

Editors' Coda

That there's a danger... that we are going to come at higher education not only in an instrumental way but, in a crude way, miss its potentiality and undermine its possibilities for human development and for the development of the wider society. (Barnett in 'Imagining the University—A Critical Dialogue' [1999, p. 558]).

Let's hope not! (Gibbs and Peterson 2019)

What we hope for and from within our universities is multivariate and so it should be. Universities are not places of predictability, although some form of public managerialism might imagine they are. Universities are places for imagination, of possibilities of hope, places where what Barnett calls 'feasible utopia' can be explored and acted upon. Universities should be places of hope: hope for their students, their faculties and for the communities that host them. Hope not for a gentle slide into a mass educative mediocracy as the only hope for an alternative to economic deprivation. A hoped-for future which is not afraid to unbalance the conventional model of neo-liberal sophism and dares to hope for a better world, challenges the knowledge of the powerful, risks the self in seeking what is uncontrollable about what we might become. A hopeful place where we have the bravery to call out that which we see

to be untrue, unreliable and morally reprehensible in ways that learned scholars ought to do. Where education is an intrinsic, not an instrumental, good available to all for the benefit of all. Where the university offers insights, freedoms, criticality and much more. Where important aspects of what we expect from the university are frequently in flux, without horizons of time and space, where learning is applauded as a mystery as well as being grounded in skills for the present but where its hoped-for function is not the provision of labour whose social mobility is little changed by the experience. Where we can hope for emotion and spirituality to be woven into our ways of understanding and into our questions and where hope is willed for a more just, free and peaceful world; not a place just for oneself but for the many. Hope is too important to be left to the self-help books and happy slogans of emotional support or psychobabble charlatans.

We need an alternative to a future where societies are characterised by a deep inequality in their distribution of hope and, when such inequality reaches an extreme, certain groups are not offered any hope at all. In these circumstances, lack of hope is not only morally corrupt but dangerous. All institutions in society have a duty of hope which reaches out to all and where everyone can share hope, none more so than those institutions whose very fabric is the generation of a sustainable future for both current and future members of society. Future generations need to embrace hope as part of their duty to society and as a reason for their existence, but the role of higher education as a hope facilitator is very little talked about. Its role in obtaining employment is talked about much more, but what are jobs needed for if not the hope for a better future? Higher education has political dimensions as a tool to animate future-oriented political imaginations but this is lost, or deliberately negated in policy discussions. Take the UK for instance, currently a country in a hope crisis. In the recent white paper entitled *Higher Education: Success as a Knowledge Economy* (2016), hope is mentioned twice, first in terms of desire for a specific quasi government entity to apply to become a designated body (section 28) and once as a wish to link with another government initiative. A White Paper about the future of higher education with no explicit notion of hope for the sector! So was the consultation for the Teaching Excellence Framework

much better? Surely here the importance of hope for students, so neglected in the previous document, will find full rein in *Fulfilling Our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice in (2015)*. Well, no! Just one mention which was addressed to institutions to try to improve their teaching should it be deemed poor. A functional readjustment.

Turning the pages of this book we find some of the questions we need to ask ourselves, some of the compassionate responses to these questions and many opportunities from which we can hopefully benefit. But hope, as these pages also illustrate, is not easy to conceptualise in a communal way to define and focus upon. It is difficult because it is a disposition, where the weaving of emotions, spirit and intellect coalesce. The authors of the text use hope nearly 400 times and in many ways the chapters illuminate the question of hope and what it can stand for, offering a range of different responses. Such a synthesis, which has resonance with each of the chapters in this book in different ways, is worthwhile to pin down because even with this we see in these pages benefit to humanity and to the university. Indeed there is a small amount of mainly USA academic literature which shows that students with high levels of hope get better grades and graduate at higher rates. It shows that hope predicts better academic performance among high school and college students, even when controlling for innate ability (Ciarrochi et al. 2007; Snyder et al. 1991). Moreover, higher hope is associated with greater psychological well-being among students (Ciarrochi et al. 2007) and hope appears uniquely to relate to the use of greater problem-focused coping (Snyder et al. 1991), which should result in greater goal achievement. This work chimes with our intensions expressed in our introduction to explore hope in higher education conceptually and programmatically.

What Can Be Distilled from the Chapters?

This is a multi-disciplinary project and hope is revealed in a number of ways: philosophically, pedagogically, sociologically, morally, economically and compassionately. Hope is used as an expression of desire, of

imagination and expectations. It is often interwoven with other concepts and features as a central focus of the chapter or is explored as the justification of a way of being. It is used as a noun and verb to shape practice or used as an aspiration for a practice yet to come. In each of these ways it contributes to an imagined future different with what is now. That imagined future in this book is often contextualised within a neoliberal discourse, often negatively. This negativity is labelled as 'toxic' by one contributor and such language makes notions of hope hard to realise. But is neoliberalism all bad? Are there other futures that it is feasible to hope for? Certainly other contributors seem to think this possible. So perhaps the neoliberal socio-political context is one where we need to seek hope and not assume that it necessarily dashes any possibility of it. Amelioration might be found in the themes of care, compassion and truth which feature strongly throughout the chapters or, to a lesser extent, in success and achievement. Certainly the discussions focus on hope for students and academics in ways the UK preliminary policy documents fail to do.

However, from the range of possibilities from which we might choose what is central to the ideas of hope is that it is temporal, for it is about desired change. This is an underlying theme which admittedly is mentioned in only two or three chapters but is there throughout as context. It can be found in this book in the temporal dimension to *hygge*, in the work of Deleuze and in the revolutionary temporality of Bloch. Indeed, in Bloch's magna opus the *Principle of Hope* he draws upon a whole range of temporal mechanisms that allow ways to conceive of the nature of hope. These range from daydreams to fairy tales, from myth to alchemists' theories. For Bloch, hope is an intertwined cognitive faculty and an emotion. It is a mode of thinking through time, with imagination, memory and reason. Affectively it can be positioned against fear and anxiety.

In a more contemporary discussion drawing on Bloch, Weeks, in the chapter *Future is Now: Utopian Demands and the Temporalities of Hope* (2011), describes hope as "a mode of temporality, a cognitive and affective relation to time and a way to approach the relationships among historicity, presentism, and futurity" (ibid., p. 186). Her conceptualisation of hope grasps the present through acknowledging its emergence from

the past and also its “open possibilities” and “horizon,” which opens up a space to cultivate “a different affective economy of time” (ibid., pp. 189–194). This different economy of time entails learning to hope through “developing the cognitive capacity to think through time in both directions” (ibid., p. 195). A more hopeful temporality allows us to envision a viable present from the past, that we can alter our relationship to a past that threatens to fix us in a present which is no more than an extension of the past. Likewise, a future which is grounded in the present offers continuity, not innovation or radical change. As Weeks suggests, it is not easy straddling past, present, and future, nurturing cognitive and affective investments in both the lived present as it has emerged from the past and its possible futures (ibid., p. 224).

A New Temporality of Hope

Finding a new temporality, a temporality of hope, is a contribution that the university can position itself to make. It needs to be brave, to speak to truth, to act to confront injustices rather than nestle in the deceptive comfort of adherence to government policies. It needs to offer hope of change, of imagined possibilities in all it does from curriculum to academic feedback, not in a self-deceptive way but in a hopeful, realistic and joyful way. We still have some way to go but these chapters help us seek a path.

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Index

A

academic 11, 12, 21, 26–28, 31, 50, 52, 53, 60, 64, 65, 72, 75, 79, 80, 81, 94–96, 98–107, 109, 115, 123, 128–130, 142, 146, 147, 150, 151, 153, 158, 162, 163, 165, 167, 168, 170, 178, 191, 199–201, 203–205, 209, 211–218, 233, 242, 243, 246–248, 250–252, 254, 259–272, 277–279

academic life 11, 44, 259–265, 267, 268, 270, 272

academic performance 98, 191, 248, 251, 252, 254

accountability 77, 78, 80, 272

activism 160, 165, 166, 170

administration 7, 57, 211

anger xxviii

apartheid 242, 245, 246, 252, 253

Apple, M. xxvii

Arendt, H. 11, 22, 28, 32–37, 39–44

Aristotle 13–15, 17, 25, 227, 228, 260, 265, 267

Audi, R. 228, 230

B

beauty of nature xxxii

benevolence 180–186, 189

boredom 148, 152

C

Canada 78, 83, 86, 157, 163, 170–172

care/caring 31, 42, 44, 67, 82, 93–99, 101–109, 106–109, 128, 171, 172, 182, 185, 186, 188, 189, 191, 192, 224, 232–234, 249, 263, 268, 270, 278

choice 77, 115, 124, 144, 204, 206–208, 215, 217, 226, 230, 231, 236, 251–253, 277

civil association 4, 8, 18

civil society 4, 8, 10, 18

collaboration 18, 58, 87, 118, 143, 248, 273

college 4, 9, 17, 30, 31, 33, 35, 42, 51–56, 58, 59, 62–65, 97, 108, 109, 120, 212, 216, 277

commodification 72, 79, 178, 193

common good 114–116, 120, 121, 130, 226, 227, 234

communication 14, 32, 63, 181, 192

community 6, 8, 11, 24, 27, 28, 50, 54–59, 73, 79, 80, 83–85, 87, 114, 119, 121–123, 126, 128–130, 147, 160, 169, 171, 182, 188, 190, 191, 216, 226, 227, 249, 251, 268

compassion 113, 115–117, 119, 121, 123–125, 127, 129, 130, 177–179, 181, 182, 190, 191, 260, 264, 265, 267, 269, 270, 277, 278

competition 9, 16, 18, 22, 24, 63, 71–74, 77–81, 85, 87, 268, 271

complicity 263

Confucius 177, 179, 181–187

consumerism 4, 9, 158

cooperation 16, 18, 74

courage 86

creative higher education 135

creativity 119, 141, 143, 144, 147, 149, 151, 153, 160, 163, 262

critical theory 163, 171

critical thinking 22, 35, 41, 118, 123

cultivation 177, 181, 187, 190, 192

curriculum 44, 104, 120, 123, 125, 126, 130, 144, 169, 178–181, 188–190, 246, 279

D

decolonizing 44, 169, 172

Deleuze, G. 135–142, 151, 203, 278

Denmark 71–72, 74–77, 81, 83, 86

dialogue 10, 15, 17, 41–42, 84, 105, 150, 153, 168, 180, 184, 210, 216, 270, 275

diversity 58–59, 100, 115–118, 166

divided world 4–5, 8, 18

E

Eagleton, T. xxviii

ecosystems 24, 116, 117, 122

educare 143, 144, 146, 147, 153, 154

emotions 33, 80, 168, 270, 277

empathy 33, 101, 124, 178, 181, 182, 190

employability 93, 262

enchantment 160

England 52, 97, 159, 199

environment 50, 53, 79, 83, 86, 95, 100, 104, 113–117, 120, 122, 126, 146–150, 153, 159, 160, 166, 171, 189, 206, 216, 218, 244, 246, 253, 271

equity 157, 160, 165–169, 172

ethics 13, 15, 18, 94, 181, 227, 228

ethos 21, 24, 26, 29, 57, 67, 72, 85, 97

F

faculty 21, 24, 27, 32, 36, 42, 50, 51, 53, 55–57, 59, 61, 62, 64–67, 75, 80, 81, 83, 84, 97, 121, 158, 162, 167, 168, 172, 192, 278
 fear 4, 42, 44, 80, 148, 164, 203, 205, 206, 260, 263–266, 278
 feminism 163–165
 Finland 23, 27, 42, 189
 folds/folding 137–139, 141, 142, 146, 148–150, 152, 154
 freedom 8, 9, 30, 31, 44, 64, 73, 77, 127, 141, 142, 147–150, 158, 163, 169, 230, 232, 276
 Freire, P. 150, 169, 170, 237
 friendship 72

G

Gadamer, H. 9, 14, 15
 gender 43, 117, 118, 166, 168, 169
 global 7, 10, 16, 18, 25, 26, 72–75, 77, 78, 93, 97, 107, 113–120, 125, 127, 130, 163, 164, 166, 244
 global economy 73, 75, 77, 78
 globalisation 115
 global rankings 77
 government 7, 23, 25, 50, 52, 53, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78, 97, 157, 158, 165, 169, 211, 233, 234, 243, 261, 276, 279
 Gravlee, G.S. 260, 265–267

H

Habermas, J. 43
 heterogeneity 6, 139, 140
 higher education 4, 9, 10, 15, 17, 21–24, 30, 33, 35, 36, 42,

50, 51, 53, 54, 56, 61, 66, 67, 71–74, 77–81, 86, 94, 95, 97–99, 102–105, 107–109, 113–116, 120–123, 125, 126, 130, 160, 163, 168, 170, 177, 179, 182, 186, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, 199, 200, 217, 223, 224–226, 230–237, 241–247, 252–254, 259–261, 264, 269, 276, 277

Hong Kong 178–181, 186, 189, 191–193

hope 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 22, 28, 29, 37, 38, 41, 42, 44, 45, 49, 53, 54, 57, 59, 61, 65–67, 72, 95, 96, 108, 109, 113, 114, 116, 120, 124, 130, 148–152, 159, 160, 162, 163, 168–170, 179, 182, 192, 193, 200–203, 205–218, 223, 224, 232, 233, 235, 237, 238, 241, 242, 244, 246–248, 253, 254, 259, 260, 265–268, 269, 271, 272, 275–279

hopeful trajectories 170

human capital 73, 74, 77

human flourishing 227

humanism 254

humanity 5, 25, 29, 113, 116–118, 160, 166, 168, 178, 180, 235, 272, 277

humility 260, 264, 265

hygge 72, 81–86, 278

I

imagination 9, 29, 32, 33, 37, 38, 43, 44, 107, 151, 162, 224, 275, 276, 278

inclusion/inclusiveness 97, 178, 199,
 201–203, 211, 215, 217, 218
 individualism 72, 73, 85, 271, 272
 instrumental 43, 106, 224, 226,
 231–233, 235, 236
 integrity 199, 201, 204, 205, 211,
 215, 217, 218
 intrinsic 10, 11, 104, 205, 225–237,
 276

K

kindness 96, 260, 264
 knowledge 25, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 50,
 65, 66, 72, 73, 76–78, 81, 95,
 116, 118–120, 124, 138–149,
 152, 153, 163, 164, 166, 168,
 171, 172, 178, 181, 186, 187,
 192, 199, 205, 210, 214, 225,
 234, 235, 237, 270, 272, 275

L

land grant 51–54, 56, 57, 59, 66, 67
 leaders 8, 50, 51, 56, 58, 60, 62–65,
 67, 121, 163
 liberal 18, 21, 27, 30, 31, 37, 41, 43,
 261
 love 58, 96, 126, 160, 183, 185, 186

M

managerialism 8, 18, 158, 261
 marketization 9, 18, 178, 193, 261
 markets 25, 72, 73, 97
 mentoring 191–193
 merit 169, 252, 253
 meritocracy 235

morality 000
 motivation 24, 100, 102, 106, 107,
 124, 206, 207, 209, 215, 217,
 252

N

narrative 31, 102, 103, 130, 202,
 212, 252–254
 neoliberal/neoliberalism 9, 22, 43,
 71, 72, 74, 75, 78–81, 83, 85,
 157–160, 162, 165, 169, 170,
 172, 259–272, 278
 Nietzsche, F. 5
 Noddings, N. 93, 94, 106
 normalising discourse 246
 nurture 16, 118, 120, 190, 191
 Nussbaum, M. 16

O

obligations 44–45, 97, 104, 107,
 109, 182, 225, 230
 opportunity 26, 101, 119, 125–126,
 128, 188, 191, 200, 202, 212,
 246
 optimism 28, 120, 127, 224
 other-regarding 259–260, 264–265,
 267–272

P

peace 4–6, 8, 16, 117–118, 276
 pedagogy/pedagogies 21, 42, 93–95,
 97–99, 102–109, 114, 121–
 122, 145, 149, 152, 159, 169,
 192, 217, 235
 place-based pedagogy 114, 122, 130

- play 4, 33, 58, 64, 98, 103, 115, 119, 141, 145, 160, 170, 172, 189, 231
- plurality 6, 13–14, 22, 32, 151, 254
- policy 22, 24, 42, 77, 145, 157–158, 168, 224–225, 234, 260, 261, 263, 271–272, 276, 278
- politics 26, 29–30, 32, 34, 39–40, 42, 78, 122, 243, 261
- pragmatism 28, 37, 39, 254
- praxis 123, 161, 163, 172
- privatisation 9, 18
- progress 14, 22–23, 30–31, 65, 98–101, 103, 113, 118, 200, 211, 248
- public good 50, 67, 116, 224–226, 231, 237
- R**
- race/racial 6, 43, 85, 96, 160, 166, 168, 169, 226, 252, 253
- rankings 77, 80, 261
- reasoning 4, 13, 14, 17, 18, 157, 159, 190, 192, 225, 230, 237
- reflection 10, 124, 181, 187, 200, 211, 215, 216, 217, 261, 264, 268
- Ren* 178–193
- Rhizomatic 139, 140, 141, 149, 153
- risk 15, 40, 45, 51, 97, 102, 103, 107, 114, 125, 128, 130, 149, 192, 200–203, 207, 208, 213, 225
- Rorty, R. 22, 28–45
- S**
- service-learning 58, 114, 123–130
- social justice 114, 115, 120, 159, 225, 245, 253, 262
- society 4, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 22, 26, 32, 34, 37, 43–45, 53, 72–74, 77, 96, 97, 102, 106, 117, 121, 163, 172, 180, 186, 189, 205, 207, 224, 225, 231, 236, 244, 248, 275, 276
- solidarity 42, 84, 260, 268, 271, 272
- South Africa 242, 243, 245–247, 252, 253
- spirituality 276
- students 10, 15, 21, 24, 27, 28, 30–34, 36, 42–44, 50–53, 55–59, 61–67, 73–79, 81, 83, 84, 94–107, 109, 114, 115, 120–130, 142, 143, 147, 148, 151–153, 158–172, 179, 180, 182, 186, 187, 189–193, 199, 200, 202, 210–218, 224, 234, 241–250, 252–254, 260–262, 275, 277, 278
- student satisfaction 261
- subjectivity 138, 142, 146
- sustainability 4, 8, 11, 17, 114, 115, 118, 120, 122, 124, 244
- T**
- Tao* 185
- time 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 27, 30, 34, 52, 54, 58, 74, 79, 82, 83, 86, 87, 102, 105, 106, 108, 116, 123, 125, 128, 130, 135, 137, 146, 147, 150, 158, 161, 168, 169, 170, 172, 182, 184, 187, 190, 203–205, 210, 213–216, 223, 225, 234, 248, 250–252, 264, 265, 268, 272, 276–279

- transformation 30, 41, 55, 66, 78, 98, 107, 114–117, 119, 243, 244, 252, 253
- trust 4, 11, 17, 80, 82, 86, 101, 127, 201, 203, 210, 215, 217, 218, 233
- truth 4, 8–13, 17, 18, 26, 31, 36, 39, 40, 168, 237, 259, 278, 279
- U**
- UNESCO 114–116, 118–120, 122, 216
- United Kingdom (UK) 7, 94, 97, 114, 123, 125, 157, 234, 276, 278
- United Nations 114, 117, 118, 171
- United States of America (USA) 6, 7, 37, 51, 269, 277
- University of Plymouth 114, 125, 130
- University of Wyoming (UW) 51, 53–67
- university/universities 4, 8–10, 11, 13, 18, 22–28, 32, 41–44, 49–58, 60–62, 64–67, 72–81, 83, 84, 86, 95–97, 102, 108, 109, 114, 115, 119, 125, 127, 130, 142, 143, 145–148, 151, 157–161, 163, 169–171, 178–181, 186, 190–193, 212, 225, 232, 233, 236, 237, 242–244, 246–253, 259–268, 270–272, 275–277, 279
- UN Sustainable Development Goals 114, 117
- V**
- values 16, 17, 34, 36, 37, 43, 62, 99, 101, 102, 104, 105, 107, 119, 130, 140, 148, 164, 171, 177–182, 187–190, 192, 193, 210, 224–230, 232–237, 245, 264
- virtues 8, 9, 11, 17, 39, 51, 94, 105, 178–182, 229, 260, 264, 265, 267–272
- W**
- Weber. M. 159, 162, 170
- wellbeing 113, 122
- widening participation 199, 204, 205, 209, 211
- wishful thinking 9, 17