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Perspectivation and (Cosmo)technical (Imaginative)

Temporalities: The *Angenommen* Script as the Culmination of

Flusserian Writing

In the second half of the 1980s, inspired by the *destinerrant*¹ potentials of e-writing, Flusser conducted four experiments in multimedia writing: the Hypertext-Flusser, *Die Schrift*, *Vampyrotheutis infernalis*, and *Angenommen*. Although *Vampyrotheutis infernalis*, as it is affectionately called, is perhaps Flusser's most appealing work – in the sense that it seems to call, more than others, for a reading that we are still waiting for – the experiments with writing carried out in it do not reach the same level as that of the last of his books published in his lifetime. The scenes, mentioned in the work's subtitle, refer to Flusser's intention of turning the book into a video-art script, to be on television or accompanying the book, something that never happened. In a way, *Angenommen* (FLUSSER 2000) can be described primarily as a strange kaleidoscope of “supposed” *scenes*, composed of unpublished texts and updated versions of some of his *philosofictions*², which have been (re)written, (re)translated, and published since the 1960s. It would not be too much to see in this book the culmination of his *quasi-poetic* filosofictional style, equivocated and assembled from his most recent reflections on computers and films. From a *theoretical*-literary perspective, what is interesting here is to find the unfinished, the wandering culminations of the equivocations of his filosofictional *destinerrancy*, the *style* or *method* of his *philosophy of exile*, from which the traces of his trajectory of escape, in their fugacity, can be glimpsed.

1 “Destinerrance” is a Derrida's neologism and concept to think the way a text could be (miss)read throughout time and history. Here I am borrowing this idea for, the way I see it, Flusser biggest interest in the e-writing was the possibility of coupling and dialoguing with the others, with the readers, in the sense not of reaching some place, some destination, but of a correcting what he wrote or erring it even more. Flusser's writing has also the dimension of he being his first reader, his first other, so the e-writing was also a possibility for him to err from himself, from his destination (his death, his “having not more to say”), to contradict (that is, to say something in face of or in opposition of) himself. See Hillis Miller (2006).

2 Here I am following Flusserian Brazilian scholar Felinto's suggestion to think most of Flusser's philosophy with the concept Szendy used for characterizing the essay Kant addresses the possibility of intelligent life outside Earth. For this, see Felinto (2016, 2018) and Szendy (2013). This concept is especially important to the understanding of Flusser's work for making it clear that it is not a fiction with some notes of philosophy, or a philosophical work with notes of fictionally, but a filosofictional whole, a kind of text that assumes from the beginning a position in between those two genres – somewhere else I used Bakhtin's notion of Mennipean satire to address the debate on Flusser's genre (see Philipson 2018 and Bakhtin 2013).

The script-book is organized by sets of scenes, in a seemingly *nonsensical* manner. For example, the ideas of the articles that make up *Natural: mente* (Flusser 2011), which was first published in 1979, have a specific logic and thematic context. Here, the transition from one series of scenes to the next appears more haphazard and less linear. However, one could argue that the book develops and expands in accordance with a common notion of dialectics, in which thesis-antithesis-synthesis develop in a spiral fashion. This idea was, incidentally, already present in the title of *Natural: mente* (Flusser 2011), which opposes and unites nature and mind in synthesis. In effect, the sequence of adjectives that characterize each set of scenes, familial-economical-political, emulate the Hegelian terms singular-particular-universal that, in his *Philosophy of Law*, for example, become subject-family-State. The passage from one scene to the other would thus preserve a certain linearity; however, since it is inspired by dialectics, this linearity is twisted or spiraled, providing a certain individuated image of the whole, which, however, does not dodge from a certain fragmentation, a certain fugacity, and out-of-place pieces.

Within the first set of scenes – the familial ones – one observes the same pseudo-dialectical logic at work in the passage from one scene to another, not so much because of the titles, which follow a certain genealogical family linearity, from grandmother to great-grandson, but rather because of each scene's theme. Let me explain: *Grandmother* (Flusser 2000) is a sci-fi work that explores the multivocality of Venus, the *Greek* goddess, the planet of the sidereal galaxy, the primordial egg; *Grandfather* (Flusser 2000), on the other hand, is a filosofiction tale about the visit of Abraham, the *Jewish* patriarch, to Bom Retiro, a neighborhood in São Paulo. Finally, *Great Uncle* (Flusser 2000) is written as a filosofictional account of the human “great-aunt” race of Neanderthals millions of years ago. As a result, we detect an amusing, filosofictional, and parodic construction of a dialectical origin or beginning of a “us,” probably influenced by *2001: A Space Odyssey*³: from the Greco-Roman culture, mixed with elements of science fiction and biology, to the human filosofictional chart that discusses the similarity or not of the Neanderthals; “our” closest cousins annihilated by “us”, humans – at least this was the theory in force up to then, on which Flusser must have drawn his own –, going through the Judeo-Christian culture, conjugated to an environment of the “new” Latin-America and São Paulo City worlds. Therein lies the pontifical stock that connects and identifies the “us”-the narrative instance and the I-you dialogical community established along the book's sequence of scenes made clear in the book's opening and closing scenes.

³ Flusser (n.d. 1) dedicated a text to the film, which made him reflect on the human condition and the history of humanity. He ends with a praise to futility, understood as “human dignity,” which could be the inspiration for *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000).

Therefore, it is worthwhile to focus on a more in-depth investigation of these opening and closing scenes because they seem to provide the key to unlocking the work. The first scene functions, somehow, as those self-reflective introductions, like the “modes-of-use” of his *Post-history* (Flusser n.d. 2), or the never published prologue to *Coisas que me cercam* [Things that Surround Me] (Flusser 1970). The difference here is that, although they constitute single sections in the work, they are not separated in a previous or later instance of the text, and, despite the writing constituting this instance, they are combined and inserted in the “sequence of scenes” (Flusser 2000) of the text, as scenes themselves, independent in themselves, and, at the same time, meta-referential to the other or to some of the other scenes. In a different sense, these initial and final scenes also engage in a dialogue with the script-book project and with Flusser’s entire philosophy of exile. If it were not for the fact that this placement is arbitrary and anachronistic in light of his tragic life and death trajectory, it would be alluring to insert a kind of Flusserian epitaph, his final words through which one can understand his entire philosophy of exile, into the discussion that occurs in the final scene, which deals with the relationship between science and theology and culminates in the theme of love.

This element of traveling and of multiple approaches to the scenes is already evident in the very passage from the title to the body in the first scene. The title stands as a double of the title, at the same time re-instituting and exploring one of the aspects of its meaning and reiterating and re-enacting its hesitation. This is demonstrated by the initial ellipsis in the text’s body, which shows that the phrase “suppose that” from the work’s title is, in fact, also valid as the first word of the opening sentence. This makes it appear as though the first scene and the work’s title were both taken from the first verse of the text, as we saw in some poems from that tradition⁴. The title in Portuguese, unlike the English or German titles (*Suppose that* – or *What if...?* – and *Angenommen*, respectively), is the only one that contains the hidden subject in the first-person plural. In English there could still be different hidden subjects, in a *quasi* Brazilianized writing, which generates strangeness by the lack of a labeled subject – “[you/we/I] suppose that.” In German, it is the past participle of the verb “suppose” or “assume,” so it contemplates a hidden, more passive or past aspect – “[es wird] *angenommen*” or, to keep the hidden “us” of the Portuguese version, “[wir haben es] *angenommen*.” The German verb “*annehmen*” has, moreover, also other meanings, such as “accept” and “receive”. Just as Benjamin’s “*Aufgabe*” of the translator is at the same time the “task” and the “resignation” of translating, here the book’s title asks at the same time a supposition, acceptance, assumption when one grab it in hands to start reading it. The supposition, thereafter, brings an

⁴ It is interesting that in a letter to his editor, Flusser complains that he has failed to notice the function of the title as the first word in the book, and explicitly asks for this to be corrected.

ethical gesture of acceptance – of those different scenarios and point of views that may be so strange for a self, but also of a self that was able to be and to exist only so far it takes place out of itself, in exile, being the exiled self itself the very gesture of varying point of views.

From this coupling and exploration of different textual instances, a tense and dialogical scene is established in the manner of analytical philosophy, a kind of Wittgensteinian language “game” between a terrorist, a man of action, and a futurologist, a man of reflection. The scene is established and resolved in this Marxian dialectic, which re-enacts the relationship between praxis and theory. This, as a matter of fact, is a characteristic mark of the Flusserian writing: the convergence of apparently divergent theories in the same passage, as he had done in *Língua e realidade* [Language and Reality] (Flusser 2007) with Heidegger’s and Wittgenstein’s theories of language, as Giannotti reminds us (*apud* Mendes 2000), “anticipating” what he himself would start doing from 2010 onwards. In that passage, an individuation, a playful-fictional-scientific structure, in analytical style, appears to develop a question that, after all, even if in current superficiality, is of Hegelian-Marxist origin: the tension between praxis and theory embodied in two characters and clipped as to the future and its forecasting.

In this sense, the future here, as in other texts by Flusser, is not that of the futurists, but rather that future of the past in which the past of the future is at stake as an instance of trauma and reflection. All the scenes, to a certain extent, are assembled within this temporal gear between futures and pasts. *Grandmother* (Flusser 2000), the first scene after that introductory one, is composed precisely as a future return to the primordial past, which develops into a future past. Besides, many other scenes play and disarticulate the notions of temporalities, conjugating and deconjugating future, past, and present in unusual ways.

Those games appear thematically in the first scene based on the idea of iron filings, immediately and vaguely referring to the Leibnizian theory of possible worlds. For the purposes of this analysis concerning Flusser’s work, it is worth saying that these possible worlds would be infinite, some kind of heterotopias (Foucault 1984), or rather, hetero-*chronotopias* (Bakhtin 2013, 2014)⁵ that would base their innovative thought on possibility and probability, in logic and mathematics, within the Leibnizian metaphysical system. In *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000), Flusser’s interest seems to be less mathematical and more focused on reaping fictional and imaginative benefits from this type of suggestion. If the book’s epigraph is Newtonian “I do not invent/do not imagine hypothesis” (Flusser 2000: 6) – *Hypotheses non fingo* –, Flusser (2000) will go against this scientific taboo of modernity – without stopping to *fingere* hypotheses and possible worlds to produce, after all, “ontological

⁵ Here I use the terms used by Foucault and Bakhtin to suggest that the supposed scenarios are not some kind of utopia or dystopia, but “heterochronotopias”, that is, space-times both inside and outside the “here-now” that point in some way to a future of the present.

somersaults” (Flusser 2000: 7) of future pasts or future possibilities, which may or may not come close to the present.

Subsequently, Flusser (2000) calls this place in which present, past and future possibilities are sheltered as “*Gespensterkongress*”, that is, a “congress of ghosts/specters”. The probability, thus, that these specters will materialize or come to nothing is a “chimera, a *Wahr-scheinlichkeit*, a true appearance: at one end it is true, at the other, it is a mere apparency” (Flusser 2000: 8-9). The instance that says “I” in that first scenario, alluding to the entirety of the book, and stating that the series of imagined scenarios will be flavored by “projecting improbabilities,” concludes, shortly after, that the “futurolologists try to bite their own tails (ouroboros). Rather, here the attempt will be to wag one’s tail in zigzag [*zu wedeln versuchen*]” (Flusser 2000: 9). In the Portuguese version, *Dúvidas preliminares* [Preliminary Questions], unpublished, Flusser (3: 2) writes: “This book will tiptoe around as if it were futurology. This book will try to make suppositions, (hypotheses, fictions), leap from it onto the reader’s desk, like Escher’s lizards coming out of the paper to invade the table.”

His *corpus* dances and makes dance, *wedeln*, wags and makes wag the tail of probability, of *Wahrscheinlichkeit* (“*ihr Schwanz ist scheinlich*,” his appearance, his tail, as opposed to the head, which is truth) in zigzags. His *corpus* makes one dance through suppositions, hypotheses, or fictions, in exercises of futurology, in exercises that unravel time past, future, and present. This is his philosophical ethics, his pragmatics of exile. It is not accidental, it seems to me, that many of these texts, such as *The Cow* (Flusser 1961) (here the *Eleventh Scenario*, renamed as *Mechanical Engineering*), accompanied him in several versions, in different languages, sometimes published, over decades during which he devoted himself to writing.

In a kind of dialectics squared, dialectics of dialectics, dialectics inside out, “the ensuing series” (Flusser 2000: 9) promises adventure for projecting futures, “*ad-venire*, that which is coming [*ankommen*]” (Flusser 2000: 9), and curiosity, as opposed to the engagement of the terrorist, the practical Homo. The twenty-second and last scene *A Pause to Breathe* [A Breather] (Flusser 2000: 74), the only one that makes up the last series of series called *Showdown* (Flusser 2000: 74) begins with a “two of us” (“*Beide haben wir uns*”) who, after watching two of the scenes, request the instance of the “imagination programmer” (“*Einbildungsprogrammierer*”) to introduce his[their] *viewpoint* in this collection of scenes. The movement away from the imagined adventure, fueled by curiosity, is like that of other articles, such as *5...C x B?* (Flusser 1998), apostrophizing external-internal, inside-out instances of the imagination that judge, relativize, criticize, move away from, and at the same time proceed, in an Escherian way, with the imagined. Nevertheless, this double instance, which here equally duplicates the double instance of the first scene, the counterposition between praxis and theory, in a counterposition between the philosopher and the theologian – as if the futurologist had, perhaps by mitosis, divided himself into two cells –, will prove to be convergent. The utopian

viewpoint in a Plato style, which starts from space, will be the *same destination place* as the messianic viewpoint, which starts from time: the state of rest, of retirement, “*der Rubestand*” (Flusser 2000: 74), a place that simultaneously corresponds to an inner urge to “*return home*” (*innerer Drang zur Heimkehr*) which pulsates (*treibt*). Then, they conclude that “theory” and “faith” go down the same path and confess, after all, to be “a little ashamed” of being “only myths” (Flusser 2000: 76).

For the purposes of the argumentative structure of this article, I will proceed to the literary-theoretical analysis of a few scenes from the book. A more extensive analysis of all the scenes can be found in my doctoral thesis (Philipson 2023).

[*Towards*] *Perpetual Peace* (Flusser 2000) brings the diametrically opposite perspective of *War* (Flusser 2000) and does so also from the concept-indictive exploration of the notion of *point of view*. As a clear satirically displaced reverence to the homonymous Kantian essay from 1795, which urges a state of peace among nations, here understood as the end point of history, of movement, the title of this scene functions in a philosophical-satirical manner. Not least for referring to the most unusual part of the Kantian text: namely, that this expression, *perpetual peace*, would have been taken by the philosopher of Königsberg from an inscription in a cemetery in the Netherlands. The scene works by dithering between the meanings of perpetual peace as opposed to war, but also to movement, to life, to that “still point” in which entropy has taken place and nothing else is in motion. Here, the alter-occupied narrator⁶ then brings together the terms *Standpunkt*, standpoint or, literally, still-point, and *Rubestand*, also hesitant between retirement and state or resting point: [the] resting point, the retirement [*Rubestand*] into which we enter is a still-point, a standpoint [*Standpunkt*]” (Flusser 2000: 58). This is because retirement would be, after all, in a Hegelian historical perspective, the “[attainment] of history’s goal.” (Flusser 2000: 58).

It is worth remembering that Hegel is not a staunch advocate of the eternal peace of which Kant speaks. In his *Fundamental Lines of the Philosophy of Law* (Hegel 2022), although Hegel mentions the possibility of war between nation-states, he does not fail to formulate his own notion of what an “end of history” in peace would be, to use the imprecise Flusserian terms. Here, we are far from that discussion – even from his critique as an Enlightenment utopia, liberal and colonial, based on the free-market and economic exchanges, as recalled, for example, by Han (2022). It is rather a matter of pointing out the way by which established philosophy is taken in its most caricatural or expressive features or motifs for ironic-satirical philosophic purposes.

⁶ The notion of alteroccupation that I am using here derives mainly from Nodari’s (2019) reflection on the obliquation in literary experience by literary analyzing, among other writers, Clarice Lispector. Although Nodari ends up not addressing Flusser’s work, it not only pretty much puts in operation much of what Nodari is stating about the literary experience’s possibility of making a variation of points of view, but also – what is decisive and still needs verification and demonstration – has a potential to advance (or err) Nodari’s ideas.

In doing so, the scenario performs an hesitation and, eventually, an inversion between what is peace and what is war, which ends up disoperating and graying its meanings. The strange conclusion is that, after all, “peace is a sign of old age. [...] Peace is senility” (Flusser 2000: 58). To understand this, one needs to point out how the contraposition – a commonplace among pre-Socratics Heraclitus and Parmenides – between war and the “flow of time”, as the source of all things and the essence that would endure, are in accordance with the fact that there would be a teleological “goal”, a place to go to. It is a direction towards a dam, towards a “fullness of time, in short: towards Perpetual Peace” (Flusser 2000, p. 59). But the teleology of advancement here turns out to be, from the point of view of retirement, the reverse of the reverse: perpetual peace is not fulfillment but the exhaustion of everything, echoing, *avant la lettre*, Han’s (2015) considerations on the society of fatigue.

From exhaustion to commonsense Buddhism, the discourse of the retiree ends up falling into telematics as that which, technically or mediatically, would have enabled this exhaustion that characterizes the “state of rest”, of retirement, since it would lead to “indifference”, to the “superfluous”, to the “objectless”, that comes from the telematics production of the “simultaneity of all events” in “us” “by screen monitors”. Unlike film, which still relied on “libertarian troublemaker” actors (Flusser 2000: 60), that is, on a certain degree of time elapsing and dripping – although in film, when editing, it was already possible to cut, to slow down or to speed up the elapsing of time on magnetic tapes –, “it was only after telematics made the elapsing of time possible to be saved and accessible (and re-accessible) at the push of a button” (Flusser 2000: 60) that there actually was an “end of history” (Flusser 2000: 60), for “it is not enough to immerge the flow of time and encompass it to have peace. One must also be able to make it” (Flusser 2000: 60).

In this scene, therefore, one supposes that the telematics would not only edit the *dis*-occurrence of time but would itself *produce* time. If there were a technical advance that would make the production of time possible, as it is supposed in this scene, it would thus mean that any time of time would be accessible “here and now.” Time would run out, and then historiographical categories such as advance, passage, event would no longer make sense: the simultaneity of historical events would make them superfluous. This would be the end of the “course,” of movement, the end of time, the still point, retirement: death. Hence, it would be consummated to the shards of possibilities of the contemplative theorist, with his telematic crystal ball, who would be capable of associating and *producing* any scene, situation, or historical event.

In the dialectic between the terrorist and the beholder, this supposed scene would be the one in which the latter abolishes the existence and the praxis of the former. The beholders, who call themselves in this scene “artists,” attain their likeness to God and become, more than human, “superhuman”: they become the Aristotelian *first immovable* motor. The retirees exercise that moral

ethical function of the God of worlds, of the possibility of monads, addressed by Leibniz, namely, that in the best of all possible worlds, one goes on to *produce the possible worlds*.

In *contradiction* to the scenario of the retirees' perspective, *Revolution* (Flusser, 2000), as the name alludes, supposes the possibility of a future in which the terrorist, that is, the revolutionary, the *Homo faber*, becomes the protagonist. The scene takes place in an uncertain future in Brazil, precisely in the Praça dos Três Poderes, Brasília, after the Islamic revolution that took place in Atlanta in 1991. Here, the Islamic revolution is a clear reference to the Black Panthers. If Monteiro Lobato had written his own exercise in dystopian eugenic futurology in *O Presidente negro* [The Black President] (Lobato 2008) – in which blacks rise to power in the US empire –, the veiled reference to the radical black movement in the United States seems to indicate rather an attempt to address the pressing issues of the times – the 1980s – and to be as wide-ranging and diverse as possible in the assumption of philosophofictional scenes. The *contradiction* that here concerns Flusser seems to be rather the one that was present since the first scene, between the man of theory and the man of action, the futurologist, and the terrorist, and leads the revolutionary doing to end up seeing himself and to face the contemplative, futurological doing.

This scene takes on the first-person perspective of the speech of a Brazilian revolution member, in a congress aimed at rethinking the directions of the black Islamic revolution that had overtaken the whole world, establishing a new global religion of an Empire that was also global, just as, in its day, Catholicism had been for the Roman Empire. Black Islam, then – this is what the speech alludes to in its first paragraphs – would have unexpectedly seized the imperialist power structure of the United States, and now was itself entangled in that structure, repeating the movement of Christianity from a contesting religion to a predictor of the Roman imperialist power. The implicit equation is that Black Americans are to the American Empire what Christians were to the Roman Empire. With and against Nietzsche, this implicit idea in this scene could be characterized as the passage from enslaved man to master.

In allusion to what occurs in the congress of specters (fifth scene) as well as in the eighth and, especially, the seventh scene – *Great-grandchildren* and *Grandchildren* (Flusser 2000), respectively –, here, again, there is a moment to reflect on the direction the revolution is taking, or to set the course of its “course”: what is at stake in this Islamic congress in Brazil is the *splitting* of its momentum, the introduction of the questioning, the passage from one to two. The fact that it happens in Brazil, in the capital city of Brasília, with a “mulatto” Brazilian president – that is, a man of color – simply indicates, it seems to me, the elective colonial and enslaving affinities that would have been accentuated with the revolutionary movement. The term “mulatto” shows that Flusser does not abandon, in his last book, the thesis he shares elsewhere on a peaceful racial coexistence in Brazil (about this, see PHILIPSON 2023).

Considering the many times it appears in different scenes, one can think that Flusser seems, in a wide horizon of expectations, to be pointing to how the revolutionary enterprise would always end up falling into a temporal circularity from which it would not be able to escape. In this sense, *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) could be placed in *contradiction* to the Koselleckian theoretical project of history, by reintroducing History – through the filosofictions of possible but flavorful improbable scenes, to use Flusser own words in the first scenario, – as a circular movement, precisely where it would be *making, producing* History.⁷ Revolutions themselves, as entropic events, would respond to some more or less common structure of functioning, that is, fall into entropy. They would always end up repeating the same *contradictions*, the same traumatic events. Eventually, they would repeat each other, according to the principle that the new always arises from what already exists. They would cease to be new and the novelty that characterizes them would become increasingly probable and calculable, falling into entropy. History, constrained to the entropic and antientropic poles, returns repeatedly in a variation of context, of scenarios. These scenarios thus emerge as fallible historical futures that, in their repetition, help to deal critically with the present and with the past as trauma.

This constraint to a more or less common structure of revolutions – and also of religions –, is precisely what *moves* and shift the gears of *Revolution* (Flusser 2000: 63): at the “First Umma Congress, in Brasilia, inner oppositions threaten to break the revolution”, and that would repeat other revolutionary oppositions throughout history. According to the Black Brazilian president’s speech, the danger of a schism in Islam – which constitutes the writing of the scene itself – lies in the desire for the extermination of white and black “minorities” by Eastern Islam, a jihad-invasion “through the computing and electronics of the Western theoretical world” (Flusser 2000: 64). And “[f]aced with the fact that the revolution is due precisely to Black Muslims, African American Muslims, there is a danger that it will devour not only its own children, but also its own father.” (Flusser 2000: 64).

Things are such as this: the ending of this scene repeats, in a real future chronotope (Brasília, after 1991), the ending of the surreal scene of the congress of specters (heterochronological heterotopia) and the encounter of the futurologist – fatal for him – with the terrorist in the first scene: if in the congress of specters the spirits are reduced to zero by the police of spectral thought,

⁷ Koselleck (2006) most known thesis is that the French Revolution changed the way we experience and understand History. Before it happened, History was seen as an useful way to learn from the mistakes from the past, as it was understood as circular, unchangeable. This is what the formula *Historia Magistra Vitae* means, that is, that History is the teacher of life: one studies History to live a better life. But the French Revolution, to say it with simple words, introduced the possibility of *making History* by accomplishing something unique and never experienced in History. My argument here is that Flusser indicates that, nevertheless, when observed from a broader point of view, the revolution still embraces a circularity, a predictability, a repetition of its very structure.

in *Revolution* (Flusser 2000), the “*mörderischen Barbareien*” (Flusser 2000: 64), against which the speech of the Black Brazilian president is addressed, takes place after a shot is fired at him.

The choice of terms such as “barbarism” and “mulatto” in this scene is not the most fortunate. Even so, we can highlight here an effort of perspectivation in which it is supposed the improbable scene in which Whites and Blacks would be minorities, who need to unite in order not to be exterminated by an annihilating impulse that is latent in contemporaneity.

The nineteenth scene, entitled *Parliamentary Democracy* (Flusser 2000), takes the perspective of an (im)probable historian of the future, who does not live in a democracy and comments on a manifesto not only of his past, but of “our” future. This peculiar “original” calls into question precisely the name manifesto of a manifesto, this because it manifests *itself* against the hand [mani] and in favor of the foot [pedi] as an index of political *mani*-festation. And what would a political “pedifestation” look like? In this historical document – to which we have no access, except through the narrator’s point of view – what is at stake is making an ode to the foot as a political conceptual index, as something that anchors and gives ground to the human being, in face of the transformations that humanity and living beings as a whole would be experiencing in this future past narrated in the scene. By following a dystopian *sf* line, we learn that the general context of the writing in this document from the future past, the *Pedifesto* of 2287, is related to the “genetic operation” of eliminating human legs and placing wheels in their place, as a measure to deal with an overcrowding planet and increase the ability of individuals to move around. Despite the transition of animal and plant life to the oceans, humanity had not yet begun to colonize other planets.

The problem is that “the loss of both legs and feet, however, was experienced as painful” (Flusser 2000: 65). The pedifesto, then, is a conservative, right-wing manifesto, just as the communist manifesto – “a document which has been lost but is often cited in literature” (Flusser 2000: 66) – was left-wing. However, these categories would be very imprecise, so much so that the narrator steers his argument towards a satirical and ironic relativization of them – which he calls “primitive and illogical” – and also of the functioning of representative democracy as a whole by reducing itself – in its “catastrophic decline” – to the electoral moment.

The perspective of this scene is assembled, then, to perspectivize, by the strangeness given by time – the future of the future that looks back to the future past – a description of the functioning of parliamentary democracy, that is, of modern representative democracy. An operation of “provincialization,” or rather relativization of its values from a vantage point which is relatively uninterested in its defense or attack, which perspectivizes at the same way as a historian today perspectivizes the Roman Empire. In order to characterize this disinterest of the viewpoint, at the end of the scene we learn that in a future after a civil war, which would have taken place after the

year 2295, that is, seven years after the writing of the *Pedifesto*, parliamentary democracy would have been “completely replaced by computing” (Flusser 200: 67), enabled by a redefinition of the “concept of freedom” (Flusser 2000: 67) that would have occurred earlier.

In effect, *Parliamentary Democracy* (Flusser 2000) is the future account of an end – driven by internal reasons – of liberal democracy as we know it in modernity and contemporaneity. It would be the internal tensions and the incapacity of this form of social-political organization in dealing with its challenges that would have led to an escalation of warlike and violent power between left-wing and right-wing parties, culminating in a civil war and the exhaustion of this form of experiencing freedom. Here, in germ, the political dilemmas of today already appear, such as political action through social networks, the simplification of existential-political positions to electoral slogans (“Weh-Weh” *versus* “Ha-Ha”) – polarized only in appearance – and the fragility of “parliamentary” democracy in the face of internal collapse through the escalating deterioration of its institutions and instances of validation, with their checks and balances.

Echoing the internal movements of *A história do diabo* [The Devil’s Story] (Flusser 2022) – in which every sin leads to another in an eternal inescapable return to the dialectical mode – if, in the previous scene, what undermined the possibilities of revolution was the inability to gird, here it is the excess of dispute, of duality, that brings democracy to its end.

From the end of parliamentary democracy to the scene in which “Aryan imperialism” dominated the world: the twentieth scenario, the penultimate of the last sequence of scenes, is an account of counterespionage of an Israeli envoy at a diplomatic meeting with the “King of All Aryans and Non-Aryans.” (Flusser 2000: 68). In a historically undefined space-time, a possible world in a parallel future, a “neo-Nazi” initiative is close to the “final victory” of “light” over “darkness” (Flusser 2000: 69). Characterized by an environment filled with symbolism, far-fetched language, and idealized and romanticized political figures, this scene has unusual features in that this neo-Nazi “final victory” occurs not by the final elimination of Jews and all non-Aryans, but by their “incorporation,” that is, their “dialectical” integration and collaboration into this realm, functioning as its negative, dark pole of the “final victory of light over darkness” (Flusser 2000: 69).

This is especially evident in a Portuguese language version of the same text written under the name of *Arianos* [Arians] (Flusser n.d. 4): “the mistake of the first satrap who wanted to reestablish the Third Empire, Adolf Hitler, was not to have understood that for that purpose an ultimate synthesis between Aryans and Jews was necessary” (Flusser n.d. 4: 3). In the Aryan King’s speech, reported by the Israeli spy diplomat, distinct philosophical-cultural manifestations, such as Buddhism, science, technique, and Hinduism, alongside Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, are pointed out as efforts in the same direction: the *ultimate* Aryan victory. In the Portuguese version of the

same text, representatives of the Chinese Empire and the Soviet Union meet at the emperor's table. The diplomat's conclusion is the same, although more explicit. In the Portuguese version: “[m]y account is over, and I ask for the orders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But I suppose your conclusion will be mine: Myush is to be considered a neo-Nazi, and Khomeiny a continuant of Hitler” (Flusser n.d. 4: 3). In the version published in book form, in German, we read: “hitherto, our account. We expect from the prime minister the instruction whether we should maintain contact with Chahr-i-Zabul or, perhaps, act against this neo-Nazism” (Flusser 2000: 70).

The scene is set, once again, on the hesitation of the meaning of words and concepts. As explored by the most diverse mystical traditions – and we may recall that *Angelus Silesius* was already in the epigraph of *A História do Diabo* (Flusser 2022) – it is about exploring the *contradictory* hesitation of symbols and sacred words, such as “JHVH” – an impossible spelling of the representation of God in Jewish tradition.

The dialectic movement of this third sequence of scenes reaches here the synthesis between Homo *faber* (the black American Islamists), doubt and division (European parliamentary democracy) into a “One”: the new attempt to achieve a total Aryan Empire, this time with global dimensions, synthesizing different peoples and political manifestations in the most terrible kind of consummation of globalization. This “One” integrates action and reflection in an Orwellian 1984-style movement, in which war means peace, and separation means union.

In this game of perspectives that constitutes *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000), it is sometimes difficult to capture Flusser's point of view. It might be that he generally seeks to place himself outside the possibilities constrained to each scene, which he alteroccupies as a way of developing critical capacity, as a way of placing himself against the program of his own perspective of existence. Here, however, it is noteworthy that the speech of the “Hitler's successor” appears in a double detachment, based on the report of an Israeli agent. This detachment that frames the neo-Nazi discourse, placing it in a *frame of the frame*, limits the perspectival exercise, demonstrating that there are positions that cannot be alter-occupied. The neo-Nazi discourse appears, then, as being as another one of the subject's alter-occupation, as was also the Neanderthal in one of the first scenes, although for quite varied reasons. In this sense, it is important to notice how in the first two paragraphs there is an ostensible description of the use of a monitor and keys by the Aryan emperor. Emulating a horror movie, he thus demonstrates the affinity of the new media with the political program of this emperor (we are here, as we can see, far from the image that has been made of Flusser as an enthusiast of these technologies). Unlike what happens in other scenarios, this one remains open-ended: the final victory, the measures that are to be adopted “against this neo-Nazism” (Flusser 2000: 70) or against Israel's collaboration with the Aryan emperor are left suspended, which reinforces the horror of the scene.

From the “One” imperialist Aryan, to the (n-) “one” anthropophagic that brings and absorbs everything, surpassing it in culture, the third and last roll of scenes of *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) does not end the dialectical spiral by effecting a thinking that is real, as Hegel would like, but by reaching the universality of the *disjunctive synthesis*, the one that does not build a *kinship with* the equal or similar, but *by* divergence and distance (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO 2015). In contrast to the Aryan universality – which is too particular and, therefore, entropic and fascist (“neo-Nazi”) – the universality represented by the alter-occupied discourse of the twenty-first scene, *Black is Beautiful* (Flusser 2000), is the anti-entropic of anthropophagy – the only one that “unites us,” as Oswald de Andrade (1990: 47) would say. Also, as stated by the alter-occupied subject of this scene, this universality counts as “philanthropy correctly understood.” (Flusser 2000: 71). This anthropophagic disjunctive synthesis stands as a *becoming Black* of humanity that here points to a “welcoming, hospitable, and good-natured” practice.” (Flusser 2000: 71).

The last one of the “political” scenes, like other scenes in the book, is also introduced as a theoretical speech at a congress. Here, at the Third International Congress of Blackness in Dakar, North Africa, there is no defined temporality. Starting from a problematic discussion about skin color and taxonomy, the scene works by defunctionalizing, by deprogramming, the program of racism from skin color and positivist taxonomic pseudoscience. The final statement that “the strategy presented here is based on cold and theoretical considerations about color” (Flusser 2000: 73), in this framework, can only be understood in its ironic sense, since nothing in the scene and the piece is purely “cold and theoretical.”

Just as he did when he dealt with the subjects of soccer and Brazilianness in his Brazilianist texts, Flusser aims at assuming here an absurd point of view aimed at deprogramming, through the absurd of the absurd, through the obverse of the obverse. It is possible and valid to question how this strategy works in all cases: this scene seems to reach even the ethical limit of its use, if it has not exceeded it, not least because, for this operation, Flusser needs to (un)operate a series of exoticisms and commonplaces, such as the beauty of black people – and this in such a way that one may question whether there would be any ethical way of mobilizing them, of (un)articulating them if not through the complete refusal of their terms. The absurdity of the racial and, ultimately, racist taxonomy, as well as of these exoticizing clichés, is dismantled by the absurd and sarcastic pseudo-elaboration of a theory of colors applied to the taxonomy of skin colors. The obverse of the obverse ends up being the affirmation of a *Black becoming* by the narrator.

Here, the multiple spinning of the voice leads to the affirmation of a “one” that is an “other,” of the philanthropic universal, of that category that can absorb and return “in synthesis” its others from the alteroccupied subject. The variation of contexts through the assumed scenes in the book will thus give in a praise of its own form. At the same time, this praise of the very form of the book

hesitates in meaning, at the end of the work, with the claim, even if by crooked lines, of a *black becoming*, in conjunction with the anthropophagic *ethos*, as that which can give another twist to the screw and counter the neo-Nazism of the previous scene, based on technique and science. The “coming earthquake” – which Flusser talks about in various places of his *corpus* – “the revolution that will sweep the dialogues from the earth’s surface,” ends up – in his last published work during his lifetime – in openness, in anthropophagic disjunction.

It is no longer mistaken for Brazil as the new world, a place that could “save” the European program of technique; it is instead modulated in the perspective of the Black subject in the ode to a philanthropic anthropophagy. Thus, it is not a matter of mixing Flusser with the alter-occupied subject who says “I” in the scene. Rather, it is a matter of showing the elusive traces of his desirous agency as a “programmer of the imagination,” that is, as the book’s author, in the articulation of the scenes and in the way they are put together. The *black becoming* operates as a disjunctive synthesis, in that it amalgamates while opening up to the destinerrancy of its identity, or rather, in that the black identity could be seen, not without exoticism, as that destinerrant identity, open to otherness and capable of synthesizing it, just as those oankali, from Butler’s (2000) *Xenogenesis trilogy*, represent, in a different note, that same counteridentitary identity, an entity of an anti-entropic species *par excellence*.⁸

The trajectory of the scenes is framed between the initial and final scenarios, in which the disjunctive dialectic spirals in the three sets of scenes are commented upon. Despite Flusser’s willingness to make of *Angenommen* (2000) a video-artistic script, the analysis of the scenes enables to realize how their functioning is very much based on the articulation of equivocation and hesitation of meanings of words and index-concepts, which makes difficult or challenging their passage, its transtranslation⁹, into audiovisuals. They are fundamentally experiments with the written language. In this sense, it is the opposite, in other words, to translate to the writing the anti-entropic experimentation of the photographic gesture. In fact, Flusser’s scriptural gesture emulates *in writing* the photographer’s way of relating to photography, a theme he deals with in *Filosofia da Caixa Preta* [Philosophy of the Black Box] (Flusser 2018). It can be seen, thus, as an attempt itself

8 In Butler’s trilogy, the oankali is an unearthly species that save humans and other earthly species from extinction after a nuclear war devastated Earth. The main goal of this salvation was to bound, make kin, with those species (particularly with humans) as a way of persisting successfully existing, of winning the run against the species’ and life’s entropy. The trilogy raises a lot of further intriguing ethical and political debates, but there should be highlighted how the oankali could be seen as running against its destination, as searching desperately for errancy.

9 I use the prefix ‘trans’ before the word translation only to evidence that translating here means more than translating words or between languages, but also between media, forms, being, therefore, also a trans- or inter-semiotic translation. In this sense, it is also a translation of what translation is, that is, a translation of translation, since the translation to another media, to another point of view, also changes what translation means.

to produce scriptural negentropy, a gesture that attempts to breathe new life and survival into writing.

Hence, Flusser's (2020) writing in *Angenommen* (Flusser 2020) has that same character of hesitation of the photographer who "runs up against a limit of a certain philosophical category [...] because he is discovering that there are other points of view available in the program" (Flusser 2020: 48). As Oliveira (2018: 130) reminds us, "the writing of the future" is "the writing that permeates technical images," one that needs to "deconstruct the traditional method of writing." In *Angenommen*, it is about transtranslating the hesitation of the photographer in his discovery of new points of view already available in the program. Writing – especially fiction, *sf* and filosofictions – represents a privileged place to explore the limits of the subject's alter-occupation, of the hesitant variation of points of view. The exercise of a fictional hesitation of points of view in writing shows itself to be, thus, an exercise of perspectivation, of "controlled equivocation," which gives writing the mediatic mediation it lacked in its clash with technical images. In so doing, Flusser (2020) plays against each other the programming of the devices, in a quasi-poetic, dancing praxis, in search of freedom and, "perhaps," the "only revolution still possible" (Flusser 2020: 101).

In effect, *Angenommen* (Flusser 2020) is a writing experiment that conducts the proposal of a techno imagination present in the book *Umbruch der menschlichen Beziehungen* (Flusser n.d. 5), from 1973, but only released posthumously. The last work that Flusser published during his lifetime was the consummation of a techno imaginative praxis. Or, conversely, the display of a technoimagination in *Mutação das relações humanas* [Mutation of human relations] works as a program of his scriptural experimentation in *Angenommen* (Flusser 2020). By modifying the concept of truth through perspectivation and variation of viewpoints, technoimagination leads the process of knowledge to resemble "a kind of dance [*eine Art Tanz*] from viewpoint to viewpoint"¹⁰ (Flusser n.d. 5: 4), as a movement towards the circulation of a problem/object, and no longer as a linear progressivity towards the ultimate objective. This revolutionizing twist [*Ummwälzung*] leads to questions that remain unanswered, such as that of a science for which objectivity is not an ideal and that of a politics for which the model is not "progress" but the variation of viewpoints, or, again, of the relationship between science and art in the deprogramming of the objectivity of science by the subjectivity of art and vice versa. It also leads to a change in the experience of time, in which everything that is not the point that every time is the present, is future, in the condition of (un)probable possibility that can be (re)effected. Technoimagination inverts the direction of experienced time. Which means that "Wherever I look, there is the future" (Flusser n.d. 5: 6), which stands as an "earthquake" for our experience of historical time (Flusser n.d. 5: 5-6).

¹⁰ "*Eine Art Tanz von Standpunkt zu Standpunkt*".

This would be like saying, for Flusser, that “I am never alone; others are always here with me. And since every other person has a different future from mine [...] to ‘open the future up’[...] is not to make projects, but to open myself up in direction of those present with me.” (FLUSSER n.d. 5: 6-7). This “never being alone” of the present, in which the past is experienced as future, echoes the “thesis” of his communicology, namely, that the meaning of human life in the face of the knowledge of one’s own death lies in communication with others, in immortality through the memory of others. In this sense, *Angenommen*’s filosofictions are the consummation, in exercise, of his philosophy of exile. Also because some of the scenes had their first versions going back more than a decade, his experiments with *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) amount to the culmination of his filosofictions and his corpus, not as a point of arrival or finality, but as that last traice of his that, in existentialism, imprints an essence to existence. *Angenommen* could be seen as experiments of destinerrance from writing to video-artistry that were left, literally, on paper.

One more word about how temporality in *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) is managed by Flusser. Through a hesitant disarticulation, by playing theology, science, and myth against each other, the supposed “scenes” are gradually opposed, mirrored, and organized throughout the book, following the logic of the fragmentary, the punctual. As exercises in “futurology,” they resemble “congresses of specters” that are being strangely composed in the likeness of the law of the “kaleidoscope” of the *bricoleur* that would typify the “savage thought” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1970: 57). They are exercises of equivocal trantranslation, of variations of viewpoint, of perspectivation, of alter-occupation of the subject.

It is worth dwelling here on how this way of treating temporality simultaneously kinships and hesitates two separate ways of answering to Modernity’s temporality:

a) Starting with the more contemporary developments, it is possible to find one of the main claims of the technology theorist Hui (2020), without even once quoting Flusser, when he states that we should escape from Modernity’s “global time axis” as a way to “overcome it” (Hui 2020: 95). To this end, he invokes the need for new agendas and imaginations, both technological, as if they were ways to escape the submission of other beings to “our fate” (Hui 2020: 95). Breaking out of Modernity’s global time axis means finding alternative ways of thinking about the technical and technological development of societies without falling into what I would roughly call the “Age of Empires model,” that is, the idea that there would be a common ground of technological development among the most diverse civilizations and that it would be possible to measure, compare, and synchronize each one of them. Hui (2020), drawing on Heidegger and his reflection on technique, speaks in terms of a division between

pre-modern and modern technologies, as if technological or cosmotechnical development can only go in one direction.

In a sense, it would not be an exaggeration to understand the exercises of suppositional and hypothetical alteroccupation in *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) as a *praxis* of destinerrant imagination of technology, in other words, ways of thinking of other, wandering destinies of technology and, with it, of the time of Modernity. However, this destinerrancy of imaginative, that is, fictional, *philosofictional* exercises, while not configured as a refusal of technology – much less a messianic technophilia, as is sometimes claimed around – do not move in the direction of a “vectorial” acceleration that modifies the direction of the movement of technology (HUI 2020: 87-88). They are thus not so much a deceleration as a disarticulation of the programs of technophilia and technophobia, of acceleration and deceleration simultaneously, thus generating not simply a “vectorial” route deviation, but a wandering of destinations.

b) Thus, *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) somehow fits into a tradition of texts coming from Modernity that propose an intimate relationship between eternal return, ghostliness, revolution, technique, and possibilities/potentialities. From Leibniz, as the prehistory of this tradition, to Benjamin, as well as Nietzsche and Blanqui, the idea of a possible world parallels and even *ipsis literis* copies of “our” “world” takes over the reflections on temporality in Modernity. *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000), like *A história do diabo* (Flusser 2022), institutes a circularity, a potential “eternal return” right there where history is being made, in the singular events that break with the circularity of past and future history, by the fictional hesitation of (un)probable possibilities. The apparent quasi-dialectical movement of the book, seen up close, proves to be a hellish circle from which there is no way out. The paradox at the heart of the work is that the freedom of imagination of (un)probable heterochronotopic scenarios is constrained by the instinctual repetition of anti-entropic principles. The (im)probably (im)possible phantasmagories repeat, as filosofictions, the real as trauma.

Angenommen (Flusser 2000) (dis)works, thus, like that *daimon* who appears furtively to say that one would have to live this life once again and countless times, that demonic specter that underlies the doctrine of eternal return and *amor fati*. Here, however, there is no love of fate as a “saying yes” to the present. It is, in opposition to this, a *praxis* of survival through writing, in which antientropy is sought by, against, in and for writing. Saying *yes* not to the master of life’s destiny, but to life against the program of destiny. The reproduction of the wheel of fate, of the rotation in eternal return of

History and time, in an apparent dialectical movement, reproduces the trauma of exile and genocide, interpreted as the culmination of Modernity. In this reproduction of the trauma that is the real, in this “return of the real,” the programs of temporalities that constitute Modernity, including its phantasmagoria, are undone.

The filosofictional practice responds, moreover, to the way in which the reconfiguration between nature and culture affects the modes of existence at the intersection between philosophy and fiction. Throughout these scenes, we follow Flusser in a dance of human and beyond human perspectives, in filosofictional exercises that contribute in a radical way to the question of philosophical destiny. Wiggling “the tail in zigzags,” placing oneself on “tiptoe,” the course of the scenes of *Angenommen* (Flusser 2000) also reconfigures the relationship between science, fiction, and science-fiction, between body and mind, between being in motion and being still. The imaginative theoretical exercise stands as an active dance of the body that, ultimately, defunctionalizes the dialectic between the “terrorist” and the “futurolgist” of the first. In the last scene, in a dialogue between two perspectives – which, “a little ashamed,” admit to being “just myths” – the contradictions between theory and faith, utopian and messianic, space and time, are disarticulated into a “same path,” although not the same. A same “odos,” not a “meta-odos,” which constitutes “what we wanted to demonstrate.” The book ends by opening itself to *destin-errancy*, to its flawed aspect: “[w]hether we can do it, is left for later. We are both, as we must confess a little ashamedly, only myths” (Flusser 2000: 76).

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