

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

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As there are many other reviews, I will write a response rather than a review. I agree with the overall argument about university knowledge production being overly insular and, in some disciplines, pursuing technical precision to the detriment of solving more substantive problems. To turn to Popper and Kuhn, one may say it is a matter of puzzle-solving within an overarching paradigm in place of tackling problems. To continue for a moment discussing Popper and Kuhn, Steve Fuller, in his 'Kuhn vs Popper', argued that 'the wrong guy won', meaning that Kuhn's work became popular in the social sciences because it was perceived as radical while Popper's was perceived as conservative when, in fact, a stronger argument can be made for the reverse perception. I mention this because it illustrates how academics write in social-intellectual contexts where there are strong prevailing assumptions about what work is worthy or not worthy. There is a wide literature on how audit culture and pressure from government is heavily influencing what research is to be valued within an academic department. In the UK, academics writing philosophy would have to bear in mind how the internal REF reading panel would try to second guess the REF's sub-panel's decisions and such activities usually result in a risk-averse conservative approach, which academic authors would respond to by being reluctant to step beyond the tacitly permitted topics and arguments. In an increasing number of departments across different subjects REF gaming has even led to a range of permitted journals one may submit an article to being prescribed, with the research produced having to conform to the norms of those journals and their gate-keepers. One could lead an intellectual double-life, writing for the institutional requirements and writing what one really thinks in other journals but it is likely by the time someone gets a 'permanent' post in an academic department that they will have been thoroughly socialised into the institutional norms about what is valued and respected and this would apply even without the current audit pressure. All of which makes me think that the tendency in this article (I don't know about the more extensive arguments in the books) to hold individuals accountable for failings overlooks the broader context in which academics are socialised into professional norms. On a related note, I would argue the problem in political life is not an epistemic deficit but the influence of power over decision-making. Shifting to prioritise wisdom over knowledge is unlikely, in my opinion, to produce any significant change to decision-making, given the way short-and long-term decision making is influenced by powerful economic interests. That's not to say it's impossible but it would require a significant change in the way governing institutions operate. The tacit assumption in Maxwell's argument here is that the state operates according to Dahl's classical pluralist model, where an intrinsically neutral decision-making institution is open to a range of epistemic inputs from which it acts on the strongest input. The problem though is not just the influence of power over political decision-making but the vested and conservative interest of bureaucracies in maintaining the status quo. Bureaucracies have a tendency to embody instrumental

rationality which operates as a norm, prioritising efficient and transparent means over substantive ends, which not only results in resistance to change, given it may be disruptive and thus inefficient in the short-term, but also in ends being colonised by means, with teaching to the test being a prime example. This norm is present in universities, with students using key word search on electronic articles to find quotes, rather than reading a book or article and following the logic of an argument, scientists fudging the data to get another academic output and, increasingly in the future, academics and students using AI to summarise books and articles, as well as to write essays and academic outputs. In such a case, knowledge-inquiry may well exist alongside data-shoving, as bits of data are typed into ChatGPT and other bits of data are shoved out the other end. Maybe the world, or at least audit-driven customer-pleasing academia, is not ready for wisdom.