹ See http://arevistaentre.blogspot.com/2010/04/coloquio-internacional-do-diabolico-ao_30.html.

Berlin. This library is simultaneously an image of his intellectual journey and, especially considering his Brazilian period, a representation of Flusser's friendships. We not only find Vicente Ferreira da Silva, but also Portuguese thinkers such as Agostinho da Silva and Eudoro de Sousa. Flusser was also acquainted with Delfim Santos who held great significance for the dialog between Portugal and Brazil in the 1950s.

In "My dear, you didn't understand anything: the skeptic generosity of Vilém Flusser," Gustavo Bernardo Krause focuses on a few absolutely essential tenets of Flusser's philosophy: the impossibility of any final truth, the necessity of doubt, and the fictional nature of all human perception. Flusser's famous sentence, apparently destructive, was actually the expression of an unsuspected generosity, giving scholars and visitors back what most kinds of opinion eliminate, that is, the doubt and the phenomenological view to see things from more than one perspective.

In "The New World in the Portuguese language during the philosophical itinerary of Vilém Flusser," Joaquim Domingues focuses on the importance of the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture for the development of Flusser's thinking. Through his early exile in a foreign land, Flusser became one of the most important philosophers of the Portuguese language. He contributed fundamentally to the development of an authentic Luso-Brazilian philosophy.

In "A linguistic re-interpretation of ontology" Rui Lopo explores the ontological consequences of Vilém Flusser's philosophy of language by examining its main topics: his definition of speech as an act and language as an expanding human presence in the cosmos; the idea that linguistic performance is the most dignifying human characteristic; the identification of reality with language; and finally, the thesis that language creates, shapes and disseminates reality. Rui Lopo focuses on the underlying tensions or paradoxes of such a position as part of Flusser's dramatic rhetoric strategy.

In "O design segundo Vilém Flusser," Rodrigo Sobral Cunha focuses on the significance of the concept of design within Flusser's work, an oeuvre that contains explicit as well as implicit traces of a philosophy of design. Flusser deals with design as part of an investigation about the intentional side of signs as well as their importance for man as a *symbolic animal*.

Rainer Guldin's "Acheronta movebo.' On the Diabolical Principle in Vilém Flusser's Writing" explores what might be called the diabolical principle in Vilém Flusser's work, tracing its evolution from the early Brazilian to the last German texts. Flusser made use of the figure of the devil in *A historia do diabo*, first published in 1965, reinterpreting the history of the West and from a diabolical point of view. The figure of the devil, the fallen angel inhabiting the dark abysses, however, plays also a major role in *Vampyrotenhis infernalis*, published in 1987, twenty-two years later. In the later text, it is the devil wearing the mask of Lucifer, the light-bearer.

The second contribution of Dirk-Michael Hennrich, “The ‘Thing’ in the work of Vilém Flusser and Eudoro de Sousa,” deals with the question of the *thing*, one of the main topics in the work of Vilém Flusser. The connection between Eudoro de Sousa and Vilém Flusser, both friends of the Brazilian Philosopher Vicente Ferreira da Silva, dates back to the *History of the Devil*. In his *Mythology* Eudoro de Sousa deals with the diabolic force of instrumental reason and the necessity of recovering the symbolic possibility of a reintegration of all things in some kind of final harmony. Flusser proposes a similar idea in his *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. Both Eudoro de Sousa and Vilém Flusser envision the ultimate overcoming of the diabolical crisis of Western industrialized civilization.

The paper of António Braz Teixeira, “Religion, the Sacred and Myth in Vilém Flusser,” shows the significance of religion, the sacred and Myth in the work of Vilém Flusser who expresses his interest in religion, in the notions of myth and ritual, and in the significance of sacrifice with the idea that language. It not only determines what we call natural, but also tries to reach that which is beyond the natural. In the vision of Flusser religion is the human capacity to understand the sacred dimension of the world, revealing the radical opacity of things.

And finally, André Rangel Macedo discusses in “For Flusser From 3kta” the theoretical and aesthetic presuppositions of his photographic work from which we have chosen six telling examples. 90 years after Vilém Flusser’s birth, responding to an invitation by Dirk Michael Hennrich to participate in the May 2011 issue of Flusser Studies with a set of electronic images that would approach Flusser’s vision of technical images, Macedo decided to program a computer to calculate and draw objectiles – a concept Gilles Deleuze developed in his book *Fold: Leibniẏ and the Baroque* (1992). The set of images produced by an algorithm are frozen moments of these objectiles.

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