Introduction

This special issue of Flusser Studies explores the ways in which Vilém Flusser's thinking can be useful in understanding what is today called "Artificial Intelligence". When Vilém Flusser died in 1991, Artificial Intelligence was 35 years old.

The term was coined in 1956 by the mathematician John McCarthy for the famous Dartmouth Summer Project on "thinking machines", which is considered to be the founding event of artificial intelligence as a field; it was chosen against "cybernetics", to distinguish their approach from Norbert Wiener (who was not invited). During its first 50 years of use, with highs and lows, artificial intelligence slowly gained ground in academic circles. It was mainly employed in discussions of game play, narrativity and object recognition[1], and it is only with the advent of machine learning and large language models in the last 10-15 years that AI as we know it today became a catchword for many forms of computational services.

The first essay of the issue, by one of us, Marc Lenot, compiles some of the uses by Vilém Flusser of the term "Artificial Intelligence"[2], principally (for reasons of data availability) in his French writings and his books *Ins Universum der technischen Bilder* and *Die Schrift*. Flusser used these terms in a variety of meanings, often as an equivalent of computers or spelling machines, sometimes in a sense that could evoke analytical intelligence. In *Die Schrift*, Flusser used it mainly to refer to general automated computational combinatorial processes which can produce grammatical constructions approximating meaning. The title of this essay is a quote by Flusser "La caméra photographique est une intelligence artificielle", extracted from one of his conferences in November 1985 in Aix-en-Provence.

While personal computers, networks and the Internet were still in relatively early stages of development prior to 1991, his unique approach to philosophy applied to the technological condition allowed him to develop a highly inventive critical practice that, 35 years later, is not only pertinent but often revolutionary and time-transcending. The purpose of this issue is to explore

[1] The older of us remembers that, in the early 1970s, in the lab next to his at the Man And Computer project, he watched Marvin Minsky and Seymour Pappert "teaching" to a computer what is a dodecahedron.
[2] The oldest reference we found is in his conference "Pour une École du Futur" in Marseille in April 1982, but they may be older mentions which could not be accessed in this research. The last reference was in his speech at the Goethe Institut in Prague on the eve of his death.

how Flusser's thinking is being fruitfully applied to understanding the phenomenon we know as AI today.

In Flusser Studies, the first mention of the words "Artificial Intelligence," however brief, was made by Vito Campanelli (May 2015, FS19), with other occurrences in December 2016 (FS22, Katerina Krtilova), July 2021 (FS31, Marc Partouche) and May 2025 (FS39, Andrea Pócsik). The first essay specifically dealing with Flusser and AI was in FS37 in May 2024[3]. And, in the previous issue (FS40, November 2025), Polona Tratnik provided an essay, "Flusser on Artificial intelligence" which would have also belonged in the current issue. That was all until the present.

These last few years, there have been a few essays published in journals and books about Flusser and AI. If we are not mistaken, the first two date from 2023, one by two UNIRIO researchers, Claudia Bucceroni Guerra & Jairo Andre Marques Junior[4], and the other by two researchers at UC Santa Barbara, Rita Raley and Russell Samolsky[5]. Other essays have been published since, such as in the book *A piece of Artificial Intelligence*[6] following a DAAD International Summer School in Robion, an essay by Anne-Laure Oberson[7] and a manifesto by Siegfried Zelinski[8], first delivered as a lecture at the École Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie in Arles on May 13, 2025.

The idea of publishing a special issue of Flusser Studies on Flusser and AI emerged naturally between the editors and Rainer Gudin accepted it with enthusiasm and full support. The two editors are complementary from an intellectual and linguistic background and did their best to supplement each other in the composition of this special issue. We issued a "call for papers", opened to thinkers, theorists, essayists but also to artists, we also published it on social networks, we contacted potential contributors directly, and one of us made it a central theme of several sessions of his research group in Brazil. Our call received a wealth of responses from all around the world, and after much editing and questioning, and some valuable help, we are publishing 29 contributions by 32 authors here. In true Flusserian fashion, the entries are in all the four languages Flusser wrote in, and 6 of them are in two languages.

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[3] Carolina Marostica and Igor Oliveira Prado, « "Becoming towards perishing": Flusser, Plastics, Wheels, and Artificial Intelligences ».

[4] « O problema da intelligência artficial aplicada às fotografias e o pensamento de Vilém Flusser », LOGEION: Filosofia da informação, Rio de Janeiro, v. 10, nov. 2023, p. 82-93, https://revista.ibict.br/fiinf/article/view/6791

[5] "Does AI Have a Future?" In Understanding Flusser, Understanding Modernism, edited by Aaron Jaffe, Michael F. Miller & Rodrigo Martini, Bloomsbury Publishing, NY, 2023, p. 15-22

[6] Flussera Robionica (ed.), A Piece of Artificial Intelligence. Fachhochschule Potsdam, 2024 https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-fhpotsdam/frontdoor/index/index/docId/3322

[7] "Making Sense of AI Generated Images in the Process of Imagination" in From Hype to Reality: Artificial Intelligence in the Study of Art and Culture, ed. Eva Cetinić, Darío Negueruela del Castillo, 2024, Hertziana Studies in Art History, vol. 03, 2024, pp. 91-97.

[8] Artificial Extelligence, A Short Manifesto. Geneva, Artists Press, 2025

Among the people who did not make a contribution to this issue, we would like to thank some whose advice, support and comments were especially useful: Yves Citton, Antonio Somaini, Anderson Pedroso, Julien Prévieux, Martha Schwendener, Steffi Winkler, Daniel Irrgang, Maren Hartmann, and Anita Jori.

This issue features a very wide variety of contributions. It is heartening to see that the topic of "artificial intelligence" has brought out so many Flusserian reflections, and that many thinkers and practitioners still consider Flusser's thinking helpful in understanding and addressing contemporary technological conditions. Flusser's work, though firmly grounded in Western philosophy, struggles palpably with the tradition. The abyssal "groundlessness" (*Bodenlosigkeit*) which opened up for him existentially and intellectually with Auschwitz and the destruction of his family could only be overcome through recourse to more direct interpersonal, intersubjective engagement with his reader, through gesture, play, correspondence and through experimental collaborations with new media.

For this reason, his work has been consistently as appealing, if not more appealing, to artists and designers than to philosophers and other academics. Flusser's essayistic gestural method of argumentation transcends the merely causal-rational mode of conventional philosophical argument and proposes synthetic forms of thinking which are more attuned to understanding and analysing/criticising an environment deeply informed by technological processes. The artists in this issue have been emboldened and inspired by Flusser to develop new modes of thinking with the apparatus in their experimental interventions into, and investigations of AI and Machine Learning. Many writers who have contributed texts to this issue discuss the work of artists as examples of this synthetic thinking.

A general sense of the threat or menace of the technological development represented by AI is shared by many contributors to this issue. Flusser is an excellent foil for such reflections not only for how he irreverently applies his firm grounding in Western philosophy to a rapidly changing technological condition, but also how he oscillates in his analysis between hope and despair. Flusser may at first warn of imminent technological disaster and dissolution, familiar to readers of his contemporaries Virilio and Baudrillard, but then turn, in the same essay, to prescribe utopian practices which may emancipate human beings in unprecedented ways.

Of course, for the abyssal thinker Flusser, meaning is always fraught and in fact the true hope for artificial intelligences is to make incontrovertible the true meaninglessness of everything, radically criticizing any meanings we may cobble together to get through our lives as vestiges of illegitimate beliefs. As Flusser wrote in *Does Writing have a Future?* (of which the relevant extract is

presented at the beginning of this issue):"There is nothing more to read and even less to write.[9]" Only in a world completely freed from meaning through automated processes will humanity finally be able, on a massive scale, to encounter their true meaningless condition, and learn to play and play to learn with each other.

We have organized the contributions, by essayists and by artists, alike in four chapters. The first chapter deals with the idea of playing against AI seen as an apparatus; the second one is concerned with technical images, from photography to AI. The third one approaches AI from the with attention to languages: narration, translation, music. The last chapter, titled neg-anthropology, engages with Flusser's vexed concern or hope for the future of our species.

Part I: Playing against the Apparatus

One of the best-known (and most-quoted) texts by Vilém Flusser is his conclusion of *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (1983) when, after defining photography as an apparatus and qualifying the photographers of functionaries obeying the programs of the apparatus, he speaks of the "real" photographers, or "experimental photographers" who, on the contrary, do not respect these programs, play against the apparatus, and thus create a space of freedom. The authors in this part all consider AI as an apparatus (or a super-apparatus), which, according to Flusser we must learn to play against in order to avoid disaster. .

Gabriel Philipson, Marc Lenot and Victor Geuer explore the concept of hallucinations, the anthropomorphic name given by the AI industry to the errors and glitches of its models. They examine the possibility for artists and AI users to generate deliberate hallucinations in the models, finding ways to make the models fail, err, make mistakes and create aberrations. Some of these deliberate hallucinations are visual, producing ludicrous images, others are based upon prompts that succeed in bypassing the system and, for instance with the use of poetry, trick the models.

Julie Martin analyses the work of several artists who explore the alternative potentials of AI technologies and embrace the fictional dimension inherent in AI-generated images. Some carefully manipulate the prompts, to produce an alternative visual fiction that can expose the biases and the power structures which have been embedded in the datasets used to train AI. Acts of counterfactualization is the name she gives to these practices of forcing technical devices to deviate from their normative uses and thus to generate new creative and critical perspectives.

[9] Vilém Flusser Does Writing have a Future? pp 84-85. For fuller context, see the insert "A New Way of Reading Called Computing" published separately in this issue.

One such artist is Lionel Bayol-Thémines, who is known for his AI generated work where, through endless repetition of carefully worded prompts, he manages to finally obtain aberrant images. In his project *Beyond the Code* presented here, he plays against pre-trained AI models producing conventional images and succeeds in generating unthought images, with "unpredictable information", via the use of locally installed models (thus avoiding the constraints and the censorship of online models). By questioning and challenging AI coding, he explores what escapes, overflows, or resists their logic, what "plays against".

Another artist presented here, the Saudi Nouf Aljowaysir, investigates how AI systems reproduce and amplify colonial hierarchies of knowledge. Exploring the representation in AI models of her Bedouin ancestors, she shows how the historical and digital visual record of the Arab world, largely produced by Western imperial actors, has been absorbed into AI training data, shaping both archival memory and algorithmic interpretation. Her project *Salaf (Ancestors)* uses AI segmentation techniques to remove orientalist figures from Western photographic databases of the Arab world, creating "absent datasets".

Beyond just playing against the apparatus, Nicolas Giraud envisions a wider solution, the Flusserian idea of withdrawal, of retreat, as a movement both backward and forward, linking it to the classical example of the Anabasis and to the monastic and eremitic culture. Considering that, with AI, one cannot anymore build an alternative to the authority of the programs, Giraud proposes that withdrawal be a vital move to disappear from the scrutiny of a panoptical control, a manner, as Flusser said, « to maintain human dignity as a subject », a move toward something that is not measurable or computable. Retreat would be a political necessity for those who cannot accept nor fight the situation, and who would become ghosts in the machine.

Finally, the Chinese scholar Zhou Haining reframes this concept of playing against the apparatus, examining the internal logic among Flusser's concepts of programmed thinking, the apparatus, and artificial intelligence, and synthesising the theoretical framework of his thought on artificial intelligence as media. He reframes the crisis of subjectivity as a generative issue within media ontology, offering a theoretical entry point for revisiting human subjectivity in the digital era.

Part II: Technical Images

As is well known, Flusser defined technical images as images created by machines following a logic of computation and calculation (as opposed to traditional images, such as paintings). His primary example of a technical image was obviously photography, but, in his last years, he started to also

include the first computer-generated images. For those, he sometimes used the expression "artificial intelligence", which appears 19 times in his book *In the Universe of Technical Images* (1985). And clearly, today, AI generated images can be seen as a continuation of his concept of technical images: the contributors in this part explore this issue.

For the computer artist and researcher Nikoleta Kerinska, Flusser's work on technical images has become more relevant today when we examine images produced by artificial intelligence: they constitute a new generation of technical images, whose most distinctive structural characteristic is the logic of sampling, specifically the statistical recombination of vast sets of visual data, which replaces direct visual references to the world with a process of probabilistic synthesis.

Starting from the photographic apparatus and examining how Flusser's thinking about the apparatus can be applied to AI, the Korean photographer and researcher Sangwoo Park contrasts the humanisation of objects and the objectification of humans: objects increasingly resembling the human body and brain, and humans progressively resembling the objects they create. With AI, this leads to the intelligentisation of objects and the robotisation of humans: as artificial intelligence comes to resemble human beings, human beings also come to resemble artificial intelligence. This leads Park to criticise Flusser's "excessive theoretical ambition" to reduce all human thoughts and attitudes solely to elements of apparatus programs.

Starting from their constatation of the impossibility to photograph the moon with a certain smartphone which has been programmed so that AI generated images replace the actual photograph, Sofia Chefalo and Vinzenz Aubry explore how to deal with such images that seem to have photographic authority but are no longer based upon the traditional indexicality. With this computational supplementation, the shutter is replaced by text prompts, and images are the result of an averaging process by machine learning models processing a multitude of singular traces.

One could argue that AI generated images should not be called photographs. Several artists have explored this space between photographs and AI generated images. The images created with AI models by Andreas Müller-Pohle (a major editor and publisher of Flusser since 1983 and who continues to be one of his main promoters worldwide) in an extract of his most recent book *Robots* are amazing, beautiful and, at the same time, frightening. This extract is introduced by Baruch Gottlieb, who points out correspondences with some of the creations of Louis Bec; and, at the end of this issue, Rainer Guldin offers a critical review of the book, reflecting on , Müller-Pohle's description of AI systems as "super black boxes" whose "processes are not just hidden, they are unpredictable."

Focusing on the errors and glitches of the models, three Brazilian artists and researchers, Thiago Hersan, Cássia Hosni and Gisele Beiguelman, have investigated the ways in which a plat-

form using artificial intelligence models to analyse, organise and visualise artworks in Brazilian museums makes errors in describing them, introducing ambiguous interpretations not predicted by the program.

Where text once dominated, technical images now govern social and political life, arriving not as conventional images but as data packets in disguise, distributing their metadata unnoticed among users. Against the passive reproduction of algorithmically proposed image worlds, Achim Mohné proposes his generative video project *Rotkäppchen* (Little Red Riding Hood) based on the classic Grimm fable. Rather than feeding the AI standard descriptive or directive prompts, he inputs the original 1812 Grimm prose directly, section by section, allowing the machine to interpret narrative language on its own terms. What emerges reveals that the aesthetic vocabulary of nineteenth-century fairy tale illustration, soft light, forest gloom, idealised figures, is already encoded as a baseline tendency within the model's latent space.

The French photographer Raphaël Dallaporta proposes here eight photographs of an African ritual statue from Congo. The photographs are real (i.e. made with a camera), but the object itself is magical and thus can function as a counter-apparatus: these images, which are "charged, opaque, and intentional" oppose the automatism of programs. They don't merely represent the world, but they act upon it: an operative image in the Flusserian sense.

Part III: Language and Linearity

For all their apparent self-evidence, technical images are not the iconic images which the "magicians" used to rule the pre-literate age. These new images, produced by apparatus executing linear written codes developed over the historical period of alphabetisation, are not images of the world, rather they are images of texts. The persistence of texts in today's universe of AI-generated images is evident in the fact that we use prompts to interface with image generation, these prompts connect with textual image annotations in the corpus which are integral to how "AI" functions. Given that texts, and the linear-causal historicity they produce, are key to understanding what AI is and how it may transform us, the authors in this part examine effects on the linear forms of narrative and music.

Rafael Bresciani and Gabriele Lautenschlaeger draw on Flusser's account of writing as a reduction of the image's two dimensions to the single dimension of the concept, arguing that machine learning performs an analogous operation: collapsing the multidimensional richness of lived experience into numerical vectors organised by statistical proximity. Each step in this chain of abstraction moves further from the concrete world while claiming to represent it more precisely.

AI intensifies this logic to a new threshold, producing a semiotic cosmos so thoroughly mathematised that the human subject risks losing the capacity to participate in meaning-making altogether. In Guillaume Beringer's contribution, the sequential logic of alphanumeric code, which reduces reality to predetermined pathways, mirrors the reduction of music to quantified, programmable sequences that began with MIDI and reaches its endpoint in AI generation. Where music once modelled non-linear, embodied thought for Flusser, its submission to computational logic transforms it into a one-dimensional flow of optimised patterns. The case of Andrew Frelon's synthetic bands is claimed to produce not music but nostalgia-as-data, a closed loop in which program speaks to program, and genuine novelty becomes structurally impossible.

This part features an ambitious and truly flusserian artwork "Thus Spoke a Strange Computer" by Samuel Hurcom. The work is reminiscent of Flusser's early experiments with Hypercard-based philosophy in the unfinished work known as the "Flusser Hypertext" produced at the Kernforschungszentrum Karlsruhe with Bernd Wingert in 1990. Hurcom's work retrieves the idioms of computer punch cards, narrative decision trees and system flow diagrams to map out the thinking of the thinker of digital media as an irreverent computer program. Thinking gestures through planes of computational operations. .

In his contribution, Ulrich Richtmeyer argues that hesitation is constitutive of humanoid writing: the delays produced by doubt, revision, and self-dialogue are not interruptions to the writing process but its substance. Drawing on Flusser's Die Schrift, he distinguishes technical automatism from the intellectual labour writing requires, and reads Flusser's account of "asthmatic" critical thinking, the rhythm of urgency and contemplative pause, as a framework for evaluating AI writing. Where human writing is dialogic and permanently unfinished, AI output tends toward the monologic and the programmatic. The real stakes are not textual quality but that AI writing short-circuits the internal incompleteness that makes a text a text in Flusser's sense, producing outputs that are resolved rather than reaching.

Daein Cheong's account of producing an AI-generated photo-roman becomes a practical test of Flusser's "programmed magic." AI image generation accelerates convergence toward a single legible scene, compressing photography's temporal stages into near-instantaneous output. Yet the process remains one of active judgment: the prompt functions as a textual interface through which accumulated personal references are translated into technical images. The photo-roman form then holds the essay's central tension in suspension each image is instantaneous, but the roman restates sequence, duration, and reading time, reintroducing Flusser's "half-fabricate" logic and the dialogic incompleteness where the linearity of prompts, programs and narratives are punctuated with images.

Part IV: Neg-Anthropology

'Every revolution is a technical revolution[10]' Our lives, relationships, societies, political systems are transformed by every scientific and technological innovation. The challenge with every technological advance, warns Flusser, is that it intensifies pre-existing difficulties and danger while transposing them to a new aesthetic and epistemic register. Many authors in this volume have voiced concerns about "AI" but what is really at stake? For Flusser it is no longer sufficient to claim humanism and advocate for measures which will preserve humanity. Even in his last writings, where his readers must persist in humanizing the new technological condition despite the fact that being human is strictly impossible. "A new, post-humanist, "post-modern" anthropology is in the process of emerging. Having come to understand ourselves as a nothing within nothing — as nodes of networked relations held together by nothing — we can, for the first time, begin to negate this nothing. Such a negative anthropology ("neg-anthropology") is not merely a theoretical philosophical position (a negative belief), but above all a practice."[11]

For Flusser, in his last unfinished book "Humanization" (*Menschwerdung*), being human is strictly impossible, yet despite its impossibility we must still strive to humanize our technological condition. In this sense he advocates what he calls a neg-anthropology. What does this entail? Flusser only gives us some hints in his late turn towards intersubjectivity and dialog, humanization requires being with other humans. The authors in this part all concern themselves with the status of this vexed condition "human."

In his essay, Marcel Marburger argues that AI cannot be genuinely creative, only simulative, since programmed processes categorically exclude surprise. But the deeper concern is anthropological. As intellectual labour is increasingly delegated to machines, human cognitive capacity, self-understanding, and independence of thought erode alongside it. Where industrial machinery displaced physical labour, AI displaces the mind itself. Users who outsource thinking to AI systems risk a creeping dependency that diminishes their own mental productivity and economic value. The danger, Marburger insists, is not merely job replacement but a fundamental transformation of what it means to be human.

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[10] Vilém Flusser, On writing, complexity and the technical revolutions. Interview by Miklós Peternák in Osnabrück, European Media Art Festival, September 1988. In: Miklós Peternák (Hrsg.), „We shall survive in the memory of others". Vilém Flusser, Köln 2010 (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 87min), 10min30s

[11] "Eine neue, post-humanistische, «post-moderne» Anthropologie befindet sich im Entstehen. Nachdem wir uns als ein Nichts im Nichts aufgeklärt haben - als Knoten vernetzter Relationen, die nichts verbindet -, können wir überhaupt erst beginnen, dieses Nichts zu verneinen. Eine derartige negative Anthropologie (Neg-anthropologie)· ist nicht etwa nur eine theoretische philosophische Sicht (ein negativer Glaube), sondern vor allem eine Praxis." - Vilém Flusser, Vom Subjekt zum Projekt: Menschwerdung, p. 18, translated by Baruch Gottlieb.

Where memory was once an embodied impression carved through lived experience, it is increasingly replaced by quantified storage and algorithmic retrieval. Drew Burk draws on Flusser's concept of cybernetic memory to argue that AI does not merely store human experience but actively transforms the conditions under which humans remember, individuate, and think. Encountering Flusser with Stiegler and Neyrat, Burk warns that this industrialization of memory risks foreclosing mental integrity itself, producing subjects interpellated by machines yet unable to fully individuate as human beings.

Luciana Nacif maps out the full material and political infrastructure of generative AI, from rare earth extraction and submarine cables to data labour and military applications. Against narratives of technological inevitability, she insists this system is concentrating power in few hands while externalising its costs onto vulnerable communities and ecosystems. The human subject within it risks reduction to a functionary, shaped by apparatuses that determine perception, cognition, and democratic possibility itself.

In his later interviews, Flusser recalls the Talmudic injunction that the only permitted image of God is the face of another human being, speculating that the experience of teleconferencing could be a radically religious experience. Marcelo Mercado series of algorithmically generated busts presents a familiar *gestalt*, a slightly flushed and bloated human head with bulging eyes, full nose and lips, seemingly invaded with information. The technical image of a human face is itself an archive, of scientific and philosophical texts and inherent historical concatenations of apparatuses, in a the most socially operative form, anthropomorphic.

Félix Jely reads the emergence of generative AI through Flusser's philosophy of photography, arguing that large language models and diffusion models represent the latest and most totalising instantiation of the apparatus. Where Flusser insisted that critique must engage with the black box rather than merely dwell on the surface of the image, generative AI multiplies black boxes into pipelines, rendering the internal logic structurally inaccessible. The apparatus tendency to put the human out of circuit, already present in the camera, reaches its endpoint in synthetic data loops where AI trains AI. Behind this acceleration lies concentrated capitalist ownership of computational infrastructure, confirming Flusser's insight that apparatus power serves the interests it conceals.

Alaz Okudan draws on Flusser's figure of the abyss to argue that humans have always sought freedom by tearing objects from nature and injecting values into them, only to become subject to the cultural objects they produce. AI intensifies this paradox: rather than fulfilling Flusser's hope that automation would free humans to develop better values, it has deepened material entanglement, obscured labour, and subordinated value questions to capital accumulation. The stick, once made to clear a path, now blocks the way more thoroughly than the branch ever did.

When his general pessimism veers into almost manic utopian moments, Flusser not only posits a post-historical situation but a post-political one. His hopeful prescriptions for intersubjective exchange, seem to assume a world where all "players" are equally privileged to play as they wish, that there is an even playing field on which new intersubjective learning can take place. Baruch Gottlieb uses the example of a GPT chatbot to examine power relations which inform any intersubjective encounter in an attempt to ground Flusser's ecstatic hopefulness in real existing social relations. Despite or rather through Flusser's radical disappointment with humanism, human intersubjectivity persists as an imperative.

AI as a techno-industrial phenomenon is about much more than images or text, it is also about power and money, a realm of activity many critics have only a very limited access to, and so we conventionally take recourse to studying emergent phenomena in forms of media. The business driver of technological development does not factor into Flusser's critiques. Capitalism is a paradigm Flusser studiously avoids. Where concerns about dangers related to computation and automation may imply a political response, Flusser counters that politics itself has been superseded by a technological condition where the public sphere no longer functions as a forum, and communication takes place massively on a private-to-private basis.

Many contributors to this volume have pointed to widely shared concerns with the prospects for humanity that the advent of AI heralds. They are wary of unacceptable labour conditions (and for the foreseeable future) required to build, maintain and supplement that automatic functioning of the "stack" which provides us these potentially emancipating "artificial intelligences," not to mention the unsustainable extraactivism which is accelerating climate change and environmental degradation. In this sense AI is merely the most recent technical development in an intensifying continuum of "progress" from photography or Gutenberg press or before, compounding the problems which aroused the concern of the thinkers of previous epochs. As such we must share Flusser's frustration and pessimism that the old ways of thinking never have been adequate to liberate humanity and will serve us even worse today. On the other hand, through his gestural, dialectical, dialogical and playful proposals for thinking with and against the apparatus, the essays in this special issue affirm that Flusser's philosophical toolbox can still prove extremely useful for making sense of our current age and for successfully navigating its many perils.

Marc Lenot and Baruch Gottlieb, May 2026