

Introduction

“We survive in the memories of others.”

Vilém Flusser

Flusser Studies was founded in the summer of 2005. The first issue was published in November of the same year. At that time, nobody would have imagined that it would survive for twenty years within the constantly evolving global landscape of the internet. The journal with its 40 issues, well over 300 authors and nearly 500 contributions (texts, pictures and videos) is an archive of twenty years of international research into the thinking and writing of Vilém Flusser: a tribute to remembrance and the importance of history in a world obsessively bent on renewing itself while rapidly forgetting its own past.

But well beyond having survived, *Flusser Studies* has flourished. Hundreds of readers have found his work resonating with their own concerns, capacities, limitations, hopes, fears and doubts to the point of responding -- in writing, drawing, photographs and videos. That is, they have formed active relationships with him, participated in the ongoing project of constructing and reconstructing a historical figure and in doing so have kept the journal alive.

To mark the occasion of the journal's 20th birthday, we therefore invited contributors to reflect on their own engagement with Flusser's life and work (or, in a few cases, with Flusser in person), whether that extended over the full twenty years or not. This idea came from Nancy Roth, a longstanding member of the Editorial Board of the journal. As we had already published a first call for papers calling for new points of view on Flusser's thinking we ended up having contributions from both sides. This double nature of the issue is expressed in the title “Changing Perspectives / New Points of View”.

Among the contributors of this issue, besides the members of the Editorial-Board Eva Batličková, Erick Felinto¹, Nancy Roth², Andreas Ströhl and myself, are the photographers and artists Andreas Müller-Pohle, Henry Lewis, Lizzie Calligas and the media theorist Siegfried Zelinski who all met Flusser when he was still alive. Michael Hanke, Marc Lenot³, Priscila Almeida Cunha

¹ Erick Felinto will be editing a special issue on “Vilém Flusser in dialogue with contemporary scholars in May 2027 (*Flusser Studies* 43).

² On this occasion, I want to thank Nancy Roth for her invaluable work as a reviewer, not only in this issue but in many previous ones.

³ Marc Lenot will be editing a special issue on “Vilém Flusser and Artificial Intelligence” in May 2026 (*Flusser Studies* 41) together with Baruch Gottlieb.

Arantes, Wanderley Dias da Silva and Daniel Irrgang have been involved with Flusser's work for several years now. Add to this Mara Recklies, Amos Morris-Reich, Polona Tratnik, Yannis Mitrou, Sophia Chefalo, Vinzenz Aubry, Antônio Frederico Lasalvia, Marcos Beccari, Víctor Geuer, Marcos Beccari, Anderson Pedroso, Miguel Ángel Luna Vilchis and Miriam Sanabria Colin.

This Special Twentieth Anniversary Issue resonates with the Special Tenth Anniversary Issue of *Flusser Studies*⁴ (December 2015), in which we published three remarkable texts and two pictorial contributions from the previous ten years chosen by the readers of the journal. This time, for a span of twenty years, *Flusser Studies* opted for a group of six inspiring pictorial contributions starting out with the very first issue of the journal published in November 2005: Michael Najjar's *Netropolis* (*Flusser Studies* 1). The other contributions are André Rangel Macedo's, *For Flusser* (*Flusser Studies* 11), Joan Fontcuberta's *Orogenesis* (*Flusser Studies* 14), Marco Cadioli's *Snap Shooters. L'evoluzione del gesto fotografico* (*Flusser Studies* 19), Milena Szafr's *Let's Besprechen. [On] Database Aesthetic Trial* (*Flusser Studies* 26), as well as David Batchelor's *A few things I didn't know about Vilém Flusser* (*Flusser Studies* 35).

The second part "Changing Perspectives / New Points of View" contains a miscellaneous collection of texts of varying length and content ranging from short statements to full-fledged essays that are concerned with changing perspectives and the introduction of new points of view. The first five texts of part one are personal statements by Rainer Guldin ("The Mirror Labyrinth"), Andreas Ströhl ("Flusser war immer ein anderer"), Marc Lenot "(Un peu moins de) 20 ans avec Flusser – (A little less than) 20 years with Flusser"), Siegfried Zielinski ("Nachworte zu einem Geburtstagsvortrag" – "Afterword to a birthday lecture"), Michael Hanke ("Perspectives on Flusser, Changing and Stable") and Mara Recklies ("Thinking with Flusser in My Gut").

To set this section off from the following longer essays we have introduced pictorial contributions accompanied by short texts from two artists who got to know Flusser in the 1980s and early 1990s, and have already published with *Flusser Studies* in the past: Lizzie Calligas' newest work with a personal comment ("The Journey of One Line") and Henry Lewis' X-rayish Photograph "35b, The Desperate Hand" with an explanatory note by Anthony Bond "Of Grids and Indexes" (2024).

The second section begins with Rainer Guldin's " , () , On Vilém Flusser's Idiosyncratic Use of Commas and Round Brackets which explores a new dimension of Flusser's writing practice: his

⁴ *Flusser Studies* 20 (<https://www.flusserstudies.net/archive/flusser-studies-20-%E2%80%93-december-2015-special-tenth-anniversary-issue>).

idiosyncratic use of punctuation, specifically his quite unusual combination of round brackets within commas.

Nancy Roth's "Reading Flusser: An Abecedarium", is a memoir of the writer's reading relationship to Flusser over roughly twenty years. It represents an effort to sift through a wide variety of tangled thoughts and associations to locate those topics and approaches characteristic of Flusser that remain most promising, that is, have potential to stimulate further research or new interest.

Eva Batličková's "O último romântico: alguns apontamentos sobre a importância do romantismo alemão na formação do pensamento de Vilém Flusser"⁵ is an attempt to place Vilém Flusser's critique of the apparatus and technique within a broader context and, above all, to reflect on its roots. This approach offers an analysis of some concepts of the philosophy of the early German Romantics, specifically the Jena group, highlighting parallels in Flusser's work: the importance of the notions of the fragment as an essential element of human thought and the cycle as its expression, demonstrating the precariousness of constructing large philosophical systems. The essay also focuses on the Romantic critique of a linear historical progress as well as on the theory of language, highlighting its poetic potential.

In "Vilém Flusser, Fabulador de Mundos Ficcionalismo e Alteridade no Pensamento Flusseriano / Vilém Flusser, Fabulist of Worlds: Fictionalism and Otherness in Flusser's Thought", Erick Felinto explores Flusser's philosophical fictions, a project in which fiction constitutes a tool for the production of knowledge. The essay aims to map out the echoes of Flusser's proposals in contemporary thinkers such as Peter Szendy and Arturo Escobar.

Andreas Müller-Pohle's "Vilém Flusser in Europa" reconstructs Vilém Flusser's European impact from 1972 to 1998. It outlines the dual engagement framed by his distinction between "people of the word" and "people of the image," beginning with the controversial, later enthusiastic embrace of his media philosophy in the German-speaking world through to its scholarly analysis and the institutional establishment of his archive. The text examines Flusser's publishing presence, his critical engagement with photographic work, and the development of his thinking towards philosophy as fiction.

Amos Moss-Reich's "The Political Crisis of the Anti-Zionist Jewish Intellectual" is an excerpt from his latest book, which focuses on Vilém Flusser to illuminate intellectual Jewish history in the second half of the twentieth century, and vice versa. Flusser resolved his personal dilemma of place and belonging by embracing *Bodenlosigkeit*, locating its final form within the realm of aesthetics. His sharp rejection of a grounded politics stood in stark contrast to Zionism, which

⁵ This text is connected with her forthcoming monograph on the role of Heidegger and Benjamin in Flusser's theory of language *O papel constitutivo do iniz' vel na teoria de linguagem de Vilém Flusser: Leituras Flusserianas de Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger*.

asserted Boden (ground/land) was a prerequisite for political life. Flusser's anti-nationalism and anti-Zionism stemmed from a general rejection of nationalism as a false striving for security and a specific conviction that Zionism contradicted his ideal of Judaism. While structurally echoing pre-1918 anti-Zionist thought, Flusser's views diverged from the post-1948 Jewish intellectual mainstream, ultimately offering a distinctive, marginal perspective on the evolving history of Jewish opposition to Zionism.

Priscila Almeida Cunha Arantes' "Entre a Memória e o Abismo: regimes de hipermemória, datificação e a arte como desprogramação na cultura de dados / Between Memory and the Abyss: Hypermemory Regimes, Datification and Art as Deprogramming in Digital Culture" investigates the transformations of memory in the context of digital culture, datafication, and algorithmic control, proposing the notion of a hypermemory regime to describe the contemporary reconfiguration of how memory is produced, stored, and monetised.

In "Revisiting 'the Problem of the Devil'...", Wanderley Dias da Silva revisits Vilém Flusser's *The History of the Devil* first published in Portuguese in 1965, a book that, as he puts it, sounds more like a long and painful meditation on death than on ethics.

Daniel Irrgang's "A cartogram of Vilém Flusser's nomadism" is an annotated map of Flusser's lifelong network of friends that was developed for the exposition "Bodenlos Flusser und die Künste – Bodenlos – Without Firm Ground" at the ZMK in Karlsruhe in 2015.

In her innovative short essay "Flusser on Artificial Intelligence," Polona Tratnik introduces a new perspective, the relationship between Flusser's thought and the contemporary developments in artificial intelligence, which is also the main subject of a new issue of *Flusser Studies* edited by Marc Lenot and Baruch Gottlieb that will be published in May 2026.⁶

In "The phenomenological crossroads between Husserl and Flusser. Toward a Phenomenology of the Image in the post-digital age of AI", Yiannis Mitrou suggests the ways Edmund Husserl's foundational ideas on intentionality, perception, and consciousness would have to change in order to accommodate Vilém Flusser's media-philosophical critique of technical images.

Sophia Chefalo and Vinzenz Aubry ("After Technical Images: Toward a Theory of Post-Technical Imaging") discuss the limitations of the concept of technical images in view of the recent changes in a new emerging visual culture, which operates beyond immediate human sensory capabilities and the constraints of previous apparatuses.

Antônio Frederico Lasalvia and Marcos Beccari ("From Sound to Sign: Writing as Worldmaking in Vilém Flusser and Walter J. Ong") compare the work of Vilém Flusser with that

⁶ For the call of papers go to <https://www.flusserstudies.net/call-papers>.

Walter J. Ong and their different perspectives. The paper explores the ontological and epistemological consequences of the written word according to the complementary views of these two authors.

Víctor Geuer, Marcos Beccari and Anderson Pedroso (“Flusser e o Design Por Trás de Todos os Valores” (Flusser and the Design Behind all Values) highlight Flusser’s critique of the modern separation between art and technique in view of the notion of design. Design is not just a project, but artifice and trickery: a practice of symbolic, ethical, and political creation that transforms the world into a fictional surface that is continuously (re)drawn.

Finally, Miguel Ángel Luna Vilchis and Miriam Sanabria Colin (“El extraño señor llamado Vilém F.” (The Strange Gentleman Called Vilém F.) approach the life and work of Vilém Flusser from various perspectives connecting biographical and geographical reflections emphasizing its thematic and disciplinary heterogeneity.

The selection of texts and images collected in this issue shows that Flusser’s intellectual legacy is still very much alive, despite the changes that have taken place since his premature death in November 1991, nearly 35 years ago.

We hope that our readers will feel inspired by this issue and keep the remembrance of Flusser’s thought alive, something that both Vilém and Edith very much hoped for.

Rainer Guldin, Vienna and Lugano Summer 2025