

Transcription of Oliver James' lecture:  
Wednesday 28 May 2008

**Anne Hawkins:**

My name is Anne Hawkins, I'm the director of the mental health partnership for Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS and I have the pleasure this afternoon of being your chair. I'd like to welcome you all and, of course, I'd like to welcome your speaker today Oliver James.

This is the last lecture in the series from the Centre of Population Health for this year and I'd like to draw to your attention the facts that all of the information regarding the previous lectures is on the website in podcast formats so if you have time and if you missed the previous lectures, all of which were very good then it's worth tacking a bit of time to look at the information that is on the website together with everything else of course which is there.

I've got great pleasure this afternoon in introducing our speaker Oliver James and some of you may have Googled Oliver in anticipation of this event and I was given by Andy information and I have to say I was quite overwhelmed in reading it and thinking how am I suppose to summarise all of the things that this man has done for his audience however I am going to endeavour to do so. I wasn't planning to hold a microphone in one hand and turning the pages at the same time, that's another challenge.

First of all, I've got to do a selling exercise on the books which are here there is a stand with them, but they look very interesting and I'm sure if you pop over to Borders and order them from them, I'm not supposed to be doing a plug for Borders but we won't worry about that so just to tell you a little bit about Oliver's background for those of you haven't Googled. He did a degree in social anthropology at Cambridge University, he's the same age as my by the way, a degree in social anthropology at Cambridge University and followed that was a psychology degree and child clinical psychology training at Nottingham University and then a period of time working as a research fellow and then as a clinical psychologist in Richmond.

In 1982 he made his first TV series for Granada and a number of those TV series seem to be around children and then he went onto become an interviewer and a producer and 44 interviews in Room 113 for the two series of the BAFTA award winning Network Seven Youth programme on Channel 4. I thought it was important to point that out. I mean there is there is a lot more here which is overwhelming, as I said earlier. 1995 Oliver produced, directed and presented a 40 Minute late show documentary for BBC2 called Prozac Diary which I was particularly interested in, in which artists took the drug to see how it affected their work. In 1997 he produced and presented The Chair, a seven part interview series for BBC2 including one in which Peter Mandelson MP famously shed a tear. I thought that was very interesting. Five books published and including the two here and regular writer for the Sun, The Sunday Telegraph, Sunday Express, The Independent and, most recently, The Observer Magazine and a number of other magazines and I think the other thing that I would like to highlight is that when Jack Straw was the Home Secretary Oliver provided blue sky thinking every six weeks for the home secretary's lunches which must have been extremely interesting and I believe currently performs the same role for the Tory Party according to your website that may no longer be the case, but that's what it says on the web.

So today we are here to hear Oliver talk about why selfish capitalism causes increased mental illness and first book, Affluenza, in this Oliver introduces us the adverse effects of affluence on people's mental health and today Oliver is going to use the chair for his new book, The Selfish Capitalist, to highlight the increasing levels of distress which accompany Affluenza and he will suggest to us that wellbeing must take precedence over the west for tiny minorities. So I'd like you to give Oliver a warm welcome to Glasgow and I'll pass over to you. *(Clapping)*

**Oliver James:**

Thank you very much.

Yes I would like to start this talk, and pitch at a higher level than normal because I understand there is quite a lot of quite well informed people present here today, not just the general public so to speak, so I'm going to take a risk of sending you all to sleep at this time of day it's very difficult to do, people talk for long periods of time which I fear I am going to talk for quite a long period of time though I do look forward to your questions. I usually start to talk with a rendition of a Tears for Fears song that was number one in 2005 "It's a mad world" which includes the lines "the dreams in which I'm dying, the best I've ever had". Just to get you into right sort of wrist slashing mood but, my starting point really is the contention that we live in a crazy society that's been well adapted to, of course I'm not an expert on Scottish society, but certainly to be well adapted to English contemporary society is to expose ourselves with a very serious risk of mental illness and my basic point is that it's not a mad world, it's a mad English speaking world. We're all very familiar with T S Elliot, Tolstoy before him, R D Laing and Frome actually who Laing got it from the idea that to be well adjusted just a society you must be mad. That was a general proposition of course, has a lot to be said for it, but that's a rather bigger subject than my subject today. The starting point and the thing I want you to really apply your minds to right from the outset is two sets of facts, which I presented in *The Selfish Capitalist* in some detail. The first is derived from a cross national study of 15 different nations, done by the government using nationally representative samples, looking at the prevalence of mental illness and that study shows that the English speaking nations are on average twice as likely, the people in them, to have suffered a mental illness in the last 12 months compared with people in mainland western Europe, to be precise, English speaking nations in that study are the USA, which is by far the most bonkers society in the world in this study, surprise, surprise 26.4% of them suffered a mental illness in the last 12 months and other studies actually show for every one of those there was another which was on the verge thereof in any society and at least half of Americans you will be amazed to hear are ..., and in New Zealand 20.7% is the second most mentally ill society in this study. It's quite interesting that and you might want to raise questions about that. New Zealand is always felt to be sane, but anyway, 23% average for those two societies compared with an average of 11.5% for Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium, France and Spain. If you took the French out of that, 18% of them suffered from some form of mental illness in the previous 12 months, it would be a lot lower. For some reason the French seem to be slightly different from the rest of the mainland western European cousins. Very, very, very startling difference I would contend and when you then add in, and this is where it gets obviously more debatable, when you add in comparable studies of UK, Canada and Australia, rather conveniently for my thesis the average still remains 23% for the English speaking nations compared with 11.5%. If you move the mainland Western Europe you'd be half as likely to suffer a mental illness. It really makes you wonder about whether the role of genes, which we are constantly told are so significant in causing mental illness, well that really is very questionable in the light of that evidence since the gene pools of all those countries are very similar. I would say that to forestall questions about this I think this evidence is by far the most reliable there is by a long chalk and I don't really have an awful lot of time for psychiatrists who are essentially sort of, you know, monkeys of the organ grinders who are the pharmacology industry, but I think the one thing that they are good at is measuring mental illness. I do have quite a lot of respect for their ability to do that and a lot of trouble has been taken with this study. These are nationally representative samples that, all the people asking the questions are trained in the same way, lot of trouble taken to make them culture proof, etc. All those factors make it infinitely more reliable than anything that Richard Layard would tell you that that happens, believe you me. The second body of evidence I would draw your attention to which is I think somewhat less reliable, none the less quite significant, is that if you look at the study that there have been in the UK, Australia and the USA, mental illness has just about doubled in all those countries since the end of the 70's. Now why would it be that the English speaking world, as I've defined it, would be twice as mentally ill as the mainland western European world I would ask you? And why might it be that that double difference might have started at the end of the 1970's. Well I suspect that some of you will already be possibly aware of the kind of answer I'll give you, but I'm going to give it to you chapter and verse this afternoon, as I say I'm terribly eager that you don't fall asleep so I'll try not to make it too chapter and verse. My explanation in summary is going to be that the evidence of Tim Kasser and Richard Ryan shows that materialism, what I've dubbed Affluenza; really materialism is the correct term for it. Materialism defined as placing too high a value on money, possessions, appearances, physical and social and keeping up with the Jones' and fame, money appearances and fame

placing to high value all these things places you at statistically speaking greater risk of suffering a common mental illnesses depression, anxiety, substance abuse, personality disorder, an amazing body of work actually I mean really not a lot of people seem to be aware of this volume of evidence and it's substantial it's not a few studies, it's a lot of studies, it's almost certainly true and it applies across the developed world if you place too high a value on those things you're significantly more likely to be mentally ill. So I start for the moment and I say that something that I call selfish capitalism, which I will go on to define for you and I'll talk in much more detail about exactly how selfish capitalism does cause mental illness something called selfish capitalism for riches at the moment lets call it Thatcherism or Reganomics causes greater materialism and our materialism causes greater mental illness. So selfish capitalism causes greater materialism. The English speaking of these speaking nations are, of course, the selfish capitalist nations, all of them have political economies which are essentially selfish capitalist, whereas relatively the mainlanders and European nations have economies which are relatively unselfish capitalism. Therefore, my argument is, that explains to a large degree, it is a matter of degree why the English speaking nations are twice as mentally ill as the mainlanders European nations. Now the first point that I'm going to deal with very briefly is I just want to very, very quickly give you something very short answer to the starting point of the whole movement which is why would it be that materialism would make you prone to mental illness and the short answer is that it interferes with the meeting of fundamental psychological needs and we can all define these, psychologists can define these, what we require as a fundamental psychological need. Tim Kasser plumps for every human being in order to be mentally healthy needs to feel secure, emotionally and materially. Everybody needs to feel a part of a community, to be part of an intimate network. Everybody needs to feel effective. Of course Selfish Capitalism is so good at making us all feel incredibly ineffective and everybody needs to feel autonomous and authentic. So, we can haggle about these things, but the basic point that literature shows is that if you have very materialistic values you are much less likely to meet those needs and in Affluenza I give innumerable examples of where you will find the fine detail of ways in which being Affluenza stricken impedes your meeting those needs. It makes you less likely to have intimate relationships, it makes you more obsessed with outcomes, what's called expensively motivated, you become obsessed with reward and less and less interested in doing things because they are enjoyable. That sort of stuff, but I'm not going to...It's Erich Fromm land, but the interesting thing for those fans of Erich Fromm here, is the extent to which Tim Kasser's colleagues really did set out to provide empirical tests of Erich Fromm's ideas and indeed to have or to be was the question that Erich Fromm posed and having it's jolly bad for you compared with being, there's a lot of evidence for it which I'm not going to really dwell on. What I want to dwell upon is exactly how such capitalism drives us mad. Well, first of all lets just summarise how I'm defining Selfish Capitalism you find in such countries. Firstly it entails businesses being judged, evaluated by their short term share cost; this is something I nicked from Will Hutton's rather good book *The World We Are In*. Practically everybody bought *The State We Are In*, but I've never met anybody who finished it. Sadly, hardly anybody bought *The World We Are In* because it is a very fine piece of work in which he makes this point that about incredible damage is done by evaluating businesses according to short term share price. Secondly insecure employment, this is a second defining characteristic. Thirdly, privatisation and fourthly the idea that the market meets all human needs. And I'll go into those now in some detail to look at how each of those defines the characteristic of selfish capitalism drive us potty. But, before I do that, I'll just cast your mind back to what were the claims that were made of this selfish capitalism or Thatcherism as it was known in this country, which, of course, you here in Scotland always took a very dim view of, but unfortunately I'm afraid that we took it far too seriously. You may remember that what Mrs Thatcher said that she was going to create a land of opportunity a land fit for "Norman Tebitts" She was absolutely sincere I believe, and I have spoken to some of the original neo-liberals, and I think they were absolutely sincere. They believed the free market, monetarist economics was going to make us all richer and it was going to improve well being thereby. They genuinely believed there would a trickle down effect. Anybody remember that? Turned into the trickle up effect, but never mind. As Adam Curtis added, I think you get BBC2 here don't you, so you might have seen Adam Curtis's series, *The Trap*, which he showed very nicely how, this idea that opportunity was going to be increased by raising aspirations for people and we were all going to be encouraged to be entrepreneurial in a truly egalitarian society and really as I shall be arguing later on, possibly to the distaste of some of the audience, she really did fight to adopt

American values to a massive extent, including what I call, and whenever I call it this I get slagged off horribly with in the Guardian , but including really what I would vow was the American version of feminism, what I call men in skirts feminism, boo, hiss. So she set out that stall and this is what she was going to offer us and she, of course the embodiment of men in skirts. You know, it was harder to argue often with the first woman prime minister. What actually happened? Well, first of all the short business success was indeed defined by short term share price on a grand scale following the introduction of sorts of... And, of course, what happens if you use that policy is that it turns the companies very much into commodities, I mean, never mind the individuals in it who are very commoditised in the way that Erich Fromm talks about in a marketing character and so forth that you can come as an individual commodity and we know Marx who originally said that. You get companies becoming commodities and above all you have chief executives ultimate justification for a massive transfer money from the poor or the.....to the very rich so that chief executives are able to argue that their main job is to support the share price in order to do most effective they must have share options and I've interviewed quite a few chief executives who believe you me, these people are not the sort of people who need any kind of motivation at all, there sort of workaholic psychopaths who forget the system they were in whether they're in a scholarly system there the kind of people who will always have to eat everybody else. It complete garbage that they need motivating at all and, of course, once the share prices started to drop at the end of the last century they then started saying they wanted the money up front and everybody forgotten the fact why you're being paid so much in the first place. But interesting statistic that in 1990 the US, 2% of US shares were traded, that were owned by company directors as share options. By 2001 that was 13% of all traded shares were owned by company directors, directors with share options. Of course, in the meantime this is extraordinary fact that not nearly enough people know about it, not nearly enough, often enough pointed out in the Guardian. There has been no increase in the real earned wage of the average person throughout the English speaking world at all since the 1970's so what actually happened during the Thatch rite years was a massive, massive transfer of wealth from the poor and the average to the very, very rich. All the increase in affluence that did occur, of course, there was an increase of affluence in, occurred as a result of dual income earnings that women going into the workforce with people like Philip Greene and other entrepreneurs got terribly confused about and on top of that of course an increase in working hours. So you became a workaholic nation compared to mainland Western Europe and the average that meant that the adult members in the household were in the 80's the average number of hours worked per week were 42. For sometime now the average has been 56 hours a week. Indeed, I would strongly recommend to you a book by David Harvey called A Short History of Neo-liberalism which makes a case and is debatable, but is very persuasive of the case being made that really these policies were actually produced because for quite sometime since the second world war the rich had been getting poorer and in the 70's, the mid 70's Harvey shows a whole lot of people got together in America, businessmen and got together a war fund of about \$900 million dollars a year in old money to spend on buying politicians which they wouldn't find very hard., but also buying academics and setting up these bustling bogus so called institutes of the kind we, of course, have here Centre for Policy Studies, these sort of things. Right wing basically organisations pedalling stuff as if it was science, to try to persuade everyone to go along with monetarism, but they knew dam well that the consequences would be a transfer of wealth to the very rich you really will fall asleep if I start reciting you with statistics just how much richer the richer got, that suffice to say we all know and we've all read our Polly Toynbee accounts which she does every so often, she just reminds us, quite rightly, quite rightly of just how big has been this increase and how sadly that this has been just as bad under Blatcher as it was under Thatcher and now under Bratcher. A key role where you have an economy that's dominated by short term share price is played by marketing and I want to dwell for a little bit on the scientific evidence because not everybody is aware of this and just how much damage is done by marketing. The first fact that is the most stealthily of all is that since the 60's per capita, the American's have spent 4 times more than mainland western European nations on marketing and advertising. 4 times more! In the other English speaking nations twice as much, we've spent twice as much as mainland Western Europe on marketing and advertising. It has not been good for our mental health. The impact of marketing on mental health is something that is again not well known. It's surprising to me how few people know about these scientific studies. There are good literatures on this. Hardly anybody seems to be aware of it. Take for instance the work of

Kendrick which I describe in much more detail in Britain on the Couch actually, than I do the Selfish Capitalism but I do describe it in the Selfish Capitalism if you want the references. Kendrick and many other people have done studies in which the basic garb is to take the research women, to take sample of women, one sample is showing pictures of gorgeous, stunning beauties and the other sample is showing pictures of average women or potted plants and, it doesn't really matter and you measure, beforehand the mental health and of the women and then afterwards and surprise, surprise the women who have been exposed to Maria Sharapova picture are feeling a little bit less happy about their appearance, their mood is dull. Not only that, it actually has an effect on both their men folk and their relationships. When you do your study of men afterwards the men who've seen Sharapova they have a smile on their faces, but they however are not nearly as satisfied with the looks of their partner when their asked to, a very naive study that's absolutely effective and the answer they give is a nought out of 10 or a 1 out of 10 or whatever for their partner. Its gone down after they've been exposed to Sharapova and they even say that they like their partners less and there are many, many variants on those studies which are admittedly experimental, but they really are explosive but its not a good idea for us to be exposed to Sharapova. At the end of it, much, I like looking at those too, but I mean, you know, at the end of the day it's something that could easily be stopped. It's quite simple to insist upon using models, who have previously evaluated as average models in all advertising, they just insist on it. So the advertising standards authority could even be in on it. The impact of marketing as well, of course, is very considerable on eating disorders and it encourages people to become anorexic as it's been shown in many different studies. There's a review of 25 studies showing their importance of marketing. But equally, of course, marketing very much encourages obesity and there's some very explosive. Regarding bulimia for example, in Fiji up until 1975 for some strange reason they hadn't got television, and the favoured figure for a women in Fiji was the fuller variety and within 3 years of the introduction of television to Fiji there never having been a single case of bulimia in that nation, but 11% of young women were suffering from bulimia and they were three times more likely to do so if they had a television in their home. Pretty strong evidence I contest and likewise in China now there is some fascinating stuff coming out showing that previously a rather starved nation studies of, huge study of 10,000 Chinese show that if you had a television in your house your probability of becoming obese within 'x' number of years is vastly greater if you have a television in the house. So there we go, some countries were actually prone to either be starving or horribly fat. There are any number of other studies which I'm not going to bore you with on marketing, which show that too much exposure to television and to advertising makes you more violent, makes you more prone to larcenies, a particularly good one on that which showed television was introduced across the USA during the 1950's at different rates and different states, they didn't all come along at the same time. It's not until you went back and looked at whether the rates of stealing were up after saturation point after 50% of the households had a TV and found that indeed it did, there was a 5% increase in shoplifting which is directly the result of television clearly causing. Basic values that are coming from this rubbish that we are having thrown at us by marketing and advertising are a repeated and strong message: to accept that only money and paid work should be valued, being rich is the point of life. That, in the end, is the agenda of the American imperialism of there retched rubbish that they send over to us. In the end we have our own version of it; we have an 'it could be you' culture. A shocking thing, the lottery. An outrageous tax on the poor offering them the absurd idea that if they won a few million pounds, their lives would be better, I mean the evidence suggests that what has really been so disastrous about, you know, if you had to pick one thing about both Thatcherism, and very much reinforced by Blatcherism, is raising aspiration while simultaneously making it much harder for people to rise. The terrible, terrible fact is that somebody who turned 20 in 1970 was much more likely, statistically, much, much more likely to have upward social mobility through the education system than somebody who turned 20 in 1990. So, you know, it was a complete lie from beginning to end there is hardly a single thing that it contained that was going to happen, that actually did happen.

Moving onto the second feature of Selfish Capitalism I don't suppose there is anybody in this room who has got a long term contract, we're all on short term contracts and that's what you find in selfish capitalist societies. You have employment conditions that favour employers and a tax system which goes to the rich, short-term contracts have weak rights and lower pay than everyone else. You end up with a fear- based career that they are all now completely used

to, that we take for granted insecurity about work, so we work longer hours are jobs are not very interested in. This is the norm that we have just completely got used to, but believe you me just travel around the world and you will very quickly see is not the same the minute you get outside the English speaking axis.

The third of the defining feature, I mean I need hardly say to the people in this room to think about the effect of your work on the condition and your mental health you need to pause for a moment to conclude that it's not good. The third defining feature, of course, is privatisation and this is something that really gets my goat and I strongly recommend that you read Florio's book *The Great Divestiture* which recalls in some details the scale of the racket that was privatisation in this country, but it was a fire sale of national assets, which were given away at rock bottom prices and most of them, of course, ended up in the hands of the rich. That never gets mentioned. Another thing which *The Guardian* is strangely remiss in actually reporting, along with the fact that most people do not have higher income, is that during this time when Thatcher was flogging off the family silver for considerable amounts of money even though it was at rock bottom prices, on top of that she is getting the money from North Sea oil. She's getting around 10 billion pounds a year in old money. This is serious money and where the hell is it now? What's happened to it? "Dude where's my country?" It's unbelievable that all that money has just evaporated, in fact it's not evaporated it's gone into off shore tax havens and large chunks of it and look at the situation of Norwegians with there, I think the last count, 107 billion pounds their heritage fund where they put the money from their North Sea oil into a piggy bank and boy could we do with that money now. You know that on the side of privatisation, of course, is all the deregulation so you end up with property fever with everybody in hawk to mortgage companies, that we're all very aware of, you don't have to be deregulated financial services which are regulated through advertising which have come much more aggressive about personal lending so that the English speaking world saving completely ground to a halt. Nobody in the English speaking world has saved anything and everybody is massively in hawk, not just through their mortgages, but through credit cards as well. So taken together these three aspects of selfish capitalism the short term business price point, insecure employment and privatisation all of them you can see by not are not going to be very good to the mental health. But there is a further key factor which I devote some time to and which is my particular hobby horse, which I've already warned you may distress some of you which is my feelings about men in skirts feminism. Now in the selfish capitalist world the American version of feminism rules, in which there is no challenge whatever to male ways which is what I thought, well I wouldn't want to tell you my exact take. I wouldn't want to give that crucial information away! But for somebody who, shall we say, left university in 1976 I can remember men's groups. I can't actually have claimed to have gone to them when I was at university, but I can remember there was a strong feeling at that time that men had to change a great deal. The version of feminism which we've got now is on in which women are suppose to essentially become women's libbers and there identities are found through work. Of course, what happened after the introduction of Thatcherism particularly in this country was more and more women did become university educated and more and more took jobs which is fine, but what also happened is, of course, that there is much greater competition and as status consumption grew, especially fuelled by housing costs, work hours increased and the more women worked, the higher the consumption standard rose. The longer the hours that had to be worked by men and they had to work longer hours to be deal with the competitions of women who then had to work even harder and so on. So the way it worked in the English speaking world was that the emancipation of women was hijacked and turned into a way of turning everybody into a workaholic. Dual income earning became absolutely essential in the system, as I have explained, nobody was getting more money for their hourly rate so the only way in which you could afford, in this increasingly Affluenza stricken, materialistic system to keep up with the Jones', and to afford property particularly, was if both of you were working, because a single earning male on average earns about 60% less than dual income earning family. Of course, the upper two thirds ended up having to work incredibly hard. At the same time women took a lot of the burden .that happened as there was this gradual disinvestment through the household economy. Women still went on to do a lot of them looking after the children and the household tasks. Indeed, women became increasingly likely to be mentally ill. If you actually look at studies abroad of populations it's the young women, I mean Bridget Jones is not a joke; Bridget Jones really is one of the most likely to be mentally ill. Women are twice as

likely to be depressed than men generally throughout the world, but the proportionate suffering from mental illness is greatest when women are young. Meanwhile in mainland western Europe they were actually working less so this story that I've heard in my childhood about having been moved to this leisure society and we're all going to be sitting around playing ping pong and getting drunk never happened at all. There was absolutely no time in society for it, but if you go to Denmark they really do work 35 hour weeks. I interviewed the equivalent of the editor of the Guardian and he actually does leave the office at 4.30 and the key to this is that they don't have American men in skirt, but women in skirts and mini skirts. They have in his case the explanation for his going home is partly, he claims, he doesn't like to admit it, he likes his children, but he also said that he doesn't have that much choice because if he wants to hang on to his wife he has got to do the cooking, he has got to look after the children and actually in Denmark you are booted out of the office if you work more than 35 hours people start coming up to you and saying "are you all right?" They're pretty worried about you. Now a key consequence of all this men in skirts feminism is a total, well not total but largely is that we have actually changed their ways. He is the outsourcing of domestic life as much as possible. Obviously, particularly apparent towards the better, not the well to do necessarily, but the better to do and obviously the very rich, so for the very rich, of course, there is au pairs and it's true that the rich never really did look after their children anyway, but at least they had time to say nanny in creating mental illness in their children rather than... Sort of a satellite of different eastern Europeans which they way it is now. The poor, as we know, what we've got is crap day care and so, you know, frankly as I will return to this point in a moment, but one of the things I find most appalling about new Labour is their advocacy of day care is the solution to our problems which to my mind consists of persuading single mothers frequently or un-single mothers trying to persuade them to go and work in Tesco for rock bottom income so that some other poor women can look after your children for rock bottom income badly because trying to get anybody to look after a 2 year knows that looking after one 2 year old is incredibly difficult, but look after four 2 year olds that aren't yours I don't know how women does it. Well they don't. It well proven to not be a very satisfactory way of looking after children and, of course, we also have a sort of rise, particularly during the Blatcher period and before it as well of the, sort of, trying to tame the beast in the nursery old school of the childcare so we have genius for all, the supernanny and, you know, you probably don't realise that there is good scientific evidence that looking after your child, you infant, in the way that Tina Ford advocates is actually not good for it there is good scientific evidence about that. My attempts for getting coverage from the newspapers so far have been thwarted. They are so terrified of her, she's so litigious. And then we have Tony's clubs, so you've got longer hours, lets get the keys after school keeping the schools so that the parents can go on working later hours. Not a good idea. Anybody knows what 5 years, if our 5 year old was doing that she would be completely chewing the carpet by the time we get home. Of course, the general tendency in the last 30 years the use of material goods instead of love, that old thing, that old cliché replacing love with money as, you know, the divorce rate has particularly gone up, but the estate to which parents, both of them disinvested from you're home, both increasing obsessed with their careers and their profession and their financial status increasing also likely to hand over ipod or to spend money on the child rather than give them the what they really need. Although curiously nips in with, it's perfectly true to say because I'm not going to say that I'm am argument for totally le se faire care for children, I'm not saying that because you also get this kind of strange guilty overindulgence as well so you get attempts to try to, particularly you see that in divorce families with, in all families, the parent trying to ingratiate himself with the child by being really overindulgent, so that's also raises a problem. Most curiously of all of them is the simple point that we also saw after 1979 a massive increase in the proportion of children being raised in a low income home and this is the bottom line. So in 1979 19% of children were being raised in low income home. Just by 1981, when Mrs Thatcher did not mess about, by 1981 that had gone up to 31%. It stayed there pretty much ever since except, of course, that we are told that Thatcher and Blatcher, the great thing that we really care about is child poverty and the 600,000 children were not in poverty were in poverty. Except that they also increased vastly the number of people living on very low wages, but who are not technically in poverty so the fact remains that they claim that really was spurious.

I have to stress as I move towards the end the extent to which that you would have told by the tenor of my remarks so far, I particularly am disappointed with what New Labour have done

and they've got it particularly wrong in the matter of children, but I've an interesting example as to how they got it wrong is actually not so long ago a piece that Polly Toynbee wrote in the Guardian calling for the government to put children first and I did agree with much of what she said until she reached the end at which she said putting children first would be a social revolution, redesigning everything, turning the world on its head, yes it would Polly. With children as the focus universal children's services would need to be good enough to be appreciated by rich and poor alike. That means the best childcare and nurseries, better subsidised for all with breakfast clubs and extended afternoon schools that really do match the activities of middle class children, so there we have it. So the point is today let's just completely give up our care for our children, let's get the state to do it, great. I do find it extraordinary that somebody as intelligent as Polly Toynbee is advocating that sort of thing..... I suppose, you know, the point, my bottom line about this, the reason I am going on about this is because it is something that people are very, very reluctant to bite this bullet, but really we are a society in which we are bringing up our women to be particularly to be Bridget Jones and not surprisingly when Bridget Jones gets up the duff accidentally or not, married or not, she then is very, very ill prepared for going to live in her home with a screaming little brat who she absolutely hates and who, as we know from Private Eye and Polly Filla or India Knight or Joan Payne any journalist you want, who endlessly describes hell as caring for small babies and they have so missed the point because, of course, anybody who has got children and is not completely stricken by Affluenza and knows they are the absolute basis for rediscovering the meaning of life especially in a soul destroying society like this. Most people live their lives as a sort of hologram we become marketing characters when we're single, yeah we're marketing ourselves to the opposite sex, to get the opposite sex, we go marketing ourselves to our employers to get jobs we've become very, very false in this society even by T S Elliott's standards and the one thing that I foresee is the great hope for the future is to get people taking an interest and actually looking after their children.

My pitch therefore is for a system, ultimately my pitch is for a system in which I think you cherry pick the best bits from mainland western Europe and which puts the needs of children, that's not the needs of employers dressed up as the needs for parents, the needs of children and meeting those needs and specifically I suppose for instance where we with young children, though there are people who have different points of view here, but I would say for instance I would argue that we should have Danish working hours and I would argue that we should have Austrian support for parents in which they are pretty much paid, one or other parent or both to stay at home until the child has reached the age of 2. I think they may be raising that to the age of 3.

More generally, points I would want to, leaning towards a conclusion, in terms of my selfish capitalist theory, while accepting that it is not the only theory in town, for explaining that the English speaking world has twice the mental illness of mainland western Europe it has explanatory power. Clearly the more kind of scholarly of you will no doubt be saying yes, yes but what about "x", you can't blame it all on free market economics. What about for example the shift from collectivism to individualism. This is a very interesting point because the English speaking nations are prone to individualism. Anybody who goes on holiday on the continent will see that there is a relative collectivism. There is a certain amount of collective view still there, the grandparents are still around. If your child is throwing a wobbly people don't come up to you and say this is a disgrace, you should look after him. There is a very different culture on that on the continent. I think other people may have other suggestions obviously people from the right will say it's the end of religion. Some others would want to blame your child's mother or illegitimacy in single mothers, etc, etc. We can talk about that. What I would say is really the fundamental problem is that there was a failure of the left to allow consumer choice to replace those, and from the left people allowed that to happen and politicians were able to present themselves like corporations, responding to consumers. There was a great kind of traditional respect of class and patriarchy, but it was replaced and, of course, people of my age, you know, were all in favour of that - the breakdown of the patriarchy and class. But unfortunately in to that gap sprang Mrs Thatcher offering instead money, really encouraging the development of ambitious marketing characters, feeling yourself as a commodity - going right through every aspect of your life - from your personal life to your professional life. It is what Fromm called the marketing character in the marketing society. That aspect became very generalised, in both genders and people of all sexual



persuasions, presented to everyone. Politicians represented themselves as responding to voters, but Thatcher and Blatcher moved away from democracy, of course, it's a very important point, destroying some service and cabinet government replacing it with their whimsies, imposed against the will of the population. Certainly was down in England, I don't know what it's like up here, it's incredible the extent in which politicians seem to get away with presenting their ludicrous ideas as being for the will of the people. In the case of my particular hobby horse of parenting, you know, Harriet Harman is always trying to tell us that her attitudes to day care, to the parents who really want to just get away from the children as quickly as possible and get out and work and earn money and that's all that they want to do. Actually the surveys showed the exact opposite of that, most parents of under 3 year olds are desperate to spend, 80% are desperate to spend more time with their small children and somehow she gets away with just lying. I think speaking as I am to a relatively exalted audience I'll put it like this to you that I think what happened was that between the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Émile Durkheim, Freud, Darwin and Marx used an extremely disgraceful explanations for what, for humanity, for why we are as we are. Between them there is not an awful lot of new thoughts that have happened since then and the trouble with those people, if you actually think about it, is that that not one of them had anything of any great significance to say about what it means to be all right so in the case of Freud the best you have is neurosis is the rule, not the exception. In the case of Marx we have total abstinence when questioned if you say to Karl come the revolution, Karl, what's going to happen he's got absolutely bugger all to say. Obviously Darwin's theory has built into it; he's not telling us anything about the future and Durkheim, there was really anything interesting there. I suppose that my final thought is simply that people on the left, you know, it really doesn't help us to really get concentrated on how you create, what would constitute somebody who was psychologically, what do we want to call it, mental healthy, I don't think so. We all talk about emotionally mature. I use words like alive and playful. We need to get on with the business of what we are going to, you know, it's all very well to stand around as we all did in the 70's criticising and saying what's wrong, but you've got to really, this is the greater challenge is to say what actually is, what it means. Individual level as opposed to collectively so what it would mean to have a happy, successful, good individual full society. I think that specifically on the collective level I would put on the table three things straight away the first is the need, the urgent need to redistribute wealth, we need to screw the rich big time and I'm very glad to see, and I'm no expert in the first place to do this, but I'm glad to see that Larry Elliott in the Guardian this week has been offered very good details of how it might be done. Secondly we need to use the wealth or the results of that to ensure that parents have the maximum chance of meeting the needs of children in the early years. This fight maintains the absolute foundation of having a mentally healthy society, and finally I think we also need to completely go backwards in terms of the public goods, how we transport utilities whether that's by renationalising or heavy regulation. I'll leave to Larry Elliott to decide, but what we need is public goods where the public good comes first, not the profits of a tiny minority of people. On the individual level I put forward in Affluenza the idea that what we need, the sort of individual we are talking about it someone who is playful rather than game playing. The sort of individual who is authentic, rather than "Tony Blair" sincere. Sincere is American. Is ideally passionate, I feel it very deeply therefore I am sincere and therefore it's ok that I'm on Oprah Winfrey and I will tell you that I had sex with my daughter that's all right if you felt it strongly. No it isn't, there's such a thing as authenticity, there's absolutes, Lionel Trilling describes in his books if you're interested. And then finally I would say that we need people who are vivacious rather than hyperactive. The very striking aspect of the selfish capitalist world is the extent to which people are just like lunatics rushing round. What we need is vivacity not hyperactivity, sanity in most materialism, not mental illness or health. My final thought, the best way of dealing with it myself is that, you know, it's not about pleasing the audience here the extent of which we have all become obsessed with seeing ourselves through other peoples eyes and trying to achieve awards or trying to achieve praise. I got as much pleasure from scoring not one but two goals in fact in a game in 1972 as David Beckham ever got from scoring any of his goals. It had nothing to do with the fact that there was hardly anyone watching. It was all to do with intrinsic, personal motivation. Likewise playing golf with wooden golf clubs, if I did a good drive I could just as much pleasure as I did from man to the ball with metal, wood, mental club which sends the ball nearly 25 yards further, it doesn't really matter. To all the points I think the pleasure is in actually hitting the ball, the same with tennis racquets, wooden tennis racquets if you are old enough to remember playing with those, it's just as good as metal

racquets. You know you never needed any of these so-called advances. What we need is a society, and individuals in it who are, shall we say, in the zone. We need really to make the most of this unprecedented affluence that we now have compared with our predecessors. It's just unbelievable that we could be so bloody miserable and mentally ill when for the first time in history we solved so many of the material problems in our lives.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

**Anne Hawkins:**

I can see there are a few people leaving, but I don't know if that's any reflection on the lecture. I'm sure you will all agree that was a highly stimulating lecture from Oliver with some controversial views expressed and I believe some people in the audience would like to express alternative theories or to ask questions.

On behalf of the Centre for Population Health I would like to give you this gift from Glasgow and say thank you very much (*laughter*)