

## INTRODUCTION

# Letter from the Editor

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For Issue 7.1, we decided on a call for papers that would not require that submissions be limited by a theme. Similar to Issue 6.2, our goal was to allow for more freedom in the production of the current issue, and in some sense produce a collaborative experience since researchers would perhaps play a larger role in shaping Issue 7.1. As a result, we have curated a bold and eclectic collection of articles and book reviews that have their finger on the pulse of contemporary political and critical theory. The articles explore a variety of topics, including discourses of failure in advanced digital capitalism, post phenomenology in media saturated life-worlds, and the limitations of nominalist theories of power. And, in Issue 7.1 we have proudly included an interview with Michael Shapiro that explores influences, interdisciplinary methodologies, genre studies, and much more.

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**Keywords:** Post-Phenomenology; Digital Capitalism; Life-World; Critical Theory; Political Theory; Max Weber; Neoliberalism

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Blacksburg, Virginia  
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Dear SPECTRA Readers,

For Issue 7.1, we decided on a call for papers that would not require that submissions be limited by a theme. Similar to Issue 6.2, our goal was to allow for more freedom in the production of the current issue, and in some sense produce a collaborative experience since researchers would perhaps play a larger role in shaping Issue 7.1. As a result, we have curated a bold and eclectic collection of articles and book reviews that have their finger on the pulse of contemporary political and critical theory. The articles explore a variety of topics, including discourses of failure in advanced digital capitalism, post phenomenology in media saturated life-worlds, and the limitations of nominalist theories of power. And, in Issue 7.1 we have proudly included an interview with Michael Shapiro that explores influences, interdisciplinary methodologies, genre studies, and much more.

Issue 7.1 begins with editors emeriti Mario Khreiché's and Shelby Ward's interview with Michael Shapiro.

Christopher England puts Max Weber in conversation with Gramsci, Althusser, and Foucault as he reconsiders Weber's diagnosis of power. England offers an analysis of these theorists' later engagement with Weber, suggesting that each theorist developed what England calls a nominalist theory of power. Ultimately, England argues that Weber's position

can still offer us useful insights into the ways in which the state and power function.

Céline Righi grapples with the temporalities of discourses of failure within digital capitalism. Righi's article draws in particular from Hartmut Rosa's work on the "speeding up of life" to consider the ways in which we may deal with failure differently in an accelerated world. As a result of the "speeding up of life," Righi argues that we have in some sense pathologized failure. For Righi, we must rethink the role failure plays in the formation of selfhood.

Sascha Engel proposes that a renewed pursuit of classical phenomenology may enhance a post phenomenological approach to studying contemporary media saturation. Drawing from two core concepts of classical phenomenology (e.g., life-world and intention), Engel argues that this earlier form of phenomenology may offer us a way to better understand the life-worlds that have emerged out of a saturation of media technologies.

In his review of Christian Fuchs's *Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter*, Shaun Respass illuminates the philosophical precursors to Fuchs's timely analysis of authoritarianism under the Trump administration. Observing the book's philosophical depth, Respass explores Fuchs's use of Frankfurt School critical theory and Marxist economics to characterize emergent—and arguably dangerous—modes of power.

Jordan Fallon reviews the contributions of Wendy Brown's *Undoing Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*

to scholarship on neoliberalism. Fallon acknowledges the importance of Brown's effort to diagnose democratic concerns across legal reasoning, educational institutions, and foreign policy in the United States and Europe, yet he argues for a wider geographical reading that includes considerations for race and ecology around the world.

And, finally, Caroline Alphin has completed her time as co-editor and editor. Following 7.1, Emma Stamm and Robert Flahive will take over as co-editors, and Sarah Plummer and Shaun Respass will take over as editors elect. SPECTRA

would also like to thank all authors, reviewers, advisory board members, ASPECT faculty, the Virginia Tech Library, and VT Publishing for helping to make this issue happen.

Sincerely,

SPECTRA Editorial Team

### **Competing Interests**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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