Feminist epistemologists have long called our attention to the situated character of our knowledge, i.e., the way our social position and experiences affect what we may know about the world. In particular, they have sought to identify the way dominant epistemic conceptions and practices harm women and other marginalized subjects by producing and reproducing oppressive gendered schemas and myths. For most feminist epistemologists, however, the solution is not to correct the situated character of knowledge in search of a neutral, properly objective account. Rather, the fact that knowledge is embedded in our practices should be seen as its very condition of possibility which “turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility” (Haraway 1988: 583).

These feminist insights closely resonate with Wittgenstein’s appeal that we “bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI§116). According to Stanley Cavell, this appeal involves a rejection of the metaphysical voice that dominates philosophical inquiry in favour of a project that seeks to recover the human voice itself – which he considers philosophy to have banished (Cavell 1979, cf. Laugier 2015). The disqualification of the human voice from the philosophical register derives from a general suspicion of all that is ordinary and adherence to the fantasy of a purified medium outside our language from which to evaluate the world. Much like feminist theorists, Wittgenstein turns this suspicion around. As Naomi Scheman writes, “what Wittgenstein and feminist theorists have in common is the suspicion that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way in which what are taken to be the ‘serious’ questions are posed and answered, something that gives the game away before it has started to be played” (Scheman 2002: 2).

By redirecting attention to ordinary language, both Wittgensteinians and feminists welcome a non-literal conception of meaning whereby words can only be assessed in their context and from particular social locations. Such conception presents us with a much larger terrain where to look for the voices that have been excluded from both traditional philosophy and patriarchal epistemic communities: marginalized conceptual resources, literary expressive devices, affective interactions, gestures, etc. Silence enters the picture in more than one way. On the one hand, it stands for the way dominant practices of knowledge production render part of the population “voiceless – not in the sense that one does not have words – but that these words become frozen, numb, without life” (Das 2007: 8). On the other hand, it can be understood “not as the silence of those with no political power to express and no forum to discuss some of their most pressing concerns (although women often also lack such political power and forums for discussion), but as the silence of those who in some sense lack words to do justice to certain of their experiences” (Crary 2001: 393). The forms in which silence occurs are many and varied and must be contextualized to be well grasped (Medina 2004). In any case, the
very recognition of silence seems to indicate the presence of an active, sensible and reflective voice. In Audre Lorde’s words,

_Where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives._ (Lorde 1984: 43)

How is meaning derived from silence in the face of the ideological contours of our dominant conceptual resources? What does it take for marginalized voices to be heard within societies that are unresponsive to them? How can these reflections be illuminated by both feminist theory and Wittgensteinian scholarship? Where do they leave us in regard to traditionally central epistemological notions such as objectivity, justification and truth? What can they tell us about the way systems of domination affect our epistemic practices? How do they relate to phenomena such as epistemic oppression (Dotson 2012), hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007), willful hermeneutical ignorance (Pohlhaus 2011)? What other productive interactions can result from this dialogue? These and other related questions should set the tone for the 4th International Conference Wittgenstein & Women.

The conference will be complemented by a workshop with presentations of graduate students, where they can present their academic or artistic ideas and in-progress work. The workshop will be supervised by the keynote speakers. Read more about the workshop [here](#).

**Keynote Speakers:** Anna Boncompagni (University of California, Irvine), Sofia Miguens (University of Porto)

**Organization Committee:** Camila Lobo (FCSH / IFILNOVA), Camille Braune (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Dima Mohammed (FCSH / IFILNOVA), Gloria Andrada (FCSH / IFILNOVA), Isabel Gamero Cabrera (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), Jasmin Trächtler (TU Dortmund), Nuno Venturinha (FCSH / IFILNOVA)

To participate in the conference or the workshop, please submit abstracts of max. 300 words through this form. For both, please apply by December 31.

We highly encourage submissions by women* and groups currently underrepresented in the discipline.

Read more on our series “[Wittgenstein and Women](#)”.

**References**


