

London, England, 6 July 2025

David Chalmers and David Bourget (Principals)

PhilPapers Foundation

Centre for Digital Philosophy

Western University

Stevenson Hall

1151 Richmond St.

London, ON

CANADA, N6A 5B8

Re: Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties, Transparency, and Accountability at PhilPapers

Dear David Chalmers and David Bourget,

I write this open letter to formally request public acknowledgment and resolution of persistent breaches of fiduciary-epistemic obligations at PhilPapers. As I have recently argued and advanced in my scholarly work—building upon foundational theories of fiduciary responsibility (Frankel, 2011) and epistemic accountability (Barnett, 2018)—academic repositories and platforms like PhilPapers bear critical fiduciary duties of transparency, openness, responsiveness, and epistemic accountability towards the scholarly community.

My recent experiences with PhilPapers have highlighted troubling failures in fulfilling these obligations:

- Persistent technical barriers prevent me from uploading publications or submitting messages via the PhilPapers platform. These barriers have been accompanied by a lack of explanation or transparent communication, creating an atmosphere reminiscent of Kafkaesque opacity.
- Direct communications to Professors Chalmers and Bourget have gone unanswered, reflecting unresponsiveness incompatible with the fiduciary obligations you have assumed.
- My repeated attempts to engage PhilPapers publicly—including through explicit posts on LinkedIn—have similarly met with silence, reinforcing the perception of systemic epistemic gatekeeping.

These concerns are not merely procedural or technical. Rather, they reflect a deeper institutional neglect of fiduciary responsibilities explicitly outlined in my recent paper, 'Why We Must Reject the

Colonial Peer Review: Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties, Epistemic Agency, and Institutional Openness in the Age of Generative AI' (Kahl, 2025). In this paper, I innovated the concept of fiduciary-epistemic duties, explicitly detailing the obligations repositories like PhilPapers owe to scholars, students, and the wider academic community:

- Transparency in decision-making and communication processes;
- Openness and responsiveness to scholars' legitimate concerns and inquiries;
- Accountability in promptly addressing systemic failures and clearly explaining institutional practices.

PhilPapers occupies a significant epistemic role in contemporary scholarship and has publicly assumed these fiduciary responsibilities. As such, breaches of these duties—whether through technical malfunction, managerial oversight, or deliberate epistemic neglect—constitute serious epistemic harm, diminishing scholars' epistemic autonomy and contributing directly to epistemic injustice.

Given the gravity of these breaches, I formally request:

- An immediate public acknowledgment by Professors Chalmers and Bourget of receipt of this letter.
- Clear and prompt transparency concerning the technical and institutional issues I have detailed above.
- A public and unequivocal commitment from PhilPapers to uphold and honour its fiduciary-epistemic obligations henceforth.

I look forward to your timely and accountable response, which I trust will restore integrity, transparency, and epistemic justice within the scholarly ecosystem PhilPapers serves.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Kahl', with a stylized, flowing script.

Peter Kahl

Independent Scholar

LL.M Candidate, University of Reading (England)

Author, 'Why We Must Reject the Colonial Peer Review' (2025)

Email: peter.kahl@juris.vc