How should we conduct ourselves? Critical Realism and Aristotelian Teleology: A framework for the development of virtues in pedagogy and curriculum.

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Bushra Sharar, is the pen -name of Bushra Connors, senior lecturer in Education at the University of Hertfordshire. Her book Emergent Pedagogy in Higher Education in England, published by Routledge, applies critical realism in a consideration of structure/agency interactions in the lives of University lecturers in England as they work to develop pedagogical approaches against the backdrop of current drives to marketization and performativity regimes in the higher education sector

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Abstract:

Faced with the marketization of higher education in England, pedagogy is under pressure in ways that often undermine lecturers' deeply held values. For instance, this pressure results in the reduction of significant aspects of teaching to narrow metrics and requires universities to operate within intrusive structures that subordinate their pedagogical aims to profit-orientated objectives. In this paper, I analyse the way that people can preserve their agency in this pedagogical context. I guide my analysis with a framework that combines critical realism with Aristotelian virtue ethics and MacIntyre's ideas of qualities within human practices. I suggest the kinds of qualities that might assist faculty to preserve and advance rich pedagogical projects in the current circumstances. Finally, I use a critical realist morphogenetic approach to argue that people may be able to resist losing their way when faced with ubiquitous performativity regimes.

Keywords: Critical realism; Aristotle; virtue ethics; performativity; curriculum; pedagogy; morphogenetic interactions; structures; agency; MacIntyre; Reflexivity.

Introduction

In the current circumstances in Higher Education in England, regimes of performativity (Ball 2012, Lyotard 1984) are undermining the agency of lecturers in the pedagogical process (Shore and Wright 1999). Teachers in higher education find themselves following paths that contradict their professional experience and common sense and often divert them from deeply held values (Collini 2018, Sharar 2016). As Sayer (2011) claims, an

integral aspect of human agency is reflected in how we choose to conduct ourselves. In this paper I argue that neither passively following the dictat of governmental and institutional agencies around pedagogy (Ramsden 1991), nor simply arguing for better metrics (Hayes 2017) to measure 'good teaching' via empiricist methods, can lead to 'excellence' in teaching. Instead, I advocate an Aristotelean virtue-based approach to ethics – as interpreted by MacIntyre (2007) – to identify the qualities needed by faculty to defend and develop their pedagogical work. I combine this with a critical realist analysis of morphogenetic structure-agency interactions to suggest a possible way to develop pedagogical approaches and curricula within current higher education contexts in England.

I begin with a brief discussion of approaches to ethical issues. I follow this with an introduction to the process of market creation within the higher education system in England in which I outline the effect of marketization on the habitual actions of faculty, and through this on pedagogy. Next, I give a description of Aristotle's teleology and his virtue ethics, both highlighting their compatibility with critical realism, and using them to understand the complexity and potential richness of pedagogical endeavours which may be disappearing in current conditions. I then provide an outline of MacIntyre's ideas on human practices and conceptualise pedagogy in higher education as a modern-day practice in which agents need various qualities in order to teach in changing contexts. However, these qualities are undermined by pressures to remain passive in the light of market-led reforms. Finally, I introduce Archer's (2007b) morphogenetic approach as a possible solution to the problems facing faculty who must be reflexive if they are to further their pedagogic projects. I illustrate my argument with anonymised experiences of faculty in universities in England drawn from my earlier research (Sharar 2016).

Approaches to ethics: the question of what is 'good'

It is possible to divide approaches to ethics into three categories: deontological, consequentialist and virtue-based. Deontological, or rule-based approaches to ethics evaluate actions in terms of whether they are inherently fulfilling a duty or contain the quality of 'goodness' (Nagel 1987, Kant 1964, Rawls 1999). This approach has been described as *'Ethics based on the notion of a duty, or what is right, or rights'* (Blackburn 2005, 94). Consequentialist approaches to ethics evaluate the consequences of an action (Bentham 1948). They have been described as *'the view that the value of an action derives entirely from the value of its consequences'* (Blackburn 2005, 94). Both these approaches, which are not mutually exclusive, tend to ignore the way that performing certain actions affects the agents. By contrast, virtue-based (Aristotelian) ethics emphasises the ways that agents change through their actions. In this approach, the agents' ultimate aims are determined through an internal principle of change within our human existence as rational beings with needs for nourishment, growth, movement and rest, as well as intellectual needs to think and learn (Johnson 2008). It is in the course of actualising such internal potentials that humans develop the ability to act judiciously in different and changing circumstances. According to virtue ethics, the choices facing teachers or students, as rational animals with intellectual and social needs are not about whether to teach or learn, but how to do so. Virtuous activity leads to the development of virtues and a state of happiness or Eudemonia. According to MacIntyre:

> Human beings, like the members of all other species, have a specific nature; and that nature is such that they have certain aims and goals, such that they move by nature towards a specific telos. The good is defined in terms of their specific characteristics (2007, 148).

In this paper, I use virtue-based ethics to claim that lecturers' habitual daily activities can have profound effects on themselves, their students and their pedagogical practices. Drawing upon Archer's (2003) formulation of personal properties and powers, I detail the way that acting in the physical world changes our bodies to give us emergent physical powers; acting in the social world further develops emergent powers for social interaction; while acting in the cultural and linguistic world further develops our emergent powers in this area (Sharar 2016). In the process, not only do humans develop new powers, they learn how to use them judiciously in different contexts and to different extents as appropriate. Habitual activities play a part in this process and habits formed due to the pressures of performativity can interfere with our capacity to successfully carry out pedagogical work. The imposition of regimes of marketisation and managerialism on faculty engage them in just such habitual activities (Broadbent 2007). Burrows points out that: *Academic value is, essentially, becoming monetized, and as this happens academic values are becoming transformed* (2012, 368). That is, the values of academia are becoming the values of marketisation. However, before I argue against the dogma that there is no alternative to this situation – which, if accepted, leaves no room for reflexive agency – I ask, 'How has this situation come to pass?'. Therefore, in the next section I describe how the higher education sector in England has become marketised. A similar process of marketization has occurred in several other countries, such as the USA (Lipman 2013) and Australia (Livock 2018), As part of a global trend to neo-liberalism (Sharar 2016).

Privatisation and market creation in English Higher Education

Burrows (2012) argues that what is deemed to be good teaching is coming to be contested in Higher Education in England. No longer are decisions

about pedagogy left to the discretion of lecturers to exercise their experience, their knowledge of their students, the contextual factors or even the demands of their discipline. Instead decisions are based on metrics, which reduce, quantify and measure pedagogy (Collini (2018). The purpose of the metrics is supposedly to simplify the complexities of pedagogical interactions for measurement and comparison. They are part of a larger mechanism to pose the market as a 'magical' solution (Ball 1998, 121) to various perceived deficits in education. In such circumstances faculty find their ability to control their pedagogical aims increasingly curtailed.

Successive governments in England have had the policy of opening national education markets to private providers. Explicitly stating this as one of its key objectives the Department of Trade and Industry, as far back as 2006, said: *The department has a key role in establishing the UK competition policy framework and promoting the benefits of market liberalisation in the EU and globally...* (Department of Trade and Industry 2006, 18)

A £449 million cut in state funding for universities was announced as early as February 2010. As a result 250,000 UK student places and 15,000 university posts were lost. In 2014, the government cut another £125 million from the higher education sector (Morgan 2014). Since then, state funding has continued to be reduced each year. The UK Minister of State for Universities and Science, explicitly embraced market production in the form of privatisation of higher education in 2011 stating.

> Currently, one of the barriers to alternative providers is the teaching grant we pay
> to publically funded HEIs [Higher Education Institutions]. This enables HEIs to
> charge fees at a level that private providers could not match……..Our funding
> reforms will remove this barrier, because all HEIs will –in future- receive most of
> their income from students via fees. This reform, of itself, opens up the system
> (Willetts, 2011) cited in (Brown and Carasso 2013, 29).

The student loans system, combined with withdrawal of state funding, acted as a generative mechanism to bring an element of artificial competition into higher education. It drove higher education institutions to try to dispense with government support (Henkel 2007). Although money for student loans still came from the state, underwritten by the taxpayer, state funding for the higher education sector was totally withdrawn in December 2010 (Collini 2018) causing universities to compete for students and resources. At the same time a shift towards market governance emerged in the higher education sector (Henkel 2007). Universities' recruitment was controlled by the government who stipulated the number of students that each institution could recruit as well as entrance qualifications and numbers per discipline (Brown and Carasso 2013). This mechanism applied to all publically-funded universities. Universities reacted, depending on their economic health, status and institutional culture. Examples of responses ranged from one university misreporting student drop out figures (Brown 2010), to universities cutting unprofitable courses, such as philosophy (Segal 2010). Another emergent phenomenon was that inequalities in the take-up of higher education actually increased over the period of its massification (Blanden and Machin 2004). Since then student fees have increased to an average of £9,000 per year in 2014 and have reached £9,250 a year in England in 2018 exacerbating further inequalities. In the wake of marketization, education has become more accessible to those who can pay (Tilak 2011), both on a national and on a global scale (Ball and Youdell 2007) making universities increasingly concerned with their image in a competitive market.

As far back as 2007, Gordon Brown's speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet for Bankers and Merchants of the City of London had already explicitly linked education with markets:

Only with investment in education can open markets, free trade and flexibility succeed. And the prize is enormous. If we can show people that by equipping themselves for the future they can be the winners not losers in globalisation, beneficiaries of this era of fast moving change, then people will welcome open, flexible, free trade and pro-competition economies as an emancipating force (Brown 2007) cited in (Grant 2009, xv).

Such emphasis on markets as an emancipating force paved the way for variants of micro human-capital theories of education to be adopted in developing education policy. Barnett (1999) claims that the 1997 Dearing report was an attempt to reposition universities as facilitators of economic regeneration. This report (Dearing 1997), though advocating the need for education to be life enriching and desirable in its own right, linked it to economic growth, international competitiveness, new technology and standards and accountability on the basis of 'value for money'. This set the scene for shifting the aims and preoccupations of the university in England.

Ball elaborates the commodification of education in general, claiming that 'market solutions' are being promoted as solutions to 'entrenched problems of educational development'. State funding was withdrawn and is being replaced with private funding arrangements throughout the university sector through what Ball calls the:...*roll-back and roll-out activities of neo-liberalism, that is in both destabilising welfare policies and welfare thinning and creating new spaces for market activity and fostering consent around ideas of choice and market freedom...* (Ball 2012, 26)

Legislative impetus for these 'roll-back and roll-out activities' was provided by the Prime Minister's Initiative in International Education, announced in (2010) by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Another driver was the need for curriculum development, which is easily and cheaply

exported, as universities looked towards this market. Furthermore, the British governments were interested in, not only the domestic education market, but the global one too (Clark 2006). According to a press release in 2010, announcing the prime minister's initiative, the aim was to: *'Maintain the UK's position in major education markets….'* and *'….to help secure the UK's position as a leader in international education'* (Department for Children Schools and Families 2010, 1-3).

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (ibid) disclosed that this initiative was heavily supported by 'Corporate Champions' – British Petroleum, British Aerospace Systems, GlaxoSmithKline and Shell – each prepared to give a million pounds to the initiatives. Overall, the project of the neo-liberal, profit-driven advancement of the UK into the global education market was funded by £27 million, taken from the UK government, the British Council and business. £2 million of this money was used to develop the UK's education markets in Russia, £4 million in China, £3 million in Africa and £7.5 million in India (the Indian Tata group's research initiative).

This encroachment of private interests into universities violates one of the fundamental principles of the 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum, created in Bologna on the 900th anniversary of the first European University, and signed by 500 rectors of universities across the world:

> The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies, differently organised because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power (Magna Charta Observatory 1988, 1).

The market: A generative mechanism affecting pedagogy in Higher Education

The language of market competitiveness filters down through university strategic plans and marketing materials right to the course team or academic group level affecting pedagogical decisions (Sharar 2016). It shifts the preoccupations of individual faculty members from pedagogical issues to marketing and financing issues Brown and Carasso claim that this is far from a free market. Those designated as consumers, in other words students, cannot access honest information to make free choices, neither do HE institutions or faculties within them operate as free agents (Brown and Carasso 2013).

The use of marketized language within faculty meetings also constitutes a move to win staff over to compliance with a market approach (Garvin 2012). In previous research (Sharar 2016), I have presented detailed accounts of the structure/agency morphogenetic interactions within faculty meetings where this mechanism acts as a structure and where staff struggle to change it. Shelley (2005) has noted that marketisation in the UK higher education sector has led faculty to accept a culture of competition in academe. Lecturers find themselves drawn into regimes of self-monitoring and competition with peers and other faculties, driven to manage their own performance against metrics and market demands as perceived by managers in their institutions (Hayes 2017). Student feedback questionnaires asking students to rate their lecturers in various superficial ways have become mandatory. Despite widespread understanding of the unsuitability of these requirements – in terms of supporting authentic learning – they remain entrenched (Collini 2018). The mechanisms by which the marketized practices are maintained can be explained in terms of regimes of performativity (Lyotard 1984). These systems of regimentation and control in higher education have been analysed by Ball (2012) and

described in anthropological detail by Shore and Roberts (1993). The latter claim that reform of education has created a centralisation of power and authority. This has consisted of: streamlining management structures; redefining lecturers' responsibilities; 'rationalising' teaching resources; and appraising and auditing staff performance using statistical indices, to allocate funding. Shore and Wright (1999, 563) go on to claim that the audit culture arising from neo-liberal forms of governance in higher education has 'systematically reconfigured the university sector as a docile auditable body'.

In 2016, the *Teaching Excellence Framework* was announced by the UK government. This consists of a series of metrics on the basis of which university teaching is to be evaluated. Frankham (2017) details ways in which universities' preoccupation with metrics on student employability is distorting the ways in which teaching and the curriculum itself is being organised. Bhaskar et al (2017, 93) state that, 'there is little evidence that programmes that incentivize narrow, tick-box behaviour … are beneficial'. Despite such critiques. For a thorough critical realist refutation of such empiricist methods to evaluate pedagogy see Scott (2014) there is increasing pressure on lecturers to score highly on metrics, which are often ill-conceived and at best irrelevant to pedagogy and often detrimental to the interests of both faculty and students. According to Clegg (2010, 31) the shift to metric evaluation subtly, and sometimes not so subtly – in the case of research selectivity – changes the faculty's teaching and research practice within higher education. In doing so, the shift also changes the conditions for critique and critical work, making both intellectual and practical intervention more difficult. She states:

> The discursive location of these newer practices of audit and evidence are
> positioned in relationship to the powerful and policy makers who increasingly set

the terms of debate about what is useful knowledge, what is open to ethical
scrutiny and what is excluded, and who is held accountable and in what ways.
(Clegg 2010, 31).

It is these newer practices that push faculty into new habitual actions to comply and accommodate them, especially if they feel that there is no alternative. According to Burrows, 'Not only are we being publically judged and ranked but we are also being encouraged to reorient our pedagogical practices towards the preferences, tastes and mores of an ever more consumerist student audience' (2012, 367).

In the above section I have outlined the conditions in which faculty in English Higher Education are trying to teach. The questions to ask are: What is happening to pedagogy and what is becoming absent from pedagogical projects faculty are pursuing? What are the spaces for agential action? What can be done within these circumstances? Clegg (2008) details resistance to these conditions in her work on academic identities. Crucial to such resistance are what Archer calls human beings' reflexive capacities, which include their ability to design (and redesign) many of the projects they pursue. She states that:

If we are to survive and thrive, we have to be practitioners, and the definition of a
successful practice is the realisation of a particular project in the relevant part of
the environment (Archer 2007a, 7).

Archer goes on to point out that this reflexive ability gives humans the power to be 'active agents', rather than 'passive agents' to whom things simply happen (Archer 2007a, 6). It is in this reflexive ability that the way forward in current circumstances may be sought. To follow this point further the next section outlines Aristotle's ideas on teleology and virtues.

Aristotelian teleology- Striving towards a goal

Aristotle assumes that all natural entities, including living things, contain an internal principle of change which moves them towards what is intrinsically good for them (Johnson 2008). In Aristotle's view the human soul has what he called potentialities or faculties to meet its needs for nourishment, growth, movement and rest as well as for perception and intellect. These he called its *'nutritive, perceptive, desiderative, locomotive and intellective' faculties (Aristotle 1986, De Anima Book ll 414a41).* In much the same way as critical realism conceptualises the world as having a stratified ontology, Aristotle postulates a stratification within the human soul. Exercise of human faculties, at biological, social, intellectual levels involves actualising inherent potentials at each level. These potentials or faculties are possessed, as part of the ontology of humans as rational animals.

In critical realist terms Bhaskar calls such an emergence of agency in living things 'synchronic emergent causal powers materialism'. According to him we can:

> credit intentional embodied agency with distinct (emergent) causal powers from
> the biological matter out of which agents were formed, on which they are capable
> of reacting back (and must, precisely as materially embodied causally efficacious
> agents, do so, if they are to act at all) (Bhaskar 1998, 601)

Such a striving or teleological movement of actualising emergent causal powers is agential action and it is evident at physiological, social and cultural levels of human existence. Aristotle claims that exercising these faculties over time develops the virtues which are associated with the different parts of the soul.

> 'Virtue, too is divided into classes in accordance with this differentiation of the
> soul. Some virtues are called intellectual and others moral; wisdom and

understanding and prudence are intellectual, liberality and temperance are moral virtues'(Aristotle 1955, Nicomachean Ethics Book l 1103a4).

According to MacIntyre, Aristotle's teleology means ethical activity involves actualising our human possibilities:

> 'Within that teleological scheme there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens to be and man-as-he-could be-if-he-realised-his-essential-nature. Ethics is the science which is to enable men to understand how they make the transition from the former state to the latter' (Macintyre 2007, 52)

Critical realists differentiate between the 'actual' powers of humans at any one time and the 'real' properties of humans which include the potential powers which could be developed under the right circumstances (Bhaskar and Hartwig 2010). It is through actualising such potential powers over time that people learn to use them judiciously hence developing the associated virtues. Humans have personal properties or capacities (Archer 2003), which have the potential to give rise to emergent powers in favourable circumstances. Such potentials allow us to actualise emergent powers and in the course of doing this people change their actual capacity to act further. This is a teleological process. Aristotle illustrates the point that humans have potentialities as well as actualised powers as follows:

> Again, of all those faculties with which nature endows us we first acquire the potentialities, and only later effect their actualization. (This is evident in the case of the senses. It was not from repeated acts of seeing or hearing that we acquired the senses but the other way round: we had these senses before we used them; we did not acquire them as the result of using them) (Aristotle 1955, NE Book ll 1103a28-31).

Aristotle goes on to say that there are some powers which we learn to use by exercising them. The Aristotelian virtues of Justice and Temperance are two examples:

> But the virtues we do acquire by first exercising them, just as happens in the arts. Anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments. Similarly we become just by performing just acts, temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing brave ones. (Aristotle 1955, NE Book 11 1103a31-1103b-3)

Therefore, it is the habitual practising of these powers to carry out virtuous acts – such as being just or courageous – that builds virtues. The virtue of courage when possessed means not only to be brave, but to know how to be brave at the right time and place and to the correct degree in different circumstances. Such understanding is developed over time, perhaps over an entire lifetime. For Aristotle the overall aim for man is happiness regardless of the whims of fortune and this can only be obtained through developing virtues, because living a virtuous life is in itself happiness: 'It is virtuous activities that determine our happiness, and the opposite kind that produce the opposite effect'(Aristotle 1955, NE book1 1100b10).

But what are virtues? According to Aristotle they are neither emotions nor capacities – yet they are related to both. Aristotle distinguishes between feelings, faculties and dispositions and concludes that virtues are the latter. He writes:

> So if virtues are neither feelings nor faculties it remains that they are dispositions (Aristotle 1955, Book 11 1106a12)

To illustrate, all humans have the capacity or faculty to feel anger. The way that we are disposed to feel anger could be either a virtue or a vice depending

on whether it tends towards being excessive, not enough or the right amount of anger in the appropriate circumstances. A virtuous person would be able to judge just how much and when, where and to what degree they should feel and exhibit anger. To gain the right disposition one would have to experience having exercised the virtues over time in different circumstances. Doing this and doing it correctly would develop the correct disposition or virtue.

The circumstances in which one might be angry are highly contextual. When is it appropriate to get very angry and when is it necessary to keep calm? It is developing the disposition to 'get it right' in any particular case, which is virtuous. So Aristotelian virtues are the dispositions to exercise the correct capacities in the correct contexts and to the correct extent. The more a person practises these virtues, the more the virtues develop. Applying a virtues-based approach to what is 'excellence' in teaching opens up a view of the complexity and richness involved in pedagogic interaction. It allows us to take account of the different contexts in which a teacher has to apply the many qualities needed at different times and to different degrees all of which vary with the particular physical, social, and cultural situations in which they work.

Virtues and their nature

Not only are virtues dispositions, but they must be fixed and permanent dispositions; and they must be undertaken as a matter of choice by a person who knows what they are about. Aristotle explains this further:

> But Virtuous acts are not done in a just or temperate way merely because they have
> a certain quality, but only if the agent also acts in a certain state, that is, (1) if he
> knows what he is doing, (2) if he chooses it, and chooses it for its own sake, and
> (3) if he does it from a fixed and permanent disposition. (NE book iv 1105a 26-
> 1105b)

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Virtues are chosen for their own sake and for this reason do not sit well with acts imposed upon people by compulsion. One aspect of humans' natural flourishing, as rational animals, is the ability to use reason to set goals for themselves. This means they are capable of envisaging goals, defining steps to follow and committing themselves to action. Actions can be undertaken both voluntarily and involuntarily. The extent of human agency is a complex issue, with various gradations of compliance where people may choose to act even when compelled. Aristotle discusses the question of how to decide if agents are acting voluntarily or not in more detail and depth than there is room for in this paper (Aristotle 1955, NE Book III section i 1109b-1111b) but there are limits to how someone can act virtuously under compulsion.

In sum, Aristotelean virtues are dispositions which involve a telos to realise humans' intrinsic potential. They are developed over time and in specific contexts and are pursued as a matter of choice. To be able to live the good or Eudemonic life, the path taken and hence the practices in which one engages are in keeping with man's nature as a rational animal.

It does not follow that engaging in a practice, such as teaching, will automatically develop virtues. They can also develop vices. Choices are always made about the practices in which we engage. People might do what they are told, or might only partially comply. Nevertheless, the practices we end up engaging in can be decisive in whether we develop virtues or vices. Aristotle uses the analogy of people learning music and artisans involved in crafts to make this point:

> Again, the causes or means that bring about any form of excellence are the same as
> those that destroy it, and similarly with art; for it is as a result of playing the harp
> that people become good and bad harpists. The same principle applies to builders
> and all other craftsmen. Men will become good builders as a result of building
> well, and bad ones as a result of building badly. Otherwise there would be no need

of anyone to teach them: they would all be born either good or bad. Now this holds good also of the virtues. It is the way that we behave in our dealings with other people that makes us just or unjust, and the way that we behave in the face of danger, accustoming ourselves to be timid or confident, that makes us brave or cowardly. (Aristotle 1955, NE Book 11 1103b8-17)

So, according to Aristotle, simply being involved in a practice will not necessarily bring about improvement. If you were to spend your time building badly you would develop into a bad builder. It is not enough to become experienced in teaching in one's discipline in particular contexts, it is important to do the judicious things many times to develop the virtues that will enable us to make the correct choices in each circumstance. Doing the wrong thing repeatedly can damage a teacher's ability to act wisely in new contexts. The claim in this paper is that the effect of neo-liberal, metric based governance of teaching is encouraging those very practices that develop bad teaching. The next section examines the process in more detail.

The virtues and pedagogy

What does it mean to develop virtues during the process of living our lives and following our preoccupations and projects? The first stage is to envisage the steps within any practice undertaken and trust that the next stage on the trajectory towards this goal will become clearer. This is not as straightforward as it might seem. To be virtuous, in Aristotelean terms, is in keeping with, and a part of, the ability to flourish. This is in contrast with Kant who saw being virtuous as a struggle against inclinations and needs and in accordance with duty:

> '…we will put before ourselves the concept of duty, which contains that of a good will, though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which, however, far from concealing it and making it unrecognizable, rather elevate it by contrast and let it shine forth all the more brightly'(Kant 1964, 65).

Such deontological approaches also appear in calls for self-sacrifice for some greater good. Similarly, ideas stemming from utilitarian perspectives that measure 'good' as the greatest benefit for the greatest number call for giving up our own flourishing for the sake of others. After all, is not the social contract about the giving up of our sovereignty for the sake of the benefits (Rousseau 1998 [1762], Locke 2003 [1690]) that come from living in a society? These ideas are familiar and well justified. We are accustomed to accepting that our personal projects, built upon deeply held values, might have to be given up for a greater good. It can be argued that similar plausible and powerful approaches to self-sacrifice justify faculty acquiescence to metric-based pedagogical practices. Specifically, it seems likely that faculty can be persuaded to conform to the idea that, in judging teaching, one should defer to the university's preoccupation with high scores on empiricist metrics (Frankham 2017). This is in the belief that without such high scores the department, module or programme would not be viable. Faculty worry that if the university fails there will be negative consequences at many levels, from less access to education for students to job losses for colleagues, perhaps themselves. Thus persuaded, faculty can find themselves uncritically following managerial prescriptions; succumbing to pressures which direct practices in ways detrimental to richer pedagogical endeavours and often detrimental to students' intellectual development (Burrows 2012). MacIntyre claims that amongst what he calls the 'central moral fictions of our age' is the 'peculiarly managerial fiction embodied in the claim to possess systematic effectiveness in controlling certain aspects of social reality'. And he goes on to point out that effectiveness is not 'a morally neutral value'. Rather it is 'inseparable from a mode of human existence in which the contrivance of means is in central part the manipulation of human beings into compliant patterns of behaviour' (Macintyre 2007, 74).

Within such manipulative frameworks the agent must choose to negotiate a path towards pedagogic aims, the correct formulation of which will result in developing various virtues in line with her internal development as a human and her professional practice as a teacher.

Aristotle claimed, in the Eudemian Ethics, that: 'It is the correctness of the end of the purposive choice of which virtue is the cause' (Aristotle, cited in Macintyre (2007, 149). Within the university context, it is essential to learn how to set such ends correctly. Yet this very basic task is being taken from faculty when the decisions about evaluating what is deemed 'teaching excellence' are decided by managers with an eye to market considerations, and monitored against vague frameworks of 'teaching excellence'. The goal is decided, and a trajectory set, with aims which – because they are preoccupied by markets and metrics – are often far from the actual pedagogical needs of the students within specific disciplines and contexts. Lecturers engage in repeated activity on a regular basis, but are they developing virtues or vices? This process was initially outlined by Shore and Wright who pointed out that new categories of 'experts' appear who:

> 'First design new types of 'expert knowledge' that provided the classifications for the new normative grid. Second, they advised on the design of institutional procedures. Third, they staffed and presided over the new regulatory mechanisms and systems, and judged adherence to or deviance from them. Fourth, they had a redemptive role in so far as they made their expert knowledge available to individuals who wished to engage in the process of self-improvement in order to modify their conduct according to the desired norms' (1999, 560).

Requiring people to perform activities which set them on a slightly different trajectory to pedagogical goals can manipulate them to shift those goals. Enforcement of the latest version of prescriptive 'teaching excellence' metrics makes faculty accommodate aims other than meeting the learning

needs of their students; the development of disciplinary aims and indeed their own physical, social and cultural needs. Whether one agrees or not with the new prescriptions is largely irrelevant, one has to comply nonetheless, and the very act of compliance begins to develop different qualities such as 'minding one's back' or working to entertain students. The development of such qualities requires the cultivation of very different skills or potentials; ones that encapsulate what Shore and Wright (1999) have called the marketized and marketizing self. Under such conditions working to the metric can lead to habitual action justified by the belief that there is no alternative (TINA). Such TINA formations are dangerous in their ability to suppress normal pedagogical interactions.

I have described such processes elsewhere (Sharar 2016) and use some of my research participants' accounts here to illustrate them. Sociology lecturer Sam Lewis describes the pressure to make things easy for students, reconceptualised as paying clients, saying:

'...the idea that you can deliver the curriculum, the idea that somehow you could deliver learning to people is just a fallacy... I think it's related to the idea of students as customers'. Sam goes on to describe changing student expectations saying they feel that:

> 'somehow you can tell them exactly what is required to produce a good answer to
> this . . . assignment and you can't do that because a lot of it is tacit knowledge . . .
> and skill, it's being able to know what would be relevant, to know how to
> formulate something, how to write it and I think that we shouldn't give the students
> the impression that somehow we can get them over that hurdle'. (Sharar 2016, 108)

There are two reasons why performativity under such regimes prevents the lecturers gaining virtues. The first is because of the connection between living a virtuous life and flourishing. The following accounts give an insight

into the distress faculty can face. Teacher educator Anne, collaborating with a colleague faced with reduced teaching spaces and resources, said:

> The first thing I knew was when Mary came to me looking . . . not looking like Mary at all . . . looking worried . . . upset. Looking like she had not had a good night's sleep (Sharar 2016, 134).

Law lecturer Jim Hope describes strategies used by colleagues in despair at changes in their faculty thus:

> We try and look after each other. . . . We look at . . . what can we do? What can we have a go at? What's a good thing? What is a bad thing? What are we trying to do? Mike and Michelle and Anne and myself, we try to put things on and say 'look this is available here and there' (Sharar 2016, 158).

Commenting further that:

> Stress is . . . there's an awful number of people going off with stress for a week, two weeks at a time. . and of course the sickness rate has gone up (Sharar 2016, 158).

The second way in which the practice of pedagogy is being impaired is through a reduced ability to know what one is doing, to choose what to do for its own sake and doing it from a fixed and permanent disposition. In effect this is a reduced ability to develop a virtuous approach. Lecturers learn to act with just the right amount of wisdom, courage, liberality, magnanimity and amiability within their complex, disciplinary and context-ridden interactions with students. Aristotelean virtues are, in themselves, important in learning how to make tacit decisions in areas of pedagogic practice. The following quote is by law lecturer Jim Hope, whose department replaced face-to-face lectures with pre-recorded on-line lectures to ensure that they scored highly on technology targets. He stated:

> '…our main complaint about this is not whether or not the students particularly like it or not, some do some don't . . . it's the fact that we can't see what they are doing, and as you know yourself, in a live lecture. . . . 'They don't get that . . .' 'let me go through that again' . . . 'I need to go slower' . . . 'no, they haven't quite grasped . . . let's go a different way round' . . . and of course you can't do that and so you just end up just giving all this stuff out' Jim cited in Sharar (2016, 153).

Jim is highlighting that the levels of tacit knowledge and the development of practical wisdom involved in teaching are rich and complex, particularly in a rapidly changing educational system, where both the nature of the students' past experiences and the circumstances in which teaching occurs are becoming less predictable than in the past.

In the following section, I will offer an alternative to the metrics-based approach to teaching. This is based on MacIntyre's adaptation of the concept of Aristotelian virtues to modern human practices.

Pedagogy as a practice: MacIntyre's approach:

MacIntyre argues that across societies and over time, conceptions of what is virtuous have differed. He develops a virtue-based approach within human practices defining a practice as:

> Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of that form of activity with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended (Macintyre 2007, 187)

Teaching in higher education is therefore a practice, but it is one under pressure. Evaluation of what is deemed good, is done in the light of the aims and practical wisdom already developed by experts within the practice.

According to MacIntyre's social constructivist approach, novices develop what he calls internal goods as they engage in the particular practice with more experienced others. He offers the following tentative definition of virtue within a practice:

> A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.(Macintyre 2007, 191)

MacIntyre ties notions of 'good' to the aims of the practice. What is deemed to be good is what helps one in developing one's practice as a carpenter for example and doing the things that more experienced practitioners have already designated as useful will allow agents to conduct themselves wisely in the roles they have taken up within that practice. MacIntyre is extending Aristotle's idea of virtue ethics to the qualities one needs to develop when entering a practice. This process of practising virtue, using qualities useful for the success of the practice, is connected the development of human personal properties or capacities in the physical, social and cultural spheres. Such properties grow as one practises the qualities needed to fulfil one's role by gaining new abilities, and in the process, learning to discern the best way to use those abilities. MacIntyre also points out that there are some goods within a practice – which he calls 'internal goods' – which cannot be gained without engaging in that practice and that there is a constant process of evaluating one's self against the values of the practice. Such evaluation requires 'the virtues of justice, courage and honesty'(Macintyre 2007, 191). In current conditions it is this aspect of the internal goods of the practice of pedagogy in higher education which are undermined by performativity, which require people to give up deeply held professional values and assume a marketized persona.

What are the implications of this for the practice of pedagogy in higher education? Alignment between the qualities it is hoped students will acquire and the experiences organised in the curriculum is always needed if students are to learn. Consider the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom about which Aristotle says:

> Well, it is thought to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate rightly about what is good and advantageous for himself; not in particular respects…..but what is conducive to the good life generally. A sign of this is the fact that we call people prudent in particular respects when they have calculated successfully with a view to some serious end (Aristotle 1955, NE Book VI 1140a 25-32).

Both teachers and students need the virtue of prudence, or practical wisdom. The lecturer develops prudence through deliberations about, for example, what to present, how to structure the content, how to adapt the level to the particular students, and how to interact with the physical and resource contexts. The students develop prudence – practical wisdom – through negotiating the many discipline-related practical decisions that are involved in the field that they are entering. They could be supported in their development of prudence through participating in a carefully considered curriculum, designed by a virtuous lecturer. MacIntyre's approach to the development of virtue on a daily basis in order to live the good life, in terms of the internal development of lecturers and students, would suggest the following set of requirements: defining those qualities that the teacher needs in order to create ways of making the concepts accessible; organising the curriculum in terms of stages and time; negotiating the affordances and constraints of all the physical, social and discursive structures in which the learning is to take place; and, through practice, gaining an ability to do all this prudently. Following MacIntyre then the question for any pedagogical project becomes: What are the acquired human qualities that the lecturer

needs to develop and practice, in the best way, in the best place, at the best time and to just the right degree, in order for the students to learn?

Once identified these are the qualities that to be practised to become virtuous, as a teacher in higher education. They may include qualities like the ability to observe and to sense the problems that students are facing in their work. Such sensitivity can only be developed over time through practising such observations. A lecturer needs to be able to identify activities that assist students to overcome the blocks and barriers to learning as they arise. Another lecturer might develop an approachability over time, so that students feel comfortable sharing their weaknesses and worries. The emergent clarity about the order in which to present ideas and the extent to which students participate in finding out for themselves, results from such capacities being exercised habitually. Judgements are made about the creative use of physical spaces and resources, of social roles and relationships and of symbolic resources particular to the disciplinary context. An experienced teacher may develop the ability to discern these and blend them so as to meet particular student needs in a variety of contexts. These are all just examples of qualities that can be developed in the course of pedagogic practice and each specific context will give rise to different ones. The objectives differ, as do the contexts. Such qualities would build up to constitute, for the lecturer, a level of practical wisdom or prudence to understand what the students need in order to flourish and act judiciously in a variety of rapidly changing circumstances.

Qualities that students could develop can also be outlined, in each particular context and for each particular discipline. Examples may be: a disposition to work together collaboratively; the confidence to engage in critical dialogue; the courage to eventually be able to critique the pedagogic authority and

attain a level of independence; the ability to reformulate knowledge gained; and the courage to use it to follow one's own trajectory in life. These are all possible examples of qualities that students could develop through a virtues-based approach to curriculum. They may be thought of as the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom about the practice of learning as a student.

Such qualities take time to form and strengthen and need to be practised regularly. Students can be enabled to experience situations where their capacities are exercised. Such a curriculum can be articulated as a set of experiences rather than lists of facts fitted around some tightly articulated learning objectives chosen for their convenience as measureable metrics for managerial purposes (Broadbent 2007).

Structures that facilitate pedagogy in its richness and complexity are needed, while those already in existence must be protected. What are the structures that will develop the virtue of friendly comradeship amongst our students? What are the pedagogic techniques? The spaces? The discourses? Which of the needs of our students are not being met by the current situation and what are we and they to do about it? What are the barriers to our being able to carry out our teaching roles? Effective pedagogy in current contexts needs structures that will nurture it. But the atmosphere of marketization and performativity prevalent in higher education in England is not conducive to building such structures. The next section is about possible ways to approaching agential change.

A possible way forward.

Critical Realism offers a number of ways of approaching emancipatory agential change. The Transformative Model for Social Action (Bhaskar 1993) outlines one way of analysing the situation and making changes. The

Capability Approach, used within a Critical Realist framework (Tao 2013, Bhaskar 2016), is another. Archer's morphogenetic approach to structure-agency interactions (Archer 1998, 2007b, 2010) has proved particularly useful as an analytical approach to pedagogical projects in England (Sharar 2016). This is because of its clear analytical separation between social structures and agency which allows a study of the interplay between structures and agency. In refusing to conflate structures and agency Archer allows a study of the precise interactions between the activities of rational human beings, to actualise their potential, and the constraining or enabling structures in which they find themselves. In the following section a possible approach is outlined and illustrated with the anonymised accounts of my research participants (Sharar 2016), who were lecturers working in higher education in England.

First the particular qualities needed by students and lecturers have to be identified in order to be able to scope such pedagogical projects. This involves a break from a passive acceptance of the situation as a TINA (There is no alternative) formation, and engaging instead in a reflexive analysis of what is going on. As Archer puts it:

> Reflexivity depends upon a subject who has sufficient personal identity to know what he or she cares about and to design the 'projects' that they hope (fallibly) will realise their concerns within society. Equally, it depends upon the objectivity of their social circumstances which, under their own (fallible) descriptions, will encourage them to follow one course of action rather than another. Deliberation consists in people evaluating their situations in the light of their concerns and evaluating their projects (Archer 2007a, 34).

This is what teacher educator Ann did when faced with diminishing resources. Here Ann explains the qualities her students could develop:

… not just subject knowledge, it is not all in the head but approaches, attitudes, values need to be got right at the very beginning … my concentration is on the process rather than the actual tasks for which there is in fact no right or wrong way … all this about learning aims is less important than for the students to learn how Ann cited in Sharar (2016, 136).

Nicola says that Geology students:

… collect information and share it…. do the far more abstract thinking, linking together, synthesising information, bringing it into the big picture…. Need to be collaborating at key points for . . . hypothesis generation… and develop… a whole set of different reflective learning processes Nicola cited in Sharar (2016, 95).

Sam suggests that in sociology:

…one of the problems is going to be for students to work out what the line is, and what can you be critical about and what you can't be critical about, what counts as critical and what doesn't. Sam cited in Sharar (2016, 110).

Jim considers the different practices the law students should develop:

…So you would not be trying to persuade a jury. . . . A different set of skills are required for that. . . . You are trying to argue the finer points of law with a judge and against opposition. Jim cited in Sharar (2016, 148).

The analysis also covers faculty. Margaret considers a range of qualities that lecturers in Zoology must learn saying:

…if you are a PhD student or a post-doc, you know a lot about one subject but have you had the experience . . . when you're at the university you are rubbing shoulders with people from different disciplines all the time so you are challenged. You should have a broad view even if you don't agree. But have you got that at the teaching level? No it takes time . . . you acquire these skills. . . . You don't have them to start with. Margaret cited in Sharar (2016, 182).

Furthermore, in setting tasks for students Margaret elaborates further:

> …you have to decide on a question, furnish it with reading material. It is highly contextual. What for? What's the purpose? I mean you ask a question, it's not the only question you can ask. It's certainly not comprehensive, so what's the point? What does that particular question elicit? It's got to be broad and also detailed. It's got to be answerable in five or six or ten different ways by the students. Margaret cited in Sharar (2016, 183).

These accounts illustrate the richness and depth of pedagogy in universities. They also illustrate the impossibility of attempting to reduce it to metrics. The qualities needed for both students and lecturers, once analysed, clarify the approaches to pedagogy needed. Reflecting on what is currently absent in the context one in which one is trying to work highlights what might be done in specific situations.

The second step is an analysis of morphogenesis in the interaction between structures constraining such pedagogy and lecturers' agency. The structures within which humans find ourselves are constantly shifting. Constraining and enabling structures can be identified as well as the mechanisms that are generating them. This step involves paying attention to specific disciplinary and contextual considerations. In this Archer's definition of reflexivity as: *'an individual reflecting about herself in relation to her circumstances and vice versa'. (Archer 2007a, 58)* is realised.

As an example of a constraint facing him Sam points out:

> The pressure is now, something that I try to resist…for providing students with a lot of information for what a good answer would be, what this question is asking for . . . writing outlines for the students of what would be a good answer. . . . And the reason I've resisted it is because it gets to the point where there's no point in having the assignment really Sam cited in Sharar (2016, 112).

Third, reflexive deliberation is needed throughout the life of the project. Lecturers engage in looking out for possibilities to make changes to the

structures themselves. Through the process of making changes within the bounds of real possibilities, people change themselves and those around them in ways that develop more opportunities. The changes made to themselves in the process constitute new personal properties which they can bring to bear upon new situations in the new structural environment (Archer 2007a) . Whenever this is done these properties interact with the structures around the agent finds herself equipped with personal emergent powers which are comparable with MacIntyre's (2007, 191) *'acquired human qualities'* which can enhance her agency. This stage involves an analysis of possible openings in existing constraining structures for things to be changed through action; what can be realistically changed; and what new pedagogical possibilities could be created as a result? Fourth, action is taken on the basis of such an analysis and the new situation analysed again both during the action and after it.

Taking advantage of the new technology structures they were asked to use, Jim and a colleague turned it to their advantage:

> Susan and I did a video . . . about how not to present . . . and we . . . simply got a script which was dire . . . true to life . . . we did ten minutes . . . literally . . . took a film of ourselves fidgeting . . . picking at our nails . . . rattling jewellery . . . going' . . . uhmmm . . .'. Ten minutes . . . and it turned out to be a real hit with students. . . . I mean it really made a difference. Jim cited in (Sharar 2016, 149).

Nicola developed a project which:

> ….actually fitted with those, ticking the boxes nicely because it's what [University X] wants to do, they want to innovate, they want to move things forward. It also ticked another box, that they were worried about the cost of residentials and field-trips. I played that card (Sharar 2016, 98).

In each case, a space is found within the existing structures to unlock the potential for new pedagogical activities. In the course of creating such spaces, the constraining structures themselves can be changed and far from simply acting superficially in order to run after scores, faculty has the possibility of exercising some of the qualities that will allow them to develop the particular practical wisdom or Aristotelian virtue of prudence involved in teaching in the varied and fast changing landscape that exists in higher education in England.

In conclusion, in a marketized higher education sector, where faculty are under pressure of performativity regimes, many feel stuck within a TINA formation. However, rather than allowing themselves to be passive agents, it is possible for them to take an Aristotelian virtue ethics approach to develop the qualities needed to carry through pedagogical aspirations. Such strategies involve an active and careful reflexive analysis of the structures that constrain, seeking potential spaces within existing structures which can be opened out further by action and structural elaboration. In this way it is possible to start to actualize the potential in pedagogical interactions in ways that could create new structures and new possibilities.

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