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## A Matter of Time: the effects of time on learning

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**ABSTRACT** This article looks at how time might be viewed differently in the classroom, drawing on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze in order to frame the exploration. It asks how teachers might become more attuned to difference, uncertainty and possibility in their classrooms and questions the wisdom of viewing the learning process in linear ways. The article draws on two examples of classroom practice – one a lesson observation and the other a lesson with a child struggling with his concept of self as a poor speller. It asks how those experiences might be differently viewed and acted upon if the teacher works as an artisan rather than as an architect.

My dear, here we must run as fast as we can, just to stay in place.  
And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that.  
(Lewis Carroll, 1998)

In 2012, after a period working in higher education, I went back to mainstream state secondary school with the title of AST – Advanced Skills Teacher – which I have worn like an albatross around my neck since arriving. The school is an 11-16 secondary comprehensive with a predominantly mono-cultural intake in a town in which there is a large multi-cultural population. My role in the school is to ‘develop’ teaching and learning so that children are ‘empowered and inspired’, in the words of the head teacher. Immediately, of course, there is a disconnect between the potentiality of empowerment and the limitations imposed by league tables, Ofsted and examination performance. The word ‘Advanced’ in my job title suggests a movement forward, but my advancement in terms of understanding classroom practice has consisted more of a constant toing and froing. ‘Skills’ suggests an element of control and certainty, where I have instead been immersed in complexity and uncertainty. As such, I have found myself oscillating between feelings of guilt in which I worry that I am not doing what I was asked to do and rebelliousness as I try to explain why it is

that doing what I am asked to do is nonsensical. Stepping back into school brought forth the shock of return – I have been a teacher before and I thought I would be the same, but better. I found only difference. Like Alice, musing in Wonderland, I found that ‘I can’t go back to yesterday because I was a different person then’. Like any person starting a new job, I needed to chart the cartographies of this new place and to reposition myself.

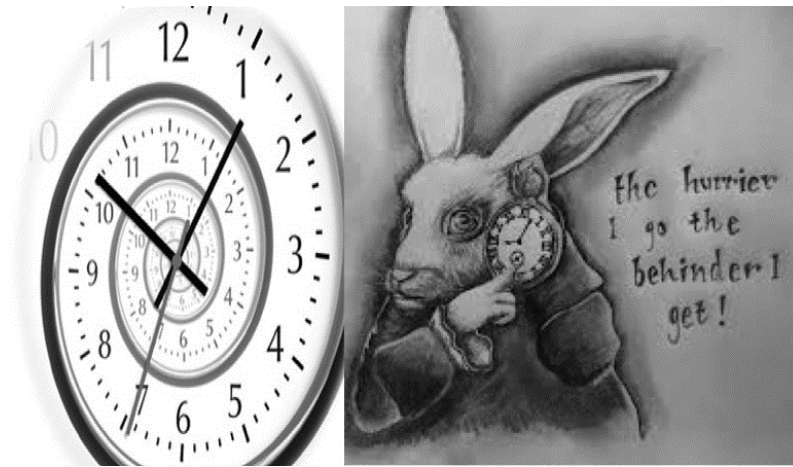


Figure 1. Time is not as linear as it seems.

The move ‘back’ into school felt like a slow fall – a frantically slow fall, if such a thing is possible. The pace of the day was fast, but the brainwork of the doctorate forced an arrest – as I fell, I noticed absurdity, inconsistency, chaos. Around me, people were running as fast as they could to stay in the same place, and I looked around – a ‘thousand little witnesses’, paying attention and wondering how we had come to this (Deleuze, in Hoy, 2009, p. 158). Since returning to the classroom, my time streams have run counter to that of others, and also contrary within myself. In arresting, slowing, I have been plucking up courage – the courage to reveal what I believe and don’t believe. But these arrests force a gathering – what Deleuze would describe as a pushing up of the stream into a rhizome where things gather speed and become other. This pushing and pulling of fast and slow time interests me and has allowed me to see anew.

For Deleuze (2004), there are two realms of time – in the multiple complexities of the classroom time is not rapid and it is not singular – it is bound in prior experience *and* future possibility (Aionic). It is also, simultaneously and sometimes broodingly, present (Chronos). Chronos is NOW time, Aion is THEN time and the two fold in on each other, affecting the lines of movement that emerge from each moment.

For example:

*An arrest:*

I am observing a teacher teaching. I have requested that a senior leader jointly observes with me in order to check that there is consistency in the application of the school's observation criteria. The senior observer leans over and points to a boy who is taking part in a task – he is supposed to be listening to another child giving him information from a sheet. It is a focused listening task. The boy is fidgeting. He is slumping in his chair, tapping his fingers on the seat, staring out of the window, his mouth agape. If a casting director had wished to cast a role as 'disengaged child' – this child would have been snapped up. My senior observer points to his notes. 'Not all children are engaged' it says. He highlights a section on the observation criteria which states that 'most, but not all of the children are engaged'. This places the teacher in the box labelled 'requires improvement'.

Minutes later I walk over to the boy. The class have been asked to recount four pieces of information they can remember from the exercise. He is busily writing down his eighth. Disengaged? It would appear not. Things are not always as they seem.

I creep back to the senior leader. 'He's remembered twice as much as he was asked to,' I say. 'He was listening.' The judgment remains ... there is a pause ...

'I think she's facilitating thinking here,' I venture.

'The pace is too slow' is the response.

But learning can be slow, I think. No-one looks bored. The questions are probing, but they are taking time. Is speed more important than depth, I wonder? But most of all I am waiting and hoping for an opportunity to challenge without being challenging – to try to point out all the unspoken declamations of understanding, the gestures and the signs that to me suggest thinking leading to action, but which, to my co-observer, suggest inaction – a lack of progress. (Journal, October 2012)

One of the most powerful forces in a classroom is the void – the moment in which children decide whether to and how to complete a task. Too often we rush in with scaffolds and instructions because we fear the silence and uncertainty of void time. But it is in void time that autonomy is learned and practised. Removing it removes an important part of the thinking process. Yet, in an observation, allowing the presence of a void in a lesson is a dangerous strategy for a teacher because the thinking processes in a void are hidden from

the observer. In the instance above, the teacher might have signalled that she knew the child – she might have said, ‘Ooh Luke, I know you are thinking, but you really don’t look like you are.’ This might have offset the judgement, but she would have, in the process, interrupted Luke’s thinking, possibly disrupting his learning. Perhaps for Luke, the open mouth was a sign of receptiveness to the information he was receiving. Perhaps the eyes staring into the distance were instead visualising the matter of the reading – bringing it forward into being. Perhaps his tapping was an engagement with the rhythm of speech – the rhythm of knowledge. Perhaps. We don’t know, but we are quick to judge – we rush to see what we think we are seeing instead of slowing and examining the possibilities inherent in a highly differentiated environment (Roy, 2003). It is perfectly possible that we were witnessing the opposite of disengagement – the emergence of imagination from a ‘fractal abyss where there was only a hyphen between stimulus and response and canned reaction’, an abyss in which ‘imagination takes the body not as an “object” but as a realm of virtuality ... as a site for superabstract invention’ (Massumi, 1992, p. 100).

It is easy for me to tut and judge, but for my co-observer in this moment it is possible that there is an aionic pressure being exerted in the form of Ofsted – a future possibility pressing in (and blinding) the observer. He sits, not seeing all the possible present ‘maybes’ of Chronos, but instead, imagining a future present – that imagined future in which an inspector may sit in judgment on a similar situation. The criterion for an outstanding lesson insists that children make ‘rapid and sustained progress’ (Ofsted, 2013). In this sense, to be outstanding is to be obvious – to have simplified to a point where there is no uncertainty. Such a simplification can only ever be an illusion.

Over the course of weeks, I see similar judgements being made – ‘Sorry. Rule 42, you know’ (Carroll, 1998, p. 104) – a lesson deemed satisfactory because books were not out on the tables for the observer to check. Another because the room was too hot. Arbitrary reasons in order to ensure that the school is making rigorous and accurate assessments based on what they think Ofsted might say if they were present in the room. In these early weeks I feel despondent – the Queen of Hearts is ever present in all the decisions being made, even though she’s miles away, and no one has ever actually met her. In the meantime staff are instructed to keep going, making progress: “‘Begin at the beginning,’ the King said, very gravely, ‘and go on till you come to the end: then stop’” (Carroll, 1998). I feel despondent, but I have places I can go to in order to reassure myself. I return to research – tune my mind into being curious, to asking the phenomenological questions that ignite interest and ideas. I read some more and think some more. It seems to me that most of the problems I am encountering are connected to time – to notions of linear progress – of a belief that the present will lead, step by step, to a definable future.

In this view of time, what Groves (2007) calls the future of the ‘everyday frame of mind’, the future is always something yet-to-come – the place where ‘we expect our desires to be realised’. Educational policy is rooted in this view – and I use the arboreal image of a root deliberately here, for our education

system does not embrace rhizomatic structures. It is necessary to the survival of institutions that there is hope and a belief in meritocracy, otherwise why would anyone attend? Many educationalists have expressed concerns about the economically driven approach to education (Noddings, 2002; Tikly, 2004; Smith, 2007; Bassey, 2011; Jun, 2011; Schostak, 2012; Waters, 2013) in which the purpose of education is rooted in future possibility, in aspiration, in potential outcomes – what Schostak refers to as a ‘Utopia’ to which children ‘must be pushed, pulled and adjusted until they fit the required categories’ (Schostak, 2012). It relies on deferred gratification, though lip service is paid to the inspirational – to the love of learning (DfES, 2004; DfE, 2013).

The future perspective of education can become an emotive and potentially frightening place for a child (Harlen & Deaken Crick, 2002; Webb & Vulliamy, 2006), loaded with discourse markers such as ‘if’ and ‘then’ and ‘but’. Causality is casually presented as a *fait accompli*, while on the news numbers of unemployed graduates grow. This model of instantaneity presents a future of empty, yet-to-be-filled possibilities to children, which may seem exciting, but which are instantly connected to power principles of work, obedience and an agreed set of cultural codes and values – such as those connected to sustaining a future economy (Bassey, 2011).

Ofsted and other policy makers or enforcers attempt to bridge the seemingly distant future by breaking it down into a ‘specious present’ (James, 1950, p. 609) – a series of mini ‘nows’ which form the impression of a present but which are constantly moving. This flow or motion of time allows for a belief that progress is ongoing, moment by moment, and can be measured and adjusted incrementally to secure the distant trajectory in a series of steps. It is easy to convince children that this is a linear process. We teach them time connectives from an early age – they appear in the literacy curriculum from Year 2 – ‘then’, ‘later,’ afterwards’, and by Year 5, ‘finally’, ‘eventually’ and so on. It is also intuitive to see the world in this way, yet Deleuze offers us alternative interpretations of time.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze (2004) presents a dual conception of time as two distinguishable yet interwoven movements: Aion and Chronos. These concepts trouble notions of chronological, linear time and move towards ontological time as its counterpart. To someone like a teacher, ruled by the hour-to-hour structure of a teaching day and planning minute-by-minute lessons, such a concept can seem almost absurd, yet we accept ontological notions of time as part of the metaphorical semantic fields associated with the way we experience time – it ‘flies’, ‘drags’, ‘takes you back’, ‘stands still’ ... Human experience of time is such that a second can seem to last for an hour and vice versa, but our subjective experience of time is often overridden by what we have been taught about the way that time is measured – in equal and linear fragments. Orthodoxy overrides sense.

Thinking in ontological time – that is, the time of experience or being (private time) rather than measured or empirical time (public time) – requires a consideration of both a past that never took place and a future that can never

arrive. This leads us to a reconceptualisation of time through a Deleuzian lens – one which is throbbing with multiple possibilities. Indeed, it resonates with Bohr's theories on quantum physics in terms of the complexity of relationships between object/subject/human/inorganic (Barad, 2007). Time, like space, is multiply complex. Chronos time is described by Rosethorn (2012) as that which is rooted in the reality of the now in which past and present are illusions. In Chronos, intuition is key – there is a sense that now matters and that becoming requires being watchful in the nowness of 'the greatest present' (Deleuze, 2004, p. 163). Aion time, on the other hand, troubles the past and future, and fragments them – 'a troublesome cracking' (Rosethorn, 2012). I think of this as 'effect time', but effects that both occur and exist as endless potentials. With Aion, 'a future and past divide the present at every instant and subdivide it ad infinitum into past and future, in both directions at once' (Deleuze, 2004, p. 164).

For education, there seems only to be a presentation of public time, with constraints and linearity in place. An obsession with linearity and conformity leads to spurious concepts of milestones – points in time in which children should achieve the same goals – that is, ready for school/work – as if, in Ken Robinson's words, 'the most important thing about them is their date of manufacture' (Robinson, 2010). They should all move together, yet are always viewed as being individually accountable and responsible for their progress and behaviours (Kessen, 1979; Burman, 2013). In setting up the structures to serve this view, educational institutions bring the future into the present. The future exerts its pressure on the present. Future expectations, hopes, ambitions, fears form the basis upon which present decisions are made. The future presses down on these children, and the people holding the pressure pads are their parents, teachers and, above them, the policy makers. All breathing in time, 'You must succeed.' This leads to a focus in social research policy and funding on the certainty of what works in terms of 'policy-relevant' social research which is concerned with adult anxiety about children, the future and the production of ideal future citizens (Rose, 1999).

The problem, of course, is that this present future is brought forth in a vision of now – we imagine that the future will be roughly like our present but with more efficient technology. In a sense, we perpetuate our present by planning our future based on a model of 'now'. And we do this, Heidegger would claim, through a process of 'disclosure' (Heidegger, 1992, p. 67). Disclosure is the presentation of the future to us which is dictated by what it is possible we will become. It is a limited view based on notions of possibility. Depending on the aspirations, beliefs and expectations of influential people around us, disclosure can have both positive and negative outcomes on one's 'to-be' self (Heidegger, 1992, p. 62). Either way, modes of disclosure and those of specious presents underpin both educational and parental habits of mind.

For example:

*Parent:* Mrs. Kidd, could I please have a quick word about this new curriculum?

*Me:* Yes, of course.

*Parent:* Don't get me wrong, he's really enjoying it, but I was wondering where the English was?

*Me:* What are you thinking of when you say 'English'?

*Parent:* Well, spelling and punctuation and things like that. His spelling is terrible. I was wondering when he'd get spelling tests.

*Me:* Ah, well we do work on spelling, but on an individual basis so rather than teaching the whole class the same spellings, when I mark, I target a few for each child and they're written as spelling targets at the end. They're supposed to go away and learn them and the next time I mark, I check that if they've used that word again, it's been used correctly.

*Parent:* But there are no tests?

*Me:* No.

*Parent:* Right. It's just that when I was at school, we had tests every week and I think it helped me ... I'm just worried that if he can't spell he won't get his exams or a job.

*Me:* I know it's a worry, but these things develop with time, he's only 11. You could really help me by checking those targets in his book and making sure he takes them on board – perhaps you could test him on them at home?

*Parent:* [with relief] Yes, yes, I'll do that, thank you. (Notes written after a Year 7 'Settling in Evening', October 2012)

There was little point of me pointing out in this conversation the other hugely important skills we were covering in English, or directing the parent to the research which questions the impact of spelling tests on learners. In her mind, her current success had depended on her spelling tests at school. Her vision of her son's future was being shaped by her own past and his present was pressured by this parental belief and fear. For this child, Danny, both past (another's) and future (imagined) were exerting considerable pressure on the views of present and this was impacting on his confidence and self image. He wrote a poem on arrival in school in which there were these lines:

*I play Rugby well, but  
I wish I could spell*

In self assessment sheets, he regularly writes that he needs to improve his spelling. In fact, his spelling is average for his age and is improving, but it exerts considerable influence on his sense of self and his hopes for the future. To help him I need to show him his current skills more clearly (imagining for the moment, that there is a present and not simply a series of disappearing nows). The next time he writes, instead of highlighting his mistakes, I highlight all the words he spelled correctly. The page is fluorescent. 324 words highlighted. Eleven left untouched.

'What's this?' he asks as he gets his book back.

'All the words you spelled correctly, Danny. Now find the others and write them down.'

He picks his pen up quickly and starts searching and jotting. Previously I had written them for him. He'd open his book, cast his eyes over them and sigh. Now he seems more eager, straighter in his chair. Is it that simple? I have a smug moment.

'Oh, Miss, Miss, that's cool, can you do that with mine?' all the others start shouting. My own future presses in on me – endless hours of highlighting.

'No,' I say 'I was making a point.'

It gives me an idea though. The next time homework is due, I take in a pile of highlighters and dictionaries.

'Check your work before handing it in', I say 'and highlight every word you've spelled correctly. Only highlight if you're certain. Check in the dictionary.'

They've never been so keen to self correct. Highlighters are the future! (Extract from journal, November 2012)

This moment disappeared into my notes as insignificant until I started to think about motivation and desire linked to past-present-future, at which point it appeared in aionic mode.

For Danny, his mother's *Befindlichkeit* – 'state of mind' or mood (Heidegger, 1992) – in this case, a worry of the future influenced by the past – had transferred to him, creating doubt and fear. It was, is, will be necessary to try to help Danny to reframe his world in this area so that spelling does not become a barrier to attempting to write or to feeling that meaning can be successfully conveyed. Already, Danny's pieces of writing are getting longer and he is attempting more ambitious vocabulary as he worries less about being 'wrong'. He is becoming attuned to other possible states. Perhaps it is all a matter of perception.

Perception has long been thought to be imbued with motivation. In 1947 Bruner & Goodman showed that coins really do look bigger to a hungry child, for example. In this way, it may be that the colour is forming a material affect which pierces through habitual assemblages of what writing *is* and makes the writing reappear in new form – a form more closely identified with past experiences of play:



Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be produced at will.  
(Einstein, in Damasio, 2006, p. 107)

Einstein, of course, is speaking here not of highlighter pens, but of the concept of the playful imagination. I am suggesting that the colour acts as a reminder of playful imagination rather than being the thing itself – that it acts as an aionic line of flight from then time to now time. For Einstein, the writing – the communication of that which has been learned – is the laborious element and it possible that something as simple as a splash of colour alleviates the labour. It is also possible that the colour indicates success rather than failure, drawing attention to that which has been done well. For the children, the writing up is work – work that some find laborious and others find purposeful. To have this work judged and valued by others carries loaded assemblages of past, present and future possible failures. It reminds me, once again, of the dominance of the Queen of Hearts, whom Carroll describes as ‘a sort of embodiment of ungovernable passion – a blind and aimless fury’ (Carroll, 1998).

It may be useful, if one is to attempt to reframe time within a child’s experience of learning, to consider carefully what has been said about the way the human mind experiences time and how it frames identity within an experience of time. Nobel prize winner Edelman and his partner Tononi (Edelman & Tononi, 2000) posit the idea that the human mind has a ‘dynamic core’ which has a degree of stability – a series of core processes to which our experiences bind themselves and through which events are viewed as significant or not. They argue that there are many layers or states of consciousness, but that those that become organised into conscious thought – those that manifest themselves in language, having moved beyond the inkling – are drawn together for one reason or another, largely through habit and repetition, but also through resonance and reminder. Whether or not experience binds itself to this core dictates to a degree the survival of memory; Edelman in an earlier text (1989) expands his idea of ‘neural Darwinism’ – a fight for survival of remembered thought, experience and knowledge. It offers an explanation for the appearance of relevance. But there is a problem here. A dynamic core suggests that the human mind is built around ‘sameness’ – that memory is built as recollections connect with new experiences which are similar. This has led to a belief in educational practices, that repetition, returning, testing and building are the components from which learning is formed. More recently, neuroscientists such as Greenfield have commented that Edelman’s view does not fully embrace the level of complexity of the brain as an emergent system (Greenfield, 2011) and argue that there is a much more subtle and yet-to-be-understood intra-action between the dominant and emerging synapses relating to memory and conceptions of time and identity.

For the children using the highlighter, there seems to be an association between colour and positive experience – sameness – but each one will

experience, remember and interpret this differently. We cannot say that colour is the single or most significant correlating factor. There are many others/ands at work. Nevertheless, the colour serves as an interruption, disrupting the sameness of their experience of writing and imbuing it with difference. In all rhizomatic metaphors, resonance, relevance and recognition form the emerging understandings we create as we meander through the world, but the interest lies in their differences. As we learn of the complexity and the wonder of the mind, the ability to convey its processes becomes ever more difficult and frustrating. Representing the events that occur in the stop – the aionic interruptions and disruptions – is difficult, perhaps impossible, but we do what we can with the tools we have. All our past experiences form present preferences to build the skills for future competencies. This might be understood in terms of what Husserl calls 'retention' and 'protention' (in Derrida, 1967, p. 64). It is possible that the children in this example have retained past memories and positive associations with colour and are using this to project into a future skill set – aionic time, characterised by impersonal verb action such as 'teaching, learning, doing', is pressing upon the moment, but they are experiencing this as a chronos time – simply being. I am not suggesting that they are consciously aware of the presence of aion, or that they are even fully processing the fullness of the immanence that is chronos, but nevertheless, they are in a smooth space – a 'now' space which is brimming with 'becoming' – the past, present and future are combining to become something. They may only be aware of *Befindlichkeit* (Heidegger, 1963), but for me, a lesson is learned about bringing positive, dynamic associations to bear on laborious but necessary tasks.

For the classroom teacher the pressure of linear future-orientated time is almost impossible to resist. But if we step back and consider how the multiple pasts of children are pressing in on the lesson, or if we consider how we might reframe the future – one that sits beyond examination results, for example – for children, we can manage to lever some non-linearity into our work; tap into the past hopes, memories and associations of children – we are all seduced by nostalgia; open up discussions of all the possible futures that might exist for them; let them see that the present is worth sitting in for a while, even as it keeps moving. These things will allow you to help children to realise that life is possibility rich.

For too long, we have built an education system around an architectural model. We assume that providing the teacher has the technical skill (and sometimes not even that – simply a manual will do), then the matter (children), who may be unpredictable and unstable, but who are malleable, are shaped into that which appears to be useful and productive and knowledgeable. It is possible that the relationship between teacher and children is similar to that of the relationship between materials and forces (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004/1968, p. 377).

The architect teacher will use disclosure, modelling and practice (pedagogical material) to ensure that the now steps of future are embedded in the child (formative material). It is the architectural model driving the structures

of Ofsted criteria. For now, let's return to Danny. My own vision of future was knocked and reshaped by my conversation with a parent. Before, I was focused on whether or not the writing demonstrated an understanding and engagement with the text. The parent's state of mind affected my focus – it attuned me to another issue and made me look closer at Danny's earlier work and conceptions of self. The architect teacher may have built in some other structures at this point – spelling tests, planned functional literacy sessions and so on – to ensure that the standard of spelling was *seen* to be addressed. That the unpredictable matter was being reformed. But to do so would have reinforced Danny's sense of his future being dependent on his ability to spell and for this future to be shaped by an inaccurate belief. To resist this, it was necessary to become something other than architect – to navigate a more nomadic space (Roy, 2003; Williams, 2013) by becoming artisanal.

In the architectonic model, there is a hierarchical relationship between the mind and the matter it works on – the mind imposes its idea onto the matter. Standing in between is a worker – someone who carries out the task for the architect in order to realise his/her vision, and this can be passed down. Similarly in education, there is an imposition of will which is hierarchical and in which the mind with the idea imposes that vision to shape the matter, setting up a series of 'normalising choices which are both highly repetitive and mutually reinforcing' (Pearce, 2010, p. 5). This passes down a chain – a minister has an idea, the accountability agents such as inspectors and writers of syllabi and curriculums are the artisans. They are then charged with becoming architects, imposing the idea on the deliverers of education – leaders and teachers in schools. They in turn create their ideas based on the blueprints offered and shape their own blueprint to mould the children. The children are the matter that matter the least in that they have least agency to form their own blueprints of learning, but they are human, and for an architectonic model to work there is an assumption that the matter is or can be made to be passive. Active matter is problematic – it is unpredictable. All of this passing is charged with the fear of future possibility.

It is this idea of the architect that has informed the TOD model of intelligence, and it is rooted in linear notions of time as well as traditional methodologies – plan-act-do. This implies a linear relationship between subject (knowledge) and object (child) (or vice versa), but for Deleuze and Guattari there is no such linearity. The artisan works with the material, responding to its knots, bends, flaws and quirks to shape something unique. Rather than forcing a child along a set path deemed suitable for all, the artisan shapes the path to the child.

For Deleuze, as outlined by Protevi (2011), the artisan carries 'artisanal sensitivity' – a body of felt awareness and understanding that shapes and moulds the decisions made and the responses to the matter. It is a motor-physical and instinctive craft set, rooted not in ideas or mathematic certainty, but in gut feeling, experience and prior knowledge. It is in observation, moulded by fine tuning – by looking for 'a-tune-meant'. This requires a

watchfulness in the classroom – tuning in to nuance, shifts in mood and opportunity.

This requires new understandings of time in the classroom – time needs to stand still while marching on. It requires a view of time as multiple possibilities sitting together in the present – any one of which may be taken. For the architect, there is only one possibility. And anyone who resists is deviant. For an artisan, it is necessary to be able to live in slow time while performing in fast time – to create wormholes. This requires a capacity to live in the void and to read. This is the science of time as a nomadic philosophy, bringing with it an acceptance of uncertainty.

Even though the realisation that the more we know, the less we know is frustrating, it can bring liberation. Complexity allows for moments of stopping, inhabiting the void, listening, watching, intra-acting – it opens up the possibility for becoming artisanal. And while exciting, this possibility-enriched learning world is a frightening place for those seeking to be able to control outcomes. It seems that in education, 'his fruit is ripe but he is not yet ripe for his fruit' (Nietzsche, 1885/1995, p. 1).

For Deleuze, the artisanal teacher is nomadic in that he or she uses the traits in the environment to best inhabit the space. The nomadic teacher uses the traits in children – their prior/present experience and understanding – to best shape the existence of living-in-future – a future which is already present but open to potential, being presently formed while having always lain as a possibility within the matter. In many ways, it is the nomad who is mediating the complex intra-action between chronos and aion time. For the children, the work is their matter, and as such it is important that we allow them to craft a form. For me, the children are matter, but the matter is not passively awaiting an imposed form, but is already inherently present-in-future. I strive to ensure that they are 'always a positive contribution to order' (Protevi, 2011). It is a question of discovering, releasing the potentiality within and being mindful of the fact that when they appear not to be making such a positive contribution to order, it is my duty to find the order they are attempting to show – to try to figure out where they're coming from and how we can merge our interests/moods/potential to shape positive futures. This is not to keep them as they are, but to build capabilities which are based on incremental adaptations to environment, stimulus and the matter with which they (and I) work. To become sensitised.

Deleuze would argue that learning is not about shaping outcomes from fixed capacities – an idea which would suggest that there are limits of ability and intelligence – but about learning capacities that were not there before, while working with what is there – 'a configuration emerging out of their virtual potential' (Groves, 2007). For Deleuze and Guattari, their conception of the word 'virtual' is not tainted with the modern associations that 'virtual reality' has become to suggest – i.e. not real at all, but simulated. Instead, the virtual future is that which exists already in its potential, but whose extent is unimaginable – imagining it can only limit it. Instead, the future exists in

moments of experimentation, play, discovery and openness in which the rhizomes and lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of potential are developed. The crucial aspects of this process are not 'rapid and sustained', as Ofsted would claim, but are characterised by 'hesitation and improvisation' (Groves, 2007). Improvisation necessitates mistakes. It requires time and trust. It belongs to a pedagogy of hope, emerging from chaos.

Much of what I write does not trouble the rhetoric of educational policy makers. Much of this rhetoric centres on 'releasing potential' and on 'engaging' learners. On the surface at least, it seems that a nomadic model, touted as a 'child-centred' model, is encouraged. The problem is that this model is not enacted in practice. It cannot thrive when the modes of measurement are linear and limited merely to examination output and writing skill. The outcome drivers do not match the intentions. There is a disconnect where an architectural assessment model imposes itself upon an artisanal intention. It cannot work and it is, I believe, bringing education to the brink of a crisis. To return to the examples I gave at the beginning of this article, the assumed realities of present, dictated by a rigid architectural observation schedule, blind the observer to the nomadic tendencies of the teacher, even as the observer claims to seek to look for them.

Future visions, however, can be changed, and as I settle into this relentlessly future-orientated world of education, I am determined to find alternative views, ways of helping children to view time and future differently, to commit small acts of nomadic subversion in the face of the arrow of a linear time.

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