

Five years is not a long time in the life of a journal, but it may be long enough for an initiative to begin confronting the question of its own form. A journal begins, after all, with an intention: to make certain questions discussable, to bring particular intellectual traditions and fields of inquiry into relation, to create a space in which work that might otherwise remain dispersed can encounter other work. If the initiative survives, however, intention gradually becomes activity. Manuscripts arrive, arguments are accepted and rejected, disagreements emerge, responsibilities are distributed, procedures develop, and relations are established among authors, reviewers, editors, and readers. What began as an intellectual project acquires a history of its own.

The question of form then ceases to be secondary. Yet form should not be confused with formalisation. Intellectual activity does not become more serious simply by acquiring more rules, procedures, categories, and standardized modes of presentation. Forms that initially facilitate an activity can eventually constrain it; conventions created for particular purposes can become ends in themselves. The familiar architecture of academic publishing offers enough examples: an argument is expected to assume the dimensions of an article, an article to follow a recognizable sequence of sections, and a piece of research to demonstrate its legitimacy through conventions that can sometimes become increasingly independent of the knowledge being produced. What was a means of communicating inquiry can thereby begin to determine what counts as inquiry.

But the opposite conclusion would be equally mistaken. The absence of explicit forms does not liberate intellectual activity from mediation. It merely leaves its forms implicit, habitual, or dependent upon particular individuals and relations of trust. A collective intellectual undertaking cannot indefinitely substitute goodwill for procedures, any more than scientific inquiry can substitute a prescribed procedure for the development of its object. Sometimes an inherited form must therefore be loosened; elsewhere, an implicit form must be made explicit. The relevant question is not whether intellectual activity should have form, but whether its forms remain adequate to the activity they are supposed to enable.

This question has become increasingly concrete for *Marxism & Sciences* as the journal enters its fifth year. Some of the developments we

announce with the present issue may initially appear unrelated: we have begun a new publication channel, “Studies”; following collective discussion, we have adopted an Editorial Governance Framework; and a new publishing portal is under construction and will be launched together with Issue 10. The present issue itself also contains a debate in which contributors disagree over questions that touch directly upon the journal’s intellectual concerns. These are developments at different levels—intellectual, editorial, institutional, and technical. Yet each poses, in its own way, the same practical problem: what forms are adequate to collective intellectual activity?

The answer cannot be unanimity. A journal with an identifiable intellectual orientation is not thereby a journal in which its contributors, or its editors, must agree. Indeed, an intellectual project incapable of accommodating substantive disagreement would have difficulty developing beyond the propositions with which it began. But neither is disagreement intrinsically productive. The mere coexistence of positions is no more a debate than the mere coexistence of disciplines constitutes a unity of knowledge. For disagreement to become intellectually consequential, positions must be sufficiently determinate to confront one another, arguments must be answerable, and the conditions must exist under which criticism can produce further thought. The problem is therefore not how to protect an intellectual project from disagreement, but how to give disagreement a form in which it can become part of that project’s development.

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