Warwick Continental Philosophy Conference 2022/2023: Continental Philosophy: The Subject and Identity
08-09 June 2023

University of Warwick (UK)

Conference Venue (Hybrid):
Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick,

Coventry, United Kingdom

Zoom

Keynote Speakers:
Prof. Peter V. Zima (Universität Klagenfurt)

Prof. Koshka Duff (University of Nottingham)

Call for Abstracts

The aim of the fifth edition of the WCPC is to stage a discussion of the subject and identity, and the relationship between the two. We hope to prompt a discussion around the various ways in which differing perspectives on subjectivity and identity may serve as philosophical methods of framing experience, reason, and one's circumstances in the world. The central problem for this conference is: how does the fraught and often politicised notion of identity, around which there are disparate and contradictory interpretations, problematise the traditional Western notion of the Subject who is assumed to be universal and prior to identity formation. The conference aims to address these issues through an engagement with contemporary debates on the subject and identity, as well as by tracing how the meaning of these concepts has transformed within the history of philosophy. The goal of the discussion being an intervention in the relational dynamic between the two.

Throughout the history of philosophy, subjectivity and identity have been interpreted in radically different ways: from views of a universal (e.g. Cartesian or Kantian) Subject, to subjectivity arising through a historical development (Hegel and Marx), and more contemporary accounts of historically contingent subjectivities and identities constituted, for example, by structures of power (Althusser, Foucault, and Deleuze). Recently, debates on these issues have sought to incorporate non-Western conceptions - such as the concept of Xin (heart-mind) in Chinese Philosophy, or the post-colonial research of

Fanon and Bhabha - in order to enrich our understanding of the diverse contexts and traditions in which subjects are positioned. The conference aims to push these historical discourses around subjectivity forward by challenging traditional notions, as well as by interrogating how the many meanings assumed by these concepts throughout history affect our present understanding of them.

To further elucidate the relationship between identity and subjectivity, the conference also intends to explore the tension of whether one's identity is self-determined, or rather, whether one's identity is thrust upon them by external conditions. The complicated relationship between one's individual sense of self and one's sense of their social standing is made explicit, for example, in the debate of whether LGBTQ+ identities are formed in resistance to normative standards of gender and sexuality, or whether they are formed independently in ever-developing queer theory. Another tension that speaks to the problematic of self-determination is the role of nationalist discourses in the constitution of one's sense of identity. This tension is particularly evident in the case of refugees acquiring new citizenships: regardless of their own relationship to nationalism and the more or less conscious choice to incorporate this into their sense of identity, they are nonetheless thrust into a national identity. In both of these examples, one finds a reflection of the Althusserian's 'subject interpellation', in which, regardless how one views themselves, one is thrown back onto themselves and made an ideological subject in the gaze of the Other. Here, the problem of how one is to orient themself as a 'self', in the face of various socio-political circumstances (such as oppression, class and racial struggles, uncertainty and instability) is made more explicitly into the problem of how one is to understand the relationship between one's subjectivity and one's identity. That is to say, is one's identity constructed by a supposed 'essential' and 'rational' self, the thinking subject, or is one's identity thrust upon them in such a way that conditions the very parameters of one's supposedly independent rationality?

With this said, some of the questions we hope to engage with in the fifth edition of WCPC are:

- What is the role of the subject in contemporary philosophical discourse?
- Are we in a post-Subject era or does the traditional *a priori* Subject linger?
- How do accounts of unconscious drives problematise the traditional notion of the self?

- Is there an inherent problem in the subject-object distinction and relation? Is it problematic to, as Adorno suggests, place the subject as the locus from which external 'objects' are to be understood?
- What is the relationship between an individual's subject position and their wider collective identities? What role might various kinds of identities: national, ethno-racial, gender, sexual, etc., play in shaping ongoing discourse?
- How could this discussion contribute to, and reframe, certain methodological and theoretical insights of the history of philosophy as a discipline?
- How the present debates on subject and identity are determined by their shifting in meaning throughout the history of philosophy?
- How have thinkers of the continental tradition historically addressed such problems? And how do contemporary philosophers approach these? What relevant insights can theorists continue to provide on questions of the subject and identity?

Submission Guidelines

Submitted abstracts should be approximately 500 words long. Abstracts must be written in English, and should be sent to the WCPC committee at **wcpc@warwick.ac.uk**. Please use **"Abstract, [your name]"** as the subject of your email. In the text of the email, please include 1) the title of your paper, 2) your institutional affiliation, and 3) your preferred email contact address. Please exclude any identifying information from the abstract itself.

Please, also clarify in your email whether you would like to be considered for the award of a partial bursary (covering 50% of accommodation costs), which may become available in due course.

The **deadline** for abstract submission is the **15 th of March 2023**.

We will be asking the speakers to **pre-circulate** their papers and provide, during their speaking slot, a short 5-minute introduction, which will be followed by 25 minutes of questions and discussions (maximum). This means that, if your abstract is accepted, we will require you to send us a 3000-word paper in advance and no later than on **13th of May 2023.**

Your paper will be shared with other speakers and conference participants, and conference discussions will be based on the submitted version.

We particularly encourage submissions by philosophers from groups who are underrepresented in the discipline.

Summary of Dates

15th of March 2023 - deadline for abstract submission
13th of May 2023 - deadline for the submission of conference papers (3000 words)
8th – 9th of June 2023 - conference dates

Additional Information

This conference is made possible by generous funding provided by **the University of Warwick Philosophy Department**, **The Mind Association** and **The Society for Women in Philosophy, United Kingdom**. It is an annual event within **The Centre for Research in Post-Kantian European Philosophy** (University of Warwick). The conference is organised in compliance with the BPA/SWIP guidelines for accessible conferences, the BPA/SWIP good practice scheme for gender equality, and the BPA Environmental Travel Scheme.