



Seminar

JOHAN ÖSTLING

Pro Futura Scientia Fellow, SCAS.  
Associate Professor of History, Lund University

*Post-war Humboldt:  
German Ideas of the University after 1945*

Thursday, 27 November, 4:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
[www.swedishcollegium.se](http://www.swedishcollegium.se)

S W E D I S H  
C O L L E G I U M  
*for* ADVANCED STUDY

## ABOUT JOHAN ÖSTLING

Johan Östling received a Ph.D. from Lund University in 2008 for the doctoral dissertation *Nazismens sensmoral: Svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyning* (The Lessons of Nazism: Swedish Experiences in the Wake of the Second World War). His thesis was awarded several prizes, including the Clio Prize and the Nils Klim Prize. Östling has been a postdoctoral researcher at the Research Policy Institute and the Department of History, both at Lund University. He was a SCAS Fellow in the spring of 2013. During the academic year 2013–14, he was Visiting Scholar at the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung (ZZF) in Potsdam and the Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte (MPIWG) in Berlin.

Östling's research combines intellectual, political and cultural history. He has written extensively on modern and contemporary European history, in particular on the legacy of National Socialism and the Second World War, historiography and the culture of history, and educational and academic ideals in twentieth-century Germany. Moreover, he has a keen interest in the theory and practice of the biography.

In addition to chapters and articles in various scholarly publications, Östling has co-edited *Med livet som insats: Biografin som humanistisk genre* (Life at Stake: The Biography as a Scholarly Genre, 2007); *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited* (2011); and *The Humboldtian Tradition: Origins and Legacies* (2014). He has also written a number of essays and reviews in the press.

Östling's current project focuses on the transformation of the Humboldtian tradition and the idea of the university in modern Germany. Central to the project is the seismic shift in the ideal and institution of the university in the twentieth century – from Berlin to Bologna.

## ABSTRACT

In the wake of the Second World War, Germany saw an intensive debate about the idea of the university and its future role in society. All were agreed that the university had to be revitalized after the ravages of Nazism, but the question was what weight should be given to the classical German heritage, and the Humboldtian tradition in particular. The focus of this paper is three leading 'mandarins' and their contributions to the debate on the university's fundamental principles. In making their points, they all revealed their strong historical orientation, but, equally, their interpretations of the Humboldtian legacy differed. They were not of the same mind on the central issues of the meaning of *Bildung*, academic freedom, the unity of scholarship, and the university's social mission. The presentation demonstrates the character of the discussion about university ideals during this critical phase in the intellectual formation of post-war Germany.