

Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education (PTHE) Special Issue – Academic Activism in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities

Editors – Fadia Dakka, Luca Morini, Carola Boehm

This Special Issue invites contributions on the topic of Academic Activism *by, in, and for* contemporary universities and the world(s) they create and inhabit. We look for contributions that pose questions in relation to forms of academic activism, their legitimacy, and their drivers and expressions (internal or external). We believe that the recent rise in activist movements - such as *Black Lives Matter*, *Me too*, and *Extinction Rebellion* - offer an opportunity to reflect on the role of universities (students and staff and universities as institutions) in academic activism *beyond* the customary indictment of racial-, disaster- and extractive- capitalism.

How do universities become agents of effective advocacy, when they themselves suffer from an institutionalised democratic deficit? Even if the question of *why* academic activism matters seems straightforward, the question of *what* makes academic action *activist*, and *how* and *when* activism is *academic*, require deeper scrutiny and engagement.

There is no consensus as to what constitutes academic activism, other than a broad understanding of it as a mode of participation characterised by the inner, humanist oppositional tension between *thinking* and *doing* (Hoofd 2010). This leads us to the crux of the matter, the relationship between production of knowledge and political action, namely between universities and social movements. This Special Issue seeks therefore contributions that will broadly address – but will not be limited to - these questions/themes:

- What might be definitions of and critical/conceptual frameworks for academic activism?
- What forms of academic activism can be identified? Which can be justified? With what justifications(e.g. epistemic, ethical, political)?
- How does academic activism compare with societal forms of activism?
- Can academic activism itself generate forms of exclusion or discrimination?
- Does academic activism vary according to (different) academic disciplines?
- What is the relationship between possible, future, speculative forms of activism and possible, future, speculative forms of the university?
- What does civil courage mean in academia? What does risk mean and entail for an activist academic in different political contexts?
- Are there particular barriers or disincentives to academic activism? Where are they predominantly to be found - within universities, or the academic world or in the wider society?
- To what extent should universities offer/be spaces for rebellion, resistance and political rejuvenation?

We invite written contributions, but also welcome experimental formats (e.g. artworks, graphic essays, poetry, videos), provided that they are accompanied by a written exegesis. We also welcome contributions from any academic discipline provided that there is an explicit link with the Philosophy of Higher Education. Synoptic classifications of forms of activism are also welcome.

Timeline:

- 30 November 2020: Deadline for proposals in the form of abstracts (500 words limit, even for multimodal proposals)
- 30 January 2021: Notification of acceptance – this will include a confirmation of how the hosting of your contribution might work where it has a multimodal element.
- 31 August 2021: Deadline for the submission of the full contributions for peer review.
- 30 November 2021: Reviews to be returned to contributors.
- 31 January 2022: Final version, inclusive of feedback from reviewers, to be submitted

Please send your proposals to: ptheactivism@gmail.com