The Role of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences in Forming and Informing Responses to Contemporary Social Change

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Abstract: Modern, liberal societies face a number of overarching challenges: demographic changes; increasing inequality; unemployment and under-employment; political instability; austerity; and ecological, social, and economic unsustainability are challenging established paradigms of political-economy. Current political discourse emphasises market-based approaches to these stressors: we contend it is rather the disciplines of the social sciences, arts, and humanities that have more to say about the resolution of these externalities. In the following we seek to broaden the discourse regarding the role of these disciplines in interpreting and beginning to address social challenges. Our consideration of human values as a complement of monetary values is illustrated practically by three indicative projects conducted by the authors. In each case, we focus on the qualitative impact of these disciplines' approaches on the participants and their environment. We suggest these activities have transformative potential through providing a platform for reflexion, collaboration, and the building of communities.

Keywords: Neo-Liberalism, Arts, Humanities, Social Science, Political-Economy

Act 1: The Value of the Humanities?

Scene 1: A Tragedy in the Making

A truly liberal general education adapts the mind to use its best faculties in business and to use business itself as a means of increasing culture.[1]

In 1890, Marshall[2] wrote, in *Principles of Economics*, that business (though important, of course) is the servant of culture. Wise words, yet currently the debate about the importance of liberal education is, if anything, taking the converse position. For example, the Browne[3] report commissioned to look at the state of University funding in the UK recommended, in the words of Professor Martin McQuillan[4]:

> The current teaching grant distributed to English universities should be cut by £3·2billion with a 100% reduction for the arts, humanities and social sciences.

[1] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics,* 8th ed. (London: MacMillan, 1966), 2:3.
[2] Marshall, *Principles.*
[3] John Browne, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, accessed March 15 2016, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/ 422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf (Belfast: Department for Employment and Learning, 2010).
[4] Martin McQuillan, "If You Tolerate this…Lord Browne and the Privatisation of the Humanities," *The London Graduate School Thought Piece*, October 16 2010, http://www.thelondongraduateschool.co.uk/thoughtpiece/if-you-tolerate-this%E2%80%A6-lord-browne-and-the-privatisation-of-the-humanities/.

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COMMON GROUND

This policy of relatively disadvantaging the humanities reflects government initiatives apparently locating the humanities and the arts in the realm of the unimportant and unproductive. According to UK education secretary, Nicky Morgan, those who study humanities "risk restricting their future career path."[5] Similarly, Japanese education minister, Hakuban Shimomura, recently determined Japan's state universities should close humanities departments in favour of "more practical, vocational education that better anticipates the needs of society."[6] It seems worthwhile to ask, therefore, what are the values of humanities, arts, and social sciences.

Small[7] argues there can be five key claims made to substantiate the value of the humanities. To:

- study the meaning-making practices of the culture
- have a useful public value, in that humanities scholarship informs government's understanding of culturally defined social concerns
- contribute to individual and collective happiness
- contribute to the workings of democracy
- matter for their own sake

According to Small, since the Victorian era, there has been a "division of approach between those…who approach questions of public value by prioritising the desired end for society (general prosperity and/or general well-being)…and those who understand the proper focus of attention to be the cultivation of the individual mind."[8] Under the ægis of a neo-liberal (market-based) political-economic paradigm, the current debate is such that Small is unsure "whether talk of non-market values…still has purchase in an economic context…under the sway of market forces."[9]

Ironically, in the context of a global financial crisis exacerbated, if not caused, by the application of simplistic market principles, the current political-economic framework demands a market rationale of claims for funding.[10] Far from having the humanities and arts fostered as a necessary human balance to a reductionist emphasis on markets, recent debate focuses on considering merely whether there is money to be made from these disciplines. Yet, it is by no means clear that market values are synonymous with human values.

A Brief Aside

We have argued that the worth of the arts, humanities, and social sciences is not limited to market values. In the next section, we consider how it is that market values became societies' metric of worth. We critique this approach and suggest that its adoption risks limiting human aspirations. The non-market value of the humanities is illustrated with several practical examples. A discussion concludes our drama.

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[5] Graeme Paton, "Nicky Morgan: Pupils 'Held Back' by Overemphasis on Arts," *The Telegraph*, Nov. 10, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11221081/Nicky-Morgan-pupils-held-back-by-overemphasis-on-arts.html.

[6] Alex Dean, "Japan's Humanities Chop Sends Shivers down Academic Spines." *The Guardian*, Sep. 25, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/sep/25/japans-humanities-chop-sends-shivers-down-academic-spines.

[7] Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[8] Ibid., 7.

[9] Ibid., 18.

[10] Kevin Albertson, Katherine Albertson, Chris Fox, and Dan Ellingworth, "Economic Values and Evidence: Evaluating Criminal Justice Policy," in *Values in Criminology and Community Justice*, ed. Malcolm Cowburn, Marian Duggan, Anne Robinson, and Paul Senior (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2013).

Act 2: The Road to Serfdom

Scene 1: The End of History?

The big businessmen argue that if they have their own way they will make the country prosperous; the fascists that they will make their people strong and glorious; the socialists that they will plan and provide for the welfare of all. "Give us power," they cry, "and see what good will come of it."[11]

In 1989, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama interpreted the end of the Cold War as "The End of History."[12] Fukuyama felt "the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started" and "Western liberal democracy [is] the final form of human government."

We tend to agree with Fukuyama that, by 1989, in many ways the political-economic outlook of the Western liberal democracies had come back to that of the Victorian era. We hope, however, it is not too late to learn from the mistakes of the past, and that the social unrest and collectivism which resulted from the inappropriate application of classical (now neo-classical or neo-liberal) political-economics in the early twentieth century can be avoided in the twenty-first century.

The political-economic paradigm currently prevailing in Western liberal democracies, sometimes known as the "Washington Consensus"[13] or neo-liberalism, dates back to economists' response to the depression of the 1930's and the apparent failure of *laissez faire.*[14] Neo-liberalism was founded at the *Colloque Walter Lippmann* held in the Paris of 1938 to celebrate the French translation of Lippmann's *The Good Society.*[15] Lippmann's book, and the colloquium, were attempts to counter the collectivist mood of the times.

The early neo-liberals agreed that the demand for collectivism arises as a response to the failure of free-markets. Such collectivism was summarised by Lippmann as falling into one of three broad forms: communism, fascism, and corporate monopoly.[16] It was, however, unclear how society might avoid one or other of these problems without falling into the third.

Friedrich Hayek, also present at the *Colloque Walter Lippmann*, later argued in *The Road to Serfdom*[17] individual self-determination required the means of production be divided amongst many independent people, rather than concentrated in the hands of a relative few. In other words, political freedom could be assured only where there is economic freedom.[18,19]

Scene 2: To Freedom and Beyond

We consider, now, the development of the neo-liberal train of thought, most notably in the USA and particularly in Chicago, amongst the likes of Milton Friedman and Gary Becker.

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[11] Walter Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 3rd ed. (Guildford & Esher: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1944; Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1938), 331. Citations refer to Transaction edition.

[12] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, https://ps321.community.uaf.edu/files/2012/10/Fukuyama-End-of-history-article.pdf.

[13] John Williamson, 1999. "What Should the Bank Think About the Washington Consensus?" (paper prepared as a background to the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000*, Institute for International Economics, Washington D.C., July 1999).

[14] *laissez faire*, from the French, "let us be," is a policy of unfettered free markets and a minimal role for the state.

[15] Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 2012.

[16] Lippmann, *Good Society*, 168.

[17] Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1944).

[18] Ludwig Mises, *Bureaucracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

[19] Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies,* 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 1966).

The early visionaries of neo-liberalism did not argue for unrestricted markets. In "Neo-liberalism and its Prospects," Friedman[20] acknowledged, like Lippmann, the collective state had arisen in response to a fundamental flaw in *laissez faire*. The flaw being, in the absence of a strong state, private individuals and corporations accrue power and limit or eliminate the freedom of their fellows. Friedman argued the neo-liberal state might provide a "middle road" between collectivism and *laissez faire*. He suggested, "The citizens would be protected against the state by the existence of a private market; and against one another by the preservation of competition."[21]

Friedman set out his justification and elaboration of this approach in the 1962 book, *Capitalism and Freedom.*[22] His analysis was based on the philosophy of Adam Smith who argued the market's "invisible hand" would distribute the "necessities of life"[23] to all. Freidman recognised, however, markets are social constructions and the "invisible hand" must be constrained by the state through appropriate legal frameworks and incentive structures.[24]

Originally, neo-liberalism, was not an economic philosophy, but a moral philosophy. It sought, not to promote unfettered free-markets, but rather markets regulated in such a way as to achieve overall social goals. Market economies were deemed "good," not in and of themselves, but because the devolution of power which is necessary in an efficient market economy fosters higher values for which communities might strive; for example, morality and freedom.[25]

The economic promotion of social goals without comment on their underlying validity is an example of "positive economics."[26] A positivist, such as Friedman, would not use economics to comment on the validity of ends, but rather simply to determine the most efficient means of achieving these ends. In this sense, "positive economics" is amoral; lacking moral commentary. This does not, of course, make economics immoral; freedom is a moral goal.[27]

Indeed, as Souter[28] argues, no economic system can be rational until it is organised in conformity with some conception of "man's chief end." According to Souter[29] the solution to this irrationality is "democratic 'economic imperialism,'" under which economics is informed by, and informs the other social sciences.

One of the prime movers in the economic analysis of apparently non-market behaviour was Gary Becker, a colleague of Friedman's in Chicago. Becker took the market into society, writing on the economic approaches to: crime;[30] marriage;[31] addiction;[32] divorce;[33] discrimination;[34]

[20] Milton Friedman, "Neo-Liberalism and Its Prospects," (unpublished paper, 1951): 5, quoted in Daniel Stedman *Masters of the University: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 97.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Milton Friedman, C*apitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
[23] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 6th ed. (London: A. Millar, 1759), 10
[24] Friedman, *Capitalism*, 112.
[25] Friedman was not so naïve as to assume that a market economy was *sufficient* for individual freedom. Friedman (*Capitalism*, 158) proposed the alleviation of poverty ought to take place outside the market. Specifically, he proposed a Negative Income Tax—in practice, equivalent to a citizen's income. We can but speculate why his poverty alleviation proposals have been met with less enthusiasm that his free-market proposals. Friedman himself argued poverty alleviation relied on the "self-restraint and good will of the electorate" (Ibid, 159).
[26] Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics," in *Essays in Positive Economics*, ed. Milton Friedman, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 38.
[27] It is worth noting, in passing, that to achieve freedom in a market construct, each individual must also have access to the market. This requires a distribution of economic means rarely found outside of pure neo-classical theory. In the world we actually inhabit, market power, like military power, is not uniformly distributed—effective freedom, therefore, remains beyond the price range of many.
[28] Ralph W. Souter, "'The Nature and Significance of Economic Science' in Recent Discussion," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 47 no. 3 (1933): 389.
[29] Ralph W. Souter, *Prolegomena to Relativity Economics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 94–5.
[30] Gary S. Becker, "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach," *Journal of Political Economy* 76 no. 2 (1968): 169–217.
[31] Gary S. Becker, "A Theory of Marriage," in *Economics of the Family*, ed. Theodore William Schultz, 299–351. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 299–351.

human behavior;[35] and life in general[36]. Becker was not alone in this work; and others contributed the economic approach to: the law;[37] religion;[38] and (somewhat humorously) tooth brushing,[39] for example.

However, where Souter[40] argued "economics is necessarily and inevitably dependent upon sociology, upon psychology," the Chicago approach to the social sciences was rather that they "should be subjugated by neo-classical economic theory."[41] Ultimately, it was suggested other social sciences might become mere branches of applied economics,[42] thus "There is only one social science…economics does really constitute the universal grammar of social science."[43] As Lazear has it, "By almost any market test, economics is the premier social science"[44]—which is to say that, by its own standards, economics is the premier social science.

One might speculate whether part of the reason for economics' "success" arises from the purse-strings of academic budgets increasingly becoming loosened in line with the paradigm of neo-classical economics.[45]

In the next section, we argue this has not been a wholly appropriate development. Just as the individual requires more than access to the market to assure personal freedom, so society must rely on more than market forces to achieve community aspirations. Holistic liberal education, and engagement with the arts, we suggest, facilitates individual and community inclusion, empowerment and connectivity, having a prime aim of enabling "man to know himself and the world."[46]

Scene 3: A Phenomenal Success—A Noumenal Failure

Economics, as we have seen, is an amoral discipline; it cannot provide a moral context: Economics might suggest means of achieving human aspirations—it is not, itself, a human aspiration. As Lazear[47] suggests, economic analysis is concerned with phenomena—with data, with what can be measured—yet the higher human needs are of quality, not of quantity; of reality, not statistics.

That there is a truth which lies beyond physical reality—a truth which no amount of physical or scientific data can describe—is highlighted by philosophers such as Plato and Immanuel Kant. Plato suggested objects and events might be divided into phenomena, which are amenable to rational examination and scientific enquiry—the objective, the realistic—and noumena which are those objects and events not capable of being known solely through the senses—the imagined or

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32 Gary S. Becker and Kevin M. Murphy, "A Theory of Rational Addiction." *The Journal of Political Economy* 96 no. 4 (1988): 675–700.

33 Gary S. Becker, Elisabeth M. Landes, and Robert T. Michael, "An Economic Analysis of Marital Instability." *Journal of Political Economy* 85 no. 6 (1977): 1141–87.

34 Gary S. Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

35 Gary S. Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

36 Gary S. Becker, "The Economic Way of Looking at Life," *Economic Sciences*, Dec. 9, 1992. Also in *Journal of Political Economy* 101 no. 3 (1993): 383–409.

37 David D. Friedman, *Law's Order: What Economics Has to Do with Law and Why It Matters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

38 Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Introduction to the Economics of Religion," *Journal of Economic Literature* 36 no. 3 (1998): 1465–95.

39 Alan S. Blinder, "The Economics of Brushing Teeth," *Journal of Political Economy* 82 no. 4 (1974): 887–91.

40 Souter, "'Economic Science,'" 399.

41 Geoffrey M. Hodgson, *How Economics Forgot History: The Problem of Historical Specificity in Social Science* (London: Routledge, 2001), 210.

42 Peter J. Buckley, and Mark Casson, "Economics as an Imperialist Social Science," *Human Relations* 46 no.9 (1933): 1035–52.

43 Jack Hirshleifer, "The Expanding Domain of Economics," *The American Economic Review* 75 no. 6 (1985): 53.

44 Edward P. Lazear, "Economic Imperialism." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115 no. 1 (2000): 99.

45 Small, *Humanities*, 52.

46 Arnold cited in Small, *Humanities*, 78.

47 Lazear, "Economic Imperialism."

felt experiences, the subjective, the idealistic. That the idealistic might not be entirely knowable does not make it less true. These are the contexts which give meaning to the objective.

Neo-classical economic analysis tends either to ignore the subjective as having no ground in scientific reality, or to take it as a given—that is, something unchangeable. However, as we show in the case studies below, it is possible to develop one's consideration of the subjective through engagement with arts based interventions. Such development is part of the human condition. Insofar as the individual's subjective needs occupy the higher levels of Maslow's hierarchy[48]—social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation—to ignore the subjective is to sell ourselves, and our human potential, short.

As a simple example of the dichotomy between what can be measured, and reality, consider the markets for prostitution and marriage in Edlund and Korn's *A Theory of Prostitution*,

> [W]e shall argue that a prostitute sells nonreproductive sex, which we shall call "commercial sex," whereas a wife sells reproductive sex (i.e., sex plus children).[49]

While it may be that there are people in the world who aspire to nothing more than marriage of this form, others may well hope for more from a life-long partnership than a contract regarding "reproductive sex.". If this really is all humanity seeks, whither love?[50]

As Robert Kennedy has argued:

> Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.[51]

It follows, although there is nothing wrong with economics as a descriptor of phenomena—that is, the world of the senses—it is an inefficient discipline where it is not constrained by moral intuition. Economics cannot provide us with a sufficient toolkit for promoting human wellbeing because, as Cameron has it (often attributed to Albert Einstein) "not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."[52] We do not contend that the consideration of economists is inherently misleading; it is misleading if it is *all* we consider.

Act 3: What is the Value of Art?

Scene 1: The Good and the Bad

We propose the non-transactional, non-monetised contribution of the arts, humanities, and social sciences is necessary in the awakening and reawakening of communities' and individuals' imaginative, creative, and moral senses. Human-scale (as opposed to business scale) reflexion is vital in determining the ways in which we may determine, inform, and support sustainable individual and community aspirations.

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[48] Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 no. 4 (1943): 370–396.

[49] Lena Edlund and Evelyn Korn, "A Theory of Prostitution," *Journal of Political Economy* 110 no. 1 (2002): 5.

[50] To be fair, Edlund and Korn *do* mention "love" four times: they describe the value of promiscuity as arising from "love of variety" (thrice on p. 7 and once on p. 17).

[51] Robert F. Kennedy, "Remarks at the University of Kansas," (speech, University of Kansas, March 18, 1968), John F. Kennedy: Presidential Library and Musuem, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/RFK-Speeches/Remarks-of-Robert-F-Kennedy-at-the-University-of-Kansas-March-18-1968.aspx.

[52] William B. Cameron, *Informal Sociology: A Casual Introduction to Sociological Thinking*, Vol. 21 of *Studies in Sociology* (New York: Random House, 1963), 13.

Notwithstanding, although we assert a non-monetised sense of the value of the arts and humanities, it is also important to note it is not necessarily the case that the arts are inevitably or unproblematically "improving" or "civilizing." Also, it is important to note that the enjoyment of the arts need not be exclusive or a product of snobbery (that is, used to signal economic affluence).

An assumption central to a humanist tradition, and promotion, of art is that it allows us to operate more holistically—some might say it humanises us; makes us better. It does this through exposing our senses to beauty, the quest for perfection, the æsthetic. This is (said to be) good art. Conversely, bad art (or non-art) is that which shows us the worse, that tends to degrade, horrify, and lessen our focus and our humanity.

Jonathan Dollimore adopts a similar position when he argues:

> those who love art…promulgate well intentioned lies, telling us that great art and the high culture it serves can only enhance the lives of those who truly appreciate them; that such art—unlike say, propaganda, popular culture or pornography—is incapable of damaging or "corrupting" us.[53]

While Dollimore seems tacitly to accept a division between high art and popular culture, his claims about the supposed safety of high art, its humanising/humanitarian capacity, are pertinent for this discussion. He proposes an æsthetic that maintains its cognitive aspect, and alerts us to the fact that character—the most significant part of identification for many readers and viewers—has routinely been dæmonic in many of the most celebrated texts. The æsthetic he is exploring:

> confronts us with what we are not; or rather it confronts us with the psychological cost of being who we are, or perhaps the social cost of becoming what we would like to be, had we but courage equal to desire. It follows we can never be complacent about the benign influence of art, any more that we can about knowledge per se. To take art seriously is to know it comes without…humanitarian guarantees.[54]

It follows, art can inform and misinform; it makes a powerful weapon and a powerful defence; art can promote either growth or decline: All the more reason to educate those whom it will influence.

Scene 2: The Heights and the Depths

We turn now to considering the validity of the distinction which is sometimes made between "high" and "popular" art. It is, of course, true that there is a "market" for art. With few exceptions, artists seek to make a living from their labour, but even explicitly commercial forms such as the mass mediated public art may offer a value and worth beyond the economic.

Consider, for example, Joss Whedon's television serials (*e.g. Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). Whedon strives to create televisual art that is intrinsically political, but also seeks to ensure the politics is a function of the characters' experience and/or a supposed audience's ability to identify with those characters.

There is a truth which cannot be expressed directly in simple words which can be conveyed through exposure to the arts—in popular media no less than in any other art form. Such communication can be carried out through identification—through the audience's feeling the dramatic characters' loves, hates, disappointments &c. For Whedon, audience identification with his characters is not just an aspect of the show, it is the rationale, the force driving him to create. Often ignored or castigated as irrelevant or "naïve," identification is crucial in understanding the

[53] Jonathan Dollimore, "Art in Time of War: Towards a Contemporary Aesthetic," in *The New Aestheticism*, ed. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas (Manchester: Mancherster University Press, 2003), 43

[54] Ibid., 48.

power of popular media. The insights offered by even such a commercially successful show as Buffy, and sought so strenuously by Whedon, are versions of a broader notion where identifications:

> are the source of some our most powerful, enduring and deeply felt pleasures…Identifications are erotic, intellectual and emotional. They delight, fascinate, confuse, unnerve and sometimes terrify. They form the most intimate and yet the most elusive part of our unconscious lives.[55]

It follows there is no tenable distinction between "high" and "popular" art. There are forms of art which are more or less able to develop identification in different individuals. As individuals differ in their outlook and perspective, and therefore differ in their response to the arts, so must the form of art be varied. It is not, for example, sufficient to encourage a school pupil to read Dickens and suppose that is all the "art" they require.

There is not the scope to develop this idea here, but the example illustrates a broader point: the value of the arts and humanities might be calculable in economic terms but the intangible, the emotional, the identificatory, the political impacts are equally important. Part of this importance is recognising that art and humanities are complex, multiple, various, dangerous, helpful, benign, divisive, reassuring—and it is precisely the efforts to negotiate at the individual, local, civic, national, and political levels this multiplicity of responses that make the arts and humanities so important.

Intermission

Where economic "values" (for example economic growth) are given precedence over all else, economics is elevated to the role of master over the social sciences. However, economics cannot be an end, but is rather a means.[56] Whether or not an economic analysis of policy will be sufficient—or even appropriate—will depend on the ends.

To implement policy fit for humanity, policy makers must be informed, not just by the objective, but also by the subjective; not just by phenomena, but by noumena. That is to say, policy must be in keeping with the natural law, and also the moral law; and policy must reflect humanity's search for underlying reality.

We must, of course, recognise that idealism, subjective as it is, differs from one individual to another; each gains a more or less perfect glimpse of ultimate truth. We ought not, therefore, to elevate individual ideals. Rather, it is in the study of the ideals of humanity as a whole, that is, in the study of the arts, humanities, and social sciences, where we might progress. Ultimately, society without the humanities may lose its humanity—and shortly thereafter, its point.

In the following case studies, we seek to demonstrate the power of the humanities in fostering the qualifiable, rather than quantifiable; the subjective, rather than the objective; and ultimately the worth of the human potential. These case studies might appear only to describe modest—or perhaps we might say, human scale—interventions. It is our suggestion that society exists, or ought to, more on a human than on a corporate scale.

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[55] Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers: Readings on Psychoanalysis, Sexuality, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2.

[56] Albertson Et Al., "Economic Values."

Act 4: Introducing the Case Studies

No sane society can be built upon the mixture of purely intellectual knowledge and almost complete absence of shared artistic experience[57]

Setting the Scene

In the following we discuss common themes in three case studies which have been conducted by the staff at Sheffield Hallam University. They are examples of the using of creative arts-based initiatives with residents of semi-closed institutions. Our intention is to highlight the qualitative impact of these disciplines on the participants and their environments. We suggest these activities have transformative potential by providing a platform for reflexion, collaboration, and the building of communities, on the basis of an approach within which resilience, social justice, sustainability, and social capacity can be founded.

Case Study Detail

The first project was a small pilot study delivering poetry readings to residents of a nursing home in a northern town in 2014. The participating group was comprised of several residents, an activities coordinator, and two members of the research project team. The group met nine times over eight weeks, with each session lasting an hour. Two or three poems were read at each session and a free discussion took place after each poem. The principal aim of this project was to explore the potential of a reading-group intervention to improve the wellbeing and connectivity of care-home residents.[58]

The second case study describes a performance company's annual delivery of twelve-week blocks of evening workshops in performance and drama, culminating in a performance at a psychiatric hospital in the West of England. The hospital is a purpose-built, sixty-bed adult male, medium secure unit run by the NHS forensic service and caters for those formally detained under the Mental Health Act. The principal aim of this project is to deliver meaningful activities to the residents. The workshops were delivered in the Recreation Room at the hospital to between eight and twenty patient participants. The final performances involve a series of sketches developed by the participants; the audience was comprised of staff, other patients, and family members.

The third case study is a critical reading group activity delivered in a high security male prison in the North of England. The group met once a week for twelve weeks. Participants were provided with reading homework in preparation for the next session. A variety of speeches, poems, and novels were selected. The session lasted two hours and facilitated open debate around the set readings. The principal aim of this project was to provide meaningful activities for the prisoners.[59,60]

Scene 1: Engaging the Imagination, Fostering Creativity, and Relationships

The imagination, image and imaginary, myth, metaphor, and narrative are all elements of the human experience. Engaging the imagination is said to assist in the making of ethically informed decisions and enliven love, hope, and forgiveness, along with engendering powerful

[57] Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York: Rinehart, 1955), 340–1.
[58] Catherine Arnold, Katie Cutts, Maxine Greaves, Joan Healey, Chris Hopkins, Alex McClimens, and David Peplow, *The Potential Therapeutic Benefits of Reading Poetry to Nursing Home Residents: The Road Less Travelled* (unpublished follow up report, Sheffield Hallam University, 2015).
[59] Caroline O'Keeffe and Katherine E. Albertson, *"The Good Days are Amazing": An Evaluation of the Writers in Prison Network* (Sheffield: Hallam Centre for Community Justice, Sheffield Hallam University, 2012).
[60] Katherine E. Albertson, "Creativity, Self-Exploration and Change: Creative Arts-Based Activities' Contribution to Desistance Narratives," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 54 no. 3 (2015): 277–291.

visualisations that can work to create better lives.[61] Recounting and sharing every-day reflexions and personal stories with those around us is a significant learning process, "the process results in new meaning/learning, which is a precursor to the recognition that change is a potential outcome."[62] Opportunities for interactions encouraging the imagination and self-expression may function as agents of social integration. This impact of the focus on human imaginary processes was observed in all the case studies highlighted.

It was clear, having the opportunity to interact, to show a side to one's character that was not so deeply associated with immediate space, place, or indeed time proved a powerful experience:

> You get to reflect on your own life too, you can't help it really.[63]
>
> I have gained more insight and knowledge here than anywhere else. I've learnt more about me than with any Psychologist.[64]

Narrative may serve as the "vehicle through which selfhood is created and recreated."[65] For example, in the poetry group, participants discussed both abstract and concrete illustrations as they reflected on their own and others' life choices[66]:

> Yes but I suppose, do you ever look back and think what would have happened if I had not done that but I had done this?[67]
>
> You do sometimes though look back and think what if…what if I had taken the other road, what if I hadn't done this, where would I be now or you know. It is quite interesting.[68]
>
> Yes a lot of people do that don't they kind of, yes. And if I had have got married at that point or if I had, yes what would your life be like or…yes.[69]

Engagement with text was a catalyst for reminiscences and reflexions that sparked the imagination of the people engaging, ranging from shared discussions of concrete detail to abstract; reflexions on past and future actions and back to abstraction again. From a literary point of view, this is a key part of the interpretation and understanding of any art form. However, while the potential benefits of reminiscence within health and social care settings are established,[70,71] the focus seems to have remained on the potential to exploit the therapeutic (i.e., monetisable) value for the individual. Explorations of the effects of reading poems on people's mood and

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[61] James F. Veninga, *The Humanities and the Civic Imagination: Collected Addresses and Essays, 1978–1998*(Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1999).
[62] Theresa Rose, Del Loewenthal, and Dennis Greenwood, "Counselling and Psychotherapy as a Form of Learning: Some Implications for Practice," *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 33 no. 4 (2005): 442.
[63] Prisoner Reading Group evaluation workshop.
[64] Prison Reading Group focus group.
[65] Christine Friestad, "Making Sense, Making Good, or Making Meaning? Cognitive Distortions as Targets of Change in Offender Treatment," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 56 no. 3 (2012): 475.
[66] Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken.*
[67] Care home poetry group.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Chris Hagens, Amanda Beaman, and Ellen Bouchard Ryan, "Reminiscing, Poetry Writing, and Remembering Boxes: Personhood-Centered Communication With Cognitively Impaired Older Adults," *Activities, Adaptation & Aging* 27 no. 3–4 (2003): 97–112.
[71] Martin Pinquart and Simon Forstmeier, "Effects of Reminiscence Interventions on Psychosocial Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis," *Aging & Mental Health* 16 no. 5 (2012): 541–58.

outlook, both individually and collectively, are more scarce (however see, Hitchcock and Bowden-Schaible[72]).

This phenomenon may be argued to be indicative of the current dominant delivery model and focus of the provision of public sector service relations; that of a transactional one. Transactional relationships (facilitating an economic exchange[73]) focus on standardised interactions rendered at a specific time, while a relational service "crucially depends on the relationships among users, and between users and professionals"[74] and facilitate social exchange where obligations are unspecified and interactions are built on trust.[75]

Where economic exchanges occur in a supposedly social relationship, there is an apparent mismatch[76] leading to stress. This may explain why staff, resident relationships in care homes[77] or caring-focussed environments, can tend towards a limited task-oriented communication between staff and residents, to the detriment of both parties.[78] Conversely, the ability to communicate meaning to others has been shown to contribute to a sense of belonging and to foster a caring community.[79] It follows, therefore, activities which re-form social relationships have a pay-off in boosting social, if not economic, exchange.[80]

Scene 2: Affecting the Emotional Geography of Social Space

Places support particular behaviours. The aim of facilitating any creative arts group is to support the giving, receiving, and sharing of information, feelings, and ideas; in short, to support dialogue. This may well contrast with the *raison d'etre* of a secure hospital; a place of care, of incarceration, of rehabilitation, and a place of security and regulation.

The hospital drama group was delivered in the recreation room in the unit; this did not initially feel like a performance space. The "Recreation Room" holds memories and connotations; it is a location of learned behaviour, restrictions and frustrations; more often than not, the men slumped into chairs as they arrived. It was not an area of re-creation, but of perpetuation; its context that of confinement.

The participants for the drama group initially arrived in small clusters, some so heavily medicated they fell asleep during sessions; others indicated, through bravado, apparent or feigned indifference, and masking behaviour. In this sense, patients were already engaging in a form of theatre, a restrictive and limiting repetitious solo performance in which they demonstrated the distance of their inner-selves from their own behaviour, from each other, and from staff. In this they followed the script inferred from Crewe's description of men in prison:

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[72] Jan L. Hitchcock and Sally Bowden-Schaible, "Is It Time For Poetry Now? Therapeutic Potentials—Individual and Collective," *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 20 no. 3 (2007): 129–40.
[73] Dennis W. Organ and Mary Konovsky, "Cognitive Versus Affective Determinants of Organizational Citizenship Behavior," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 74 no. 1 (1989): 162.
[74] Rick Muir and Imogen Parker, *Many to Many: How the Relational State will Transform Public Services* (London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 2014), 32.
[75] Organ and Konovsky, "Organizational Citizenship Behavior."
[76] Russell Cropanzano and Marie S. Mitchell, "Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review," *Journal of Management* 31 no. 6 (2005): 888.
[77] Hagens Et Al., "Reminiscing."
[78] We hope that the reader will appreciate we do not intend to imply that the particular care home in this study had an especially task oriented approach. Naturally, Hagens et al.'s analysis applies in general, rather than in specifics. Indeed, the facilitation of the reading group is one example of many that this particular enterprise placed value on relational transactions.
[79] Patrice Rancour and Terry Barrett, "Art Interpretation as a Clinical Intervention toward Healing," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 29 no. 1 (2011): 69.
[80] c.f. Organ and Konovsky, "Organizational Citizenship Behavior."

> Experienced prisoners in particular modelled a form of tense courtesy, in which they were careful to avoid giving anyone a reason to precipitate conflict.[81]

Despite this difficult start, the potential of space has seen theatre artists branch out of the apparent fixed nature of "theatre" and the restriction of location, to seek other places to perform; to demonstrate truths which transcend fact (e.g. Forced Entertainment[82]). In any theatre, it is the reimagining of place which is the primary truth transcending fact:

> I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space with someone watching him and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.[83]

Thus, a location is defined by more than its function (and physical dimensions), but also by its social interactions, associated stories and histories, and the needs and imagination of those who inhabit and occupy it.[84] Therefore, the recreation room was re-framed as any-place the participants needed it to be. An act of theatre involves imagination, creativity and emotional commitment on behalf of the community; performers, participants, and spectators. Location now becomes not only physical space but personal, emotional, creative, and ultimately social space.

Certainly, the human spirit can be dangerous: freed from constraints it can fly either up or down or, perhaps, cowed, it might seek to avoid leaving the confines of familiarity. In the criminal justice system for example, if we allow suppressed voice to emerge, by imagining a space between the institution and the outside world, this may result in, as Thompson[85] has it: "a blurred, transitional space between the two worlds."

That said, different approaches to activities elicit different modes of engagement, and to deprive people of connecting with their imagination ignores "the human capability to reflect on whether an objective is compatible with our own moral understanding of ourselves and our relationships with others."[86] In this light we are challenged to address the issue of whether or not rehabilitation may be distinguished from intimidation; and which of these is more in keeping, not only with the narratives of (ex-)offenders, but which is more in keeping with the narrative of a liberal (i.e. free) society.

Ultimately, the essence of any theatre is to create a reality which stands up against, perhaps opposes, observable facts. In such a space, transformation is not only possible, it is required!

Scene 3: The Honesty of the Fictional Narrative

Within a prison reading group, facilitators approached prisoners as people who had the potential to be creative, rather than being defined by their offence. This illustrates an approach acknowledging "people have the capacity to develop different patterns of identification."[87,88] In

[81] Ben Crewe, Jason Warr, Peter Bennett, and Alan Smith, "The Emotional Geography of Prison Life," *Theoretical Criminology* 18 no. 1 (2014): 56–74.
[82] Forced Entertainment. "Nights in This City," *Forced Entertainment*, last modified 1995, http://www.forcedentertainment.com/project/nights-in-this-city/.
[83] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space: A Book about the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate* (New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 1996), 11.
[84] c.f. Tim Etchells, 1999. *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1999).
[85] James Thompson, ed., *Drama Workshops for Anger Management and Offending Behaviour* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999), 17.
[86] Barry Vaughan, "The Internal Narrative of Desistance," *British Journal of Criminology* 47 no. 3 (2007): 398.
[87] David Gadd and Stephen Farrall, "Criminal Careers, Desistance and Subjectivity Interpreting Men's Narratives of Change," *Theoretical Criminology* 8 no. 2 (2004): 147.
[88] c.f. Judith Rumgay, "Scripts for Safer Survival: Pathways out of Female Crime," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 43 no. 4 (2004): 405–419.

such a group, the mode of expression is of secondary importance; communication is the essential starting point from which "new meanings can emerge."[89]

Practically, communication cannot occur in isolation, it requires space in which text, context, and participants interact and the "act of analysis inevitably alters the experience and the learning that flows from it."[90] This approach is important as:

> We are all better than our worst deeds, yet it is surprising how often offending behaviour work focuses almost entirely on the worst deeds and the "worst self" of the participants, paying only peripheral attention to their best instincts, their strengths and their abilities.[91]

Prisoners in the evaluation focus group reported their session time provided a safe and non-judgmental space, facilitating their retaining ownership of their own narrative. Given the need for emotional distance, discussion was cast in the third person (for example, a discussion of a fictional character's actions in a book or play). In this way, the study of the humanities based projects provide empowerment, rather than requirement; enhancing community engagement, something one "can trust it to pace itself to your needs and wants rather than to anyone else…It can be private until you decide to share it."[92]

Participants retained a sense of ownership, because they did not have to share any personal information yet the exchange facilitated a connexion to those around them[93]. This connexion—empathy if you will—was increasingly evident as prisoner participants reported that, in everything they read, they felt they connected with someone in the text in some way.

The virtue of engagement in reading group activities is that they allow people to step outside of their objective experience and begin to engage with subjective reality. Thus "it is when you do not know what you are supposed to think, that the work starts happening."[94] The prison reading group facilitated critical engagement with a text, providing an opportunity for imagination and reflexivity, and "acting back on themselves in the light of some kind of process of reflexion on the situation before them."[95] As participants commented:

> You are often alone when reading—so it's good to hear other people's interpretation that can often be so different from your own. We learned to agree to disagree too…[96]

> When you're in the exercise yard, you have to show a different side to your character. I learnt to settle disputes and diffuse conflict through listening to other people, using dialogue—that's the best way to go.[97]

> Being able to bounce different ideas around has opened my mind. I know more about myself and my fellow man after this.[98]

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[89] Rose Et Al., "Counselling and Psychotherapy," 444.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Sally Brookes and Alun Mountford, *Geese Theatre Handbook: Drama With Offenders and People at Risk* (Winchester: Waterside Press, 2002), 25.

[92] Gillie Bolton, *The Therapeutic Potential of Creative Writing: Writing Myself* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999), 12. Cited in Jeannie Wright and Man Cheung Chung, "Mastery or Mystery? Therapeutic Writing: A Review of the Literature," *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 29 no. 3 (2001): 278.

[93] c.f. James W. Pennebaker and Janel D. Seagal, "Forming a Story: The Health Benefits of Narrative," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 55 no. 10 (1999): 1243–54.

[94] Jennie Hartley and Sarah Turvey, *Prison Reading Groups: What Books Can Do Behind Bars: Report on the Work of PRG 1999–2013* (London: University of Roehampton, 2013), 34.

[95] Vaughan, "Narrative of Desistance," 393.

[96] Prisoner Reading Group evaluation workshop.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

Participants were enabled to try "on the roles of productive citizen, responsible citizen and active citizen [which] provides, at a minimum, an imaginative rehearsal for their assumption on release."[99] It was engagement with fiction—narratives objectively not true—which allowed participants to question, inform, and reform their own narratives, and sometimes to build subjective truth in their own life course and desistence.

Act 5: Conclusion

The prophet and the poet may regenerate the world without the economist, but the economist cannot regenerate it without them.[100]

"There never has been a time when…except in the most general sense, a study of history provides so little instruction for our present day," Tony Blair declared in a speech to the US Congress in July 2003. Is this lack of instruction because history has let us down, or is it because society has stopped listening. We suggest the latter. Bound up in apparently new and pressing problems, we fail to see that "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*."[101] It may rather be the case that, as George Santayana has noted, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."[102]

If, however, history is seemingly bereft of lessons, perhaps we ought to turn to poetry; for example, to Percy Shelley who argued, in *A Defence of Poetry*, that the health of the nation requires we subject economic philosophy to human considerations and restraints; "imagination" as he called it. Else:

> Whilst the mechanist abridges, and the political economist combines labor, let them beware that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want…The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer; and the vessel of the State is driven between the Scylla and Charybdis of anarchy and despotism.[103]

Recent history supports Shelley's analysis: as in the aftermath of the great depression of the 1920's, so now in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, both arguably exacerbated by the misapplication of neo-classical economic theories[104].

The end of History envisaged by Fukuyama has rather resulted in the turning back of the clock by a century. The opportunity to attempt to avoid repeating the mistakes of the twentieth century beckons, not through the pursuit of the material—we tried that last century—but rather by elevating our aspirations; from the individual to the social and from the market to the human.

The freedom humanity seeks must, in the end, be more than the freedom to maximise profitability. Otherwise, "We had forgotten, and now have to learn again, that to be civilized

[99] Christopher Uggen, Jeff Manza, and Angela Behrens, "'Less Than the Average Citizen': Stigma, Role Transition and the Civic Reintegration of Convicted Felons," in *After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration*, edited by Shadd Maruna and Russ Immarigeon (Cullompton: Willan, 2004), 262.
[100] Philip H. Wicksteed, *The Common Sense of Political Economy: And Selected Papers and Reviews on Economic Theory*, vol. 1, book 3 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), 35.
[101] Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr "the more it changes, the more it's the same thing."
[102] George Santayana, "Flux and Constancy in Human Nature," Chap. 12 in *The Life of Reason: The Phases of Human Progress*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1906)
[103] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in *English Essays: Sidney to Macaulay*, vol. 27, *The Harvard Classics 1909–14*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1821; Bartleby.com, 2001), 33. Citations refer to P. F. Collier & Son edition.
[104] John T. Harvey, "How Economists Contributed to the Financial Crisis," *Forbes*, February 6, 2012, http://www.forbes.com/sites/johntharvey/2012/02/06/economics-crisis/.

simply means that society again and again musters the strength and the will to keep clear of the two poles of barbarism, of anarchy, and the barrack square."[105]

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[105] Wilhelm Röpke, "End of an Era?" (lecture, Frankfurt am Main, February 8, 1933). In Wilhelm Röpke, *Against the Tide*, trans. Elizabeth Henderson (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1969), 79–97.

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