

WILLIAM F. PINAR. *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching and Technology*. Oxford, Ottawa, Canada: University of Ottawa Press. (2019). 459 pp. \$49.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-776627-87-8)

Moving *Images of Eternity* catalogues the major ideas of George Grant, Canadian “political philosopher, nationalist, theologian, witness, and prophet” (p. 44). William Pinar’s book paints a complex picture of Grant. Pinar explores the important people, movements, and forces that influenced Grant’s teaching and writing. Pinar’s aim is to provide context for the ways Grant’s ideas – be they “philosophy, prophecy, political argument, [or]...social criticism” (p. 47) – were formed and how they were taken up by his students, his contemporaries, and in society more generally – especially in Canada. Pinar saw Grant as a “great gift” (p. 60) to scholarship and education. Far from being solely a collection of Grant’s ideas, this work is a “reactivation” (p. 43) of Grant.

The title of the book, *Moving Images of Eternity*, refers to one of Grant’s central philosophies: his conception that time had changed drastically from its earlier correlative. At one point, time was a “moving image of eternity” (p. 97) and facilitated – in keeping with Grant’s progressivist philosophies – an “emphasis on experience as education and learning through living” (p. 114). Grant feared that time was becoming “a totalizing process within which all events are subsumed” (p. 97). The book’s title serves as a reminder of Grant’s aspiration for his students and readers to reclaim time: to embrace experience and living as guides to “knowledge, thoughts, and action” (p. 362). After an introduction and a chapter explaining the rationale for the project, the book is divided into six sections, each detailing a major domain about which Grant wrote: technology, time, teaching, idolatry, attunement, and eternity. The book concludes with an epilogue that summarizes Grant’s overarching ideas.

Although the book grapples with many provocative ideas from Grant’s prolific career, the focus is on education, which Grant took as “the purpose of our existence” (p. 1). Pinar’s text describes Grant as an icon because the latter directs our attention “not only on but also beyond what is material” (p. 381). By reading Grant (or any great thinker) as an icon instead of an idol, one can

integrate their “account to one’s own signal, honed through one’s attentiveness, attunement, to the Good” (p. 381). By *Good*, Grant refers to “God” (p. 383) or to “the Whole, Eternity” (p. 383) or simply, “reality” (p. 394). This attentiveness and attunement were – according to Pinar – Grant’s idea of how his students or readers could honour and traverse movement from the “universal to the particular, from the eternal to the contingent” (p. 381), connecting tradition and community to themselves in personalized ways. *Attunement* refers to the bridge between the “abstract and the concrete” (p. 261) or from “particularity to universality” (p. 261). Attunement was a major facet of Grant’s teaching. Grant taught students that attunement could be achieved by a thinker who “decentres and waits, open – listening – to what lies beyond [material existence and technology]” (p. 261). Grant suggested that attending to one’s “knowledge, thoughts, and action” (p. 362) led to a kind of “subjective presence” (p. 11) that could help people grow into themselves. Grant’s educational philosophies rely on this movement (universal to particular; eternal to contingent), inviting us to use our experiences as a way to “‘recreate’ ourselves, [and] reconstruct what we have been conditioned to be” (p. 362).

Pinar also highlights the prominent role Grant played in shaping Canadian discourses around Anglo-Canadian nationalism – both as these discourses connect to the imperial influence of the United States and to the relationship between French and English Canada. Grant’s idea of nationalism had a lot to do with avoiding big business dominating the economic landscape. This concern overlapped with his problematizing of technology’s totalizing and homogenizing potential. Grant believed technology “enables communication through standardization” (p. 7). Although Grant saw new technologies as inevitable and perceived some of their benefits, he saw technology as responsible for many environmental and social ills, even “encapsulating our very capacity to think” (p. 386). Despite Grant’s pessimism about technology, he *did* seem to believe that the “individual may be redeemed... [even if] civilization... [could] not [be]” (as cited in Pinar, 2019, p. 388).

Pinar’s book is a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners, especially teachers and educational researchers, and not only those studying Grant. The book is written less in the style of a reference text, but with much of the content one may expect from a textbook. With extensive usage of notes, parenthetical comments, and dashes, Pinar’s “citation-centred” (p. 377) style of writing blends Grant’s thoughts with the ideas of various thinkers. Pinar sheds light on aspects of Grant that have “not been emphasized before” (p. 14), such as Grant’s critiques of teaching, time, and technology. This book explores much more, though; it includes ideas relevant to educational, political, philosophical, and spiritual practice and research. Pinar’s text provides an abundance of contextual information that grounds Grant’s thinking in Canada’s history, and in the ideas of thinkers inhabiting similar intellectual

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and spiritual worlds. Such a comprehensive rendering allows readers to understand Grant on their own terms, which — Pinar believes — was Grant's aspiration for how he saw education being meaningfully taken up: through each individual's own experience and perspective.

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REFERENCE

Pinar, W. (2019). *Moving images of eternity: George Grant's critique of time, teaching, and technology*. University of Ottawa Press.