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**The (a)political dimension of the school:**

**Vilém Flusser's project with no purpose for education**

## **I. The apparatus as a problem**

On January 8, 1974, after his return to Europe, Vilém Flusser wrote to one of the Brazilians with whom he had a close relationship and friendship, the lawyer José Bueno<sup>1</sup>. In the letter, Flusser responded to Bueno's considerations about the oil crisis that began in 1973. Bueno felt that the crisis should not be overestimated, as it was only one of many periods of scarcity that had already affected civilizations in the past. For the Czech-Brazilian philosopher, that crisis could not be compared with any other: “[...] the current technology is something else: it is a cosmic project. And that project is us, is about us: ‘de te fabula narratur’”<sup>2</sup> (Flusser, 1974: 41).

Various researchers who dedicated themselves to Flusser's thought attributed to him an optimism in the way he dealt with the irruptions and disruptions that communication technologies already performed in his time and would continue to perform in the future. This would not be a mistaken conclusion, given what Flusser made explicit in relevant parts of his published work. For example, in his much-discussed *Vampyroteuthis infernalis*, Flusser (2012: 121) he envisions the possibility of devices freeing humanity from the boredom of work so that we can be “total artists”. Putting it on his own terms: “Men will stop being workers, and will become programmers and message receivers. The ‘morality of production’ will disappear simultaneously with the ‘morality of property’. A new morality will emerge, that of the elaboration and consumption of messages. Human existence will no longer be realized in the struggle against objects, but in the struggle for the preservation and transmission of acquired information. Men will cease to be ‘workers’, and will become ‘system functionaries.’”<sup>3</sup> (Flusser, 2012: 121)

When the Vilém Flusser Archive was founded in São Paulo, the author's essays and correspondence, previously unpublished and in Portuguese, became available to researchers. As a result,

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence detailed in other articles published in Brazil at (Silva; Baitello, 2020) (Silva; Racy, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> “[...] a tecnologia atual é outra coisa: é um projeto cósmico. E tal projeto somos nós, e é ‘de te fabula narratur.’” (Flusser, 1974: 41).

<sup>3</sup> “Os homens deixarão de ser trabalhadores, e passarão a ser programadores e receptores de mensagens. A ‘moral de produção’ desaparecerá simultaneamente com a ‘moral da propriedade’. Surgirá uma nova moral, a da elaboração e do consumo de mensagens. A existência humana não mais se realizará na luta contra objetos, mas na luta pela preservação e transmissão de informações adquiridas. Os homens deixarão de ser ‘operários’, e passarão a ser ‘funcionários de sistemas.’” (Flusser, 2012: 121)

we now know that Flusser's announcement (2012: 120) of a new morality focused on the elaboration and consumption of messages is a kind of inverted prophecy. Unlike the Old Testament prophets of the desert, who announced the end of all things for the beginning of new and prosperous times, Flusser's visions of the apparatus identified the beginning of such prosperous times as a form of anteroom of the end of all things. With this inversion, it becomes possible to appreciate the ambiguity of arguments such as those of *Vampyrotheutis*: the emergence of the “new man” or of a “new morality” is not a fate destined to occur, as an obvious consequence of the rise of technologies; rather it must be achieved through the laborious task capable of mastering and transforming the principles of decadence. The “new man” would come after the insertion of humanist values into the emerging digital world. But how? To answer this question, a keyword of his work deserves, finally, a more dedicated study: politics.

Fragments of letters, writings and essays allow us to confirm this hypothesis about the Flusserian thought, among them the quote already mentioned, about the oil crisis: in exchanges with Bueno, Flusser sought to convince his friend that the technologies of his time - on that occasion, dams, nuclear plants and combustion engines - were not just artifacts of humanity, but that the human was also a function of such technologies. We are the characters of its fables, the objects (and not the subjects) of its project. In the same letter to Bueno Flusser identifies himself as a prophet, comparing himself to Jeremiah, the one who predicted the fall of Jerusalem and denounced the misdeeds of the rulers, anticipating great destruction and agony: “[...] the spirit of Jeremiah is more alive in me”<sup>4</sup> (Flusser, 1974: 41). A similar tone prevails in all correspondence with Bueno throughout the 1970s: Flusser dedicated himself informing to his friend - a deeply conservative and Catholic man, sympathetic to the Brazilian military dictatorship and enthusiastic about its economic plans for the country -- the agonies of the West and its project, which gave signs that the world had already ended.

This feeling is also present in Flusser's most recently published work entitled in portuguese *O Último Juízo: Gerações* [The Last Judgement: Generations] (2017). In the introduction to the first volume of the book, the philosopher presents a reflection on the end of the world, considering that it would not realise anyone's fears of a final explosion. Rather, “[s]o imperceptible will [it be] that we won't notice its dawn or its twilight, nor the last night. [...] Is the world around us just a sad epilogue of reality? That we are on an inclined plane whose slope we call ‘progress?’”<sup>5</sup> (Flusser, 2017: 26)

<sup>4</sup> “[...] o espírito de Jeremias está em mim mais vivo” (Flusser, 1974: 41).

<sup>5</sup> “Tão imperceptível será o último dia que não notaremos o seu raiar nem o seu crepúsculo, nem a última noite.[...] O mundo que nos cerca não passa de um epílogo triste da realidade? Que estamos em plano inclinado cujo declive chamamos ‘progresso?’” (Flusser, 2017, p 26)

It is, after all, progress that is the theme of Flusser's inverted prophecy. Progress is the objective that animates the technological and political project of which we are objects. The speculative quarrel, then, about whether Flusser would be an optimist or a pessimist in relation to the apparatus that produces the technologies of progress seems to be gradually resolved, but not in the direction of either side: the new writings reveal an indignant Flusser, dissatisfied with our status as functionaries, but hopeful that we could master such a fate. However, for that, we would also have to learn to lay bare the benefits of the apparatus that adorn the anteroom of the end of the world.

Still in *Gerações*, Flusser (2017: 27) describes two attitudes towards the end of the world: the destruction of everything, on the one hand, and a shrug on the other. Both would be false attitudes, just poses. The first is somewhat progressive while the second is just uncommitted, disengaged. By “world”, however, Flusser seems to refer to a phenomenological perspective, greatly influenced by the concept of *Lebenswelt*, in Husserl. He presents the notion through an image: that of a sphere that represents the set of beings that constitute reality, more compact at its center and more and more diffuse toward its edges. He continues: “It is a ball whose surface evaporates. We are at the center of the ball, and we are the cores of reality. In our immediate surroundings, the multitude of beings jostles. Each one seeks to reach us in order to fulfill himself. Each one tries to break the barrier formed by the others, in order to be perceived. Everyone wants to be known and recognized. Together these beings form the circumstance in which we are. At the back of this disorderly crowd floats the amorphous mass of imperceptible beings. It forms the territory of virtuality, from which perceptible and realizable beings are condensed. And this nebulous mass is lost in the abysses of nothingness. The ball of reality rolls in the dome of nothingness propelled by the past towards the future”<sup>6</sup> (Flusser, 2017: 22).

The world, therefore, would not end in extreme conditions, as the prophets of the desert believed. Rather it begins and ends with us, the nucleus of reality, as we engage in the intersubjective task of condensing the virtual into the perceived, known and the recognized. The two attitudes described by Flusser would be the ways in which we annihilate the world: the attitude of indiscriminately devouring follows from a centripetal movement, which accepts everything as it is with optimism, but swallows the world into the void of the “I”; while the attitude of shrugging is like a centrifugal movement, which rejects everything around itself and, for that very reason, gives up the

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<sup>6</sup> “É uma bola cuja superfície se evapora. No centro da bola estamos nós, e somos nós os núcleos da realidade. Em nosso redor imediato, se acotovela a multidão dos seres. Cada um procura chegar até nós para realizar-se. Cada um procura romper a barreira formada pelos demais, para ser percebido. Cada um quer ser conhecido e reconhecido. Em seu conjunto formam esses seres a circunstância dentro da qual estamos. Às costas dessa turba desordenada flutua a massa amorfa dos seres imperceptíveis. Forma o território da virtualidade, do qual os seres perceptíveis e realizáveis se condensam. E essa massa nebulosa se perde nos abismos do nada. A bola da realidade rola na abóbada do nada propelida pelo passado em direção ao futuro” (Flusser, 2017: 22).

task. The apparatus which produces such technologies as the computer or the rocket could then be understood not only as a technique, but as a means of observation and formation of the world. We oscillate between the two attitudes: if we are very focused on the demands of the particular and specific “I,” we recognise it as a set of wonderful means that will lead unequivocally to a better era; if we are disinterestedly moving away from the “I”, it becomes a set of mere noises that disrupt and disturb everyday patterns and do not deserve engagement.

What Flusser does, with his inverted prophetic vision, is a phenomenological turn. The end of the world, the decline of the Western project of progress, is not a crisis of things as they are, but a crisis of things as we observe them. Flusser thus makes an observation of the observation, as defined by Thomas Bauer (2021). Neither optimistic nor pessimistic, neither interested nor disinterested, the flusserian perspective asks whether the models we have to form the world are, in fact, sufficient and satisfactory to meet our needs to create meaning. The task of condensing the world is communicological and the apparatus obstructs it. It is necessary to rethink or even reanimate the processes of condensation that produce the world, and the apparatus will only help us in this task if we consider them problems, as they are with respect to our observation. This would be the third possible posture facing the end of the world: accepting things as challenges, so as to be able to transform them through our observation, through our active condensation, through our engagement. He continues: “As they rush upon us, [things] bar our way. If we want to keep our way open, we must not seek to annihilate things, nor ignore them. We must try to overcome them. Things are overcome by being transformed. It is not in consumption or in refusal that we will transform things. It is by manipulating things that we overcome them”<sup>7</sup> (Flusser, 2017: 29).

The world modeled by apparatus is already a world that has been previously manipulated, and therefore only demands from us the postures of consumption or refusal. What Flusser demands, then, is a radical experiential openness that does not passively accept this obstruction in order to be able to transform the situation. Thus, Flusser draws for his readers a communicological problem of how we want to articulate what is perceived, known and recognized around us. In this communicology, the refusal of obstruction deserves the proper name of politics, which can now be identified as the condensation of intersubjectivity itself. However, “politics” as formulated in the modern era, because it would no longer be applicable in the age of apparatus, needs to be characterised as apolitical.

Because Flusser never presented the concept of politics in a focused and dedicated way, the paths that led to his understanding are many and still unknown, Without it, however, we seem

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<sup>7</sup> “Ao se precipitarem sobre nós, [as coisas] barram nosso caminho. Se quisermos manter o nosso caminho aberto, não devemos procurar aniquilar as coisas, nem ignorá-las. Devemos procurar superá-las. Coisas são superadas ao serem transformadas. Não é no consumo e nem na recusa que transformaremos as coisas. É manipulando as coisas que as superamos” (Flusser, 2017: 29).

to lose sight of a central element in his thinking. It is one that bears on the concept of the apparatus - which would, after all, be part of an apolitical project for us (*de te fabula narratur*), whose immediate impact prevents us from actively condensing the world. Like all else in Flusser's body of work, what he calls politics is also full of inversions and ambiguities. But we find important clues as to how Flusser thinks and perceives the political and apolitical in his essays and articles on education.

## II. The school: diagnosis of the catastrophe

Flusser always sought to synthesize his reflections and assertions around a theory of communication, which he used to call communicology. Flusserian concepts, including his notion of politics, can be understood within this proposal, which recognises humans above all as communicating beings, that is, as beings who respond to their existential, social and cultural conditions by communicating. In his communicology, Flusser maintains that communication can be defined as "[...] the process thanks to which acquired information is stored, processed and transmitted"<sup>8</sup> (Flusser, 2014: 45). This is a more concise statement of the same project of condensing what is perceived, known and recognized, as formulated in his work *Gerações*. This definition is the key from which one can understand both the diagnosis that Flusser made for education and, also, the prognosis or the solution for this crisis, which passes through the mastering and transformation of the apolitics of the apparatus.

As Diogo Bornhausen (2020: 107) argues, the central issue in Flusser's communication theory is that of models. For Flusser, communication is the way in which we humans decide to accumulate, store, process and transform our experiences. Still relying on the image of the sphere, communicating would be forming the world from the periphery to the center of the sphere, and vice-versa. However, the accomplishment of this task depends on the creation of models, which can be understood as the specific means of forming according to the intention of the communication - a project. In this sense, communication devices -- technologies, media, in a more specific sense and, in a broader perspective, apparatus -- refer to systems that reproduce previously established codes, materialize and reproduce these models, drawing us in as the characters of its fables. We function according to its ways of experiencing the world. In short, the communicational dynamics and the devices of which they are part are related to the creation and maintenance of those meanings that govern experiences and social conduct.

Bearing this in mind, the problem that mobilizes the flusserian communicology is how we want to communicate, or how we want to experience the world, and whether it is possible to rebel

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<sup>8</sup> "[...] o processo graças ao qual informações adquiridas são armazenadas, processadas e transmitidas" (Flusser, 2014: 45).

against pre-established models so that we achieve a radical experiential openness in the face of them. This problematization is also present in his work *Mundo Codificado*, in which Flusser defines communication as an artificial process, based on discoveries, tools and instruments, in short, symbols organized into codes (2007: 89). A change in the codes of culture, therefore, affords a glimpse of a change in the model of thought itself. With this in mind, it becomes clear than the end of the world that Flusser refers to in *Gerações* radiates from this “I” that observes it and performs it unsatisfactorily - that is, without generating transformation or change, using codes and models that are no longer capable of condensing, giving form.

For Flusser, there are three moments in which the codes of culture brought expressive transformations in the lived and experienced world, the passages from one moment to another having been marked by catastrophes (Baitello Jr., 2006). The first of them, in prehistory, is characterized by an imaginative and magical world characterised by traditional images. History, on the other hand, occurs in the predominantly textual period, marked by linearity and progressivity of thought. Finally, the contemporary period, post-history, is defined by technical images that propose a new relationship to the world in which condensation or formulation becomes the responsibility of the apparatus. The catastrophe that marks the passage to post-history, called by Flusser the nameless catastrophe, may be interpreted as the one in which self-determination becomes hetero-determination: the programs of the apparatus pre-define and pre-determine the world.

In *Pós-História*, Flusser describes this same catastrophe based on some other communicological characteristics of the era it inaugurated. One such characteristic can be found in the dialectic that Flusser establishes between dialogues and discourses, both key concepts of his Communicology. If the task is to choose how we want to communicate, dialogues and discourses are two main ways to store, share and transform codes, or even to manipulate or preserve models. Dialogues are sought whenever there is an intention to confront information to synthesize new information. Discourse, on the other hand, is the communicative mode that aims to conserve information and just transmit it, as it is. For Flusser, the widespread complaint of lack of communication in contemporary times would not be a consequence of the scarcity of the communicative fabric, but of the exuberant success of Western discourses and the consequent inability to elaborate new information in dialogue (Flusser, 2011: 74). Democracy, then, in the sense of a constant dialogue that produces, creates and transforms models, is impossible in a communicational environment that only reinforces discourses.

Flusser also describes four patterns of the discourse, with the three shifts of the cultural codes separating them. Theater, the most primordial of all, is prehistoric: it is about discourses that allow circular dialogues, from the patriarch who transmits the myths orally (Flusser, 2011, p. 35). In it, the participants have responsibility, because they need to produce a response. Revolution,

contestation and transformation are consequences of such an environment, but when societies begin to demand obedience, and not dialogue, another discourse environment proves to be more advantageous: the pyramidal. In the latter, the sender of the discourse is inaccessible, as he is hierarchically above. It is the communicological base of the West, historically and linearly produced, which tends to the stagnation of the social fabric from the reinforcement of tradition and authority. But because pyramidal discourses make dialogue difficult, they need “dialogical circles” (Flusser, 2011, p. 77) established in the ir guts, constantly moderating the pattern without losing the hierarchy. Thus, tree-shaped discourses are born, typical of modernity and of the scientific attitude towards the world. These, too, are historical, establishing specialties that are sub-branched and start to produce new information within its limits. However, each circle generates specific codes that tend to be indecipherable to non-experts. Then, the discourses are updated into their most recent form, the post-historical, that of amphitheaters, understood as the discourse of mass communication. There, the apparatus “transcodes” socially indecipherable codes in a simple and poor way, so that their messages can be easily transmitted. This type of discourse no longer produces history, as history is now an input to devices that transcode events into programs. The goal of this process is not to produce new information, but to constantly maintain the feedback loop. In this environment, the radical experiential openness necessary to continue articulating the world becomes a daydream.

With this in mind, one can understand Flusser's view of education experiencing a crisis in models. That is, the historical model that the school offers of articulating, condensing, shaping the world is no longer effective. In post-history, theatrical and pyramidal discourses are almost completely empty because they become anachronistic. On the other hand, tree-shaped discourses are only relevant if they are coupled with amphitheatrical discourses, which “transcode” them continuously. The school, then, built in environments of historical discourses, becomes anachronistic to the extent that all discourses turn to become amphitheatrical and, therefore, even more averse to a radical experiential turn. In this sense, the school crisis is a symptom of a larger communicological crisis: that of observation and articulation of the world.

In *Para uma escola do futuro* [Towards a school of the future] (1983), one of his unpublished essays discovered by Diogo Bornhausen's research (2020) in the São Paulo's Vilém Flusser Archive, Flusser describes the catastrophes that befell school and education historically. In the essay, Flusser describes three modes of living that can be identified within the anthropology underlying the Western project. The *economic* life would be “private”, a life in which the world revolves around itself: of a human concerned with cooking in order to eat and with eating in order to be able to cook again. The *political* life, on the other hand, is one that recognizes ideas, seeks to apply theories to everyday appearances and, consequently, produces artists and artisans who realise the world in

particular ways. The *school*/life, finally, turns its back on appearances and contemplates the very logic of ideas. The school, then, is the space for the formulation of theory, par excellence. Economic life is absurd, because the eternal return does not produce any transcendent meaning. Political life is a mistake, because every application of ideas to *praxis* produces flaws in thinking. Only the contemplative life of the school is one that produces wisdom. Flusser explains: “Nevertheless, economics and politics are justified. Economics because it opens a field for politics, and politics because it opens a field for philosophy. Without the idiots who live economically, artisans don't have free time to make their accomplishments. And without the arts, philosophers cannot compare works to show how wrong they are while they are showing. For this reason, the Platonic State consists of three layers: the economy supporting politics, and the latter, philosophy. Philosophers are kings because they are the purpose of the state, which is to bring wisdom” (Flusser, 1983: 1).<sup>9</sup>

There is one more rung on the ladder. The economy that sustains politics, the politics that sustains the school, but with modernity, there is a catastrophe that reverses this ladder as a victory of progress and of the bourgeois State. The valorization of tree-shaped discourses subservient to amphitheatrical discourses creates an environment of specialized information that can no longer be contemplative, but must be applied. Such an inversion establishes the conditions for the post-historical *zeitgeist* in which the production of meaning is no longer justified ethically, and becomes a mere formality. The economy, then, which was once the base of the ladder, becomes its highest point: all production of meaning must be economically useful. The school starts to create theories that need to support the achievements, that is, the political life of the bourgeois State which, in turn, emptied of dialogue, seeks to legitimize the discourses that sustain economic life. For Flusser (1983: 2) the finality of all theory in post-history is to benefit purely productive activity.

Such a project favors the increasing proliferation of specialized discourses that, in turn, stimulate the production of technologies. With this, a new way of life is created, that of technique, which quickly multiplies. Flusser (1983: 1) argues that techniques, in their exuberance, can no longer be stored and transmitted in the discursive environments of schools. In general, these rather become the place of training for economic life and the site where the techniques aimed only at production multiply. Thus, the creation of apparatuses come into play, which use what is produced at school as input for new programs. In doing so, however, they doom the school to an end because they themselves become preferred sources of available information and begin to codify the world

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<sup>9</sup> “Não obstante, economia e política se justificam. A economia, porque abre campo para a política, e a política porque abre campo para a filosofia. Sem os idiotas que vivem economicamente, os artesãos não disporiam de tempo livre para fazer suas obras. E sem os artesãos, os filósofos não poderiam comparar obras para mostrar o quanto são erradas as ideias que nelas transparecem. Por isto, o Estado platônico consiste em três camadas: a economia sustentando a política, e esta a filosofia. Os filósofos são reis, porque são o propósito do Estado, que é o de trazer sabedoria” (Flusser, 1983: 1).

on their own. The modern school produces agents who make history, but the apparatuses produce programs that provide stored information and carry out post-history without the need of agents. Such a mechanism potentially hampers the articulation of the world, from the periphery to the center, because it dispenses with the need for engagement. In the essay *Pós-História e Educação* (Posthistory and Education, in a free translation), Flusser details his explanation: “But [the school] is condemned not only for its inadaptation to the context, but above all for the anthropology that serves as its background. The bourgeois school seeks to train agents, that is: for it, man is 'homo faber'. Currently, it is no longer viable to consider work, this gesture that informs the given, that prints information about the circumstance, as a typical gesture of man. On the contrary: such a gesture, when analyzed in its various phases, reveals itself as a mechanical and automatable movement, a typical movement of devices, because it is programmable. What is typically human becomes, nowadays, the gesture of programming work” (Flusser, 1987a: 2).<sup>10</sup>

The school, engulfed by post-history, cannot escape the possibility of training only functionaries. In *Filosofia da Caixa Preta*, the functionary is defined as “a person who plays with the device and acts according to it”<sup>11</sup> (Flusser, 1985: 5). The device, on the other hand, is a “toy that simulates a type of thought”<sup>12</sup> (Flusser, 1985: 5), and therefore it is not a definition restricted to describing technologies, but any system that works by previously formulated codes -- such as a highly bureaucratic state the economy when perceived as a model. To “function” is, for Flusser, “to exchange programmed symbols”<sup>13</sup> (Flusser, 1985: 16). The employee then is the one who makes a device work. Without being able to fully understand it, the functionary is dominated by the apparatus, and obeys its instructions in order to serve its program. In *Da Religiosidade*, the notion of functionary appears as a way of describing someone who does not understand the purpose of the device. Flusser writes: “For the functionary, the question of the purpose of the apparatus in terms of which he works is a metaphysical question in the pejorative sense of the term. It lacks meaning”<sup>14</sup> (Flusser, 2002: 71). In other words, the functionary is incapable of articulating the world and incapable of a radical experiential openness. A similar understanding is found in *Pós-História*, in which Flusser defines the functionary as “[...] the one who sits behind the desk and receives papers covered with symbols that are provided to him by other functionaries. He archives such papers, and

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<sup>10</sup> “Mas [a escola] está condenada não apenas por sua inadaptação ao contexto, mas sobretudo pela antropologia que lhe serve de fundo. A escola burguesa busca formar agentes, isto é: para ela, o homem é 'homo faber'. Atualmente, não é mais viável considerar-se o trabalho, este gesto que informa o dado, que imprime informação sobre a circunstância, enquanto gesto típico do homem. Pelo contrário: tal gesto, quando analisado em suas várias fases, se revela movimento mecânico e automatizável, movimento típico de aparelhos, por programável. O tipicamente humano passa a ser, atualmente, o gesto de programar trabalho” (Flusser, 1987a: 2).

<sup>11</sup> “pessoa que brinca com o aparelho e age em função dele” (Flusser, 1985: 5).

<sup>12</sup> “brinquedo que simula um tipo de pensamento” (Flusser, 1985: 5)

<sup>13</sup> “permutar símbolos programados” (Flusser, 1985: 16)

<sup>14</sup> “Para o funcionário, a pergunta pela finalidade do aparelho em função do qual ele funciona é uma pergunta metafísica no sentido pejorativo do termo. Carece de significado” (Flusser, 2002: 71).

covers others with symbols, to provide them to still other functionaries”<sup>15</sup> (Flusser, 2011: 49). That is, the functionary’s *praxis* is no longer aimed at modifying the world, but at adjusting the code.

In the essay *Post-History and Education* (Flusser 1987a: 2), Flusser identifies two trends in the development of the school of the future. The first is the threat of totalitarian robotization described above, and the second is “[...] the hope of a new, and never before dreamed of form of freedom”<sup>16</sup> (Flusser, 1987a: 2). The second trend is one that points to a shift in focus in the school from data transmission to processing. For example, the syntax of the English language would be taught, but not the language itself. Flusser continues: “It becomes obvious, in such a tendency, that manipulating symbols, whether manually or electromagnetically, will be the dominant gesture of future society, and that the *praxis* of informing objects (relegated to intelligent instruments) will be replaced in the future man by the *praxis* of programming instruments” (Flusser, 1987a: 2).<sup>17</sup>

But, once again, this is an inverted prophecy. The *praxis* of programming instruments still presupposes giving up the condition of agent to assume the role of functionary, with a device, as a player in a game. And in the world of apparatus, the public commitment to articulating the world from the periphery to the core no longer exists. It would be necessary, therefore, to resist this tendency, to implode the project inscribed in the devices, injecting it with a humanist intention of reactivating a theory that does not seek pure production. Or again, taking up some steps of the ladder: economic life was superimposed on contemplative life, and on the way, it produced an apolitical school, that is, one that does not articulate intersubjectivity. The apparent solution could be to reverse the escalation once more, so that the contemplative life can be superimposed on the economic one again, and this path would then require a re-politicization. In other words, there is a need to reformulate amphitheatrical discourses in a radically democratic direction, in order to adapt those environments for non-elite circular dialogues. But such a solution is paradoxical: how to carry out such an inversion in a world already dominated by, or worse, familiar with and attached to apparatuses? Is it possible to think of an apparatus that obeys politics? A device subjected to such dialogues, committed to articulation? Is there an apparatus capable of being radically democratic?

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<sup>15</sup> “[...] aquele sentado detrás da escrivaninha, e recebe papéis cobertos de símbolos que lhe são fornecidos por outros funcionários. Arquivava tais papéis, e cobre outros com símbolos, para fornecê-los a outros funcionários ainda” (Flusser, 2011, p. 49).

<sup>16</sup> “[...] a esperança de uma forma nova, e jamais dante sonhada, de liberdade” (Flusser, 1987a: 2).

<sup>17</sup> Torna-se óbvio, em tal tendência, que manipular símbolos, seja ainda manualmente, seja já eletromagneticamente, será o gesto dominante da sociedade futura, e que a *práxis* de informar objetos (relegada sobre instrumentos inteligentes) será substituída no homem futuro pela *práxis* de programar instrumentos (FLUSSER, 1987a: 2).

### III. The (a)politics: the apparatus, its prescriptive attitude and the probabilistic consciousness

The problem of how we want to communicate in a moment of fixed models and whether we are capable of rebelling against them is political. The core of this problem lies somewhere in the passage already described from historical perception (predominantly Euro-American), in which subjects are understood as self-determined, as agents of events, to a post-historical perception for which subjects are hetero-determined, as functionaries of an apparatus. Perhaps, at the present time, it is not even worth pursuing the notion of the subject as we have inherited it. And the problem is political within a communicological understanding of the notion in Flusser's work. In *Comunicologia*, the philosopher writes: "I defined politics as the method through which information is transmitted, in principle from generation to generation"<sup>18</sup> (Flusser, 2015: 200). Further on, he continues: "politics exists so that what is elaborated in the private space is available in the public" (Flusser, 2015: 201)<sup>19</sup>.

Similarly, Moses Finley (1988) attributes the moment of invention of politics and democracy itself to the separation between public and private. In democracies, political power -- that is, in the public interest -- is separated from the authority of economic, military, and religious powers -- in private interests. Much earlier, Aristotle (1998) distinguishes *oiké* from *politiké*, attributing to the private the economic and domestic administration, and to the public the realization of justice, both the distributive - which refers to the distribution of goods that a society produces - and the participatory - which refers to civic equality. Therefore, if politics is reserved only for the specifics of private interests, it will be unjust: the regime of power of a lord over all, or despotism.

In all these conceptions, the understanding of politics is present as a task that assumes a division between two types of interest. The quote above reveals how, for Flusser, this task requires citizens to energetically articulate their own interests. Thus, the human becomes a political animal because he needs to share publicly what is elaborated in a private way, and also because he needs to bring to his privacy what is elaborated publicly. Although it seems simple, this conception hides a radical inversion: Flusser places communication as the superstructure of politics, and not the other way around. It would be the modes of communicating that condition the political models, and not the political models that condition modes of communicating.

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<sup>18</sup> "Defini política como o método graças ao qual as informações são transmitidas, em princípio de geração em geração" (Flusser, 2015, p. 200).

<sup>19</sup> "a política existe para que aquilo que é elaborado no espaço privado esteja disponível no público" (Flusser, 2015, p. 201).

Communilogically, politics for Flusser would not be a concept in itself, but the active and engaged practice of articulating intersubjectivity - that is, of subjects coordinating their experiences, what they perceive, what they know and what they recognize. Or further, to recover a Husserlian root of Flusser's thought, the articulation of intersubjectivity can be understood as the search for the coexistence of all selves, from their original spheres to a reciprocal self-perception that produces a synthesis of the world. But to do so, politics must be engaged with a certain intentionality -- in other words, politics has finality, it is imbued with purpose, it is conceived within a project.

In a letter to Bueno dated November 10th, 1971, Flusser briefly comments on the Brazilian situation in the midst of a military dictatorship and, in a very intimate passage, confesses that he identifies with the reactionary tendency of the time: "I took responsibility for what seems to me to be harmful in the [current Brazilian] establishment, because I partially identify with it"<sup>20</sup> (Flusser, 1971: 5). He continues: "The attraction of the irrational, the emotional, the irresponsible, and therefore anti-humanistic in the correct sense of the term, is strong. I continue to be the victim of requests not only from Zionism and Brazilian ufanism, but from countless other forms of obscurantism, some of which are less obviously harmful. I'm not a great advocate of the 'clear reason of the day', because the 'dark passion of the night' in me is strong. [...] Let us unite in the difficult task of fighting the dark in us, not denying it, but admitting it, in order to disarm it" (Flusser, 1971: 3).<sup>21</sup>

It is intriguing how, in the quote above, Flusser offers in very living terms this notion of politics as an articulation that we defend in this essay: not to deny the deep divisions and conflicts it generates, but to admit them in order to be able to transform them. For such articulation to become a task, however, there must be an intentional, purposeful and engaged action on the part of an agent, and not a probabilistic – hence purposeless – consequence of an apparatus.

But the question remains: can we really accomplish the task? Flusser's response in different parts of his work is ambiguous. Often, as in earlier examples, the philosopher assumes the effort will fail. For example, in *Comunicologia*, Flusser describes how politics is carried out in the West through the attribution of an authority (Flusser, 2015: 202), that is, given to the police (synonymous with politician) whose function is to regulate the flow of information between the public and the

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<sup>20</sup> "Assumi a responsabilidade pelo que me parece ser nefasto no estabelecimento [brasileiro atual], porque me identifico parcialmente com ele" (Flusser, 1971: 5).

<sup>21</sup> "O atrativo do irracional, do emocional, do irresponsável, portanto do anti-humanístico no sentido correto do termo, é forte. Continuo vítima de solicitações não apenas do sionismo e do ufanismo brasileiro, mas de inúmeras outras formas de obscurantismo, algumas das quais menos obviamente nefastas. Não sou muito bem defensor da 'clara razão do dia', porque a 'obscura paixão da noite' em mim é forte. [...] Unamo-nos na tarefa difícil de combater o obscuro em nós, não negando-o, mas admitindo-o, a fim de desarmá-lo" (Flusser, p.3, 1971).

private. But the existence of the police is in itself contradictory -- after all, what this figure accomplishes is the control of the flow, and not necessarily an articulation. After all, if the sense of authority is solid enough, it wouldn't need an executive power to exercise control (Flusser, 2015: 171). Returning to the theme of the essay *Towards a school of the future*, this contradiction always makes unsatisfactory the passage from the theory produced in schools, understood as the highest degree of escalation, to its political realization, since execution reduces or constrains theory.

The vacuum that is established by this contradiction opens the way for what Flusser treated as a crisis of authority (Flusser, 2015: 178). Strongly influenced by Walter Benjamin (2018), Flusser argues that technical life -- inaugurated by the proliferation of discourses, as already seen -- creates space for apparatuses, which do not need an author, diluting once and for all the boundaries between public and private. As a result, an apparently undivided social life created by the apparatus conceals the need for articulation. Returning to *Gerações*, the institution of authority favours a centrifugal movement towards the "I": coexistence in reciprocal self-perception no longer exists, as the "I" does not even perceive something that is not of his specific and private interest, or worse still, the "I" mistakes his private interests for public interests. Everything becomes domestic and economical. There is an impoverishment of all conversation, of all collective purpose. There are only individuals in their particular and world-defining intentions.

The school crisis is part of this same desperate process. The obsession with technique in education can, finally, be read as the problem it is: an apolitical scenario -- because it does not favor the articulation of intersubjectivity, only the exchange of previously fixed codes -- made real by an economic apparatus -- that is, of private interest. In *Pós-História*, Flusser describes his concept of apparatus in another way that allows for such an interpretation: "They are all, like Auschwitz, black boxes that function as complex gears to carry out a program. They all work, according to the inertia that is inherent to them, and such functioning escapes, from a given moment, to the control of their initial programmers. Ultimately, such apparatuses all work to annihilate their functionaries, including your programmers. Necessarily, because they objectify, they dehumanize man" (Flusser, 2011: 25).<sup>22</sup>

In Flusser's work, we can find two main apolitical characteristics of the apparatus: on the one hand, the probabilistic consciousness that they allow and, on the other hand, their prescriptive attitude towards the world. The first, regarding probabilistic consciousness, is described in *Pós-História*, in which Flusser describes the current and dominant programmatic image of the world

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<sup>22</sup> "São todos, tal qual Aushwitz, caixas pretas que funcionam como engrenagens complexas para realizarem um programa. Funcionam todos, segundo a inércia que lhes é inerente, e tal funcionamento escapa, a partir de um dado momento, ao controle dos seus programadores iniciais. Em última análise, tais aparelhos funcionam todos no sentido de aniquilarem seus funcionários, inclusive seus programadores. Necessariamente, porque objetificam, deshumanizam o homem" (Flusser, 2011: 25).

that assumes it as a concretely given structure of chance (Flusser, 2011: 41), which shapes the behavior of society with programs that have neither purpose nor cause. In relation to his prescriptive attitude, Flusser, in *Comunicologia*, develops the history of imperatives as a way of establishing authority in politics. For Flusser (2015: 203), the West was only able to assert itself politically through imperatives and, in the age of apparatuses, such imperatives evolved to become prescriptions: dictates previously determined and unquestionably fulfilled because they are inscribed in the apparatus itself.

These features combined make the problem of self-determination inconceivable and produce something very distant, for example, from what Aristotle referred to as politics, as the realization of justice. In this era, it is introduced only as the formal concern of functionaries to fulfill their programs. Or, in Flusser's words: “[...] to live means to function within an apparatus that gives them their rights. If the device denies them these rights, it is because it has been badly programmed and is malfunctioning. It must be fixed. For the employee, the law is not an ethical or political judgment, but a formal judgment” (Flusser, 2011: 51-52).<sup>23</sup>

In education - especially in Brazil - evidence of such apolitical thought is spread through pedagogical projects. In 2017, for example, a proposal was approved for secondary education that no longer requires the teaching of Philosophy, Sociology, Physical Education and Arts, but creates a mandatory body of technical and professional training detached from other more traditional curricular components such as mathematics, language or the natural sciences (Ferretti; Silva 2017: 28). In higher education, 2020 marked the first time the number of people enrolled in distance teaching modalities exceeded the number enrolled in classroom teaching modalities.<sup>24</sup> Distance teaching promoted strong professional and technical application and offered as commodities that individualize the learning process and give in to strong deinstitutionalizing pressure (Seeger; Alves; Ghisleni, 2021: 7.)

In the essay *Nossa Escola* [Our School] Flusser summarizes the fate of the school in the face of these trends. For him, the post-industrial school will be an “[...] amphitheater radiating information towards future program analysts and programmers, who will work according to devices. [...] Future informed functionaries will be able to analyze or program computers and “word processors\\’\\’\\’, instead of calculating or speaking English. In this way, the school of the future will no

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<sup>23</sup> “[...] viver significa funcionar dentro de um aparelho que lhes proporciona seus direitos. Se o aparelho lhes negar tais direitos, é que foi mal programado e está mal funcionando. Deve ser consertado. Para o funcionário, o direito não é juízo ético ou político, mas juízo formal” (Flusser, 2011: 51-52).

<sup>24</sup> In 2020, of the more than 3.7 million Brazilians entering public and private Higher Education, more than 2 million (53.4%) opted for distance learning courses, offered predominantly by private institutions at competitive prices, and 1.7 million (46.6%), opted for presencial teaching. In the last 10 years, the number of enrollments in presencial courses decreased by 13.9%, while in distance learning courses it increased by 428.2%. Source: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/educacao/noticia/2022-02/censo-matriculas-em-cursos-superiores-de-ead-superam-presenciais>.

longer program society for functions of mechanical thinking, better executed by intelligent instruments, but for functions of analytical and programming thinking” (Flusser, 2011: 167).<sup>25</sup>

Due to the apolitics of the apparatus, the school occupies the lowest level: “This is, in effect, the ultimate de-virtualization of the school. It will be the place for the programming of functionaries according to the circular operation of the apparatuses”<sup>26</sup> (Flusser, 2011: 167). In short, the apolitics of the apparatus reveals that the central problem of the 21st century is still that of freedom. But not the lack of freedom, in a superficial sense, but which freedom we want: that in the face of coercion or that liberty for individual, private and economic self-fulfillment which, for that end, tolerates coercion.

#### **IV. The school of the future: the possibility of the 'new men'**

As said before, Flusser's discussions regarding education are not without their optimistic aspects. After all, Flusser still seemed to anticipate the possibility of a 'new man' emerging from this catastrophe, a 'new morality' focused on creative thought and activity. We have seen, however, how ambiguous and inverted this prophetic vision actually is, and the texts in which Flusser dedicates himself to elaborating such thoughts about education demonstrate this very well.

Flusser was more committed to the second trend in education, a shift from teaching as transferring information to teaching how to process information. In this trend, says Flusser (1987a: 4), theory becomes “the programmer's symbolic game strategy”; that is, a teaching focused on the ways of mastering and transforming the symbols that the devices provide. From inside this game, there will always be the possibility that we could, through our ingenuity, find paths in the device that inaugurate other models. In other words, that articulation would not be totally unfeasible, that there would always be a chance of continuing to generate meaning: “The purpose of the school, according to this view, is to give purpose to casual games that result in programs. School as a place of search for meaning. A place for dialogues establishing meanings for the absurd game of devices propelled by the weight of their automated inertia. Such dialogues can have cosmic amplitude, given the development of dialogizable channels. And its theme will be the analysis of the systems that program the behavior, knowledge, experience and values of society” (Flusser, 1987a: 4).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “[...] anfiteatro irradiador de informações em direção de futuros analistas de programas e programadores, os quais funcionarão em função de aparelhos. [...] Os futuros funcionários destarte informados poderão analisar ou programar computadores e “word processors\\”, em vez de calcular ou falarem inglês. Desta maneira a escola do futuro não mais programará a sociedade para funções do pensamento mecânico, melhor excetuadas por instrumentos inteligentes, mas para funções do pensamento analítico e programador” (Flusser, 2011: 167).

<sup>26</sup> “Trata-se, com efeito, de derradeira desvirtualização da escola. Será ela o lugar da programação de funcionários em função do funcionamento circular dos aparelhos” (Flusser, 2011: 167).

<sup>27</sup> “O propósito da escola, segundo esta visão é o de dar propósito aos jogos casuais que resultam em programas. Escola enquanto lugar da busca de significado. Lugar de diálogos estabelecendo significados ao jogo absurdo dos

However, the political problem remains. After all, even in this view, codes and models are only programmed privately. Even the one who learns to program, although apparently a bourgeois, is also a functionary of the apparatus and, therefore, is not self-determined. Thus, the question about the possibility of having an apparatus that is in the service of politics, in this Flusserian sense, is absurd. The inversion of the inversion of the escalation - that is, launching the school again to its highest point, so that theory, and not economic life, informs politics - is a naive solution that imagines that it is possible to inject a new purpose that erases all the already established impacts. Also, such an injection would destroy the apparatus, which cannot accomplish anything other than its program.

When this dead end is reached, Flusser demonstrates his intellectual inventiveness. Flusser does not associate his optimism with this naive idea of reconquering politics against the apparatus, but with learning to think apolitically with the apparatus, allowing new circles of non-elite dialogue to emerge from their absurd game. That is, to seize probabilistic consciousness and master its prescriptions. Faced with the apparatus, the political challenge is the most indigestible of all, especially for the modern way of articulating the world and producing progress: to elaborate politics without purpose, which carries out the articulation of intersubjectivity with only the intention of the articulation itself. Double the bet. An absurd answer to the absurd. In *Pós-História*, Flusser presents his elaboration as follows: “The challenge represented by the programmatic vision is therefore the need to learn to think a-politically, if we want to preserve freedom. This is paradox. Because if we continue to think politically, finalistically, if we continue to look for reasons behind the programs that govern us, we will fatally fall victim to absurd programming, which precisely foresees such attempts at demythologizing as one of its potentialities” (Flusser, 2011: 43).<sup>28</sup>

Education, therefore, would be the center of this transformation, and teaching would be the main means for learning to think apolitically, engaging in a project without a purpose. Or, rather, what is required is that teaching, rather than needing a purpose, as bourgeois education is invariably thought to do, could itself be a producer of the social form, that it could generate forms of coexistence that allow modification, whenever necessary, of the ways a world can be articulated. Flusser seems to conclude this argument in the essay *Escola Primária* (Primary School, in free trans-

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aparelhos propélidos pelo peso da sua inércia automatizada. Tais diálogos podem ter amplitude cósmica, dado o desenvolvimento dos canais dialogizáveis. E seu tema será a análise dos sistemas que programam o comportamento, o conhecimento, a vivência e os valores da sociedade” (Flusser, 1987a: 4).

<sup>28</sup> “O desafio representado pela visão programática é pois a necessidade de aprendermos a pensar a-politicamente, se quisermos preservar a liberdade. Isto é paradoxo. Porque se continuarmos a pensar politicamente, finalisticamente, se continuarmos a procurar por motivos por detrás dos programas que nos regem, caíremos fatalmente vítimas da programação absurda, a qual prevê precisamente tais tentativas de desmitização como uma das suas virtualidades” (Flusser, 2011: 43).

lartion), in which he proposes a phenomenological shift in teaching he calls “self-conscious humanism” (1987b: 17). His proposal is based on the assumption that the teaching of equations and propositions is not enough to translate the world, insufficient means for articulating realities in the sphere given the availability of computer simulations and artificial intelligences. On the contrary, “[I]rue human dignity” (1987b: 17) comes from diving into bodily lives, enriched with the world and curious about it. It is thanks to the possibility of this immersion that, according to Flusser, the “new” human will be born, whose body can “powerfully vacuum our world” (1987b: 17). Teaching would then be radically against the reproduction of models but would rather promote the free and creative circulation of the many possibilities of articulation. In the essay, strongly ironic and allegorical, Flusser gives the name “spirit” to this intentionality that, for the West, produces the reduction of the world to models of progress. After the model explodes, there would be no search for another such model. Rather the new human would be the one capable of articulating the spirits of humanity - that is, another way of imagining intersubjectivity. He concludes: “Instead of the spirit of the world, unite, the new revolutionary motto is: may all the spirits be effused on humanity” (Flusser, 1987b: 18).<sup>29</sup>

The notion of a project not subjugated to a purpose seems to be unique to Flusser's work and to represent his true sense of political revolution, his way of understanding how to keep articulating the world in the most varied possible ways, and not just linearly and historically. In his essay *De sujeito a projeto*<sup>30</sup> [From Subject to Project], Flusser details the understandings from psychoanalysis and phenomenology that empty the notion of subject, recognizing that in the notion of “I” there are thick layers of collective (Flusser, Document without data, p. 4). This next quote clarifies the argument: “We can identify ourselves only in relation to others (identity implies difference). The “I” is definable only in relation to a “thou”, or, in other words: “I” is what is called a “thou”, and such a relationship is reversible. The analysis of an individual “I” will reveal the successive layers of “thou” that they constitute. The “I” reveals itself as a node of intersubjective relationships, and (like the famous onion) does not contain a core. Outside of every relationship the “I” is strictly nothing. The notion of “I” is a mere abstraction from the concreteness of intersubjective relationships. It is these concrete relationships that intertwine in “I” like the threads of a network, which constitute the vital world, and everything else is ideology to be reduced. Such a dialogical view imposes the following suspicion: since we exist only in terms of dialogue with others, wouldn't the

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<sup>29</sup> “Em vez de espírito do mundo, uni-vos, o lema revolucionário novo é: que os espíritos todos se derramem sobre a humanidade” (Flusser, 1987b: 18).

<sup>30</sup> The version to which the researcher had access is a draft of the essay in Portuguese that would later be published in German.

world of objects be a projection of such a dialogue, and wouldn't the structure of such a world be a function of a certain consensus?"<sup>31</sup> (Flusser, Document without data: 5).

Clearly, by the quotation above, Flusser's understanding of the 'collective' is referencing the concepts of intersubjectivity and of the *Lebenswelt*, as discussed by Edmund Husserl (2002, 2020). But also, a strong influence of Martin Buber (2014) can be noticed in the ways Flusser is articulating his notion of 'dialogue'. For instance, Buber perceives a notion of the individual should not be perceived as a relation in itself, as an isolated point that excludes all other relations, but rather as a knot: one becomes an individual as one seeks relations (Buber, 2014: 91). Therefore, what Flusser seems to be describing by the use of the term 'collective' is a deflation of the notion of the subject, as formulated by modernity, in favor of a transindividual network of relations and meanings. However, such a loss of belief in a subject of history centered on a person is also what makes room for massifying hypotheses that reveal themselves as shadows of this transformation: a paradoxical attempt to 'save' the subject, by glorifying a individual as a point excluded by relations, but also by massifying the subject, inserting people in a pre-modeled articulation of points.

The phenomenon above described is what Flusser comprehends as the concept of the apparatus - which Flusser calls by the deserved name: fascism – a program that operates both glorifying the individual and massifying it, as in current Brazilian distance teaching proposals. However, the abandonment of a subjective anthropology and this new existential attitude should not necessarily be fought against, as it defines what it now means to perceive human existence as a *project* – and that is an inevitable tendency, as it continues to develop in our experiences and interactions. Faced with this end of the world, we should now learn to live without foundation. It is all about how to live after the end of the world. Which implies that we no longer take ourselves to be agents, but rather projects of ourselves, elements in the process of being realized and requiring from us an intense intersubjective and dialogical effort.

As confirmed in an interview with Rodolfo Geiser<sup>32</sup>, Flusser's notion of project was strongly influenced by the French biochemist Jaques Monod and his book *Chance and Necessity* (1971). In it, Monod ponders the principles that define an organism. The first of these would be

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<sup>31</sup> "Podemos identificar-nos apenas em relação com outros (identidade implica diferença). O "eu" é definível apenas em relação a um "tu", ou, em outros termos: "eu" é aquilo que é chamado de "tu", e tal relação é reversível. A análise de um "eu" individual revelara as sucessivas camadas de "tu" que constituem. O "eu" se revela nó de relações intersubjetivas, e (como a celebre cebola) não contém núcleo duro. Fora de toda relação o "eu" é estritamente nada. A noção de "eu" é mera abstração da concreticidade das relações intersubjetivas. São tais relações concretas que se entrecruzam em "eus" como os fios de uma rede em nós, que constituem o mundo vital, e todo resto é ideologia a ser reduzida. Tal visão dialógica impõe a seguinte suspeita: já que existimos apenas em função de diálogo com outros, não seria o mundo dos objetos projeção de tal diálogo, e não seria a estrutura de tal mundo função de determinado consenso?" (Flusser, documento sem data: 5)

<sup>32</sup> Rodolfo Geiser is a Brazilian landscaper who kept up a correspondence with Vilém Flusser in the 1960s, in addition to being one of his students. In an interview on Vilém Flusser Archive São Paulo's Youtube, Geiser reveals how Flusser was impacted by reading Monod, in addition to citing other influences of the philosopher.

the principle of teleonomy. He states: “One of the fundamental properties that characterize all living beings without exception: that of being projects, that of being objects endowed with a project that at the same time they represent in their structures and carry out through their performances” (Monod, 1971: 21).<sup>33</sup>

For Monod (1971, p. 36), the perception that organisms serve purposes in their biological structures - for example, eyes that serve to see - and in their accomplishments - for example, hives serve to produce honey - generated a family of animist theories in the different sciences and in philosophy. Those theories perceive in elaborate organisms the most perfect product of the evolution that culminated in humankind. In this understanding, “The project explains the being and the being only makes sense through its project” (Monod, 1971: 43)<sup>34</sup>. Through this vision, the very understanding of the history and evolution of the universe is ascendant and constructive, which generates a need to develop models that can predict the rise. Such a manner of thinking also shaped the modern and bourgeois understanding of what politics is: as an exchange between public and private that seeks efficiency of administration and improvement of technique, but not the articulation of intersubjectivity in itself, as Flusser apparently suggests.

For Monod, however, the animist model is a mistake, and it is against this very same mistake that Flusser proposes education as a project without purpose in such a way that favors conditions for the rise of the new human. The mistake, according to Monod (1971: 25) is to ignore how deeply ambiguous this teleonomic principle actually is. The principle only foresees the possibility that something will happen, but not the necessity that a particular event must occur. For example, the combination of iris, cornea, retina and pupil can produce a human-like eye that can see. But it is not a duty that this combination should occur, nor is it a law that it will always occur with those characteristics as particular as those of a human eye. Teleonomy, therefore, envisages that organisms have a project, but that remain essentially unpredictable, that is, without a purpose. This is the way Flusser envisions education: not as a duty, but as a possibility of the new human.

In conclusion, what Flusser thinks of as a proposal for education is undoubtedly a utopian teaching that embraces contingency rather than denying it. It is an education that appropriates the apolitical apparatus, thereby facilitating another form of non-linear, post-historical shaping of intersubjectivity. It would not be a school that has a duty to exist, but a conviction that any possibility that can be radically open and experiential has the right to be radically open and experiential. A revolution through the back door.

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<sup>33</sup> “Uma das propriedades fundamentais que caracterizam todos os seres vivos sem exceção: a de serem projetos a de serem objetos dotados de um projeto que ao mesmo tempo eles representam em suas estruturas e realizam por suas performances” (Monod, 1971: 21).

<sup>34</sup> “O projeto explica o ser e o ser só tem sentido por seu projeto” (Monod, 1971: 43).

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