

# Which future of feminism? A postconventional feminism is possible!

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## I. The story behind this text

Some month ago I was invited to speak about the future of feminism at a philosophical work shop in the Austrian city of Linz. VFQ, the association for women and qualification (connecting mainly female handcrafters and artisan), has organized this event. The reason for their invitation was a great frustration. 2009, the association applied for presenting the work of their members in the program organized by the city Linz during the time it has been the European Capital of Culture. But the application of VFQ was rejected with the argument, in the time of gender and queer politics presenting a women's project is out of date.

Making the work and art of women visible, this fundamental feminist idea is antiquated? Or is there a new strategy born for keeping women's work and art invisible? What happens with the elementary political ideas of feminism?

Confronted with the rhetorics of postfeminism, as a postmodern philosopher I came up the idea that feminism and its development needs a metatheory, a metaethic.

## II. Why a metatheory or metaethic of feminism?

1. It is a political requirement! The prefix "post" often weakens what is connected to it. "Post" understood as a signal for "over" makes a past period of feminism. And I personally don't want feminisms being an affair of the past. I don't want to say, feminism has been import in the past, but today, it is out-of-date.
2. Nevertheless, speaking of "post" is a very important identification mark even in the last (let's say) 50 years. We have an inflation of post-issues. Therefore, what is "post" able to express in addition?
3. Mainly, "post" marks a movement in the time. Therefore, when we understand "postfeminism" as a pass to reconstruct our concepts of feminism. As an alternative to an idealistic conception of feminism, we can describe it in its temporal dimension. We can remember feminism as a really movement.

4. But taking the concerns of postfeminism into account, we have to ask: What kind of movement? And the movement of what?

### III. “Post” and the movement in the time

With “post”, we can distinguish two different movements:

1. a 2-step-movement: there is a starting point and it's past: feminism and it's past
2. a 3-step-movement: there is a starting point, the willing to overcome it and the consequences of this engagement: patriarchy, feminism and its consequences: a lot of changes could be taken into consideration – changes changing feminism, too

By the second understanding, feminism is not the starting point; first of all, it is an in-between: a habitus of staying in the world, perhaps an in-between as a melting pot. Feminisms: a staying between in-between and post? Postfeminism: a movement outgoing from the very heart of feminisms?

### IV. Postconventional feminism

For all that, I want to take seriously the fact, the talk of postfeminism wants to put forward feminist arguments. But putting forward arguments is more than criticizing and restraining feminism. The process of “post” needs to be qualified.

For such a qualification Simone de Beauvoirs words about living activities: “To go forward, each existence must be maintained, for it to expand towards the future, it must integrate the past, and while intercommunication with others it should find self-confirmation. These two elements – maintained each progression – are implied in any living activity.”

For qualifying such a progression of feminism one can pick up Carol Gilligans concept of post-conventionality. Gilligan succeeded in describing postconventionality especially as a feminist critic of rules, norms and laws. One of her main point is that women don't want to have new rules, laws and norms because every new rule, norm or law is rejecting their responsibility and their freedom of judging. And at the same time, she reminded the problem of overcoming rules, norms and laws can be dangerous by driving human acting into a pre-conventional status.

Therefore, we find to developments of overcoming rules, norms and laws: a pre-conventional and a postconventional overcoming.

Longing for a postconventional feminist moving, my suggestion is to develop a meta-ethical rule for overcoming rules, even feminist rules. Thus, for overcoming feminist rules, norms and laws, I suggest to make the following consideration:

When we receive the impression the reconstruction of a feminist idea and concern is necessary, we can overcome it by keeping the insights of its critics, norms, rules and conventions, and building normative aspects on them.

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