

EMERGENCE

By Mehrdad Hadighi

Philosophy has, for thousands of years, worked to bring thought and analytical attention to topics that may otherwise go un-noticed. On the contrary, our contemporary world of instant communication, while great for arranging the time of a meeting, does not encourage deep engagement. Our world is saturated with sound-bites, news blips, and tweets, where immediate and fully present communication is a must. Images must say all they want to say in 10 seconds, before they disappear! Posts must say all they need in 140 characters. We want digest-able answers to complex questions, and consumable ideas that may be internalized immediately and turn a profit quickly. Even, and perhaps especially, opinions are swayed by un-checked words and images of influencers. All in all, we live in a web of immediate and constant affirmations and negations. People, ideas, and products are all either bad or good, right or wrong, all in the same way. A communications network that is designed to sell products, is selling ideas and thoughts in the same manner: as sound-bites, and image-clips. Thinking has become ever more specialized and far from the ordinary citizen.

Arthur Rogers, in his 1901 analysis of the history of philosophy, suggests that the necessary conditions for philosophy to exist outside of its productive and practical roles, such as its roots in Egyptian rule-of-thumb geometry, is time! Time to think, time to think critically, and time to think critically about thinking, a disinterested interest in wisdom. Although we have more time away from practical necessities of life than ever in history, that time is spent in a cursory engagement with our world.

An essential part of academic leadership, to me, has been to project time and space for critical thinking. That was precisely the inception of Hyphen, on which I worked with Matthew Kennedy. As a corollary or a counter-force to our emoji-filled existence, we imagined Hyphen as where time would be elongated, would stand still, which would then open a space to explore ideas of architecture. No more, no less. The space created by Hyphen both joins and separates, connects and divides. Its sign forces us to rethink singularity and division. It is never one or the other, both or neither.

The journal as a part of the academic enterprise mandates an infrastructure of topics, student editors, writing, reading, reviewing and contemplating. Hyphen will, by necessity, make time where no time had existed, and will make space for exploration. Hyphen is a most reduced sign (even more reduced than emojis) that instead of producing summations, forces an expansion of thought.

The Hyphen of the title naturally found its way into the topic of the first journal, both as idea and sign: In-stability. It posed the simultaneous consideration of two opposing notions, that of stability and instability. How can we think instability in stability? One of the three Vitruvian principles of architecture, firmitas, is posed as the title of the first issue, but with a counter-force embedded in it. A Hyphen that de-stabilizes a singular, stable, reading of stability and in-stability. The first issue lived up to its promise of asking critical questions. I am certain that the second will, also. As long as the infrastructure remains, it will project time and space for critical inquiry.