

Review of: "Does Philosophy Matter? The Urgent Need for a Philosophical Revolution"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I agree with Professor Maxwell's sentiment. Much of academic philosophy has had nothing to do with helping students make their lives worth living. But, with all due respect, the argument that philosophy faculties are mainly concerned with esoterica no longer applies to most of North America and elsewhere. There is currently a movement, a kind of 'revolution' if you like, in departments of philosophy that's been going on for the past fifteen years or so, to make the material more relevant for students. It's doing this by helping them to see how useful philosophy actually is when it's applied to issues in the real world, and in their lives.

Furthermore, in the university where I taught for many years they require all first-year students to take at least one semester of reasoning/critical thinking offered through the philosophy department. This is promoted as a course that will help students to think not only critically but creatively in all their other courses.

The philosophy department also offers many applied courses such as environmental ethics, medical ethics, business ethics, feminist ethics, philosophy of children, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, philosophy of science, and philosophy for counselors. This last course teaches students how to help others as well as themselves, to deal with personal problems. They learn how to think about and resolve difficult life issues that could escalate into distress which, according to the DSM, could be diagnosed as so-called 'mental illnesses.' There are any number of case studies and real-life examples discussed and role-played in these classes. And most instructors use the "Community of Inquiry" approach. I'm not sure what more could be offered to students to enhance their understanding other than some type of internships.

Understanding and knowledge are based on learning. This makes an educational setting appropriate for the acquisition of knowledge. But my understanding is that wisdom comes from real-world experience. And it doesn't seem to me that this sort of experience can be taught in a classroom. Philosophy departments are just not set up to offer practicums by which the wisdom of experience can be gained. Perhaps they should be.

One other point: Professor Maxwell's argument stops short of explaining what he means by "wisdom inquiry." He refers his readers to his previous publications. It would be very helpful to readers if he had briefly explained his concept, and not sent his readers elsewhere.