

**Feminist philosophy:
Time, history, and the transformation of thought
Nordic Summer University 2017-2019**

1: a) Description of the project

What is the relationship between feminism and philosophy today? Although feminist philosophy is now a recognized field in the institution of philosophy, a tension between the two terms still seems to persist. Compared to the status of feminism in other disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences, feminist philosophy is generally marginalized in departments for philosophy. Similarly, women compose a smaller portion of the student body and faculty in philosophy, in comparison to other disciplines.¹ A great deal of work in feminist philosophy is undertaken in other disciplines, such as literary studies, the history of ideas, gender studies, and sociology.

The prospective NSU circle *Feminist philosophy* has the ambition to become a Nordic and Baltic platform for inquiries in and on feminist philosophy. Our aim is to explore the borders, connections and tensions between feminism and philosophy in critical perspectives. We want to create a forum where philosophy is scrutinized from a feminist perspective and yet be able to ask questions about what philosophy has to offer feminism. How can feminism revitalize philosophy? What would it mean to develop a philosophical feminism? Ours is an interdisciplinary initiative at the intersection of philosophy, the history of ideas and feminist theory. Our ambition is to make a contribution to feminist thinking both within and without the discipline of philosophy, as well as to put extant efforts in feminist philosophy in historical perspectives.

Philosophy can be described as a tradition of texts, questions, and concepts. It is a discipline with a long history and it has a rich tradition of dialogue with historical thinkers. As philosopher Andrea Nye has pointed out: “thinking necessarily uses concepts with roots in the past”.² However, the philosophical canon largely consists of works by male philosophers, some of whose writings are explicitly or implicitly misogynistic, which places questions of history at the center of efforts in feminist philosophy. According to Nye, there are three main strands in the works and methods of feminist philosophy, the first of which is a critical examination of the exclusion of women from the ranks of philosophers as well as outright misogyny and racism in canonical texts. The second one has to do with a revision of the canon with respect to gender; a vast body of literature now exists in which historical women philosophers have been acknowledged as thinkers in their own right. The third strand concerns questions about the possibility of problematizing the very conceptual foundations of modern philosophy in light of critical readings of standard texts and contemporary feminist perspectives. In addition to these three strategies discussed by Nye, there is a growing interest in a productive re-reading and actualization of the history of philosophy for new and creative feminist applications.

In our prospective circle, we will adopt versions of all these strategies. In particular, we want to focus on developing perspectives on the very categories of time and history. Feminist

¹ Bostad, Inga och Pettersen, Tove, “Kjønn og feminisme i norsk filosofi – Noen betraktninger”, Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift, no. 03-04 / 2015; Reuter, Martina, “Varför så få kvinnor? Könsfördelningen inom den akademiska filosofin”, *Tidskrift för politisk filosofi* nr 3, 2015; Thompson, Morgan et al. “Why Do Women Leave Philosophy? Surveying Students at the Introductory Level”, VOL. 16, NO. 6, PP. 1-36.

² Nye, Andrea. *Feminism and Modern Philosophy: An Introduction*. Routledge 2004. P. ix.

theory, understood as an interdisciplinary tradition of texts that interrogates gender, sexuality and other similar categories in critical perspectives, has a rather paradoxical relationship to time and history. If philosophy, as Finnish feminist philosopher Tuija Pulkkinen has pointed out, generally takes an omnipresent ahistorical point of view, feminist theory rather tends to stress what Donna Haraway calls “situated knowledges”: the historical, the local; first and foremost concerned with questions of transformation.³ However, the emphasis of historical situatedness is not necessarily matched by an awareness of or interest in the historicity of the concepts that are being employed to make such claims. Rather, with the aim of changing oppressive conditions, feminist theory runs the risk of overemphasizing the present and the future at the expense of the past. We argue that there is a need for both empirical and theoretical interrogation in this domain and our prospective circle has the ambition to develop a forum where questions of feminist ways of relating to history and the past can be asked and addressed.

The practical aim of the circle is to provide a platform for the interaction between different initiatives in feminist philosophy on a national level in the Nordic and Baltic countries, which is currently absent in this context. We have already established a collaboration with the Icelandic project “Feminist philosophy, transforming philosophy” (see below), and have been in contact with the Swedish chapter of the Society for Women in Philosophy, the network *Kvinder i filosofi* in Denmark, and “Bergensnettverket for kvinner i filosofi” in Norway. Moreover, we have established contact with people in Finland, two of which are professor Tuija Pulkkinen and Virpi Lehtinen (who coordinates a Finnish network on feminist philosophy). We have also been in touch with *Balphin*, a network for philosophy in the Baltic Sea area that includes universities from all three Baltic countries.

In order to scout the interest in a circle on feminist philosophy and history, the coordinators organized an ad hoc symposium at Umeå University, Sweden 15-17 March 2016.⁴ Four keynote speakers from philosophy, history, literature, and gender studies, and nineteen participants presented their work. The total number of participants was more than thirty, representing ten countries. Judging by the interest in our initiative and the experience with the symposium in Umeå, we believe that this circle would attract a wide range of scholars.

b) Evidence and Outcomes

The circle has the ambition to publish an anthology about feminist philosophy and different themes related to questions of time, history, and historiography. Advisor and part of this project is Sara Edenheim, docent in history and associate professor in gender studies, Umeå University. We have already received funding from Umeå Center for Gender Studies to get this project started and will apply for additional funding from NSU and other funding agencies. Our aim is to publish with an established Nordic academic publishing house. The winter symposium in 2019 at Södertörn University will be devoted to papers that will be a part of this anthology.

The circle will also strive to produce a publication related to feminism and Ordinary Language Philosophy. This theme is new in the Nordic and Baltic context and we see the potential to make an important intervention in the fields of feminist theory and the humanities

³ Unpublished paper presented at our ad hoc symposium at Umeå University in March 2016, see below.

⁴ The symposium was a collaboration between the Nordic Summer University, Umeå Center for Gender Studies and the Department of philosophical, historical and religious studies at Umeå University.

more generally speaking. We will look into the possibility of publishing in journals such as *NORA* or *Nordic Wittgenstein Review*.

2: Structural overview

Winter 2017: *Feminist philosophy, transforming philosophy*. University of Iceland, IS.

Session organized in collaboration with the project “Feminist philosophy, transforming philosophy” connected to the University of Iceland. Local contact persons are Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir, professor of philosophy, Eyja Margrét Brynjarsdóttir, PhD in philosophy and research specialist, and Nanna Hlín Halldórsdóttir PhD-candidate in philosophy. The aim of this symposium is to discuss how feminist philosophy, rather than adding yet another sub-category to a nicely refurbished philosophical curriculum in universities, transforms the very questions and methods of (traditional) philosophy.

Summer 2017: *Feminism and genealogy*

The session will focus on genealogies of feminist thought and feminist genealogies of the history of philosophy. Feminist theory and historiography has been greatly influenced by thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. This theoretical trend has contributed to critical reflections on feminism’s own historiography and a renewed interest in narratives of feminist history. Furthermore, feminist genealogies emphasize complexities, power and struggle in the production of historical truths, including feminist truths. Special attention will be devoted to questions of the relationship between the body, discourse, history, and time, corporeal temporalities, and history as embodied practice.

Winter 2018: *Feminism and ordinary language philosophy*. Åbo University (FI).

Since the 1980’s, poststructuralism has been the dominating theoretical paradigm for feminist theory with respect to the understanding of language and meaning. However, a growing number of feminist scholars, for example Toril Moi, Naomi Scheman, Linda Zerilli, and Nancy Bauer, have turned to the philosophy of language developed by Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin and Stanley Cavell. This session will be devoted papers that discuss feminism and ordinary language philosophy. Special attention will be given to the problem of skepticism in feminist theory, to the interrogation of the legacy of poststructuralism in feminism and the potential of using OLP in feminist theory and the humanities more broadly speaking.

Summer 2018: *The context of concepts*.

There is a rich tradition within feminist thought to engage with and actualize past thinkers and concepts for feminist aims. We would like to take a historical look at this tradition by applying perspectives from the history of ideas and conceptual history and contextualize these actualizations and theoretical trends. Questions that we will focus on in this session are: What happens with classic philosophical concepts when they are appropriated by feminist thinkers and employed in new contexts with various aims? What are the limits and possibilities of re-contextualizing philosophical concepts?

Winter 2019: *Feminism and the presence of the past*. Södertörn University (SE).

This session will focus on investigating the intersections between the philosophy of time and history that began in continental philosophy in the 19th century and questions about feminist ways of relating to history and the past. Feminist theorizing has a somewhat paradoxical relation to history - on the one hand there is an emphasis on historically and locally situated, and embodied knowledge, and on the other hand feminist theory is very open to embrace new theoretical trends and the focus on contemporary issues, which can invite the risk of

presentism without historical depth and insight. This symposium will be dedicated to discussions on how to develop feminist ways of relating to thinking in the past.

Summer 2019: *Writing history, writing philosophy.*

This session will discuss feminist perspectives on the writing of the history of philosophy. One theme is the question of philosophy as a gendered genre: Is the notion of a feminist philosophy - the way these concepts have been established historically speaking - a contradiction in terms? Is there a special history of women's ideas? How can feminist readings transform the philosophical canon?

3: People behind the proposal

a) The coordinators of *Feminist Philosophy* are

Synne Myrebøe (NO), Phd candidate, Department of historical, philosophical and religious studies, Umeå University, Sweden. E-mail: synne.myreboe@umu.se

Valgerður Palmadóttir (IS), Phd candidate, Department of historical, philosophical and religious studies at Umeå University, Sweden. E-mail: valgerdur.palmodottir@umu.se

Johanna Sjöstedt (SE), Department of literature, history of ideas and religious studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. E-mail: johanna.sjostedt@gmail.com.

b) Prospective participants

Jennie Brandén, Phd candidate in political science, Umeå University (SE).

Eyja Margrét Brynjarsdóttir, PhD and researcher in philosophy, University of Iceland (IS).

Anders Burman, associate professor in the history of ideas, Södertörn University (SE).

Maria Carbin, Senior lecturer in gender studies, Umeå University (SE).

Camille Buttingsrud, MA philosophy Copenhagen University (NO/DK).

Hanna Bäckström, Phd candidate gender studies, Umeå University (SE).

Sara Edenheim, Docent in history, Umeå University (SE).

Kristina Fjelkestam, Professor in gender studies, Stockholm University (SE).

Petra Green, Phd candidate in philosophy, Umeå University, (SE).

Demet Gulcicek, Phd candidate in sociology, University of Warwick (TUR/UK).

Nanna Hlín Halldórsdóttir Phd candidate in philosophy, University of Iceland (IS).

Mirjam Hinrikus, Post doc in literature, University of Tartu (EST).

Lisbeth Jørgensen, MA philosophy, Copenhagen (DK).

Zlatana Knezevic, Phd candidate in social work, Mälardalen University, (SE).

Kasper Kristensen, Phd candidate in philosophy, University of Helsinki, (FI).

Johanna Lauri, Phd candidate in gender studies, Umeå University (SE).

Claudia Lindén, associate professor in literature, Södertörn University (SE).

Ingeborg Löfgren, Phd in literature, Uppsala University (SE).

Daniel Nyström, Phd in the history of ideas, Umeå University (SE).

Esther Oluffa Pedersen, associate professor in philosophy, Roskilde University (DK).

Gitte Pedersen, Journalist, MA Philosophy (DK).

Tuija Pulkkinen, Professor in philosophy and gender studies, University of Helsinki (FI).

Monica Quirico, Docent in political philosophy, University of Turin & Södertörn University (IT).

Susanna Rönn, Phd candidate in English, University of Vaasa (FI).

Aija Sakova-Merivee, Phd in literature and Head of Baltica and Rare Books Conservation Department at Academic Library of Tallinn University (EST).

Naomi Scheman, Professor of Philosophy, University of Minnesota, (US).

Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir, professor of philosophy, University of Iceland (IS).
Carola Maria Wide, Phd candidate in English, University of Vaasa (FI).
Annelie Bränström Öhman, Professor in literature and gender studies, Umeå University (SE).

4: Selected references

- Bauer, Nancy, *How to do things with pornography*, Harvard UP 2015.
- Bostad, Inga och Pettersen, Tove, “Kjønn og feminisme i norsk filosofi – Noen betraktninger”, *Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift*, no. 03-04 / 2015
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Metamorphoses, Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Polity Press: UK. 2002.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *La philosophie là où on ne l’attend pas*. Paris: Larousse 2009.
- Browne, Victoria, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014
- Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press: New York. 2005.
- Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives, Storytelling and Selfhood*. Routledge: London and New York. 2000.
- Dotson, Kristie, “How is this paper philosophy?”, *Comparative Philosophy* vol. 3, No. 1 (2012): 03-29.
- Ethics, Politics, and the Historian’s Responsibility*. Forthcoming Södertörn University 2016.
- Ethics and the Philosophy of Culture: Wittgensteinian Approaches*, ed. Gustafsson et al. Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2013.
- Heinämaa, Sara, “Introduction: Feminist Philosophy and the Nordic Situation”, *Nora*, Vol. 14, Iss. 3, 2006.
- Le Doeuff, Michèle, *Hipparchia’s Choice, An essay concerning women, philosophy, etc.* Oxford: Blackwell 1991.
- Irigaray, Luce, *Between East and West: from singularity to community*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002.
- Liljeström, Marianne, et al, *Translating and Constructing Gender Studies in the Nordic Region 1975-2005*, forthcoming 2016.
- The Monist*, Vol. 98 Nr. 1 January 2015
- New Literary History*, Vol. 46, Nr 2, Spring 2015.
- Nussbaum, Martha Craven & Glover, Jonathan (red.), *Women, culture, and development: a study of human capabilities*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995.
- Nye, Andrea. *Feminism and Modern Philosophy: An Introduction*. Routledge 2004.
- Moi, Toril, Monograph on feminist theory and Ordinary language philosophy, Oxford UP, forthcoming in 2016.
- Rethinking time: Essays on History, Memory, and Representation*. Södertörn Philosophical Studies no. 9 (2011).
- Scheman, Naomi, *Shifting ground : knowledge and reality, transgression and trustworthiness*. Oxford UP 2011.
- Songe-Møller, Vigdis , *Philosophy without women: the birth of sexism in Western thought*, Continuum 2003.
- Söderbäck, Fanny, “Revolutionary time: Revolt as temporal return”, *Signs* Vol. 37, No. 2, (January 2012), pp. 301-324.
- Theories of Time and Historicity*, Forthcoming Södertörn University 2016.
- Tidskrift för politisk filosofi* nr 3, 2015.
- Wallach Scott, Joan, *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, Duke UP, 2011.
- Zerilli, Linda, *Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment*, Chicago UP, forthcoming in 2016.