

**"TALKING BACK" ABOUT LECTURES:
A PLEA FOR LECTURES AS TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENTS**

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Abstract

There is an orthodoxy abroad in higher education that lectures are poor educational practices because they position students as passive learners. The corollary of this is to extol the virtues of other student-centred pedagogies which are portrayed as solving the (teacher's) problem of getting active and deep learning in students. In this paper I want to argue that this reasoning, which seems to rest on the presumption that students are passive unless teachers make them "do" otherwise, is founded on an inadequate theorising of pedagogy. I make three challenges to this: the first is a critique of the model of pedagogy implicit in this orthodoxy. The second is to point out that lecturing like all forms of higher education pedagogies is a paradoxically disciplinary technique which produces passivity in students at the same time as other more desirable effects. The third suggests that the lecture, rather than being a form of teacher abuse of students, is a performative pedagogy which has some transformative possibilities in its particular pleasures. I conclude from this that there is no utopian space of endless deep learning beyond lectures and, more seriously, we cannot be certain of the educational effects of abolishing them. Finally I explore some possibilities for academic developers, suggesting that we have an ethical responsibility to promote theorisations of university pedagogies which acknowledge their formative and transformative potential.

Introduction: A problematic orthodoxy

"Teaching space is still dedicated to the medieval idea of students sitting at your feet... Room design - podium, lectern etc. - emphasises the dominant role of the lecturer as disseminator of authoritative knowledge, with the student as passive recipient rather than shaper and part-producer of knowledge". (*THES*, Oct. 03, 1997, "Good Teaching Guide", p. 111)

"Myth 2: The lecture is, all considered, the standard and most effective teaching method in higher education: ... Exceptional lecturers there may be who can carry it off, but the rule that this exception proves is that the majority of lectures not only encourage but demand passivity among students..." (op cit., p. VIII)

In spite of abundant evidence to support the relative effectiveness of lectures (see for instance Blich, 1972; Brown, 1990; McKeachie, 1994; Nilson, 1998), there is currently a problematic orthodoxy abroad that they are poor educational practices. This "common-sense" view is not confined to the popular press but is also found in authoritative texts on teaching adults and in higher education. For instance, in her summary of instructional methods, Patricia Cranton (1989) lists the lecture as "instructor-centred" and states that in the lecture "students are passive" (p. 90). In what follows I present a challenge to this orthodoxy which has three aspects: first, to the implicit theorisation of pedagogy which underpins it; second, to the idea that some (other) pedagogies are innocent of producing passivity in students; third, to the

charge that lectures have no pedagogical merit. This is followed by an exploration of some possibilities arising from this critique for academic developers. My defence of lectures is not grounded on a desire for things to stay the same but rather on a necessary deconstructive critique (Leitch, 1986) of institutional values, arrangements and practices which asks that we transform the institution from within by rearranging existing practices, by adopting an "intractable gaiety" (op cit., citing Derrida, p. 47) towards that which we are critical of. This critique is offered in that spirit.

**Reclaiming the student/teacher relationship:
The first challenge - pedagogy as relations of power**

A fundamental flaw in this thinking is the premise of a simple binary relationship which opposes teacher-centred and student-centred practices in university pedagogy. In this thinking, the teacher's privileged but problematic position as authoritative knower/actor can be rectified by simply giving the student that position:

"Many lecturers are refusing to budge in the face of pressure to step down from the podium and embrace innovative teaching methods that hand authority back to the students".
(*THES*, Oct. 24, 1997, p. 8)

Yet this simplification risks making a nonsense of a university education. We cannot overlook a proper transmissive aspect of university pedagogy. Universities are cultural storehouses of accumulated learning about the world and students who come to them rightly expect those riches to be shared. Stephen Draper (1994) argues that "[a]cademic knowledge is primarily knowledge of descriptions [with a] secondary level of personal action and experience which needs to be learned and related in good education" (p. 8). Likewise, Laurillard (1993) points out that higher education is concerned with descriptions of the world. At the same time, both acknowledge that teachers cannot guarantee that the knowledge taught will be known by the students in exactly the same way. Knowledge is potentially, and potently, transformed through pedagogy.

I want now to offer another way to theorise educational practices than as a cycle with two stages - what the teacher thinks and does and what the student thinks and does - which is implied in the teacher-/student-centred binary. This model of pedagogy, based on David Lusted's work (1986), is a relational or transactional one which has the following aspects and implications for rethinking how we understand and talk about educational practices.

First, pedagogy refers to the *productive relations* between three active, changing and changeable agencies - teacher, student and knowledge. The relations between teacher and student in particular are power relations which are unpredictable in their effects because of the workings of social factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, language, class, sexuality, religion and so on - in fact all the social categories that figure in social life to structure uneven power relations between individuals and groups of people, as well as so-called personal qualities like "confidence, commitment and energy which are more often symptoms of the social differences" (op cit., p. 6). These effects are always disciplinary in part, for both teacher and student.

Second, what *is* produced by these productive relations? Knowledge is, for one thing - through processes of thought, discussion, writing, debate, exchange, listening, struggle with difficult ideas, fleeting engagements with disruptive ideas (op cit., p. 4), it is produced by transforming both students' and teacher's consciousnesses. For this reason, there is a kind of equality in the relations between teacher and student at the moments of interaction in knowledge exchange because "[k]nowledge is not the matter that is offered so much as the matter that is understood" (op cit., p.4). While there is a transmissive or reproductive aspect to pedagogy, there is also, for good and ill, a serendipitous element. A further productive effect of pedagogy, which Lusted does not deal with but which is important for my argument, is the ethical one: in pedagogy the subjectivities of the teacher and student are formed and transformed through power relations in which social structures and expectations, and personal desires, play out. Teacher and student discipline each other to be who they are as academic subjects.

Third, because of its relational nature how one teaches, what is being taught and how one learns are regarded as inseparable. Thus the conceptual division between content and process, which persistently closes down possibilities to get academics to rethink their teaching practices, is dissolved. Where content is privileged over process, as it usually is in academic life, we find overly transmissive practices which aim to cover as much content as possible regardless of effects of intellectual indigestion in students. Yet a simple binary inversion whereby process replaces content is simplistic:

"the focus of university teaching is shifting away from the corpus of knowledge in favour of the process of learning. And that means the lecture can no longer be the central plank of university study". (*THES*, Oct. 24, 1997, p. 8)

Such a "logical" move undervalues the knowledge as well as the teacher. What we need instead is to learn how to think content *and* process, in tension with one another, but mutually fruitful.

Following this model, it makes no sense to separate teaching and learning as objects of enquiry nor to frame educational practices as either teaching-centred or student-centred. We might instead talk of pedagogy-centred practices, that is ones which foreground and maximise the transformative relations of production and exchange between lecturers and students. It is clear, too, that pedagogy requires teachers: the "excising" of the teacher from pedagogy means not only the withdrawal of the teacher's body (although this by no means equals teacherless pedagogy) but risks a loss of the teacher's pedagogical responsibility to form relations with students which incite and inspire them to learn. A hidden danger of student-centred learning is that it provides a new excuse (of the sort which higher education has been riddled with) for blaming students entirely for their failure to learn. Just as problematically, student-centred pedagogies (taken to their logical conclusion) may invite students to get locked into their own world views, "not going beyond what they come to know 'naturally', unaided, as if they could be the original source of their knowledge" (McWilliam & Morgan, 1994, p. 118). And if, as is often suggested, these pedagogies are group-based, in the absence of the teacher they are vulnerable to student-student relations of power:

There's one lecturer ... trying a new approach where you have the students actually participating in the lecture instead of the lecturer standing there just lecturing... he has workshops where he gets all the students together in... groups of 3s and 4s... and gets them to

talk about the topic.... With discussions like that, it always tends to be one person, who's got a loud voice and opinion, taking over. There was three guys... and a woman, she was Chinese... but one of [the guys] was very, very vocal and he would have his opinion and it would be said in a loud voice ...

(30 year old Tongan male, first year, Arts)³

In this story we see the unintended and surely unwanted effects of a lecturer putting group work into play in a lecture theatre. Wider social relations emerge among the students who are not all equal in some very important ways and whose differences will affect their pedagogical relations. What's more, in the absence of the knowing teacher, some students are willing to fill the vacancy!

Producing docile subjects:

The second challenge - educational practices as always/already disciplining

Implicit in this orthodoxy is a problematic view in which students are understood to be passive unless visibly doing something which the teacher requires them to do. At least two uncontroversial challenges can be made: first, students frequently are active in lectures - taking notes. As well, they are often invisibly active in a sense that is vital to a university education - thinking about, even "talking back" to, the lecturer's ideas as they listen. Second, students who obediently carry out requirements which are apparently centred around their learning needs may be more passive than those who, while sitting still in the lecture, are thinking rebelliously about what the lecturer is saying.

It is fair to say, though, that students are positioned physically in lectures in a particularly obedient way: both held in the vision of the lecturer by the architecture of the site, and to the lecture by its connection with what counts as valuable (examinable) knowledge:

[The lecturing in one paper] started off really well but near the end it was just really terrible and lots of people stopped turning up to it... they were just trying to fill in time... none of it was relevant at all to the exam... I still went thinking that I'd probably miss out on something. [laughs]

(18 year old pakeha woman, first year, Arts)

This is one of the difficult contradictions of university education: the simultaneous production of the student as a docile body and an independent critical thinker. We can see this contradiction more clearly if we contrast our current practices with those of a medieval lecture:

"Here come the bands of idlers that the town has sent us; their arrival is heralded by the clatter of their hob-nailed pattens. They come in and open ears as intelligent as those with which Marsyas listened to Apollo. They are annoyed at not having seen notices of the classes posted up at the street corners, ... furious that the lesson is not being devoted to Alexandre's *Doctrinal...*, and shocked by a master who does not read out of a bulky book loaded with marginal glosses (they are wedded to tradition and suspicious of the new methods of humanist masters). They get up and go off in an uproar..." (Buchanan cited in Aries, 1962, p. 168)

³ All student quotes come from a qualitative research project in which I explored the experiences of first year Arts students at the University of Auckland (Grant, 1993).

While the modern scene of orderly bodies, ranked and serried, is a far cry from the ribald, rip-roaring studentry of this earlier time, to even a casual observer there is a Breughel-like quality in most large lecture classes - students clean their nails, sleep, arrive late, doodle, take notes, eat, play noughts and crosses, flirt with the person next to them, do other class-work, leave early, write on the desks, talk, imitate the lecturer's peccadilloes, read the student newspaper, write letters, throw darts, even occasionally, it is said, have sex. They may be present in body, row upon row, but at the same time, in their bodies, some are evading and resisting the discipline of the lecture.

If all modern pedagogical practices are fundamentally disciplinary, in some sense rendering students docile, passive and unfree, then student-centred learning is no less a practice of governmentality than lectures are. While an absence of the physical body of the lecturer gives an illusion of the withdrawal of their power and authority, and certainly the sense of a pedagogical relation becomes increasingly fragile, in so-called student-centred pedagogies there is not necessarily a greater freedom and authority for the students. Instead of being governed by the lecturer's gaze, they are merely governing themselves, to the institution's ends. Likewise practices such as self-assessment can be seen as new technologies through which students are increasingly controlled (Rowland, 1997). This is the project of modern power: subjects who govern themselves for some other's ends, all the while believing themselves to be free (Foucault, 1986). Problematically, higher education in many ways drives this project. But abandoning lectures is not the solution to this contradiction. For, while they are disciplined by lectures, students also experience some powerful pedagogical moments there. Let us turn to an analysis of what some of these moments might be.

Inflaming passions, engaging desires:

The third challenge - some pedagogical possibilities of lectures

"Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awake their curiosity. It is enough to open their minds, do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire." (Anatole France)

The "mystery" of the persistence of the lecture has been noted (Ling & Baldwin, 1992/3, p. 1). What are the pedagogical reasons to support the continuation of this medieval practice. What are its particular pedagogical possibilities? Baldwin (op cit., p. 2) mentions the synthesis of a wide range of material, analysis, critique and explanation which is responsive to a particular audience, the provision of a model of intellectual discourse, of sustained argument, of commitment to and excitement for the discipline, a "potent stimulus" to thought. I want to take up some of these ideas, adding others from some new theories of pedagogy.

Before I proceed, a caution: we are not dealing here with the reliable outcomes of lectures. Indeed, we cannot. In theorising pedagogies as productive relations, an element of unpredictability enters every scene of pedagogy. Thus lectures produce multiple effects (as most research which explores teachers' and students' perceptions of pedagogy shows - see for instance Hodgson's study of lectures reported below), *some of which are transformative*. From stories told, lectures have the power to excite and move:

I sit in the shabby, student-stained auditorium and the pleasure of the unfolding narrative fills me. As he [the lecturer] talks, his body is quite still although there is an easy intentness about him. His voice comes in and out of loudness because his mouth moves close then away from

the microphone as he looks up and down from his notes. For a while this preoccupies me. I'm annoyed by it. But slowly the power of his narrative captures me, and I feel myself leaning forward to stay with his line of thought. He talks to us/me as 'four/my listening counts - now, later, I wonder how did he do this? Was it in the way he broke his train of speech every so often and did the "now listen to this because it will be important to a later stage of the is argument thing? Was it in the attention to pace and explanation? The choice of illustrations, a jumble of Marilyn Monroe, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King Jnr., (someone) Gillette and Henry Ford? Was it his apparent warmth, modesty, clarity? Was it the way in which he dealt with the questions from the young dogs at the end? They were confrontational and edgy as usual yet he answered appreciatively ("that was a really good question,"), clearly and, thank god, briefly. (So often the question part becomes an alienating display of power/knowledge between lecturer and young dog, or visiting lecturer and home lecturer.)

It was over too soon, and when I stood up to go I wasn't ready for it to be finished. Hesitating in the aisle, mid-way between door and podium, I gathered up my courage to approach him. What moved me to do this, in spite of the familiar adrenalised feelings of apprehension, the feeling of presumption? Partly the desire to tell him how much I enjoyed the lecture - I know how I feel when students tell me this - partly the desire to be known to him, to stand out from the crowd and be recognised as an individual, and partly a desire to finish it in some way to close what had felt like an intensely personal interaction by talking to him... (40-something year old pakeha woman teacher/PhD student)

What do these experiences mean? How do they work on us? How are they significant for lectures-as-pedagogy?

Laying out the body of knowledge

At one level the lecture is a kind of ritual: a place and time where the lecturer uncovers a body of knowledge for the students to gaze upon. In showing the students her relations with the knowledge the lecturer invites them to share those relations. For some it may be almost a sacred ritual where, sermon-like, the word of the lecturer as high priest compels a contemplative listening. For others, a ritual of commerce, a place where the lecturer as hawker shows her goods, displaying them as invitingly as possible, while the student sizes them up ("Will this be in the exam?"). Or a feast, at which the body of the lecturer's knowledge is consumed by the students. The pedagogical possibility of the sermon, the selling or the feast is that the students will become as interested in this disciplined way of knowing about the world as the lecturer is. The lecturer's part is to convince and persuade, awe and terrify, incite and seduce the students with the knowledge and her authoritative knowing. This experience may be both deeply pleasurable and transformative:

"My entire stay there might have been time lost if it hadn't been for... a brilliant teacher ... who was in love with information. I will always believe that her love of teaching came not so much from her liking for students but from her desire to make sure that some of the things she knew would find repositories so they could be shared again" (Maya Angelou cited in McWilliam, 1996, p. 376)

On a more mundane level, as a map to guide discernment of the key issues within a body of literature, the lecture comes into its own. But, the content is not the end of the story.

"Doing" academic, doing teacher and student

Another powerful possibility of the lecture is the effects on the student of the lecturer "doing" academic before their eyes (and thus requiring, sometimes inspiring, them to "do" student in particular ways): synthesising material from various sources, laying out a sustained argument perhaps, and so on - as Baldwin so well outlines. In trying to understand these possibilities, and the ongoing sense of lack he experiences as a lecturer, Arthur Frank (1995) gives a psychoanalytically-influenced reading of them as a site where the "undercover work" of transferences⁴ between teacher and student may build and resolve. Let us look at what he means by this.

Frank sees the lecture is a multi-layered performance for which the content of the lecture is merely a pretext which necessarily (because of the rationalist nature of academic discourse) conceals the significance of the body of the lecturer. For the students, the access to the person of the lecturer is important because it is "an entity held to be of value" (Goffman, cited in Frank, *op cit.*, p.29). In this view, the lecture is a pedagogical ritual centred on the value of the lecturer's physical presence. What are the productive possibilities is such a ritual?

Over a series of exposures, argues Frank, such as you would experience in a lecture-based course taught by one lecturer, there is the possibility for transferences to build and resolve.⁵ His argument turns on the assertion that a central goal of a moral (higher) education is to find "a proper relation to authorities; a relation that is neither a transference fantasy nor a resistance to any transference" (*op cit.*, p. 33). What has to be modelled through the lecture (because it cannot be taught) is "how to handle oneself in the matter of one's own claims to position" (citing Goffman, *op cit.*, p. 34), the position of the subject-presumed-to-know. Transference occurs because the teacher "by mindfully displaying [the] limits [of any position] and providing openings for students to understand that what they want from the subject-presumed-to-know -this lecturer, you and me - is a fantasy that comes from themselves" (p.34) pushes the students to move on from this fantasy. Resolving the fantasy allows the student to move on, to let the teacher be other, even to be able to make use of her as a teacher.

I think Frank's onto something really important here - what universities strive to produce in academic subjectivities is the subject-presumed-to-know. How to "do" (act as) this subject is not only a central ethical question for academics in their own lives but must also be one for their pedagogies. This is because pedagogical practices are complicit in the formation of student subjectivities who should be in a proper relation with authorities (neither in awe of them nor in combat with them simply because they are authorities). In the lecture, through the relation that the lecturer potentially establishes *but does not satisfy* with each student, the lecturer assists the student develop a sense of themselves as academic subjects who can come to know the world in the ways the lecturers do. Furthermore, students' angst and

⁴ Transference is a term from psychoanalysis which describes a process central to the successful therapeutic relationship. Frank is appropriating it for pedagogy and so transference-in-pedagogy might be understood in this way: as the displacement on to the teacher of feelings, ideas and expectations which derive from the student's past relationships with authority figures. In the teacher's detachment and refusal to play along with those expectations, she may assist the student in becoming conscious of them and working through them.

⁵ An argument against team-teaching?

dissatisfaction with lectures is in some way central to their effectiveness as occasions for transference. If lectures were deeply satisfying, why would the student move on? It is the frustrating aspects of the lecture (i.e. that the student cannot make personal contact with the lecturer) which ultimately push the student to "get over" the lecturer.

The lecture is not only the transference scene of doing and becoming academic but is also one where pedagogical relations are enacted publicly. Through them the identities, or subjectivities, of teacher and student are mutually formed and transformed. What Judith Butler says of gender identities can, less radically, be said of pedagogical ones:

"[they] are *performative* in the sense that the identity that they ... express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means".
(Butler, 1990, p. 136, original emphasis)

In performing pedagogy, the identities "teacher" and "student" are enacted and re-enacted repetitively in stylised, historically contingent ways. The corporeal signs are those given consciously and unconsciously by their bodies: as teachers, we may become aware of them in the moments as we walk to the lecture theatre, preparing (steeling?) ourselves, gathering up a coherent persona so there is something solid for the students to gaze upon, rehearsing our opening lines, even our opening moves.

Because of the instability of these identities, pedagogy is marked by desires for both the teacher and the student: incipient anxiety for being found out as less than the good teacher or student, as well as the incipient pleasures of being found to be good, and of enjoying the pedagogical relations which play out there:

I really enjoy going to lectures and just listening... I'd love to just do that and not have to do the essays cause I really find it interesting but I just hate the bits that go with it.
(18 year old pakeha woman, first year, Arts)

The insertion of the desiring and performing bodies of teacher and student in theorising pedagogy is productive. bell hooks (1994), for instance, says that through "change, invention [and] spontaneous shifts" (p. 11), teaching can mobilise excitement and pleasure in students; likewise Erika McWilliam (1996) argues that "desire may be understood as an embodied force which must be cultivated and mobilised" (p. 373) in pedagogies. For McWilliam, the teacher's desires are as important as the students' because "a possible outcome of the desiring teacher's body ... is powerful pedagogy of a most elating and transformative kind." (op cit., p. 374).⁶

What we see here is a volatile landscape where lectures are scenes of necessary and productive frustrations and pleasures played out through performances of the unstable identities of teacher, student and academic.

⁶ In mainstream academic development discourse we see lecturers talking about their teaching in ways which echo this - for example Sue Campbell (Monash video on lecturing) talks about establishing the right relationship with students and Jane Stein-Parbury (UTS video on lecturing) about wanting students to love the subject as she does

World disclosing

Latent in both possibilities described above is another unpredictable yet transformative effect of lectures: that in the laying out of the body of knowledge, or the “doing” of pedagogical identities, or a combination of both (the unique possibility of lectures perhaps), a new world will be disclosed to either student or teacher:

Professor LeRoy Cooley taught Chemistry and Physics in crystal-clear lectures: his favourite word was “accurate” which he pronounced “ackerate”, and I have loved, though by no means always attained “ackeracy” ever since. Particularly delightful was quantitative analysis, with the excitement of adding up the percentages of the different ingredients in the hope that their sum might approach one hundred...

(Mary Floy Washburn, cited in McWilliam, 1996, p. 375)

For the student, the world disclosed may be that of the lecturer, or some different world which is sparked inadvertently by association. In such transformative experiences there is much pleasure and excitement, and because of them, sometimes we make commitments which thereafter shape the direction of our lives. The power relations invoked at the such moments have, as Lusted says, a kind of equality because both student and lecturer are in pursuit of understanding.

Vivien Hodgkin’s (1997) work on students’ vicarious experience of relevance in lectures is suggestive of these possibilities. She found that some students either took over the lecturers’ perceived interest or enthusiasm for the content of the lecture or the lecturer, in giving an example or description from their experience, provided a point of identification for the student who could then “see the content of the lecture as having meaning in the real world” (p. 171). Without in any way theorising it, Hodgson points to a similar potentiality in lectures.

These multiple and uncertain possibilities for inflaming students’ passions and engaging their desires are always present in lecturing *because* of the power relations at play. Michel Foucault has remarked: “There’s so much pleasure in giving orders: there’s also pleasure in taking them. This pleasure of power - well, there’s a topic for study” (1976, p. 55). The same can be said for the pleasures of giving and receiving lectures. But, problematically for teachers in particular, power relations produce multiple effects in their subjects, none of which can be guaranteed. Yet we need to anticipate the consequences of our pedagogies and try to be responsible for them, for some are crucial for the students’ learning in various ways: for coming to see the world differently, for coming to love and commit themselves to the pursuit of knowing the world more deeply, for coming to be particular kinds of (university-educated) subjects.

Possibilities for academic developers

While I acknowledge the problem of talking about the multiple possibilities of pedagogy in an era committed to accountability and predictable outcomes, it is important for academic developers to engage critically with both traditional and contemporary discourses of higher education. Particularly problematic are those that produce an illusion that when we find the right techniques all students will learn what we want them to. Below I offer some possibilities for academic developers that flow out of my critique.

Theoretical possibilities

Applying a relational theory of pedagogy to our work with academics is one powerful possibility. Thus academic development is a form of pedagogical power relations which, at the moment of their being performed, produce staff developer as teacher and academic as student. This may help us to understand the resistances of some academics to staff development (their dislike of being positioned as the student-who-does-not-know, for instance); it may also help us to focus on the goal of *together* producing knowledge about better pedagogies for particular disciplines. Further, we might attempt to do with academics-as-students what we would challenge them to do with their students: to turn them on to pedagogy in a way that secures their attention to it, maybe even their love for it. We are perhaps more likely to achieve this if we take a less instrumental approach to pedagogy than that which raises its head when we think "competence" and "excellence". Maybe it's partly our fault if teaching is undervalued in the academy when we keep pitching it as *only* a bagful of skills and common-sense understandings.

Further, when considering pedagogies, a relational model enables us to think outside the theoretical bind of mutually exclusive teacher-centred or student-centred practices towards a notion of pedagogy-centred practices, that is diverse pedagogies where multiple relations can and do happen between teacher, student and knowledge. A central question becomes how can teachers have productive pedagogical relations with students *in* lectures and *in any other* pedagogical forms? How can we recast the lecture as an untidy scene of academic learning - rather than the orderly ranks of temporarily stabilised identities of teacher-as-speaker and student-as-listener - and as a place where pedagogical relations flourish with all that attends them, excitement, uncertainty, passion, disappointment, curiosity, anger, frustration, ambition, power, talking back and so on.

Lastly, because asking these kinds of questions poses challenges for new ways of thinking about how to "do" teacher as lecturer, we need discourses of academic work which offer new subject positions for academics, ones that positively include the idea of "teacher". Because of their instability, pedagogical identities are always open to disruption; re-theorising pedagogy may orient academic development practices towards interrupting and reconfiguring the performances of teacher/student that constitute university pedagogies.

Practical possibilities⁷

"What we [students] want is someone who can grab our attention, who wants to be there". (*THES*, Mar 13, 1996).

One practical matter is what we constitute as valuable knowledge in our interactions with academics over their teaching. Rather than focusing on tips for teaching, for instance, it might be more productive to promote an examination of their/our values, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and ethics about pedagogy. Sheffield's study of lecturers and their students showed that "attitudes towards students and teaching are more important than methods and technique" (cited in Hodgson, 1997, pp. 160-161) but suggested little is known about how attitudes are formed and even less about how they might be changed. Yet central to the ethical dimension of pedagogical relations, that is their role in the production of student subjects, is the matter of the kind of relations teachers work to form with their students and between their students and

⁷ Because practices are not reliable in their effects, this section cannot be read prescriptively

the knowledge. The teacher's regard for her students is clearly crucial to these relations, as is her regard for her material and for the activity of doing lectures. This matter of attitudes is a puzzle for academic development, warranting further exploration. It is one where pedagogies which do not privilege the rational or the technical might be useful, for example narratives, visualisations, drama, role plays and case studies which highlight central issues and problems, as well as multiple ways to address them. Through these pedagogies we might assist academics in exploring the kinds of teachers they want to be and ways they can be these kinds of teachers within (and against perhaps) the constraints of their institution and the wider culture.

Another practical possibility following on from this is to encourage teachers to add creative practices to the scene of the lecture, to teach them, for instance, the art of pedagogical seduction. If they say (in the traditional discourse of higher education) it is the students' responsibility to learn, then we might answer back (both agreeing and disagreeing) that it is also their responsibility to incite and seduce their students *to want to learn* and that the lecture is just the place to do this. If we want to think about a pedagogy-centred lecture, what might this look like? What practices can we add to the scene of the lecture? One study (Ruhl, Hughes, & Schloss, 1987) of the effects of pausing at regular intervals during lectures to give students time to rework their notes together showed that there were long-term effects on students' retention of the lecture material. Such pedagogy-centred lectures may be untidy, more difficult to control, less intent on covering the content, less "ideal".

What we also need is ways to talk about these practices that excite academics to try new ways of doing them where otherwise they resist.⁸ This may mean taking up new ways of "teaching" lecturing skills, for example employing drama teachers to assist some academics find ways they enjoy to "do" teacher. While there are criticisms of the superficiality of such approaches (and the suggestion that students are easily duped) I suggest another reading of this: if such practices make students more interested in learning then they are justifiable, given that this (the theatrical) is one of the unique productive possibilities of the lecture.

Finally, if pedagogy is relational, it makes sense to find ways to teach it with academics and students. For instance, in most institutions there are students with particular responsibilities (such as class representatives, graduate teaching assistants, academic assistance tutors) who would potentially make good participants in academic development.

Conclusions

Let us not join in unthinking calls for abandoning lectures or any so-called teacher-centred pedagogies on the one hand, problems will inevitably attend alternative pedagogies and, on the other, we may lose some unique pedagogical possibilities. This viewpoint is underpinned by an ambivalent stance towards academic development because of its complicity in some of the contradictions within university pedagogy. University pedagogy, including academic development, is troubling work in that it delivers much that we, the teachers, cannot control, including social inequalities which are perpetuated in our classrooms and in educational outcomes. At the same time we must squarely face the unpredictable ethical potential of *our*

⁸ I make this comment because it is notable that in spite of good information about how to do lectures better (Brown & Atkins, 1990; McKeachie, 1994; Nilson, 1998) there has been remarkably little insertion of it into everyday practices.

normative pedagogical work with academics, who in turn wreak normative effects in their students. With such uncertainty, Derrida's intractable gaiety is called for!

It will be clear by now that although in this paper I have addressed the so-called "problem" of lectures, my concern is more generally to do with an entrenched yet inadequate theorising of university pedagogies and the subsequent inclination to treat problems of teaching (and learning) performances in an instrumental and simplistic way. One version of this is the "if only we can get more, preferably mandatory, teaching training for university staff, then we will be able to solve this problem once and for all" position. We must consider whether or not it is the very way in which we reductively construe pedagogy as a set of teaching skills on the one hand and a set of learning skills on the other that is the "problem". Finally, a warning: while a little misguided orthodoxy may not have been an issue to date, because academic developers were widely ignored in universities, recent shifts in policy heralded by the Dearing Report in the UK, the West Report in Australia, maybe even the upcoming White Paper in NZ, as well as our increasing role in institutional policy making, indicate that we might be going to have our day. When we do, our simplicities and certainties become more dangerous.

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