



Leading education  
and social research  
Institute of Education  
University of London

# The philosophy of higher education: its scope and tasks

– a personal view

Ronald Barnett, Emeritus Professor UCL IOE

Higher Education reading group, 24 January 2020

[www.ronaldbarnett.co.uk](http://www.ronaldbarnett.co.uk)

[www.ioe.ac.uk](http://www.ioe.ac.uk)



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# Emergence of the field

- Brubacher
  - Niblett
  - Barnett
- 
- NB: Not to be subsumed within the philosophy of education

# Recent developments

- Journal - <https://www.peterlang.com/view/journals/ptihe/ptihe-overview.xml>
- PaTHES - <https://pathes.org/>
- Annual international conference: <https://www.humsam.uu.se/phec2020>
- Springer series - <https://www.springer.com/series/15094>

# The field as social philosophy

- Philosophy and sociology
- Adorno, MacIntyre, Gellner, Habermas, Arendt
- Concepts are social
- The field is inherently social – social institution, social practices
- eg, concepts of fairness, of academic freedom
- The idea of empirical warrant
- ('Scholarly research')

# My own conception of the field

- Conceptual
- Social ('supercomplexity')
- Critical
- Realist
- Layered
- Ideological
- Imaginative
- Practical
- Feasible
- Utopian

# Distinguish ‘higher education’ and ‘university’

- Overlaps
- Institutions/ practices
- Ideas
- University
  - As idea
  - As institution
- Higher education – different meanings
  - - Critical standards
    - What is higher about ‘higher education’?

# Ten key concepts for me

- Knowledge
- Truth
- Ideology
- Academic freedom
- University
- Higher education
- Criticality
- Reason
- Utopia
- Culture

# Planes of the University

- What is it to understand the University?
- Planes
- Trajectories
- Responsibilities
- Possibilities

(Ontology and Epistemology)



# 'The Ecological University: A Feasible Utopia'

- The idea of ecology
- Fact & value
- Responsibilities
- Beyond sustainability
- Glimpsing possibilities
- Criteria of adequacy

# Some 'real' – and difficult - questions

- Are the humanities worth saving?
- Should non-liberal speakers be banned from campuses?
- What place should values have in a university?
- What is the value of research?
- Should higher education be more than the acquisition of knowledge & skills?
- Does/ should the university serve/ provide 'public goods'?
- Does a university need leadership?

# 'The Philosophy of Higher Education'

- Proposed contents of the book
- Structure & chapters
- Comments?

## Conclusions – not really!

- A fledgling field
- Butterfly emerging
- Taking off
- Work all around the world
- But matters are urgent
- The world is faced with huge problems
- The university and higher education are vital
- But then so is scholarly work
- To aid their development and their possibilities in the world.



**Institute of Education**  
University of London  
20 Bedford Way  
London WC1H 0AL

Tel +44 (0)20 7612 6000  
Fax +44 (0)20 7612 6126  
Email [info@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:info@ioe.ac.uk)  
Web [www.ioe.ac.uk](http://www.ioe.ac.uk)