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## INTRODUCTION

# Letter from the Editors

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SPECTRA 7.2 builds on the journal's history of publishing pieces that take intellectual risks. This issue presents a combination of articles and book reviews, and includes a dialogue on contemporary teaching practices. These works examine assumed power structures of empire, the emergence of Japanese philosophy in global culture, and integrative approaches to higher education, among other topics.

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**Keywords:** Interdisciplinary; pedagogy; empire; Japanese Shinto; Decolonial; posthumanism

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The publication of SPECTRA Issue 7.2 comes in the midst of what Arundhati Roy refers to as "a portal, a gateway between one world and the next."<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing notions of normalcy to a halt, while global anti-racist protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd lay bare the hollow, unjust foundations which support the status quo. The portal is a time for posing critical questions about history, forms of knowledge, and structures of power. It also urges us to rethink academic orthodoxy, providing an opportunity to critique disciplinary and pedagogical norms.

SPECTRA 7.2 speaks to these questions, building on the journal's history of publishing pieces that take intellectual risks. This issue presents a combination of articles and book reviews, and includes a dialogue on contemporary teaching practices. These works examine assumed power structures of empire, the emergence of Japanese philosophy in global culture, and integrative approaches to higher education, among other topics.

Jay Burkette's "Imperial Law as Identity Politics: A Subjective Perspective" highlights the limitations in imperial power through a focus on the agency in tactical and strategic maneuverings within imperial legal forums. Burkette shows how colonized populations renegotiated imperial power through the creative use of legal structures in order to "protect, broaden, and defend" personhood.

Johnathan Flowers's "Tokimeku: The Poetics of Marie Kondo's KonMari Method" examines the theoretical foundations of KonMari, an internationally popular home organization system. Flowers indicates that the KonMari method embodies Japanese Shinto aesthetic principles. As such, it should be understood not merely as a domestic

technique, but as a practice of philosophical and spiritual cultivation.

In her review of Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh's *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Garland Mason argues that, in contrast to their explicit intentions, the authors "continue a legacy of white settler scholarship" by failing to engage with critiques of indigenous scholars.

Hannah Glasson's review of Cary Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism?* highlights the potential in Wolfe's systems-theory approach as a "strategic resource for building a different future," despite the prevailing human-centered limitations in what is fashioned as a posthuman project.

Instructors from the departments of History, Sociology, and Science, Technology, and Society contributed to "Exploring Interdisciplinary Pedagogy with 'Data in Social Context.'" This dialogue addresses Virginia Tech's Data in Social Context initiative, which offers interdisciplinary courses on the construction and social impact of Big Data. Topics considered include the nature of education in a changing technological milieu, the advantages and challenges of interdisciplinarity, and the politics of digital methods.

After the publication of 7.2, co-editors Robert Flahive and Emma Stamm will have completed their work with SPECTRA, and Sarah Plummer and Shaun Respass will assume co-editorship. In closing, the editors like to voice unequivocal support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Our political values inform our work as scholars, and as we face the future, we remain committed to dismantling racism in all its forms. We would also like to thank all authors, reviewers, advisory

board members, ASPECT faculty, the Virginia Tech Library, and VT Publishing for their contributions to this issue.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> Arundhati Roy, "The Pandemic is a Portal," *Financial Times*, April 3, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>.

### Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

### Bibliography

Roy, Arundhati. "The Pandemic is a Portal." *Financial Times*, April 3, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>.

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