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Philosophy in the Age of Neoliberalism

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This essay argues that political, economic, and cultural developments have made the twentieth century disciplinary approach to philosophy unsustainable. It (a) discusses the reasons behind this unsustainability, which also affect the academy at large, (b) describes applied philosophy as an inadequate theoretical reaction to contemporary societal pressures, and (c) proposes a dedisciplined and interstitial approach——"field philosophy"——as a better response to the challenges facing the twenty-first century philosophy.

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1. The Problem I: The Outside-in University

In June of 2012, the governing board of the University of Virginia (UVA) summarily fired President Theresa Sullivan. The head and associate head of the board made the decision without consulting either university faculty or higher administration. The board's complaint: Sullivan refused to turn the university into a market-reactive entity.

Colleges and universities may resist these outside pressures——after a campus-wide firestorm, Sullivan was reinstated[1]——but the UVA incident exemplifies the dominant trend across the academy today (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). Universities no longer develop strategic plans that chart a course to be hewn to despite outside perturbations. Increasingly, universities are expected to pursue

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"strategic dynamism" where university leadership constantly monitors the market and reacts to each marginal change. Universities must respond to the demands of their customers (formerly known as students) and their overseers (governing boards, and through them, corporate clients) rather than pursue an autonomous course. Students, presumably, want a cheaper, faster, and more convenient education, where "education" means a ticket to a job. Our university system is evolving into an institution whose output consists of salable innovations and salarymen and career women (who are at the same time expectant consumers). University life as self-improvement, esthetic education, or life of the mind is rarely referenced, and is less and less taken seriously.

But we should not simply paint the governing board as the black hat here. The concern they expressed——that Sullivan was taking too incremental approach toward adapting the university to a time of extremely rapid change——is real. Higher education is being radically transformed. Market consolidation and privatization may drastically reduce the number of four year colleges, with online education offering instruction for pennies on the dollar (e.g. Duderstadt and Womack 2003; Weissmann 2012). UVA's governing board might be a set of callow neoliberals, but the question remains: how does one preserve the liberatory function of higher education in neoliberal times?

Similar questions now surround university research. The autonomy of research is under attack. Increasingly, the value of research is reduced to its market value. Researchers are now asked to give accounts of the impact of their research, both before and after it is performed. Funding decisions are increasingly made on the basis of these accounts (Frodeman and Briggle 2012; Holbrook and Frodeman 2012a). Researchers who stubbornly claim that their research need not have a larger, transdisciplinary impact face a future that involves less and less research and more and more teaching.

What was once a virtue——the University's distance from the hurly-burly of the market——has become a vice. Of course, one only needs to recall Dickens' Mr Gradgrind to be reminded that *homo economicus* has been with us for some time (see Donovan 2009). But as recently as the postWorld War II era, it was common for people across the political spectrum to argue that a political and philosophical education was an essential part of higher learning (Schrum 2007). Students needed to understand the dangers of totalitarianism from both the left and the right. The Nazis might make the trains run on time, but life was about more than economic efficiency. The Communists might give everyone a job, but freedom and competition were ruled out. Public funding of higher education in the West was essential if we were to understand and defend the democratic way of life.

Now, however, the greatest generation has passed from the scene. The chief threat today comes from stateless actors with a millenarian, rather than political, ideology. Osama bin Laden did not promulgate an economic theory. His worldview does not represent a creditable challenge to global capitalism.

Lacking challengers, the door has opened for a new, more radically economic conservatism known as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a theory of political econ-

omy that believes individual and social progress is best advanced through societal institutions characterized by free markets, strong private property rights, and free trade (Harvey 2005). Without a credible external philosophical nemesis (Marxism went down with the communist ship), neoliberalism has turned the lessons learned from its victory over communism——the superiority of market capitalism——on our own culture. A successful career in business is the chief accomplishment of the 2012 Republican candidate for president. Market thinking, a force so pervasive that we hardly notice it anymore, has permeated everything from carbon trading to surrogate mothering (Sandel 2012).

Neoliberalism is now a full-fledged political philosophy: the state *is* the market. Neoliberalism is an epistemology: it embodies the belief that markets always know best. Neoliberalism is a moral philosophy: since no human actor, individual or government, can operate as efficiently as the blind dealings of the market, and since efficiency is of the highest value, intervening in the activities of the market becomes morally suspect. Neoliberalism is the dominant rhetoric: it looks backward to the classic seventeenth century liberalism in its claims about individual freedom, and forward in its desire to expand this freedom into other, nonmarket areas of society (such as the health sector, the environment, and even national defense; in the Iraq war, the US military was supplemented by more than 100,000 civilian contractors).

This view has led to the progressive defunding of the public sphere, including public universities. Adjusting for inflation, state support for public colleges and universities declined by 26% from 1990 to 2010 (Vaidhyanathan 2012). When the public sphere and the market were still thought of as separate, there was a reason for the existence of the autonomous university. It provided an oasis for critical thinking. It educated people for their role as citizens, as well as to be the creators and appreciators of art, literature, and philosophy. Now, that decision-making consists of the summing of economic preferences, the sort of critical thinking once thought necessary to sustain democracy is seen as wool gathering and inefficiency. Neoliberalism turns those forces the university sought to keep outside its walls inward; the neoliberal university is the university turned outside-in (Kitcher 2011).

2.   The Problem II: The Trials of Disciplinary Philosophy

The humanities are especially vulnerable to external pressures. The science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines can at least plausibly talk the talk of "return on investment." The humanities, however, have not even tried such a strategy. Moreover, most humanists believe they should not, lest they "sell out." Those in the STEM disciplines can appeal to the popular account that they are the engines of social progress. As threadbare as this story may seem upon deeper inspection (see, e.g. Sarewitz 1996), today's politicians and CEOs generally believe that more money for science and technology research drives economic innovation. There is no parallel story available to justify the humanities.

Take a look at philosophy. Viewed from the inside, the philosophical community entertains questions organized into a number of fields——epistemology, ethics,

logic, political philosophy, the philosophy of language——pursued via books and journals, in seminar rooms, and at professional conferences. It adds up to a vibrant intellectual community. But viewed from the outside and as a whole, philosophy today (especially in the USA) has little public presence. Moreover, the discipline ignores a pressing question: how can philosophers respond to an increasingly market-driven university and cultural environment?

This question——historically framed as the relationship between the philosopher and the *polis*——is also a philosophic question, although it has not been treated as one in recent times. Since the time of Thales, philosophy has been criticized for not being sufficiently real-world in its orientation. In response, philosophers have offered a variety of accounts for how philosophy is actually quite practical. And they have claimed that philosophy should be celebrated for its impracticality. In our opinion, both points are true. Any argument that seeks to justify philosophy needs to be pluralist in nature.

The situation today, however, has a distinctive tenor. This results from two factors. The first is the growth of the market mentality described above. But the second factor runs headlong into the first. For the last 100 years, philosophers have formed a professional class whose main audience consisted of one another. In other words, philosophy has become a discipline.

Not just anyone can be a philosopher; one needs a Ph.D. in the subject. And for the last 100 years, philosophy Ph.D.s have lived in philosophy departments. The establishment of the Ph.D. in philosophy——the doctor of philosophy in philosophy——formed a part of the early twentieth century disciplining of philosophy. In disciplinary philosophy, philosophers associate with and write for the community of other philosophers. Philosophy becomes an inside game; rather than taking on the role of generalists who work with people across the spectrum of life's problems, philosophers became part of the common disciplinary structure of the academy. Philosophers specialize, and direct their attentions to other philosophers, just as chemists or biologists direct their attention to their disciplinary peers. Lost is the tradition of going abroad in the world, as Socrates and Descartes and Leibniz (and for that matter, Dewey) did.

This twentieth century process of disciplining all knowledge was treated as unexceptional. Analytic chemists wrote for a disciplinary audience; so did Quine and scholars of Joyce. Disciplining was part of the development of a modern bureaucratic culture, something that has come to characterize nearly all of our institutions. Every task is subdivided to the point where expertise becomes a possibility. It was left to the invisible hand to put the specialized pieces together into something socially valuable. Questions of relationships between knowledge fields or between knowledge and other social goods are (because relational) not part of anyone's remit. Among the professional classes, at least, there has been no one whose task it was to speak to the whole of things.

That phrase, the whole of things, in the form of "what makes up the good life," was once the central question of philosophy. It is what ensured an external focus for much of philosophy, and explained why philosophy was of real use to society.

Alas, the question of what constitutes the good life has become quaint. The good life has become a private matter, ruled by a "philosophical" decree that cannot be countermanded. The public sphere is given over to those with the requisite instrumental expertise (given that we want X, how do we get more of it?). The question of whether we should want X has been banished from the conversation——or become the sole province of evangelicals. Abnegating their public role, philosophers cloistered themselves in universities where they pursued a form of *l'art pour l'art*: "philosophy for the sake of philosophers."

It is an approach now badly out of sync with the development of the neoliberal university. A disciplinary approach to philosophy is inconsistent with the drive toward marketization that characterizes both our wider culture and the university itself. Philosophers thus find themselves in the peculiar position of being professionals whose institutional home is increasingly hostile to their profession (Donoghue 2008).

Philosophers have been largely absent from debates about the future of the university. That is, philosophers have not treated the future of institutional knowledge production as itself a significant philosophical question on par with those in logic or ethics.[2] This is a shame, for universities are struggling to respond to what are essentially philosophical questions. What is the purpose of knowledge? What is the future of knowledge production? What are the implications of turning students into "consumers?" To what degree should market perspectives reign within the university? The recent controversies at the University of Virginia and elsewhere have had such resonance because they highlight the institutional, professional, and personal consequences of changing the fundamental mission of the university.

One common response to the crisis of the university has been a call to make research and education more interdisciplinary in nature. This response is telling, for the demands being placed on university life have little or nothing to do with the (interdisciplinary) integration of knowledge. The demand——whether by neoliberals, or others——is for knowledge production of whatever type, disciplinary or interdisciplinary, to be made more relevant to our lives. Interdisciplinarity can thus be seen as the last gasp of academics attempting to retain control over their activities. On perhaps a fairer account, "interdisciplinarity" is a half-measure on the way to a new regime in which knowledge production and its use are continually thought together——a postdisciplinary regime (Frodeman 2011; Gibbons et al. 1994; Hessels and van Lente 2008).

3. Applied Philosophy as a Response to Neoliberalism

> Whatever drives people into highly complex interdisciplinary projects——curiosity, social responsibility, or money——the need of manageable objects and presentable results in their reference community drives them out again. (Wolfgang Krohn).[3]

Twentieth century philosophy had a reply to demands for societal relevance. Applied philosophy developed precisely to serve this need. In all its various manifestations——environmental ethics, bioethics, engineering ethics, computer ethics,

and more——applied philosophy has sought to demonstrate the practical efficacy of philosophic thought.

"Applied philosophy"——or applied ethics, the more common phrase——is an ambivalent term. When Thales cornered the olive market 2500 years ago, one might claim he was functioning as an applied philosopher. More seriously, one could claim that Thomas Aquinas (who wrote on marriage) and John Locke (who wrote on education as well as toleration) were applied philosophers. The list can be expanded to include most philosophers across the history of philosophy. But this misses the point. These are predisciplinary examples. Applied philosophy is a distinctly twentieth century movement that arose in response to the lack of practical application of disciplinary philosophy.

Before Kant, and until the institutionalization of philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century, philosophy always had both an inside and an outside focus. Some philosophers emphasized one, some the other; but it was understood that both elements were central to the philosophic enterprise. This is why philosophers such as Descartes and Hume are still so readable today. The question facing applied philosophers in the twentieth century was how to respond to societal demands for relevance given the preexisting institutional reality of disciplines.

Applied philosophy has had a small presence within the discipline since the 1960s.[4] Initially, the practical turn on the part of philosophers was driven by a number of societal controversies over the environment, health care, and technological failures. In response, applied ethics successfully broadened what is considered properly "philosophical." Indeed, Stephen Toulmin argued in 1982 that "medicine saved the life of ethics," in that medical ethics and other applied fields rescued philosophy from death by irrelevance. Applied philosophy showed that real-world problems have philosophical dimensions and that one can make interesting and important contributions to such problems acting as a philosopher. Whether we should reintroduce wolves to Yellowstone Park or how we ought to allocate scarce medical resources were not questions that could be confined to instrumental forms of expertise. They raised matters of justice, first principles, epistemology, and the nature of the good——the very stuff of philosophy.

Nevertheless, the field has remained on the margins of philosophy. Institutionalization occurred late: the Society for Applied Philosophy was founded in 1982; its companion publication, *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* in 1984; and the *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* was started in 1982. In the case of more specialized journals, *Environmental Ethics*, the first journal in its field, began in 1979 and the *Hastings Center Report*, the first bioethics journal, launched publication in 1971.

A full characterization of applied philosophy over the last 50 years would require chapters on each of its various subfields, a task beyond the scope of this essay. Here, we offer some generalizations about the field buttressed by our experience in two prominent areas of applied philosophy, environmental ethics and bioethics (Briggle 2010; Callicott and Frodeman 2008; Frodeman 2003, 2006). Our basic point, however, is made by Krohn (2010) efforts by applied philosophers

to reach out to a larger audience regularly end by falling back into the reference community of philosophy.

3.1.   Environmental Ethics and Disciplinary Capture

Environmental ethics developed in the 1970s in reaction to larger societal forces. Earth Day and the passing of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts all predate the inauguration of the field, which can be symbolically dated by the first known course in environmental ethics, taught by Baird Callicott in 1973.

There was something distinctive about the applied turn in environmental ethics. Talking about ecosystem restoration or invasive species was a far cry from the question of free will and other abstractions that occupied the twentieth century philosophy. Yet while thinking about real-world problems was distinctive, the way environmental ethicists went about their work has been quite traditional. Few environmental ethicists asked how the institutional and disciplinary nature of philosophy affected the practical efficacy of their work. And in remaining largely a disciplinary endeavor, environmental ethics consigned itself to the margins of both philosophy and society.

Eugene Hargrove, founding editor of *Environmental Ethics*, has repeatedly lamented the social impotency of environmental ethics. In a 1998 editorial, "Environmental Ethics at 20," Hargrove noted that, contrary to initial hopes, environmental ethics had remained an insular group of thinkers engaged in theoretical debates (Hargrove 1998). In 2003, Hargrove raised the issue again. In "What's Wrong? Who's to Blame?," he offered an account of why environmental ethicists have not played a larger role in policy-making (Hargrove 2003). While the perspectives of environmental ethics had been integrated in environmental science courses, and contributed to the creation of a new field——conservation biology——no analogous penetration has occurred within the policy curriculum. On Hargrove's account, environmental ethics had been marginalized by the philosophic presumptions underlying policy analysis, whose understanding of human motivation had been underwritten by economics. Viewing humans as *homo economicus* and assuming the dominion of subjective felt preferences eliminated the need for ethical reflection.

Hargrove's account, however, makes it difficult to tell what was cause and what is effect. Are environmental ethicists marginal players because of a philosophic prejudice? Or are they ignored because environmental ethics uncritically assumed a disciplinary model of knowledge production? Environmental ethicists have inhabited philosophy departments, written for a professional philosophical audience, published in specialized journals read by (applied) philosophers, and attended conferences populated largely by philosophers. They have employed jargon and theories in ways that assume a shared expertise with their audience. Graduate students interested in environmental ethics are still trained to work in philosophy departments rather than in the public or private sector. One finds neither a practical (e.g. the development of internship programs at the National Park

Service) nor theoretical (e.g. how does the nature of our arguments change when our audience is nonphilosophers?) questioning of the disciplinary model of knowledge production.

Beginning in the 1990s, environmental ethicists gave increasing attention to the policy element of environmental problems. Ecofeminists, environmental justice theorists, and environmental pragmatists all grew impatient with the lack of practical application of theoretical work. In *Toward Unity Among Environmentalists* (1991), Bryan Norton proposed that we "think about environmentalism as a force in public policy first and to examine philosophical questions in passing." Norton and Hargrove (1994) later distinguished between applied and practical philosophy——the former applies theoretical principles to problems, while the latter begins with real cases and seeks to insinuate philosophic insights into these cases in a spirit of amelioration and compromise. Similarly, Light and Katz (ed.) in *Environmental Pragmatism* called for a pluralist and nonreductionist approach to environmental problems that would "identify practical strategies for bridging gaps between environmental theorists, policy analysts, activists, and the public." The year 1994 also saw the publication of Van de Veer and Pierce's *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book: Philosophy, Ecology, Economics*, with a second edition in 1997 and a third in 2003.

This literature does highlight the need to take better account of policy concerns. Its overall weakness, however, turns on its inability to carry through on its promise to offer specific insights and strategies within the context of live controversies. As Krohn notes, the gravitational pull of disciplines becomes too great. Thus despite the overall goal of the volume, the essays in *Environmental Pragmatism* in the main consist of applied philosophy——general, theoretical, and top-down accounts of environmental questions. Or consider Van de Veer and Pierce's section on "Biodiversity";

> The Diversity of Life——E.O. Wilson.
> What is a Species——Stephen Jay Gould.
> Why do Species Matter?——Lilly-Marlene Russow.
> Why Species Matter——Holmes Rolston III.

There are no accounts of philosophers working through case studies of particular problems——of, for instance, the challenges Australia faces through the importation of the European fox, the rabbit, and the house mouse. No one disputes the need for general philosophic accounts of environmental issues. But the overall thrust of the volume firmly lies within applied rather than practical environmental ethics.

In short, in the case of environmental ethics, the message changed, but the medium (disciplinarity) remained the same. Such "disciplinary capture" pertains not just to environmental ethics but to other subfields in applied ethics as well. It means that applied philosophers produce ideas intended for consumption by their peers. Moreover, they tend to operate by disciplinary standards of rigor and excellence. Intellectual rigor has become one-dimensional: the only epistemological

standard is the deeply sociological one consisting of the degree of detail that a given subdivision of the field has reached at a given moment in time. Unconsidered is the possibility of taking a pluralist approach to rigor, where rigor is defined on a case-by-case basis balancing epistemology with other criteria such as timeliness, cost, and relevance (Frodeman 2011).

Our account of disciplinary capture is thus the opposite of the critique launched by those who have written off environmental ethics as insufficiently rigorous. We see the field as having been *too* rigorous——or more exactly, tied to a disciplinary notion of rigor that ignored the fact that rigor is a rhetorical concept that must adjust to circumstances. Defenses of applied philosophy as theoretically rigorous (e.g. Young 2004) miss the point. They rather exacerbate the problem: making applied ethics "rigorous" leads to more disciplinary insularity. As a consequence, the main objective of environmental ethics——against its own better intentions——has not been to help those struggling with actual problems. Rather, it is to refine the theories and methods of an academic discipline.

This also holds true for the more recent development of "experimental philosophy" (or x-phi) (e.g. Knobe and Nichols 2008). Experimental philosophers use cognitive science methods to understand people's ordinary intuitions about such philosophic issues as causation, consciousness, morality, and free will. Whether applied or experimental, the emphasis remains on developing arguments for a disciplinary audience, with their own criteria for defining success in addressing those problems.

The supposedly purely epistemic goal of rigor comes attached to the social and institutional trappings of a disciplinary model of knowledge production. It is this institutional expression of philosophy that is under assault with the neoliberal corporatization of the university. While environmental ethics speaks to the kinds of "external" problems now flooding into the academy (e.g. sustainability and resource consumption), it only speaks to them on its own academic terms. What a public policy-maker, engineer, physician, or economist makes of the work of environmental ethics is not a primary consideration——indeed, if it is considered at all. The environmental ethicist is satisfied when disciplinary peers approve of her Rawlsian framing of environmental justice, even if her work has no chance of landing on the desk of someone who is actually making relevant decisions, say, about the siting of waste management facilities. The outside-in university, however, demands that scholars be accountable to nondisciplinary audiences. Environmental ethics and theoretical philosophy thus share the same accountability gap.

3.2. *Bioethics and Instrumentalization*

While clearly interested in addressing real-world problems, environmental ethics has little tradition of critical reflection on the social roles and responsibilities of the philosopher. In contrast, from its inception with questions about the ethics of biomedical science and technology in the early 1970s, bioethics has been quite aware of its institutional status and place in the wider world (see, e.g. Ackerman

1980; Eckenwiler and Cohn 2007; Jecker, Jonsen, and Pearlman 2007). This is at least partly attributable to the fact that bioethics has emerged from and crossed over several disciplines (philosophy, medicine, law, nursing, political science, sociology, theology, and more), whereas environmental ethics was an offshoot of philosophy alone. Members of these disciplines (even before they would call themselves "bioethicists") have been enrolled into public policy-making on a scale that far surpasses involvement by environmental ethicists. By taking part in the ethical, legal, and social implications research component of the Human Genome Project, for example, bioethicists have been forced to think critically about their roles in society and relationships with power (see Juengst 1996).

Thus, bioethics has escaped the kind of disciplinary capture that has ensnared environmental ethics. Bioethics is not simply a subdiscipline of philosophy. Nonetheless, it has fallen prey to another form of disciplinary capture.

The *locus classicus* for the questioning of the institutional status of bioethics is Callahan's 1973 essay "Bioethics as a Discipline." Callahan emphasized that bioethics should be something useful to those who face real-world problems: "the discipline of bioethics should be so designed, and its practitioners so trained, that it will directly——at whatever cost to disciplinary elegance——serve those physicians and biologists whose position demands that they make the practical decisions" (2007 [1973], 21). While bioethics has taken on the normal sociological trappings of a discipline (with degree-granting programs, conferences, and journals), bioethicists have also regularly conducted extradisciplinary, clinical work, staying true to Callahan's vision. They sit on government advisory boards and hospital ethics committees and are often prominent voices in public discourse and policy debates.

Callahan argued that ethicists had two choices when it came to addressing their difficulties in communicating with scientists and physicians. They could "stick to traditional notions of philosophical … rigor" and continue "to mutter about the denseness and inanity" of their nonphilosophical colleagues. Or they could adapt an extra-disciplinary definition of rigor:

> Not the adaptation of expediency or passivity in the face of careless thinking, but rather a perception that the kind of rigor required for bioethics may be of a different sort than that normally required for the traditional philosophical or scientific disciplines. (Callahan 2007 [1973], 19)

As an example of a new kind of rigor, Callahan claimed that a good bioethical method would allow those who employ it to arrive at quick and viable solutions to moral dilemmas. If bioethicists are to be of use in such situations, philosophical reflection must be tempered by the demands of timeliness. They must have ready at hand a "normative ethic, which can presuppose some commonly shared principles" (2007 [1973], 21). Otherwise, bioethicists will remain mired in foundational debates restricted to an insular set of colleagues that would seldom contribute to actual decisions in real time.

Callahan's essay appeared the year after the Tuskegee trials became public and the year before the first federal-level US bioethics commission was formed. With

its landmark Belmont Report, released in 1979, that commission moved in the direction called for by Callahan. The Belmont Report outlined three principles (respect for persons, beneficence, and justice) that "provide an analytical framework that will guide the resolution of ethical problems arising from research involving human subjects."[5]

The Belmont Report seeded an approach to bioethics, "principlism," which contended that these three principles formed an adequate moral vocabulary for identifying and resolving any bioethical dilemma (see Beauchamp and Childress 2008).[6] Principlism held a monopoly on federal level bioethics commissions for nearly 30 years (see Briggle 2010). Principlism is the approach to bioethics taught at the historically formative and still influential Georgetown program. And it is the most widely debated form of bioethics, with entire books devoted to attacking (e. g. Baron 2006) and defending (Beauchamp and Childress 2008) it.

The principlist approach has helped bioethics to play the useful role envisioned for it by Callahan, especially in the area of human subjects of research. In this way, it has escaped the type of disciplinary capture that marginalized environmental ethics. But bioethics has purchased its relevance at a steep price. Bioethics has been captured in another sense. It has, as Evans (2002) noted, become "instrumentalist."

Principlism substitutes a "formally rational" discourse for a "substantively rational" one. Substantive rationality debates ends and means together. By contrast, formal rationality asks whether the means employed are being maximized to achieve assumed ends. Bioethicists settled the question of ends in advance with their principlist method. The goals of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are classically liberal positions that walk away from substantive debates about the good life (see Englehardt 1996). The only questions that remain are the instrumental ones of how best to achieve them. This allows bioethicists to fit the neoliberal mold of instrumental expertise, which in turn explains their social influence. As Jonathan Moreno (2005) put the point, bioethicists made a compromise. They get the social power that attaches to the label of "moral expert" and in exchange they forfeit any deep questions about the ongoing technoscientific remaking of the human condition.

This scenario makes the transdisciplinary success of bioethics as troubling as the failure of environmental philosophy. Bioethicists pass off as a neutral expertise what is in reality a contingent way of framing moral problems. They have constrained dialog and narrowed options without opening up these terms of constraint for debate. This has an exclusionary effect on any concerns that do not fit the supposedly neutral mold of the principlist discourse. What, for example, are we to make of claims about humans overreaching their proper sphere of action to "play God," or about the deeper anthropological meaning of procreation? Such questions are bracketed from the conversation.

Disciplinary knowledge is defined by subject matter, tools, or methodology—*not* by the nature of the problem being faced, or the use to which that knowledge is put. Disciplinary knowledge severs the relation between means and

ends, between knowledge production and its use by those outside the academy. Principlism is still victim of a form of disciplinary capture, because it establishes a framework in advance, prior to engagement with the particulars of a problem or question. It thus isolates and confines crucial intellectual activities solely within the domain of the experts. Indeed, this is what gives them their claim to expertise; that they have settled on *the* way of doing bioethics.

When Leon Kass took charge of the President's Council on Bioethics in 2001, he said it would be a "council *on* bioethics, not *of* bioethicists" (in Briggle 2010, 3). With their instrumental discourse, Kass contended, bioethicists had ceased being philosophers. They had abandoned the questions of ultimate goods and first principles now facing society in favor of a ready-made formula that harmonized with the presuppositions of a utilitarian and neoliberal age.

In the end, bioethics took the easy path to relevance. Socrates strode out into the world naked, as it were, with no established dogma or framework——just openness to whatever conversation would arise. This approach requires a tolerance for loose ends and sudden twists and a knack for quick thinking——being a public intellectual rather than a disciplinary expert. Bioethics, by contrast, armed itself with an "expertise" that shapes any encounter into one about autonomy, beneficence, and justice. While it appears that they are clarifying and resolving problems, they only do so by setting aside the increasingly central questions of what it is to be a person and what we should be using our autonomy *for*.

Our account of two subfields of applied philosophy poses key questions: how does philosophy avoid disciplinary capture? Is there a way to do work that is both socially relevant *and* richly philosophical? Or do philosophers only have two unpalatable choices: irrelevance (but on one's own terms) or usefulness (but according to narrow, un-philosophic standards)?

4.   Taking Philosophy Into the Field

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. (Deleuze and Guattari)[7]

Instances can certainly be found where applied philosophy has contributed to our thinking about a matter of public concern. Despite these contributions, applied philosophy remains a theoretically inadequate response to neoliberalism. Its failure at placing philosophy at the center of a wide variety of policy debates is rooted in its allegiance to disciplinary standards of scholarship. One sign of this failure: the lack of a literature within applied philosophy concerned with developing a way of gauging the impact of its work upon society at large.

The institutional situation of philosophy——philosophers inhabiting philosophy departments, writing for other philosophers, and training the next generation

almost exclusively for philosophy departments——is not a neutral framework for philosophic thought. Rather, it brings in its train a whole set of theoretical presuppositions concerning what counts as proper philosophic work. With standards of merit defined in terms of disciplinary success, it becomes nearly impossible to practically respond to real world challenges——whether those are the specifics of a given environmental or bioethical problem, or the more general demands for accountability that increasingly fill the life of an academic.

Philosophy and the liberal arts in general face a profound challenge. At all but a few elite locations, universities will be pressed to become more accountable to society. Moreover, accountability will increasingly be defined in neoliberal terms. We do not applaud these facts. They are simply the situation on the ground that we must address in any attempt at creating a viable philosophical culture in the twenty-first century.

Carrying on internalist philosophic debates while hoping for the best——complemented, perhaps, by an occasional op-ed bemoaning the philistinism of modern culture——is not a workable strategy. The walled approach, where we create a boundary between philosophy and society and defend an interior space (say, through appeals to faculty governance and peer review) from the onslaught of outside forces, is no longer practical. The future will require an ongoing set of negotiations between inside (the discipline of philosophy) and outside (society in its many forms).

Let us be clear: we heartily support theoretical, disciplinary philosophy. We engage in it ourselves. Ours is a pluralist argument: the error of twentieth century philosophy was precisely in only legitimating an inside, disciplinary game. In fact, we believe that the best theorizing is precisely that theorizing that exists in dialectical tension with a philosophical practice. These considerations do not have to reside in the same person. But they do both need to be recognized as coequals in terms of lying at the center of philosophical concern.

In truth, the metaphor itself is inadequate. Talk of "inside" and "outside" is an anachronism from the era of nation states and atoms rather than transnational corporations and bits. Disciplines define a territory to be defended. Today territories are becoming permeable and even nonexistent: what terrain does PLoS (Public Library of Science) inhabit? And to the extent that territories still exist, they are growing more difficult to defend: in a cyber war, where is the "inside" that we defend from an "outside?"

Culture today increasingly consists of networks and interstices, held together by connections that are intermittent, transitory, and subterranean. Communication across the Internet is rhizomatic: links lead in all directions prompting unanticipated exchanges and synergies. Surfing the net stands in stark contrast to the linear model of argumentation assumed as "rigorous" by theoretical and applied philosophers. In Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, the narrator mocks Mr Ramsey, an earnest twentieth century philosopher who struggles to get from L to M and then on to N and perhaps all the way to R someday. The information age makes absurd what Woolf already saw as antiquated: the idea of resolutely plodding along *the* path to knowledge.

When Deleuze and Guattari (1987) speak of rhizomatic politics they are emphasizing a subterranean approach to problems. Philosophy has always had a subterranean quality. Challenging the status quo leads to reaction; let insights insinuate themselves here and there. Much of the interaction that field philosophers have with other disciplines and society at large remains half-hidden and interstitial in nature——revealing concealed premises, drawing out implicit contradictions, and connecting disparate insights. Field philosophers emphasize the messiness and open-endedness of philosophic work, where thinking gropes in the dark. We must be ready to turn this way or that on encountering unexpected obstacles and opportunities. This approach contrasts both to the purity of environmental ethics' disciplinary approach and to the surety of bioethics' principlism.

"The field" is the set of inter and transdisciplinary practices where these interactions occur. Field philosophers begin with the problems faced by nonphilosophic actors in real-world settings and seek to make contributions deemed successful according to more-than-disciplinary standards.

We identify three central characteristics of field philosophy.

First is the question of audience. With the exception of bioethics, applied philosophy has uncritically assumed a primarily disciplinary audience. Its results may eventually be disseminated in one way or another to nonphilosophers (perhaps, mailing the resulting article to someone). But this is ad hoc: nonphilosophical audiences are not designed into the work plan, do not form part of the metatheoretical ruminations of applied philosophers, and have no real effect on the nature of the theorizing. In field philosophy, the initial audience consists of one or another specific group of nonphilosophers. Moreover, nonphilosophers initially define what counts as a problem and a solution. At least initially, philosophers play a marginal role in the process.

Field philosophy rejects the linear model of disciplinary knowledge according to which knowledge is produced in isolation from the context of use and then deposited in a reservoir of peer-reviewed publications for potential users to draw from Pielke and Byerly (1998). Rather, field philosophers engage in the coproduction of knowledge with nonphilosophers, where the context of use defines the field of thought (Gibbons et al. 2004). Though disciplinary peers retain a crucial role in field philosophy, a field philosopher recognizes an equal if not greater obligation to his or her nondisciplinary peers and the issues they are confronting. Disseminating results to one's disciplinary peers may be necessary for the field philosopher (especially as a way to improve disciplinary practices), but it is not sufficient to demonstrate rigor.

Second is the question of theory. Applied philosophy is top-down in orientation: theory is higher than practice, and applied philosophers focus on getting the theory right through ongoing philosophical debate and testing the theory against cases (Glock 2011; Young 2004). The framework for intellectual analysis is established in advance and is applied top-down to whatever case happens to be under scrutiny. Field philosophy is bottom-up: it begins with a problem in the world that has a philosophical dimension and directs its attention toward working with the

parties involved——seldom philosophers——on terms initially set by them but continually refined as the process of thinking-together ensues.

Field philosophy takes Husserl's "to the things themselves" seriously, going out to the actual situations in the world (the field) in order to address problems encountered there. The point of field philosophy, then, is to take on such cases and work through issues, perhaps even moving toward a solution, rather than engaging cases as a method for testing, applying, or (more likely) bolstering a pet theory or set of principles. Field philosophers remain as open as possible to seeing "the problem" from multiple perspectives and at multiple depths. There is no determination in advance as to problem definition or the correct framing of philosophical analysis. Moreover, there is no preset understanding of what counts as an acceptably rigorous answer. Appropriate rigor will be defined on a case-by-case basis.

Third is the question of metaphilosophy. Field philosophy is not antitheoretical. But it recognizes that the main audience for theoretical philosophical discussions is other philosophers. At some point (such as in this essay), field philosophers turn to theory and address fellow philosophers. But rather than (as with applied philosophy, and with x-phi) stopping when we have returned to the study, content at having sufficiently strengthened or refuted our philosophic theories, field philosophy continues the cycle, over and over, between field and study, a never ending dialectic between practice and thinking. While disciplinary philosophers still cling to the idea that one can make progress in philosophy (along the lines of progress in physics), field philosophers embrace an alternative notion of progress that places more value on helping nonphilosophers work through and reimagine their own problems. Whereas disciplinary philosophy measures "progress" by the extent to which it increases our understanding of the world, field philosophy measures progress by the extent to which it manages to change the world (but again, without pretending to know in advance of the actual field work what kind of change will be for the best).

5. Conclusion

Having spent several years on the island of Utopia, the philosopher Raphael returns to Europe hoping to convince political leaders to implement reforms based on that ideal society. Thomas More (as a character in his own story, *Utopia*, first published in 1516) believes Raphael's "recommendations on matters of policy could be immensely beneficial to society" (More 1999, 76). But Raphael is hesitant, because his recommendations would require rethinking basic assumptions (e.g. about property) and reforming well-entrenched practices. He is pessimistic about the dilemma we raised above. Philosophers can either banter among themselves about first principles, but remain socially marginal. Or they can serve society, but only by being shoehorned into a practicality defined by the very standards and assumptions any good philosopher would wish to question.

More tries to convince Raphael that "another philosophy" would find a home in the halls of power: a philosophy that "recognizes the play that's being staged, adapts itself to playing a part in it, revises what it has to say as the drama unfolds, and speaks appropriately for the time and place" (More 1999, 83). More calls for a field philosophy that, perhaps ironically, takes *topos* seriously. The place for this other philosophy is not the utopia of disciplines, those social nowheres that define their own ideal parameters. Rather, it is the messy and evolving world, a dynamic field of interactions.

In More's story, the corrupting influence on philosophy is the King and his demand for knowledge that could keep him in power. Today, it is neoliberalism that is threatening ideals of pure philosophy. In 2011, in the face of severe budget cuts the President of the University of Nevada proposed closing the UNLV philosophy department.[8] At the same time, the president of Howard University recommended shuttering its philosophy department. Such pressures are, of course, not restricted to philosophy: the Governor of Florida recently claimed that state funds should be shifted to practical areas such as the STEM disciplines rather than useless fields such as anthropology.

We note above that the STEM disciplines have an advantage over the humanities when faced with neoliberal demands. STEM disciplines can plausibly talk the talk of accountability in terms of "return on investment." In other words, STEM disciplines can speak in a language neoliberals understand. And they have been rewarded for doing so. Yet, there is ongoing resistance within the STEM disciplines in engaging neoliberalism on its own terms. Rather than answering calls to account for the broader societal impact of their research, many members of the STEM community engage in resistance. We have argued elsewhere that such resistance is a mistake and that STEM researchers should start owning neoliberal demands (Holbrook and Frodeman 2012b, 2012c). We suggest a similar approach for philosophy.

We see widespread opportunities to simultaneously do groundbreaking philosophical work and to address societal needs——that is, to kill two birds (the question of academic value and the question of transacademic value) with one stone. Our own work has engaged society on issues of science and technology policy, often in connection with environmental issues (e.g. Briggle 2012; Frodeman 2008; Holbrook 2012). The opportunities here are endless; the world has many problems to which philosophers can contribute. By linking knowledge production and use——that is, by dedisciplining philosophy——philosophers and other humanists can develop a new language in which we can respond effectively to neoliberal demands for accountability.

We grant the appeal of the idea of keeping one's distance and maintaining one's independence from societal concerns. After all, being able to speak truth to power requires a certain critical distance from society. As von Humboldt argued in founding the modern research university, the value of the university to society is grounded in its autonomy from society (see Holbrook 2010). The humanities in particular are often valuable because they are, for all intents and purposes that go

beyond disciplinary standards, useless for society (Fish 2008). Instead of engaging neoliberalism, there is ample reason to fight against it, defending our autonomy to the bitter end.

But we have argued that such an approach is unsustainable. Field philosophy should be seen as a response to the growing presence of neoliberalism within the academy and across society. But field philosophy can also be defended against the charge of simply being a tool of neoliberalism. Such an objection to field philosophy depends on viewing the demand for autonomy and demands for accountability as opposites. Of course this is the most common conception today. We suggest, however, that it is not only practically, but also theoretically inadequate. Autonomy makes sense only in a dialectical relationship with accountability.

The point is not to respond to demands for accountability by pulling ever more forcefully in the "opposite" direction. Instead, we need to take ownership of demands for accountability——to expand our autonomy into the sphere of accountability and the metrics that define its parameters. This approach will require rethinking the place of the university in society. It will require rethinking the role of the academic. The question of what counts as accountability should be treated as a philosophic question (e.g. Kant 1793). For philosophers, it will mean rethinking the relationship between the philosopher and the *polis*. This, as we have argued, is itself a philosophic question. We also think that it is *the* question for field philosophy to explore.

Notes

[1] But the leader of the coup, Helen Dragas, was reappointed by the governor to the board for another four-year term.
[2] Exceptions to this general disregard are often found within the English literature, e.g. Chris Newfield, Louis Menand, and Stanley Fish.
[3] Krohn (2010, 32).
[4] In the early twentieth century, the Vienna School originally had a social–political as well as an epistemological focus. The former was lost in the aftermath of the World War II (Reisch 2005). But there is a crucial difference between social–political philosophy, which offers high-theoretical accounts, and applied philosophy, which seeks to address specific controversies (Frodeman 2011).
[5] The Belmont Report is available here: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.
[6] One could see principlism as just one of numerous forms of bioethical inquiry, including virtue ethics, feminism, libertarianism, and religious ethics of all types. This diversity has been taken to suggest that nothing identifiable as "bioethics" even exists (see Turner 2009). Can a postmodern queer theorist and a Baptist theologian really form parts of the same whole? Others have argued that "rigor" in bioethics does not really exist, because so many disciplines are involved, each with its own methods and standards for defining problems and establishing acceptable work (Adler and Shaul 2012; Kopelman 2006). Yet although bioethics is clearly diverse, principlism stands out as a predominant and mainstream approach.
[7] Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 27).
[8] An updated plan calls for merely removing all nontenured professors in philosophy, anthropology, and sociology, in lieu of the elimination of philosophy (Etchison 2011).

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