

### Roundtable 1:

#### What do non-philosophers want from philosophers of education?

The Spencer Foundation has recently established an Initiative for Philosophy in Educational Policy and Practice, aimed at further developing the field of philosophy of education, with special attention to the moral and political philosophy of education. We hope both to induce more philosophers to enter the field, and to gain more attention to the field from other education scholars and practitioners and policymakers. But what do other scholars, practitioners, and policymakers want from philosophy of education? What philosophical writing, if any, do they pay attention to at present? What disappointments have they had, if any, when they have sought out philosophical writing? What would they read if they knew where to find it? Of course, what they say they want cannot be the final word: they may be ill-informed about what philosophy can do, or they may lack crucial insight into their own work that would enable them to comment well. But it is worth asking, and entering a dialogue with them. We have invited 4 people we regard as stakeholders in philosophy of education to address this question in a roundtable discussion. We have asked them to identify one, or two, problems that exercise them, and about which they think careful philosophical analysis could be illuminating, with the aim of providing ample time for audience discussion of the issues. Participants would be:

Mike McPherson (President of the Spencer Foundation)

Professor Geoff Whitty (Director, Institute of Education)

David Woods (Dept of Children, Schools, and Families)

Elaine Unterhalter (Institute of Education)

Professor Sir Tim Brighouse (former CEO of Oxfordshire and Birmingham, former Commissioner of London Schools) (invited – has to work out availability – McPherson will chair, rather than contribute, if Brighouse can participate).

### Roundtable 2:

#### Social Justice and Higher Education Subsidies

Most developed countries provide substantial subsidies for undergraduate education. But undergraduate education is selective, and the selection mechanisms – both financial and academic -- typically track social class origin of the students closely. Successful completion of higher education typically adds considerably to the expected lifetime income of the student, as well as providing access to numerous other unequally distributed benefits. The subsidy to undergraduate education is typically the only significant government grant available to young people who want to invest in their prospective employment and earnings opportunities.

What should a good theory of social justice say about this subsidy? On the face of it the subsidy cannot be defended on equal opportunity grounds (since it seems to inhibit, rather than trigger, social mobility); on basic liberty grounds (since it involves redistribution) or on the grounds that it benefits the least advantaged (since it appears, at least, to be available only to the more advantaged, and to secure for them further advantages). It is sometimes justified on the grounds that it develops human capital that would otherwise not be developed, and sometimes on the more egalitarian ground that, even though the subsidy does not appear to facilitate social mobility, in fact without it social mobility would be even worse because the few working class children who attend college would be disabled from doing so, because they would be rationally averse to taking on debt.

These normative questions underlie crucial public debates, such as the extent to which the US Federal government ought to underwrite student loans and how much support it should give to low-income students in HE; the debates around the introduction of top-up fees, and the introduction of variation in top-up fees for UK universities; and the debates around the reform of European universities. They are also relevant to the deeper issue of how much governments should do to encourage the expansion or restriction of participation in HE.

We propose a roundtable discussion of these issues. We have asked 4 people to discuss them:

Michael McPherson (President of the Spencer Foundation)

Co-Chair of the College Board's Rethinking Student Aid study group, and lead author of its recommendations, Fulfilling the Commitment: Recommendations for Reforming Federal Student Aid

Harry Brighouse (Philosophy, UW Madison). Author of School Choice and Social Justice (Oxford) and On Education (Routledge).

Judith Lichtenberg (Philosophy, Georgetown University). Author of Levelling the Playing Field: Justice, Politics, and College Admissions (Rowman and Littlefield)

Stuart White (Politics, Jesus College, Oxford) author of The Civic Minimum (Oxford) and Equality (Polity)