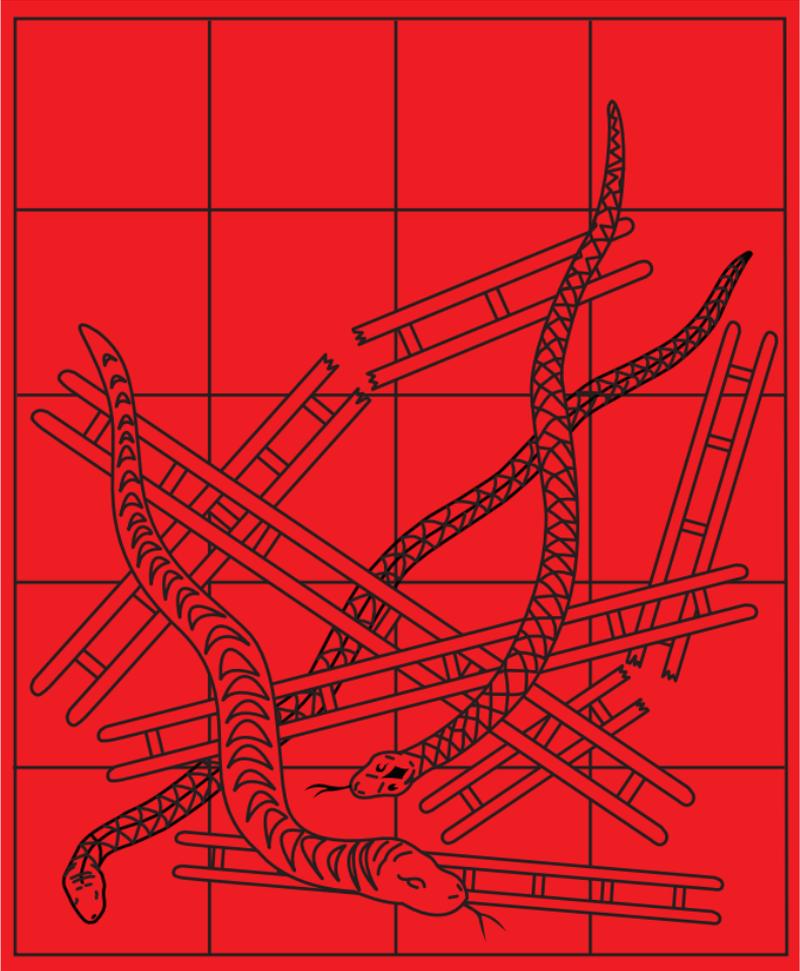


# TERMS AND CONDITIONS



WELFARE EDITION



### **ACHIEVEMENT**

(1.) A winning lottery ticket.

(2.) Negation of whatever was done, which becomes an attribute of the Achiever instead of an intervention in the world.

### **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

*The worst crime against property was [sic] to have none.*  
(E.P. Thompson)

The historian confuses past and present tenses here. What goes for the late 18th century is true of the early 21st: the discretionary punishments most often imposed by British courts and lesser administrative bodies for unlegislated (i.e. not criminal but ‘anti-social’) offences involve

withdrawal of rented housing and/or the benefits that pay for it. Thus *owner-occupiers* are happily exempt. See also that favourite theme of the upholstered brawling class: ‘the right of a *homeowner* to defend *his property* against intruders’.

### **ASPIRATION, ASPIRATIONAL**

(1.) The invention of the highly elastic adjective follows a long-term shift in the scope of the noun. In his 1973 rant to the Trilateral Commission, Samuel P. Huntington deplored ‘aspiration’ as an extravagant and dangerous *collective* claim: an overeducated underclass demanding too much and expecting to get it by forcing structural change. But by the time of its emergence in the 1990s as a party-political marketing theme, aspiration implied a strictly *personal* kind of anxious conformism. The aspirational individual stakes everything on ‘social mobility’: she expects to compete and win against the rest of her class on a ‘level playing field’ (i.e. everyone doing the same thing), beating her opponents fairly by embracing more eagerly, energetically and obediently whatever rules of the game are transmitted from above. Or better still, by guessing in advance the instructions *likely* to be dictated by previous winners who now sit higher on an imaginary career ladder (comprised in turn of playing fields at ever-higher

altitudes). This kind of pre-emptive obedience is known as *showing initiative*.

(2.) The curious elasticity of ‘aspirational’ as an adjective lies in its multiple applications to a prize (an aspirational apartment, home entertainment system, lifestyle), the competitors pursuing it (see above), and the wider social structure imposing the competition (an aspirational society). This last usage confirms the contradiction between aspirational conditions and the kind of aggressive class aspiration feared by Huntington. Diligent aspirational behaviour would never dream of provoking structural change, because the existing structure is the context, vehicle and measure of personal success. Turning the world upside down would make a mockery of the effort to rise to the top.

### **AUSTERITY**

A notion of collective sacrifice is invoked by those who do not have to make sacrifices, with the promise that austerity will somehow purge the collective and its individuals of their excesses, toxins or sins, and that in the long run we will all be better off for the experience. This familiar bedtime story, aimed especially at parents hoping that it will turn out to be true for their children, now tells us to defer those ‘appetites and pleasures’

that were so encouraged in yesteryear's bank advertisements telling you not to put it off, but to take that holiday-of-a-lifetime now!

## **BEHAVIOUR**

(1.) Described this way, whatever a person is doing becomes an infantile disorder. The emphasis may fall on childishness (*unacceptable, disruptive behaviour...*) or pathology (*irrational, addictive, self-harming...*) or it may all be imputed at once, as in the supremely question-begging *negative behaviour*. Whether as an overgrown child, a noncompliant patient or both, anyone caught committing behaviour is a legitimate target for *intervention*, and one way or another can expect to be disciplined, treated, educated or most alarmingly *helped*.

(2.) For all its personally invasive character, 'behaviour' is a slur most often used by professionals convinced that everyone would benefit from some robust and tailored intervention. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is pushed by the British medical, welfare and Offender Management systems as a labour motivation technique, funded in the hope of cutting incapacity benefit payments and the number of working days 'lost to depression and anxiety'. CBT locates the origin of individual misery and sub-par social productivity in 'negative thoughts'. Or in the words

of Mind, a Mental Health Charity, *it's not events themselves that upset us, but the meanings we give them*. (3.) In case 'behaviour' in the open-ended singular comes too close to acknowledging slow social formation of subjective traits, the no-nonsense plural form cuts it sharply down to size. There's no mistaking *behaviours* for anything but self-contained facts, contained within the individual and contained there one at a time. Behaviours are ready-made to be identified, classified and modified through Operant Conditioning: a course of aversive and reinforcing stimuli, or punishment and reward.

## **CARE(S)**

(1.) *s.* What with all those aging populations, now an industry in which women especially are expected to do the heavy lifting and the emotional shitwork for low wages. Otherwise unpaid, done for love of the aged parents.

(2.) *pl.* Without rich parents or a sunny disposition, one is likely to have plenty.

(3.) *Care homes.* To be avoided.

(4.) *Carefree.* Those great times in life when you're off the leash and on the lash.

(5.) *In Care.* Children's homes: institutions for vulnerable children placed under a 'care order'. Sometimes prefaced with 'secure', as in the case of

particularly vulnerable children subject to ‘secure accommodation welfare orders’. For most of the inhabitants these children’s prisons are certainly NOT secure: more often than not, they are associated with systematic child abuse by adult ‘care professionals’. Secure Training Centres in the UK have killed at least 29 inmates in the last 18 years; for example the director of Serco’s Haddockfield STC explained that 14-year old Adam Rickwood hung himself after receiving a ‘structured hug’. Guidelines on ‘physical restraint’ through ‘nose distraction technique’, the ‘double basket hold’ and the ‘double seated embrace’ were modified in 2009, but somehow these Caring environments keep sending kids to hospital (one a week from G4S-run Medway STC alone) in the name of Good Order And Discipline, or in the professional jargon GOAD.

## **CAREER COUNSELLING**

A growth market for the renascent doctrine of phrenology. MRI brain scans and measurement of lumps of grey matter are increasingly popular career advice tools in the US in a context of near 10% official unemployment: “job seekers might be willing to try anything now to gain an edge”. This is one contribution to a 21st-century phrenology boom, involving statistical samples so

small as to be nonsensical and riddled with negative correlation, never mind wholesale embrace of cause-correlation fallacy. The Joseph O’Connor Research Foundation charges \$675 (\$750 in New York!) for a scan and ‘aptitude’ assessment based on size and position of visible lumps of grey matter (‘voxel-based morphometry’), plus traditional cognitive/IQ-type tests (‘inductive speed, analytical reasoning, number series, number facility, wiggly block, paper folding, verbal-associative memory, number memory’), generating vocational ‘aptitude scores’. So those who can afford it will pay lavishly to be reassured that each person suffers a *form* of exploitation reflecting his or her unique personality. Cognitive masochism in paying patients, or sadism when applied to the labour market at large.

## **CHALLENGE**

Are YOU up for it? This is a challenging post, the job advert says, sit on the phone and persuade people that they want to be robbed. And if you’re not up for it, what’s the matter with you? Have you no ambition, no get-up-and-go? And make no mistake, the world is going to leave you behind.

## **CHANGE**

Invoked in a general, unqualified sense to consecrate as natural and inevitable a particular shift of power in favour of some interests and against others. The naturalistic alibi gets more persuasive as one petty interest strings together a series of coups: *it's the way the world is going; you can't turn back time so you'd better adapt*. Where particular change can be passed off by its partisans as Change in general, resistance to their next move is made to look like defence of an insufferable past.

## **COMMUNITY**

(1.) Now being used by every scumbag under the sun. Any sense of it as social generosity and heartfelt care having been fucked over by those very same scumbags, they feel free and easy to use it to order. These days it's media-normal to talk about the 'business community', the 'intelligence community' and the 'values' which, it turns out, mean at the very least not doing anything to disturb the smooth running of the world as determined by community proprietors, or, for full value, grassing up your neighbours. If you fail in these responsibilities, community work will be imposed, a business of pointless tasks and public humiliation.

(2.) *Community work*. One of many vanishing points

where welfare and criminal justice mechanisms meet. Brand names vary slightly – 'Community Action Programme', 'Community Task Force' and 'Mandatory Work Placement' in one government department, 'Community Punishment' and 'Community Payback' (as displayed on Guantánamo-orange uniforms) in another – but 'community work', meaning compulsory unpaid labour, is common to both, as is the use of 'charities' alongside outsourcers (Serco, G4S, A4E) in the mission to instil 'discipline' and correct unsaleable 'attitude'.

## **COMPETITION**

(1.) Aggravated collectivism. Multiple subjects (individuals, businesses, nation-states) are forced for reasons of survival to pursue the same prescribed end. Maximum conformism is assured throughout the process by reservation of the rewards for the few candidates most closely fulfilling the prescription.

(2.) Widely misconstrued as 'individualism': this is true only in the sense that competitive conformity is monitored, measured and priced at individual level.

(3.) The world made up of winners and losers, presented as a natural state of affairs.

## COMPLIANCE

(1.) The scope of contemporary Police Science is glimpsed in the indiscriminate use of this term across the vocabularies of law (self-explanatory) and ‘health care’ (referring to a patient’s submission to a prescribed course of treatment). Public health agencies warn of a *non-compliance crisis*, to be prevented by re-educating patients in ‘health literacy’. (By which logic obedience to orders is no more than ‘military literacy’; the implications for ‘emotional literacy’ are obvious.) A large body of psychological research on compliance ‘in general’ (i.e. in pseudo-isolation from pesky social factors) draws on clinical experiments such as Milgram,1974 (one group of test subjects obeys the order to administer electric shocks of up to 450 volts to another\*) and the US Navy/Marine Corps-funded Stanford Prison,1971 (subjects are divided into ‘inmates’ and ‘guards’ of an ad hoc ‘prison’; the guards *exceed* orders in their torture and humiliation of the prisoners). [\*To rule out sadistic tendencies, all 40 “teachers” were male and were screened for competence and intelligence before beginning the experiment.’ – S.Milgram]

(2.) Modern businesses routinely maintain large *Compliance and Ethics* departments, whose highly paid lawyers comment in the manner of biblical scholars on the mysteries of compliance, or rather

on the single non-mystery that law originates not in the letter but in the arbitrary power of enforcement.

“Laws and definite norms remain unwritten... A man can transgress them without suspecting it and then must strive for atonement.”

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Best understood in terms of the description of the work of sexual prostitution as the ‘servicing’ of ‘clients’\*. The point here is not just glib assimilation of all jobs to whoredom: *customer service*, invoked as part of a job description or as a learnable, marketable ‘skill’, is always a *supplement* to some other labour performed by the customer servant (taking calls, pouring drinks, shining shoes or cars, or simply processing retail sales). That special supplementary service is provided (and the self-contained ‘skill’ is demonstrated) when the servant acknowledges the buyer’s momentary right to command not only the commodity she paid for, but also the *person* (the gesture, expression: in all senses, the ‘attitude’) of the delegated seller. “With rising real wages it became increasingly untenable for middle class households (such as Marx’s) to employ servants. For much of the 20th century this destitute labour force was reduced to a memory, only to reappear as ‘service’ workers in

every corner of the modern world.”

[\*In business-to-business services the term ‘customer’ – suggesting personal interaction between buyer and seller and therefore *personal obligation* on the part of the customer servant – is increasingly preferred to the more institutional-sounding ‘client’. Thus the essential impersonality of the transaction as such is acknowledged *more* directly in the ‘sex industry’.]

## **DELIVERY**

Stand and deliver. Or sit down and write a directive.

## **DEPRESSION**

(1.) An entirely rational response to the world as is. An increasingly popular response in a time of economic depression, now being dealt with by record sales of handily named Anti-Depressants.

(2.) The ideal vehicle for a multi-agency pincer movement. On one flank, another diagnosis turning the patient’s experience of the world into *something wrong with the patient*, whose opinion on the matter may therefore be disregarded by medical, welfare or ‘employee wellness’ professionals\*. On the other, the very nebulousness of the ‘disease’ makes it an easy target for metadiagnosis as workshy malingering, so that anyone whose misery is classified this way can be kicked along to the next stage on the care-punishment continuum.

[\*As with other mental health issues, the patient’s opinion qualifies as *insight* when it consists of recognition that the problem is indeed internal and in need of treatment. Mental Health Charities would like to attribute these ‘issues’ – or this incapacity for any other kind of insight – to 25% of the UK population.]  
(3.) Included in the general category of ‘Mental Health in the Workplace’, which along with Stress and Anxiety accounts for the ‘loss’ of 70 million working days per year in Britain alone, according to some reports. Productivity-obsessed employers especially deplore ‘presenteeism’, a relatively new pathology assigned to workers who show up but fail to perform with outright, unconditional zeal. Some bosses see a more serious and less manageable threat here than in absenteeism or sick leave: hence a rush to calculate the costs and remedies in various research papers, studies and policy reports. In contrast to absenteeism, which is unsurprisingly associated with low-paid work, presenteeism is said to be universal, afflicting executives, ‘professionals’ and low-paid workers alike. (Note the premise that executive-style devotion to the business should be the norm for any healthy cleaner or cashier.) In short, everyone is depressed and no-one wants to work. Who manages to cope best with the situation – or behave themselves – may just come down to the quality of the (self-)medication

available.

(4.) Provides the pretext allowing an employer to enter the home for purposes of ‘workplace counselling, advice and guidance’, with a 24 hour, 7-day emergency hotline, courtesy of ‘Employee Assistance Programmes’. A leader in the field, PPC Ltd., offers online stress-busting exercises, such as: *Clench both your fists for about 15 seconds, then relax them and feel the tension draining away from your arm muscles. Repeat this twice. Hunch your shoulders for 15 seconds and relax. Repeat twice. Continue the same routine with jaw clenching and relaxing. Finally, screw your eyes up tightly and relax them, feeling the tension disappear.* Amateur boxers would be familiar with this particular exercise, but rather than offering solace and silence away from stress, it would be associated with entering the ring, waiting for the bell to sound before the opening combination of attack and defence.

## **DISABILITY**

(1.) When attached to ‘learning’, a means of identifying children and adults with so-called Special Needs or Special Educational Needs and isolating them from others. Recent UK government ‘help guides’ set out various early warning signs for pre-school children (under 5s), including ‘trouble finding the right word’.

‘Fucked-up’, mugged-off’ and/or ‘turned over’ might be more accurate and useful phrases for those who will go on to make up 25% of the prison population.

(2.) Special status within the UK welfare system under which the claimant receives an expanded pittance of £90 a week instead of the sub-subsistence dole of £65 tossed to able-bodied ‘job-seekers’, or in the more forthright language of the 1596 Poor Law from which the policy draws its inspiration, *sturdy rogues*. Since the 1990s governments have sought nonstop to reduce the payments while maintaining the distinction between deserving and underserving poor, narrowing the definition of ‘disability’ (and its less respectable annexe ‘incapacity’) in order to create hundreds of thousands of newly ‘able’, retrospectively suspicious *malades imaginaires*. Among malingerers discovered to be secretly healthy is Keith Tilbury, accidentally shot with a .44 Magnum by a Thames Valley Police firearms instructor in 2007. “The bullet smashed a rib, damaged his sternum and put a hole in his liver. He had to have part of a kidney removed and lost part of his bowel. He had massive entry and exit wounds, muscle and other extensive soft tissue damage”, compounded by “two heart attacks, two more while undergoing surgery, a quadruple

coronary bypass, two transient ischemic attacks (mini-strokes), one full-blown stroke resulting in reduced vision in his eyes, post-operative complications and post-traumatic stress disorder”. Atos, the medical testing outsourcer, duly ruled him ‘fit for work’.

## **DOWNSIZE**

On the face of it, a stoical acceptance that fings ain’t what they use to be, an acceptance that a little modesty might be in order. Unfortunately this usually means certain employees are out on their ear. Fortunately clears the way for a leaner something-or-the-other, whereby, naturally enough, more will be done in less time by fewer people.

## **EDUCATE**

As in: *educating the public* about household recycling, approved diet, airline baggage restrictions, personal pension ‘saving’... Used when the agency giving an order wants to add the message: *this is for your own good*: were it not for your ignorance, slovenliness, selfishness etc. you would have complied spontaneously before we told you to.

## **EDUCATION**

(1.) Something that happens when one is alive.  
(In this sense, to be contrasted with

Lifelong Learning.)

(2.) *Private education* (esp. UK & former colonies): A system for the reproduction of an owner/officer caste, whose children it equips with the psychological sense of entitlement and mannerisms of command they will draw on later in a life spent overseeing the perpetuation of wealth in entitled hands.

## **EFFICIENCY**

Early 2011: Paypoint, a processor of electronic card transactions using terminals in neighbourhood shops, wins a UK government contract to administer welfare benefit payments. Paypoint-style ‘smart’ cards (managed by private prison operator Sodexo) are already used in a voucher system restricting the purchases of asylum applicants to an approved list of products. The Home Office admits that there are ‘no immediate financial benefits’ from the card-based system. But the political – or policing – interest is confirmed by the simultaneous launch of a pilot scheme to *extend food vouchers to the unemployed*. The Trussel Trust, a Christian Charity, takes donations of approved products, to be distributed by ‘statutory professionals’ such as *doctors, health workers, social workers and probation officers*. The vouchers are supposed to be a ‘last resort’

for claimants whose cash benefits are cut off for noncompliance with 'job search' rules; as such they make it easier for outsourced welfare agencies to cut off the payments. But the coupling of the (British Tory) 'Big Society' with the (EU) 'Digital Agenda' promises to be more fertile still. Consider what the Treasury could save on cash benefits by negotiating bulk procurement of Approved food from supermarket chains instead! More importantly, quarantining claimants outside the cash economy might go some way towards keeping 'scroungers' socially segregated from 'hard-working families' at a time when instant unemployment is the rational expectation of everyone in work.

## **EMPATHY**

(1.) Most conveniently summed up in Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen's Empathy Quotient test, proposition 55: *I can tell if someone is masking their true emotion.* An empathist is someone who claims to know better than you do what you are really 'feeling'.  
(2.) *Invasive emotional presumption* would almost do as a definition, but by itself that doesn't quite account for a more subtle complex of coercion. In clinical psychology and its outposts in everyday speech, the idea of empathy equates the practice of emotional espionage with *its opposite*, i.e. attentiveness to the opaque specificity of other people's experience.

The confident social ventriloquist is empathetic and therefore sensitive, whereas reluctance to presume registers as a symptom somewhere on a scale between aloofness and autism.  
(3.) In clinical papers on early childhood and 'low-functioning' autism, 'empathy' is shorthand for recognition by the guinea-pig that other people exist separately at all. But once experiments extend to 'normal' or at least 'high-functioning' adults, only one kind of 'recognition' qualifies, namely the capacity "to put oneself in another's shoes". (Excuse the technical jargon, Dr. Baron-Cohen is quoted verbatim here.) Acknowledgement of the 'other' counts as full-grown empathy only if otherness is instantly *foreclosed*, replaced by projection of the empathist's own spectral double onto guesswork about the other person's spiritual footwear.  
(4.) What Empathy Quotient scores measure is above all *self-satisfaction*, i.e. test subjects' willingness to assume their own ideas about people around them to be true. As the shoe-exchange criterion spells out, this usually depends on readiness to *ascribe to others a psychic apparatus like one's own*. In an immediately given situation the other person's shoes may stand some distance away, but the enterprise of swapping asserts that the feet must be fundamentally the same. From the start the idea

bespeaks not attention but obliviousness to other conditions. In all history only one social class has ever naturalized and generalized its inner life this way.

## **ENTITLEMENT**

(1.) An unusually complete work of institutional irony. Speakers using *entitlements* for welfare payments, or *entitlement mentality* for failure to accept starvation with a good grace, take for granted that nothing could be more ridiculous than an *unconditional* expectation to remain fed, housed and unenslaved.

(2.) Meanwhile every repetition of the joke habituates its hearers to the fable that the ‘entitlements’ in question are in any sense unconditional, rather than laden with conditionalities so crushing that the claimant must live in perpetual breach of them or not at all.

(3.) Stories of sub-legal social survival (with the reality requiring it left out) may then be used as evidence of claimants’ endemically depraved *mentality*. At this point *entitlement* acquires another layer of irony: the target audience picks up on a suavely understated way of saying *pillage*, or mass social banditry without the equestrian romance.

(4.) The actually-existing entitlement mentality protected by these rhetorical armaments is never

named as such, and is as institutional as the rhetoric. It shows up most conspicuously as ‘property rights’ – sometimes simply called ‘the rule of law’ – but that hardy outgrowth of the Roman slave economy doesn’t quite account for the scope of present-day entitlement. Particular property claims are zealously pursued (all the way to amicable settlement between propertyholders or a hundredweight of flesh from the propertyless), but tribute is also exacted from the unentitled class in the form of continuous personal and social adjustment to the whim of bailiffs named ‘necessity’, ‘reform’, ‘therapy’\*, etc. No entitled party need even come forward: the first duty is to demonstrate the will to deliver *before* knowing quite what will be asked by whom.

[\*By happy non-coincidence, the term is the same in microsocial and macroeconomic management.]

(5.) There is no reason why propertyless entitlement mentality should remain a joke for owners to scare their clients with. The entitled will have something to fear when an aggressive entitlement mentality overruns ‘common sense’, expelling the moral accountancy of Just Reward and Community Identity. There is no such thing as society, but there is one sound economic theory: *Do they owe us a living? Course they do, course they do, course they fucking do!*

## **ENVY, POLITICS OF**

A variation on ‘entitlement mentality’, slapping down the political pretensions of nonproprietors. These are really no politics at all, just the attitude of the bad losers in the game of life. If you’ve got it, flaunt it, and tell the whingers where to get off!

## **EXPECT**

Strictly speaking expresses the belief that something is probable (*I expect to work until I die*). When used to deliver a command (*pupils are expected to wear correct school uniform; employees are expected to understand company values; England expects every man to do his duty*), the word is symptomatic of institutional entitlement mentality.

## **FLEXIBILITY**

Yes, of course, all for it! The flexible body, environmental adaptability and so forth, wonderful! Its use however is now restricted to “labour flexibility”. So much so that there is an index to measure it, kindly provided by the World Bank as part of its Doing Business reports. These grade countries as to how ‘business-friendly’ they are. Recently the UK moved up a few positions on this league table, but this immediately provoked a whinge from capitalists stationed there, on the grounds that it disguised a fall in Britain’s

position on the labour flexibility/rigidity index. Higher ratings for ‘governance’ and other such criteria were meaningless given the disgraceful leftovers that make any restriction on the firing of workers, along with health & safety standards, an intolerable expense. How could they compete internationally with such handicaps! The World Bank’s measure confidently asserts that greater labour flexibility guarantees better economic performance and lower levels of unemployment. It promotes five reform projects:

- reduce the scope of employment regulation
- introduce flexible part-time and fixed term contracts
- reduce or lower the minimum wage for new entrants
- allow employers to shift work time between periods of slow demand and peak periods, without the need for overtime payment
- cut regulations on firing by cutting severance payments, or eliminating notice, and increasing the number of ‘fair causes’ for dismissal.

Despite their whinging, capitalists stationed in Britain are working hard to regain their flexibility league table position. The use of CVAs to avoid redundancy payments and an increase in drug testing of employees for ‘fair cause’ dismissals are just two examples. Meanwhile the World Bank

justifies its employer advocacy – which has real consequences once taken up by international aid agencies and used as ammunition by capitalists everywhere – by saying the recommendations will “provide better opportunities for the poor.” To make this claim it suggests that ‘rigid’ labour regulations benefit privileged (for this read ‘unionized’) workers at the expense of those in the informal economy, an economy that, it says, is produced by such regulations. A Trojan Horse argument that ignores evidence of a high degree of mobility between the ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ sectors.

### **GIVE THEM AN INCH AND THEY’LL TAKE A MILE**

A constant anxiety of the rich and the ruling class and their various enforcement agencies. A constant justification for stinginess, Toughlove and worse.

### **GOING FORWARD**

A necessary phrase for dealing with the disappointing present in which unnamed lessons have been learned.

### **HANDLING IT**

A highly rated ability to survive the impossible or heartbreaking without stumbling.

### **HELP**

- (1.) Whether used transitively (*helping the long-term unemployed into work; encouraging the mentally ill, drug users etc. to seek help*) or reflexively (*self-help*), identifies the person helped as the cause of her own problems and those problems as a matter for the proper Authorities.
- (2.) Invasive social surgery practised by those with the gall to *want what’s best for* others.
- (3.) A gift from someone who kicks down your door to make sure you get it.

### **HUMAN CAPITAL**

With a single flick of a phrase, a contradiction – a set of opposing interests – is overcome. Or rather the notion that labour is free when it has no other choice ceases to apply when an individual without the wherewithal to employ others for profit works his/her arse off to learn those skills or ‘knowledges’ that may or may not be useful to those with the wherewithal to employ him or her profitably.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

- (1.) Used by managers as a kind of magical incantation: if labour is invoked often enough as a pool of passive matter to be tapped and shaped at will, perhaps it will eventually become the longed-for docile body.

- (2.) What success the manager-magicians may claim has less to do with the magic of ‘Resources’ than the lure of the ‘Human’ part. With the right additional incentives, a few employees may be convinced that obedience will lift them out of labour altogether and into spiritual development.
- (3.) Hence the boldness of those employers who have lately dropped Human Resources in favour of the uncharacteristically pithy ‘People’.

### **IDENTITY**

- (1.) Name! Date of Birth! Place of Birth! And if that’s not enough, Christian Name of Father, Mother! Credit History! The data tell a story, any part of which may suddenly be evidence against you.
- (2.) Identity Consultancies like Futurebrand worry that your sweater, hot drink or motor car will feel left out and unwanted if not adequately titled.

### **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR**

You, a person of importance, tell a lie, smear an innocent person, or have your goon squad manhandle pensioners, and you are found out. As a person of importance it is not then inexcusable, iniquitous, or invidious. Rather, it is inappropriate as if socks had been given to a teenager as a Christmas present, or the quality

of the wine complained of at a State Banquet. This useful phrase from the New Labour era is likely to run and run.

### **INEVITABLE**

Surrender now! Resistance is pointless! In one version it’s Shock and Awe, which mimics Clausewitz’s “affecting the adversary’s will to resist as the first order of business”. Modern-day proponents aim to achieve this with their ‘alternative force package’.

Sometimes the notion is flirted with, as in the lead-up to the Iraq War, which was not inevitable until it was inevitable. (What, with all the men and materiel already moved into forward positions, they were all going to be brought back to base?! When the Grand Old Duke of York has never lived it down, marching his men up the hill and down again?!) In another form, it’s TINA – There Is No Alternative, a relished slogan which reveals the true limits to choice. The brazen style of neoliberalism is predicated on masochism by proxy, via the market. It may not always be pretty, but it is the way it is, it says. ‘Globalization, what did you expect, it was going to be victim-free?’ As if we were children who simply aren’t up to speed. These fashioned inevitabilities are used to normalize selective versions of the future using

a spurious neutrality and old-fashioned fatalism. Meanwhile, since the ‘inevitable’ collapse of Soviet ‘Communism’, old-fashioned fatalism is transformed into a superior understanding of the massive historical forces that are making the modern world as it is.

### **INTERACTIONAL SHITWORK**

Reserved for women doing the work that doesn’t get paid in the care business.

### **LEVEL PLAYING FIELD**

A to-and-fro within acceptable political parameters about access to various elites. Still punted as if achievable and therefore acceptable to the excluded mass. You had your chance!

### **LIFE ADVICE**

Now to be given to ‘hardcore problem families’ – also known as Dysfunctional – by a squad of ‘troubleshooters’. No namby-pamby stuff here, these troubleshooters are going to come in your door and administer tough love. Maybe it will be without the love and just be tough, but it will also be magical. They will train you up to get a job and conjure up a job when there are none to be had.

### **LIFELONG LEARNING/LIFE SKILLS TRAINING**

*BABY COMPETITION, Brixton Tesco (Now judged by Professional Agents)*

### **MEASUREMENT**

“Whatever can be measured can be managed.”  
(McKinsey, global consultants and tax avoidance innovators.)

### **MERITOCRACY**

(1.) Predicated on the ridiculous and correspondingly cherished idea that individuals are born equal. Their success or failure must therefore come down to their own hard work and/or sense of personal responsibility. In fact statistics on economic ‘success’ confirm that ‘chances’ of succeeding have as much to do with privileged birth (or lack of it) as they ever did, so that ‘meritocracy’ means those whose merit was once known as breeding will by and large run the show. A few low-born success stories help to disguise the persistence of “things as they are, things as they were, things as they will be by-and-by”.

(2.) Perfect and perfectly empty circularity: personal ‘success’ is retrospective proof of meriting it. *Whatever is, is right*, wrote Alexander

Pope in 1733, since when the applause of the owners of merit has been unbroken.

## **MOTIVATION**

(1.) The suffix ‘-ation’, appended to the noun (or adjective) ‘motive’, yields an exquisite logical redundancy and a telling psychological fallacy: ‘motivation’ as supplementary motive for an action that is already being performed. A meta-motive with no particular content other than itself; a self-sufficient force in the brain of the ‘motivated’ worker (for only labour is ever *motorized* this way), yet also something managers and psychologists may stockpile and instil.

(2.) The perceived need for such a motive-supplement, with the resulting attempts to sell, transmit and measure it, at least helps erase any lingering delusion of the ‘dignity of labour’. Motivation-pushers tacitly admit that no paid work serves any *direct* purpose for the person doing it. The undermotivated worker is already working *for some reason*, but outright recognition that the *wage* is the only rational motive for work would lead the managers’ epiphany onto dangerous ground. Hence the need for a towering obfuscation, a fantasy substitute-cause, and a whole body of professionals to will it into being.

## **NATURAL WASTAGE**

This is not a case of ‘You are fired’, but ‘You are shit’. To be excreted.

Human resources and human capital, all very good, valued, nurtured and so forth, but subject to efficiency drives, leanness and meanness.

This invariably requires that fewer people produce the same or more work per second. The humane method of achieving this end is to encourage older workers into early retirement or, at worst, if tied into antiquated labour laws, reluctantly wait for the old bastards to reach retirement age. Resources become waste in the process of production, completely natural, and awaiting evacuation.

## **ONE-PARENT FAMILIES**

A description of single mothers (and that ultra-suspicious category, single fathers) when a modicum of self-restraint is being shown by demographic paranoids, eugenicists, cost-cutters, and professional moralizers. None of these people, for whom self-restraint is purely tactical, has ever scrambled onto a crowded bus with child, buggy and shopping, got children fed and ready for school on an impossible budget, been lectured by those who know best, or got up in the morning actively fearing the utility bill that is on the way.

## **OPPORTUNITY**

Another form of jumping through the hoops with every likelihood you're going to land slap-bang right on your kisser. Don't bother unless rich parents apply. An entirely fictitious notion of equality of opportunity remains a mainstay of political rhetoric, however, as an essential prop to the continued shelf-life of an elitist hierarchical society. 'Equitable distribution of opportunities is preferable to a redistribution of assets or incomes', says the capitalist class and its useful idiots.

## **PARENTING**

A skill required by all those brave enough to endure the sacrifices (as well as the joys) to be a parent with little money, but which can only be taught, by salaried professionals who know just how, when, in what proportions and in what form, reward and punishment must be applied to the child.

## **PARTICIPATION**

(1.) Great, all for the promise of the breakdown of exclusive barriers; only it doesn't work that way. Instead, states and capitalist entities see advantages in the ostentatious display of participatory intentions and a rhetorical complicity of those excluded in reality. Also used to soften resistance to the intentions, and their execution, of those

entities.

(2.) Or as the old slogan has it: I participate; you participate; he/she participates; we participate; yous participate; they profit.

## **PERFORMANCE**

'You're only as good as your last film.' That was for actors. Now it's everyone. Your individual work measured on a regular basis. Did you come up to scratch today? The number of tasks completed, the intensity required. Knowing that these requirements can only go on increasing. Results vary, from worker suicides to the ever-increasing prescription of anti-depressant drugs.

## **PLACE**

(1.) *v.* A new profession whereby folk abused somewhere in the welfare system are put into 'community' organisations as wageless workers or designated 'volunteers'. The professionals placing them receive a weekly payment for as long as the placement (the resulting noun) lasts.

(2.) *n.* Know yours.

## **PRISON**

Secretive places of humiliation and resistance. Old-style prisons inside cities may have been put there as a visible threat, an attempt to discourage

the others, but these days, in the all-conquering name of Security, they are built in the middle of nowhere to make them even more secretive, social isolation made complete. Inside, the Incentives and Privileges scheme, whereby all 'privileges' – i.e. the bare minimum – have to be earned, and punishment of those who do not comply is integral, has become thoroughly systematized, as has the psycho-pharmacological regime. In this way Prison has become a model for the whole social welfare system.

### **PRIVATE PROPERTY**

A restaurant where the waste bins are caged and padlocked.

### **PRODUCTIVITY**

A capitalist wheeze whereby how hard workers work in a given length of time and elasticity within the length of that given time are mixed in with improvements in equipment and machinery, allowing workers to produce more without working harder or longer. The time and effort saved this way are invariably reinvested in longer and harder work.

### **PROVIDERS**

(1.) Franchises reselling access to indivisible resources (water, electricity, airwaves) once these are broken into imaginary bits by political decree. Any involvement in extraction, generating, distribution, etc. is entirely incidental. Marks & Spencer, the retail chain, is an 'electricity provider' in the same sense that a street dealer is a provider of heroin.

(2.) The Alchemists of the public-private sector, who use words like 'Trust' to 'deliver' services without moving from their laptops. From the moment they decide what service is to be delivered, hey presto it is delivered, untouched by human hand. Unless, that is, something goes wrong. Then the hired human hands are presented, ready for reprimand or amputation.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

A labour-saving device for police (broad sense): from childhood onwards the message is hammered home that responsible behaviour means spontaneously doing as you *would* be told if you put someone to the trouble of giving an order. (Such advance compliance is called *showing initiative\** when the voluntary servant intuitively embraces the spirit of orders never yet given rather than sullenly sticking to the letter

of those heard before.)

[\*See also: *aspiration*]

## **RIGHTS**

Once upon a time, for a brief period, there were rights, fought for by many people who made their own lives that much harder by doing so. Declarations were made by powerful institutions to the effect that these rights were unconditional. In recent years, however, these rights have become wholly conditional on responsibilities, as defined by those powerful enough to define the nature of those responsibilities definitively.

## **ROBUST**

A word from the past resurrected by New Labour but with good long term prospects. It hints both at a relish for punishment – law breakers will be dealt with robustly – and at a vigour and resolve whereby the tedious business of realizing the brilliant idea is overcome at a stroke. ‘Robust implementation’ of projects and initiatives is promised on a daily basis.

## **SATISFACTION**

A necessarily temporary state affairs in the queasy world of consumer capitalism. While temporarily a non-consumer, one should be satisfied with one’s lot.

- *I can’t get No...* A sentimental nihilism lurks here, but so often, it IS the case. Just can’t get any. All too difficult. Or it’s all too short-lived as the sugar rush from cheap food dies away.

- *Self-satisfaction*, aka, Smugness. An extremely unpleasant characteristic, somewhat typical of a young professional class whose parents have money.

## **SCARCITY**

In the happy world of neoclassical economics with its equilibrium, there is scarcity, while at the same time there is no limit to how Mr Supply can rise to the occasion to satisfy the potentially infinite requirements of Miss Demand. Environmental limits happily, do not apply. In the capitalist world it purports to describe however, scarcity’s real function is all too evident.

*It is a fact well-known...that scarcity to a certain degree, promotes industry, and that the manufacturer who can subsist on three days work will be idle and drunken the remainder of the week... The poor in the manufacturing counties will never work more time than is necessary just to live and support their weekly debauches... We can fairly aver that a reduction of wages in the woollen manufacture would be a national blessing and advantage, and no real injury to the poor. By this means we might keep our trade, uphold our rents, and reform the people into the bargain.*

J.Smith: *Memoirs of Wool*. 1747 II

## **SECURITY**

(1.) In the singular, an abstraction ill-defined on a case-by-case basis. Violence is licensed by the illusory promise of total security, played against a kaleidoscope of threats, commands and permanent anxiety: *homeland, energy, data, personal, emotional security*.

(2.) Clarified by the plural form: *securities* are financial assets, finite claims on value (i.e. embodied labour), 'secured' by the promise of violent legal enforcement.

(3.) *Social security, job security*. Withdrawn from polite language when the balance of violence shifted in favour of a class wishing to keep its (un)employees chronically insecure.

## **SELF-ESTEEM**

Consent to the conditions that compose the self.

## **SHAPE UP**

The language of the gym, with direct coercion attached. Those days of being a wimp, idling or simply not performing are either over, or you're out of here: the job, the team, the relationship.

## **SOCIAL SKILLS**

The most shameless of many expressions defining human interaction, language, gesture and thought

as elements of labour for sale, subject to training and evaluation according to potential buyers' needs.

## **STRESS**

Fighting for the Number One Spot as the most overused word in the vocabulary. Not surprising given the multitude of crimes against humanity it disguises. The pretence is that it's an inevitable result of urban life, of modern life. As if the 16th century miners digging out the silver from the pyramid mountain of Potosi with a life expectancy of a few weeks or months to come had not felt stress. Or present day indebted farmers in India killing themselves by swallowing the very insecticide whose cost had carried the promise of a better life. In work, more per minute bullied out of people on a wage: at Foxconn in China, the pace of the production line relentless, worker suicides; at France Télécom, more worker suicides as if the very power of management to uproot lives with a manpower board game was essential to profitability. For consumers, there's the time wasted making communication with an official or corporate outfit, held in a queue, subjected to repeated snippets of music, all in the name of efficiency: fewer people to take your calls, and costs cut. The consumer's time and patience elastic

and expendable. The constant paying of bills while leaving enough to survive from one week to the next: highly stressful. For single parents this plus the full-time and full-on work of bringing up a child. But they are also subjected to choice. The nonstop demand to choose between one service provider and another when it's hard not to notice that their promises are flexible and the savings minimal, likely as not.

### **TAILORED**

(1.) The unemployed will now have programmes tailored to their individual needs. You don't have a job? Then it must be due to some individual defect, also known as 'need', even when there are no jobs to be had. The tailoring process involves people with power over those without a job creating categories of individual defect, then designing a particular programme of incentives and punishment to Sort It Out!

(2.) A bold inversion wrapped up in an ordinary metaphor. An artisan tailor would measure the body of the client and cut the cloth to fit. A 'tailored' welfare-to-work or offender rehabilitation programme likewise starts from personal metrics, then hacks and gouges the *person measured* into the form required by design.

### **THE ROUGH AND THE SMOOTH**

Just accept, you're told, at the very moment life is at its hardest. There are life rhythms, Swings and Roundabouts, they say. Hearing these smug words, like you're just one more idiot in the queue, is guaranteed to make it that much harder to endure.

### **TOUGH LOVE**

It's all for your own good, being punished by those who really care about you and worry that you're not going to shape up. "Being cruel to be kind is just ordinary cruelty with an excuse made for it."

### **THRIFT**

A virtue which can also be a vice.  
Seek expert advice.

### **TRAINING**

(1.) Something done to dogs, circus animals, soldiers and athletes. (In the case of horses more informatively known as 'breaking'.) In the course of the 20th century extended first to manual work, then to labour in general and finally to all forms of psychosocial existence.

(2.) Long-term unemployed under the Hartz IV regime in Germany are assigned to compulsory 'Real Life Training' in full-scale fake

supermarkets, using plastic banknotes to 'buy' and 'sell' inflatable cheese and wine bottles filled with tinted water. Trainees 'work' full time shifts, 8am-5pm and 11am-10pm including Saturdays, for between 6 and 9 months, in order 'to get used to a work-oriented rhythm again'. Attendance is monitored through a clocking-in system, with absentees thrown off and losing benefits on a 'two strikes and you're out' basis. 6,000 real products worth EUR 30,000 also circulate among the fake goods; most are taken back by a supermarket after a week, but any that are out of date are offered for sale to the trainees at a discount. Consequently the trainees are regularly searched to prevent theft; those pretending to be cashiers are also supposed to stop 'shoplifting' by trainee 'shoppers', and to spot the fake 'fake' banknotes distributed among the fake 'real' ones. 'Real' employees of the Real Life Supermarket include six 'social pedagogues': a discussion paper defines 'social pedagogy' as a 'holistic combination of youth and community work, social work, adolescent mental health services and careers services'. A note in the Creative Workshop room in the 'supermarket' reads: 'Think positive, act constructive'.

(3.) *Retraining*. A cruel fiction that there is an endless supply of new jobs requiring new skills, knowledge,

etc. Rather it means re-education: 'work-readiness' or 'life skills', that is, Keep Your Mouth Shut and Take What You're given, Or Else!

## **TRANSITION**

A painless word used by those who will suffer no pain in a process of social change in which many will suffer. It suggests that the change is inevitable and/or natural often with a hint of progress thrown in. All the ideological heavyweights in the one word that carries them lightly. Thus the notion that there was a transition from feudalism to capitalism, as if there was no alternative.

(2.) *Transition Town* (UK). A community-based and state-sponsored eco-project preparing the transition back to feudalism.

## **UNCOMFORTABLE**

Beyond consolation.

## ATTRIBUTIONS

### CAREER COUNSELLING

Reported and ridiculed by *The Neurocritic*  
(<http://neurocritic.blogspot.com/>)

### COMPLIANCE

Walter Benjamin, *Franz Kafka*

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

*Endnotes 2* (<http://endnotes.org.uk/>)

### DISABILITY

*Private Eye*, 27/1/12

### ENTITLEMENT

Crass, 1977

### LIFELONG LEARNING

Actual advertisement, Brixton Tesco  
supermarket, 2010.

### MERITOCRACY

Wallace Stevens, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*;  
*Alexander Pope, Essay on Man*

March 2012, London  
[wealthofnegations.wordpress.com](http://wealthofnegations.wordpress.com)

