Collegiality and intellectual love

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Introduction

A love of knowledge, the most valuable resource in Universities, is being squandered by policies designed for the market place. This is the proposition I want to explore in this essay: to consider what is to be done about it; and to think about how collegiality, based upon a celebration of intellectual love, might restore, or rather create, integrity within the academic community.

It is difficult to be taken seriously when writing in the academic press about 'love' in relation to academic work. In response to a chapter entitled *Intellectual love and the link between teaching and research* (Rowland 2005), a reviewer commented 'Rowland… highlights the role of 'intellectual love' (*I kid you not*) as the motivator for academic inquiry' (Tight 2006 *italics added*). Why might an experienced reviewer sardonically assume that readers will need to be warned that a discussion of love in relation to one's subject – an ordinary enough notion in everyday language – is not mere 'kidding'?

It suggests that the language in which higher education is debated has become disconnected from the ways in which academics commonly feel

about their intellectual commitment. There is evidence to suggest that between 1998 and 2004 British academics became no less enthusiastic about the academic aspects of their work (Kinman and Jones 2004). Furthermore, many employers consider 'passion', integrity', 'enthusiasm', 'openness' (Miller Smith 2002) and 'scholarly values' (Bok 2003, CIHE 2003) – which all imply a love of knowledge - to be amongst the most important outcomes of a higher education. So it is somewhat ironic if academics consider a term such as a love of knowledge – or 'intellectual love' – should not be taken seriously. It is strange that a phrase such as 'the delivery of learning outcomes' is taken to be serious and meaningful, but not 'inspiring a love of learning'. Has talk of such love no place in the language in which academics write about their work?

If so, it must impact upon how academic staff relate to each other as well as to their students and their subject matter. Without the opportunity to express their shared love of knowledge academic staff are likely to feel isolated from their community which they experience as fragmented, unsupportive and non-collaborative. In these circumstances one might expect the university to become, as one wag put it, institutions where the only shared commitment is to finding a parking space. Unless academics can profess something like a shared love of knowledge, the *collegium* and collegiality may become indistinguishable from the corporation and corporate identity.

Collegiality based upon Intellectual Love

The word 'love' is not prominent in educational writing. But it is not completely silent. Carl Rogers (1961) drew upon his experience of teaching, psychotherapy and conflict resolution. He was perhaps the most prominent exponent of student, client, or rather person-centred approaches to learning. He was also very involved in developing models of parenting in which 'unconditional love' was the major principle for learning. In the context of teaching he more often used the term 'unconditional positive regard' to describe the commitment of the teacher the student. McWilliam (1996, 1999) has written about love as part of an exploration of critical pedagogy. Barnett (2007), while not using the word love itself, has sought to instate terms which carry much of the emotional significance associated with love. Again, however, the focus is mainly upon the pedagogical relationship between teachers and their students in respect of powerful emotions.

In contrast, I shall use the word more directly in terms of the relationship between knower (student or academic) and known (subject matter). Like Maxwell (2007), in his conception of 'wisdom inquiry', I am concerned to recognize that an appreciation of the mysterious 'is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science' (Einstein 1973) and that such emotion has a rational role to play in enquiry.

So far, I have used the term 'intellectual love' interchangeably with 'a love of knowledge' as expressing the desire to know. I now want to develop the concept of intellectual love in order to see how policy and collegiality might be built upon such a conception.

The term 'intellectual love' is normally attributed to the seventeenth century philosopher Spinoza (1955), now widely held to have played a central role in the development of the Enlightenment in Europe (Israel 2001). For him, intellectual love combined what modern-day psychologists would call the cognitive and the affective: both intellectual thought and emotion. He did, however, distinguish between the passions (in relation to which we are passive) and emotions (in relation to which we are active). Thus love and compassion would be emotions, lust and greed would be passions. For Spinoza it was important that individuals should become aware of the passions over which they have no control and as a consequence transform them into active emotions. This insight foreshadows the psychoanalytic approach of Freud, some 250 years later. In these terms, intellectual love is an emotion rather than a passion.

Thus when one speaks of a love of history, this is an active emotion. Indeed, it would seem peculiar to say 'I just can't *help* loving history', like one might say 'I just can't help loving cream buns.' A love of history is not lust.

Spinoza expresses his concept of intellectual love in terms of desire for knowledge of God, a term which he uses pan theistically to indicate all that exists. It includes the natural world, ourselves and all knowledge.

Putting this into non theistic terms, desire to know more about, say, history is a desire to identify oneself with this aspect of the infinite world in which the

search for knowledge can never be complete. The more one knows, however, the more one's capacity for intellectual love is enhanced. Collegiality based upon a shared commitment to such intellectual love would thus lead to greater capacity for intellectual love, enhancing the very attribute that gave rise to it.

Intellectual love always wants a more intimate acquaintance with its subject matter, just as lovers desire greater intimacy with their beloved. Intellectual love, like personal love, is strengthened, rather than exhausted, by being expressed. It thus provides an excellent basis for academic enquiry. Unlike other forms of enquiry (such as criminal investigation) it suggests a developing interest rather than one which concludes once an objective has been met.

Knowledge from such enquiry always remains open to further interpretation, further questioning and new ways of knowing. Karl Popper adopts this view of the progress of science as the asking of ever more significant questions. He calls this his 'Searchlight Theory of Science' and contrasts it with the 'Bucket Theory' which views research as the cumulative addition of truths (Popper 1979). A parallel distinction was made by Paolo Freire (1972), who contrasted a questioning approach with the more traditional 'banking theory' of learning. Such openness suggests metaphors for enquiry like quests and searchlights rather than buckets and banks. It also presupposes collegial relationships in which claims to knowledge and authority are always subject to further examination.

Since intellectual love is concerned with a closer identification with the human a well as the natural world, it seeks to share rather than hoard. Collaboration, from this point of view, is not merely a technique to improve the effectiveness of learning or of research. Nor is it simply a means to achieving a harmonious form of collegiality. Rather it is a logical implication of the search for knowledge. Learning is thus essentially social rather than individual, public rather than private. Such a view is fundamentally at odds with a view of knowledge as a commodity that can be the subject of market mechanisms. One does not own what one knows.

The idea of academics loving their subject but not wanting to share it with others is incongruous. This is not a question of personal characteristics. Many people, like Isaac Newton, are shy (Gleick 2003) and may not enjoy talking about their work in large lecture halls. Indeed Spinoza himself was a somewhat reclusive character. But it is inconceivable to imagine that, in circumstances of their choosing, one would not want to share with others the knowledge that arises from intellectual love.

The effects of policy upon collegiality
The language of higher education is, however, forged within a wider social and political context. What place does this leave for intellectual love and the search for truth? How does policy impact upon collegial relationships and their potential to sustain intellectual commitment?

A historian colleague who bubbles with enthusiasm for his subject recently told me he was taking early retirement from his institution which claimed to be a 'global university' in UK. When asked why, he said, 'so that I can be a historian'. When I told a number of others of this, they sympathised. One reminded me of Tony Benn – the well known UK parliamentarian and socialist – who decided to leave parliament in 2001 in order to devote his life to politics. Just as Benn had considered that perhaps parliament was not the best place to pursue politics, perhaps my historian colleague decided that the university was no longer the best place to pursue his love of history. If this is how some successful academics feel, may it not soon be in question for students as well?

So far, government higher education policy, with its emphasis upon narrowly economist forms of accountability, has served to exacerbate rather than ameliorate wider anti-intellectual trends in society. Much has been said about the negative consequences of accountability in the professional and academic press. They include requirements that research proposals should detail the outcomes of research before it has even begun; that publication should be in forms and time scales that suit assessment exercises; that teaching should be conducted in ways that ensure its outcomes are predictable; that trails of paper should document every decision; and that increasing effort should be put into reports (and reports on the reports) of academic work, at the expense of academic work itself. Such policy undermines the capacity for intellectual love by fragmenting academic relationships and dissociating them from their intellectual purposes.

The effects of such requirements were commented upon in an interesting document submitted to the UK *Association of University Teachers,* which drew upon observations from a range of prominent senior academics. They described how such a culture of accountability 'perverts research' and 'obstructs innovation' (Tagg 2002). A central part of their argument was based upon an idea that parallels Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in physics, that is, that the attempt to measure something inevitably changes the value of that which is to be measured. Often referred to as 'Goodhart's Law' (Charles Goodhart was for several years Chief Adviser to the Bank of England) this states that in business organizations, as soon as government attempts to regulate any particular set of financial assets, these become unreliable as indicators of economic trends because financial institutions can easily identify new types of financial assets (Goodhart 1984). This is part of a wider argument that is often made against the dominance of target setting in relation to government policy.

According to McIntyre (2001), this same principle applies to the measurement of higher education's assets of teaching and research. In this case, the identification of certain indicators of research value (such as academic publications, research contract income) inevitably leads institutions and individuals to maximize their score on these items, regardless of the consequences elsewhere. Such an approach to audit is likely to show increased measures related to research or teaching merely because the actors have become adept at playing the game of maximizing their scores.

The real purpose and value of new knowledge created by research is not always readily measurable and so an emphasis on maximizing scores takes attention away from the more important intellectual purposes of research. Thus, they argue, audit 'perverts' research and teaching.

The implication of this argument is that the collegial relationships that sustain research are also perverted, becoming characterised by competition, greed and acquisitiveness rather than the kind of sociality that is a necessary part of intellectual love. The term 'perversion' here is apposite. Extending his imagery, the perversion of intellectual love suggests the prostitution of intellectual endeavour. What emerges is a culture in which competition to build up the best individual profile stands in the place of the collaborative relationships of intellectual love.

Such forms of audit characteristically lead to unintended outcomes. One of these is the elimination of risk that comes about as human action is transformed into technical production (Grundy 1992). A preparedness to take risks is as fundamental a part of the dynamic of intellectual love as it is of personal love. It is through taking risks that greater intimacy can arise, new territories be encountered and trust built. In this way, accepted knowledge, understanding and methods can be challenged and disciplinary rigour enhanced. Furthermore, if higher education is to fulfil its economic and social purposes it must be prepared to take the kinds of risk that necessarily accompany innovation. Onora O'Neill, in her 2002 Reith Lecture argued that

the risk-averse culture associated with bureaucratic audit stifles innovation and undermines professional trust (O'Neill 2002).

In a text about memory, Derrida (1996) explored the idea of an archive, drawing upon its etymology. An archive indicates both a place where material is stored and one in which authority is invested. The increasing prominence of digital technologies has given greater prominence to archive building and their consequent relations of power. Applying this idea to university research, its assessment (through such procedures as research assessment exercises) involves building archives which acquire a legitimacy and authority. Performing well for the research archive then begins to replace a concern for investigation itself and thus displace the intellectual love that motivated it. Similar processes take place in teaching. A desire to produce reports which demonstrate 'excellence' replaces the desire to excel. Since such demonstrations of excellence need to be quantified, teaching and research is increasingly directed towards measurable and therefore predictable outcomes. This is turn numbs the researcher, the teacher and hence the student to the possibility of surprise, so essential to knowledge acquisition.

The same phenomenon can be observed in the identification and reporting of so-called transferable skills (in such documents as the Joint Statement of UK Research Councils, BBSRC 2001). There, statements of skill are framed in terms of the 'ability to demonstrate' the 'skills'. What then becomes the focus of concern for the learner is their ability to demonstrate (for the archive) rather

than the subject matter itself. (For a more detailed argument of this aspect of performativity see Rowland 2006: 45-59)

In such an environment students become reluctant to learn anything that does not translate directly into improved exam grades (the 'archive' of their learning achievement); staff are encouraged to teach only in ways that maximise satisfaction ratings from their customers; and research is driven by an overbearing concern with ratings. Building the CV becomes the purpose of academic endeavour for staff and students alike.

While the prominence of this kind of accountability displaces the motivation of intellectual love and truth seeking, government policies have promoted the view that universities should not have such purposes anyway. A search for truth may have been appropriate for the scholarly elites of a few cloistered institutions, but not for the masses which modern higher education serves. Such a view of higher education has, in the UK at least, become internalized by government when the Secretary of State for Higher Education writes: 'the medieval concept of scholars seeking truth… is not (in my view) the most powerful argument for seeking state financial support' (Clarke 2003).

Those who claim a role for contemplation as an important aspect of academic enquiry are often charged with social elitism (Louth 2003): it was alright for the privileged few but not for the rest of us. But what is elitist about trying to discover the truth? Such a view is narrow minded and patronising to a public assumed to have little interest in the pursuit of knowledge.

If the next generation of graduates is to address the problems of our increasingly complex global society, their curiosity and critical faculties need to be nurtured and directed toward the common good. The training of skills for employment is not, on its own, a sufficient justification for higher education. It needs to be predicated upon a desire for knowledge together with the 'passion', 'integrity', 'enthusiasm', 'openness' and the other attributes of intellectual love employers seek from higher education. Training imbued with such qualities is not merely instrumental. It is education.

Towards a renewed collegiality

A number of policy initiatives might be proposed in order to redress these effects of anti-intellectual policies towards higher education. The following give some idea of the directions they might take and how they might contribute to a renewed collegiality.

First, the sector appears to be tired of new initiatives and funding arrangements in the competition for resources. A disproportionate amount of energy is spent on administering and accounting for small, ring-fenced, funds and too much time on learning games in order to maximise chances of success in relation to research and teaching. Government needs to hold back on new initiatives in order to provide a breathing space for higher education. Within such a breathing space members of the academic community might begin to celebrate their shared commitment to knowledge rather than have their eyes only upon learning the latest set of rules for attracting funding.

Second, there should be fewer, simpler systems of accountability that give prominence to qualitative professional judgement rather than the spurious measurements which inevitably lead to game-playing. Reflection upon professional practice would then serve to deepen professional judgement. It would also contribute to collaborative relationships amongst staff as they sought to understand each other's interests and judgements. Such considered debate and reflection, itself an expression of intellectual love, would replace the kind of hoop jumping activity that has come to be associated with instrumental self-assessments.

Third, curricula and research which emphasise genuine exploration, particularly across disciplinary, professional and other cultural boundaries, should be encouraged at all levels. This is inevitably risky and demands the building of trust amongst staff and students that makes risk taking sustainable. Innovation in society requires innovatory curricula which in turn require collegiality which is trusting. Trust arises from a sense of shared endeavour.

Such suggestions, however, should be premised upon a much wider public debate about the purposes of higher education, in which the economic and cultural benefits of education are related. Government has an important role to play in promoting such a debate. Higher education has changed radically over the last 30 years in response to the market, but these changes have not

been the consequence of public or academic debate. To initiate such a debate intellectual leadership is required rather than managerial accounting.

This is not just a question for government, however. The higher education community needs to find ways of contributing imaginatively to such a debate. Indeed it should play a leading role in shaping the terms in which such a debate is to be conducted. In an increasingly managerialist environment it is difficult to resist the pressures for accountability. Thus academics have, perhaps, been too ready to comply with the consequences of government impositions, while at the same time complaining about them. This has contributed to a reluctance to explain the value of their work to the wider public. The confidence to do so needs to be built. My proposal is that intellectual love could have an important place in such a debate.

Some critical questions

The purposes of an organization are reflected in the relationships between its members: relationships between soldiers are characterized by the kind of discipline that is appropriate for warfare; those between musicians of an orchestra by a different sort of discipline. The fragmented collegiality of today's universities reflects a lack of any clear understanding about the purposes of higher education except in terms of the a market. Collegial relations are therefore determined by market, rather than academic, relations. In this essay I have suggested that a public debate about the purposes of higher education should go hand in hand with an attempt by university staff to articulate their shared commitment and thereby establish an appropriate basis

for collegiality. A love of knowledge is a possible focus for such a shared commitment.

Drawing upon Spinoza's conception of 'intellectual love' I have suggested that if academic enquiry were to be built upon such a unifying conception, collegial relationships would be radically transformed. Trust, openness, collaborative debate and a commitment to knowledge would contrast with the suspicion, self interest and individualistic competition that are promoted by the marketization of higher education.

This may seem an idealistic manifesto upon which to build an academic community and its contribution to a much needed debate about the purposes of higher education. I will therefore very briefly consider some related objections that can be made against such a proposal.

First, expression of any academic ideal in relation to universities tends to invite the response that the writer is harking back to a Golden Age when universities articulated academic values that have now been lost.

No such Golden Age existed. 'The medieval concept of scholars seeking truth', of which the minister speaks (Clarke 2003, above), was severely circumscribed by the authority of a doctrinaire church. Even in 1670, Spinoza declined the offer of a Chair in Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg on the grounds that it might compromise his freedom of thought and speech. He wrote to a friend: 'I do not know how to teach philosophy without becoming a

disturber of established religion' (Haught 1996). One might almost imagine a twenty-first century intellectual turning down a similar offer on the basis that to do so would disturb the quasi religious authority that the market now appears to hold over universities. Putting intellectual ideals into an institutional context has always been a struggle.

It might be argued, however, that universities have always been primarily concerned with vocational rather than intellectual preparation. Intellectual love could thus never reasonably be a basis for collegiality.

Such an objection presupposes a form of Cartesian dualism that has been characteristic of British (as opposed to German) university tradition. It opposes the intellectual to the emotional, the theoretical to the practical, education to training, and the mind to the body. The effects of this were noted by the Chief Medical Officer with regard to the way in which universities have presented medicine as a science devoid of insights from the humanities (Calman 2000).

Spinoza's 'intellectual love' brings together the cognitive and affective drawing upon the medieval metaphysical conception of one indivisible substance (Spinoza's God). In this respect, while Spinoza, like Descartes, identified reason as the basis for knowledge, he rejected the latter's mind/body dualism. In Spinoza's terms the vocational and pure subjects would thus be treated with equal respect as different aspects of this one indivisible substance. As a consequence, collegial relations would tend to be integrative across practical

and theoretical fields without privileging the status of some fields over others. Thus intellectual love would form as good a basis for study in the field of leisure management as in theoretical physics.

But how can a love of knowledge provide a basis for shared commitment when subjects are so specialized that there is little shared knowledge?

This presents a real challenge not only to the academic community but to wider society where the importance of crossing boundaries between cultures, religions and standpoints is now emphasized. This is particularly important if the academic community is to generate debate amongst itself and engage the wider community in debate about its purposes. The current call amongst university leaders for interdisciplinarity in teaching and research is an expression of this need for boundary crossing and the development of shared ideas, even if it is often little understood.

While the objection on the grounds of specialization identifies the difficulty, it also emphasises the need for forms of collegiality that reflect the ways in which knowledge is socially generated. A requirement to cross boundaries and understand the world from different standpoints demands a commitment to communicative relationships amongst academics. Listening to and understanding one's colleagues becomes as important as observing and analysing one's data. It presupposes collegial relationships that resist the distortions in communication caused by the inequalities of power between disciplines, between academics and their managers, and between staff and

students. It is not easy to develop shared understanding. But this is necessary if academic research and teaching are to connect with the needs of society.

This returns us to my central purpose: to place the academic's intellectual commitment at the centre of collegiality. Universities will then be in a position to lead a public debate about their role in society. As a contribution to this, I take inspiration from Spinoza's conception of intellectual love. I do not imagine, however, that a single philosophical concept, lifted from a seventeenth century philosopher, could become the sole foundation of collegiality in the modern university. Others will have other resources to offer. In this context a love of knowledge in respect of my own, my colleagues and my students' motivation is to be valued. I'm not kidding.

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