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Higher Education, Markets, and Emotional Values

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ABSTRACT *Reflecting on the generational changes in student movements and the echoes we find in student resistance in the UK in 2011 to the privatization of higher education, this paper argues for a wider understanding of the sources of stress, anxiety and uncertainty of young people. Engaging with the individualization of experience that is encouraged through a neoliberal culture, the effects of changes over time in universities, the increasing use of internships, and the differential effects across class, "race" and ethnicities, the paper goes on to argue that those engaged in the helping professions need to engage psychotherapy and politics in new terms. Thinking beyond the familial frameworks of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, the paper shows that the marketization of values encourages young people into an instrumental relationship with self and a fear of being "a loser" in ways that call for different terms of engagement with emotional lives. There are tensions between an instrumental relationship to therapy of younger generations and humanistic values that potentially challenge the market values and commodification of life fostered within a taken-for-granted neoliberal culture. The paper seeks to learn from the fundamental questioning of the nature of education, values and meaning of life that has been triggered in the UK with lessons that are globally relevant.*

Key words: higher education; gender; generations; emotional lives; stress; neoliberalism; privatization of experience; internships

STUDENT MOVEMENTS AND THE POLITICS OF HOPE

On the day after the vote in Parliament that could potentially triple student fees to £9000 per annum on 9 December 2010 and the violence that exploded that evening across parts of London after a largely peaceful day of mass demonstrations, the editorial in *The Guardian* newspaper warned in familiar balanced terms:

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> It is important neither to exaggerate the violence that occurred in central London on Thursday nor to trivialise it. Crowd violence is a relatively rare but nonetheless a recurrent aspect of British life. It should neither be foolishly romanticised nor overly demonised. (Rushbridger, 2010, p. 46)

The editorial recognized that "A sensible society needs to reflect on such events as well as condemning them . . . A responsible government should not treat such disorder, if it occurs, as exclusively a policing problem. There have to be creative political responses." (Rushbridger, p. 46) At the same time it asked:

> Is 2010 a new 1968, as some like to think? Maybe. It is likely that the class of 2010 will be marked forever by these events. Perhaps, 40 years from now, this week's demos will be the subject of nostalgic documentaries and writings, as those of 1968 have recently been. (p. 46)

These events serve as a reminder of how generations are formed and marked by particular events that they have to find their own ways of coming to terms with. As the world changes, along with the forms of technology through which experiences are shaped, so also are emotional lives and their relationships with politics. Different generations have different hopes and the generation of 1968 was shaped by a particular feeling that the world *could be changed* and that the structures of capitalist power were not inevitably set but could be transformed through their efforts. This hope for transformational change died away in Britain with the rise of Thatcherism and the emergence of a neoliberal culture and politics that shaped more individualistic aspirations for those who were to become students in the 1980s. They were encouraged to be ambitious for themselves as individuals and to succeed in accumulating money, wealth and power.

Students from elite universities no longer shunned the City (i.e. business) and established political parties but, rather, were keen to make their way in corporations or the research offices of political parties. They were shaped by a *narrow* sense of political possibilities and they identified with their realism and sense of individual ambition. They flourished with New Labour shaping individualized and often competitive relations with self that sustained the aspirational culture of neoliberalism. If there were issues that they faced in their emotional lives they would look to psychotherapies for "quick fixes": they were not so concerned with making changes in their lives. So they were surprised when the global financial crisis happened in 2008 and the student movements that were to emerge across Europe as a response.

The National Campaign against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) was formed on 6 February 2010 after a conference in London of 170 university students who were engaged in activism on their campuses. NCAFC is supportive of non-violent direct action. It organized the national day of action on 24 November 2010, which was not officially backed by the National Union of Students, that called for students and pupils to walk out of schools, colleges and universities to protest against government plans. Michael Chessum, a sabbatical officer working as the educational and campaigns officer for the student union at University College London, was one of those behind the first conference: "I sat down last summer and decided we should have mass demonstrations against tuition fees because otherwise free education was going to fall off the map." Though it makes connections with other political

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organizations, Chessum feels "The strength of the national campaign is that it doesn't rely on those groups at all. Our activists are basically all independents" (Chessum, 2010, p. 8).

Chessum also wrote a piece published in *The Guardian* on the day of the mass demonstrations of 9 December entitled "Today is our 1968 moment", in which he takes David Cameron and Nick Clegg (the British Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, respectively) to task for patronizing students for saying that they have not understood the arguments for the increase in fees, and suggesting that if they took time they would accept the rationality of the case. Chessum (2010) insisted that:

> We have read them, and we don't like them. These proposals will put up barriers to access for poorer students who fear a lifetime of debt; they will hammer arts and humanities; and they will lead to the closing and merging of universities that are reliant on teaching grants, most of which are disproportionately populated with students from less privileged backgrounds. (p. 38)

What was at stake was a sense of future possibilities for a generation that would shape their emotional lives and sense of identity. There was anger on the streets because students felt future hopes were being broken for their younger brothers and sisters who would never have the chance to go to "Uni". In August 2011 this anger was to turn to rage as the breaking of futures was an element that was to fuel the riots across England with terrible consequences.

Chessum admitted that there were elements that mark an improvement of what was on offer but insisted that:

> the concessions and apologies of recent days pale in comparison to the privatisation and marketisation of higher education. The reforms threaten to turn universities into businesses and students into compliant consumers. If the protests have shown anything, it is that we are nothing of the sort. (p. 38)

He asserted that: "It is the government that is failing to understand the situation." What they are involved in doing is making a structural change not simply in the financing of universities but in their very purpose. As Chessum (2010) wrote: "The government is doing more than plugging a funding gap, it is fundamentally changing the purpose of education: not simply orientating it towards the logic of the market, but introducing the market directly into the system." (p. 38) With the withdrawal of state funding for students who would study in the humanities and the social sciences, it is clearly a measure of social engineering that challenges the very possibility of education as a public good. Rather, education becomes a commodity that becomes reserved for the rich who do not have to deal with the anxieties of future debt.

MARKETIZATION AND EMOTIONAL LIVES

If we are to grasp the changing relationship between psychotherapy and politics we need to be able to think beyond the familiar frameworks that have traditionally framed classical forms of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. We need to recognize how the individualism of a prevailing neoliberal culture helps to shape the relationships that people from diverse class, "race" and ethnic backgrounds learn to relate to themselves and others. For example, it has tended to shape certain controlled masculinities where both young men and young women

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within "post-feminist" cultures learn to identify themselves as independent and self-sufficient; "autonomy" comes to be framed within traditional masculine terms; and there is a fear that travels across gender of vulnerability and dependency that is taken to be signs of weakness. Also, within the terms of gender equality young people learn that they are equal, but this means that it is difficult to frame a feminist language that can help illuminate the predicaments that young women face. Rather, they learn to treat feminism as the "f" word that somehow belongs to their mother's generation but does not speak to their own. They learn, within a neoliberal culture, that it is their individual abilities and hard work that will shape their futures and, therefore, that they only have themselves to blame if they make "bad choices" about their futures. Thus they can be reluctant to seek help from caring professions because this can reflect a (perceived) failure on their part, and because they assume that it is up to themselves to assert control over their lives.

If we are to understand contemporary student movements we have to understand that these processes of marketization, i.e. preparing young people for the market, have been going on for some time in Britain where the government has been directly involved in the reorganization of higher education. This has been going on at different levels. In relation to academic staff this has been organized through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), shortly to become the Research Excellence Framework, through which academic departments are financed, at least in part, i.e. through the "success" of the research activities of its staff. Though there are also practices put into play for the assessment of teaching, these have not had the same financial consequences, though this will probably change with the decline of research funding opportunities. For the competitive relationships between departments teaching the same disciplines in different universities the research rating of the department in the RAE has remained critical. Over the last decades it has established not only the relative status of the department but also the funding it will be able to call upon. This has created its own atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty that has made universities tense spaces for academics, administrators and researchers who feel they are constantly being assessed on their performance and being stretched to increase their "outputs" in both teaching and research. Within competitive institutions particular regimes of stress are produced that travel across institutions and affect the learning experience of students.

Neoliberalism, however, tends to be impatient of emotions and feelings, even stress-related ones, which are quickly dismissed as "touchy-feely"; signs of individual weakness, so that both men and women can find it difficult to seek help; and/or that they are "losers" – which is the threat that hangs over all within a neoliberal culture. Along with this has gone a focus on particular forms of funded research and thus a measure of "performance" to do with the levels of funded research an individual member of staff can "deliver" to the department. This means that there is a financial measure of the "value" of the research that has to do with the level of funding it can capture from external sources, principally research councils and European research funds. One's status as a researcher is directly measured by the sums you attract.

Obviously, this encourages certain kinds of research over others and can undermine traditional forms of scholarship. It also tends to focus upon short-term research that can be completed at high value in a short period of time, thus releasing you to bid for more funds for other projects. This encourages a particular kind of short-term specialization and makes it hard to devote time to intellectual research that can take years to bring to fruition and cannot be measured in similar terms. As a colleague, Ross Gill (personal communication, 3 June

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2011), wrote to me: "It often seems as if we have to retire precisely to enjoy the intellectual pursuits that we thought would be part of academia." What is clear is that the very relationship of teaching and learning is going to change profoundly in the neo-liberal university in which students in the new coalition settlement that looked to the USA for its model of the privatized neoliberal university are going to be concerned with "value for money".

You can discern similar tendencies within psychotherapy training whereby generations brought up within a neoliberal market economies have learnt to think of psychotherapy as a career option that is to be evaluated in terms of the income and professional status it might offer. They are willing to involve themselves in experiential work because this is a requirement of the course, though this does not seem to have the same significance for them as it had for an earlier generation that was more concerned with personal growth and development. Neoliberal market economies encourage a more instrumental relationship towards emotional life as a discrete set of personal skills that can enhance particular capacities and so give people a competitive edge in the market. This can affect the motivations with which people come into psychotherapy training and the difficulties they have in really engaging with experiential work. It can also encourage a "problem-solving" relationship to emotional life that makes it difficult to appreciate the relational aspects of psychotherapeutic work and the need for people to work emotionally on themselves if they want to form deeper connections with their clients.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

On 9 December 2010 it was my birthday and so I was 65 when I attended the demonstration in Parliament Square. I had been thinking about the next stages in my academic life and the kind of future I wanted to create for myself, so it was a good time also to reflect upon the 40 years or so that I had been teaching in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London. I have lived through many changes in the organization of teaching and learning but here I want to focus upon the changes that have been brought about through recent globalized marketization and a shift in values. As part of a '68 generation we were committed to teaching and learning with our students and we were ready to question traditional academic hierarchies and the relevance of traditional disciplinary boundaries that seemed to get in the way of focusing on questions that were central to living ethical and good lives within late capitalist societies.

We were serious teachers who were concerned to relate to our students in more equal ways and to appreciate where they were coming from individually as we attempted to teach them different disciplinary traditions. We were also prepared to think across the boundaries of given disciplines as Marx had encouraged us to do, while also being ready to rethink the theoretical terms of analysis that could engage critically with changing historical relationships and imaginations. But we also recognized the significance of emotional lives and their place in the interrelation between personal and political lives. We were concerned with the emotional lives of our students, appreciating the connection these have with their capacities to learn and thus the need for students to develop supportive relationships.

As teachers we learnt the importance of listening to students, as well as a sensitivity to the different backgrounds that our students were bringing with them and their own diverse experiences as sources of knowledge, not only for them individually but also for the groups

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of students with whom they were working. As feminism and sexual politics made their way into higher education institutions, these politics also helped to transform relationships of teaching and learning as we learnt to name the significance of gender and sexual differences and the patriarchal and homophobic traditions with which we needed to engaged critically.

It also transformed the structural renderings of traditional Marxist critical theory that had traditionally distained the personal and the affective. This opened out intellectual discussions beyond a sometimes narrow focus on issues of class and power towards a politics of recognition that could engage with different aspects of colonial and post-colonial inheritances and the different structures and relationships through which identities and subjectivities were being formed and re-visioned. With feminisms and sexual politics we had learnt to question the false polarity between structural transformation and personal change. We were concerned to explore how power and privilege work themselves out in women's and men's lives at an emotional level.

But in the 1970s we also had to make space for a radical shift in numbers in higher education and had to review whether traditional models could be sustained. At Goldsmiths in the 1970s I was still seeing students in tutorials of two with whom I would meet on a fortnightly basis. We got to know our students well and had a sense of their intellectual development over time. We heard them make connections for the first time and the wonder of insights that they had reached through intense reading and reflection. We could guide them and we could learn from them and with them. However, in the 1980s, universities were to become different spaces as they were opened up to a much wider range of people from diverse backgrounds and Goldsmiths, for example, thrived as a multicultural space where students from very different backgrounds learnt to communicate with each other and learn from their different experiences of migration, history and displacement. The tutorial system gave way to a class system where we taught first-year students in groups of 10 or 12. Gradually this teaching was given over to postgraduate teaching assistants and the permanent staff found themselves focusing on lectures or seminar groups for second- and third-year students. From having been a relatively elite space, higher education opened up into a cosmopolitan space that was reaching towards comprising 40% of a particular age cohort. Those who had aspirations and abilities were encouraged into higher education.

In many ways this transformation was well made, though there was a pervasive institutional rhetoric that could make it difficult to understand the difficulties there were in sustaining the same level of student experience. There was a rhetoric of "student experience" that presented as if the move from a relatively elite system of higher education concerned with about 12% of an age cohort could transform itself into a system of mass education coping with over 40% of the age group. Teaching groups were inevitably much larger and it was impossible to sustain the same level of personal teaching relationships through the deployment of young postgraduate students, albeit that they were often highly motivated and committed. It was harder to do the repair work with students having difficulties, and the drop-out rates were often substantial.

In many universities lecturers were being evaluated on their research more than their teaching, and a younger generation of lecturers who came into the universities in the 1980s and '90s learnt that what was going to matter as far as their careers were concerned was the research they managed to publish. Teaching was often a secondary activity to be limited so that as much time could be reserved for research. They had come into a different university space where their performance as researchers was to be the primary means of governmentality. Though teaching

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still mattered, lecturers often did not define themselves primarily as teachers, and student numbers were to increase, thereby shifting expectations of teaching and learning.

As a neoliberal culture took hold, students learnt that it was up to themselves and the control they had over their emotional lives if they were to succeed. There had long been a reprivatization of emotional and personal lives that could make it difficult for teachers to engage with the emotional troubles of their students, since they could not deal with their own. Even though there was a developing rhetoric of engaging with "the student experience", this remained managerial speak because the category of "experience" had itself become problematic within the human sciences in ways that served to reinforce the privatization of experience. Thus teachers and students had more difficulties relating more openly and honestly with each other. Within a neoliberal culture it was easier for students to treat education as a means towards an end of getting a well-paid job rather than as end in itself, and it became harder for students to value their love of learning. Also, within the student culture of "cool", it was difficult to take your studies seriously and many students had to develop a self-protective persona. Study became a series of hurdles that you had to pass and students became skilful in writing a "good essay" and discerning what teachers wanted from them. This could make people wary of psychotherapy training initially because it seemed to call for an emotional engagement with self that was something it was difficult to value within neoliberal terms that tended to regard emotions as signs of weakness, especially in regard to dominant masculinities.

However, when the financial crisis erupted, suddenly futures looked different. It could also encourage students to regard a range of careers, including counselling and psychotherapy, that they might not have formerly considered as they also engaged with the emotional stresses in their own lives with their intended futures so suddenly undermined.

VALUING EDUCATION, CRAFTING LIVES

The UK government's challenge to the binary system of tertiary education, previously divided between universities and polytechnics, and enshrined in the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*, whereby more institutions were enabled to become universities, was successful in motivating many more young people to go to "Uni", so that by the 1990s many young people were the first in their families to have an experience at a university. Of course there were dangers in creating false equivalents and given status to an academic model as if it were appropriate to all and so not giving time and attention to the value of practical and technological learnings. As Richard Sennett has helpfully explored in *The Craftsman* (2007), there was an implicit devaluation of craft learning and so of the ways theoretical and practical learnings interfaced. There was a dangerous tendency to separate out academic learning as it if were exclusively cognitively framed. At the same time, there was a wide range of new courses taught in universities and a democratization of learning that was socially very important. With far more young people having experienced university there was a more highly educated citizenship, and people from diverse backgrounds came into contact with each other within newly created multicultural learning spaces.

In part it is the widespread recognition of the value of this experience, not only for students themselves, but also for their younger brothers, sisters and cousins, that has fuelled the intensity of the widespread resistance to the increases in fees initiated by the

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Conservative–Liberal government coalition at the same time as the Educational Maintenance Awards were being withdrawn. People across diverse social classes were being affected, and their ambitions for their children thwarted. Not only were the intended changes not represented in the manifestos of the political parties prior to the 2010 UK election, but it seemed as if the coalition government somehow meant that they could compromise in the making of new policies for which the electorate had never voted.

As Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was to point out in the *New Statesman* he guest edited, talking about reforms to health and education: "With remarkable speed, we are being committed to radical, long-term policies for which no one voted" and "At the very least, there is an understandable anxiety about what democracy means in such a context." He recognized that Britain needs a long-term education policy "that will deliver the critical tools for democratic involvement, not simply skills that serve the economy" (Williams, 2011, p. 4). He also noted:

> Managerial politics, attempting with shrinking success to negotiate life in the shadow of big finance, is not an attractive rallying point, whether it labels itself (New) Labour or Conservative. There is, in the middle of a lot of confusion, an increasingly audible plea for some basic thinking about democracy itself – and the urgency of this is underlined by what is happening in the Middle East and North Africa. (p. 4)

People from diverse backgrounds have learnt to value higher education. At the same time they understand the argument that, with so many young people going to university now, the state cannot afford to carry all the costs, and that some kind of further contribution needs to be made. At the same time, they cannot accept the ideological withdrawal of the state from responsibility for higher education and the denial of education as a "public good" for which the state should take some responsibility. As Chessum (2010) wrote:

> The way in which the coalition has behaved on fees has fed into a broader disillusion. What was presented as "new politics" looks empty now . . . If the government wins today's vote on fees, it will not be a moral victory – and will certainly not be the end of the protest movement. (p. 38)

At the same time Chessum recognized:

> But while in 1968 protesters fought for a new society and a new history, today we contest the supposed end of history – the idea that human progress is now and for ever linked to free markets and corporate interests. It is a paradigm that continues to form the backbone of mainstream political discourse. (p. 38)

Generations change and, as Thatcher's children, there were students in the 1990s and 2000s who were prepared to take an instrumental relationship towards their degrees, seeing qualifications as a means to getting a higher-earning job. However, within institutions like Goldsmiths, which has a multicultural community of students from diverse backgrounds, many students have been struggling for years with the demands of earning money at the same time as working for their degrees. For instance, young Bangladeshi students are often acting as interpreters for their mothers and working to support the family income at the same time as

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studying. Unlike their middle-class colleagues, many such students cannot depend upon their families for financial support but are dealing with a whole array of family responsibilities. They are balancing difficult lives, and their studies suffer in comparison with students who have much lighter part-time jobs. This is exacerbated in a period of financial crisis when students from working-class and ethnic minority backgrounds cannot afford to take on unpaid internships that might be the only available point of entrance to careers for which they have been trained.

Ross Perlin's *Intern Nation* (2011) has helped question the discourse of fairness that different political parties have invoked to legitimate their attitudes towards student fees. In the guise of widening opportunity, internships often promote social injustice, shutting out those who cannot afford to work for nothing. The proliferation of internships tells us something significant about the precarious nature of work within globalized new capitalism. Perlin argued that the word intern itself is a "smokescreen, lumping together an explosion of intermittent and precarious roles" (p. 39). The legal status of these internships remains unclarified as "entire industries rely unabashedly on this source of free or cheap labour" (p. 39) and young people feel obliged to compete to accept their devalued positions. Internships have flourished in a "fast-changing, intangible economy built on networks and highly general skills" (p. 39) and in this uncertain environment "go-it-alone autonomy is pitched as way to survive" (p. 39). Perlin argued: "post-industrial, networked capitalism has provided the ideal petri dish for the growth of internships … one of the many forms of non-standard or contingent labour that have mushroomed since the 1970s" (p. 39).

Reviewing Perlin, Anna Winter, who has also worked as an intern, recognized that "Beyond legislation, an entire ethos must change to counter complicity in a system that is corrosive and unfair" (Winter, 2011, p. 39). She recalled: "In February, a Conservative party fundraiser auctioned off internships at City firms and glossy magazines. With thousands of young people struggling to find work, wealthy Tory backers paid thousands to secure plum opportunities for their children." She also remembered that, "While Nick Clegg sermonises about social mobility, David Cameron has admitted being "very relaxed" about giving an internship in his constituency office to his neighbour's son" (p. 39). For Winter, this brings to mind 'Mandelson's 2008 admission that he was "incredibly relaxed about people becoming filthy rich" which, as Winter suggested, "seemed almost calculated to stir resentment" (p. 39). Drawing on her personal experience, Winter had acknowledged that, in the absence of a salary, she used up all her savings:

> While my granny might have envisaged me putting down a deposit on a modest London property, I decided to put my stake in internships, hoping that they would be an investment for the future and bring security in the end. Every stint has involved a mixture of hope and despondency, a feeling of progress tempered by the frustration of not being able to become a "proper" adult. (p. 39)

Perlin has incisively documented this "prolonged adolescence" (p. 39) experienced by many interns. If this shapes different anxieties and uncertainties for a younger generation growing up in a different material world, it also frames the stresses and unspeakable fears that they bring into psychotherapy.

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RE-VISIONING UNIVERSITIES

David Willetts, the Universities Minister, has insisted that: "The government is committed to the principle that going to university should depend on ability – not the ability to pay" (Willetts, 2010, p. 3). He continued: "Our proposal is for a system of graduate contributions that is fair for all" (p. 3). If we are not to misrepresent what the government values, we need to assess the arguments Willetts has made. However, Willetts (2010) has made our task difficult as, rather than listening to what students are saying, he insisted:

> My biggest concern is that young people currently at school or college do not appreciate how the system will actually work. During the first student demonstrations in London, one teenager said in an interview that higher contributions would make it impossible for her to fulfil her ambition to become a teacher. (p. 3)

The new system means that Rahimi, a Bangladeshi student, no longer has to find any fees upfront and so can be more independent of her parents' circumstances – but only because it is she alone who will begin to pay the increased fees as a qualified teacher on an income over £21,000 (while the current threshold is £15,000), a benefit Willetts has used to insist that: "We are not, therefore, placing a heavier financial burden on people least able to afford it" (p. 3).

This, however, is to individualize students and somehow abstract them from their family circumstances and the duties and obligations that students such as Rahimi have to others, and the fear that they have about levels of debt. This is very different from students from middle-class families whose parents will be able to minimize the levels of debts through helping with contributions to pay off loans. Willetts has attempted to make this sound like a "good deal" but he has not dwelt on the years people will have to live with these debts hanging over them, or relate them to other debts, such as mortgages, which they will be obliged to pay. Neither does he explain that if students do arts, humanities or social science degrees, they will be responsible for the full costs of their own education as the State withdraws from supporting these disciplines. This is a form of social engineering of higher education that attacks the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Even if Rahimi is eligible to compete for the £150 million scholarship programme that was introduced to win over votes and for Willetts to claim that they are "more generous living grants" (p. 3), these are entitlements that not every student from poor backgrounds will be able to claim, but, rather, a pot of gold for which they will compete with others. Moreover, students will still be worried about how they are going to support themselves during their studies. It is clear that there will be increased inequality between those middle-class students who can rely on parental support to enable then to give more or less full-time attention to their studies, and others like Rahimi who are obliged to work long hours every week.

Willetts (2010) has said: "I do not want anyone to be put off from going to university through a misunderstanding" (p. 3), but it is not that students do not understand the new arrangements, it is that they do not agree with them, recognizing that they are an attack on the very idea of a university as a space of learning and creativity that is free from market values. If going to university depends on ability alone, why should some universities be allowed to charge more and, thereby, break the equality within the current system which means that, despite living costs, people do not have to pay more to study at different universities? Willetts (2010) insisted: "Besides our desire to make the finances of universities

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more sustainable than they are now, we are just as committed to improving students' experiences of universities" (p. 3). This, however, is to be achieved through the market for, supposedly, it will be the paying students who will have the power to determine the quality of their learning experience. As Willetts has framed it: "Universities that offer the best teaching arrangements and facilities – and can demonstrate that their graduates are successful – will themselves be more successful at recruiting applicants" (p. 3).

Oxford and Cambridge universities have been able to sustain their particular tutorial systems so that some students, obtaining places at Oxbridge, will willingly pay the additional £9000 fees for the privilege. They also know that the brand has a certain value in the market with which it is difficult for other institutions of higher learning to compete. David Lammy, Labour MP for Tottenham, used freedom of information requests to build up a picture of the students who are offered places at Oxbridge:

> The results provide shocking reading. If Britain has become a "classless society" then Oxford has not got the message. David Cameron's alma mater, Brasenose College, Oxford, recruits 92% of students from the top three social classes – the sons and daughters of solicitors and accountants. The average for UK universities is 65%. Often these students have had the advantage of small and intensive teaching in Public Schools that their parents have paid for. (Lammy, 2010, p. 28)

Do we say that these students are more "able", more "intelligent", or more thoughtful or creative than students like Rohimi who have struggled in the larger classes in state schools in Whitechapel to win a place at Goldsmiths? As Lammy (2010) reported, "Just one British black Caribbean student was admitted to Oxford last year. That is not a misprint: one student" (p. 28). He also noted: "Last year, 292 black students achieved three A grades at A levels and 475 black students applied to Oxbridge. Applications are being made but places not awarded" (p. 28). He also pointed out: "Cambridge does not employ a single black academic. How can they hope to admit a diverse student body without recruiting a diverse staff?" (p. 28). As he concluded: "The lesson from the US is not to compromise on excellence, but to search harder for those who are capable of it" (p. 28).

Lammy asked: "What is it about the famed Oxbridge interview system that counts against the students who didn't attend top public school?" He noted:

> Our proudest universities were obstructive in responding to my inquiries. They provided patchy data, challenged valid requests and deliberately pushed back their deadlines until after Thursday's vote. If Oxford and Cambridge are ashamed of these statistics, they are right to be. (p. 28)

He recognized that:

> Universities are not like supermarkets: their job is to serve the country, not just the customers who happen to walk through their doors. Oxford and Cambridge receive nearly £400m a year of taxpayers' money. They cannot be allowed to spend that money entrenching inequality instead of addressing it. (p. 28)

That, however, is just the point. It is precisely the neo-liberal model of higher education that has allowed the coalition government to announce an astonishing 80% cut in public funding for higher education, which, moreover, many vice chancellors in the Russell Group, a group

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which represents 20 leading UK universities (www.russellgroup.ac.uk), seem to have supported on the condition that they gain the freedom to charge the full £9000. The Browne Review (Browne, 2010) saw this as the beginning since it argued that universities should be free to charge whatever the market could allow. As the State withdraws, British universities are, effectively, in the process of being privatized.

It is through a corporate model that allows the university to become a supermarket that encourages Willetts (2010) to argue that the students' experience will be improved for they will no longer tolerate poor teaching and conditions. He says, somewhat surprisingly:

> The government's wish to place a greater emphasis on high-quality teaching is consistent with the very idea of a university. Academics who devote time to teaching are often precisely the ones who most inspire students. So we are looking at ways to reward lecturers who excel in teaching, in order to challenge the perception that university staff must publish or perish. (p. 3)

Of course university is about the quality of teaching, but this has to do with the quality of the relationships between staff and students. This is what the tutorial system traditionally recognized. Of course, Willetts is thinking about financial rewards, since these seem to be the only "reward" that he values. Somehow – and this is really disappointing given the creative thinking he was involved in while in opposition – Willetts (2010) seems to think that it is the market that will allow universities to become "free": "the success of this country's HE sector – now and in future – rests on its autonomy. Our proposals will free universities to build more distinctive relationships with their students and to grow" (p. 3). This is an example of corporate speak for privatization that will foster very different relationships of teaching and learning.

John Sutherland (2010), Professor Emeritus, University College, London, recognized, like many academics, that "The government's justifications for the fee hike have been, at best, disingenuous. Don't call him "two-brains", call him, "forked-tongue" Willetts" (p. 2). As Sutherland knows and wrote: "The notion that tripling the cost of higher education will not deter those applicants who are not, as David Cameron described himself, "relatively well off" (i.e. net worth an estimated £19m) would strain the satirical powers of Jonathan Swift" (p. 2). As Lammy (2010) has reminded us:

> Eighteen millionaires sit around the cabinet table. Their complacency is breathtaking. While they defend a fee hike, they have not published a word on what they will ask in return from Britain's top universities . . . Oxbridge continues to recruit in the same image. It is the image of the prime minister and deputy prime minister, the authors of Thursday's bill. (p. 28)

Sutherland (2010) was aware:

> Nor will they stay merely tripled. The American example predicts that tuition fees go up faster than inflation – to whatever the market will currently bear. And, of course, this country's universities have neither the Ivy League billion-dollar endowments for bursaries nor the in-state reduction that universities like Berkeley offer to residents. (p. 2)

He predicted: "the deterrent effect on applications in the coming years. Worse still will be the corrosive effect on universities, despite the immediate injection of cash from hiked

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fee revenue. Educationally, it's a poisoned chalice" (p. 2). Sutherland questioned the government's idea that raising tuition fees threefold will mean students will demand a higher quality of tuition. He countered: "It doesn't work that way. If you pay up to £50k for an undergraduate course, "you don't want a good education, you want a good degree". The two are not identical" (p. 2).

As Sutherland recognized, "Once you charge the going rate, "selling" lectures, for example, rather than "giving" them, you change the nature of staff–student relationships. The student has become a customer – and, as they say, the customer is always right" (p. 2). If they are paying "good money" for their courses they do not want to be "wasting time" searching for books in the library so that they can take notes, but would prefer that the lecturers give the full notes of what they might be covering. This changes the relationships of lecturing that no longer is responsive to the learning that it taking place in the room and is, thus, sensitive and shifting according to what is being grasped. Rather, the new technologies already favour the breaking up of knowledge into discrete "bite sizes" so that they can be presented on "overheads" that can then be easily reproduced. This is very different from being challenged to think differently, and being asked to follow an argument which you might check out through working with others in order to learn both what and how you are understanding what you have heard, and how you might read a particular text in order to develop your understanding and analysis further. This kind of learning through processing and reflection is especially important in educating students for a reflective practice such as psychotherapy.

As Sutherland asked, "Having paid all the money, are students in future going to happily accept a B−, or – heaven forbid – a 2.2?" (p. 2). If a student has not done well on a particular exam and they might fear their parents' complaining about the large sums they have invested in their child's education, there must be someone to blame. Surely the teachers must be to blame and so be held responsible for, if they had taught well and prepared their students well, then surely they would have done well? Of course, there have always been some students who have taken up an instrumental relationship towards their learning but this has become more generalized as schools have been encouraged to focus upon teaching for exams, rather than teaching for learning. This has undermined relationships between teachers and pupils in schools and often for brighter students this has created a sense of disdain, for they know that this is not education. Students have been well trained at school to write a "good essay" and they know exactly what is required of them, but, as soon as the assignment has been completed, they forget about it, and their reading and writing do not seem to have changed them. Studying and writing to pass learning outcomes and essays create cynicism and lay the foundation for an instrumental approach to education and the subject. Applied to the field of psychotherapy, in both its education and practice, such instrumentalism only fosters an instrumental view of psychotherapy as manifested in quick fix, short-term approaches.

QUESTIONING MARKET VALUES

For many students university has already become a means towards an end of getting a well-paid job. Rather than questioning these motivations and reaching for a broader vision of the freedoms and possibilities of education as a universal right that should be open to all, the government is framing a corporate vision of the future of the university. Sutherland (2010) worried that "The cash nexus will, over time, rot the system" (p. 2) and that people will regard

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their education as an investment not in themselves as human beings who can grow and develop in freedom as they learn about themselves and the world, but in their future careers alone. This makes a difference to the assessments they make and shapes their expectations of universities that will no longer be spaces of intellectual challenge and excitement.

Things might stay more or less the same for a while because there will always be idealistic students who want to study arts, humanities and social science subjects, but as Sutherland argued:

> in the long term, two very bad things will have happened. One is that assessment of ability, and quite like entrance procedures, will be hopelessly skewed by money considerations. The second is that teaching will become divorced from research, as academics who are able . . . put as much distance between themselves and the classroom as they can. The early symptoms of this decay are already visible. (p. 2)

For a while, under the pressure of the RAE, academics have been encouraged to value their research time and minimize the contact with students as a distraction that takes them away from the "real work" of research.

Many academics no longer recognize the classroom as a space in which they are likely to learn as much as they teach. They read their prepared lectures and often find it hard to connect to their students. Sometimes they are scared of their students and the questions they might ask. They blame the students for not learning and they are rarely reflective about their own teaching practices. They are constantly seeking for more "efficient" ways of teaching that can mean teaching in ever larger numbers where direct contact with students tends to be minimized and restricted to framing questions about issues they did not understand, as if the students are simply seeking clarification.

How can you have a university responsible for what is effectively mass education and yet sustain small-scale and personal teaching relationships? There are no easy solutions to this and no new technologies that allow for innovative ways of meeting these challenges. The moment of silence in a classroom when you can hear a pin drop because a point has been made that is still suspended in the air waiting to ground itself in people's minds and souls is still the point of teaching. These moments are not rare; they happen in different classrooms, and it is often what students are yearning for and what teachers are continually hoping for in their teaching. This is why we are teachers; and it is through these moments that we make contact and help transform minds. It is part of the excitement of learning, and it happens as much between students who come from very different backgrounds who are listening to each other as they hesitantly find words to express a new insight or idea that is forming. It is a moment of wonder and magic.

In a letter to *The Guardian* in support of Chessum's article, signed by over 100 signatories, headed by Neal Lawson, Chair of Compass, a Labour Party group, Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the Trades Union Council, and Aaron Porter, President of the National Union of Students, they pointed out:

> Since the 1980s universities and schools have been steadily marketised, and pupils and students commodified. This instrumentalism is such a narrow view of what it means to be human and to be educated. That is why campaigns like UK Uncut, which link corporate tax avoidance to the rebalancing of our depleted public finances, are critical both morally and practically.

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> Students don't have to be told that we are all in this together. They know it. The students know that the education maintenance allowance is critical for young people from low-income families who now attend FE colleges and that cleaners on the campuses should be paid a living wage. The political class may choose to forget, but we don't, that it was the greed of the banks and the free market regime handed to them by our politicians that tipped the nation's finances into crisis.
>
> We start from the belief that education cannot just be a debt trap on a learn-to-earn treadmill that we never get off as the retirement age is extended. Education in our good society is a universal public good which all must explore to reach their fullest potential. It is about the protection and extension of a precious public realm where we know each other not as consumers and competitors but as citizens and co-operators. (Lawson et al., 2010, p. 49)

Without grants, many students have been struggling for years to find a balance between the demands of their education and their need to earn money and find jobs so they can support themselves. This has already produced inequalities that are difficult to calibrate since it has meant that students from middle-class backgrounds who could rely, at least to some extent, on the financial support of their parents have been able to give more time and attention to their studies. Teaching at an institution like Goldsmiths that is multicultural and draws people from a range of backgrounds makes you aware of these everyday inequalities and the very different responsibilities that students carry, especially when they have children, and the enormous efforts they often make for their education.

The responses to these systems, policies and crisis represent a discussion about the nature of democracy, as Rowan Williams (2011) has recognized; they also call for a discussion of the relationship between justice and fairness. Education provides for an experience that many students value, not just for the occupational opportunities it might open up, but for the growth and deepening of the relationships with themselves as they learn to "make sense" of migrations within a globalized world. With its current policies, what is the British state saying to these students? It is, as one female student suggests, "So what you are telling us is that we are not worth paying for."

The weekend after the demonstration against the cuts, *The Observer* reported Lucinda Hodge, a 22-year-old student from Goldsmiths, University of London, saying:

> By the time the cuts are put into place, my Uni will be hanging by a shoestring and the government want to charge people three times the amount. Politicians don't care about young people as we don't vote as much. We are just collateral damage. (Asthana, Dyer, & Helm, 2010, p. 9)

Others came to the mass demonstration on 9 December from schools and colleges: "There is a slim chance of going to university now," said Roze Brooks, aged 17. "Quite frankly I won't be able to pay," said Jack Jordan, 16' (p. 9). Though Cameron told a Lib Dem CentreForum, that "the existing system gave universities no real incentive to improve, since they received much of their money from central government" (reported in Stratton, 2010, p. 3), he just reveals his neo-liberal assumptions and his ignorance of the efforts many universities have made to widen participation. It seems as if only the privatization of universities allows for their freedom through the withdrawal of state support, and that the presentation of a university education as a private good that students should be ready to pay for because of the financial benefits it can bring, undermines state support for the aspirations of its young citizens.

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Even the right-wing press in the form of the *Daily Mail* was concerned enough to say:

> We also worry that graduates will have to start paying this money back at about the time they are buying their first house and starting a family, crippling them financially just as they try to become fully fledged members of society. (Daily Mail Comment, 2010, p. 18)

Young people are discussing fears about their financial futures and how this undermines the possibilities of freedom to shape their educations according to their developing interests. Education ceases to be a creative and critical engagement with ideas but becomes framed instrumentally as a means to a high-paying job. The anxieties over debt will make it harder to give time and attention to ideas and so to tolerate the risks and uncertainties that come with creative learning. As the market intervenes, education or, more accurately, training, is seen in terms of short-term gains, and it becomes increasingly difficult to engage intellectually with education as a transformative practice.

"Debt for ever?" asked Holly Carlile, 22, from the University of Birmingham. "Will we ever be out of rented accommodation? How are we ever to put a single foot on the property ladder?" Jacob Burns, who studies at Goldsmiths, said he was increasingly pessimistic about ever being "debt free" (Asthana et al., 2010, p. 9). Nick Cohen (2010), a journalist, is clear that "The vulnerability of the young explains why the coalition has hit them with such force. In democracies, politicians worry about those who vote and the majority of the young do not." He went on to explain:

The coalition has redrawn the boundaries of the politically possible to reflect the new demographics. A few weeks ago, it seemed "realistic" politics to soak the young, who are few in number and unlikely to vote, while pandering to the old, who are many and vociferous. The media played along. Fleet Street showed how roughly it treats slick fakers when they break their word these days by describing Clegg as an "honourable", "strong", "hard-headed" and "mature" politician, whose U-turn on tuition fees proved he was "serious about government".

Hardly any journalists pointed out that the coalition's claim that increased fees were penalties graduates should accept as a fair contribution to reducing the deficit did not make sense. A rise in tuition fees by one third from £3000 to £4000 would have been sharper than the cuts imposed on any government department, but fair in the circumstances. A 50% rise to £4500 might have been just about tolerable, but fair in the circumstances. But a tripling of the upper limit to £9000 and a slashing of the tuition grant to universities by 80% was not even an exceptional measure to cope with an exceptional crisis. It was an act of political extremism – a raw display of the power of the old over the young (p. 35).

Cohen recognised that the government is not treating the rest of society with the same severity, so you can hardly call this "fair". As he said: "However hard times get, he will ring-fence health spending because he knows that the older you are the more you need the NHS. We are all in this together, he says, but some of us are more in it than others" (p. 35). He also recalled that David Willetts, when in opposition, published a book, *The Pinch* (Willetts, 2011) on the subject of intergenerational unfairness, in which, as Cohen summarized: "he [Willetts] castigated baby boomers for stealing their children's future and spending their kids" inheritance. Once in government as universities minister, he decided

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to speed up the larcenous process by helping Cable [Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills] triple fees' (Cohen, p. 35). Ed Howker and Shiv Malik in the *Jilted Generation* (2010) take their analysis beyond education and investigate how children were having their rites of passage to adulthood postponed. They could not afford housing costs or a build a career because they worked in exploitative internships or insecure temporary jobs, if they worked at all. As Cohen (2010) pointed out:

> exploiting inter-generation conflict can only take politicians so far. Many baby boomers are anything but wealthy. The comfortable among them worry about their children's future and help them when they can. Like the rest of the public, they do not approve of politicians who lied to voters who are little more than children to win university seats, and then break their solemn promises . . . The students may have not stopped fees rising but they have changed politics. They have destroyed Nick Clegg's reputation so thoroughly, I cannot see how it can recover. (p. 35)

The editorial in *The Observer* also recognized that, although the pledge the Liberal Democrat MPs had made (prior to the General Election, to oppose higher fees) was hardly legally binding, "it imbued the policy with a moral solemnity that makes reneging look shabbier" (Mulholland, 2010, p. 32). It also noted that Clegg might insist that the pledges were only valid in the event of an outright victory (at the General Election) and thus had been superseded by the coalition agreement with the Tories. The editorial continued: "There is a pedantic logic to that position, but it is also self-defeating . . . They should be advertising coalition as a restorative tonic for politics, not a licence to jettison principles" (p. 32) However, it is precisely because Clegg's reputation and integrity were built on such pre-election pledges that many young people feel so intensely that "they were used for their idealism and [thus] see the deputy prime minister as an emblem of all that is rotten in politics" (p. 32). It also noted that Clegg

> doesn't help himself by defending his actions with the same self-assured piety that he once used to attack others. His determination to present the government's higher education reforms as fair often slides into patronizing attacks on its opponents for failing to understand the issues. If only students would do their homework, he seems to say, their anger would dissolve. (p. 32)

The students have done their homework and they understand, as do lecturers, what is intended for them. Their anger won't dissolve and it hasn't.

If the goal is supposed to be a better university education for more people, as *The Observer* editorial recognized:

> that goal is savagely undermined by plans to slash teaching grants by up to 80% with humanities subjects deemed unworthy of any state subsidy. The cuts will hollow out faculties and impoverish institutions before revenue from higher fees arrives. Undergraduates will pay more for a worse product. Grants for sixth formers are also being cut . . . Mr Clegg simply can't say the government is offering a good deal for students. They deserve an apology, not self-righteous sophistry. (p. 32)

Students deserve a radical change in policy that recognizes education as a universal right and as a social good that brings benefits to the well-being of fellow citizens and the larger

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community. Until such times, however, we need to recognize the emotional impact of broken futures and the difficult material conditions that young people face if we are to help them clarify the tensions between their own humanistic values and the neoliberal constraints in which they are obliged to survive. Those in the helping professions are having to engage with increased levels of stress, anxiety and uncertainty on the part of young people with whom they work, and need to understand the struggles around education as the UK, following the USA, serves as a model of increased privatization that will be followed around the globe as countries submit to neoliberal policies within a globalized world.

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