

**01 July 2010**

### **Centre for Modern Thought Yearly Report 2009/2010**

2009/2010 marked the first year in the three-year plan agreed with the College of Arts and Social Science in January, 2009. This plan outlined arrangements for seed funds for conferences and workshops, support for PhD students, a new location, administrative support (a part-time line manager and a part-time secretary), and two academic positions attached to the Centre. In the course of its drafting, the College administration recognized 1.9 FTE existing staff support through the affiliations of Professors Fynsk, Moreiras, Ruiz, and Vilaros-Solers.

In the course of the year, the two administrative positions were filled: Laura MacKenzie (.4 secretary) and Jon Cameron (.5 manager). We have been pleased to welcome them to our community. Searches for the two academic appointments were deferred, pending strategic planning undertaken on an institution-wide basis. Unfortunately, the Centre lost the participation of Prof. Ruiz for technical reasons (his papers did not allow him to continue in an employed capacity; he now has an honorary appointment while we await a change in his citizenship status.) Professors Moreiras and Vilaros-Solers also resigned their positions at Aberdeen in order to take positions at Texas A&M. Relocation has unfortunately been delayed because of the state of the premises identified for our offices and meeting room (Luthuli House requires full rehabilitation after close examination of its structural integrity).

Thus, from a staffing and administrative point of view, the Centre for Modern Thought traversed a trying year. From an intellectual point of view, however, the year was remarkably successful. The Centre hosted five meetings:

1. Energy Security (“Criteria for Decision-Making” organized at the very end of the last term by Prof. Fynsk with Prof. Paul Mitchell and Dr. John Paterson)
2. The Global Food Challenge, organized with the Rowett Institute, November, 2009
3. Haiti and the Politics of the Universal, organized by Dr. Nesbitt, March, 2010
4. Blanchot’s *Le Pas au-delà*, organized by Professor Fynsk, April, 2010
5. Mathematics and Literature, organized by Dr. Wickman, May, 2010

All of these meetings held ground-breaking potential and will be followed up with subsequent events at Aberdeen or elsewhere (in planning).

The Centre also co-sponsored visits by Prof. Bruno Bosteels, Dr. Sha Xin Wei, Dr. Davide Tarizzo, Dr. Benjamin Mayer-Foulkes, Dr. Julian Lethbridge, Dr. Peter Paik, and Prof. Simon Critchley (an event at the Glasgow School of Art in May, 2010). It began a fascinating discussion with Dr. Benjamin Brock of the School of Divinity on Heidegger and Theology.

Year-long workshops were also directed by Professor Moreiras (“Nietzsche, Proust, and Deleuze”) and Professor Fynsk (“Blanchot’s *Le pas au-delà*”)

International links were pursued through the development of the “Politica Comun” project in association with 17, Instituto de Estudios Criticos in Mexico City. The Centre also began planning for a promising new international PhD with the University of Salerno and a number of scholars in Italy. The venture will entail partnering with other institutions in Europe with the objective of securing an Erasmus Mundus grant and sponsorship from other foundations. Applications will be prepared in the fall of 2010.

The Centre anticipates a promising academic year to come, though public events will be concentrated largely in the spring term. Its affiliates are now located in English, French, German, Visual Culture, Hispanic Studies, Divinity, Law, History, Anthropology, Geography, International Relations, and Music. It hopes to advance its relations with the Institute for Complex Systems and Mathematical Biology (under the direction of Prof. Celso Grebogi) and will be exploring research collaborations with colleagues in computing and imaging with the participation of Dr. Sha Xin Wei (who will visit Aberdeen in the spring of 2011).