EDITORS' INTRODUCTION:
Crisis, Context, Modernity, Myth

The editors of *SPECTRA: The ASPECT Journal* are pleased to announce the publication of Issue 2.1: Crisis, Context, Modernity, Myth. The publications in this issue highlight the work of several ASPECT students and affiliated faculty. We are also delighted to have this issue feature several recent ASPECT sponsored events.

The essays, interviews, reflections and reviews in this edition focus on four thematic areas of contemporary discourse: Crisis, Context, Modernity, and Myth. The contributing authors bring forth an interplay of insightful and controversial ideas that revisit classical interpretations along with new areas of discourse. In keeping with the interdisciplinary mission of SPECTRA, we have selected and compiled these essays in order to promote a variety of methodological risks as well as offer a forum for traditional disciplinary insights.

In doing so it is our aim to provoke new readings and alternative interpretations in social, political, ethical and cultural thought. With each successive historical era we suppose that lessons have been learned, that the past will be built upon, and that a better notion of what ought to be has emerged. Modernity, however, has resulted in a societal tailspin with a lively debate on what modernity is and how society must evolve. This debate is found in several of the featured submissions in Issue 2.1.

Issue 2.1 begins with essays by Alex Barder, Steve Daskal, James Klagge, and Kent Morris. In his essay, "Mythopoiesis and the Constitution of the Mytho-State in Plato and Heidegger," Alex Barder confronts common rationalist assumptions about modern liberal political theory by tracing the use of myth as a foundational component of theories of the state. Barder's argument for attention to the "mytho-state" exposes a connection between myth as political and politics as mythical prompts reconsiderations in contemporary political theory.

Steve Daskal wrestles with this search for unification in his article *A Contextual Approach to Political Philosophy*. In this piece, Daskal evokes John Dewey to argue that we must always have a contextual referent if our political philosophical pursuits are pragmatic enough to search for resolution to life's difficulties.

In Jim Klagge's "U.S. Power After 9/11: The Metaphor of Exile " we are confronted with the question of whether the United States can be thought of, at least metaphorically, as a nation in exile. Drawing from comparisons with ancient Judeo-Christian narratives of

exile, Klagge poses some possibilities for changing common sentiments in the U.S. regarding security, vulnerability, and the role of a nation that may need to give up a powerful position in the world in order to co-exist, to experience restoration to membership in a global community.

Kent Morris' "Executive Privilege: The Sovereign Exception in Action" explores the relationship between expanding executive privilege in the United States and Carl Schmitt's sovereign exception. Beginning with the hearing on contempt of Attorney General Eric Holder, Morris traces the history of executive privilege in the United States beginning with President Abraham Lincoln. Throughout the article, Morris shows how the use of executive privilege answer the question Schmitt posited in 1922: "Who decides?"

Our issue continues with three interviews from the ASPECT Speakers Series. The first is with Michael Hardt, Professor of Literature and Italian at Duke University and a Professor of Philosophy and Politics at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, who gave a public lecture entitled "What to Do in a Crisis" on February 23, 2012. Dr. Hardt was kind enough to grant an interview prior to his lecture which is transcribed in our journal. The second interview, with Dana Nelson, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English at Vanderbilt University, discusses her book *Bad for Democracy: How the Presidency Undermines the Power of the People* as she presented in a public lecture entitled "Barriers against Democracy: Rethinking the Nation's Founding" on January 22, 2009. The third is an audio interview with Lawrence Grossberg, Morris Davis Professor of Communication Studies and Chair of the Executive Committee of the University Program in Cultural Studies at UNC.

Issue 2.1 concludes with two book reviews by Heba El-Shazli and Jennifer Lawrence. Heba El-Shazli's review of Timothy Mitchell's *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* is a timely piece, looking at the relationship between economic reforms and technology and politics. Mitchell's 2002 work focuses on the intersection of modernity, capitalism, agrarian history and colonialism in modern Egypt. Grounding her piece in Mitchell's theoretical framework, El-Shazli adds critical points to the conversation, citing the work of James C. Scott, Fernand Braudel, Eric Wolf, and Daniel Thorner to integrate perspectives on peasant studies and its place within discourse in modern Egyptian politics. The review also places Mitchell's book in the greater context of the Arab Spring, asking whether the changes seen in Egypt today have any real depth or are merely superficial.

Jennifer Lawrence's review of Simon Dalby's *Security and Environmental Change* highlights some of the common referents of modernity, including its presence, contemporary existence, and yearning for the future. But, even with this yearning for the future, it is clear that modernity cannot be equated with progress. The spirit of modernity remains elusive, unable to be grasped, held, or obtained. The disaggregated feeling that modernity leaves in its wake is one that lingers and searches for unification, meaning, and place.

As you read the range of essays addressing contemporary intellectual discourse in terms of crisis, context, modernity, and myth please consider contributing to future issues of *SPECTRA*. We encourage a broad range of conventional and creative contributions and welcome inquiries about the journal at any time.

Holly Jordan	Christian Matheis	Jennifer Lawrence
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