

Editorial: Earnings

According to *The Times* (24/6/97), along with theology, philosophy is at the bottom of the graduate earnings league. Dentistry is top. What might especially disturb some about this claim (which is based on a Birmingham University survey of 18,000 graduates in Britain) is that what is being compared are not initial salaries, but those earned 10 years after graduation. The myth that philosophy graduates start slowly but forge ahead later is well and truly punctured.

There are many possible reactions to this. There is, of course, the high minded view. The value of philosophy does not lie in what it enables one to earn. There are more things to life than spending one's days peering into other people's mouths. True, but easier for a university professor to articulate than for the average male philosophy graduate on £13,000 per annum. Others will conclude that the survey shows that philosophy dons and graduates need to beef up philosophy's transferable skill quotient. (Not unreasonable either, but beware of 'key skills'.) Then again, perhaps we need to examine the fine grain of the survey; maybe 'philosophy graduates' are those who read philosophy, period: but what about those who did Greats or PPE or even 'philosophy-with-tourism' or 'philosophy and motor mechanics'?

Still, all is not doom. For those who enjoy a little *Schadenfreude*, we have to record that theology graduates did *very* much worse than philosophers (50% worse in fact). And the producer of the Spice Girls film (*Spice The Movie*) read theology *and* philosophy at Oxford. He obtained what he calls 'very good third class' honours, and generously attributes his later success to what he learned in his degree. We should stop pretending we haven't heard of the Spice Girls. What we urgently need is further research on the current earnings of those who got thirds in joint philosophy degrees in 1987.