



Foreword

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Hannah Arendt claimed: “Action [...] is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act”. One would be forgiven for attributing the quotation to the philosopher’s 1951 *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, because that book is fundamentally concerned with how atomised societies of isolated individuals can (perhaps counterintuitively) have a propensity towards a wider, transcendent connection, unification and group identification. In fact, the line comes from Arendt’s later work *The Human Condition* (1958) and has an evident relevance for us today. As we inhabit a milieu that is increasingly fragmented by technologies of the virtual, we might expect that a fragmented society of citizens will seek unification: exactly the kind of integration and connection that provide a breeding ground for totalitarian regimes and ideologies. Could it be that there occurs cyclically throughout history a triangulation of technology, social atomisation and the rise of totalitarian regimes?

The academic vocation creates its own community of researchers who are intimately familiar with the condition of solitude. But this experience does not leave scholars alone as individuals in obscurity, single-mindedly working in isolation. Rather, we focus on thematic specificities with a view to fostering creative connections with the world as active agents participating in it. This is not a solipsistic pursuit but a dedication of personal time to offering ideas to society for its betterment. The loneliness of the researcher is silent, but it is not about voiceless separation. Scholars of the arts and humanities are always facing, Janus-like, into the past as much as they look outwards and towards the future. They investigate evidence and synthesise ideas to compose a portrait of humanity: connecting, collaborating and compiling narratives from canons and archives and cultural forms of expression. The onus is on scholarly researchers not only to bring personal discoveries into the community, but also to challenge and redefine the spaces in which healthy intellectual and

creative cultural points of contact can foster between individuals and the societies in which they participate. We are ultimately defined by the very fora that we create for the circulation and promotion of our discourses.

For over a decade *Aigne* has played an instrumental role in providing exactly this kind of forum for the dissemination of ideas from within our college community. It has included, over eleven issues, contributions from postgraduates, early career researchers and College lecturers. Recently it has offered work presented at the CACSSS Annual Postgraduate Conference: another important forum for doctoral researchers from the college. The journal has been edited and published by an incredibly dedicated team of CACSSS postgraduates, with hours given in service of the critically important ideal of fostering and supporting a communal platform for the sharing of our best research. I hope that the readers of *Aigne* will be intellectually challenged and stimulated by the contributions to this issue and will see themselves as part of the community of discourses generated by some of the exceptional scholars in our college.