

## Editorial: Philosophical Investigation

When Callicles dismissed philosophers as useless he did not mean that they were unemployable. When Socrates argued for the indispensability of philosophy he was not concerned with its contribution to the growth of the Athenian economy. For centuries in classical and post-classical times it was possible to question or defend the value of our activities without benefit of the concepts of input, output and throughput, and the life of a person or a people could be examined without invoking the authority of an Examining Board or even a Board of Examiners. In our own age degree courses in philosophy are long established, and two boards have recently instituted A level papers in what we have learned to call our subject. We now have to acknowledge that we are costly and prove that we are effective. Employers, parents and governments ask for evidence that philosophy graduates are competitive in the labour market, or that they can usefully teach in schools in spite of having been trained in a 'non-school subject'. The recent Green Paper on Higher Education asks universities to foster economic growth, and says that the Government will use success in the labour market as one 'indicator' of the health of a university. The officially published University Statistics (in Vol. II, *First Destinations of University Graduates*) suggest that philosophy graduates have a poor employment record. The graduates and their teachers have a different impression.

The Royal Institute of Philosophy and the University of Warwick are collaborating in an investigation designed to seek further and better particulars of the matter in dispute. The Institute has accordingly issued what the longest memories at Gordon Square believe to be the first 'press release' in our sixty-year history.

The University of Warwick has already conducted a 'pilot survey' of its own philosophy graduates of 1980, 1981 and 1982. It confirms some facts that university teachers of philosophy already know in their 'anecdotal' way. Many philosophy graduates take longer than most other graduates to settle on a choice of career but are nearly all successful after the choice has been made. Some of the difficulties that some of them do meet arise from ill-founded prejudice against philosophy as a preparation for a career. A degree in philosophy is of particular interest to many employers in the world of computing. From our own observation we can add that it is also a well-travelled route into broadcasting, television, journalism, publishing, writing, films, advertising and other 'media' careers.

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The press release and the results of the pilot survey are themselves partly anecdotal, and among the remarks it quotes from its subjects is one of some philosophical interest: 'Although I was spectacularly bad at logic, employers believe this explains my aptitude for computer work'. The structure of the remark tends to confirm the content, unless the author means what he (or she?) actually says: that badness at logic is regarded as a qualification for working with computers.

The Royal Institute of Philosophy will continue to provide employment for a small number of graduates in philosophy. Mr Denniss has retired from the Secretaryship after giving energetic and thoughtful service since his appointment in October 1983. He is succeeded by Mrs Mary Tiles, author of *Bachelard: Science and Objectivity*, who has taught philosophy at Oxford, Cambridge, Leicester, the Open University and the University of South Carolina. Her colleagues and the members of the Institute are already forming a favourable view of her value in this corner of the labour market, even though her disqualifications include three degrees in philosophy.