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Feminism and Feminist Scholarship Today

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1. It would be interesting to read more feminist reflections on fundamental problems of theory. What is the task of theory in general and feminist theory in particular? Do we need a theory of every phenomenon in the world, just because that phenomenon exists? Should we rather think of theory as an effort to get clear on a problem that keeps tripping us up? What do feminists use theory for? In short: what work do we think that theory can do for feminism? (I assume, of course, that there are different kinds of feminists, and different kinds of feminisms, and that there may be more than one answer to any of these questions.)

2. I take a strong interest in writing, not least in the writing of theory. Can we find a way to discuss the writing of theory, which does not simply redraw the old boundary lines between those who consider that difficulty and obscurity help to unmask the ideological commitments of the seemingly simple and commonsensical, and those who consider that a certain kind of theory writing is self-indulgent, off-putting, and elitist? Must theory be written in ways that appeal only to specialists?

3. Finally, I would genuinely enjoy reading new reflections on the relationship between feminism and literature, film, and other art forms. A generation ago literature, poetry, painting (and so on) were not just sources of exciting work in feminist criticism, but also of crucial work in feminist theory. Nowadays it is not uncommon for core courses in women's studies to pay very little attention to different art forms. The question is why? Is it a matter of disciplinary shifts, academic fashions, or the general decline of the humanities? Have we discovered that literature and the other arts are irrelevant to the main goals of feminist theory? In short: What's at stake in this development? And, crucially, should feminists be concerned about it?

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