

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

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This paper engages with an important perspective: that much of academic philosophy has lost touch with the real concerns of people and needs to be reconceived. Indeed, one might make a similar claim about much of the academic work coming out of many other fields. I'm not sure how useful it is to make such sweeping generalizations.

The paper begins with an assumption of what most people would say about philosophy. Much philosophy probably would bring up such comments. However, participating at many Public Philosophy "Ask a Philosopher" tables, has shown me that people are often very open and eager to engage in philosophical discussions.

The main problem here is that there are countless assertions that are not defended. The claims of the sweeping harms of academia (who knew we had such power, albeit destructive power?), the aims of universities, the content of courses, etc...The paper never demonstrates that philosophers are not engaged in the problems of the public. The author makes huge claims about all of academic philosophy; is the reader to assume the author stays contemporary with all of it?

Additionally, the main conceptual framework for this paper of knowledge-inquiry rather than wisdom inquiry are barely articulated. In fact, the sweeping claims and unexplained terms come in the midst of reference to a "body of work" that's supporting the claims of the author, yet doesn't discuss anything specific! What's the body of work, and why is so valuable? The author does mention their own body of work and claims it was praised; if it somehow didn't change the practice of "mainstream philosophy," why are we to assume it's the fault of the field?

The article is much more of a manifesto than an argument. It employs a stream of implied claims, but in the end only makes a huge generalization accompanying a wildly exaggerated picture of the consequences. In the end, what's dismaying is that the core claim has long seemed to me to be right...academic philosophy IS disconnected from the concerns of the larger community and is overly jargonistic and technical. Rather than railing against this, the author ought to join or help publicize Public Philosophy efforts happening all over the place in which philosophers are directly engaging with public-facing projects. I just don't understand how the author thinks this manifesto is the solution; doing the kinds of publicly engaged philosophy the author favors seems much more useful.