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Golem, robot and other configurations. Vilém Flusser's concept of the apparatus

This essay attempts a systematic genealogic reconstruction of Flusser's concept of apparatus from Portuguese texts of the early 1960ies up to the *Bochumer Vorlesungen* held in the summer of 1991 shortly before Flusser's death. As with many other instances from Flusser's work the concept of apparatus is decidedly interdisciplinary in nature, positioning itself on the border of philosophy, sociology, history, literature, the arts, cybernetics and technology. This fundamental ambivalence becomes particularly visible in the use of the German word 'Apparat' and its many derivatives, as for instance 'Verwaltungsapparat', 'Fotoapparat' or 'Messapparat', subsuming under the same heading the photographic camera, Kafka's impenetrable bureaucratic apparatus and the perfectly operating apparatus of Auschwitz. Over the course of many years Flusser combined different textual sources to fashion his view of the apparatus. Many of them stem directly from the history Prague. Apart from Kafka's novels, Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.*, as well the figure of the Golem as it appears in the legend of Rabbi Löw, would also have to be mentioned. Flusser's concept of the apparatus is, furthermore, connected to the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger and Giorgio Agamben.

Key Words: apparatus, Golem, Kafka, Auschwitz, Arendt, photography.

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