

This issue of *Stasis* comes out during the Russian Federation's "special military operation" on Ukrainian territory. The operation has created many casualties on both sides and among civilians: women, children, and the elderly are dying. A vast number are wounded. Millions have been forced to flee their homes. Many remain without medical help, food, water, or a familiar infrastructure. We are not able to express freely everything that comes to mind about this situation without putting ourselves and others at risk. We mourn the dead and express deep solidarity with the Ukrainian philosopher Irina Zherebkina, who currently remains in Kharkiv and whose article opens this issue.

## **Introduction**

One pressing reason to connect the topics of psychoanalysis and feminism are their marginal positions in Russian academic discourse. In Russia, psychoanalytic institutions and gender studies centers exist despite the dominant educational and academic systems: questions concerning sexual and gender identity are considered at least unnecessary and, more often, even harmful. They are regarded as manifestations of "gender freedoms" (as the current President of Russia Vladimir Putin calls all deviations from traditional patriarchal gender roles) and of the "new sensibility" (which is considered to be a Western ethical code presumably alien and even harmful to Russian culture and mentality).

Other than the journal's editors, four researchers who take different positions on the theory and practice of psychoanalysis and feminism have worked on this issue. Because of the differences between these positions, our goal here is not to express preexisting opinions but rather to expose the crucial differences between

psychoanalysis and feminism as two different discourses and draw the principal lines of discussion.

Work on the issue began with a seminar at the Rosa House of Culture in St Petersburg. We studied the texts of psychoanalysts who discuss the issue of female sexuality: We read texts written during the so-called debate on female sexuality of the 1920s–1930s; we worked on the texts of feminist authors, where one can find both harsh and uncompromising criticism of psychoanalysis (second-wave feminism) and elements of productive theoretical dialogue and mutual exchange (Lacanian feminism); we also held a roundtable on whether feminism and psychoanalysis can “meet” and, if so, on what terms. This discussion served as the basis for one of the articles of this issue.

While preparing the issue, we encountered several problems that delayed its publication. Although the topic’s relative obscurity served as an impetus for working on the issue, it also complicated the process. The small number of applications we received reflects the lack of development and current work in the psychoanalysis and feminism fields in the Russian-speaking space. Unlike in Great Britain and France, psychoanalysts in Russia exist primarily outside of academic discourse and mostly limit their non-clinical presence to professional associations; rarely do they interact with any universities. Many are wary or even hostile toward feminism. The same goes for feminism—the only Russian-language journal that consistently displays feminist approaches in science and philosophy is based in Kharkiv, a city now being destroyed by the Russian bombing. Another journal that publishes articles on the topic is the Kyivian *Critika Feministichna*. The only current publication in Russia is, perhaps, one of the recent issues of the journal *Logos* (n146, vol. 32).

On top of this dearth of current research, the very combining of psychoanalysis and feminism to formulate the topic turned out to be problematic. The key works in this tradition were written several decades ago; dealing with such a topic in 2022 feels like a retrospective. Few people now write texts that link psychoanalytic and feminist approaches. Where no monolithic “feminism” has existed in the academic world for some time, psychoanalysis has quite deeply influenced continental philosophy and various areas of cultural studies for the general public.

Feminism and psychoanalysis intersect at the point of analytics of social processes. Psychoanalysis can serve to explore the unconscious patriarchy, while feminism fights against oppression and formulates a political demand. At the same time, despite the precedents

of a productive theoretical synthesis and dialogue, this exchange is still highly problematic.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, we continued to work on the issue and explored how we could find our way out of the impasse.

## **This Issue's Articles**

The article by Irina Zhrebkina is devoted to the productive theoretical dialogue between psychoanalysis and feminism. It shows that the departure from the scene of psychoanalytic feminism can be illusionary and that at this moment, we are witnessing a revival of the problems of the 1980s. Zhrebkina examines one of the most exciting periods in the history of psychoanalytically oriented feminism. Through understanding the figure of the hysteric, issues of social structure, resistance, and the formation of female subjectivity come to the fore.

Two texts follow that are devoted to conceptual figures with direct representation in the order of the imaginary. They both consider the unconscious representatives of the feminine and the associated clusters of unconscious fantasies: Indian psychoanalyst and researcher Nilofer Kaul writes about the figure of the great goddess, specifically a psychoanalytic reading of the mythology surrounding the cult of the mother goddess Durga in Bengal. Kaul finds not a fixed repository of meaning in the figure but rather a shifting psychic space; Russian psychoanalyst and researcher Veronika Berkutova analyzes the phenomenon of aversion to the feminine through the mythological representation of the Gorgon Medusa, who kills with her gaze. Several influential psychoanalysts wrote about the borderline status of the feminine as something byas something that repulses the male subject subject, and this article inherits this tradition.

The following two articles each in their way deal with Lacan's theory of difference between the sexes: In his close reading of Jacques Lacan's XX Seminar, Changzhi Hu analyzes the formulas of sexualization and the logic of "not-all" proposed by Lacan. This reading allows the author to tackle the issue of the sexed subject from the sophisticated psychoanalytic point of view; in his article, Alexander Smulyansky contrasts the theory of sexualization with gender theory, opposing them to one another as conceptual "rivals" in the field of Russian intellectual discussion. The text interestingly problematizes the theoretical potential of both approaches to understand the issue of the sexed subject.

Alla Mitrofanova's article rethinks the main theoretical stances of psychoanalysis from the point of view of feminist epistemologies.

Mitrofanova proposes a strategy for overcoming the patriarchal matrix of psychoanalysis with the help of the main presuppositions of feminist ontology.

In their text, poets Alisa Roydman and Dmitry Gerchikov interview the community of Moscow- and St Petersburg-based psychoanalysts (mainly of Lacanian orientation). Their co-authored study raises several questions that determine the existence of psychoanalysis in a broad intellectual context. Their text exposes a crucial issue: the problem of the relationship between psychoanalytic practice and political demand. By finishing the issue, this text leaves the final debate open as to the clash of the two discourses of psychoanalysis and feminism and how their mutual intransigence can be best represented.

The closing article of the issue is written by Aurelio Sainz Pezonaga. It explores the political problem of the multitude in the context of the theory of social movements. The analysis focuses on the interpretation of the concept of "free multitude", taken from Spinoza's political theory. The author examines in detail how this concept functions in Spinoza's dictionary, and tries to discover the theoretical potential of the concept of "free multitude" for the analysis of social movements.

## References

Feministskie issledovaniia [Feminist studies] (2022). Logos 32.1.