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Reading Flusser

Reading Flusser is excellent preparation for living in Brazil in the era of Bolsonaro, as is the case of the author of this text. Flusser relates that he emigrated twice; once because he was forced to leave Prague and a second time when he deliberately left Brazil (Flusser 1975: 1). This self-exile was his reaction to the nationalism of the time, as with the military coup in 1964, the country had discovered patria and patriotism, something strictly rejected by Flusser, as he writes in his autobiography (Flusser 1999: 257), and in his book titled “The Freedom of the Migrant. Objections to Nationalism” (Flusser 2003). This political positioning destroyed the intellectual climate in Brazil that had attracted him initially. Although not recognized as an environmentalist, Flusser also condemned, as early as 1971, the already ongoing destruction of the Amazon rain forest – at the time protagonized by the the rightwing military dictatorship - and the kind of progress attributed to it (Flusser 1994: 54-55). He also considered the dichotomization between communists and catholics toxic, which finds its current equivalent in the rift between the worker's party and evangelicals. Finally, in 1990, in a letter to his friend Dietrich Mahlow, who tried to persuade him to accept an invitation to a congress in Brazil on environment issues, Flusser writes that he and his wife Edith had sworn to never return to Brazil, whereby in this context he refers to burocracy and pollution (Flusser 1990: 1). The fulfilling of Flusser’s hope that Stefan Zweig's book title, referring to Brazil as the “country of the future” (Flusser 1994: 123), which one day will be written in the affirmative mode and not with a question mark or irony will still have to wait. But in the meantime we are well prepared by Flusser’s testimonies made some 50 to 30 years ago.

References

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