



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



The Philosophy
Foundation
THINKING CHANGES

Tackling extremism through philosophy in schools

ESRC DTP Collaborative PhD Studentship University of Birmingham and The Philosophy Foundation

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the Universities of Warwick, Aston, Birmingham, Leicester, Loughborough and Nottingham.

The University of Birmingham, in collaboration with The Philosophy Foundation, is now inviting applications for an ESRC PhD studentship, commencing in October 2019, on the topic ***Tackling extremism through philosophy in schools***.

Can schools fairly be tasked with tackling, or building resistance to, something we might sensibly call ‘extremism’? And if they can, is there reason to think that putting philosophy on the curriculum might help them to meet this challenge? The aim of this theoretical research project will be to develop and defend answers to these two questions – with no prior expectation that they will be answered in the affirmative.

The idea that schools should do something about the threat of extremism has recently gained considerable ground in education policy in the UK. The 2015 Counter Terrorism and Security Act imposed a duty on schools to ‘have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’. The Department for Education’s advice to schools on implementing the Prevent duty charges them with helping children and young people to ‘understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments’. The suggestion that schools might tackle extremism through the teaching of philosophy is less politically entrenched, but has been widely canvassed. In a Department for Education report published in 2010, *Philosophy for Children (P4C)* is one of several approaches recommended for building resilience to extremism among young people.

There are serious and difficult questions to be asked about these developments. The proposed research project will focus on the **conceptual** and **normative** dimensions of these questions, rather than the empirical dimensions. Certainly, any recommendation to the effect that we can protect children against extremism by teaching them philosophy will require empirical support. But, prior to the design of empirical studies, there is crucial theoretical work to be done on what exactly extremism is, why we should be worried about it, whether it is a problem capable in principle of educational remediation, and whether there is anything in the nature of philosophy that might be expected to remediate it. It is this theoretical work, pursued through the analytical and argumentative methods of philosophy of education, that the studentship-holder will undertake.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form available online at www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/collaborativeandjoint/#collaborative and email this, along with two references, to pgeducation-enquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 6 March 2019**.

MGS PhD Studentships

Our PhD studentships cover fees, a maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements listed here: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the project prior to application can be directed to Professor Michael Hand (m.hand@bham.ac.uk).