

How Council-Management Governance Troubles Australian University Labours and Futures: Simplistic assumptions and complex consequences

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This paper diagnoses how Australian universities are troubled by a mode of institutional governance that debilitates academic labours and harms university sector capacities to contribute to social futures. This mode, which I call Council-Management Governance (CMG), comprises: an executive level of Council and Senior Management; a line-management chain that extends between executive level and academic labour grounds; and a range of auxiliary offices and actors. I consider CMG actors not as personalities but as epistemic enactors of positions in a governance system, focusing on how they 'see things' from these positions. As well, I situate CMG activities and logics in broader contextual forces acting on universities from outside. A key theme is that CMG runs on power-invested simplifications that generate damaging consequences in the complex grounds of academic labour. I further consider how/why CMG resists hearing grounded academic wisdom about consequences, instead exerting power to restructure academic work in ways that weaken academic agency. This relational dynamic between CMG power and academic disturbance features emotive and ethical dimensions as well as epistemic. I conclude with a gesture to possibilities that academics might mobilise ethico-emotive energies proactively, to re-purpose university labours, and their governance, towards renewed affective care for social futures.

Diagnosing Council-Management Governance

This paper diagnoses how Australian universities are troubled by a mode of institutional governance that debilitates academic labours and careers and harms university sector capacities to contribute to social futures. I call this mode Council-Management Governance (CMG). While the term denotes two elements – Council, and Senior Management – constituting a 'topmost' executive level, CMG also includes: a line-management chain extending from 'above' into academic labour grounds 'below'; and a range of auxiliary offices, consultants and more. All of these elements comprise the governance syndrome analysed in this paper.

A backdrop to my diagnoses is my academic career in education programs and as a union activist across three Australian universities. From this combination of standpoints, I have engaged with people in various CMG locations. In this paper I consider CMG participants not as 'personalities' but as *epistemic enactors* of positions in a governance system. Indeed, my focus is epistemological: I seek to understand how CMG actors 'see things' from their positions. In the process, I consider broader contexts and forces from outside universities that instigate and sustain the CMG mode

and its logics. A core theme of my analyses is that CMG runs on power-invested simplifications that accumulate damaging consequences as they impose their way into complex grounds of academic labour.

I consider further how/why CMG resists hearing grounded academic wisdom about consequences, instead mobilising intensified power – including workforce restructures – to break academic agency. A relational dynamic between CMG power and academic disturbance comes to the fore featuring *emotive* and *ethical* dimensions as well as *epistemic*. I conclude with a gesture to possibilities that academics might mobilise ethico-emotive energies in pro-active efforts to re-purpose university labours, and their governance, towards new affective care for social futures. This concluding provocation stops very short; but it is taken up in Marie Brennan's paper in this issue. (I suggest that readers see this paper as 'part 1' of a two-paper development.)

'This is how shit happens!': A simplification syndrome

In late 2016, at a meeting of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, a Dean presented a brief skit which

she called 'The Plan', The ACDE, in posting the skit as a podcast on its website (7/11/2016), observed that the Dean 'shared her "wisdom"' in 'a humorous [sic] take on how ideas may grow in higher education'. (I note that similar versions of 'The Plan' can be found on a number of humour websites; but the Dean's specific version addresses problems with *university* governance structures.) I transcribe the Dean's skit below:

In the beginning was The Plan.

And then came The Assumptions.

And The Assumptions were without form. And darkness was upon the face of the workers. And they spoke among themselves, saying: 'It is a *crock of shit*; and it *stinketh!*'

And the workers went unto their supervisors and said: 'It is a pile of dung; and none may abide the odour thereof'.

And the supervisors went unto their managers and said: 'It is a container of *excrement*; and it is *very strong*, such that none may abide it'.

And the managers went unto their Directors, saying: 'It is a vessel of *fertiliser*; and none may abide its strength'.

And the Directors spoke amongst themselves, saying one to another: "It contains that which aids plant growth; and it is *very strong!*"

And the Directors then went to the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, saying unto them: 'It promotes *growth*; and it's *very powerful!*'

And the Deputy Vice-Chancellors went to the Vice-Chancellor, saying unto him [sic]: 'This new plan will actively promote the *growth and vigour* of the University, with *powerful effects!*'

And the VC looked upon The Plan, and saw that it was good; and The Plan became Policy.

This is how shit happens!

I first heard the Dean's skit when members of a Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) circulated a link to it. I did find humour in the wordplay on St John's Gospel; and, as myself a NTEU activist, within the humour I indeed found wisdom about how remote 'leadership above' avoids grounded knowledge that it ought to attend to in processes for strategic planning of university directions. I apprehended the wisdom with emotions of both appreciation and dismay. Let me first interpret the wisdom, after which I address my dismay.

I hear the Dean suggest that university strategic plans initiated at 'upper-level' remove – among Senior Managers

and inner-circle Council Members – inevitably proceed from assumptions that are 'formless' in the sense of *simplistic*. That is, they are not *informed* about complexities on 'the grounds' where core university work is done. Those who do the work can anticipate likely effects, including multiplications of negative unintended consequences when plans based on uninformed simplifications enter the matrix of grounded complexities. Yet, for their wisdom to apply correctively to strategic plans, a process of ground-up voice and *hearing* is necessary. However, the upward-bound communicative process that the Dean details – from workers to supervisors who dwell among them, to managers (Deans and Heads of School) a rank 'above', on to Directors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Vice Chancellor at 'high' remove – is one of *euphemistic translation*. An implication is that, across the line-management chain inheres tacit understanding that powers 'above' do not want their assumptions challenged; hence the 'job' of those in positions along the chain is not to channel grounded wisdom upwards, but to translate it in ways that reinforce formless simplifications from 'on high'. And that's how shit happens 'down below'.

To my mind, the Dean's analysis of lost wisdom suggests need for democratic processes to inform strategic directions, whereby CMG 'leaders' put ears to the ground, listen, and learn. Yet, across the CMG chain, incentives are to align with power 'above', not wisdom 'below'. I note here that, throughout the Dean's presentation of the skit, the assembled Deans laughed knowingly, including, robustly, at the concluding punch line: 'This is how shit happens!'

My dismay, was in hearing Deans knowingly show critical awareness that, in my experience, is kept mum, and *contradicted*, when *enacting the position* of Dean. In my career across three Australian universities (I retired in 2016) where I worked as both an education academic and a NTEU activist, my activism focused on pursuing workload justice for academic staff. In the process, I consulted extensively with colleagues on what, realistically, it takes to do the work that their institutions rely on them to accomplish. There were a number of experiences in which I, with other colleagues, sought to communicate to Deans: (a) what was invisible, rather than recognised and measured fairly, in existing workload models; and (b) how those models should change in order to take due account of staff labours needed to sustain quality teaching – let alone scholarship and research, too often forsaken – along with staff health by keeping workloads honestly within the total hours sanctioned in institutional Enterprise Agreements and national industrial laws. Staff sought to explain complex working conditions that required time not recognised in instituted workload models. Yet Deans generally evaded responsive hearing of complex grounded testimony – let alone promised to

convey staff accounts upward. Typically, Deans referred, simplistically, to 'advice' from senior finance officers about the 'necessity of keeping workload models budget-viable'.

So: An assembly of Deans communicating among themselves – *within their level of university governance* – show knowingness about the perils of (mis)translation, up a managerial chain, that converts complex grounded wisdoms to accord with simplistic 'on high' assumptions. Yet they participate in this suppression of grounded knowledge. How shall we understand this?

An Assemblage of Minions: Epistemic actors who compartmentalise ethics

I suggest we see Deans and others along the chain as *epistemic* actors, more than *agentic* actors. They perform *governmentalities* (Foucault 1991) – dispositions associated with institutional positions – wherein they become habituated to compartmentalising ethical conscience about what they do, even if conscious of consequences. In thus bracketing duties of care for academics to do work of *substantive* quality (not performative pretences of 'quality', as discussed in the next section), they abandon ethics-driven agency to contribute to university future capacities to serve students, communities and broader social purposes.

But how do actors in the chain settle for *epistemic* bypass of ethical response-ability? I suggest that systemic distance from the grounds of academic labour is a crucial dynamic. Notably, the Dean, in her skit, names a 'supervisor' position between 'worker' and 'manager'. Increasingly, Australian Deans and Heads of School no longer function as *middle*-managers who dwell among, and empathise with, academics' labour-pains. Across universities, line-managements are being restructured in ways that reduce agentic 'middle' positions (Brennan 2010). As Deans/HoSs move up to 'senior' level, they designate low-level supervisors from within the academic workforce who, while dwelling among colleagues, all the more lack agency to shape or act outside CMG's 'line'. As I observe, those selected often embody dispositions towards complying with authority, and/or careerism, and/or bullying – all functioning, in day-to-day relations, to insist that colleagues 'know their place' in relation to CMG agendas.

I do not mean to say that, in *living* their epi(sys)temic positions, actors along the chain embody no cognitive or ethical dissonances. In my interactions with people in the chain, I see what appear to me as complex, often tense mixes and balances of practised poise, angry venting, authoritarian self-righteousness, and other symptoms of what it takes to do self-surgery on conscience. I have indeed seen crises of conscience that lead to exiting the

chain. Yet, however actors may 'manage' psycho-emotive stress, I find it *ethically* concerning that many 'adjust'.

Moreover, many find ways to sublimate analytic and creative capacities that, like many academics, they bring to universities. If they forsake agency to practise such capacities in the ethics-driven pursuit of democratic universities that collect wisdom towards contributing to worthy social futures, they may instead apply capacities in career-building contributions to CMG's reductive and power-driven narratives that Pignarre and Stengers call 'infernal alternatives' (2011: 31):

[T]he labour of many ... hard-working *minions* produces ... [what] imposes itself with the self-evidence of unavoidable alternatives.... [T]hey work on a very small scale, whilst *infernal alternatives* are an overall result ... It is a discourse that drives one to despair ... [but] is well policed ... even 'scientific' ... a science that ratifies these alternatives by adopting the categories that they have put in place. And it is perhaps all these 'minions' who put us on the [so-called] right path. [italics added].

Infernal alternatives are discursive products (with effects on practice) of a *complex process of simplifying complexities*, including invocations of 'science' – of 'evidence-basis' – to police 'truths'. Thus, workload models that, in the wisdom of staff, honestly assess time to do quality work, are declared 'not budget-viable'; and simpler models, leaving much real work invisible, are then declared 'honest' by Finance Officers, Deans, and 'on down'. Moreover, minion minds that combine to produce such complex simplifications – and seek ways to *believe* them, so as to elude cognitive-ethical dissonances – require a larger mass of actors than those in CMG's line-managerial chain. Ever-expanding offices of auxiliary service to CMG agendas – Marketing, HR, Finance, etc.; and temporary 'Project Officers' and 'Consultants' – add thicker assemblages of minion roles. Spending working days among a minion 'collegial' mass is crucial for sustaining epistemic remove from empathy with a despair-driven mass of academics who struggle with conditions increasingly unviable for quality in doing what, at least for now, is still called the 'core work' of universities.

Another device supporting epistemic avoidance of empathetic ethics is Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set from 'above'. These powerfully reductive expectations of 'output', to which minions must work to keep positions and advance in careers, typically link to overarching infernal narratives, such that 'saving on budget' is the *uber alles* purpose of institutional governance. Even the most 'Senior' Manager – the Vice Chancellor – answers

to this KPI, set by inner-circle Council members who typically come from a 'business' mindset. I suggest that the discourse of 'budget above all' exerts an implicit disciplinary regime that exceeds the 'fiscal' priority to which it overtly speaks. It both mutes, and normatively substitutes for, care about ethically substantive social purposes for universities, while perhaps allowing minions to feel they work for the 'noble' purpose of the university's institutional survival.

My analyses of mentalities in management-chain and auxiliary positions may help explain how these epistemic actors come to function as minions promoting 'strategic plans' that, tacitly or consciously, they may well sense 'stinketh!' Yet enacting of plans carrying uninformed assumptions from 'above', unchecked by corrective wisdom from 'below', pile up unintended consequences that debilitate and demoralise academics doing grounded work. How, then, does a CMG mode of governance remain entrenched past any sensible use-by date? This question leads me to look 'above' the minion assemblage, to dynamics at CMG's 'Senior Executive' level. To begin, I next consider how governing political-economic-ideological contexts outside universities shape governance inside universities.

Meta-simplistic Impositions on Universities from Governing Forces Outside

The discourse of 'budget above all' can hold normative sway only if it has *some* basis in experience: a simplification, but not simply *fictitious*. Australian universities do struggle with inadequate funds. As John Ralston Saul, an analyst of global trends, noted in a speech at the University of New South Wales (1999):

[I]f you analyse the tax base of your country, you'll find that the corporations ... about 50 years ago [paid] somewhere around 45 per cent ... [but] now probably somewhere around six or seven per cent. That's why you can't afford the public education.

That is, *fiscal crises for nation-states*, under neoliberal compulsion to 'free corporations from tax burdens', reduce government revenues to fund public sectors. Nor do Australian universities raise much funding from alumni contributions, industry investment, etc. They thus rely on higher student fees than in most OECD nations (OECD 2018): all the more so since, while among most OECD governments '[s]pending per [tertiary] student increased between 1995 and 2011', exceptions were 'Australia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel and Switzerland, where expenditure did not keep up with expanding enrolments' (OECD 2014: 213).

Despite this funding lag, Australian federal governments have, since the mid-1970s, steered university enrolment expansion. We might wish this were driven by social-justice impulses; and there have been 'equity' strands within policies and reports (e.g. the 2008 'Bradley Review') calling for greater 'diversity' as well as numbers in student intake. However, such strands fold into a predominant economic rationalist frame – 'diversity expands the nation's human capital' – that responds to another global effect of neoliberal policy climates: *legitimation crises for nation-states*. That is, fears among voters about downward mobility in living standards prompt governments to bolster political-economic credibility through policy that 'promises' ways to secure futures of decent work and wages. Universities are then political footballs of this promise, touted as spaces for 'lifelong accumulation of human capital for knowledge-economy futures'.

To Brown et al. (2011), such rhetoric about higher education – as the space of 'opportunity' to build human capital and secure good life-chances – is, increasingly, an 'opportunity trap'. Like other critical political-economic analysts (e.g. Harvey 2011; Wallerstein 1983), they see career precarity and downward mobility as inevitable in 'advanced capitalist' nations for growing portions of populations – professional as well as working-class – as secure while gainful jobs are displaced by global redistribution of capital investment to cheap-labour regions. This includes high-tech jobs; and technologies also replace much human labour everywhere. People lured by the 'value-added' promise of universities may thus invest in costly degrees, building debt into their futures, without reward for the investment.

I lack space to detail further the complex material-historical problems for futures faced by populations which governments – wrestling with fiscal and legitimacy crises – translate to discursively simplistic education 'problems' and 'solutions' (Bacchi 2000). My focus is on how governance *external* to universities becomes a source of powerful *meta-simplifications* that transfer to governance *internal* to universities. Indeed, and perversely, federal government's weak allocations to the university sector become a force of leverage to shape university governance. That is, government tosses bits of funds into the cash-starved sector, for which universities compete with each other based on performance criteria based in what the Dean called 'formless assumptions'.

While stakes of sectoral competition include funds attached to performance in teaching, research, etc., more significant are how measured indicators of performance signify institutional reputation that draws student tuition revenues. In stressing competition for *reputation*, I note that universities are fiscal break-even institutions more

so than *economic* capital-accumulating institutions. The 'coin' they struggle to accumulate is what Brown (2003: 144) calls 'reputational capital', driven by '*positional imperatives* [that] refer to relative performance'. But 'good performance' takes on questionable meanings when the criteria are based on assumptions too simplistic for *substantive* achievement. Rather:

[I]mages of 'achieved quality' gain precedence over substantive achievement. VCs, PVCs/ Deans, and down the managerial chain, learn to respond to impossible-to-meet 'quality performance' criteria by producing *performative fabrications* (Zipin 2006; see also Ball 2000).

Dedicating increased portions of scarce university resources to *fabrications* of 'quality performance' – in pursuit of institutional reputation to be *marketed* to government, students and communities – thus vacates substantive purposes for university labours. Says Marginson (2002: 113), about what he and Considine (2000) call the 'Enterprise' form of Australian universities:

The hallmark of the Enterprise University is a reactive ... business-like style of engagement, where the overriding objective is not knowledge, community service, national development ... but the prestige and competitiveness of the university *as an end in itself*.

Add teaching to this list of *substantive* objectives for academic labour that lose resources to market-*fabrications* of university 'glory' in pursuing 'prestige'. I note further that such 'business-like' focus on *competitive reputation as an end in itself* is not a prime motivator of academic staff who labour, with reduced resources, to teach, develop knowledge and serve communities. Rather, it motivates a small-but-powerful Executive fraction of CMG: (a) inner-circle Council members; and (b) Senior Managers – VC, DVCs, PVCs, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and foot-soldier Deans. I henceforth call this Executive fraction CSM.

'Reputation' and 'Budget': A CSM combo that makes 'shit' happen

For Senior Managers, CSM is a space to build career mobility by showing they can 'lead' an institutional entity – 'The University' – to greater 'prestige'. At the same time, CSM is a locus of institutional accountability to government outside universities, with non-debt budget seen as a supreme responsibility, especially by 'business'-minded members of Council. These two impulses – to create institutional reputation at all costs; and to balance budget as a supreme norm – can combine in stressful ways. On the one hand is an impulse of relentless effort

to fabricate and market institutional 'glories'. But, on the other hand, *fabricating and marketing* 'prestige' are *not academic labours*: they occupy an expanding number of minions in Marketing, HR, Finance, consultancies, etc. – all of which must be budget-resourced.

Fattening the minion workforce thus impels reduced budget allocation to employ and resource academics. Consequent restructuring of academic workforces, through various devices, has lately been steered by CSMs across the Australian university sector. A hallmark of such restructures is replacement of teaching-and-research (TR) positions with teaching-only (TO): a mix of 'casual', 'contract' and 'permanent' employments. TR academics who have long carried teaching and administrative workloads that take away time for research/scholarship are then 'performance-evaluated' as insufficiently research-productive to justify TR status. They can then apply for the reduced numbers of 'permanent' TO positions – at lower salary and/or more intensive teaching/admin workload – which they may or may not gain based on 'past teaching-performance' evaluations. Or they can 'choose' redundancy packages that, in many cases, terminate careers.

In 'justifying' exploitative restructures of academic workforces, CSMs pose as spaces of 'hard budget decisions for The Good of The University'. Such rhetoric of necessary sacrifice required of academics masks transfer of budget from *good quality academic work*, to *non-academic* work of making The University *look* 'good'. Yet such masking is sometimes exposed in public arenas, inciting CSMs to further rhetorical contriving of 'virtues' in their acts of budget 'necessity'. Thus, Flinders University VC Colin Sterling, when overseeing conversion of most TR positions to TO, responded to sceptical questions from a radio interviewer (who had previously hosted Flinders NTEU voices of critique):

Teaching specialists are a marvellous new opportunity for the very best educators to be in front of our students in our classrooms ensuring our students get the very best education possible (Flinders NTEU blog 2018).

Through unrestrained hyperbole, this VC, like many others, masks exploited teaching-*only* staff as 'marvellous specialists'. It is not explained how they are 'very best' relative to staff whose teaching is informed by research. For that, CSMs draw on expensive consultancy firms (e.g. KPMG and The Nous Group; see Zipin and Brennan 2019 for citation and critique of these 'explanations').

CSMs do worry about losing 'research-productive' reputations that governments measure and rank. Rather

than provide time and other resources for TRs who can grow in research, however, they try focusing restricted research funds on 'good deals' to bring in small numbers of research-only (RO) high-flyers in a few targeted disciplinary areas, competing with other universities from dwindling pools across the sector. ROs are mostly housed in centres removed from the rest of the academic body, even in their same disciplines. Such isolation of ROs, along with purging TRs, further debilitates research culture that needs both mass and interaction. It also undoes a core pedagogic rationale for what distinguishes universities as spaces of contribution to knowledge-able publics: i.e. a teaching-research *nexus*, embodied in teaching-and-research academics. Rhetorical glorification of TOs as 'marvellous specialists' thus masks how restructures are jeopardising the university sector's capacities to contribute to social futures. This includes renewals embodied in early-career academics who are discouraged from entering a field where too many are 'called' but so few 'chosen'.

As well as long-term consequences from restructures framed within simplistic short-term thinking, immediate consequences feed into academic work grounds. For example, purging TRs reduces the number of academics who can supervise doctoral students, including students already in process. NTEU Branches have called out CSM 'leaders' on their duty of *care* for these students. They get replies to the effect that the students can land on their feet at other universities. Yet students relying on scholarships at given universities do not retain them when transferring; and such flippant sidestepping of *ethical responsibility* travels word-of-mouth across the sector, damaging institutional reputation.

I lack space for further examples of 'strategic' CSM steering that generates long- and short-term damage. The point is that *substantive* prestige within tight budgets is a complex, long-term challenge; and the problems encountered are compounded, not 'solved', by simplistic on-the-run acts that shift resources to marketing 'prestige' and masking damages. In the next section I consider how, as CSM persists in isolation from the academic grounds it imposes upon, compounding rather than learning from its mistakes, it incites itself to intensified *substitution of power for wisdom*, involving *emotive* energies that further hinder academic workforces and harm university futures.

CSM Will-to-Power and Academic Disturbance: A vicious emotive cycle

In interviews with executive-level actors from Australian universities of diverse status and situation, Marginson and Considine (2000: 75) note a commonality of:

... strikingly similar deployments of executive authority across the sector. All the VCs we

interviewed, and most of the other senior staff who described the imperatives of the senior role for us, pointed towards a certain *will to power*, expressed as a singularity ... and a relative detachment.

As do I, Marginson and Considine see executive will to rule academic grounds from a detached distance as incited by accountability to governing forces outside universities. But '*will to power*' suggests a more *animated* dynamic of CSM rule inside universities. In later reflection, Marginson (2002: 128):

[A]s the executive leader sees it, to secure institutional flexibility and responsiveness he/she must *break the power of the disciplines in university governance*. And because ... the power of the disciplines in governance was tied to the traditional academic structures derived from their constitution as fields of knowledge, the executive leader feels impelled to weaken or *break the power of the disciplines in teaching and research*.

I want to give context to the executive epistemology (how they 'see it') that Marginson suggests. CSM invokes 'flexible institutional response', controlled from their locus, as crucial to meet government and market-competition forces acting upon the institution from outside. While academics labour in specific domains of teaching, research and service, CSM feels urgency to bring all activity into holistic alignment with its central strategies, for 'the Good of the University', by re-structuring 'traditional academic structures'. Academic Boards are stacked with line-managers who outweigh elected academics in deciding academic priorities (Rowlands 2015). Faculty meetings – where academics formerly made collective decisions about the conduct of their work – are newly framed and steered, by Deans, around agendas from 'above'. Staff (and students) elected to Council are reduced in numbers and told that their obligation – under penalty of removal from Council – is a to represent 'the Whole of The University, not the constituencies that elected you'. And so on.

Yet, would not academics' knowledge of their work domains, in mutual listen-and-learn dialogue with managers and leaders, contribute better to strategic flexibility – *if* it is the *substantive* university capacity that all care for? Yes, meta-simplistic forces from outside pose 'performance' challenges. But inside it is CSM's embrace of simplistic assumptions, I suggest, that: (a) blocks meaningful whole-of-institution participation in strategies to work with-and-around those forces; and (b) creates epistemological strain between CSM and academics. After all, much academic knowledge work entails *analysis of complexities, and critique of simplifications*, including

some who specialise in policy analysis and could advise university leaders if they are willing to speak up to governments. Perhaps some do so, behind scenes? I am not in a position to say. But from my academic career across three Australian universities – including, as a *union activist*, engaging CSM's periphery – I observe that CSM increasingly looks to outside consultancy voices that reinforce strategic simplifications, and treats academic voices of complexity and critique as threats. I also observe, over time, *intensified animus in CSM exercises of will to break critical academic agency*, not just in governance domains but also, *punitively*, in academic work spaces.

Reprisals against critics are often indirect: e.g. poor performance reviews from Supervisors, non-support for promotion from Deans; and so on. Sometimes there is more direct targeting: e.g. HR 'complaint' cases – supposedly 'in confidence'; but colleagues know – against those who, by CSM-ordained institutional policy, 'endanger staff wellbeing' through what they say in emails or meetings. (More punitive devices could be chronicled.) However, power and agency are always *relational*; i.e. CMG exertions of power do not simply suppress, but also rouse, challenge. Many witnessing staff do keep heads silently down in fear; but there are always those with courage to speak up for colleagues, even knowing they will be targeted. And NTEU Branch leaders and delegates – increasingly targeted these days (see Miller, this issue) – call out 'leaders' directly: in internal disputes; in Fair Work Commission cases; in protests outside Council meetings; in media, and more, drawing publicity to actions against staff and posing long-run harm to universities. CSM, and the fuller CMG apparatus, respond with further *will to break* academic voice in 'defence of University Reputation'. A vicious cycle thus impels CMG to a punitive pitch.

Worsham (2001) analyses late-capitalist workplace trends toward symbolically violent governance practices, including 'a pedagogy of emotion in which violence always finds its "appropriate" object in any audacious and insubordinate refusal ... [that] threatens position and rule' (249-250). Setting such examples 'instructs' the wider workforce to embody an emotive 'crisis of abjection' (244), including 'grief, bitterness, terror, apathy as well as emotions of self assessment such as pride, guilt, and shame' (233). Self-assessing emotions then offer managers a substrate upon which 'demoralized subjects' can be 'remoralized ... [via] crisis intervention and management' (255). In this vein, I see university managerial interventions targeting demoralised 'academic culture' as 'the problem', ignoring how *power-wilful and emotively violent CMG culture* induces workforce abjection. In this vein, I suggest that, beyond fiscal

reasons, recent academic workforce restructures are (e) motivated by CSM will to break and replace long-standing staff, who feel embittered at how academic working life is taking bad turns, with *uberised* academics who might more readily 'learn' docility.

Yet workplace emotions are not simply controlled by governors. Work life also cultures connectivity in which, says Worsham (236), '[w]hat the working day produces as its ... most valuable product is an affective relation to the world, to oneself and to others' (236). I suggest that academic labours do draw emotive vitality in being affected by, and affecting, worthy needs and purposes for social relation in and beyond universities. Might academics pro-act to strengthen such vital connections despite – and with potential to shift – CMG governance?

Conclusion: Ethico-emotive pro-action to redress CMG wrongs?

This paper highlights how academics fare under CMG governance that debilitates potentials for their labours. I have attended to contextual forces that entrench CMG despite accumulating negative consequences, and to epistemologies of simplification by which CMG troubles *wisdom, ethics* and *emotive* life in academic (and in governing) workspaces. Epistemic, ethical and emotive dimensions are inextricably linked in working life, and all three are vital to pro-action by which academics might shift university governance.

Is there no hope that senses of need for a governance shift could mobilise in sites of political-economic reckoning outside universities, and/or 'leadership' spaces within? The weight of my diagnoses of contextual forces, and associated govern-mentalities that entrench in universities, suggest not. We live a historic juncture of governance crisis that cuts more deeply and extensively than university sectors, running across institutional, state, federal and global infrastructures.

Can we hope, then, that mobilised pro-action towards governance shift can emerge among more populated but – in terms of systemic power – far weaker spaces of academic embodiment (including the NTEU, which has degrees of infrastructure and media access)? I do not see impetus arising from elsewhere; so I suggest *we* (I speak here from my body-invested, political-academic identity) must try. Our diverse wisdoms and *ethico-emotive* energies (Zipin 2010; Zipin and Nuttall 2016) need to collect and rise to occasions, fuelling pragmatic strategies that orient dialogue and action around *re-purposed* (not 'traditional') senses of contributions that academic labours can and should make to local communities and wider social life (Brennan and Zipin 2019; Zipin and Brennan 2019).

On this gestural and hortatory note, I must conclude. However, as said in my introduction, readers can see this paper as 'part 1', exploring contexts and conditions that both block, and spur the need for, an academic politics of pro-action – taken further by Brennan in her paper, this issue.

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Yours truly

You prayed as if there was
so much god news, a test run
before the judas kiss.
Don't mess with the light
at the end of all that matters,
the day you said I must leave
to people in the know.
Time on your hands
and turning away from what remains
is not so easy.
You were what I've become,
you, the last paesano.

UGO ROTELLINI,
ADELAIDE, SA

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