George Grant is a major figure in the public intellectual life of Canada. He is the only political philosopher that country has produced. Grant has no doctrine that lends itself to a short precis; his efforts move within the tension of a quest, not the relief of an arrival. But he is not, for that, a merely academic philosopher taking delight in recondite discourse and making the weaker argument seem the stronger.

The term political philosophy is meant in the sense given it by Leo Strauss. It is appropriate to take Strauss as an authority in this matter because Grant has acknowledged an "enormous debt" to Strauss's teaching (TE, 19, n. 1). According to Strauss, political philosophy means two different but related things. On the one hand, it is a branch of philosophy: "philosophy indicates the manner of treatment: a treatment which both goes to the roots and is comprehensive; political indicates both the subject matter and the function: political philosophy deals with political matters in a way that is meant to be relevant for political life." But if political philosophy is relevant for political life, it will be addressed to citizens, not just to philosophers: "From this point of view the adjective 'political' in the expression 'political philosophy' designates not so much a subject matter as a manner of treatment, not the philosophic treatment of politics, but the political or popular treatment of philosophy, or

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We are living in the era when the great thoughts of western liberalism are being actualized.

-George Grant, 1967

*George Grant died in September, 1988, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.
the introduction to philosophy—the attempt to lead the qualified citizens, or rather their qualified sons, from the political life to the philosophic life.” Grant’s writing is philosophical in manner, political in content, politic in effect.

George Grant’s work is accompanied by the voice of his personality. He appears in the world along with his work. The ancient Greeks sometimes spoke of a daimon, a guardian spirit that looked over one’s shoulder. This meant that it was more easily seen by others than by oneself. The daimon, the personal element in a man, is neither subjective nor recognized by the one who reveals it, and yet it is public and real without being objective. For Grant, as for the Greeks, the appearance of one’s person in the world actualized the political virtue of courage. “Theory,” he said, “cannot be pursued in isolation from the need of courage in the world, because those men who do not live with courage in the world will never understand what is at stake in the profoundest differences of theory.”

Grant’s writing, including his theoretical work, evokes a widespread but personal response. Kant once said that the way one could distinguish between genuine difficulties in philosophy and vapors of cleverness was the susceptibility of the work to popularization. Grant has addressed the general reading public in his works, not just academics. This is why, when he is read by academics, their first response is also personal. Then they rummage around for suitable arguments and quotations to justify or bolster the initial experience. The quality of Grant’s prose and what William Christian has called his consummate eroticism may account for this power or charm.

It is difficult to convey much of the initial experience, which is, in part at least, an encounter with George Grant’s daimon. The realm of discourse to which I allude is neither the darkness of the heart nor the objective thing between covers that we may read. As F.R. Leavis used to say, it is somewhere that minds can meet, which means that they must begin with a commitment to participate in a kind of collaborative prac-

1. Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies*, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), 10, 93-94. By this understanding, C.B. Macpherson is a fine historian of political opinion and analyst of political thought; Charles Taylor, the only other Canadian scholar for whom the term political philosopher might be applicable, has devoted much of his life to politics and to academic philosophy, but it is doubtful that he would be comfortable with a Straussian description of his work as political philosophy.
tice. Grant’s writing takes the form: “this is so, isn’t it?” The question contains an appeal for us to confirm, on the basis of our own experience, that indeed it is so. The answer, to borrow from Dr. Leavis again, takes the form: “yes, but ... ” with the “but” standing for qualifications and reservations. I should add that making that “yes, but ... as forcefully as possible is also a way to honor a man who has revealed so many truths to Canadians of my generation, and to the generation we are now called to teach.

In calling George Grant a political philosopher and his work political philosophy, it is obvious that I mean those terms to be taken with some weight. Until the publication of Technology and Justice in 1986, Grant did not identify himself as a political philosopher, and even there he used the term with a qualification. The book that secured Grant’s reputation, particularly among Canadian intellectuals and opinion leaders, Lament for a Nation, was characterized by its author as being “not based on philosophy but on tradition” (LN, 96). Of Technology and Empire, he said it “did not presume to be philosophy” but was “written out of the study of the history of political philosophy” (TE, 11). On Grant’s own terms, this characterization may be true enough: “For whatever else may be said about the philosophers who related their doctrine on political matters to their desire to have knowledge of the whole, among the best of them there has been a monumental consistency which related their doctrine on one issue to what they taught on all others” (TE, 86). Grant, in contrast, freely admitted to having changed his thought on certain fundamental questions (TE, 44). O’Donovan and Flinn have both detected three “phases” in his thought. In Technology and Justice, however, Grant called himself “a political philosopher within Christianity” (TJ, 92). It is for this reason that the first book of essays to honor Grant rightly bore the title George Grant in Process. Even so, the number of phases in his thought and the weight we care to give to his most recent self-interpretation is secondary. Grant has advanced a description and an interpretation of contemporary society and its regime, and that is what concerns us here.

The titles of Grant’s books indicate grand themes: philosophy in the mass age, technology and empire, time as history, English-speaking justice, and now, technology and justice. It takes more than brain-power to

write books with such titles; it takes greatness of soul as well. Without that latter quality, theories of justice in the modern world flatten into handbooks of special pleading. At the same time, however, such books as Grant’s will not harmonize with the dominant opinions of the age. Indeed, Grant has said that “philosophy is always and everywhere the enemy of the opinions of any society, however much philosophers may have tried to conceal that enmity.” Accordingly, the persuasiveness of his writing will depend only in part upon the fidelity of his account of the modern world; it will also depend upon the ability of his readers and hearers imaginatively to experience the common reality of contemporary society in such a way that Grant’s descriptions evoke a meaning.

Two other books provide by their titles clues to the proper interpretation of Grant’s thinking. A series of essays written in honor of Grant’s sixtieth birthday (and published, after the usual delays associated with academic books, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth) bore the title Modernity and Responsibility. The editor of that work observed that the men who honored Grant

have in common their affirmation, which is the affirmation of the book as a whole (as it is of Grant’s work), that it is irresponsible to fail to examine modernity critically and that the ground for criticism and responsibility is not to be found within modernity itself, any more than it is to be found within any one tradition. Responsibility, the authors assert, takes precedence over the modernity in which we live. Modernity indeed provides the setting for our responsibility, as the traditions have provided earlier settings, but it does not, and cannot, and must not define or limit it.

Grant, it is true, worked over the topic of modernity by way of tradition. But in doing so he has worked through both “tradition” and “modernity” as we conventionally understand those terms, namely from within a discursive context whose dialectically related poles are revolutionary radicalism and conservatism.

Joan O’Donovan’s book, George Grant and the Twilight of Justice, indicated the topical theme of much of his work. “In an hour of crisis,” Eric Voegelin once said, “when the order of a society flounders and disintegrates, the fundamental problems of political existence in history are more apt to come into view than in periods of comparative stability.”

Voegelin's insight is sustained by the example of George Grant's reflections on justice, which is surely the question for political philosophy, in the modern technological-liberal world. Indeed, as Grant himself remarked on the opening page of _English-Speaking Justice_: "The first task of thought in our era is to think what that technology is: to think it in its determining power over our politics and sexuality, our music and education" (ESJ, 1). Those themes should be taken in a large sense to refer to our public world and to our private existence, and to education as the mediation of the two. In common sense terms, Grant's mature work is concerned with understanding the significance of technology in the contemporary world.

In this review I am not going to discuss what O'Donovan called his patriotic beginnings; nor am I going to discuss at length Grant's account of Canadian political life save as it bears upon the larger topic of justice in the North American technological-liberal society. I would, however, begin with a few analytical remarks about the place of _Lain ent fora Na tion_ in his thinking. It is that book, more than any other, that has made his name known in Canada. On the basis of it, he has become, in Clifford Orwin's phrase, "a father of Canadian nationalism."

The "nation" of his title was centered in what he would later call "the Great Lakes region of North America" (TE, 11). "Growing up in Ontario," he wrote, "the generation of the 1920s took it for granted that they belonged to a nation. The character of the country was self-evident" (LN, 3). Grant's Canada was one where the National Policy of the first Canadian Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, was an unambiguously good thing: "The west-east pull of trade-from the prairies, down the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, to western Europe-provided a counter-thrust to the pull of continentalism." Indeed, the National Policy had a kind of nobility to it: "In an earlier era, Macdonald's 'National Policy' was... possible because enough Canadians were determined to pay the economic price for such nationalism," but also, Grant was quick to add, "because Britain was still a dominant force pulling the flow of trade eastward (LN, 33, 46). There is a great deal hidden in those abstract images, the "pull" and the "flow" of trade. One of the meanings obscured by them was that those who were determined that Canada would pay the economic price were not always those who actually paid that price. The Canadian Pacific Railway, the building of which was es-

sential to the implementation of Macdonald’s National Policy, has been to western Canadians an agent of their subordination, not the realization of the national dream. For reasons not unconnected with the National Policy, Westerners have viewed the United States, the “pull of continentalism,” with less suspicion and skepticism than Canadians who grew up in Ontario during the 1920s or during the 1980s. In short, Grant shares with many Canadians a view of the nation nurtured by the Loyalist experiences of Upper Canada and Ontario. That experience is local or regional, though the images used to articulate it and the rhetoric of its expression claim to be national.

The limitations of Grant’s regional perspective appeared in his discussion, in *Lament for a Nation*, of another Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker. To be sure, Grant showed both his affection for Diefenbaker and an awareness of the limitations of Diefenbaker’s policies. However, after a second Prime Minister from the West, Joe Clark, was removed from the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, Diefenbaker’s significance as a Westerner is clearer. In this light, Grant’s discussion of the conflict between Diefenbaker’s “populism” and his commitment to “free enterprise” with the corporate conservatism of central Canada was particularly revealing: “Nor did his talk of free enterprise belong to an older Canadian conservatism, which had used public power to achieve national purposes. The Conservative Party had, after all, created Ontario Hydro, the CNR, the Bank of Canada, and the CBC” (LN, 14). To many Westerners, those “national purposes” and the examples adduced as evidence were not at all national but regional, and instruments of what nearly all Canadians now call centralization.

Grant’s criticism of Diefenbaker’s lack of specificity regarding national purposes is less a criticism of Diefenbaker than the expression of Grant’s own imaginative horizon, what Northrop Frye called the garrison mentality of Great-Lakes Canada. In other words, Diefenbaker and Clark were unacceptable to central Canada, to Ontario and Quebec, not because of their nationalism or limitations as statesmen but because they were not trusted by majorities at the center of power. They were not trusted because they did not share the vision of central Canada and did not easily mouth the platitudes nor exult the images of the garrison mentality. That *Lament for a Nation* remains a popular book among intellectuals and opinion leaders may simply be a consequence of the regionalism of opinion leadership in Canada.

In the years since *Lament fora Nation* was published, Grant has undertaken an analysis of what even then he saw as the greatest force in the dissolution of Canadian nationhood, technology. It is a question central to the lives of all North Americans and, indeed, to most people now alive. His writing has shifted from the topic of Canada’s absorption by the American technological-liberal empire to that of the meaning of English-speaking justice. This has meant that his vision of the “nation” has altered with experience as well. In an essay on Celine, for instance, he reminded his readers that chatter by professors of literature about Celine’s madness was misplaced. Celine’s hallucinations were recounted during the saturation bombing of Hanover, “Roosevelt’s unconditional surrender . . . in full swing. Was there, Grant asked, a better way to say “what is it like to be in the midst of saturation bombing? When one says this, it is well to remember that English-speaking people have done most of the bombing in this era, not so much suffered it.” To remind us of that fact does not mean that such bombing was not to some extent right or in the service of justice. It is, however, to remind us that it was right or in the service of justice only to an extent or in part. This sort of reminding is some distance from his early “patriotic” pamphlet, *The Empire, Yes or No?* Grant has, in short, moved from a close love of one’s own to a more comprehensive love of one’s own that included Europe. For this reason he could not welcome without qualification what his own people did, in the service of justice, in Europe. Likewise Grant has recently remarked, “Canada is a nation put together of regions. I think that is what this nation is all about.” That was not a comment the author of *Lament for a Nation* would easily have made.

To summarize these remarks about the place of *Lament fora Nation* in Grant’s work, one might say that a challenge to what he loved, namely the Loyalist heartland of Ontario, by a force that he had learned not to love, namely the United States, set him thinking. His thought-train pulled him away from his tradition, from the particularity that had been handed over to him, and he came to see the regional complexity of Canada. At the same time, his views of the United States changed as well. In his later writings it appears no longer just a threat to Loyalist Canada, but also as a threat, so to speak, to itself. That is, to the extent that the United States is the center of a liberal-technological empire, all particularity, including those republican institutions that distinguished the two political units of this continent, must eventually dissolve.

In view of the thoughtless moralism and petty nationalism that in-

forms so much Canadian opinion regarding the United States, Americans might be forgiven if they ignored or dismissed Grant’s criticism of their country. Such a dismissal would stand in need of forgiveness, however, because it would be a mistake. At the height of his popularity in the United States, Marshall McLuhan wrote a newspaper column called, variously, "D. E. W. Line" or "Thoughts along the D.E.W. Line." The reference to the string of obsolete radar bases in the Arctic, intended to give a Distant Early Warning of a Soviet bomber attack, was meant to suggest that Canadians such as McLuhan were well situated to observe the United States from a distance that was not a great distance, and at the same time give an early warning of impending problems or worse. Grant’s remarks might usefully be received in the same spirit as McLuhan’s.

**Evidence of Events**

Several events were paradigmatic in bringing to articulate form Grant’s deeper understanding of the meaning of technology: the war in Vietnam, the space program, the increasing availability of easy abortions, loose talk about euthanasia.

*Technology and Empire* was "mostly written as the meaning of the English-speaking world’s part in the Vietnam war gradually presented its gorgon’s face." For this reason the essays were "austere" pieces of writing. "How could there be any public laughter for somebody whose life came forth from the English-speaking world, at a time when that world reached its basest point?" (TE, 11). From its earliest beginnings, it has been the fate of Canada to take part in the rivalry and interplay of ecumenic power-units. "What our fate is today becomes most evident in light of Vietnam. It is clear that in that country the American empire has been demolishing a people, rather than allowing them to live outside the American orbit" (TE, 63). Canada and Canadians, willy nilly, were accomplices in the "ferocious demolition" undertaken by the Americans. Moreover, what made the catastrophe of Vietnam different from those undertaken earlier or later by Germans or by Russians was that Vietnam was not the consequence of "the perverse products of western ideology." On the contrary: "What is being done in Vietnam in 1967 is being done by the English-speaking empire and in the name of liberal democracy" (TE, 65). At the same time, however, what appeared to him to be the obvious injustice of the war "cannot be accounted for within the usual liberal description by which the society is legitimised to its own members and to the world" (TE, 75). Grant’s indictment may seem harsh when we consider the nature of the regime that rules Vietnam twenty years later. But we may wonder as well if American "demolition"
GEORGE GRANT As POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER

was unconnected with the present tyrannies of Southeast Asia. However that may be, Grant’s emphasis was upon the decadence of liberalism and of the liberal account of justice that allowed the United States to act as it did. His analysis was based on the premise, to him self-evident, that the United States is a liberal regime and fundamentally decent.

Disintegrating liberalism is not, however, the same as vanished liberalism: it is grotesque to compare the Americans to totalitarian mass murderers. Nor was the “ruthlessness and banal callousness” of the war simply a consequence of the thoughtless self-interest of a greedy technological empire (TE, 26). Now, it is true that no modern empire can be maintained in the absence of violence and aggressive war; but what made Vietnam so unusual was that the necessary violence could not be sustained or justified “under the banner of freedom and a liberating modernisation.” Consequently there existed in North America a patriotic political protest of a kind that never occurred during the era of fading European ecumenic hegemony. The reason, Grant said, lay in the living reality of American liberalism. Moreover, the absence of liberalism in Europe was what later made such episodes as the Watergate affair so difficult for Europeans to understand. How could Senator Ervin’s quotations from the Bible, Shakespeare and the county court house appear to sophisticated Europeans, to say nothing of clever Marxists, as anything other than hypocrisy gilding itself in cliche?

Even though the exigencies of imperial violence increasingly make mockery of the rhetoric of that [liberal] dream, the dream still publicly holds, that North America still stands for a future of hope, a people of good will bringing the liberation of progress to the world. To be more precise, the dream still charmed the most banal and ruthless of our managers (TE, 27). They were the ones doing the greatest damage; they were also the ones for whom Vietnam was genuinely tragic.

Despite the injustice manifest in Vietnam, it was important to maintain a clear distinction between European and North American dynamism. In an essay entitled, “In Defence of North America,” Grant wrote:

What makes the drive to technology so strong is that it is carried on by men who still identify what they are doing with the liberation of mankind. Our ruling managers are able to do what they do just because among sufficient of them technology and liberalism support each other as identified. It is this identification which makes our drive to technology still more dynamic than the nihilistic will to will which is emptied of all conceptions of purpose. (TE, 27)

It may turn out that North American liberal technology would someday turn into the nihilist will to will, but that is not yet how we under-
stand our present [1968]." What Vietnam did bring to light was "an ancient and forgotten doctrine, that evil is, not the opposite, but the absence of good. If your moral roots lead you to exalt affluent technology as the highest end, out of the consequent vulgarity will come a use of power, when deemed necessary to comfortable self-preservation, which perpetuates evil from its very banality."13 Vietnam was an intimation of deprival because it expressed the impossibility of liberal imperialism.

A second event, space exploration, "the supreme example of the autonomy of technology," was likewise beyond the categories of earlier liberal justification.14 The importance of the autonomy of technology can scarcely be overestimated: "the fulfillment that many find in the exploration of space is some evidence that the spirit of conquest may now be liberated from any purpose beyond itself, since such exploration bears no relation to the building of freedom and equality here on earth" (TE, 138). The building of a regime of freedom and equality was connected as consequence to the initial justification for technological activity. Today, however, the space program "serves as verification of the continuing meaning in the modern drive to the future, and the possibility of noble deeds within that drive" (TE, 138). By this reading, major programs such as the Strategic Defense Initiative and manned space flight may be linked back to the original project of building or at least defending a regime of freedom and equality, and so to human nobility of a kind. Yet, the potentialities of space exploration may also imply the destruction of human nobility. If, for example, humans cannot adapt to the rigors of space, substitutes may be fabricated who can. Even now the training of astronauts scarcely serves to enhance their humanity.

More ominous however, was the popular interpretation given to space exploration. In particular, Grant was concerned with "the sermons preached by our journalists about the achievement of landing on the moon" (TH, 6). On the one hand, the moon-landing was described as one more stage in human evolution from some mythic primordial muck; on the other, it was but the latest example of human freedom in overcoming nature. In the first instance, nature and history blended in the old nineteenth-century talk of evolution; in the second, they were separated so that human history might take charge of nature and "direct the very process from which he [= man] came forth" (TH, 7). The second usage implied an abandonment of an otherwise comforting belief in progress. In the earlier formulation, historical change was understood as

the manifestation of increasing rationality, "and because they [ = pro-gressives] assumed that rationality was 'good', they could find in history the purpose for their existing" (TH, 28). But just as molecular biologists have argued successfully that there is no need for a final purpose to account for the mechanisms of chance and necessity that have driven evolutionary change, "so also there are no reasons to justify belief in the goodness of rationality as our given purpose" (TH, 28). Centuries of belief that rationality was a high calling for man, that truth-seeking was a virtue, produced a science and a technology that have shown discursively and in deed that there is no basis for that belief. The assertion that the space program is an indication that we can direct the process of our own genesis implies that we make ourselves as we go along, and without a vision given by nature or in the nature of things.

The third event that lit up the meaning of technology was abortion. With the 1973 United States Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, the triumph of contractarianism loosened whatever moral cement remained from the liberal account of justice. In delivering the majority opinion, Justice Blackmun stated the assumption that guided the Court's deliberations: the allocation of rights under the Constitution cannot be made on the basis of knowledge of what is good. His authority in announcing that principle was his illustrious predecessor, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who in Lochner v. New York had argued that our essential ignorance of moral goodness entailed the acceptance of ethical pluralism and a strict legal contractualism. Accordingly, rights were concerned with ordering conflicts between "persons" and legislatures.

In the Roe decision, the conflict concerned the right of the state of Texas to pass laws regulating the way a pregnant woman can behave during pregnancy. Such laws were held to interfere with the prior right of a woman to control her body. Fetuses, who might be thought to have an interest in the outcome, were not considered "persons" and so could not have standing in the litigation. In other kinds of cases, involving estate law, for instance, fetuses have apparently been granted standing since they are capable of inheriting. Roe v. Wade has been praised as an example of the nobility of liberal contractarianism because "the right of an individual 'person' is defended in the decision against the power of a majority in a legislature." Yet, Grant said, "however 'liberal' this decision may seem at the surface, it raises a cup of poison to the lips of liberalism" (ESJ, 70-71). The "poison" is in the form of the "unthought ontology" that lay behind the decision. That is, by distinguishing between the pregnant woman and fetus in light of the legal status of "per-

15. 410 U.S. 113, 93 S.Ct. 756, 35 L.Ed. 2d 147.
son, liberal justice also was obliged to distinguish between the pregnant woman and the fetus as beings.

By deciding, Grant said, on the basis of Holmes’s doctrine, that the potential or expectant mother had rights whereas the potential or expectant infant did not, a more fundamental question was necessarily introduced and decided upon: "What is it about human beings that makes it proper that we should have any rights at all?" (TJ, 117-18). By denying rights to fetuses, the Court said that they were things that had no right to continue to exist. Now, since fetuses are of the same species as pregnant women, the question arises: what do pregnant women have that fetuses do not have such that pregnant women have legal status and rights? Grant proceeded to eliminate some obvious arguments. We do not usually accord legal status and rights to cats and dogs because we are not of the same species. There the "ontological distinction" between what is and is not a person does not violate common sense. But, to repeat, fetuses and pregnant women are of the same species: "pregnant women do not give birth to cats" (ESJ, 71). Fetuses are not simply "part" of the pregnant woman because, from its beginning the fetus is genotypically unique. The argument that fetuses are "merely" potentially alive is also rejected. Something is either alive or dead, and fetuses can be dead. When it is alive it is potentially dead, but to say a fetus is potentially alive is nonsense. That is to say: if a fetus is alive, it is human. It is true that fetuses are not "self-sufficient," but neither are diabetics or paraplegics who nevertheless seem to enjoy rights to continued existence. Are fetuses then no more than "tissue"? If so, how are we to distinguish, with respect to rights, fetal from diabetic, paraplegic or merely stupid "tissue"? In answering that question, we must recall that the Supreme Court granted rights to one member of the species by denying them to another. Grant’s question was: on what grounds? It was, he said, a "terrible question" because the answer cannot be: on grounds of being human. That is, the being of both potential child and potential mother was human being and not any other kind.

Let us look at Justice Blackmun’s decision more carefully. The argument turned upon whether or not a fetus was a person within the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, which declared among other things that no person could be deprived of life without due process of law. "If . . . personhood is established," said Blackmun, "the appellant’s case, of course, collapses, for the fetus’ right to life is then guaranteed specifically by the Amendment." On reargument the appellant agreed. Thus, there was no question in law; there was only the question of fact. So far as usage was concerned, Blackmun allowed that in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments and elsewhere "in nearly all these instances, the use of the word is such that it has application only postna-
Yet, Blackmun and the Court were evidently unsatisfied because the argument against abortion raised other matters. Grant and the state of Texas argued that life began at conception and that the State therefore has a compelling right to protect it. The Court, however, made the following observation: "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate on the answer." Leaving aside the question of whether special training is required to resolve the question, and whether any further developments in man's knowledge are likely to matter, it seems that the Court acted as if it knew the answer.\(^1\) Had the decision simply been: fetuses are not alive until they are born, it would have been a clear judgment although arbitrary in the extreme. The reasoning that underlay the judgment contained several additional implications, Grant's "poison."

In areas other than criminal abortion, "the unborn have never been recognized in the law as persons in the whole sense." A great deal is obscured by the phrase, "persons in the whole sense," just as in the phrase "potential life." In Grant's words, "On what basis do we draw the line? Why are the retarded, the criminal or the mentally ill persons? What is it which divides adults from fetuses when the latter have only to cross the bridge of time to catch up with the former?" (ESJ, 72). Is it the ability to make contracts? That would exclude ducks and very stupid humans; but what is due humans, whether very stupid or not, is that we do not hunt them. The government does not issue licenses to hunt very stupid humans: why not? Are they persons in the whole sense? What about the old, especially the old who are very stupid? That is, once the question of "persons in the whole sense" is introduced, it is clear that contemporary liberalism can give, at best, only ambiguous answers.

The reason that Grant adduced to explain this gap in our understanding of justice concerned nature: "Many believe that we are accidental beings in a world that came to be through chance." That is, many people do not "hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights, that among these rights are life ... that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men." On the contrary, many people believe that all men are not created equal; to the extent that being created indicates the reality of a Creator, which is a very large extent, many

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\(^1\) Special training is not required because it is possible to speak of a dead blastosphere, for example; if it is not dead, it is alive.
people do not believe they are created at all. Why, then, have we rights? And what, then, happens to justice when it is no longer a natural goal towards which we are drawn?

Justice can become a privilege society grants to some of its people, if they are the right age, and sufficiently like most other people. One can foresee a time when before one can qualify for rights, a kind of Means Test maybe used: "Are you human in the fullest sense of the word? Are you still enjoying quality of life?" And here is the crunch: as the fetus loses out on this ethic, so will the weak, the aged, the infirmed, the unproductive. If we come to believe that we are not creatures, but accidents, rights will no longer be given in the very nature of our legal system. (TJ, 126)

The effects of this new and diminished justice are expressed in a vulgar way in slogans. The purpose of slogans is to hide from us an awareness of what we are doing and substitute sentimentality for self-awareness. Consider the tag: "every 'child a wanted child." Who could be against that? Of course it is better for children to be wanted rather than rejected, and for lives to have a high quality rather than a low one. But let us remember for what purpose these slogans are now mainly used. They are used negatively, and with terrible destructive implications. Every child should be a wanted child-so destroy those that do not seem to be wanted" (TJ, 126). The slogan, therefore, is used not to express a compassionate approach to children but to diminish some lives as expendable. Likewise the phrase, "quality of life," a phrase borrowed, probably in ignorance of its source, from Nietzsche, that has replaced the earlier "sanctity of life," is not meant to express a compassionate approach to human suffering but to direct our attention away from life and towards its several mutable qualities so that we can then deny rights to those who do not measure up.

Possibly the worst kind of deception and self-deception surrounds not the beginning of life but its end. Euthanasia literally means a good death, which is something we all want. Its current meaning is: deliberate intervention to bring about the death of another human being. The old term for this practice was mercy killing, "but it is not now always appropriate, as mercy is not always the motive for the killing" (TJ, 104). Grant distinguished three types of euthanasia. First, voluntary euthanasia or "assisted suicide," which is usually justified in terms of a "right to die," and which amounts to a right to kill. Second, involuntary euthanasia, which generally takes the form of withdrawing treatment and is to be distinguished from a refusal to prolong dying. Generally speaking dying is prolonged because we have the technologies to do so even though the patient's condition will not be improved. Involuntary
euthanasia, in contrast, would involve the withdrawal of life-support technologies from persons who were not dying. By analogy with the early slogan, here we might find: "Every granny a wanted granny." The third type of euthanasia is often called "benign neglect." Generally this means killing defective infants by starvation.

Euthanasia and the language that surrounds it is greatly removed from old notions of providing comfort and allowing patients to die. Forcing patients to die for their own sakes or for the sake of the family or medical practitioners or the "health-care delivery system" as a whole is something quite new and it has been accompanied by changes similar to those stated by Justice Blackmun. A person, for example, is no longer an individual human being, a category, but has become a scalar set of attributes. If one does not score well on the Stanford-Binet IQ test, for example, it has been proposed that one is not "fully" a person. Exalting neocortical functions as an index of personhood is complemented by the term "mere biological life" to describe those with diminished intellectual capacities—a child with Down's Syndrome, for example. What the term "mere biological life" is meant to indicate is an imperfect human being. The assumption seems to be that our humanity is measured by our intellect, an assumption that Grant considers highly dangerous. Anyone who works in a university knows that there are very clever people, people who would score very well on the Stanford-Binet test, who are mean, small-minded, and tyrannous.

Another example is the phrase "death with dignity." To the extent that dignity means self-control, independence and autonomy, it is one of the fine rewards of being human. It is also "irreconcilable with most kinds of dying and with all kinds of death" (TJ, 112-13). Linked to it is the phrase, already encountered, "quality of life." Thus one may say: when life is low quality or without value, one ought to be allowed death with dignity. When surrounded by the proper sentiments it suggests the "caring professions" working to sustain our humanity. Grant insisted, however, that the main point of these pleasant phrases is hidden: "what is going to happen to those not considered to have quality of life?" (TJ, 114). To some extent we already know: quality of life criteria are seldom invoked positively. If a patient is normal, he will be treated without any reference to quality of life criteria; if not, questions will be raised about whether his life is worth preserving. 17 The significance of these and similar phrases is not simply that they becloud the significance of our ac-

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17. It should be emphasized again that Grant is not referring to withholding life-support systems from the dying but from, for example, the retarded because they are retarded and so able to enjoy only a diminished quality of life.
tions with sentiments but that they provide us with “great confidence in our right to control human life” (TJ, 115). In an older language, they seem to turn murder, the deliberate killing of the innocent, into something humanitarian.

The Vietnam War indicated to Grant the ruthlessness of an ascendant technological civilization and the space program its lack of moderation or even of direction. Inhabitants of North America can easily dispute these interpretations or forget about them because we are scarcely touched by them. The evidence adduced to indicate the meaning of abortion and euthanasia is more immediate: each of us was born (but might not have been) and each of us must die (and may be forced to die). It does not take much imagination to see the link between the absolute right of a woman to abortion and the absence of a right of an unborn child to existence, though it is not clear why rights are distributed in that way. Let us add to those rights (or lack of rights) the right to kill those with a low quality of life. According to Grant, we may find coherence in the distribution of rights (and the rhetoric that accompanies the distribution of rights) by reference to the focus of technological society, namely cybernetics. Considered in the light of cybernetics, abortion and euthanasia are techniques of population management.

This observation raises two serious questions: if the justice of a society, following Aristotle, can be indicated at least in part by the way the strong treat the weak, insofar as they are equal, namely as living human beings, what does the public place we give to abortion and euthanasia indicate about justice in the technological society? Second and more directly: how did we come to this understanding of justice?

Technology for Philosophers

Grant’s understanding of what might be called the phenomenology of technology was borrowed from Jacques Ellul. According to Ellul, technology is “the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity.” Ellul’s detailed description of the technological society was accepted by Grant; his reservations were made chiefly with respect to the language Ellul used. In addition, Grant relied on certain of Heidegger’s formulations, chiefly those found in the essay “The Question Concerning Technology,” in Heidegger’s first volume on Nietzsche, and in his book on Leibniz, Der Satz vom Grund. At a more profound level,

Grant has been led by the political philosophy of Leo Strauss to an understanding of modernity of which technology may be considered the greatest perfection. And finally, Grant has learned from Simone Weil how to articulate the experience of Christian faith, within which, as he said, he was a political philosopher (TJ, 92). In this section we will consider some of Grant’s analyses of the significance of technology, the evidence for which was indicated above.

The dominant paradigm of knowledge in any society sets the agenda for what is to count as truth. In ours it is natural science, a discourse that expresses a project, literally a throwing forth, of reason to know the world as object, literally, as thrown over against us; it is a project of putting questions in such a way as to force an object to appear to reason, to summon up an object to give our reason reasons for its being an object. In Grant’s last book, *Technology and Justice*, he identified the modern paradigm of knowledge as “behaviourist explanation in terms of algebra” (TJ, 9). It is a paradigm applicable equally to the human as to the natural sciences: both quarks and humans behave in conformity to statistical regularities that may be expressed algebraically. This discourse is surrounded by rules and procedures, as is any science, but more importantly, it is suffused with art, with the activity of making. Grant has insisted on the importance of the novelty of this amalgam. In Aristotle’s day, for example, science dealt with what was necessary or rather with necessary being, whereas art dealt with what might or might not be, depending upon human agency, chiefly the capacity to make. Whereas Aristotle would rightly understand a biology as the giving of an account (logos) of life (bios) technology is not the giving of an account of the means of making things happen (techne). It is the actual means of making things happen. The new meaning of technology “reveals to us the fact that these new events happen because we westerners willed to develop a new and unique co-penetration of the arts and sciences, a co-penetration which has never before existed” (TJ, 12).

The newness of this co-penetration, where arts enable new knowledge to appear and where knowledge guides the production of new artifices, inevitably calls forth thought, and especially questions. Many of these questions will be, from the perspective of technology, out of order.

Consider the simple question: what should be made? Technology can make and unmake a great deal; it can make some things, such as radioactive waste from nuclear generators that it cannot (yet) unmake, and it can unmake other things, such as the Tasmanian tiger that it cannot (yet)

make. Before science was co-penetrated with art, it could say what ought to be made: good meant what something was fitted for. Before technology, that is, there was no "metaphysically neutral" science of nature. But, as Grant said, "our modern science does not understand nature in these teleological terms. Knowledge of good cannot be derived from knowledge of nature as objects." We have replaced speech about good in the sense of natural fitness with speech about value, which is something added to nature. The modern assumption is: truth and meaning originate with humans and are not inherent in a cosmic order independent of human activity. Poetry, for example, is considered creative, not imitative. One of the consequences of technology is that we have lost a sense of boundary or limit to making.

Close to the end of his study, Thoughts on Machiavelli, Leo Strauss voiced a pungent aphorism: "Modern man as little as pre-modern man can escape imitating nature as he understands nature. Imitating an expanding universe, modern man has ever more expanded and thus become ever more shallow." Grant drew a stark inference. "The dominant tendency of the western world has been to divide history from nature and to consider history as dynamic and nature controllable as externality. Therefore, modern men have been extremely violent in their dealings with other men and other beings" (TE, 72). Grant had made a similar observation in his first book, Philosophy in the Mass Age, and had grounded that observation in a similar metaphysical position. The worst crimes of the twentieth century, he said, had been undertaken in proof "of progress and man’s right to make history." The impressive magnitude of those crimes "has presented us with one question above all: are there any limits to history making? The question must be in any intelligent mind whether man’s domination of nature can lead to the end of human life on the planet, if not in a cataclysm of bombs, perhaps by the slow perversion of the process of life." The co-penetration of art and science, which has led men forth to conquer nature, has produced as many obvious dangers as benefits.

Thinking what the previous sentence may mean is, literally, a paradox. On the one hand, "this dominance of man over nature means that we can satisfy more human needs with less work than ever before in history." In this respect the objective, clearly, is to liberate the individual from the pain of toil; it is the relief of man’s estate (Bacon). But at

21. The phrase is from Leo Strauss, "An Epilogue, in Hilail Gildin, ed., Political Philoso-
the same time, increasingly tight rules of behavior seem necessary to regulate human life; not least of all there exist strict rules for rulers. The paradox indeed is this: so great is the power that society can exert against the individual that it even subjects to dominance those very elites who seem to rule. Thus at this stage of industrial civilization, rule becomes ever more impersonal, something outside the grip of any individual. Theoretically speaking, the paradox or contradiction of technology is that it is said to aim at the domination of nature for a purpose, namely individual liberation, but that at the same time it requires an increase in domination of humans, presented as administrative normalization, mental hygiene, or social welfare, all of which is undertaken abstractly. To put the matter directly: "More technology is needed to meet the emergencies which technology has produced." The kind of technology, however, is not simply hardware technology but "technology turned towards human beings" (TJ, 16). A generation ago Norbert Wiener observed: "We have modified our environment so radically that we must now modify ourselves in order to exist in the new environment." Grant saw no reason to dispute Wiener's observation, though he saw in it a sinister significance.

In his later writings, Grant discussed the theoretical aspect of technology in connection with the term, the universal and homogeneous state. The Hegelian or Kojevian depths of that concept do not concern us. What is significant in the present context is that the universal and homogeneous state is equivalent to the technological society insofar as it combines the "paradox" of individual liberation and abstract or impersonal subjection to rules.

"The end towards which the modern project was directed," Grant wrote, "was the universal and homogeneous state—the worldwide society of free and equal men in which all but a few idiots would be open to the knowledge of science and philosophy and therefore increasingly ruled by it." Likewise in Technology and Empire: "the drive to the universal and homogeneous state remains the dominant ethical ‘ideal’ to which our contemporary society appeals for meaning in its activity. In its terms our society legitimises itself to itself" (TE, 88-89). If the belief in freedom is serious, and is not simply a doctrine of free will or a project of personal self-fulfillment, it leads to activity that seeks to actualize free-

27. For details see Barry Cooper, The End of History: An Essay in Modern Hegelianism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
dom for all persons. "The purpose of action becomes the building of the universal and homogeneous state-the society in which all men are free and equal and increasingly able to realize their concrete individuality. Indeed this is the governing goal of ethical striving, as much in the modernising east as in the west" (TE, 33). The condition for actualizing freedom for all persons is the mastery of nature and especially of that aspect of nature that appears to human consciousness as good or bad fortune or chance. The condition that is antecedent to the goal of modern striving, namely the universal and homogeneous state, and the actual means by which that goal is attained, is technology. In Grant’s words, "progress in techniques is the horizon for us" (TE, 31).

The use of Nietzsche’s term ‘horizon’ introduces a further theoretical consideration. Horizons "are the absolute presupposition within which individuals and indeed whole civilizations do their living " (TH, 29). All that appears in the world appears within the limit established by a horizon. The ordinary live within horizons that appear to them as given; the great establish their own within which both they and others live and are sustained. That is, horizons are not discoveries about the structure of reality but products of the wills of the great and the strong. But once we know a horizon for what it is, namely the product of will, it can no longer sustain us as truth. Under such conditions, "impotence descends " (TH, 29), whether we count ourselves among the great or not. Most men, however, do not become conscious of their horizons; certainly most men are not conscious of technology as a horizon. Of those who know technology as their horizon, impotence may well be the consequence of their knowledge.

We have seen that Technology and Justice was centered on the modern paradigm of knowledge. That account of knowledge, Grant said is at the "core of the fate of western civilization" (TJ, 9). It is a fate, a destiny, and not something we can control. As Heidegger said (and Grant quoted), technology is the ontology of the age (TJ, 32). This does not mean, however, that our only response is impotence: we are capable of questioning the cost of that paradigm of knowledge. One of the costs, Grant has indicated, lies in the novel understanding of justice made plain in the Roe decision. We will see others in the following section. Within the modern paradigm of knowledge, however, a measure of impotence is thoughtlessness. Grant illustrated his point by analyzing a sentence we have all heard in one form or another: "the computer does not impose upon us the ways it should be used." 29

29. This sentence was first the subject of analysis in A. Rotstein, ed., Beyond Industrial Growth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 117-31; the present text is in TJ, 19-34.
The intent of that statement is to convey the information that computers are neutral instruments, insofar as the morality of the goals for which they are used is determined externally. This statement "gives the prevalent 'liberal' view of the modern situation which is so rooted in us that it seems to be common sense itself, even rationality itself. We have certain technological capacities; it is up to us to use those capacities for decent human purposes" (TJ, 21). However, upon reflection, the sentence abstracts the capacities of the machine from the events that have made such machines possible. Those events include the activities of generations of human beings as well as the triumph of the modern paradigm of knowledge, which is "central to our civilisational destiny." However that destiny is judged, "the only point here is that without this destiny computers would not exist. And like all destinies, they 'impose'" (TJ, 22). Accordingly, even though our common sense understanding may indicate that the computer is a neutral instrument, reflection indicates it is an instrument "from within the destiny which does impose itself upon us, and therefore the computer does impose" (TJ, 23). Moreover, the computer is, in fact limited in its ways: facts can only be stored as information by being classified, and it is inherent in classification to homogenize. In addition, information can only exist with respect to objects and therefore as part of that science that summons forth objects to give us their reasons.

It makes as much sense to say of automobiles that they do not impose upon us the ways they should be used as it does to say it of computers. "Obviously the 'ways' that automobiles and computers can be used are dependent on their being investment-heavy machines which require large institutions for their production" (TJ, 25). Computers cannot be built by Bushmen or Inuit; they can be built only in societies where there are large corporations. In order for Bushmen and Inuit to build computers, they would have to cease to be Bushmen and Inuit. It is equally obvious that they are not neutral with respect to the relationship between the technological society and that of Bushmen or Inuit. "They will be the instruments of the imperialism of certain communities towards other communities" (TJ, 25). Whether our current imperialism is but a prelude to the universal and homogeneous state, "in which individual empires and nations have disappeared, "it seems clear that the universal and homogeneous state "would be an even larger corporation" (TJ, 26). In general, therefore, the notion of the neutrality of computers cannot be sustained; or, what amounts to the same thing, the ways that computers are used cannot be detached from modern conceptions of justice. In turn, these conceptions of justice emerged from the account of reasoning that led to the building of computers in the first place. That is, we do not, because we can not, use computers according to standards of
justice that exist outside of the existence of the computers themselves. "The instruments and the standards of justice are bound together, both belonging to the same destiny of modern reason" (TJ, 28). Technology, in sum, has brought us a new accounting of goodness, which is not neutral.

**Technology for Citizens**

Grant’s theoretical analysis has shown that the faculty of will is at the center of technology, specifically the will to overcome chance, luck, fortune, or spontaneity. As a purely practical matter, North Americans are "the most advanced" in technical achievements and in living the technological life; as a consequence, "we are called to think what we are" from the midst of a technological presence (TE, 15; ESJ, 2). And that, precisely, is the problem: because we are in the midst of technology, because it is so new and amazing, "the very dynamism of the novelty enthralled us to inhibit that thinking." In fact, in the first edition of *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, Grant characterized North America as holding collectively the belief "that moral issues do not require much reflection (let alone systematic reflection) and that therefore the good life is in no way dependent upon sustained philosophical thought."³⁰ Since the good life in 1959 was self-evidently North American, there was no need for thought. It must be immediately added that innocence of philosophical thinking has not been confined to the late 1950s but is an integral part of the history of the new world.

One reason why it has been especially difficult for North Americans in particular to think through the meaning of technology is a consequence of the fact that for most of our history we have devoted our lives to "the practical business of a pioneering nation. Such a society must put its energies into those pursuits that will achieve material ends. The active rather than contemplative life perforce becomes the ideal. Anything that will effectively overcome hardship must be welcomed with enthusiasm. That concentration on material ends and admiration for the man of action continues for a long while after it has ceased to be a necessity."³¹ In a pioneering society there are obvious material rewards open to men of modest intellectual achievement and a limited awareness of rich and complex cultural realities. Accordingly, we have been optimistic about the future and, when dreams have lost their grandeur coming true, we or our ancestors have been willing to push on out West.

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Moreover, the actual activity of pioneering was a technological encounter with an unformed land: the assault on the Ontario forests was followed by the mineral mining of the Canadian Shield and wheat mining of the prairies. Americans have an entire historiography centered on the ‘frontier thesis.’

Pioneering activities use up a person’s lifetime with the consequence that the time for contemplation, even if the desire were present, is lost. The real difficulty that we have had in thinking about technology, however, is not that we have been too busy. Rather it is the fact that the spiritual side of North American life has been in the service of technology. The point of pioneer life was to gain the freedom and independence from Europe, characteristically called the old world, necessary for self-legislation and for communal legislation.

To know that parents had to force the instincts of their children to the service of pioneering control; to have seen the pained and unrelenting faces of the women; to know, even in one’s flesh and dreams, the results of generations of the mechanising of the body; to see all around one the excesses and follies now necessary to people who can will back the body only through sexuality, must not be to forget what was necessary and what was heroic in that conquest. (TE, 25)

Political liberty may not be the highest good, but it is a good, and one that has been won on this continent by pain and courage.

The relation of North America to Europe has been subtle. To Europeans, North American pioneering existence has resulted in hedonist and vulgar self-indulgence, a society of bounders sorely in need of a little culture and a sense of their proper place. “They express their contempt of us as a society barren of anything but the drive to technology; yet their contempt is too obviously permeated with envy to be taken as pure” (TE, 16). What Europeans forget, perhaps what their envy prevents them from remembering, is that the North American drive to technological liberalism arose in a religious, not a secular, context. “What must never be forgotten is that the secular faith in our society has not arisen in the same way as the secular faiths of Europe, because it is the end product of a certain form of Protestantism—namely Puritanism.”

Puritanism was always a marginal religious movement in Europe, but the Pilgrim Fathers are central to our myths of purpose. In North America, Thanksgiving is celebrated on different dates in the United States and Canada, but with the same authentic conviction that far outweighs the

sentiments that inform the original English festivals of harvest home.

Puritanism, with its biblical emphasis on God's working His will in history, brought to Christianity an intense concern that history give evidence of God's purposes. Richard Hooker's description of the Puritan in the Preface to *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* brought out the intensity of their devotion to historical meaning. "Indeed, it is the biblical interest in the concrete event and the form of the world which has created the relationship between Protestantism and science—a relationship vouched for in the fact that the scientific spirit has held sway above all in the predominantly Protestant countries, England, Germany and the U.S.A."

The historical tie that bound together Protestantism and technology was their allied rejection of medieval Aristotelianism and especially of natural theology.

Perhaps more importantly, Puritanism contained an assertive and austere doctrine of will. "The absence of natural theology and liturgical comforts left the lonely soul face to face with the transcendent (and therefore elusive) will of God. This will had to be sought and served not through our contemplations but directly through our practice. From the solitude and uncertainty of that position came the responsibility which could find no rest" (TE, 23). Responsibility before God coupled to restlessness in the soul of the solitary practitioner was experienced as radical freedom and an unflinching will to do right. "Indeed the Puritan interpretation of the Bible produced more a driving will to righteousness than a hunger and thirst for it. As it became secularised in America, that will became the will of self-righteousness, and produced its own incarnation in Emerson" (ESJ, 60). In turn the combination of willful self-righteousness and pioneering practicality has produced the managers and technicians that have made North American production of the good things of life the envy of the rest of the modern world.

A second element of North American thoughtlessness regarding technology is derived from liberalism, which in this context served to justify the production of the good things of life as the highest good. With liberalism the connection is not internal, as with the centrality of will, but consequential. Hobbes and Locke were not Puritans, Protestants, Christians, or even theists by reason of their political teaching. "Protestantism," said Grant, "was merely a presence in the public world they inhabited which was more compatible with their espousings than Catholicism" (TE, 22). Protestants, however, found the political teachings of the liberal thinkers congenial and acceptable. The course of the transformation of liberalism by Protestantism and of Protestantism by liberalism

has been chronicled by Max Weber, whom Grant praised highly. "Worldly asceticism" was to become ever more worldly and less ascetic in the gradual dissolving of the central Protestant vision. The control of the passions in Protestantism became more and more concentrated on the sexual, and on others which might be conducive to sloth, while the passions of greed and mastery were emancipated from traditional Christian restraints." (TE, 22-23). During the course of its dissolution Protestantism provided the "necessary moral cement" that was not to be found in the teachings of Hobbes and Locke (when those thinkers were interpreted consistently, which according to Grant meant as calculating contractarians). The absence of any "moral cement" at the heart of liberalism was, Grant said, "hidden for generations by the widespread acceptance of Protestantism" (ESJ, 62).

Because Protestantism was so successful in hiding the baseness found at the center of liberal contractarian doctrines, there was no suckevent as the French Revolution in the English-speaking world and until very recently, no secular revolutionaries in the European style. And finally, because liberalism was the civil theology and dominant form of public moral self-definition of a long-ascendant English-speaking peoples—from Waterloo to the present—there was no need to question shared conceptions of political justice when they so obviously worked. Whether one saw the greatest achievement of liberalism in the appearance of technology or the greatest achievement of technology in the flourishing of liberal regimes, the connection was self-evident and the result self-evidently good. This is why political thought in the English-speaking world has been so insipid. A good case can be made that Hobbes was not only the greatest, but the last genuinely great, English political philosopher. It is almost as if English-speaking justice has been moderate because English-speakers have refused to think. It is sometimes difficult to realize that James Mill and Hegel were nearly exact contemporaries.

To summarize Grant's account: the experienced reality of pioneer life meant that philosophy was so unlikely as to be impossible in North

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34. Grant's interpretation of liberalism, like that of Strauss, is contentious. It is surely a distortion to argue that Hume, Smith, Burke, Madison, and Tocqueville, all of whom were as "liberal" as Locke, were simply nihilist proponents of a will-to-technological abundance. It would take a careful interpretation to argue this in detail. But Grant's point, I believe, centers not so much upon the correct interpretation of liberal doctrine (for Hume, Smith, Burke, Madison and Tocqueville could also be identified with "conservatism"), as upon the ease with which technological activism could use (or, if you like, deform) the arguments of liberal thinkers. In this respect Grant has some fine words to say regarding John Rawls' bulky and programmatic pamphlet in ESJ, 13-47.
Second, the Puritan emphasis on will had immensely practical consequences because once men had cut themselves off from contemplation (because God was hidden and His will was inscrutable) they sought assurance of election in practical life and control of the world. Third, liberalism justified after the fact the comfortable rewards gained by successful pioneering. The summary result: "technique is ourselves." The obvious corollary: "All descriptions or definitions of technique which place it outside ourselves hide from us what it is" (TE, 137).

If the foregoing account is to some extent valid, the next question is: where does one go for an accurate perspective on technology? In principle the answer must be: outside the experiences of pioneering practicality, a concern with will, and the discourse of liberalism. And that, of course, meant outside "ourselves." Grant’s first attempt was a direct one: if liberal discourse was an expression of technology, one should look to conservatism. But it was "almost impossible to express the truth of conservatism in our society without seeming to justify our present capitalism" because conservatism in Canada means de facto to justify "the continuing rule of the business man and the right of the greedy to turn all activities into sources of personal gain." Such rule was indistinguishable from technological liberalism, though perhaps less tempted to bureaucratic tyranny in the name of social welfare. What was needed, therefore was a "careful theory," a conservatism of principle.

The occasion was the controversy in the early 1960s over the place of religion in Ontario schools. The question was posed with Grant’s usual clarity: "Does public morality rest on the widespread practice of piety?" (TE, 50). The modern view was that public morality rested on the widespread inculcation of socially useful passions. Grant surveyed the arguments on both sides and noted a danger to believers in the importance of piety if they accepted the terms of the discourse of the believers in the importance of progress. This danger made the question of the religion in public schools even more complex and advocacy of the proper policy even more delicate. Nothing much would be gained by capitulating to chatter about the importance of "religious values" in "our tradition" because such language already conceded the high ground. Only one group had a clear and consistent answer, "the believers in the religion of prog-

35. This did not mean, of course, that there were no imported and certified philosophers present on the continent or that historians of our intellectual life cannot find Canadian and American and Mexican philosophers in the past (see Grant, "Philosophy," Encyclopedia Canadiana [1957] for details); it does mean that what allowed these men to be identified as philosophers was, precisely, their command of European discourse.

ress, mastery and power," which was an enormous advantage when clarity and consistency were tactically persuasive.

Assuming their religion to be self-evidently true to all men of good will, they [the progressives] are forceful in advocating that it should be the public religion. They work for the coming of the universal and homogeneous state with enthusiasm; they await its coming with expectation. Such a belief, of course, appears nonsense to those of us (Christian or non-Christian) who hold the conservative principle that belief in a "higher" divine power is a minimum public necessity if there is to be constitutional government. (TE, 57-58)

When Grant republished the essay in Technology and Empire, he added an introductory note that indicated that he now felt it illustrated the futility of conservatism: "the general principles of political philosophy asserted in it have no possible application in the society to which it is addressed. This is fatal for an article on a practical matter" (TE, 43). Conservatism, it seemed, was abstract; or worse, it was boring, and in any case was irrelevant to the concerns of technological-liberal society.

Occasionally Grant himself made boring comments about the modern world and its problems. These moralizing remarks addressed to the world from "a conservative standpoint" were self-defeating inasmuch as admitting a standpoint also amounted to capitulation, given the ease with which such language could be translated into the language of values and will and "pluralism." For example: "Has the secular state, and the religion of progress which dominates its education, led to widespread happiness in North America in the last forty years? How can we escape the fact that the necessary end product of the religion of progress is not hope, but a society of existentialists who know themselves in their own self-consciousness, but know the world entirely as despair?" (TE, 58).

These rhetorical questions were answered in an obvious enough way: "In other words, when the religion of progress becomes the public religion we cannot look forward to a vital religious pluralism, but to a monism of meaninglessness" (TE, 58). But that gloss is not persuasive because it is sheer assertion, and contains no analysis.

"Conservatism" was useful in polemic against liberals and radicals because it served to accentuate the deficiencies in those doctrines. Grant's grace of style endowed these lighter pieces with beauty as well as with wit, and lifted them above the immediate issues that occasioned them. 37

The difficulty, of which Grant was fully aware, was that even a conservatism of principle meant love of the ancestral, not love of the good. He knew as well that to substitute tradition and the explication of tradition for thought was the great temptation for philosophers. Those tasks, however pressing, if pursued in neglect of what he called the "prophetic" purpose of philosophy, would eventually prove unsatisfactory. As a practical stance, conservatism was bound to be eclipsed. "Loyalties rather than principles are the mark of the conservative. This is one reason indeed why conservatism is so difficult in a technological age. It cannot be said too often that fast technological change goes with fast moral and religious change." Theoretically oblivious to principles, conservatives have been unable even to analyze the co-penetration of knowledge and art, let alone resist its dissolution of all loyalties and all principles but those of technology. And in the event, Grant was led by his own thought-trains to abandon the attempt to criticize technological-liberal modernity from outside. He determined upon the necessity of thinking through technological-liberal modernity, a strategy that would avoid the futile abstractions that followed upon ab extra rejection (TE, 34).

The "Platitude" that concluded Technology and Empire described the new approach concretely: we must listen and watch or simply wait for "intimations of deprival which might lead us to see the beautiful as the image, in the world, of the good" (TE, 143). To make plain the experience of deprival we must wait upon events and scrutinize them for their meaning or their lack of meaning. Even if we are able only to know what we were missing, that at least would be better than not knowing what we were missing.

In his earliest discussion of the meaning of technology in North America, Grant was unsure as to how much of our quest to master nature was undertaken for purposes that may loosely be called liberal, such as the building of the universal and homogeneous state, and how much was autonomous and undertaken for no purpose or reason beyond our capacity to do it. The paradigmatic events discussed earlier helped resolve Grant's uncertainty. The war in Vietnam showed that violence would be undertaken in order to "make" history in conformity with the visions of

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technological liberalism; the space program indicated an absence of purpose or vision of justice external to technology; and the double-sided question of euthanasia and abortion made it clear that the same will that resulted in the ferocious destruction of foreigners in order to maintain domestic comforts could be turned against one's own. Liberal justice, the flickering afterglow of Protestant Christianity, in Grant's view, had been eclipsed by a technology-sustained pursuit of comfort, including psychological "well-being" and "quality of life." Our commitments to those comforts have made us oblivious to any sense that the costs might be too high. Events confirmed in practice the philosophical insight that the core of technology was, in Strauss's words, a shallow nihilism, a nihilism indifferent to contemplation. But that was not, in the end, why liberal justice proved unsatisfactory.

Implications

There could be no question but that in North America the practice of technology was identified with goodness; technology determined what was to count as good and just, not the other way around, which is to say that even such things as the building of the universal and homogeneous state, which Grant considered a tyranny anyhow, was subordinate to the autonomous augmentation of technology.

Perhaps the easiest way to consider the disturbing implications of Grant's argument is to begin his account of the significance of a symptom of the disorder of technological liberalism, hippies and other non-normal young people. To repeat, the dominant ethos in the society is provided by an autonomous technology. But the space program, necessary imperial wars and the struggle for recognition in the interlocking corporations can provide purpose only for a small minority. Purpose for the majority will be found in the subsidiary ethos of the fun culture. It will meet the needs of those who live in affluence but are removed from any directing of the society (TE, 126). With the vanishing of liberal innocence went whatever images of excellence that liberalism displayed. Consequently:

The sheer aridity of the public world will indeed drive many to seek excellence in strange and dangerous kingdoms (as those of drugs and myth and sexuality). In such kingdoms, moderation and virtue and courage may be known by the wise to be essential virtues. But when such virtues have been publicly lost they cannot be inculcated by incantation, but only rediscovered in the heat of life where many sparrows fall. Much suffering will be incurred by those who with noble intent follow false trails. (TE, 132)
The inadequacy of ideology, Grant argued, had led people, and especially young people, to an increasingly irrational pursuit of goodness, or at least of that aspect of goodness that young people find most congenial, and the absence of which they find most intolerable, namely spontaneity. When the aridity of ideology turns into the dessication of the "end of ideology" there is a corresponding transformation from the irrational pursuit of goodness towards frenzy and even madness.

The reason why hippies, sex, and drugs are not the object of simple disapprobation is that those phenomena represent a protest against disorder that is as shallow as the technological liberalism against which they presume to object. "The old individualism of capitalism, the frontier and Protestantism, becomes the demanded right to one's idiosyncratic wants taken as outside any obligation to the community which provides them" (TE, 39). Forced from the practical tradition, many could find no substance in yippiedom; after innumerable divertissements into strange irrationalities and into ecstatic and entatic transcendencies, why not become a yuppy?

This banal dialectic cannot illumine itself. Pioneer Protestantism and liberal practicality contain no serious centers of resistance to technology. Hence the shallowness. "Nihilism which has no tradition of contemplation to beat against cannot be the occasion for the amazed reappearance of the 'What for? Whither? and What then?'" (TE, 39). To raise those questions one must return to Europe, to thinkers who have had more significant matters to deal with than those associated with progress and the actualization of the great thoughts of western liberalism.

Grant identified that experience as contemplation, one of a class of experiences "beyond all bargains" and beyond all action, too: "public and private virtues having their point beyond what can in any sense be called socially useful; commitments to love and to friendship which lie rooted in a realm outside the calculable; a partaking in the beautiful not seen as the product of human creativity; amusements and ecstasies not seen as the enemies of reason" (TE, 36). Such experiences perhaps never disappear from human life, but they do not appear publicly in the vision of pragmatic liberalism. What does appear, to repeat, is a shallow nihilism with a guilty conscience.

To see what we are in liberal-technological society, it is necessary to interrogate the voice of authentic nihilism, and for Grant that was Nietzsche. "There is no escape from reading Nietzsche," Grant said, "if

42. Grant, "Ideology and Modern Empires," 197.
43. Grant turned in particular to Simone Weil; for details see Edwin B. Heaven and David R. Heaven, "Some Influences of Simone Weil on George Grant's Silence," in Schmidt, ed., op. cit., 68-78; O Donovan, Twilight, 80-85.
one would understand modernity” (TJ, 89). For Nietzsche “the fundamental experience for man was apprehending what is as chaos; values were what we creatively willed in the face of that chaos by overcoming the impotence of will which arises from the recognition of the consequences of historicism” (TE, 38). The chief consequence of historicism, the impotence created by consciousness of horizon, we have already discussed. Overcoming that impotence by an act of will, by a will to will, as Heidegger said, cannot be said to be a resolution because the very thing for which the will is willing, namely purpose, is excluded by the act of will. Will creates purposes; it does not find them.

Grant expressed this dead-end of Nietzsche’s nihilism in several different but equivalent ways. The phrase, "time as history," which was the title of a book whose cover showed a familiar and slightly demented likeness of Nietzsche with his left temple at the center of a target, indicated the belief that history was meaningful configuration made by humans (TH, 17). This interpretation of human life, with the burden of creating meaning by will, has the consequence that "we can do nothing about what we are fitted for” (TH, 30). What we are fitted for used to be expressed as limit, but how could there be a limit to will? to making ourselves by making history? "Morality was above all concerned with the frontiers and limitations of making," but modern Nietzscheans know that all limits are so-called limits, honorific limits, limits by virtue of our (temporary) indulgence, which is to say, of our will. 44 There was no implication that Nietzsche’s teaching would be, or could be refuted. In both English-Speaking Justice and Technology and Justice, Grant indicated that he rejected Nietzsche’s teaching, especially his conception of justice. Nietzsche, Grant indicated, was a "teacher of evil" and the evilness of his conception of justice consisted in his teaching that justice is "the human creating of quality of life" (TJ, 91, 93). This consequence was made plain by Justice Blackmun.

By making history in the hopes of experiencing it as meaningful, we have attempted to substitute infinite tasks for a sense of eternity. "The infinite is not the ancient eternal-beyond-time, but the limitless possibilities of men for action in space and time. Now that western man has made his civilization world-wide, he turns outward to be the maker of worlds beyond." 45 But the space program could become routine; initiation of the new and different is soon subordinated to the regular occurrence of the unvarying same. "The overcoming of chance by technique may have made us oblivious to the true eternity; but it more and more

44. Grant, "Knowing and Making," 65.
45. Philosophy in the Mass Age, 25.
opens to us an immanent sempiternity of the same. "46 By an act of will, that is, we can, and perhaps have, condemned the experience of eternity to oblivion. "For oblivion of eternity, or, in other words, estrangement from man’s deepest desire and therewith from the primary issues, is the price which modern man had to pay, from the very beginning, for attempting to be absolutely sovereign, to become the master and owner of nature, to conquer chance."47 What we have gained is a sense (perhaps false, perhaps temporary) of mastery; what we have lost is the experience of attention, receptivity, and consent to otherness, that is, an awareness of dependence that is love.

Grant began his public career as a Canadian patriot, well rooted by family and by educational experience in the enduring and historic structures of meaning that constitute the regional identification of Upper Canadians. He knew what Canada meant and he knew its British heritage. In time he lamented its passing and he reflected on the significance of its passing and what it passed to. Lament for a Nation was not, or not just, a patriotic pamphlet, as those who praise it often say. It was also an example of what he later called "open thinking" (TE, 4445). That is, it contained reflection of the drama of events; Grant pondered their ambiguities and by intent at least moved ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem. Canada's fate, he argued, was a particularist development of a more universalist progress of modern liberalism. It was, accordingly, tied to, or driven by, the engine of technology. Taken as a theme, technological liberalism revealed itself as the political, economic, social, or cultural expression of modern will, a will to will that for generations in North America had been clouded by the remnants of Protestantism. The shallow nihilism of the fun culture and the more astringent nihilism of crisp managers sums up the political achievements of technological liberalism.

Grant, however, has achieved something more: he has brought those achievements to consciousness. He has, thereby, recalled to us the awareness that modernity is but a part of the contemporary world. As a practical matter, he has illustrated Voegelin’s remark noted above, that in an hour of crisis we can see the great issues of political existence more clearly than in times of confident stability. Like Hooker, he has not loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream. Moreover, by bringing to consciousness an awareness of the crisis of modern technological liberalism, Grant has alerted us to the possibility

46. Grant, "Revolution and Tradition," 85.
that "private anguish and public catastrophe may lead men to renew their vision of excellence" (TE, 132). Neither the words nor the sentiments are new, which should be grounds for sanguine, if not great, expectations.

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