
BOOK REVIEW

Time and the rhythms of emancipatory education: Rethinking the temporal complexity of self and society, by Michel Alhadeff-Jones, London, Routledge, 2017, 226 pp., £88.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781138845848, £27.99(e-book), ISBN 9781315727899

Michel Alhadeff-Jones is a philosopher of education and a psychosociologist whose professional occupation spreads across Europe and USA. He is also the founder of Sunkhronos Institute in Geneva, Switzerland. Alhadeff-Jones explains that the word *Sunkhronos* comes from the Ancient Greek 'sun' (meaning 'with', 'together') and 'khronos' (meaning 'time'). Referring to contemporary contexts, he stresses that people often experience time as a source of difficulty and tension. Sunkhronos Institute as such therefore, emphasizes the importance of questioning the coherence of the temporalities and rhythms that drive our lives. Michel's book explores these very questions and does it with the rigor reflected in Gert Biesta's blurb: 'A probing exploration of the temporal dimensions of education. This book is an intellectual masterpiece that will set the standard for a long time to come'. Indeed, I found the meta-research presented in the book to be of extremely broad scope.

The style of the book appears to depart from the exclusively critical stance as a preferred mode adopted in the field of educational philosophy and instead embraces the range of theoretical positions articulated by different educational researchers with a single focus on time and rhythm in many different guises. In addition, the book invokes the names outside education such as Russian poet Osip Mandelstam or composer Richard Wagner thereby crossing the disciplinary boundaries and also venturing (even if briefly) into 'hard sciences' such as physics and biology. The book is organized in such a manner so as to preserve a historical dimension usually associated with the study of time and, while mainly covering the present-day research, goes as far back as to St. Augustine who in his *Confessions* asks 'What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know'.

In exploring the variety of possible answers to this question, Michel structures his 200-plus pages book as comprising three parts: I. The study of time in educational sciences; II. The evolution of temporal constraints and the rhythms of education; and III. Theorizing the rhythms of emancipation in education. Each of 12 chapters in the book is a relatively autonomous study comprising short sections that read like cross-referenced encyclopedia entries which center on this or that aspect of time, rhythm, and education. Importantly, Michel grounds his exploration of time not only in multiple theoretical resources but also in his own practice and teaching experience that he describes as especially 'com-pressed' and as such triggering what he calls a 'rhythmic dissonance' manifested in different learning environments, such as at the University of Geneva in contrast to Teachers College at Columbia University (my *alma mater*) in New York. No doubt, time demonstrates its inherent complexity, both as a concept and as a phenomenon of everyday life—the dimension stressed by Michel in terms of the possibility of accelerating some aspects of the learning process.

In the first part, in view of Michel's envisioning the complexity of the very idea of time, he explores several (and often conflicting) epistemological frameworks across disciplines as well as in educational sciences for the purpose of providing his readers with a theoretical lens. Michel's emphasis is on autonomy and emancipation as one of the educational aims. The second part of the book explores and contextualizes how what Michel dubs 'temporal constraints' have evolved throughout the history of education and how they may have affected the relational dynamics

between time, rhythm, and autonomy. He discusses the rhythmic features pertaining to Jewish education, musical education during Spartan and Hellenic periods, monastic education throughout Medieval era, and new school regulations introduced in Early Modern period. Turning to the twentieth century, Michel addresses the time of instruction not only as a means to promote discipline and efficiency of education but also as coupled with a counter-movement informed by social ideal of rhythmic harmony that necessarily affirms the cultural and political dimensions of education. Recognizing the emergence of discontinuities in formal and non-formal education, Michel analyzes this phenomenon (as presented by different researchers) from four angles: The rhythms of the learner's activity; the effects of alternating between work and study in vocational education; lifelong learning in its both formal and informal aspects; and what he calls 'the formative dimension' embedded in the life history of adult learners.

Acknowledging the preponderance of 'speed' in our Western society, Michel in the third part of his book discusses the rhythms of emancipation in terms of its dynamic fluidity. Asserting the 'periodicity' of educational rhythms in view of repetitive behaviors vis-à-vis alienation, he brings into the conversation several contemporary rhythm theories articulated by Lefebvre, Michon, and Sauvanet. He further illustrates the concept of emancipation by reference to the theories of Freire, Rancière, and Mezirow and then introduces Bachelard's and Lefebvre's considerations with regard to the idea of *rhythm analysis* followed by reference to the two generations of contemporary French scholars in this area. Affirming the experiences of transgression which open up a time of rupture, Michel includes a specific life narrative of a young adult and concludes his book by suggesting six core issues (or 'logics' addressed in his earlier research in 2007) in order to further develop the elaboration of both theory and praxis of rhythmic emancipatory education.

It is the paradigm of complexity that informs Alhadeff-Jones's overall explorations of time. In the context of human sciences such as psychology and sociology he cites Mead's perspective on human acts that are 'understood not as movements in an already existing time, but as emerging events that first constitute a present with a past and future horizon' (p. 28) and affect the personal identity of the actor as constituted over time and in interactions. A subsection titled *Toward a transdisciplinary conception of time* (p. 29) challenges the foundational and reductive assumptions concerning time, and Michel calls for embracing *transdisciplinarity* as a perspective articulated, for example, by Basarab Nicolescu. Still, a more detailed exploration of this complicated concept (itself informed by the latest achievements in physics) rather than just a brief mention would, in my opinion, have benefited the readers of Alhadeff-Jones's indeed complex and densely presented text.

Referring to significant events that often disrupt the orderly course of life and experience (p. 134), Alhadeff-Jones notices their influence on the transformation of the self. He singles out the notions of epiphany and *épreuve* as the examples of temporal discontinuities occurring throughout the life course. While epiphany is mainly associated with the psychological dimension of self-identity, *épreuve* is closely related to 'bifurcation' associated with the linguistic and sociological aspects. Michel asserts that, from a semiotic perspective, *épreuve* defines the basic structural unit that both organizes the historical narrative of the subject and also constitutes an experiential challenge to human subjectivity. Alhadeff-Jones presents some of discriminating rhythms in reference to the conscious or unconscious activity of the mind and examines rhythms' values and their normative features. He asserts the necessity to 'determine the nature of the influence between heterogeneous rhythms (e.g. physical, discursive, corporeal, social, individual and collective) and the ways they eventually synchronize with each other' (p. 212). He moves into the sphere of the problematic of judgment as related to the underlying principles of justice and asserts individual and collective transformation as one of the main features of emancipatory education. Michel cites Pascal Galvani in reference to specific opportune time (*Kairos*) as the moment of transgression that as such needs to be identified.

Throughout the book Michel mentions the multiplicity of names including Aristotle, Bergson, Castoriadis, Durkheim, Foucault, Freud, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Whitehead, and many others. The readers

are thereby provoked to look up those original sources should they wish to undertake the analysis in depth with regard to many conceptions associated with time and rhythm. Across the chapters, the concepts related to the Greek *Chronos* include chronobiology, chronography, chronology, chronometry, chronopsychology, and chronosophy. Strangely missing in this context is *chronotope* as well as the name of Bakhtin who defined it as the unity of time and place where the events occur and as especially significant to dialogue. Bakhtin's dialogue now has a prominent place in educational studies and timely relates to novel learning practices. Alhadeff-Jones mentions dialogue only in passing—understandably in the context of Socrates or when introducing Freire's critical pedagogy. These minute omissions do not take away from the otherwise rich and informative material in Alhadeff-Jones's book.

The text is oriented to the broad readership comprising graduate students, practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers with the aim 'to challenge both the heterogeneous rhythms that frame their activities and what is at stake in the process of theorizing the critical role they play in education' (p. 6). Such challenge gleans from nearly every single page—and not the least because of the originality of Michel's approach. Indeed, as Rene Arcilla says in his blurb, 'Michel Alhadeff-Jones's study constitutes the richest examination of educational temporality I have ever encountered. It is immensely learned, assembling and responding to a body of literature that crosses multiple scholarly fields; it is penetratingly insightful, particularly in the way it explains how emancipation is, literally, a matter of rhythm; and it is utterly original'. The book represents a compelling, valuable, and inspiring resource for scholars in education who wish to explore the novel ways of conceiving time and rhythm while also learning to resist the multiple temporal constraints.

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