

AN INTERVIEW WITH GADAMER CHAIR PROFESSOR SARA HEINÄMAA



Elliott R. Jones: Professor Heinämaa, you were announced as the Gadamer chair professor in 2021 and we're very glad that you're finally here, though this is a very snowy winter. Your work deals with the phenomena of embodiment, intersubjectivity, temporality, normality, emotions, and sexual difference. You described to me in a former conversation that your previous research interests were heavily analytic and focused on debates concerning artificial intelligence as well as the philosophy of mind. And yet, it was in conversation with Martha Nussbaum that you said you decided to transition to new research interests. Could you describe her influence in prompting you to transition into these new interests and why you ultimately took her advice seriously?

Sara Heinämaa: Well, actually Professor Nussbaum has given me philosophical guidance about direction several times. I was a young PhD student, I think I was 27 or 28, and was working with the philosophical problems of artificial intelligence and cognitive sciences. And it was then that I met Martha for the first time in a workshop on Aristotle's reception. She has the delightful habit of asking students about their philosophical interests, and when she asked me, I told her that I was studying contemporary philosophy of mind, focusing on Jerry Fodor's hypothesis of a language of thought and the related idea that all thinking is computational. I happened to also mention that I was reading Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, just for fun. When I mentioned Fodor my voice was quite apathetic, and then,

when I mentioned Beauvoir, it became full of enthusiasm. And so she said to me, “Why don’t you just follow your intuitions and what calls you in philosophy. Why don’t you see what comes out of it?” And I changed my PhD topic, immediately without hesitation. Luckily my supervisors, Professors Lilli Alanen and Leila Haaparanta were both positive and supportive about continental philosophy and feminist topics.

And then I had to do a lot of phenomenology—especially with topics of embodiment and intersubjectivity, in order get at the philosophical core of Beauvoir’s argumentation in *The Second Sex*. For this purpose, I did a lot of philosophy of selfhood and studied the self-other relationship, how different philosophers make sense of it, not only ethically but also ontologically. Now Martha came to Helsinki every year for workshops and conferences organized by Finnish colleagues, originally and most importantly, Professors Simo Knuuttila and Juha Sihvola, who were experts of Aristotelianism and Stoic philosophy. The philosophical topics of these meetings ranged from philosophy of mind and ontology to ethics and political philosophy. By the turn of the millennium, our workshops started dealing with political emotions because that had become one of Martha’s central research topics at that time. (She has since authored several volumes on political emotions, *Hiding from Humanity* 2004, *Political Emotions* 2006, *Anger and Forgiveness* 2016, *The Monarchy of Fear* 2018.) The speakers and participants of our meetings represented many different branches of philosophy, very broadly, from the history of philosophy and analytical philosophy of mind to pragmatism, phenomenology and Foucaultian archeology.

These discussions gave me a new interest in emotions. I had been studying emotions, independently of Martha’s influence in the 1980s and 1990s, since both my teachers, Professors Alanen and Haaparanta, were historians of philosophy, Lilli specialized in Descartes and early modern emotion theories, Spinoza, Hume and Leibniz; and Leila specialized in classical phenomenology, and especially phenomenological accounts of logic and mathematics. And then, thanks to Martha, I found my way back to the topic of emotions and started to really study it, from the roots, both historical and systematic. But at this same time, I happened also to meet a young PhD student in Leuven, Tomas Sinkunas is his name. He was working on disgust and

related emotions. We had a small bar discussion, and what he told about his work on disgust—mainly based on his PhD—was deeply intriguing in its phenomenological tenor and political-philosophical implications. He published this work later. It deals mainly with the analysis of disgust by the Hungarian phenomenologist, Aurel Kolnai.

Kolnai was a Hungarian Jew who had to flee Hungary when the Nazis came to power. He wrote an early book, *The War Against the West* (1938), a political-philosophical analysis about the new type of totalitarian formations that started to happen in Europe; but he fled to England, and published there several important articles on ethics and emotions, including a small paper called, “The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Hatred, Disgust.” It came out posthumously and quite late (in 1998), in the highly esteemed journal *Mind*. It deals with three aversions: disgust, fear, and hatred. I was struck by that article, its originality and boldness. One of Kolnai’s arguments there shows that we can’t theorize emotions in an analogously general manner as we can theorize beliefs and cognitions. We have to look carefully into their individual intentional structures and compositions, so their mental makeup, so to speak. Fear, for example, is structurally very different from hatred and also from anxiety—even if it also has similarities to both. And disgust again is very different intentionally from the other two aversions discussed by Kolnai. So the richness of the intentional structures of emotions showed itself to me.

Kolnai writes that the three emotions have very different kind of targets as well as different manners of relating to their targets. But he also shows they differ importantly in their temporality. They have very different forms of duration: Hatred can stay with you for years, even decades. Disgust and fear, in contrast, are occasional: disgust strikes you when you are exposed to certain kinds of things or materials in perception or imagination or perhaps memory.

So, yes, from these two inspirational sources, Martha’s discussions of the political aspects of emotions and then Kolnai’s analyses of aversions, I started to work again on emotions, this time very seriously. When I was invited to Boston College, I had already developed a new lecture series on the phenomenology of emotions and given it and pieces of it at home in Finland and other European universities. I thought that perhaps I can present

these topics here, too, since they have such contemporary interest and broad implications; you can see their relevance for us in what's happening every day.

ERJ: What was the reception of Kolnai's work? Was it popular at first or were you part of the people who revived it?

SH: He has been largely forgotten. A great mistake! However, two philosophers, Barry Smith and Carolyn Korsmeyer, translated Kolnai's work on disgust in 2003 into English, and this drew some younger phenomenologists to that topic. There are some American philosophers who know about his analyses, Colin McGinn, for example, but he's not well known here. I do think his work is now becoming more and more attractive because the topic of political emotions is now very real and disturbing for us, both practically but also philosophically. So his analyses of emotions and volitions are perhaps coming to be appreciated—certainly more than it has been for a long time. Which is nice, because his approach can be combined with both psychoanalytical accounts, like Kristeva's on the abject, and with cognitivist accounts, such as Nussbaum's. Kolnai's account of aversions differs from both alternatives, but it's not incompatible with either, and I believe that new combinations will prove powerful.

ERJ: Who did he study under?

SH: Honestly, I don't know. He was quite an original thinker; he was not really a rebuilders of phenomenology, like Scheler or Heidegger, after Husserl. It was more the case that he used the phenomenological methods of analysis, and began using them in his unique way for new intriguing questions. Another topic he treats—a very different one—is games and gaming. This is central to his philosophy of the will and willing. Moreover, his analyses show that volitions have crucial constitutive roles in many emotions, such as hatred and love, but not in all.

Claire Swanby: Interesting, so this semester you're teaching a course titled "Political Emotions: Phenomenological Analyses of Disgust, Hatred, Desire and Love", and it sounds like you had a vision for this course after you were announced as Gadamer Chair in 2021. I was wondering if that vision changed at all between 2021 and now, and, if so, what influenced those changes.

SH: Well, since the 2010s, I'd been giving lectures on specific emotions in Europe—hatred and hate-speech, for example, and disgust and its implications, both ethical and political. At the same time, I have written quite extensively also on love, wonder and curiosity, and studied their roles in ethics and political life. When I started to put the individual lectures and papers together into a course, I realized how very fruitful it is to compare their intentional and temporal structures, and do so open-mindedly without pre-established categorizations. Such comparisons display the distinctness of emotions and allows us to understand their specific roles and powers in our life. I have also compared hatred with some near-by emotions, such as anger, rage, contempt, indignation... The focus was not on those, but for comparative reasons it's important to look at both nearby emotions as well as distant ones. Hatred, for example, turns out to be quite different from the whole anger family, so from anger, indignation, and rage, both in its intentionality and temporality. The latter are all occasional, but hatred is persistent, abiding, even patient.

So, I had already decided I would teach on the topic of political emotions, but instead of discussing just desire and love on the “positive side”, I decided to bring in also curiosity and wonder. So the course became a discourse on disgust, hatred, curiosity, and wonder. Namely, I think—am really deeply convinced—that if we want to develop an emotive life which is able to respond to the “negative emotions” or aversions, which seem to win more and more social space in our time, then we definitely need to develop our skills of being curious. It is the curiosity family—wonder, surprise, admiration, marvel, generosity—that is most important for us today, and much more so than some other constructive emotions, say sympathy, compassion or tolerance.

So, yes, the idea of the course changed a little in development. I also think that if one builds from curiosity, then one's understanding of love and its obligations becomes less naive. Curiosity namely also entails the task of self-critique: with it, you can't just act out your loves and think that you're a largehearted person; you also have to take a critical look into yourself and ask why certain things and person remain out of your sphere of love, or our spheres of love. What might still be curiosity-raising in them... even if they are not lovable to you... to you as I know yourself and have learned to think about yourself? So as a cure

for our emotive weaknesses and stubbornness, I think curiosity is urgently needed.

ERJ: Do you have any doubts about it—the strength of curiosity?

SH: No, I think it is powerful emotion, if it is allowed to flourish. But how we use it depends, of course, on how we think about it, how we conceptualize it. There are many alternatives here: You can start from Plato and Aristotle, from Plato's *Symposium*, where *eros* is tied to curiosity and knowledge. Or alternatively look into Descartes's *Passions* and the other early modern sources where it entails a suspensive moment. Or perhaps Kant or Kierkegaard? But at the end, you should bring this all together, for the analysis of our present.

ERJ: I talked to one of the students who is attending your course, and, judging from his comment, I'm sad I did not get a chance to sit in on your lectures. One thing he said that struck me was that you often "pictorialize" the philosophies and ideas you present through works of art. This reminds me of your philosophical articles which are littered through with references to literature, movies, and music. Could you describe how you use art in your lectures and the role it plays in your pedagogy or your thinking?

SH: Well, I think my interest in this comes from the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. He argued that not all thinking is discursive; there are important modes of thought which operate by non-linguistic processes and structures, such as diagrams and models. I believe that this holds also in philosophizing, and that there are different kinds of philosophers in this respect. I'd say that my thinking is basically a bit diagrammatic: diagrams, maps and geometrical and topological structures help me capture connections, make distinctions, and see larger wholes. Images and moving pictures, in particular, allow me to reflect on emotions, but then of course one needs to put it all into a discursive form, into an argument, a thesis or a train of thinking. Images serve as tools that advance and support the discursive process which one cannot avoid if one wants to publish articles and books. You can't send a series of pictures to a journal; you have to explain what they signify.

I don't think such tools help everybody. Rather one needs to find out if one is a discursive thinker rather than a pictorial thinker. Originally I wanted to become a graphic artist and almost became an architect, so I think there is a historical root

in my use of pictures, images, and diagrams. I ended up being a philosopher, but writing was horribly difficult for me at first. In high school I always got an extra hour for writing assignments. If we had to write an essay of five or two pages, my teacher (a very nice person) would say, “Okay, just stay and finish,” because I couldn’t produce on time. It was horrible. I hated it.

ERJ: About the relationship between art and emotions, you do think that music, say, or movies really train the emotional life....

SH: Yes, I do believe so, and I was convinced by Martha Nussbaum about the strength of imagination, productive imagination, especially in cultivating the emotive life. But for me personally it’s more about the fact that I *need pictures for thinking* about anything. From the beginning, it’s really been kind of normal business for me, and I hope it helps the students and doesn’t distract them. One has to be a little careful with it.

ERJ: And now on to some more philosophical topics. Your articles that deal with Husserl, have been extremely clear and insightful for me, even helping me to analyze my own interior life. Your recent work focuses on the intersection of phenomenology and ethics—with a particular focus on emotions and values. Could you help me solve what seems to me like a paradox, which is this: What can phenomenology, as a ‘descriptive science’, say about ethics, which is a ‘prescriptive science’?

SH: My phenomenological commitments and interests are very classical and existential, that is, Husserlian and Merleau-Pontian. I contribute to contemporary philosophy, to philosophy of intersubjectivity and embodiment, sexual difference and emotions, and philosophy of the sciences too, but I use classical phenomenological methods in all these enterprises and am very happy to do so. I find these methods invaluable, crucial for the purposes of contemporary thinking.

Phenomenology is a strange field in philosophy, because there are several different manners of doing it, and not everybody agrees on how it should be done. So the Heideggerians do their thing (though there is a common ground) and the Levinassians do another thing (and again there’s common ground), but what I say holds primarily for the Husserlian approach. And in *that* the task is to understand and analyze experiences, to discover their intentional and temporal structures.

The first result here is that we distinguish conceptually between three modes of intentional consciousness. One form of intentionality is *axiological*, and it deals with valuing and with different kinds of values (e.g., personal values of love, objective values, the value of truth, beauty); another one is *practical* or *praxeological*, and it deals with different modes of volition and with norms, goals and means as their objective correlates. And then the third mode of intentionality is what Husserl calls *doxic* (which comes from *doxa*, the Greek word for opinion or belief). This is about believing and all forms of cognition, convictions, assumptions, presumptions etc. Most emotions, interestingly, combine all these three modes of intentionality: they relate us with what is good, beautiful or valuable in some other sense, but at the same time they detect such properties in realities and beings of other sorts (ideal and fictional); and on the top of this, they also motivate our goal-directed actions. Emotions in many cases are intricate combinations of axiological, practical, and doxic modes of intending.

So we can say that they have a robust structure of intentionality which brings together these three aspects. The task is to distinguish and describe these structures and their variations across all emotions, and to do for the purposes of ethics, political life, and epistemology. This brings us to the normative and practical implications of emotions. Some of them, curiosity and responsibility for example, concern ourselves also as scientists *and* philosophers—which is why, when you start to study the possibilities of emotive and normative-practical intending, you soon realize that your own attempts to make sense of all this is also guided by certain goals and motivated by certain valuations.

I think that such self-reflective studies brought Husserl to understand that his philosophy is not just a theoretical enterprise with practical implications, but also a practical and existential commitment to *theoria*, a certain kind of vision of the world *in toto*. On that level, the two dimensions, the theoretical and the practical, cannot be separated. Of course, for analytical reasons they have to be conceptually distinguished, but they need not be separated into two oppositional, parallel or alternative regions of life, so that we would neglect the practical consequences of our theorizing, or try to push theoretical things aside when involved in some practice.

So I think that for Husserl the practical *and* the theoretical, the prescriptive *and* the descriptive grew together step by step in his investigations; and when we come to the 20s and 30s, they are already...well, not *fused* together, but related in a new way, freshly intertwined. Not by contrast or opposition, but by mutual excavation and deepening. Due to their egoic underpinnings, the descriptive, theoretical and analytical *always* drag with them and motivate normative questions, questions that concern one's own commitments and responsibilities: What should I do now, today? In this way, phenomenology becomes a normative enterprise.

ERJ: Is a goal a value?

SH: No, goals are not values, but the goals that we are striving for are values *for us*. So, yes, there is valuing that motivates the striving for the goal and working for the goal. And, of course, the amounts we're willing to put into our attempt to realize goals depend on how much we value them.

CS: I had the privilege of attending your Gadamer chair lecture, which was focused on the phenomenological method of *Besinnung*—which seems very similar to what we were just discussing—and its potential to ground and orient the philosophy of science. Could you please clarify for me and for our readers what *Besinnung* is? And also: Is *Besinnung* something that philosophers engage with at certain critical moments, or is it an ongoing attitude?

SH: That's an excellent question. I would say that it's *both*. It's a praxis, which is an ongoing process. But Husserl also interestingly argues that in times of crisis (be they theoretical crises or crises of other kinds, like political or ethical), we are as if *called* to take care of our commitments in a *different* way than usual. Oftentimes it's just business as usual: we know what to do and how to do it; what our specific goals are, and which one should be taken care of first and which later. But in times of crisis the whole praxis, which consists of several different goals, tasks, and subtasks, and connects several different agents, is brought into an unexpected and uncontrolled movement, and those times, he says, call us to reflect (*besinnen*) the praxis as a whole.

This means that we need to think through quite deeply to what we actually are committed to, and what might be additional assignments that during the years of working have been connected

to and associated with our deepest commitments, sometimes challenging them or hindering their realization. These additions might have served our work at some point, might have been part of business as usual for us, but in times of crisis we have to find our *core* goals in order to be able to save the praxis—if it's worth saving. So *Besinnung* is both a mode of critical reflection and self-reflection that stays with us as a capacity, a cultivated and habituated capacity, but it is also something that needs to be performed at certain moments, if the project or the praxis that we are sharing falls into crisis.

Let me add just add one thing. Because Husserl started with deep epistemological goals, his work at first was focused on questions on knowledge and the sciences; he started by asking about the structures and forms of theories, theorems, and sciences—to study how these are structured by sense. So phenomenology, at the beginning, was a theory of theories. But in the 20s and 30s, which is the period I'm looking into, it has become, as we've already talked about, also a critical study of *practical* intentionality, that is, intentionality of willing and valuing. Here we need to ask how our scientific, scholarly, and theoretical goals can be practically realized, if they can be, and on what conditions. This emerged as a very concrete question for Husserl in the 20s, because various kinds of quasi-scientific and bureaucratic discourses started to bloom within German universities and these gave rise to many pseudo-scientific activities which....

ERJ: Sorry, what would be an example of these 'quasi-sciences'?

SH: What comes to mind here are examples from Nazi Germany: eugenics and craniometry, for example. There were projects that measured the human skull and facial bone features and tried to classify, rate, and improve people on that basis... But this was not just some Nazi invention. Anthropology in the 20s was developing in that way more generally, in many countries, also here, trying to measure and classify—trying to make a hierarchical evolutionary typifications of the people we find in the world. So something was happening in the biosciences and humanities, something that went beyond their proper aims, something strange. And Husserl was aware of that.

ERJ: Something just came to mind. Could transhumanism fit with what you're thinking, trying to sort of modify the....

SH: Yes, I think that's a very good example, from our own time. So, yes, it seems to me that *Besinnung* is an invaluable method for sciences in times of crisis: also our own time. And Husserl gives us a kind of rulebook for it. He shows how to do it, but he also gives us concrete examples: critical reflections on the goals and norms of logic, mathematics, psychology, ethics... And his followers, Merleau-Ponty, for example continue by reflecting on the norms and goals of the biosciences and life sciences.

CS: I was wondering, in your view what is it that's *new* within phenomenology, and why is it especially important and relevant today—this question could be about phenomenology in general, or your own work in phenomenology in particular—and what do you think might change in philosophy or public thought if this approach were more broadly integrated into research and into debate?

SH: I think there are several things to say here. When I came to phenomenology, what specially interested me and my colleagues at the time—the mid-90s—was intersubjectivity—not just what the subject is, or how the ego relates to this or that objectivity (which had of course been and needs to be part of phenomenology), but more about how experiencing subjects and embodied egos relate to one another, and what kinds of communities they are able to form: communities of language, community as *polis*, religious communities such as the church, and so on.

The other topic, embodiment, was really not taken up much at all within philosophy—or it was relegated to the philosophy of perception. But now it turns out that embodiment is important to many philosophical enterprises, philosophy of action and joint-action, communication, political philosophy, aesthetics, and ethics. So the topic of embodiment became more central, and its potentials and implications were discovered in the mid-90s. Those two topics—intersubjectivity and embodiment—certainly, became crucially important, and people here in America and Europe started to work on them at pretty much the same time. We also found sources in the tradition that had been forgotten or neglected. Manuscripts of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, *important* manuscripts about these topics, were discovered, not just one or two but numerous. Experts of course knew about them, but they had not been studied systematically

and not used for philosophizing; so secondary literature had been weak.

But what was very important to me then, and still today, in addition to these topical issues, is that philosophy should be a *systematic* enterprise and not merely an *exegetical* one. I was educated by Wittgensteinians, and of course they did study Wittgenstein also exegetically, interpreted his texts and debated about correct interpretations. But even so, there is in Wittgenstein a *very* strong emphasis on the task of *systematically* solving philosophical *problems*, dealing with *problems*, finding them and formulating them. When I say “him,” I mean conceptualizations invented by him, structures of argument that came from him, that he formulated.

So I was educated to cherish that systematic part of philosophy by my teachers. And that’s why it’s important for me today in phenomenology not to let what I do become an exegetic or philological enterprise. I don’t mean that exegesis isn’t important; it’s absolutely necessary. We have to have it. We need scholars who know what is *really* being said. But we also need, and necessarily so, also philosophers who ask what can be said, what can be thought and conceived.

To summarize, as a common enterprise, philosophy needs exegetic work and historical inquiries. But if it lets go of systematic questioning, systematic manners of inquiry, systematic search for connections between concepts, questions, and arguments, as well as theory formation, then it becomes, I think, either philology or history—which are good too!—but not philosophy. So I think our discipline, for essential reasons, has to be able to combine exegetic work with systematic thinking. Perhaps it’s specific to me that even if I do a lot of exegetical work, I can’t let go of systematic inquiry.

For example, I have put in a lot of work in order to understand what Husserl says about love. But then I think that such questions have to be put aside and we have to ask: What *is* love? And: Was Husserl *right*? And what about Plato—how did he deal with the *topic*? And what about Descartes—how did he *define* love? Did they *discover* something in their inquiries? At the end, all these questions need to be brought together.

ERJ: I agree. I think the more systematic view is more creative, more artistic. You take an idea from exegesis and then *work* with it.

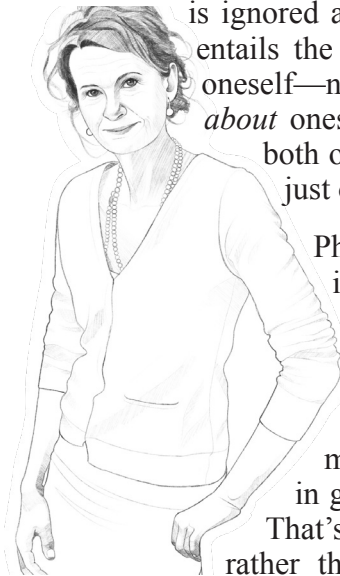
SH: Yes, you also need to *elaborate*. You reform, or you combine, and you answer to the present and its own problems—with the help of newly formed concepts or whole theories.

ERJ: On to Husserl’s idea of love. In your article, “On the Beauty of Persons, How to Love Value Producers”, you develop Husserl’s ideas on values to a novel account of persons. You argue that we “experience a person’s value as good purely for the sake of the beauty of their appearances.”

Thus good-values and beauty-values appear in the encounter with another person, such that we can say that they are not just beautiful, not just good, but are instead *beautifully* good. Now there is a certain attitude required for this. I want to ask: Is this attitude natural or habitual? Is it taught? Does it come from *us* or from the *Other*?

SH: I think it’s given to us. It’s a capacity in us. As such it can, of course, be ignored and left undeveloped, and if it is, we are in great trouble.

It *is* developed today, but only to a certain extent, not enough. More precisely, it is not completely neglected, but it’s not at the center of our attempts to relate to others. Moreover, what it is ignored again and again is that personal love entails the readiness to challenge and criticize oneself—not in a manner of passing judgments *about* oneself, but in a manner of questioning both one’s habituated conceptions, but also just one’s habits of relating to others.



Phenomenologists thematize what is called *suspension*: a suspensive interruption of habituated activities which always involves *possibilities* for us. Today, academic institutions emphasize *production*—producing more and more, faster and faster, and in greater and greater detail or accuracy. That’s come to be the emphasis of our time, rather than taking advantage of suspensive

moments, intervals and pauses, and look back to what we have *presupposed* during our theory construction and productive work, so that we can then perhaps see something else, or see things differently. And I think a similar suspensive moment is also a crucial possibility in our ethical relationships to one another and to ourselves. Even here we tend propose fast solutions, formulate rule books and general guidelines, and try to do so as efficiently as possible. We feel we need to solve the most often repeated problems first and then move on, rather than giving ourselves time to pause, let the persons involved show something about themselves, which may be irrelevant to our own concerns—or, so we think, to the situation at hand.

So, yes, I think love or loving wonder is *both* a natural capacity and also something that can and must be cultivated. And it can be taught; someone can teach us how to do it better, so we can mutually train one another. There may be masters who model the skill, so we can learn from the masters. It's *in* us, but we also need the other person in order to get all we can out of it, to really put it into practice.

Of course we also need to have curiosity about *ourselves* and be able to wonder at ourselves, and then find something 'beautifully good' in ourselves. But the great adventure, I think, is that everybody is different, and we can't assume that *this* person would have to be 'beautifully good' in an exactly similar manner as *that* one.

ERJ: Do you think this relates to what you *mean* by curiosity? It almost sounds as if curiosity and critique are very, very, similar to each other.

SH: Yes, they are similar, they have similar ingredients or phases. I think they share a structural feature, which I would call a 'suspensive moment.' In both, you need to be able to suspend something which is *already* in operation in you. Say you're studying the world, either experimentally or reflectively, and in order to do that you need some concepts, some basic beliefs, some epistemic commitments. They all have to be operative. But at the same time you're also able to *suspend* all that, all this conceptual machinery, interrupt it for a moment and see how differently the world looks if you don't let it guide your investigations. In emotive curiosity, I think, there's a similar suspensive moment.

ERJ: I see. In that suspensive moment, would you distinguish between doubt and wonder? Because it seems to me almost like a method of doubt. I'm wary of methods of doubt, but I'm open to a method of wonder.

SH: Despite similarities, there are also important differences between doubt and wonder; and doubt, I think, presupposes wonder. In order to doubt, in a pregnant sense of the word "doubt", in a *heavy* sense, you have to put a belief or an emotive commitment into question. A specific, targeted object that has to be questioned, possibly negated. Wonder, in contrast, is an open state. It doesn't choose a target purposefully for preestablished goals and it does not prepare us for affirmation/negation, acceptance/rejection. Rather it's a constant possibility that exists within us of taking a *pause* from our activities and interests. Now one of such activities is that of believing—or maybe committing to some belief, instead of taking a step away from it. Doubt is an interruption of believing for the purpose of taking a position, it's more targeted and purposeful than wonder, more interest-related. And, as said, I think that it entails, as a moment, what I would call "wonder" and "curiosity".

ERJ: Brilliant.

CS: This reminds me a lot of what the poet John Keats calls "negative capability", which he defines as "[A capacity of being in] uncertainty, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

SH: Yes, I know his poems. And yes, definitely, what you suggest is intriguing. I need to look into that. That's fantastic.

CS: And that makes me wonder if maybe there's also a connection to the creative life here.

SH: Yes, I think the masters of wonder are often the artists, and also the thinkers, who are able to re-evaluate and change their projects, and so renew themselves. They seem to me to be very good at this—not *abandoning* what they've done, but taking a new attitude toward their achievements and thereby steps forward.

I think both artists and thinkers need such moments of pause in order to renew themselves and their activities. The creation and discovery of something new and original, something not

yet encountered seems to be dependent on this. And of course, poets—I mean, they are the masters of all masters in this, because the material that they’re working on is language, and many other activities depend on the activity of language use. So poets study the basic activity that necessarily needs to be questioned, if *other* discursive activities are to be questioned: they question habits of language usage and linguistic meaning, ask how phonemes can form words, and how they can be understood.

CS: In your article, “Varieties of Love, Intentionality, Temporality, and Agency,” you introduced the concept of the transitivity of loving care to describe how, “love transitively ties us not just to our objects of love, but further also to the objects of love of the beloved.” And I was wondering, to what extent does this transitivity of loving care suggest that loving carries with it an implicit ethical orientation beyond the immediate relationship?

SH: Yes, I think transitivity is at the very core of the ethical dimensions of love. And the problem is how to make sense of it properly. There are many problems here—in the first place, counterarguments built on case studies where ‘transitivity’ doesn’t seem to work. I have debated this with Alva Noë and Kate Kirkpatrick, and many other philosophers interested in love. My transitivity argument is still very much a work in progress, so it needs to be developed. But I’m convinced that something *like* this is a real phenomenon at the heart of our intersubjective relations, and it needs its own phenomenological analysis of intentionality and temporality. Plus, I’m quite convinced that an ethics can be built with the help of the concept of expanding circles of love. But how adequate that ethic is, whether it’s *sufficient* and can stand on its own feet without any help from any other kind of ethical concepts or considerations—that’s still an open question. But definitely, this transitivity and the enlarging circles of loving wonder, this very specific kind of loving, which is grounded in our deepest commitments (in plural)—I’m very optimistic about the possibilities of the building a pluralistic ethics on that basis. And not only do I believe that an ethics can be built on that basis; I think we *need* it.

CS: I think it’s also important to note your contributions to feminist philosophy. I was wondering how phenomenology has shaped the way you approach feminist philosophy, or the other way around. And then broadly, how does the phenomenological

approach enrich our understanding of questions of femininity, embodiment, and sexual difference?

SH: It was a kind of revelation for me, when I studied the works of classical and existential phenomenologists and realized that they *all* discuss sex! Not sexual activities or orientations, but “sex,” meaning the difference between men and women. Not only Simone de Beauvoir, but Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, when he asks: What is this? What is this phenomenon, strangely between necessity and contingency? Merleau-Ponty as well. They were all struck by this phenomenon. And I think the basic insight that they give is this: There is a phenomenon which is neither *just* psychological, nor *just* physiological. There is a phenomenon which is neither natural, which doesn’t simply come from physical or biological nature, nor simply cultural, but is *both* psychological *and* physiological, *both* natural *and* cultural. It’s *cultivated nature*; a *second nature*. These philosophers don’t call it *gender*; instead they call it *sexual difference*. And I think it shouldn’t be called gender, because it’s not merely cultural, not simply socially constructed, not an artefact. As said, it’s *cultivated nature*.

Traditional feminist philosophy, the one that begins in the 18th century, or actually much earlier, in Renaissance, talks about ethico-political matters, such as justice, subjection, and violence, not in terms of gender, but in terms of sexual difference. This is conceptually crucial. Even if we would say at the end of the day that it’s not an adequate manner of approaching these matters—justice and violence for example—, and that gender concepts are better or broader, it’s still very important to compare these two ways of articulating the field of the phenomena and take a critical attitude to both.

And I think this kind of phenomenology has nicely grown and developed during the last 40 years. I mean, there is now a well-known and attractive subfield of phenomenology which can be called “feminist phenomenology”. And it’s also now branching out into intersectional questions about how race and gender, or rather racial and sexual differences combine, and further how religious, ethnic and linguistic differences relate to racial and sexual differences. So I’m really happy about the current state of things—there are new developments all the time.

CS: You've written on vocation in the past, and this idea is very much in keeping with Boston College's liberal arts formation, with *Cura Personalis*, and with Ignatian Discernment. For our readers, and especially for rising academics, do you have any reflections on vocation as it relates to one's own personal commitments, friends, loved ones, and family, mentors, or God—or as it relates to the academic, religious, or technical life?

SH: Well, I am impressed by Husserl's concept of vocation: that concept actually gives us the possibility of talking about vocations in their full richness and plurality. It allows us to say and think that a vocation can be directed at an activity, at philosophizing, scuba diving or salsa dancing, for example, or alternatively at persons or just one person, say a friend or a lover. Think about Armand Duplantis, Lynsey Vonn, Usain Bolt, and Matti Nykänen! And then think about Anna Karenina, Rett Butler, Jay Gatsby, and Catherine Earnshaw/Linton! But notice that you can also have a vocational relationship to an institution, such as science—a specific one, or all sciences in general—or to a religion or a religious leader, or a vocation to a nation. So the concept covers very broad set of phenomena, all linked to our deepest commitments in life. That, I think, is its strength.

I'm particularly interested in scientific, artistic, and athletic vocations, on the one hand, so deep commitments to practices and activities of various kinds, but also in vocational relationships to individual persons and groups of persons: lovers, friends, colleagues, families, children, students... But it's becoming more and more interesting for me to study vocational relations to *institutions and organizations*, such as the university. The vocation to the university as an institution is not the same as the vocation to the sciences (which you find within the university). They are related, but a different kind of focus and attention guides them. And in order to understand what's happening at our universities today, right now, we need to understand this difference. I think the same holds true about the church. So you can have a vocational relation to the church simply as an institution; you can have a vocational relation to various religious practices; you can have a vocational relation to the persons and groups of persons within that whole. And I think we should see the differences, because, if we don't respect them, we tend to have these absolutely futile disputes and quarrels, assuming that everyone is vocationally guided just the same as we are.

ERJ: Our last question is this: You mentioned that you wanted to be an artist at one point in your life, but you are an academic philosopher now. So what was your own vocational discernment like?

SH: I was seriously committed to becoming a...not a painter, but a drawer, a graphic designer. And I tried to get into an art school in Helsinki (which was actually a very good art school, and still is), into the graphics department. Well, I didn't. And not only that. On the entrance test, where you had to create pictorial presentation of six different topics, on each of them I got a zero points, zero out of five! I was devastated. And I never expressed myself in drawing again for, I think, ten years. But my mother forced me to get into the architect school, because she thought, okay, perhaps you can do this, perhaps you can realize your vocations there. Why don't you try it?

And I told her, I'll take the entrance tests, but even if I get in, I'm not going. I don't want it, I don't want to plan buildings, I want to work with plants and animals. I did get in and with very good test scores. But I didn't continue in the architecture department. I started to study literature and mathematics.

But then some friends in a literature class said, why don't you come to this course that combines mathematics and arts—it's philosophy. And I couldn't turn back after that. The course was about Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. And it was really kind of wild. What really spoke to me is that I immediately realized that I don't have to *remember* anything. There's no need to remember anything in this field. You can think or conceive everything by yourself, if you're lucky. Of course, you might end up in a school which forces you to study *this* and *this* and *this* and *this*. And then you have to show that you know and remember *this* and *this* and *this* and *this*. But I realized, from the beginning, that with luck you might also end up in a department that says you have to study Descartes today, but if you don't remember it tomorrow, then we can think through the problems again and find something new. You don't have to remember what he said, the focus is on the problems.

ERJ: So would you say philosophy is more about the method rather than the facts or subject matter....

SH: Yes, it's all about the method. If we must sacrifice something—and hopefully we'll never have to make such sacrifice—then we should sacrifice the facts.

ERJ: Prof. Heinämaa, we thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview.

SH: Such great questions, fantastic questions! You have gained a new reader of your journal.

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