

Editorial

Laura Hellsten*, Nicole des Bouvrie

Home and Exile – Feminist Philosophy in Thought, History and Action: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2020-0194>
received November 25, 2021

Living in an increasingly polarised world, where control and fear seem to be for some an appropriate answer to the problems of today, philosophy is called upon to respond. Responding in the way of being responsive, responsible, response-able. This is a double calling, for both action and contemplation. Generations of thinkers and lovers have spoken about the need to listen and stand side by side – with those who think and feel differently – and wait to clear up what the needed action in that particular space and time will be. Letting the response arise from a deeper space of receiving. Allowing the vulnerability of not-knowing and letting go of the strict borders of the self, in order to listen and hear and think with someone who is not me. This means demarcating the grounds of what it means to live while also acknowledging the act of not knowing as an integral part of life itself.

As philosophers, as theologians, as engaged individuals, acting as the coordinators of the Nordic Summer University study circle *Hospitality and Solidarity: Feminist Philosophy in Thought, History and Action*,¹ we have taken up one of the questions that has become newly significant in our present times – namely the question of what it means to be hospitable, what it means to be in solidarity. What kind of relationship to the radical *other* do we choose to create? In our own lives, in our society, in our thinking? How do we deal with not living up to being in solidarity? How can we rethink our positions without questioning again and again the notions of what it even means to think, to worship, to breathe, to be. And what does it mean to use the word “we” in this regard?

The theme of this topical issue of *Open Philosophy* is *Home and Exile*, after a Symposium organised by the Nordic Summer University study circle in March 2021 with the same topic. This question of “home and exile” is to be understood in the broadest sense possible. How do we respond to refugees, to our sexualised bodies, to being *other*? How to be at home in our own body, skin, creatureliness, thought(s), emotions, life, dwelling place, village, country, world? And how to come to terms with the exilic reality of our own bodies, skins, creatureliness, thought(s), emotions, lives, dwelling places, villages, countries, world?

¹ The Nordic Summer University (NSU) is a voluntary organisation that aims at creating space for multidisciplinary dialogue and joint actions and has been a hub for new research initiatives in the Nordic-Baltic region since its establishment over 70 years ago. NSU also works to dismantle traditional hierarchical structures both within academia and in relation to academic work and societal concerns. Particularly in the online settings of these past years, these efforts have also been able to spread beyond the borders of the Nordic-Baltic regions, with many participants joining us from across the world. The Hospitality and Solidarity study circle, led by Laura Hellsten and Nicole des Bouvrie, brings together a wide variety of scholars, artists and activists from fields ranging from theology, religious sciences and philosophy to literary, migration and gender studies, including post- and de-colonial thought together with anti-racist praxis.

* **Corresponding author: Laura Hellsten**, Systematic Theology, Åbo Akademi University, Åbo 20100, Finland, e-mail: laura.hellsten@abo.fi

Nicole des Bouvrie: Nordic Summer University, Nuenen, The Netherlands

This topical issue reflects some of the contributions made by participants in this symposium. Due to the restrictions imposed by the way peer-reviewed academic journals operate, not all submissions have been eligible. Although we are very happy to be able to present to you here a wide range of articles that clearly indicate the multidisciplinary of our thinking practises embodied by the participants in the NSU study circle, it is at the same time a concern to us that not all contributing voices are represented here. This is not simply due to one particular reason. Establishing a community in which people feel at home enough to think exilically, that is, as an *other* neither dominating the whole nor dominated by the whole, requires a lot of care. The only way to avoid mistakes and overstepping boundaries would be to do nothing, which is not an option. Therefore, we are happy to say that neither this symposium nor this special issue is the final result of this ever-changing study circle, but one of the milestones by which to track our progress.

Feminist philosophy and theology are especially appropriate and important approaches to consider when faced with crises that require rethinking structures of thought. Yet, at the same time it is important to also be aware of the ways in which feminists have failed to go beyond – and in many instances – has incorporated the very structures they set out to overthrow. This is the continuous struggle of living within an already established world with inherited demarcations and injustices. Which is why action and contemplation must go hand in hand, continuously re-evaluating the values in order to stay true to the spirit that keeps them alive.

What we aim for in the space at *Open Philosophy* is to allow the plurality of voices investigating feminism and feminist thought and principles in different fields and contexts. Solidarity doesn't mean the acceptance of everything, but it does mean that we stand with the voices of the *other* and not demand beforehand, before anything is spoken, that the other says something that falls in line with what one considers truth (or rigour, "scientific" or other kind of value statement). Letting go of those overarching moral frameworks is an ethical feminist methodology. It allows for meetings of otherness.