

Editorial

Scientia Media

An interdisciplinary journal is a conglomeration of philosophy and the individual sciences and arts. What does it mean to be ‘interdisciplinary?’

If we turn to the etymology of the word ‘discipline,’ we find it originally derives from *discipulus*, ‘learner,’ which in turn derives from the verb *discere*, ‘learn.’ Passing into Anglo-Saxon English, the term *disciple* emerged (Ayto 174). The learner of a discipline, in this sense, is a disciple: from Webster’s, “one who receives instruction from another; one who adheres to a particular school of philosophy, religious thought, or art; a follower...” (109). As students of a discipline we work within a tradition. As disciples of a discipline, whether that tradition is philosophy, the social sciences, the natural sciences or some other art, we live out--in ways that may or may not be thematically articulated--certain metaphysical commitments that guide our conduct. Had we not each and all come from a tradition, if we could not find ourselves rooted in the ground of a particular disciplinary lineage, we could not practice our discipline. In fact, there would be no disciplines.

The noun *disciplina*, ‘instruction, knowledge,’ was derived from *disciplinus*. Annexed into the English language, the word eventually took on the meaning of ‘maintenance of order (necessary for giving instruction),’ and, in this sense of *disciplina*, comes via Old French the English *discipline* (Ayto, 174). Disciplines are disciplines by virtue of their orderliness that enables the passage of the discipline from teacher to pupil. An ‘interdisciplinary’ approach could be said to be a communication, a dialogue, between disciplines, between different manners of maintaining order within various scholarly traditions.

An interdisciplinary approach that includes the continental tradition in philosophy is fundamentally concerned with issues of truth and method. The individual sciences/disciplines hold out the promise of truth through the application of a particular method. This method provides an orderly manner of approaching a given phenomenon which both 1) promises access to the ‘truth’ of that phenomenon, and 2) allows for the transition of this orderly method from teacher to pupil. Hans Gadamer’s contribution to the question of truth and method is the recognition of the inevitable circularity between the two. A discipline must always already have a pre-understanding of truth, without which a method could not be framed. The individual disciplines, as the very condition of their possibility, must begin from a specific metaphysical position. A presupposed “objectivity” already assumes an unthematic,

pre-articulated understanding of truth which implies that a discipline, if it is given a particular method, can have a privileged access to truth.

Common sense tends to assume that there is a radical distinction between 'philosophy' and the 'sciences.' We know that the individual sciences, *in their very methodology*, already pre-suppose metaphysical positions. For the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, however, there is a common 'frame' within which philosophy and science may be situated in the history of Western civilization.

Heidegger called this common frame the *Gestell*, the presencing of Being in such a way that Being withholds itself. What is called to be thought about is that we are *not* thinking, that 'meditative thinking' has been overshadowed by the predominance of the 'calculative reasoning' of philosophy and the sciences as the 'sending' which is the 'destiny' of Western civilization.¹ Heidegger's later thought can be characterized as an attempt, not simply to provide an alternative metaphysical position, but to think the very limits of philosophy: to listen to the Saying of Being as that very sending. While Heidegger is often characterized as an irrationalist, this criticism fails to understand that Heidegger's thought is a kind of thinking that attempts to go beyond philosophy--to think the very 'end of philosophy.' Heidegger's post-metaphysical thought resides in the region of, though is not identical to, poetry and mysticism, rather than philosophy and the sciences. Heidegger's thinking is a 'releasement toward things' as their own ground and as the gathering of the Fourfold (Earth, Sky, Mortals, Gods). It is an attempt to disclose a more genuinely human "dwelling." As John Caputo writes of Heidegger's thought, "the analysis of the fourfold is a protest against the dehumanization of the earth, against rendering it inhumane and unlivable"(243). As opposed to the effort to bend nature to the will of the human being, exemplified in Sir Francis Bacon's philosophy, Heidegger's post-metaphysical thought aims "to befriend nature...to dwell with it, to let it be, and to find in it a hidden address of Being" (243).

Yet where does Heidegger's thinking leave us? What interest can we have in a philosopher who thinks at the end of philosophy? From this place, the sciences can be described as the inevitable conclusion of the history of rational philosophy in the West, which finally discovers itself in the midst of a barely inhabitable technological world. Philosophy and the sciences must, as their very condition of possibility, 'render reasons' and question the "cause of things." "Hence philosophy is cut off from a primordial 'experience' of Being, and must always be content with 'propositions' which 'talk' about what is" (Caputo, 260). If an interdisciplinary approach is to enter into a kind of thinking which Heidegger proclaims, it cannot simply remain satisfied with the grip of representational thought which has the character of calculative thinking, but must endeavor to make a place for that 'other thinking' which is meditative in character and concerned with the thought of Being.

But this leaves us in a difficult position. On the one hand, there is the pull toward meditative thinking to retrieve the thought of Being which is the very origin of philosophy (an "end to philosophy," a meditative thinking which is antithetical to the calculative reasoning of philosophy and the sciences). On the other hand, philosophy can become "consumed by the particular sciences" through an emphasis on mathematical reasoning (266). What then can Heidegger offer us in the practical concerns of the everyday practice of science?

Der Spiegel: We politicians, semi-politicians, citizens, journalists, etc., we constantly have to make decisions of one kind or another. . . We expect help from the philosopher, if only indirect help, help in a roundabout way. And now we hear: I cannot help you.

Heidegger: I cannot. (279-80)

From Heidegger's post-metaphysical language, thinking offers us nothing in the way that is practical. And, in a sense, that is the point. Heidegger's thinking is a making room, a letting be, by which Being may open other possibilities. All we can do is listen, engage in the play of Language as the Saying of Being, and wait upon the Word. Thinking is necessary but not enough. We must wait upon and ready ourselves for Being's presencing.

Yet is there not a third alternative between post-metaphysical thought and calculative reasoning? For Heidegger, the answer is "no." And this is something which we must heed, something which, perhaps, we should question. As Caputo writes:

We need another alternative to the piety of thought and cybernetics, a third thing, a *Scientia media*, a cognition which is neither held captive by the cave of mathematical science nor released into the upper world of thought. We need philosophical reflection, a reason which, while it does not match the simplicity of thought, still does not degenerate into technological calculation. We need ethics, philosophical anthropology, philosophical psychology, political philosophy, and all the other regional ontologies, and we need them now in the age of the *Gestell*, even as we also need thought. (269)

It is quite accurate to characterize such a project as a movement to explore this "third thing," a *scientia media*, in the age of *Gestell* between meditative thinking and calculative reasoning. And it must gather from all sides the many disciplines, the many 'orders,' which comprise the vast landscape of the sciences and humanities which have become the logical conclusion of the philosophical project of Western civilization.

In Part II of "Alfred Baeumler on Holderlin and the Greeks," Frank Edler presents a thoroughly researched exploration of Baeumler and Martin Heidegger's political and philosophical relationship. Of particular interest is Baeumler's response to Heidegger's 1932 talk in Dresden. In his "Theoretical and Political Man," for example, Baeumler sharply distinguishes between "theoretical man" and "political man." There is a striking parallel here between Caputo's reserve in the face of Heidegger's meditative thought and Baeumler's critique of Heidegger as an active "theoretical man"--active, that is, in his emphasis on the ready-to-hand and theoretical (passive) in his "let it be" emphasis in "On the Essence of Truth." That being so, Baeumler characterizes Heidegger as a "scientific-scholarly subject," and "withdrawn completely from the world like a *monk* of the Middle Ages," who "leaves the world behind in order to dedicate himself completely to the *via contemplativa*." What is even more striking is Baeumler's reference to Middle Age mysticism, the very subject of Caputo's *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, where he compares and contrasts Heidegger's later thought with Eckhart's mysticism. If we turn again to Caputo, however, we find an essential difference between Heidegger and Eckhart.

Eckhart thought of releasement in terms of the will, according to Heidegger. This is so because Eckhart was concerned with uprooting "self-love" (*Eigenliebe*) and "self-will" (*Eigenwille*) which are primarily moral or ethical defects. Thus Heidegger does not want to think of *Gelassenheit* within the realm of "morality"--but in the realm of thought. . . Heidegger is not interested in overcoming self-love, but what he calls "subject-ism" (*Subjectitat*). The perversion is not "sinful self-seeking" but setting up the thinking "Subject" as the highest principle of Being, and subordinating everything to the dictates and demands of the subject. . . Subjectivism inverts the essence of man, for it refuses to acknowledge the priority of Being and sets up in its place the priority of man. (174-5)

As Edler shows, Baeumler appropriates Nietzsche's will-to-power in the service of National Socialism. If the choice is between a Nationalist will-to-power and an overthrowing of "subjectivism," Heidegger's argument becomes much more appealing. The question again becomes: Is there a third alternative? For Norman K. Swazo, this third alternative is sought with the guiding question of his essay, "A Preface to Silence": "Why not silence rather than discourse?"

If any essay in this issue truly *practices* a form of *releasement*, it is Suzann Kole-Berlingieri's exploration of a schizophrenic client's language in "Deconstructing Psychological Meta-narratives." As Kole-Berlingieri writes, her shift in

phenomenological/psychological focus "toward the language of dissociation" allows her and her client to dwell with the *pathos* of the client's suffering without the covert assumption that "something is wrong and in need of fixing." Kole-Berlingieri reveals a profound trust in the Saying of the client's Language and demonstrates a relentless refusal to impose a structure to what is presented as "breakdown." Structurally, at least, might Kole-Berlingieri's psychotherapeutic 'paradigm' of allowing the "breakdown" to speak, or have its Say, set an example for how one can face the 'breakdown' of the human world in this age of the *Gestell*? And what of this 'breakdown?' Wayne Hunt's "Ideas and Information Technology" speaks to the political *Zeitgeist* of "'Soft' Power" and "the 'Third Way,'" a trend gathered together by those who "are true believers when it comes to the wonders of the information revolution." Yet Hunt manages to capture the 'breakdown' between the lines of these idealistic politics. Loosely related, Shadoian's essay explores one example of a fruitful engagement with 'throwaway' culture. His reading of the Ninon de Lenclos strip centers on the "instability" of the comic's text; one could say, even, that he reads the comic in the very place where it 'breaks down.'

Is it breakdown that we face as the third alternative between meditative and calculative thinking? Or is there a place for a *scientia media*? And what of history? Can we perform an authentic historical retrieval, return to the moment of historical necessity and thereby open new future possibilities? What is the glory in the 'breakdown' of history, what is left to retrieve? Herodotus, the historian of historians, recorded the grandest of narratives. Doug Mann's "Political Ideology as Theatre in Herodotus" offers to us the comfort that these narratives continue and resurface in the different and new medium of film.

The poetry in this issue of *Janus Head* offers the reader myriad and various styles and themes—enough to illustrate quite colorfully the lyric's power to infuse one's understanding of an event or thing with dimension and substance. Ed Block's "Hunter's Moon," begins the section with an affective, seasonal atmosphere that lures the reader to an experience of an autumn that is alive, alien, and mysterious. "Farm Fall," by David Allen, continues the seasonal atmosphere and reveals through image dense with action the motion of life towards death. On a different note, in the sphere of human relationship, the reader is treated to levels of feeling, complicated and unexpected, in Allen's "Love Song of an Ordinary Life." Tinged with echoes of Eliot and Meredith, who both voiced the sorrows and frustrations of love, the poem's neritic images immerse us in the ebb and flow of relationship and our reactions to its uncertain and protean nature. Exploring again the realm of human relationship, R. Flowers Rivera's "Bernadette, Vocalist, Age 27: Omaha, NE" is a painfully intimate and jarring portrait of a woman's longing made palpable by the memory of surrounding things and lingering impressions on the body.

Sensuality of the body and the fabric of the world are explored in James Hoggard's poems "Alfresco" and "Lying Indolent at the Squall Line." Both poems take up an uncanny sense of the world's sensuality interacting with, echoing, and in fact composing human sensuality. The body here is shown to be inextricable with the world; its experience is swathed in the rhythm of things—for example, the voluptuous notes of "then low in the brush a rustling comes" and "portions of moss and weed/ that waves washed off the rocks/ wash upon us undulantly."

But with the experience of the body often comes an uneasiness, a sense or suspicion of undercurrents in the surrounding environment, whether human or not, that we cannot always grasp or articulate. Peter Junker's "So Quiet in Idaho," in an ironic stream-of-consciousness style, chronicles "where the mind goes given no uncertain terms"-- from the simplicity and singularity of a newspaper article or the "Side Effects" of male birth control to the primordial "Sirens of Life" and the fundamental "plights" of the body. The succession of these seemingly arbitrary images in the poem relay the mind's avoidance and concealing of the final current that always moves with us.

The lyric offers a delight to its partakers in its obscurity; with its devices—image, hyperbole, tropes, and conceits-- it both reveals and conceals meaning. This dialectic of language is the subject of Allen's poem, "Derrida-esque Moment with a Friend Who Read 'Antigua, 1975.'" The last poem of the section, "The Transformation of Lot's Wife: An Image," revises written biblical history by imagining the spaces between the written word and interpreting the recorded language in an alternate fashion, calling attention to its possible disguises and its mystery.

The play published in this issue, *Four for Cheese*, by Frank Lehner, is a fantastical farce that fixes at its crux the symbol of cheese. It is cheese, in this case, that brings the worlds of two couples together—stage direction at one point in the play emphasizes, "*the only thing common in their two worlds is cheese.*" Cheese becomes the motif of culture; it is the 'multi-cultural' link between gender perspectives, national identities, and class distinctions. Literally and symbolically, it is the aged, ripened, cultured product that is the substance of civilization, mature enough to accommodate diverse orientations.

Where else but in the works of drama, prose and poetry are we made so aware of the shifting masks of language and the flickering cells of meaning it conveys? In a sense, this is the work of *scientia media*: it commands a descriptive writing that does not acutely confine things, but offers to human perspective layers of possibility. The frame of *scientia media*-- the middle knowledge-- asks one to tread on liminal earth. It

is a *machina* of the symbolic imagination²; as such, in the spirit of *Gellessenheit*, it enlists an openness to different views, apprehensions, metaphors. As the "middle knowledge" it stands in a mediating space that must shift its lenses often in order to see what knowledge is alternately revealed and concealed by the far-sightedness of one discipline or near-sightedness of another.

Brent Dean Robbins
Claire Cowan-Barbetti
Victor Barbetti

Notes

1. For Heidegger's discussion of technology, see: Heidegger, M. (1993b). "The question concerning technology" (W. Lovitt, Trans.). In M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (D. F. Krell, Ed.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1954). For Heidegger's discussion of meditative thinking, see: Heidegger, M. (1996). Memorial address (J. M. Anderson & E. Hans Freund, Trans.). In *Discourse on Thinking* (pp. 43-57). New York: Harper & Row.

2. Allen Tate describes the symbolic imagination as a "poetic insight" that "is dramatic in the sense that its fullest image is an action in the shapes of the world: it does not reject, it includes; it sees not only with but through the natural world, to what may lie beyond it. Its humility is witnessed by its modesty. It never begins at the top; it carries the bottom along with it, however high it may climb." (446) For more, see: Tate, Allen. *Essays of Four Decades*. 3rd ed. Wilmington, Delaware: ISI, 1999.

Sources

John Ayto. *Dictionary of Word Origins*. New York: Arcade, 1990.

John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*. New York: Fordham UP, 1986.

Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. 2nd English ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum, 1994.

Martin Heidegger, "Only a god can save us: *Der Spiegel's* Interview with Martin Heidegger." trans. M. P. Alter and J. D. Caputo. *Philosophy Today*, 20, no. 4, Winter, 1976.

Webster's Dictionary. Miami: P.S.I. & Associates, 1987.