Introduction

Suzi Adams and John W. M. Krummel

This issue of *Social Imaginaries* continues to delineate key thinkers and debates in the social imaginaries field proper, whilst opening onto problematics that configure the terrain more broadly. Contemporary approaches to social imaginaries—as a paradigm-in-the-making—have emerged from a number of intersecting currents of thought, including Durkheimian understandings of collective representations, Marxian debates on ideology, structuralist debates on the symbolic and the imaginary, and phenomenological and hermeneutical reassessments of the creativity of the imagination and its relation to—or institution of—the 'real'. More broadly, the various interpretive frameworks that undergird the social imaginaries field also draw from debates amongst third generation phenomenologists—such as Merleau-Ponty, Patočka, Levinas, and Ricoeur—that seek to critique Husserl's philosophy of consciousness through reactivating specific aspects of Husserl's phenomenological approach, in conjunction with a critical encounter with Heidegger, from which new articulations of selfhood, the social, and transcendence appear.

More generally, reflections on social imaginary constellations (and their varied sources) invite engagement with—and interrogation of—the concreteness of our social worlds *within-the-world*. Socio-cultural contexts of worldhood, imagination, reason, art, and civilizational forms, as conceived here, reference the human condition in modernity, in political, cultural and social aspects. Modernity is not autonomous but relational, that is, it grounds—and founds—itself in relation to a variety of 'others', including classical antiquity, inter-cultural and inter-civilizational others, and, finally, intra-cultural constellations. These inter- and intra-cultural elements call for interrogation of our understandings of 'the strange', 'the extra-ordinary', and 'varieties of otherness' at all levels of socio-political life, be that at the macro level of civilizations or the inter-subjective level of social selves in action. Such frameworks must also be capable of interrogating the final frontier of otherness—the different regions of nature—where the formalization of mathematical reason and the limits of the cultural-political project of rational mastery grow weary, and thoughtful political ecologies and nuanced environmental phenomenologies

arise in their place. From this, in line with the ancient Greeks, the world—and the human condition *in-the-world*—is to be understood as a 'unity in plurality', which emphasizes the importance of articulating both the commonality and the diversity of the human condition. Indeed, the human condition *in-the-world* can only be known in its concrete historical articulations, and thus needs both comparative research and robust theoretical frameworks to address these issues, be that in social theory, political philosophy, critical theory, historical sociology or comparative history.

<div align="center">*******</div>

We open this issue with two essays on Paul Ricoeur's thought. Along with Cornelius Castoriadis and Charles Taylor, Ricoeur's distinctive elucidation of the social imaginary has been pivotal for the emergence of the social imaginaries field. Indeed, interpreters of Ricoeur increasingly highlight the centrality of the imagination for his overall philosophical trajectory. The question of the imagination was an enduring concern for Ricoeur, but it gained momentum in his thought in the 1970s. The early- mid-1970s were particularly important in the present context, as this period saw his developing engagement with the problematic of the imagination gain traction and momentum. The year of 1975 was especially propitious. During the course of that year, Ricoeur presented two series of seminars on the imagination—the first on ideology and utopia as the two poles of the cultural imagination that together comprise the social imaginary, the second on the philosophy of the imagination—and published *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, in which the role of the imagination, especially the productive imagination, was underscored. These highly original works prepared the way for Ricoeur's further reflections on the productive-receptive imagination as 'narrative' in *Time and Narrative* (3 volumes) in the early 1980s.

George H. Taylor's contribution to this volume, 'The Phenomenological Contributions of Ricoeur's Philosophy of Imagination' focuses on Ricoeur's articulation of the productive imagination as it emerges from both the Lectures on *Ideology and Utopia*, and the *Lectures on Imagination*. Taylor primarily focuses on the productive imagination as fiction as it emerges from Ricoeur's Lectures on Imagination. While it is generally thought that Ricoeur's move to hermeneutics incorporated a simultaneous shift away from phenomenology, Taylor offers an alternative view, and reconstructs Ricoeur's approach to the imagination through a phenomenological lens. Ricoeur's philosophy is best understood as the interplay of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and thus it is no surprise that Taylor reconnects Ricoeur's phenomenology of the imagination as fiction to hermeneutical themes, especially through the central interconnection of vision and language—of seeing and saying. Of particular interest is Ricoeur's articulation of the productive imagination as iconic

augmentation (a theme that has also been recently taken up under the auspices of a 'strong program of cultural sociology', and for which Ricoeur's distinctive take will prove of interest), his reworking of Husserl's notion of intentionality as the 'consciousness of' the 'absolutely nowhere', and 'imaginative variation' as 'as if' and as the capacity to 'shatter reality'.

In his essay 'Between Receptivity and Productivity: Paul Ricoeur on Cultural Imagination', Timo Helenius also pursues the theme of the imagination in Ricoeur's thought. Helenius accepts Ricoeur's critique of the possibility of 'creation *ex nihilo*' and instead draws attention to the ways in which the cultural imagination operates in a dialectic of innovation and sedimentation as part of an overall 'disjointed continuity' with the civilizational traditions that inform western currents of history. Helenius argues that the cultural imagination forms the basis of a poetics of human action, and, in so doing, offers a corrective to those approaches which stress the centrality of Ricoeur's articulation of the imagination as the basis of possibility of a human subject. Instead, Helenius argues that the mediated or situated subject emerges from a cultural basis—from the cultural imagination—that resides in the nexus of receptivity and productivity.

One important component of a discussion of the social imaginary is how we understand the world. Adam Konopka's article, 'Embodiment and *Umwelt*: A Phenomenological Approach' discusses the notion of the world and its "constitution," and especially in its relationship to the natural environment, in Husserl's phenomenological theory in regard to the intentionality of embodied experience vis-à-vis the pre-given *Umwelt*. The issue is necessarily complex as Husserl's understanding underwent several revisions and reformulations through his career until culminating in his notion of the "life-world." Konopka examines this development of Husserl's theory of world constitution and his account of environed embodied experience, especially as a phenomenological response to the 19th century debate concerning the methodology of *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*, involving Wilhelm Dithey and the Neo-Kantians of the Baden School. Konopka argues that Husserl develops his response in the context of '*un*building' the *Natur-Geist* distinction in his identification of the pre-given world as embodied and lived. He argues that for Husserl, environed embodiment—pre-reflective bodily self-awareness in correlation with its *Umwelt* as horizon—grounds both *Natur* (spatio-temporal materiality) and *Geist* (human culture and history) and hence their dichotomy.

Ľubica Učnik's essay takes up the question of the life-world, human responsibility and debates on scientific reason in engagement with Jan Patočka, who, like Ricoeur, was a third generation phenomenologist whose reworking of Husserl and Heidegger offers rich resources for the social imaginaries field. Her essay, 'The Problem of Morality in a Mathematised Universe: Time and Eternity in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and the Concept of 'Love' in Patočka's Last Essay', takes up some remarks made by Jan Patočka in his last

written essay 'Notes on Masaryk's Theological Philosophy' as a heuristic tool to reflect on Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. The overall question animating her essay can be framed as: How can we understand human responsibility, without God, in a world that is ineluctably defined by modern science? Following Patočka's cue, Učnik considers Dostoevsky's novel as a response to Kant's approach to practical reason, on the one hand, but also his reformulation of theodicy, on the other as part of an overall critique of modern subjectivism. The underlying context of the essay concerns the question of the place of the human condition in modernity in its grappling with (scientific) rationality and divinity, especially as it pertains to practical reason, themes that play out in Dostoevsky's works. But Učnik questions the binary at play in Dostoevsky's and Kant's responses, and looks to Patočka for options not limited to the physical world of science and God as sources of human morality. Patočka is concerned to reformulate individual social responsibility that eschews a religious framework—from another perspective, this can be understood as an attempt to reflect on the problematics of time and eternity 'in a world bereft of God' that takes account of the human situatedness in, and responsibility for, an historical world. This is encapsulated in Patočka's formulation of the 'third movement of existence' as 'the movement of breakthrough'.

If the human condition of being *in-the-world* is to be understood as a "unity in plurality," in its involvement with both commonality and diversity, the issue of equality and inequality cannot be ignored. Bernhard Waldenfels in his contribution to our volume, 'The Equating of the Unequal', focuses on this relationship between equality and inequality and the need for a responsible form of equalization that avoids on the one hand normalism whose fixation on mere order degenerates to levelling and leads to indifference, and on the other anomalism (from "anomaly") that dreams of nothing but the extraordinary and the eventful. He refers to the philosophies of Marx in his analysis of money, Nietzsche in his concept of order, and Levinas in his ethics of the *other*, all of whom give expression to the paradox of that which inevitably escapes our attempts to equate or reduce to sameness, an excess that falls beyond the bounds of any equation. Any order of normality is susceptible to the unexpected and the extraordinary from *outside* of its bounds, but it is *also* threatened from within by its erosion through levelling into indifference. Using the fiction of Dostoevsky and Musil, Waldenfels asks how something unexpected coming from out of the bounds of the ordinary may rouse us from such entropy of indifference, illumining the ordinary and the indifferent in harsher light. In this way non-indifference serves to limit mere levelling. The process of equalization must thus be navigated in a responsible manner that avoids the extremes of the merely ordinary, hence indifferent, and the merely extraordinary, hence meaningless.

Waldenfels's essay touched upon the dangers of an over-emphasis upon the same in its tendency towards levelling. The imaginary construction of the

world is inevitably forced to confront the *other* and deal with this issue of possible violence that stamps the voice of the other under a levelling sameness. A noted critic of the violence of totalizing sameness is Emmanuel Levinas, the subject of Kwok-ying Lau's expository article, 'War, Peace and Love: The Logic of Lévinas'. Lau looks into this issue by examining the internal "logic" underlying Lévinas' provocative stigmatization of the realm of being as a state of war—in its process of totalization that attempts to universalize, and in which Western philosophy has played an active role since its inception in Greece. Levinas' critique of Hegel and Heidegger's phenomenological ontologies are examined as recent examples of that western canon, both opting for the sameness of being. The critique also extends to dialogue regulated under a unitary reason. Levinas' response, according to Lau, is a *pathétique* cry for love and peace. Implied is an ethical relation, such as through love but also fecundity, that escapes the realm of absolute immanence by opening the door to alterity. In this way Lau presents the logic in Levinas' reading of western ontology on the one hand as a logic of negation of the rationalization of war and violence and on the other hand as a logic of affirmation of alterity and plurality through love and justice. The suggestion is that Levinas' logic points to the possibility of an ethical politics of non-violence that aims to restore justice in face of the other as non-indifference to the other's suffering and death.

If Lau argues for an ethical politics of non-violence, Fred Dallmayr's contribution, '"Man Against the State": Community and Dissent', focuses on the relationship between freedom and community in the search for an ethically responsible mode of dissent against the totalizing state. Taking as its starting point the contrast between the "state" as castigated by Nietzsche and the "polis," Dallmayr's essay examines the two contrasting forms which critical resistance in pursuit of freedom can take: the libertarian social-Darwinian kind of resistance in pursuit of self-centered interests and the ethically motivated conscientious kind that aims at the "common good." In the first self-interest comes to overrule any form of social solidarity, and in the second freedom and dissent are in the service of justice and a more ethical mode of solidarity. Dallmayr begins the essay by examining Herbert Spencer's formula of "man against the state" and its dichotomizing tendency that separates individual interest from public and social interest, and which eventuated a kind of *laissez-faire* liberalism or libertarianism. To this he contrasts and affirms the more ethically responsible conception of liberty that he finds articulated in the thoughts and actions of Thoreau, Gandhi, and Camus. Additional examples are found in Socrates's conduct in his confrontation with the Athenian public, and the anti-Nazi German resistance movement, including people like Bonhoeffer. In the face of the steady growth of the modern state realizing its totalizing tendencies with ever more efficient technological means, Dallmayr's essay provokes us into thinking and rethinking how our imaginaries shape our world

and institutions and the possibility of acting in ways that can move towards the realization of new imaginaries, worlds, that are ethically sound and just.

The place of the state, institutions, and social imaginary worlds can also be analysed within broader civilizational frameworks. In his contribution to this issue of *Social Imaginaries*, entitled 'Elias and Eisenstadt: The Multiple Meanings of Civilisation', Johann P. Arnason constructs an encounter between two very different approaches to civilizational analysis: those of Norbert Elias and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. At first glance, the dissonances between their respective investigations into civilisations stand out: Elias emphasized the long-term processes of psychogenetic transformations of the subject and sociogenetic developments of state formation in Western Europe—the civilising process. Eisenstadt, however, articulated a distinctive understanding of the civilizational dimension of society—the interrelations between cultural visions of the world and institutional arrangements—that lead to a focus on the plurality of civilizational forms that emerged historically. The Eisenstadtian perspective leads to comparative approaches to the *longue durée* of civilizations. In addition, Elias focussed on power, whereas Eisenstadt's turn to culture is well known. Noting their common East Central European origins and life-world, Arnason contextualizes Elias and Eisenstadt's respective projects within an overarching Durkheimian–Maussian (rather than Weberian) civilisational framework, in the first instance. (This increasing emphasis on the Durkheimian approach to civilisational analysis is in line with Arnason's own growing engagement with anthropological debates on stateless societies and civilisations.) In order to integrate some of their respective insights further, Arnason's strategy is to demonstrate that each raises implicit questions that centrally connect up with primary themes of the other. He seeks to show the latent (inter)civilizational contexts of Elias's articulation of state formation, and, conversely the opening onto processual frameworks in Eisenstadt's work on the axial patterns of civilisations to more fully understand the historicizing trends of the Axial Age. Despite the points of contact that Arnason establishes between Elias and Eisenstadt, he does not seek to homogenize their approaches and remains attuned to civilizational dissonance.

$$******$$