

## FROM THE EDITOR

We imagined this issue within a series titled “Thinking with the Sciences.” Such phrasing suggests a scarcity best understood as artificial—meaning not illusory, but manufactured. It demands polyliteracy: not the same as polyglottery, but no less worthy. It also imagines reconciliation. This is more troublesome, if we also accept that the party tasked with reconciliation isn’t the party who produced the schism. And can we call it reconciliation when one party is too merely busy (in Heidegger’s sense) to notice? I began asking myself: Who needs to think with whom? Is it possible to do any thinking, let alone thinking-with, when one party is a source of such unrelenting noise?

What dialogue the humanities do have with the sciences, at least in the United States (but very unlikely only there), is for the most part an exchange of shouts with whispers. I refer to the shouting about “STEM” that we hear from edupreneurial CEOs and technocrats of all stripes—which most of us can’t bring ourselves to interrupt, in any way that matters, and over which the furtive objections of a few teachers and scholars of other acronyms can barely be heard.

Don’t think for a moment that professional thinkers are immune to terror. The way some of us babble about present history, one might think the humanities disciplines are on the verge of extinction because of our truculence, rather than our timidity. Neither (extinction, truculence) is true. But we are either desperately seeking science, or berating each other for not seeking science desperately enough. There’s no time left for *finding* science, for examining science, much less *evaluating* science. Not to speak of accomplishing science! As worthy a goal as believing in God, if done with good reason, and freely.

This is a recent development, driven by economics. Like anything else, it ends. It has already begun ending. STEM faculty may not have been its source, but they have been its beneficiaries, and most were too busy to consider the costs (which far exceed STEM’s own, differently configured labor precarities). As I write this, the American Psychological Association has formally resolved to bar its members from participating in military interrogations. Too late! Meanwhile, some of the University of Illinois’s dirtiest laundry is being aired. It includes an email written by a physicist who sees the “two cultures on campus” as divided by humanities faculty who maintain the bizarre belief that “the campus can operate almost completely as a democracy.”<sup>1</sup>

I could go on, but I won’t go on.

I’ve come to read the work in this issue not as work that obeys an injunction to think with the sciences, on pain of some consequence or other, but as work by scholars capable of such thought, who serve us better by thinking *about* the sciences as well—or even against them, instead.

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Guest Editor

1 See “Want to Be My Provost or Chancellor? Quote a Poem I Don’t Already Know by Heart,” *The Good Enough Professor* (blog), August 8, 2015, <http://goodenoughprofessor.blogspot.com/2015/08/when-i-first-started-blogging-about.html>.