Social Imaginaries and the Imagination

The cover of this journal, The International Journal of Social Imaginaries, is inspired by Cornelius Castoriadis’s reading of the myth of Daedalus’s labyrinth as an alternative to Plato’s Cave. He draws on this metaphor so as to rethink reason, thought, truth, being, creation, and doing. Rather than searching for an absolute truth, we are, when thinking, engaging in human creation in order to be able to encounter the real. When entering the metaphorical labyrinth to explore the real, we simultaneously create new, interconnecting corridors to negotiate. This is our lifeworld—the social and historical world, as it is given in our experience and understanding—whose reality we come to know only in fragments, as we articulate and problematize it and debate its meaning. This requires what Castoriadis called ‘thoughtful doing,’ on which the further development of our social, cultural and historical world depends. This is a metaphor for social imaginaries and the imagination that is central to the journal’s project.

Welcome to the inaugural issue of The International Journal of Social Imaginaries! We are a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal that inquires into complexes of social meaning and cultural projections of power, and that is concerned with the fundamental issues in modernity—including multiple modernities—and the human condition.

The journal: past and future

The International Journal of Social Imaginaries emerges from the journal Social Imaginaries, which consisted in an effort to gather philosophical, social-theoretical, and broader social-scientific research on the role of the creative
imagination and of social imaginaries. A growing variety of approaches and disciplines focus on social imaginaries as ways in which people collectively and pre-theoretically make sense of their social and personal existence, to constitute a collective space of meanings or semantic space for co-being.¹ The *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* intends to build on the earlier publication effort, and helps to create a global platform for a dynamic and evermore interdisciplinary and intercultural interest in social imaginaries and aims to capture the increasingly prominent and interdisciplinary contributions in one globally accessible journal. In this, the *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* seeks to bring theoretical and analytical clarity in discussions on the imaginaries. It intends to do so by means of publishing established and emerging authors in human and social sciences who are shaping the field of social imaginaries.

There are both continuities and discontinuities between the *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* and its previous incarnation, *Social Imaginaries*. Being global in scope, the new journal caters for a more expansive and diverse audience. Reaching a wider audience, the journal aims for greater diversity in interdisciplinary content while respecting the rigor of its core disciplines. Our interdisciplinary tradition covers philosophical and sociological discussions of the imagination and the imaginaries, journeys in the creative imagination, trajectories of modernity, approaches to religion, and interdisciplinary features on world regions. In publishing work on the concepts of the imagination and the imaginaries, on the major problems of past and present societies, states, cultures, and civilizations, we have also accommodated discussions of future oriented critiques, including debates on utopian thinking and projects of emancipation. Tabling into a single journal philosophical analyses of the imagination as well as new theoretical, historical, and empirical investigations of the crises of democracy and autonomy, interrogations of the relationship of society and the psyche, capitalism and statehood, climate and the Anthropocene, and war and terror, *Social Imaginaries* brought theory and analysis through a multi-disciplinary scholarship, on the one hand, and themed discussions of the creative imagination, religion, the Americas, and major thinkers on social imaginaries and the modern world, such as Castoriadis, Gauchet, Ricoeur, and Peter Wagner, on the other hand. Readers will notice that many of these areas have been expanded in the scope of the journal. In these pages, the international appeal of the new journal will become apparent, as will the widened and deepened scope of core questions.

¹ See Adams, Blokker, Doyle and Smith (2015) and Adams and Smith (2019) for overviews of the field.
How might the new *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* continue to reconstruct and apply the paradigm of imaginaries and the imagination but with an expanded range of themes and empirical studies? An emphasis on the phenomenological and hermeneutical analyses of the imagination and the collective creation of social life, politics, representations, power, myth, and modes of actions (such as social movements) continues because the collective level is a major point of distinction for the field. In the human sciences, phenomena studied as social life, politics, representation, power, myth, and modes of praxis are often understood as subjective or inter-subjective, or at most systemic. By adding the collective level of meaning as an essential reference point in interpreting and debating empirical issues, the journal further elaborates a different conception of collective and individual levels of imagination in examining social imaginaries as collective institutions. Such an approach not only adds a dimension to the analysis of the human world, but also aims at developing and deepening the critical dimensions that put taken-for-granted assumptions of the contemporary world to the test. It is from this perspective that the journal aims to contribute to topical interdisciplinary discussions with regard to, for instance, constitutional and democratic imaginaries or the imaginaries of the environment. In fact, as canvassed above, the range of imaginaries and modes of imagination addressed in these pages aims to capture the many areas in which the imagination is currently discussed: constitutional, totalitarian, populist, urban, and democratic imaginaries背景下 by global ecological and capitalist imaginaries, for which feminist, humanitarian, and religious imaginaries provide horizons of meaning and modes of agency for political and cultural responses.

The concept of social imaginaries belongs to the family of the imagination. With this in mind, the journal will also strive to offer a forum for philosophical debates on the nature of the imagination, understood in its various modes: creative and recreative, productive and reproductive, social and individual, etc. The journal is guided by the goal to reflect on the human condition, in past, present, and future societies and constellations, without limiting itself to a specific geographical or sociocultural region. The *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* will include in its focal range discussions of historical ruptures in societal meaning (as with the emergence of early democracy and capitalist society), and also will discuss critical contemporary shifts in meaning-making, related to (post-)democracy and populism, globalized capitalism, environmentalism, terrorism and human rights, and religion. This involves debates concerning specific concrete issues such as the current pandemic or police brutality or media portrayal of such phenomena and political polarization through social media, among others, and their effects on how we view our
relationships to the social and natural environment. The *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* wants to demonstrate that researching social imaginaries is crucial in allowing for a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of existing collective systems of meaning in—and across—societies as well as of shifting and newly emerging meanings. Such understanding is even more important in distinctive periods in which taken-for-granted meanings are in a state of rapid transformation (as arguably is occurring in current times).

The labyrinth of meaning and power through imaginaries, represented in our cover, extends globally and in the first instance its scope is reflected in the journal itself through the location of its Editors in four different continents: North America, Australia, Asia, and Europe. Whilst the composition of the journal’s editorial team echoes the geographical, horizontal extension of the labyrinth, the diversity of the texts the journal is set to publish echoes the thematic dimension. The labyrinth opens onto the interplay of multiple distinct social imaginaries and associated problematics across and within different cultural and civilizational horizons. The forthcoming issues of the journal will be concerned with:

1. Clarifying the socio-historical world we are immersed in, making it explicit, and the mode of being we tacitly live—like the air we breathe or the water to fish swimming in it—and thus bringing what is not immediately apparent but which conditions the meanings we unconsciously assume and attribute to the things around us and shape our picture of the world, thus to our attention.

2. Inquiring into the creativity of the imagination in shaping the human experience of the world not only on an individual, but also on the collective level—that is, the function of the imagination that is phenomenological, hermeneutical and ontological.

3. Inquiring into highly diverse ways—both historical and transcendental—in which imagination shapes the sociocultural experience by forming the contours of action, intuition, knowledge, and understanding

4. Elucidating new perspectives on the relationship of the past and present in a variety of world regions (in research on the emergence and transformations of democracy, public politics and movements, capitalism, nationalism, the entanglement of civilizations and states, and the cultural diversity of ways of being).

5. Bringing new dimensions and insights to existing debates, such as currently in constitutional law and theory (‘constitutional imaginaries’), human rights law (‘human rights imaginary’), democratic theory (‘Democratic imaginaries’), and populist politics (the ‘populist imaginary’).

What then are imaginaries and where does the imagination fit in?
Social Imaginaries—What is it?

The notion of ‘social imaginaries’ is frequently used, across disciplines, but often without sufficient conceptual elaboration and explanation. Moreover, discussions of social imaginaries that we come across as presented in specific disciplines often ignore the discussions of social imaginaries in other disciplines. The journal aims to fill an important gap in contemporary research by offering a platform for cross-disciplinary debates relating to social imaginaries. Originating in the sociological and philosophical thought of Émile Durkheim, Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan, and crystallized in landmark works by Cornelius Castoriadis, Paul Ricoeur, and Claude Lefort, the notion of the imaginary refers to the constitution of reality in social, political and cultural life. As a human capacity and activity, the imaginary and imagination allow human beings to creatively grasp reality in a variety of ways. Thought of as plural, ‘social imaginaries’ refers to constellations of power that frame politics, culture, economy, and society on multiple levels in diverse historical and social or cultural contexts. The term points to several interrelated trends in the humanities and social sciences that are concerned with developing a new approach to the question of modernity. First, it reveals the concern with—and emphasis on—the imagination as creative and no longer only reproductive, or fictive; as such, forms of social creativity are seen as the workings of the creative or productive imagination. Second, social imaginaries highlight the phenomenon of collectively instituted meaning and its inter-cultural variations. Third, foregrounding ‘imaginaries’ provides a corrective to a one-dimensional over-emphasis on theoretical reason or rationality as the central tenet (or promise) of modernity. Finally, the elaboration of ‘social imaginaries’ underscores the ongoing, albeit incomplete, hermeneutical turn in the human sciences. Therefore, instead of focusing on the singular ‘imagination’ or ‘reason’ as a faculty of the human individual, it seeks rather to emphasize the constitutive elements of socio-cultural ‘reality’, such as ‘social imaginaries’ and ‘forms of rationality’. In brief, one focus of the journal is the cultural hermeneutic of modernity (and ‘multiple modernities’), a need for which the socio-cultural contexts of worldhood, imagination, reason and civilizational forms point to. In the context of the grounding of modernity that implies a variety of ‘others’, the journal is concerned to elucidate dimensions of of meaning, action and power as the precondition for inter-subjective modes of being-in-the-world. It is concerned with the comparative analysis of civilizations and concomitant elaboration of world histories, which however have yet to fully assimilate the hermeneutical turn. The journal aims to be a forum for contributions to what Johann P. Arnason characterizes as a ‘paradigm in
the making’. For this it seeks to foster disciplinary rigor with an interdisciplinary disposition.

Arising out of phenomenological, psychoanalytic and sociological thought, the interdisciplinary field of social imaginaries has burgeoned in the last two decades and spread internationally. From primary traditions of thought in philosophy, and especially phenomenology and hermeneutics, the field has grown to also include contributors from sociology, history, psychoanalysis, urban studies, cultural and social geography, political theory, legal studies, as well as its established domain of social theory. Philosophically, The International Journal of Social Imaginaries draws on the resources of phenomenology and hermeneutics. The growth in the field since the turn of the century has incorporated key challenges facing contemporary society. Charles Taylor’s renowned book Modern Social Imaginaries (Duke University Press, 2004) is a landmark widening the appeal of the field, by applying conceptual and theoretical suppositions to societies, politics, and culture in Western societies. In its wake, scholars have discussed global, feminist, ecological, capitalist, humanitarian, constitutional, populist and religious imaginaries, and increasingly, non-Western imaginaries. Seeking to capture this vitality, The International Journal of Social Imaginaries aims to investigate social imaginaries from theoretical, comparative, global, historical, interdisciplinary and inter-civilizational perspectives. The journal’s objective is to foster challenging research on the growing and diversified field of social imaginaries, on the one hand, and the related field of the creative imagination, on the other.

The International Journal of Social Imaginaries thus reflects on questions of contemporary politics and the political, including in relation to the economic. The recent trend in civic disengagement in the context of the rise of ideologies of neo-liberalism have masked the profound crisis that now affects Western modernity in its specific relationship to the natural world. The theoretical response to this exhaustion of the central imaginary significations of modernity has failed to articulate the full significance of the crisis, counter the loss of collective vision, and inspire a new political imaginary. There is thus an urgent need to find new theoretical approaches and interpretative frameworks that can re-assert the capacity of human societies for political autonomy and at the same time conceptualize its fundamental connection to the natural world.

The journal’s focus is also distinct in concerning itself not only with the constitution of the social, cultural and historical world, but also with the neglected other of the social: nature. Beyond current debates concerning the environment, the journal will pursue questions that interrogate the images of nature underpinning these accounts and the various imaginaries of nature. Modernity has seen the realm of history invested with meaning, whilst concomitantly the
kosmos has been stripped of inherent significance. Social Imaginaries aims to interrogate the lines of continuity and discontinuity drawn between the human and non-human world. In so doing, the cultural images of nature intersect with the cultural projects of power concerning nature, and here new forms of ecological worldhood and environmental movements come into focus, in turn necessitating comparative and intercultural approaches.

Expanding on the field’s relevance for the human sciences, we can divide new themes and continuities into the two areas of the imagination and imaginaries.

**Imagination**

Since the first half of the twentieth century there has been a steady interest in the imagination, culminating in the more recent explosion of interest from the beginning of the twenty-first century, within philosophy and related fields. One can state without exaggeration that imagination now occupies a central place in contemporary philosophical and, more broadly, intellectual discussions. The recently published handbooks on the philosophy of the imagination (see Kind 2016) and cross-disciplinary handbooks on the imagination (see Abraham 2020) strongly reflect this view. In this regard, the intellectual landscape has changed profoundly over the last fifty years. Suffice it to recall that in the 1970s, such thinkers as Paul Ricoeur and Edward S. Casey had to lament in their writings that imagination is an almost entirely forgotten theme in philosophy and related fields. The International Journal of Social Imaginaries will strive to reflect the broad interest in imagination that we come across in various intellectual fields and traditions. In this regard, the journal will continue the tradition, initiated by Social Imaginaries, of promoting phenomenological and hermeneutical research on the imagination and on the links that bind philosophical analyses of the imagination to social imaginaries. The new journal has a strong interest in promoting cross-cultural investigations. The goal is to offer a forum for intellectual discussions on the nature of the imagination that would not be limited to classical analyses but that would also incorporate those investigations that are often overlooked in other journals, such as those that we come across in Asian philosophy.

**Imaginaries**

Just as the general interest in imagination has grown, so also an interest in societies, cultures, civilizations, and currents of knowledge beyond Europe and the West has grown significantly, and especially since the 1980s and 1990s. A shift in interest from modernity that characterizes the North Atlantic world to multiple modernities has broadened the field’s scope from international
vantage points. The empirical and historical focus on multiple forms of human consociation has an equivalent in the realm of theory. Pluralizing the imaginary as imaginaries and mapping the multidimensional institution of social life delineate how we might interpret cultural and social meaning. This may be in experiences of nationalism, public politics, capitalism, democracy, human rights law conflict, gendered or class-based social relations, or different modes of being. Instances, patterns, or episodes of how these are instituted are wide open to specific analyses within the social imaginaries paradigm.

As mentioned, a landmark example is Charles Taylor’s seminal work. It is indispensable in outlining the multidimensional nature of daily life, morality, legitimacy, politics, economy, and normative meaning (Taylor 2004). Taylor did not do this alone, but rather through collaboration with others in the Centre for Transcultural Studies (Lee and Gaonkar 2002). Drawing deeply on exchanges and mutual interchange with his colleagues, Taylor went on to expound a version of understanding dimensions of modernity illustrated with extensive case discussions and examples in a pithy book (or, better, a lengthy essay). This plurality in theoretical understanding is the hallmark of the International Journal of Social Imaginaries. Social imaginaries are not as self-contained in the terms they were originally theorized in the works of the later Durkheim, Sartre, Lacan, Castoriadis, Ricoeur and others, and there is consequently abundant space for further research. The proliferation of social imaginaries, which we began to track in Social Imaginaries, will continue to aggregate in these pages.

A crucial illustration of multidimensionality lies in debates around the Anthropocene, which highlight the intense impact of productivist industrialism and consumerism derived from the capitalist imaginary on the non-human world. The patterns are complex, as shown in the Earth sciences. There are, however, also many ways of interpreting, understanding, arguing about, and acting on it, and the sociocultural maps of meaning they draw on, including scientific reason, are multiple. The concept of the Anthropocene, as an abbreviation for the age of escalated impact of human productivity, reflects heightened doubt about progress and unlimited growth into the domains of the natural world. Such doubts reflect a crisis of progress in modernity—a subject of debate in an issue of our predecessor on Peter Wagner’s sociology. The International Journal of Social Imaginaries will be a forum for laying out further perspectives and debates on this and other crucial questions. We also anticipate that it will be a bigger and more effective platform for critical scholars, human rights advocates, occupational professionals, and social

2 Special issue, Festschrift for Peter Wagner, Social Imaginaries, 4, 1, 2018.
movement activists undertaking research on the interrelated domains of the Anthropocene and ecology.

In sum, *The International Journal of Social Imaginaries* aims to pursue intersecting debates on forms of meaning, knowledge and truth as they have been historically instituted and reconfigured, both within disciplinary confines and beyond. It seeks to elucidate ‘the world in fragments’, and, in demanding the continued problematization of existing horizons, the journal, as symbolized by the labyrinth, refuses ultimate closure. *The International Journal of Social Imaginaries*, as an interdisciplinary refereed journal, therefore invites contributions from philosophy, social theory, historical sociology, political philosophy, political theory as well as anthropology, cultural and social geography, hermeneutics, phenomenology, comparative philosophy, critical theory, legal and constitutional theory, and other fields or disciplines that advance our understanding of the human condition. Although the journal will publish English language manuscripts, we shall also occasionally translate significant essays from a variety of other languages, European and Asian.

In addition to being a forum for interrogating these various problematics, the journal will be a home for research on imaginaries and the imagination from and on East Asia, the Americas, Africa, South Asia, Eurasia, Central Asia, and Australasia. Submissions on these topics are encouraged. As Editors, we anticipate that publication of such research will substantiate the relevance of the expanding field. The journal will further experiment with new formats, such as in the form of roundtables on publications that expand the analysis of imagination and the imaginaries. The next issue will feature a roundtable on constitutional imaginaries. Discussants will address Zoran Oklopcic’s *Beyond the People: Social Imaginary and Constituent Imagination* (Oxford University Press 2018). Other new formats include a more open varia section encompassing interviews, analyses, and commentaries. Along with future book review and review essay sections, the journal will bring new research in through a variety of channels. By diversifying formats, we aim to facilitate different theoretical and applied approaches in the social imaginaries field. The formats will serve as interdisciplinary forums exhibiting fresh research relevant to all disciplines of the human sciences. They will supplement high grade refereed scholarship.

**This Issue**

Our first issue begins by confirming the encompassing problem of our times: ‘nature’, climate change, and the living world. José Maurício Domingues' ‘The
Political Dimension and the Unsurpassable Exteriority of ‘Nature’ entreats us to re-examine the relationship between society and nature. Arguing against constructivist trends in the humanities and social sciences casting everything as socially constructed, Domingues contends that the modern social imaginary has an institutional core we must accept if we are to adequately face up to the wicked problem of climate change. The exteriority of ‘nature’ is here to stay; no viable constructivist assimilation of nature into the social can do justice to the complexity of modernity. One of many illustrations of his point is the well-intentioned attempt to locate a legal personality for nature in the constitution of Ecuador. This amounts to an alternative projection of relations between society and the living world. Yet, it has struggled to move beyond gesture and into meaningful post-developmentalist institutions of being with the non-human environment or superseding the political dimension. Indigenous imaginaries informing these developments in Indo-America of course do point to wider conceptions of being. Integrating those into analyses and political projects of the twenty-first century post-neoliberal conjuncture is a more challenging and remote prospect. One thing is certain in Domingues’ estimation; a homogenous vision of nature is a roadblock and ought to be overcome, just as singular and unitary notions of society have been surpassed. At the same time, a common political discussion is necessary to confront the necessarily unsurpassable nature of Nature’s exteriority. Whatever metaphors might be used in media, economist, and political discourse to invoke ecology, democracy remains an indispensable component of modernity in finding enough in common to institute a ‘collective assumption of responsibility’ for living in and with Nature.

Domingues’ essay is longer than readers can usually expect. The gravity of the topic justifies the length. Also deservedly longer than usual is Alice Pechriggl's ‘Gender Between Imaginary Institution and Cultural Incorporation: Revisiting the Concept of Anaclisis From Freud to Castoriadis.’ Pechriggl approaches layers of the gender imaginary through a re-examination of Freud's notion of anaclisis (or leaning on). Seeing in Castoriadis' elucidation of the 'effective imaginary' a co-location of gender identity, she connects this level of the psyche to gendered social relations and representations instituted in the wider social imaginary. Finding the boundary between inner psychic and societal layers is difficult to say the least; it is a speculation analogous to theology's attempts to separate body and soul. Understanding this problem through reference to anaclasis, but also trying to determine the means to counteract it, Pechriggl pinpoints a social imaginaries perspective on widely debated issues of gender, bodies, representation, and politics. How the 'broken unity' of the psyche conditions the creation of the social world is her topic, and she finds
the formation of the self is complex and never total or finished. Likewise, gender does not exhaust socialization, as social science research and social theories of the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and religion have suggested. Finishing with a discussion of the binarism of socially instituted gender identities, a question left untouched by Castoriadis not to mention Freud, Pechriggl ventures into the terrain of intersex and transgender experiences of being. She does so by pointing to the benefits of a Castoriadian understanding of the interrelation of body and psyche, instead of fashionably casting gender as a biopolitics.

In ‘Imagination and Belief,’ George Taylor analyzes some central issues in Paul Ricoeur’s still unpublished Lectures on Imagination, held at the University of Chicago in 1975. The paper focuses on the relation between imagination and belief while relying on the schematic distinction Ricœur draws in his lectures. According to this distinction, we should consider imagination across two axes: across the horizontal axis we have the set of possible forms of imagining ranging from the extreme of ‘reproductive imagining’ to the extreme of ‘productive imagining’; across the vertical axis we have the set of possible attitudes toward the imaginary, ranging from the extreme of ‘belief’ to the extreme of ‘critical distance.’ Taylor focuses on the vertical line and offers an appraisal of imagination as belief and as critical distance. Taylor questions two central aspects of Ricœur’s account: (i) the view that critical distance can neutralize all kinds of belief, and (ii) the view that belief must necessarily be negative in the theory of imagination. Taylor’s critique of these aspects of Ricoeur’s philosophy of productive imagination unfolds within the framework of an overall approval of Ricoeur’s theory. While building on other arguments offered by Ricoeur, Taylor contends that belief plays a constant role across Ricoeur’s vertical axis. Part of the value of the vertical axis lies in recognizing that along this spectrum, our imaginative orientations, including social and political ones, are beliefs that need to be tested by contrasting them to other imaginative perspectives. Taylor concludes his analysis with a brief examination of the way in which his thesis coheres with and is reinforced by other contemporary work in cognitive theory, and especially in the work of Daniel Kahneman and Aaron Tversky.

Nicolas Poirier brings a timely discussion to the issue of the predicament of modern democratic society. Poirier intimately discusses, and compares, Claude Lefort’s and Cornelius Castoriadis’ conceptualizations of democracy, starting from the influence of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on the work of both, even if to different extents. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘wild being’ is of relevance for both the philosophers’ conceptualization of democracy, in that democracy is understood in its ‘socio-historical’ condition, in particular in terms of its historical specificity as a society which rejected any transcendental
grounding and is hence aware of its human origins. Wild being translated into more specific political terms then becomes the acknowledgement of the historically situated, but always fragile and partial, institution of any political community, democracy being the only historical form which explicitly recognizes its fundamental incompleteness. Any society emerges from some form of nothingness, disorder, or chaos (which can be understood as the fact that world cannot ultimately, in its entirety, be fully grasped by means of human meaning-making). In democracy, this chaos is not covered up under a notion of unity or homogeneity, grounded in some supra-social, transcendental order, but is acknowledged as intimately part of society as such, reflecting the social division that any society contains. Lefort and Castoriadis differ, however, in their understanding of the origin of the law. For Lefort, society has no origin and hence the law cannot be related or reduced to some constituent instance. For Castoriadis, in contrast, the lack of origin of the law means that the law has no supra-social foundation and needs a social embedment in the figure of an anonymous collective. Lefort and Castoriadis ultimately conceive of the ‘wild being’ in different ways. In current times of turmoil around liberal democracy, both Lefort’s and Castoriadis’ considerations offer highly significant insights into the ultimately indeterminate, and evolving nature of democracy.

One of the principal concerns of The International Journal of Social Imaginaries is the issue of modernity, especially the possibility of multiple modernities as recently suggested by Shmuel Eisenstadt. We are also interested in how the labyrinths of meaning and power through imaginaries unfold in distinct regions of the world. One interesting case is East Asia during World War 2, especially Japan in its unique modernization process. How did modernity arise in Japan and how was it received by its intellectuals? The Kyoto School, a school of philosophy that arose in connection with the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imperial University of Kyoto in the decades preceding and during the war, and which gave birth to a number of major modern philosophers rom the 1920 even up to the 60s, has been noted—quite infamously—for its participation, along with other intellectuals, in a number of published round-table discussions and symposia, critiquing modernity. Well-known today, in particular, are two such meetings: the ‘Overcoming Modernity’ symposium of 1942 organized by the Bungakkai journal and the ‘The World-Historical Standpoint and Japan’ symposia of 1941–42 organized by the Chūōkōron journal. In her article, “Overcoming Modernity,” Overcoming What?: “Modernity” in Wartime Japan and its Implication,’ Atsuko Ichijo examines the Zeitgeist of the period that was behind this questioning of ‘modernity’ in connection with what these intellectuals meant by ‘modernity’ and its ‘overcoming.’ She suggests that Eisenstadt's
The notion of ‘multiple modernities’ may be helpful in understanding the motives of these intellectuals.

The issue closes with an interview with Johann P. Arnason on the question of social imaginaries as such. Arnason has made social imaginaries central to his theoretical framework, hermeneutic of modernity, and comparative civilizational analysis for more than three decades, and the richness and breadth of his reflections are apparent in this conversation with Suzi Adams. Arnason regards social imaginaries as an entry point for rethinking the problematic of culture but fuses the imaginary dimension in innovative ways with the phenomenological hermeneutic problematic of the world as an horizon of horizons from which a highly distinctive account emerges. "A Conversation on Social Imaginaries: Culture, Power, Action, World" provides a sweeping exploration of key aspects of social imaginaries. Although Arnason has primarily drawn on Castoriadis, the discussion ranges from consideration of the sociological classics to contemporary thinkers in the social imaginaries field and tackles problematics as diverse as action, meaning, power, the symbolic and the world problematic. This conversation is the first of two: the second, entitled "A Further Conversation on Social Imaginaries: Political Philosophy, Normative Commitments, and the Creativity of Social Action", will be published in this journal soon. In the second discussion, Suzi Adams raises the question of “the political” and political imaginaries, and the discussion with Arnason enters the terrain of political philosophy. Arnason outlines a non-normative approach to the field.

The Managing Editors and Associate Editors, together comprising the journal’s Editorial Collective, are delighted to be publishing this new journal with Brill. We extend our thanks to all the individuals involved in this new endeavor. The Managing Editors and Associate Editors bring to the journal considerable experience in the field and significant research profiles. Our colleague Suzi Adams, unable to contribute to the editorial effort in this particular issue, is crucial as a Managing Editor alongside Jeremy Smith. We invite subscribers, readers, and potential contributors to engage with us in debate about new approaches in the humanities and social sciences and to debates about crucial issues of the day.

Editorial Collective

References


