

A Brief Reply to Maya Frodeman

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I would like to consider briefly three points in connection with issues raised by Maya Frodeman.

1. Academics' approval or disapproval in transforming the knowledge production system in universities does not mean much. Certainly the majority of academics do not want such changes, but the main reason is not that they fear losing their position in the social structure of the university. Rather, a serious difficulty follows in recognizing and taking up new ideas. Many academics believe sincerely that new knowledge policies will destroy science. And they are right if science is considered by politicians, in the same way as by academics, and if the science policy does not take into consideration the changes outlined by Robert Frodeman. Philosophy offers the ability to see the current features of contemporary science that make it fundamentally different compared to classical science (which some scientists and philosophers perceive as the only possible one).

2. I think the field of philosophy is a significant achievement, but I would not talk about a revolution. In recent decades, philosophers almost never use the notion of revolution and that is no accident. The appearance of new knowledge does not mean that a revolution destroys old knowledge and, as a result, new concepts (theories, paradigms) are built on the ruins. Classical science, for example, continues to function and, in many cases, remains useful. Pluralism and communication prevail in current science.

3. At the beginning of the last century, physicists recognized that their science had become too abstract and understandable only to a very narrow circle of specialists. It was considered a drawback—science was too far removed from the interests and needs of the people. Currently, politicians support the tendency to make science accessible to more people given their desire to have scientific results that can withstand competition in the market. As I see it, one should keep in mind that if a research study is addressed to professionals in different areas, and not just specialists, the level of scientific research inevitably declines. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in movies and on television. When a writer grants popular opinion an advantage over serious performances, which are more difficult to understand and which result in fewer viewers and less income, the development of art is slowed down. Science can be useful for society only if it gives new results, which cannot be understood at once by many people, including students. This process is normal and one should not make special efforts to accelerate the process of understanding.

I agree with Maya Frodeman's high opinion of the ideas of Robert Frodeman and Adam Briggle, but I think that the defense of the field philosophy could be more persuasive. In any case, Maya Frodeman's comments put on the table many serious problems that deserve to be discussed.

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References

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