
Review of William Pinar, *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology*

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Preview

William Pinar's 2019 book *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology* presents a much-needed and welcome addition to scholarship on one of Canada's most significant philosophers. Widely recognized as a major conservative thinker and public intellectual, George Grant (1918–1988) came to national prominence in Canada with the 1965 publication of *Lament for a Nation*, which argued that due to the twin effects of liberalism and technological dynamism, it was no longer possible for Canada to exist independent of the expanding American empire. ¹ This book and his other public engagement were so broadly received that he became a household name and the paradigm for a distinctly Canadian political term ("red tory").² Despite this, only a handful of monographs have been published on Grant, and Pinar's book is the first published after the completion of the *Collected Works of George Grant* in 2009. As a result, *Moving Images of Eternity* represents the first effort to make full use of the resources available in the *Collected Works* and to expand on them with the help of a modest body of secondary literature. Whereas previous scholarship depended on work available only at the National Archives or to intimates of Grant and his family, *Moving Images* takes a significant first step in public discussion of Grant using publicly available materials. *Moving Images* seeks to provide an account of Grant's understanding of education, teaching, and the curriculum, and to place that account in conversation with both secondary literature on Grant and a host of other scholars and thinkers working on the same or related issues. At 459 pages, *Moving Images* is a success in this regard, though it invites and requires further work, both elaborations of certain themes and rebuttals to some of Pinar's bolder claims. *Moving Images* proves an engaging read for those already quite familiar with Grant as it takes a new approach

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William Pinar's 2019 book *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology* presents a much-needed and welcome addition to scholarship on one of Canada's most significant philosophers. Widely recognized as a major conservative thinker and public intellectual, George Grant (1918–1988) came to national prominence in Canada with the 1965 publication of *Lament for a Nation*, which argued that due to the twin effects of liberalism and technological dynamism, it was no longer possible for Canada to exist independent of the expanding American empire.¹ This book and his other public engagement were so broadly received that he became a household name and the paradigm for a distinctly Canadian political term (“red tory”).² Despite this, only a handful of monographs have been published on Grant, and Pinar's book is the first published after the completion of the *Collected Works of George Grant* in 2009. As a result, *Moving Images of Eternity* represents the first effort to make full use of the resources available in the *Collected Works* and to expand on them with the help of a modest body of secondary literature. Whereas previous scholarship depended on work available only at the National Archives or to intimates of Grant and his family, *Moving Images* takes a significant first step in public discussion of Grant using publicly available materials. *Moving Images* seeks to provide an account of Grant's understanding of education, teaching, and the curriculum, and to place that account in conversation with both secondary literature on Grant and a host of other scholars and thinkers working on the same or related issues. At 459 pages, *Moving Images* is a success in this regard, though it invites and requires further work, both elaborations of certain themes and rebuttals to some of Pinar's bolder claims. *Moving Images* proves an engaging read for those already quite familiar with Grant as it takes a new approach to his corpus and makes a few bold, if contestable, claims along the way.

Above all else, the broad project of *Moving Images* is indeed a new approach for a monograph-length study of Grant. Despite Grant's enduring

¹ George Parkin Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).

² Gad Horowitz, “Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 32, no. 2 (May 1966): 159.

interest and emphasis on education and teaching, a detailed study of these themes in Grant's writings had yet to be undertaken. The handful of monographs published on Grant prior to Pinar's work cover a broad introduction to Grant's thought,³ his developing understanding of history,⁴ and his theology,⁵ each of which is excellent in its own right and makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of Grant's thought. Prior to *Moving Images*, however, there had been no extended treatment of Grant's discussion of education, a major lacuna given the evident importance of the issue to Grant.

The importance of teaching and education to Grant is plain even from the days of his youth. Grant came from a long line of educators (his father was the principal of Upper Canada College in Toronto and his grandfather was the principal of Queen's University in Kingston), and Grant turned to public education early in his career. As Pinar explains in useful detail, prior to his appointment at Dalhousie University, Grant took up a position with the now-defunct Canadian Association for Adult Education, leading a national dialogue through a series of radio programs and discussion groups scattered across the country.⁶ This was the first of many significant efforts Grant took toward truly *public* education (as opposed to education exclusively for those working or studying at universities). A number of years later, Grant came to national prominence through a number of radio lectures broadcast over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, including a series of lectures that were later published in 1959 as his first book, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*.⁷ Grant also affirmed his commitment to public education through his choice of publication: nearly everything he wrote was published in magazines geared toward a public readership and he generally eschewed academic journals. Furthermore, Grant's commitment to education was not simply practical but theoretical as well: works like "The University Curriculum"⁸ and "Faith and the Multiversity"⁹ testify to Grant's sustained reflection on what universities had become, what the purpose

³ H. D. Forbes, *George Grant: A Guide to His Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁴ Joan E. O'Donovan, *George Grant and Twilight of Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

⁵ Harris Athanasiadis, *George Grant and the Theology of the Cross: The Christian Foundations of his Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁶ William F. Pinar, *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2019), 182–83.

⁷ George Parkin Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁸ George Parkin Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1969), 111–33.

⁹ George Parkin Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1986), 35–77.

of education was or should be, and how both teachers and students should comport themselves to educational practices.

This is all to say that given the clear priority of education within Grant's thought and practical life, Pinar's book represents a welcome addition to scholarship on Grant. Some scholars have made efforts to recognize the importance of education to Grant, but these have been either single essays located in broader collections¹⁰ or they have been single chapters or sections, somewhat brief and subordinated to the broader purpose of the monograph.¹¹ By contrast, *Moving Images* makes teaching, education, and pedagogy its priority: rather than subordinating Grant's understanding of education to, say, his theology or his critique of history, this book takes up the various themes in Grant's thought and directs them toward an understanding of education.

Pinar is especially equipped to take on this project because of the years of experience he himself has in curriculum studies. His decades-long career in curriculum studies allows him to locate Grant within a constellation of other thinkers and commentators on the nature of the curriculum, the relationship between teachers and students, and the functions and activities of universities within a broader social context. In a word, *Moving Images* is able to bring Grant into the "complicated conversation" Pinar understands the curriculum to be and which he aims to enact through his book. As a result, Pinar's book is not simply an effort to explain Grant's understanding of education (though it does do this), but an effort to bring Grant's thought to life in the context of contemporary issues and trends and to juxtapose Grant's comments with those of other thinkers of education and curriculum. To give just one example, Pinar makes frequent reference to curriculum theorist Ted Aoki, in order to develop the connections between Grant's thought and the discipline of curriculum studies, and to pursue lines of thought at which Grant only gestures but does not discuss. This is despite the fact that Grant himself never mentions Aoki nor, to my knowledge, the discipline of curriculum studies. Such an approach is not limited to discussion of curriculum—Pinar uses various commentators on, e.g., history, theology, and corporate capitalism—but it is about curriculum that this approach proves most fruitful. Pinar's own academic expertise allows *Moving Images* to offer an especially informed consideration of education in the thought of George Grant.

As suggested by the title of the book, this consideration of education takes shape through three broad areas of criticism that Grant sustains throughout his career: critiques of time, teaching, and technology. Pinar uses these themes as a point of entry to Grant's more general account of education. Using Grant's critiques as a point of entry is a sound, if common approach to studying Grant, perhaps a requirement given that Grant is notoriously tight-lipped about his

¹⁰ See Nita Graham, "Teaching Against the Spirit of the Age: George Grant and Museum Culture," in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity: Art, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

¹¹ See Forbes, *George Grant: A Guide to His Thought*.

positive philosophical and religious commitments.¹² Pinar structures his book by first providing a progressive elaboration of Grant's criticism, beginning with technology (Chap. 2), expanding this to his critique of the modern understanding of time (Chap. 3), and then concluding with Grant's critique of teaching as it is presently practiced (Chap. 4). He then presents what he takes to be Grant's positive response to these critiques by discussing idolatry and iconography (Chap. 5), attunement (Chap. 6), and eternity (Chap. 7). In a sense, Pinar presents his book as a critical descent and then a positive ascent so that we may restore our understanding of teaching, its purpose, and how it is best performed.

One implication of this approach is that the second half of *Moving Images* does not present as close a reading of Grant as we find in the first half. As I have noted, the bulk of Grant's works are critical in nature, furnishing scholars with a great deal of material to work with in that regard, even if sorting out the various essays, lectures, and articles is no easy feat of synopticism. Reconstructing a positive doctrine in Grant's thought, however, is a bit tangly because much of what Grant might have said in this regard would have to be inferred from his negative work, his criticisms. This is where Pinar's practice of bringing Grant into "complicated conversation" with other thinkers and scholars comes into its own. Pinar introduces these other thinkers—in addition to Ted Aoki, we get Jean-Luc Marion, Lisbeth Lipari, and Carla Benedetti, to name just a few—to provide theoretical elaboration for what would otherwise have been lacunae or obscurity in Grant's writing, drawing out lines of thinking that Grant left only as hints or suggestions. The evident aim of this is not to crudely guess what Grant would have said, but rather to provoke thought about what was left unaddressed. Pinar ventures the suggestions of, e.g., Marion to make sense of a difficulty in Grant's thought, and the reader is implicitly asked to consider whether these suggestions resolve that difficulty. In short, the attentive reader is encouraged to move beyond an "academic" understanding of what Grant said, and bring Grant into unexplored territory as part of an ongoing conversation in which the reader is necessarily implicated. As a result, it seems that whether the reader finally agrees with Pinar's elaborations or concludes that they are at odds with Grant's own teachings is almost beside the point; what matters is that the reader has considered the issue and attempted a response to Pinar. In so expanding one's own understanding of Grant's thought, the reader re-engages with Grant, Pinar, and the above-mentioned thinkers and enters into "conversation" with them.

It is with this same aim of provoking and continuing "conversation" that Pinar introduces terms of his own to make sense of Grant, though Grant used them sparingly or never. For example, Pinar brings in the terms "reactivation" and "attunement." Reactivation refers to the way in which we may remember

¹² The only significant occasions on which Grant discusses his positive religious commitments are the 1953 essay "Two Theological Languages" (Arthur Davis, ed., *Collected Works of George Grant*, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 49–65) and the 1986 essay "Faith and the Multiversity" (Grant, *Technology and Justice*, 35–77), effectively book-ending an otherwise negative publishing career.

things past from our present point of view, but also experience them with a certain immediacy.¹³ Attunement refers to the way we may “traverse the gap between our world and what is outside it, from particularity to universality.”¹⁴ To my knowledge, Grant never uses the term “reactivation” and only rarely uses “attunement”;¹⁵ certainly, these terms play no major role in his writing the way that “technique,” “charity,” or “the whole” does. Yet, Pinar finds that these terms, as well as a handful of others that he introduces, articulate something central to what Grant is trying to say about education and teaching and, hence, that they are helpful in clarifying what Grant has to say. Pinar uses these terms to reformulate some of Grant’s thoughts so that certain ideas may be clearer for the contemporary reader (or at least the contemporary curriculum theorist) and bring Grant’s work into the 21st century, so to speak. In effect, Pinar introduces new terminology in order to bring Grant into conversation with contemporary theories and discourse.

One result, however, is that Pinar occasionally appears to be correcting what he believes are shortcomings in clarity on Grant’s part. That is, at times Pinar seems to believe he is better able to say what Grant thought than Grant himself, at least on certain topics. Regardless of Pinar’s intentions (I am sure he would deny that he is trying to correct Grant), this introduction of new terminology and rephrasing of a thinker is a dangerous approach and ought to be used sparingly. Grant knew this well and said so in his 1964 article “Tyranny and Wisdom.” There he comments on and responds to the debate between Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève as found in *On Tyranny*.¹⁶ Grant prefaces his comments by cautioning the reader against carelessly producing summaries and reformulations:

My purpose in writing is not to give a summary of the controversy between Strauss and Kojève. Both men knew better than I do what words are necessary to make clear what they mean. Modern academic writing is strewn with impertinent *précis* written by those who think they can say in fewer words what wiser men than they have said in more. To be too eager to reformulate what someone else

¹³ Pinar, *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant’s Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology*, 48.

¹⁴ Pinar, 261.

¹⁵ The single instance of “attune” in Grant’s corpus of which I am aware is *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, 26.

¹⁶ Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève, *On Tyranny: Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth, revised and expanded edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

has said is to think one understands the issues better than that other person.¹⁷

It would be far too harsh to call him “impertinent,” but in Pinar’s case, developing the themes of reactivation and attunement as central to Grant’s thought on teaching comes perilously close to implying he is better able to articulate what Grant himself wanted to say about what one should do and what one should aim for in education.

This is a risky approach when working on any intelligent thinker, but all the more so for a work on Grant. For Grant, one of the chief aspects of our modern condition—a consequence of technique—is that we have been stripped of the language we might use to discern or articulate the Good so that not only are we deprived of that Good, we can neither articulate that deprivation to others nor perhaps articulate it to ourselves.¹⁸ What is more, technique emerges from and reaffirms a conception of our selves as “will” so that when we try to get technique in hand, we end up tightening technique’s embrace.¹⁹ When we try to speak technique or try to do something about it, when we try to say what it is we should do in the face of the crisis brought on by technological civilization, we do so from the very heart of technique and hence unwittingly affirm technique. It is for this reason that Grant does not advocate a program for curing us of the deprivation central to our modern condition, but instead suggests that all we may do is wait and listen patiently for “intimations of deprivation,” faint hints of that Good which is essential to our well-being but which we are unable to know.²⁰ This is all to say that Grant was very careful about the words he used to describe our present crisis and, indeed, what could be said at all about that crisis. Grant insists that one consequence of our modern condition is that the language we presently have necessarily falls short of what we might want it to say. Pinar therefore takes a risk in advancing new terminology in his study of Grant, especially as terms like “reactivation” and “attunement” are part of a positive program of restoring our well-being. It would be presumptuous to judge that Pinar is wrong in introducing these terms, but the reader would be well-advised to approach *Moving Images* with an air of caution, conscious that such terms do not belong to Grant’s own writings and that Grant was very much concerned with what could and could not be said.

The reader may indulge Pinar’s risk, however, because of the intent of *Moving Images*. Pinar does not claim to have reached any final conclusions about

¹⁷ Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*, 82.

¹⁸ Grant, 137–39.

¹⁹ George Parkin Grant, *English-Speaking Justice* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998), 63 ff.; Neil G. Robertson, “George Grant: Intimations of Deprivation, Intimations of Beauty,” *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review* 46, no. 1–2 (2004): 77.

²⁰ Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*, 137–39.

Grant, nor is he advancing a set interpretation about which he simply wishes to convince the reader. Rather, Pinar wishes to enter into “conversation” with both Grant and the reader, thereby encouraging reflection, examination, and response. I have already noted above how Pinar introduces other thinkers to provoke this conversation. Conversation is possible (rather, necessary) because Pinar demands the reader actively contribute in following up lines of thought that were otherwise un- or under-addressed by Grant. Does Aoki’s understanding of teaching flesh out Grant’s account? Does Marion help us make sense of what Grant was implying? Pinar ventures new terms in the same way that he introduces other thinkers, so that he would welcome agreement and rebuttals to his suggestions, since both responses are part of the conversation he wishes to continue.

Pinar further demonstrates his commitment to conversation through his style of endnoting. *Moving Images* has a staggering number of endnotes (on average each chapter has about 275 endnotes and together they make up roughly half of the book’s 459 pages). These endnotes are not simply citations or clarifications to an excessive degree—a potential fault of which Pinar is quite conscious—but an opportunity for Pinar to make provisional suggestions about how we might read or respond to Grant, or what avenues of thought we might pursue in the future. In other words, the endnotes are frequently digressions, the sort we might make as an aside in a face-to-face conversation. They allow Pinar to express his disagreement or uncertainty without the requirements of a full rebuttal, as well as point out interesting but peripheral philosophical, social, and political considerations. Their provisional or tentative nature indicates that while Pinar wants to convince the reader of Grant’s merits as an occasion for rethinking education and curriculum, more generally he wants to start a conversation rather than finish it. He is not laying out a rigid doctrine of pedagogy on the basis of Grant’s writings, but inviting the reader to respond with questions, clarifications, and rebuttals of one’s own.

It is this commitment to conversation and this implicit invitation for readers to respond that allows Pinar not to shy away from disagreeing with Grant or identifying issues about which he is uneasy. Throughout *Moving Images*, Pinar touches on issues where he expresses personal disagreement with Grant. Although, as I have noted, this is primarily a matter for the endnotes, it appears in the main text as well. Pinar’s reservations range from Grant’s social and political convictions (Pinar says that Grant’s anti-abortion activism “slide[s] toward extremism”)²¹ as well as Grant’s more philosophical concerns, such as his assessment of John Dewey (more on that in a moment). Pinar’s disagreements with Grant vary in length and detail—some are a few paragraphs long and others are just a couple of lines—yet each is offered with the humility required for a productive conversation. Just as frequently as Pinar offers disagreement, he is willing to say that he does not understand Grant and his position on a certain issue. For example, he confesses that he does not see why Grant insists that

²¹ Pinar, *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant’s Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology*, 5.

Heideggerian historicism contradicts Plato's claim that philosophy must rise above historical particularities.²² Pinar does not venture a full-throated criticism of Grant's claim, but only raises the question and admits his ignorance as if he wishes the reader to consider it, and bear it in mind throughout the remainder of the book so that one can decide for oneself. Such admissions are only possible because Pinar refuses to limit *Moving Images* to a dispassionate, disinterested work of scholarship and instead brings his own beliefs, convictions, and lived-experience to bear, a requirement given his understanding of "conversation."

The result of this approach, however, is that Pinar does miss the mark from time to time. This is indeed forgivable given the aim of the book and is by no means destructive to the work as a whole, but certain examples merit a brief response in this review. In particular, the reader should note Pinar's efforts (1) to rehabilitate John Dewey before the criticisms of George Grant and (2) to argue that Grant was indeed "progressive" despite Grant's own claims to the contrary.

Criticisms of Dewey are peppered throughout Grant's writings so that Dewey becomes something of a punching bag when Grant is criticizing contemporary educational practices. Dewey is not always mentioned explicitly, but the attentive reader will often discern that Grant is aiming at Dewey with a passing remark about the lowering of educational horizons, the rise of the multiversity, and vocationalism.²³ In *Moving Images*, Pinar comes to the defence of Dewey in contending that Grant understood Dewey quite poorly and likely read little of the American philosopher.²⁴ If Grant had read a little bit more and had read more carefully, Pinar explains, he would have seen that he and Dewey were in fact not so far apart and they actually agreed about a great many things. Pinar mounts no systematic defense of Dewey, but sporadic comments throughout the main text and the endnotes serve to argue that Dewey was not guilty of the charges Grant lays against him, or at least that the reader should give Dewey a fair shake and not take Grant's criticisms at face value.

It is not clear, however, if this defence hits the mark when it comes to Grant's criticisms or if Pinar understands the real force of what Grant is saying. Pinar's defence of Dewey quite understandably is centered on the man himself and what he himself wrote. For example, Pinar contends that Grant and his commentators charge Dewey with promoting education as "adjustment" and in response provides quotations from Dewey as evidence that he wanted no such thing.²⁵ No doubt Pinar is correct that Dewey did not advocate "adjustment." Yet,

²² Pinar, 266.

²³ For explicit criticism of Dewey, see "American Morality" (Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, 75–89) or "The University Curriculum" (Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*, 111–33).

²⁴ Pinar, *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology*, 177.

²⁵ Pinar, 183 nn. 172, 174.

it is not clear that the man Dewey was actually the target of Grant's criticisms, even when Grant mentions Dewey by name. In many cases, when Grant criticizes a thinker, he does not directly address their arguments or the details of what they have to say. Rather, Grant seeks to enucleate the logic implicit in their writings, point to the full expression of that logic, and indicate why that logic has led to unsatisfactory consequences. With certain important exceptions (e.g., Grant's response to Karl Popper),²⁶ Grant was not interested in blunt criticism or refutation and instead takes a more indirect approach. To the extent that Grant criticizes Dewey, he does not do so by directly attacking the things Dewey said or wrote.

We see this sort of approach in Grant's account of Immanuel Kant in *English-Speaking Justice*.²⁷ There, Grant aims to show how Kant has been the foundational thinker of autonomy in the Western world. It is in the light of Kant's philosophy that the West, and particularly the English-speaking world, has come to understand the self as essentially free and autonomous. Grant argues that this vision of autonomy has led to a relationship with the world characterized by mastery, and hence technology: in our limitless autonomy, the only thing to do with the world is master it however we please, and there can be no justice beyond what we find convenient for that mastery. This account of the self as autonomous finds one contemporary expression in the thought of John Rawls, whose book *A Theory of Justice* is the occasion for *English-Speaking Justice*. Grant's claim is that Rawls, as a culmination of Kantian thought, fails to give reasons why justice is anyone's due and should be binding upon us. Although the real target of *English-Speaking Justice* is the Kantian account of autonomy, nowhere does Grant seek to refute Kant or deny any of his arguments. The exact arguments that Kant makes, and what Kant did indeed write in his books is in the end beside the point, because Grant is not criticizing Kant, but Kantianism.

In the same way, when Grant criticizes "Dewey," it is not at all clear that John Dewey and his writings are the actual target; rather, it seems much more likely that Grant is criticizing "Deweyism," or more generally, American pragmatism. When Grant criticizes Dewey in *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, claiming that pragmatism "fails because it does not understand the relation between freedom and thought,"²⁸ it would be somewhat beside the point whether Dewey himself properly understood the relation of freedom and thought; what matters for Grant is that the consequence and heritage of Dewey's thought has been a forgetfulness and an ignorance of this relation. Likewise, in *Lament for a Nation*, where Dewey is the representative of the liberal "plurality of tastes": Grant suggests this "plurality" has led to a debasement of human aims so that the

²⁶ George Parkin Grant, "Plato and Popper," in *Collected Works of George Grant*, ed. Arthur Davis, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 75–92.

²⁷ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*.

²⁸ Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, 96.

only public value is the conquest of nature,²⁹ but whether or not Dewey himself would have accepted this debasement is beside the point.

This much was known and recognized by Grant's intimates, including his wife Sheila Grant. In her essay "George Grant and the Theology of the Cross," she notes that Grant had a somewhat "unscholarly" way of using thinkers.³⁰ She says that even from his early years at Oxford, Grant would quote an inaccurate translation of Luther's Heidelberg theses when invoking the Theology of the Cross, an important theme throughout his life.³¹ That his preferred translation was inaccurate was beside the point for Grant, because invoking the Theology of the Cross was not his way of referencing a detailed and careful study of Luther, but a shorthand for a certain way of thinking. As S. Grant notes, Grant neither studied Luther in great detail nor taught him in his courses,³² so the importance of the Theology of the Cross in Grant's thought is relatively unrelated to exactly what Luther wrote or meant. A detailed account demonstrating that Grant misunderstood Luther would thus be missing the point and have little to do with Grant's Theology of the Cross. In the same way, while Pinar's sporadic defences of Dewey may prove interesting to the Dewey scholar and may rehabilitate the man John Dewey, they do not address the thrust of Grant's criticisms of Deweyism.

Part of Pinar's intention in rehabilitating Dewey before Grant is to show that Grant inhabits the ranks of progressives, despite Grant's own claims to the contrary. Pinar insists throughout *Moving Images* that Grant was born and "remained a progressive"³³ his entire life, despite Grant's professed commitment to conservatism and his repeated criticisms of progressivism. As is his preferred method when expressing his disagreement with Grant, Pinar mounts no systematic argument to show that Grant is indeed progressive. Rather, he makes somewhat passing and scattered comments pointing out where Grant is in alignment with present-day progressives, particularly those progressives working in education or curriculum studies. For example, Pinar cites Grant's commitment to being accessible as a teacher or his refusal to allow curriculum to become detached from society—both hallmarks of contemporary self-described progressives in education—as evidence that Grant was more progressive than he

²⁹ Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, 57.

³⁰ Sheila Grant, "George Grant and the Theology of the Cross," in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity: Art, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, and Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 243.

³¹ Cf. Athanasiadis, *George Grant and the Theology of the Cross: The Christian Foundations of His Thought*.

³² Grant, "George Grant and the Theology of the Cross," 245.

³³ Pinar, *Moving Images of Eternity: George Grant's Critique of Time, Teaching, and Technology*, x.

was willing to admit.³⁴ His general point seems to be that since Grant has so much in common with progressives, he too is one of them.

This approach is somewhat wanting, however, because Pinar never offers a clear definition of what it means to be “progressive” nor does he address Grant’s own understanding of progressivism. The closest Pinar comes to offering an explicit definition of progressivism is when he says that “one of the lasting lessons of US progressivism is to meet students where they are,” in effect, an attentiveness to situatedness, both of the individual student and the society in which they live.³⁵ While this seems a plausible if rough definition of progressivism, one wishes that Pinar had been more explicit in enucleating progressivism so that the reader could better judge if it is theoretically sound and whether it genuinely applies to Grant. Scattered examples and a somewhat brief suggestion of what progressivism is do not do the matter justice and leave a sense that the connection between Grant and Pinar’s “progressives” is superficial.

In particular, it would have been helpful if Pinar had addressed Grant’s explanation of progressivism as found in *Lament for a Nation*, the text in which Grant is most explicit about what conservatism and progressivism are. There, Grant explains that conservatism is the notion that there is some good which we do not make and of which we ought to be the custodians by realizing it politically.³⁶ The conservative believes that there is such a thing as the human good, common to all of us, which communities ought to try to realize and then preserve, however varied those attempts to realize it may be. One chief implication of this position is “the right of the community to restrain freedom in the name of the common good,” i.e., that there are limits upon our freedom and that freedom is not the final word.³⁷ Progressivism, by contrast, maintains that it is the special privilege of humans to change the world endlessly and that there can be no final limit to the changes we might pursue or realize in our freedom. According to Grant, the progressive refuses to acknowledge any ultimate conception of a human good which would limit humanity’s ability to change itself and its communities or to “progress.”³⁸ It is for this reason that Grant can say that Marxism is more conservative than American liberalism: Marxism maintains that in the end there is such a thing as human well-being and a political structure that realizes that well-being; once that we realize that well-being, we can stop “progressing” and instead “conserve” what we have. It is precisely in this sense that Grant is a conservative and not a progressive: that “beyond all

³⁴ Pinar, 51, 59.

³⁵ Pinar, 58–59.

³⁶ Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, 64–67.

³⁷ Grant, 64.

³⁸ Grant, 56.

bargains and conveniences,”³⁹ he is committed to an unchanging and eternal Good which would limit our freedom to remake the world and ourselves.

In calling Grant “progressive,” Pinar does not use or address this explanation of progressivism and conservatism. While Pinar may be correct in highlighting certain specific affinities between Grant and self-described progressives, his general claim seems less convincing because he does not address Grant’s own explanation. One wonders if Pinar is cherry-picking evidence rather than getting at the heart of Grant’s apparently “progressive” positions. For beneath Grant’s varied positions which defy conventional political groupings (for example, he protested the Vietnam War but was staunchly pro-life, earning him allies and opponents on both the Left and the Right) lies a commitment to an unchanging Good that is central to our individual and collective well-being. It is this orientation to the Good and attentiveness to how we may come to discern it—namely, through particularity⁴⁰—that made him so attentive to the particular circumstances of his students and the society in which we live. Yet, although this attentiveness to particularity and situatedness may seem “progressive” to Pinar, it is unclear that progressive thinkers in curriculum studies would be likewise committed to the Good that Grant believed should orient our educational practices.

These objections to Pinar are not destructive to his overall project but are intended only to caution the reader. Pinar’s project is to provide a synoptic account of George Grant’s understanding of teaching and education, and this he does quite well. Whereas before there had been only a handful of brief essays on the subject, *Moving Images* is able to bring together the vast resources of the *Collected Works* into a thorough and comprehensive account. What is more, Pinar is able to bring Grant into “conversation” with a constellation of other thinkers so that the audience for one of Canada’s most intriguing thinkers grows a little bit larger, and the breadth of his significance more closely matches the complexity of this thought.

The two objections I have advanced in the latter half of this review— against Pinar’s rehabilitation of Dewey and his labelling Grant a progressive— are to say that the reader should come to this book with a certain skepticism about Pinar’s diverse claims and should come equipped with a familiarity with Grant’s writings. The reader should not expect *Moving Images* to provide an introduction to Grant the way that Forbes’ *Guide* does, but rather may expect it to provoke responses in one who has already read Grant and some of the secondary literature. The reader who only knows Grant’s own writing in passing would be ill-equipped to assess what are indeed bold claims from Pinar. For the reader already familiar with Grant, however, *Moving Images* offers the opportunity to explore new avenues of thought by way of the theologians, philosophers, and

³⁹ Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*, 35.

⁴⁰ Peter C. Emberley, *By Loving Our Own: George Grant and the Legacy of Lament for a Nation* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990), xi–xii, 11–13.

educational theorists Pinar introduces to make sense of and expand upon Grant. It also encourages the reader to reconsider old issues that may have seemed settled and done with (eg., Can Heideggerian historicism be reconciled with Platonic philosophy? Was Grant correct in denying he was progressive?). No doubt I am not the only one who will object to Pinar's claims when reconsidering those old issues; but it is just as certain that Pinar would welcome objections and responses, as they are part of the "complicated conversation" which he continues and which he urges us to join.

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