

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF GEORGE GRANT

BY

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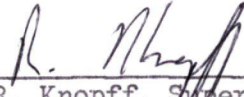
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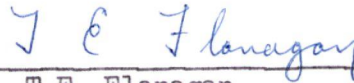
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF GEORGE PARKIN GRANT" submitted by David E. R. Venour in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

The political thought of George Grant centers on the replacement of Nature by History as the basis for understanding man and as a guide for political life. Grant is concerned that the teleological view of the universe that dominated western thought for centuries has become a subject of merely historical interest. Grant perceives radical historicism to be the chief threat to the traditional teleological understanding of justice because it denies the existence of eternal absolutes and explains all previous standards of human conduct as historically relative, subjective preferences with no claim to recognition as objective truth.

The first chapter of this thesis examines Grant's early political thought. At the beginning of his professional academic career Grant believed in the unceasing progress of the human race through the technological domination of nature; he also accepted the truth of Christianity. Grant found a synthesis of his progressivism and Christianity in the philosophy of Hegel. However, a major re-thinking of the basic issues of political philosophy in the 1960's led Grant to abandon Hegel in favor of Plato. This re-thinking took Grant from his early liberal progressivism, through considerations of modern conservatism and socialism, to a

type of pre-modern conservatism that advocates adherence to the Christian tradition.

The second chapter of this thesis begins with a brief comparison of Grant with contemporary classical liberals, and their mutual approbation of bourgeois liberalism. It then describes the similar views of Grant and classical liberals on the support religious piety gives to liberal democratic politics. But while Grant agrees with classical liberals on the political utility of religious sentiment, he criticizes modern contractualist teachings, represented by John Rawls' A Theory of Justice, as theoretically insufficient to support the idea of natural right.

After an examination of Grant's substantive views in Chapters One and Two, Chapter Three focuses on the communication of those views by investigating Grant's theory of writing and his conception of the role of the philosopher. Some writers claim that Grant's work possesses an esoteric meaning as well as an exoteric one. The claims for an esoteric message are evaluated by looking at Grant's use of irony and his literary restraint, the latter being intimately related to his perception of the philosopher's task in the twentieth century. The third chapter concludes with an examination of Grant's motives in explicitly questioning the hidden implications of modern liberalism.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the more engaging descriptions of the contest between ancient and modern learning is Jonathan Swift's "The Battel of the Books". In that essay the guardian of the King's library bore a confirmed enmity toward ancient wisdom. He took full advantage of his position to put the books of "the Moderns" in the most accessible places; the books of "the Antients" were relegated to the dusty recesses of the library's back rooms. This disposition would have been much different if George Grant had been the keeper of the library, since Grant, like Swift, sides with the ancients - more specifically, with traditional Christianity. He would return Christian doctrine to a place of honour, since he believes that its teachings are wiser than the denial by modern philosophies of the existence of an objective truth about the world.

For Grant it follows that if objective truth exists, it must be apprehended by our rulers and embodied in our institutions, or else the truly just governance of human beings is unlikely to be achieved. The purpose of this thesis is to examine Grant's belief that politics requires a Christian and hence a teleological understanding of the universe, and to see how he communicates this belief to his

fellow citizens.

The first chapter of this essay examines the development of Grant's thought. Grant experienced great difficulty in shaking off the liberal idea of unceasing progress through the conquest of nature by technology; he admits that this ideology, which was very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was a powerful creed that was most difficult to reject. This personal trial illustrates the problem that Grant sees plaguing our society as a whole: how are we able to think outside the dominating assumptions of our age? Yet Grant did reject those assumptions, an achievement that has led to his attempts to communicate his mature understanding of politics to his fellow citizens.

The second chapter of this essay examines why Grant believes that the acceptance of the Christian tradition is necessary for the preservation of good government. Grant has written repeatedly about the moral foundations of liberal democracy, the nature of justice in the modern world, and the dire consequences stemming from the rejection of Christianity. While agreeing that Western liberal democracies better protect the rights of man than modern Eastern regimes, Grant argues that the very success of liberal democracy has eroded its own foundations. In contrast to classical political philosophy, liberalism

postulated that the role of government should be limited to the protection of each citizen's ability to pursue happiness; government should not attempt to inculcate virtuous habits as defined by some understanding of man's highest ends. Yet many liberals, like the Founding Fathers of the United States, have recognized the importance of the role that religion plays in the formation of just and temperate citizens. Unfortunately, the beneficial influences of religion decrease as the encouragement of the trade, self-interest, and free-thinking that characterizes liberal democracy increases. Grant describes the consequences of the rejection of Christianity by western nations; his main point is that the idea of the equality of all men is substantially weakened by removing its Christian underpinnings. It is true that many modern writers, such as Rousseau, have believed in equality, but, according to Grant, this belief rests uneasily with other parts of modern thought, such as the notion of the perfectibility of man and the conventional nature of moral standards.

Grant is well aware of the biases he faces when he makes public his own political and philosophical views, which are not representative of the views of the majority. The third chapter of this essay investigates Grant's response to this problem through an examination of his theory of writing. Grant often appears to be content with

iconoclastic attacks on the conventional wisdom of modern liberalism, without offering a more comprehensive solution to pressing political and social problems. This perceived reticence has led some writers to the conclusion that Grant emulates Plato by using the literary techniques of the so-called "esoteric writer", who seeks at appropriate times to conceal his true teachings from the masses, either to avoid persecution, a significant concern in past ages, or to avoid a quick dismissal by an unreceptive audience, which is the death sentence of the modern philosopher. A study of Grant's work shows that there is some truth in this conclusion; Grant, like many other writers, allows for the prejudices of his readers to some extent. He does not, however, use the literary techniques of the esoteric writer in the manner of, for example, Plato or Montesquieu.

Thus we arrive at the three major themes of this essay. First, how did Grant come to see politics and man in the light of Christian thought, when many scholars consider the battle between ancients and moderns to be long settled? To answer this question we must examine the development of Grant's beliefs from an early progressivism to his acceptance of Platonism and Christianity. Second, what are the consequences of the rejection of Christian doctrine for modern society? This question requires a consideration of the moral foundations of liberal democracy and an

understanding of the nature of justice in the modern world. Third, how does Grant communicate his understanding of politics to a modern audience? The answer is to be found in Grant's manner of writing and in his understanding of the role of philosophy in the twentieth century.

The answers to these questions produce a complex picture of Grant: sometimes profound, at other times contradictory, but always challenging and thought-provoking, because through his work we encounter a number of central questions in contemporary politics and philosophy.

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRANT'S THOUGHT

A. PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATISM

Grant's political thought can be understood to develop in stages. Professor Flinn divides Grant's work into three parts: (1) the "time of chastened hope", dating from Grant's first published work up to 1963, during which Grant was caught up in Hegelianism and the idea of mankind's inevitable progress toward a better world; (2) an "era of retractions" in the mid-1960's, when Grant was awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by the writings of Leo Strauss, who showed Grant the full implications of modern political philosophy; (3) the time since the era of retractions, characterized by Grant's analysis of the nature of justice in the modern world and his confrontation with Nietzsche and Heidegger.[1] Professor O'Donovan distinguishes three similar stages in Grant's career: a "liberal-synthesizing phase", a "polemical-conservative phase", and a "tragic-paradoxical phase".[2]

The two best sources of information about Grant's intellectual background and early philosophical outlook are the introduction to the second edition of his book

Philosophy in the Mass Age, and the conversations he participated in at Erindale College in 1977, collected in George Grant in Process. In the latter Grant states that he had "been brought up... in a species of what I would call secular liberalism".[3] Grant understands liberalism in an unorthodox way. He does not define it as a theory about the purposes of government and the proper means to achieve those ends; he does not distinguish the philosophical differences between classical and welfare liberalism. To Grant liberalism means the "set of beliefs which proceed from the central assumption that man's essence is his freedom and therefore that what chiefly concerns man in this life is to shape the world as we want it".[4] Professor Reimer writes that "the underlying premise of liberalism, in Grant's view, is the notion of freedom as autonomy - human freedom to shape itself, society, and history without reference to eternal absolutes, to divine law".[5] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this ideology was a secularized version of Christian eschatology; the passage of history was identified with Progress and with the relentless march of increasing human freedom and satisfaction. Grant says that he was raised, like others of his generation, to believe in a progressivism which held "that an advancing technological society went with an advancing humanness".[6]

Grant initially found the philosophical expression of

this progressivism in the writings of Hegel. Early in his life he considered Hegel to be the greatest of all philosophers. Grant believed that Hegel had "partaken of all that was true and beautiful and good in the Greek world and was able to synthesize it with Christianity and with the freedom of the enlightenment and modern science".[7]

Grant's early progressivism was joined by his commitment to Christianity, made during the Second World War. This commitment meant that Grant came to believe in "a moral order which men did not measure and define but by which we were measured and defined".[8] And the war itself, although he did not participate in it, was an important formative experience for him. He admits that the liberalism of his youth could not come to terms with it, evidently because the idea of progress from the brutality of primitive civilizations implied the peaceful and harmonious co-existence of nations.[9]

Grant also recognized at a very immediate level many of the limitations of the technological society that was developing in North America: the transformation of the university from a bastion of the liberal arts to a "successful technological institute" [10], the inevitable commonness of the mass society, the degeneration of the Protestant Church into a "tame confederate of the mass secular society".[11] These developments left Grant "deeply

divided about the relation between (the moral traditions of the west) and the religion of progress".[12] However, Grant claims that despite these misgivings he still clung to his progressive faith; in his words, the "ferocious events of the twentieth century may batter the outpost of that faith, dim intuitions of the eternal order may put some of its consequences into question, but its central core is not easily surrendered".[13]

Grant's first book, Philosophy in the Mass Age, expresses some uncertainty about the progressive beliefs with which he had grown up. Grant recognized in this book that some influential formulations of progressive thought, such as Marxism, tended towards immoral practice.[14] However, he has said that the book is "permeated with the faith that human history for all its pain and ambiguities is somehow to be seen as the progressive incarnation of reason. What had been lost in the immediacy of the North American technological drive would be regained, and regained at a higher level because of the leisure made possible by technology".[15] Thus our society "would have within itself all that was good in the antique world and yet keep all the benefits of technology".[16]

In fact the progressivism that Grant sees in Philosophy in the Mass Age is not especially apparent. However, his other early writings are more clearly

characterized by a stubborn faith in the idea of progress, even when it was evident that cherished conservative institutions were threatened by the forces of the modern world. For example, Grant's earliest views on international relations in general and Canadian-American relations in particular combine an attachment to traditional conceptions of justice and order, as embodied in Canadian nationalism and the British Commonwealth, with a progressive optimism that such things will be preserved in the future.

Grant's strong nationalistic feelings make their first appearance in two short articles, The Empire: Yes or No? and "Have We a Canadian Nation?", both written in the 1940's. Grant strongly advocated a concerted effort to foster patriotism and national feeling - although he never explains how - based on principles that in his opinion "represent something individual and special"[17] in Canadians. He warned that only a continued fidelity to the political and social traditions that distinguished Canada from the United States could prevent cultural and eventually political submission to the Americans;[18] he also held that these traditions provided a surer foundation for good government and social stability than those prevalent in the United States.

What were the principles that Grant found so important to defend? Grant's analysis of the respective national

characters of Canada and the United States revolved around the balance struck by the two nations between the competing values of freedom and authority. To Grant the American position emphasized the "inalienable right of the individual to be free to do as he chooses, whatever effect it might have on society as a whole".[19] In contrast, Canada was first of all a conservative nation, one that "put the balance far more on the side of order or the good of society".[20] Grant refrained from giving examples of this greater conservatism in Canada; he simply asserted as a fact that Canada has followed in the conservative tradition of British nations that have endeavoured to "compromise between the two extremes of liberty and order".[21] He saw in the middle course taken by Canada between the "individualism of the USA and the extreme social order of the USSR"[22] a possible solution to the great problem facing the post-war world - the co-existence of freedom with the efficient functioning of the industrial society. Unfortunately Grant did not inform his readers about the specifics of Canada's "middle course" or how Canadian practice could be transferred to other countries.

Grant obviously was strongly attached to Anglo-Canadian traditions in which he perceived a dedication to organization and a respect for authority. This desire for order and good government was buoyed by Grant's progressive

optimism, which led him to believe that the virtues of Canadian social conservatism could be preserved in the modern world; Canada could take advantage of the benefits of modern science while maintaining, in a Hegelian manner, all the conservative "truths" of past times. Grant perceived the threat of American cultural imperialism, but he still believed in the continuation of the principles underlying Canadian society. In "Have We a Canadian Nation" he said that he had no doubts that a unique Canadian identity would continue to develop;[23] Canada's traditions somehow provided "enough depth [and] sufficient resources"[24] for the maintenance of a distinct community on the northern half of the continent.

A mixture of practical concern and progressive faith is also apparent in Grant's analysis of international affairs in the 1940's. In The Empire: Yes or No? Grant criticized individuals who opposed Canada's membership in the British Commonwealth.[25] He thought that the severance of this relationship with Britain would open Canada more fully to the harmful influence of the United States, since Commonwealth membership provided a salutary pull on Canadian society away from the American sphere and toward the more conservative British way of life.[26]

As Canadian involvement in the Commonwealth furthered the cause of independence, so too was the Commonwealth

strengthened by Canada's membership. Immediately after the war, Grant perceived in the victorious United Nations coalition a "possible nucleus for future world order".[27] He believed, however, that the development of an effective international organization in the post-war era was menaced by the "division of the world into great competing continental regions".[28] In The Empire: Yes or No? Grant wrote: "Already there are signs that nothing is more truly undermining the basis of world order than the fact that the great continental empires feel they do not need an international body, but can retire back into regional isolation".[29] Grant believed that the British Commonwealth could oppose such divisive tendencies. As an association of nations whose members were scattered over the globe, the Commonwealth, he said, "cuts across the regionalisms of the world".[30] This apparently meant that the Commonwealth could break down isolationism and promote international co-operation. Its emphasis on decentralization, autonomy of individual members, and unity by consent provided a small-scale example of world order.

In the meantime, varying forms of empire would remain as stepping stones toward a new order.[31] The strength of empire was needed to solve the problems of international security; Grant even shoulders the white man's burden by speaking of the "development of retarded peoples".[32]

Although the British Commonwealth had committed its share of follies, it now was most likely among all political organizations to be an enterprise of law and not of power alone, unlike, by implication, the new American and Soviet empires.[33]

Notwithstanding this rhetoric, Grant recognized the problems attending the development of this rational world society. He admitted that "every step of the way will be fraught with dangers and difficulties".[34] But at the same time there still lurked a constant assumption of progress toward peace and international co-operation. Grant claimed that "[m]ore and more empire will become a trust and less and less the imposition of the will of the powerful on the weak. More and more will it be the strong bearing responsibility and authority...Eventually blatant power can be reduced and voluntary law take its place".[35] He concluded that in "God's good time the perfect world order will finally be created".[36] These millenarian hopes demonstrate the vigor of Grant's progressive optimism; they summarize his faith in the possibilities of political and cultural development on both a national and an international scale. Yet Grant's hopes for a new world order never brought him near to the adoption of any sort of revolutionary ideology; his ideas about the perfectibility of society existed side by side with a firm belief in the

wisdom of the moderate political and legal traditions of the west. He wrote that the inalienable rights of the individual are the chief pride of western civilization.[37] Still, we cannot forget that Grant's early political writings involved criticisms of excessive individualism and called for the British balance between order and liberty; The Empire: Yes or No? has been called "a rejection of American rugged individualism and crass capitalism, and an espousal of a balance between individual freedom and an ordered society in a distinctly British-Canadian tradition".[38] Grant's political creed was (and still is) an uneasy balance; he accepted certain elements of the liberal tradition but not its dominant assumption - that man possesses an Archimedean freedom to order his life and the world as he sees fit.[39] His underlying conservatism emphasized the need for limits on human autonomy to shape man and society. Grant's acceptance of divine laws of morality, his support for orthodox religions rooted in the past, his condemnation of enthusiastic metaphysical systems "over excited by the limitless possibilities of the human species",[40] and his respect for tradition as the basis of social order[41] were all manifestations of his inclination to view reverence, and not freedom, as the "matrix of human nobility".[42]

Grant's earliest political outlook has been

characterized as a "progressive conservatism".[43] One commentator writes that Grant "found a genuine purpose and meaning to political and economic 'development,' [and] world government seemed to offer the possibility of international cooperation among gentlemanly democratic regimes".[44] Yet while maintaining this belief in progress, Grant rejected revolutionary ideology and the freedom of the individual to act in the world without reference to eternal absolutes; to Grant "true progress can only be made step by step - layer on layer - if it is going to stick".[45] According to Professor Flinn, this progressive conservatism necessitated a reconciliation of the truth of conservatism - that man lives within a natural order that should guide his conduct - and the truth of the history-making spirit - that man is entirely free to build a society that overcomes the evils of the world.[46] In a portentous understatement Grant said that the difficulty was "to understand how they can be thought together".[47] Professor Flinn states that the idea of an objective natural law, which Grant accepts, demands contemplation and reverence from man, whereas the concept of unbounded freedom allows action and mastery.[48] To Grant the necessity of reconciling these two truths is shown by the difficulties encountered in the exclusive acceptance of one or the other. A denial of natural limits on human conduct facilitates immoderation, while a denial of the idea

of human freedom to change the world encourages the maintenance of a possibly unjust status quo.[49]

This stark analysis of the tendencies of these two ways of thinking is misleading when put in historical context. It is true enough that history is replete with the atrocities of revolutionary movements which have been encouraged at least in part by ideologies that own no divinity. But of course the promulgation by various religious denominations of man's subservience to a universal order has been, in the hands of corrupt men, equally perverse. Likewise it is probably true that a belief in a natural order of things may hinder change and thus progress; it is also true that influential members of the church have long believed that Christianity is an important vehicle for social change; Calvin's writings are a good example of this attitude. However, it appears that Grant's scholarly inclinations were not satisfied with a simple reliance on Christian dogma; he continued to search for a philosophy that maintained a dedication to reform and a politically stabilizing concept of limit. Grant's realization that this synthesis was impossible within Hegelianism characterizes the next stage in the development of his thought.

B. GRANT'S ERA OF RETRACTIONS

Grant's philosophical and political thought changed significantly in the early 1960's. As we have noted previously, Professor Flinn has termed this new phase in Grant's career his "era of retractions", [50] a time when Grant came to terms with the full implications of modern political thought, and more particularly, with his early Hegelianism. The initial indication of Grant's reconsideration of Hegel's philosophy appeared in 1963 in his article "Tyranny and Wisdom". By the 1965 publication of Lament for a Nation, Grant had fundamentally revised his earlier beliefs. He expressly acknowledged this shift in the new preface to the second edition of Philosophy in the Mass Age, published in 1966, and in the new introduction to "Religion and the State" in Technology and Empire in 1969.

Grant was guided in his rethinking of the fundamental questions of political philosophy by the writings of Professor Leo Strauss. Strauss's criticism of the Hegelian account of the political history of the West is central to Grant's rejection of Hegel and his adoption of Strauss's views, because it led Grant to the conclusion that Hegel's attempted synthesis of ancient and modern philosophy was impossible.

1. HEGEL'S HISTORICAL METHOD

Before discussing Grant's rejection of Hegel it is first necessary to gain some understanding of Hegel's interpretation of history. Hegel postulated the existence of a "general law or direction of cultural growth"[51] at work in history. This pattern of development allowed the identification of "an orderly evolution of law, of economic institutions, of philosophical or scientific thought, or of government".[52] Professor Sabine comments as follows: [53]

This order is not imposed on the subject-matter by the investigator but is immanent in the facts themselves once they are seen in a proper perspective. The special work of historical insight consists in bringing to light this pattern, which is of course concealed in a welter of facts, and it is for this reason that historical and theoretical studies are connected. By grasping the general plan or logic of historical development the important can be distinguished from the casual. The purpose, as Hegel conceived it, was not so much to predict the future course of events as to discriminate the main current from the eddies and back-washes in the stream, and thus to arrive at an historically objective standard of values. Such a standard, progressively revealed in the evolution of religion, morals, law, or government, was to fill the place left vacant by the collapse of the philosophy of natural law. Instead of self-evident moral axioms the historical method was to exhibit the necessary stages of moral and social development.

What was this pattern of development that Hegel perceived? Hegel believed that history told a story of the

increasing realization of human freedom, culminating in a state in which each person's fundamental desire to be recognized as a free and equal citizen was satisfied. The genesis of this state of affairs is found in the presence of two main forces that shaped western civilization: "the free intelligence of Greece and the deeper moral and religious insight... of Christianity".[54] The political importance of these forces in the Hegelian system is outlined by Grant in "Tyranny and Wisdom". In that article Grant reviewed the writings of Alexandre Kojève, whom he believes to be an accurate interpreter of Hegel's work; thus for present purposes Kojève's writings will be equated with those of Hegel.

In "Tyranny and Wisdom" Grant says that the Hegelian account of western history centers on the establishment of the universal and homogeneous state (Kojève's term) through the combination of certain elements of Greek and Christian thought. In Lament for a Nation Grant defines this state, which he says is perceived to be "the pinnacle of political striving", [55] as follows: [56]

"Universal" implies a world-wide state, which would eliminate the curse of war among nations; "homogeneous" means that all men would be equal, and war among classes would be eliminated. The masses and the philosophers have both agreed that this universal and egalitarian society is the goal of historical striving.

The first great political theme of history is said by Hegel and Kojève to be the success of Alexander the Great in establishing a universal state; that is, Alexander created an empire in which citizenship did not depend on any natural dispensations like ethnic or geographical background but on the sharing of Greek culture. Kojève says that what characterized the political action of Alexander was [57]

the fact that it was directed by the idea of empire, that is, a universal state, in the sense at least that this state would have no limits (geographic, ethnic, or otherwise) given a priori, nor any pre-established "capitol," that is, a geographically and ethnically fixed nucleus destined to dominate politically its periphery...Alexander...was obviously ready to dissolve Macedonia and Greece entirely into a new political unity created by his conquest, and govern this unity from a geographic point freely (rationally) chosen by him in relation to the new whole.

However, the Greeks never overcame their differentiation of human beings into masters and slaves; their society could never be homogeneous - a society without classes - because there existed politically relevant differences between individuals.[58] The distinction between master and slave was only overcome, according to Hegel, through the influence of the Semitic religions (for the west, by Christianity), which introduced the second great theme of political history, the idea of homogeneity. In "Tyranny and Wisdom" Grant quotes Kojève at length on the

meaning of homogeneity: [59]

It is the idea of the fundamental equality of all who believe in a single God. This transcendental conception of social equality differs radically from the Socratic-Platonic conception of the identity of beings having the same immanent 'essence'. For Alexander, a disciple of the Greek philosopher, the Hellene and the Barbarian have the same title to political citizenship in the Empire, to the extent that they HAVE the same human (moreover, rational, logical, discursive) 'nature' (=essence, idea, form, etc.) or are 'essentially' identified with each other as the result of a direct (= 'immediate') 'mixture' of their innate qualities (realised by means of biological union). For St. Paul there is no 'essential' (irreducible) difference between the Greek and the Jew because they both can BECOME Christians, and this not by 'mixing' their Greek and Jewish 'qualities' but by negating them both and 'synthesizing' them in and by this very negation into a homogeneous unity not innate or given, but (freely) created by 'conversion'. Because of the negating character of the Christian 'synthesis', there are no longer any incompatible 'qualities' or 'contradictory' (=mutually exclusive), 'qualities'. For Alexander, a Greek philosopher, there was no possible mixture of Masters and Slaves, for they were 'opposites'. Thus the universal state, which did away with race could not be homogeneous in the sense that it would equally do away with 'class'. For St. Paul on the contrary, the negation (active to the extent that 'faith' is an act, being 'dead' without 'acts') of opposition between pagan Mastery and Servitude could engender an 'essentially' new Christian unity (which is, moreover, active or acting, or 'emotional', and not purely rational or discursive, that is 'logical') which could serve as the basis not only for political universality, but also for the social homogeneity of the State.

However, Grant explains that in the Hegelian system, the union of the political ideas of universality and homogeneity could not "result in the universal and homogeneous state becoming a realisable political end when it came into the West as part of Christian theism. That religion did not suppose such a state to be fully realisable in the world, but only in the beyond, in the kingdom of heaven".[60] According to Hegel and Kojève, for the universal and homogeneous state to become a realisable political end, Christian theism had to be overcome. This overcoming was the third major stage of political history, in which modern philosophy secularized the idea of the fundamental equality of human beings. This stage was represented by the Germanic nations beginning with the Reformation. As O'Donovan writes: [61]

In the final stage, the modern secular stage, the universal and homogeneous state comes into being through the secularization of the political ideal realized by the Christian community. This secularization, accomplished by modern philosophy (from Hobbes to Hegel), is the negation of Christian theism (the negation of the negation) and the reinterpretation of the Christian eschatological hope for a perfect human community into a historically realizable goal.

O'Donovan also notes that this interpretation of history [62]

entails for Hegel-Kojève the view that tyranny and wisdom, the political tyrant

and the philosopher, are mutually dependent. That is, the philosopher, in discursive reflection, grasps the historical present, including the contradictions between the actual and the ideal that inhere in it. Under the guidance of the philosopher, the political tyrant overcomes the contradictions of the historical present through struggle and work, thereby creating a new situation for philosophical thought. Thus, philosophy and political action are each the *RATIO* of the other. This can only be, Grant impresses upon us, because for Hegel-Kojeve philosophy does not take its bearings from 'an ahistorical eternal order,' but from eternity as 'the totality of all historical epochs'.

Grant says that according to Kojève, history finally ends with the creation of the universal and homogeneous state. In this state, man's primary desire for recognition by other men of his unique personality is realized. Kojève argues that history necessarily ends when "'man is perfectly satisfied by the fact of being a recognized citizen of a universal and homogeneous state, or, if one prefers, of a society without classes encompassing the whole of humanity'".[63] The basis of this state was apparently created by Napoleon, whose Empire was based on the principles of the French Revolution. Because men will not attempt to change the reality revealed by this last philosophy of universality and homogeneity, that philosophy becomes Wisdom itself. All men are able to achieve this wisdom simply by being citizens of the universal and homogeneous state and living by its principles.

Thus, philosophy for Hegel is made more complete through successive historical epochs. Eventually the progress of history and hence philosophy reaches an end. That completion, the establishment of the universal and homogeneous state, transforms the love of wisdom into Wisdom itself. The goal of history and philosophy has been the achievement of universal freedom and equality. Hegel is conscious that this goal has been reached. He therefore incarnates wisdom; he is the wise man.

2. STRAUSS'S EVALUATION OF HEGEL

Grant was attracted to Hegelianism because of its apparent retention and validation of Greek philosophy and Christian dogma. In terms of the Hegelian dialectic, the third stage of political development in the West preserved and united the enduring truths contained in the earlier Greek and Christian stages of development. Grant's debt to Strauss arose from Strauss's conclusion that Hegelianism does not in fact successfully synthesize ancient Greek and Christian teachings. Strauss argues in his "Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero" that Hegel continued "the modern tradition that emancipated the passions and hence 'competition.' That tradition was originated by Machiavelli and perfected by such men as Hobbes and Adam Smith. It came into being through a conscious break with the strict moral demands made by both the Bible and classical philosophy; those demands were explicitly rejected as too strict." [64] Hegel falls into this modern tradition because he conceived of man's ultimate aim as the desire or passion for "recognition" of his "exclusive human dignity", [65] and not in the contemplation and emulation of a natural and eternal order that inheres in the universe; this lowered end of human life (compared to the end of human life propounded by the Bible and classical philosophy) is achieved by the culmination of

history in the universal and homogeneous state, in which the particular, individual value of all citizens is recognized. In fact, Hegelian philosophy asserts what Strauss terms "the oblivion of eternity"[66]: that there is no permanent and unchanging higher purpose for man. The enduring truths synthesized by Hegelianism from past ages are the universality of the Greeks and the homogeneity of Christianity, and not the idea of an eternal and unchanging order that Grant sees as their essence: the idea "of human existence having a given highest purpose, and therefore an excellence which could be known and in terms of which all our activities could be brought into some order." [67] Hassner concludes that by taking "the emancipation of the passions as given...the reconciliation of ancients and moderns, as Hegel elaborates it in...his philosophy of history, represents in its essential elements a decisive consecration of modernity". [68]

3. PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES WITH HEGELIANISM

Besides the problematic success of Hegelianism in preserving classical philosophy and biblical teachings, Grant, as a practical man, was concerned with the difficulty of making traditional moral judgements within Hegel's system. Hegel's dialectical interpretation of history

identifies necessity with goodness because any state of affairs that exists is the highest expression of philosophy and politics yet achieved as a result of the irresistible social forces that work towards a wholly rational world. Professor Sabine writes that each stage of human existence [69]

carries, for the time being, the whole weight and force of the Absolute, even though in the end it is transitory. It is, so to speak, absolute while it lasts, and its duty is to achieve complete self-expression, though its ultimate defeat in the further advance of the World Spirit is assured. Hence the dialectic implied a moral attitude which is at once completely rigid and completely flexible, and it offered no criterion of the rightness of either except the success of the outcome. It was for this reason that Hegel's critics, Nietzsche for example, saw in the dialectic only an opportunism which is in practice an adoration of "the whole series of successes".

Grant makes the same point in Lament for a Nation when he brings out the implications of the "common philosophic assumption" that "what must come in the future will be 'higher,' 'more developed,' 'better,' 'freer' than what has been in the past".[70] Grant says that this doctrine "was given its best philosophical expression by Hegel: 'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht' - 'World history is the world's judgement.'"[71] Grant argues that "if history is the final court of appeal, force is the final argument." [72] He asks:

Is it possible to look at history and deny that within its dimensions force is the supreme ruler? To take a progressive view of providence is to come close to worshipping force. Does this not make us cavalier about evil? The screams of the tortured child can be justified by the achievements of history. How pleasant for the achievers, but how meaningless for the child.

In contrast, Grant and Strauss speak from within the assumptions of classical philosophy. They agree that "political philosophy stands or falls by its ability to transcend history, i.e., by its ability to make statements about social order the truth of which is independent of changing historical epochs and which therefore cannot be deduced from any philosophy of history which makes positive statements about the historical process".[74] As Strauss says: "A social science that cannot speak of tyranny with the same confidence with which medicine speaks, for example, of cancer, cannot understand social phenomena as what they are."[75]

The ability to make judgements about the best social order, and hence the ability to criticize the shortcomings of existing regimes, implies the acceptance of permanent and universally valid standards of good and evil. Grant derives these principles from Christianity; Strauss, from a philosophical vision of human excellence. The positing of universal standards leads Strauss and Grant to the

conclusion that men find their fullest satisfaction in the contemplation and emulation of the eternal order rather than in the desirable but lower goal of recognition by others of one's uniquely valuable identity. Thus, Strauss condemns the universal and homogeneous state as a tyranny, that is, as "destructive of humanity",[76] because he proceeds from "the classical premise that man finds his fulfilment in the thinking that leads to wisdom and not, by implication, in the 'recognition' available to the citizens of Hegel's 'universal and homogeneous state'".[77] Thus Grant's debt to Strauss arises from Strauss's demonstration that Hegel's moral and political teaching represents a "tyranny of unwisdom"[78] because it denies the essence of classical and biblical thought.

C. THE POLITICAL ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

As a result of his encounter with Strauss's thought, Grant was led to conclude that "Plato's account of what constitutes human excellence and the possibility of its realization in the world is more valid than that of Hegel".[79] Hegel's philosophy of history was replaced for Grant by Strauss's own history of political philosophy.[80] Strauss's views on the western tradition can be found in "What is Political Philosophy?" and other essays;[81] they

will only be restated here to serve as the background for an examination of Grant's views on the role of technology in society, a theme that has been one of his dominant concerns since the middle of the 1960's.

According to classical philosophy, the use that could be made of the physical world was an important means, but only a means, to achieve the moral perfection to which man was impelled by nature; for example, in the Politics Aristotle says that "the acquisition of wealth by the art of household management (as contrasted with the art of acquisition in its retail form) has a limit; and the object of that art is not an unlimited amount of wealth".[82] Instead, the art of household management is "concerned with the provision of [a due amount] of subsistence, and not, therefore, unlimited in its scope...but subject to definite bounds." [83] That is, Aristotle believed that the moral life of the citizen required the "'equipment of private property'", [84] since the quest for moral perfection required the due satisfaction of man's physical needs. But wealth was only a means to reach one's full human potential; Aristotle rejected the idea of productive activity divorced from the limitations imposed by the Good Life. The use of nature served the Good Life.

Strauss's interpretation of western political philosophy, which Grant accepts, features a confrontation

between classical and modern thought, the latter postulating a very different role for productive activity and the manipulation of nature than the former. The "first wave of modernity", as Strauss terms it, originated with Machiavelli and was adapted by early modern thinkers like Hobbes and Locke; it reacted against the classical disposition to view politics as the means for "the moral development and perfection of its individual members".[85] It was thought that the history of mankind under the ancient conception of politics had been wracked with misery and strife because the ancients had insisted on basing politics on metaphysical conceptions of the Good Life. This orientation posed two major problems. First, grave difficulties attended the belief that the function of government was the promotion of a single best way of life because of the contentions of opinion-based faction over what precisely constituted the summum bonum. Madison spoke of this problem in Federalist 10. He wrote: [86]

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning Government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions,

have in turn divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to co-operate for their common good.

In other words, under the classical scheme individuals who are opposed on the fundamental issue of a man's highest good are unlikely to see one another as legitimate contenders for political power. Furthermore, moderate discussion between such opponents becomes very difficult when each is convinced that he alone understands the truth about man and nature. As a result, force is relied upon to overcome heresy or delusion.

The solution proposed by the representatives of the first wave of modernity to this tendency towards civil war was to banish the question of the best way of life from political debate. The resulting neutral state recognizes no politically relevant metaphysical truth. The pursuit of moral perfection is relegated to the private sphere and the conscience of the individual, while the public sphere is confined to the lower level issue of deciding upon the best means to aid that private pursuit of truth.

The neutral state was also seen to alleviate the second major problem of the classical understanding of politics: the repressive nature of government once a particular conception of the Good Life is established. Aristotle, for example, saw politics as the art of making and executing

laws that helped citizens with their moral development.[87] Men were composite beings who required fear and punishment to control their passions. Most could not progress towards the proper ends of human existence without the spur of legislation, which was a tool of reason's perception of the Good. Moral behaviour was obtained by the inculcation of good habits. As Professor Barker writes: "A state which is meant for the moral perfection of its members will be an educational institution. Its laws will serve 'to make men good': its offices ideally belong to the men of virtue who have moral discernment: its chief activity will be that of training the young and sustaining the mature in the way of righteousness." [88]

In contrast, the early modern philosophers like Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke purported to base their political theories upon man as he actually exists, rather than upon how he ought to be. Martin Diamond points out that "[i]n place of the lofty and seemingly unrealistic virtues demanded by classical and Christian political philosophy, the moderns accepted as irremediably dominant in human nature the self-interestedness and passions displayed by men everywhere". [89] He explains that [90]

the ends of political life were reduced to a commensurability with the human means readily and universally available. In place of the utopian end postulated by the ancients, the forced elevation of

human character, the moderns substituted a lowered political end, namely, human comfort and security. This lowered end was more realistic, they argued, because it could be achieved by taking human character much as actually found everywhere, or by molding it on a less demanding model than that of the premodern understanding.

The early modern thinkers believed that to secure these lowered ends of comfort and security, there must exist a general consensus on the limited end of government. If some considerable part of the population maintained that government should guide citizens towards moral perfection, then there would remain a potential for factional violence. It was thought that the best way to secure the needed consensus was to pander to what was considered the permanent self-interestedness of men. This appeal to the passions was to be accomplished through the encouragement of a commercial society which would create wealth through the systematic conquest of nature. Commerce weakened men's interest in spiritual matters; by fostering material self-interest, commercial society would discourage attempts to form a society based upon metaphysical systems that denied legitimacy to all but one way of life. The first wave of modernity therefore expanded the political importance of the manipulation of nature through technological science. Technology served a moderate political process by

facilitating the attainment of commodious self-preservation, the new lowered end of life; technology was still a servant of political life but was now directed to a decidedly anti-classical end.

An excellent example of this liberal attitude is found in T.C. Keefer's Philosophy of Railroads.^[91] Keefer is a representative of the commercial solution to the problem of good government: moderate politics requires commerce, which moves attention away from fractious spiritual matters like religion. In his book Keefer discusses the influence of commerce in the context of a mythical town that he calls Sleepy Hollow.^[92] Before the arrival of the railroad, this outwardly tranquil town was in fact wracked by poverty, ignorance, suspicion, dissension, bigotry, and political demagoguery. Commercial activity is the proposed antidote to these problems; it leads to interaction, knowledge, and exposure to new ways of doing things; it appeals to the passions and redirects energy which would otherwise be spent in bickering about religious questions; it encourages the acceptance of new ideas and compels closer fellowship with other men, because xenophobic hostility decreases as individuals learn more about one another. Commerce is to Keefer, as it was with Montesquieu and the other classical liberals, a softening influence that helps to form a tolerant population.

The "second wave of modernity" originated, according to Strauss, with the thought of Rousseau. Rousseau provided an important criticism of earlier thinkers like Hobbes and Locke because he fulfilled the internal logic in their thought; Rousseau is said to take seriously the early liberals' view that men are not naturally social.[93] He believed that if one accepts the idea that man is not a social animal, then Hobbes and Locke contradict themselves by basing their theories on man's allegedly permanent self-interest; that is, Rousseau denied the irreducible naturalness of both the teleological conception of man held by the ancients and the permanent selfishness of man supposed by the early liberals.

To Rousseau not only is there no highest good, but not even selfishness is ordained by nature. As Professor Bloom explains, Rousseau believed that since man "is not primarily political and social, he must be divested of all qualities that are connected with life in a community if we are to understand him as he is by nature".[94] Among these qualities is rationality itself. If man is not naturally social, he would not possess the faculty of language, which is the precondition of reason and forethought. Without these attributes, man is like the other animals; he has "only the simplest needs of the sort that are usually easily satisfied".[95] He certainly does not possess the nasty,

competitive passions, like pride and vanity, that led to the violent state of nature of Hobbes. Therefore if one takes seriously the idea that man is not naturally social, one is led to Rousseau's idea that humans have no constant, permanent, or given nature at all. Human nature is a blank slate that develops historically and is determined by the social environment in which it finds itself.

In Lament for a Nation Grant says that this second wave of modernity significantly altered the role of technology in society. He writes: [96]

The earlier thinkers [Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke] criticized the classical view of nature and natural law, but they still maintained some conception of what was natural. While believing that man's essence was his freedom, the later thinkers [Rousseau, Hegel] advocated the progressive mastery through that freedom of human and non-human nature. Man in his freedom was thought to stand outside nature, and therefore to be able to perfect it. We could interfere with nature and make it what we wanted.

In fact, while Rousseau initiated the replacement of Nature by History, thinkers like Hegel believed that there were still standards for the use of technology, but that they developed historically. Hegel agreed in important respects with Rousseau's understanding of man; to Hegel, "[c]onsidered by himself the individual is merely capricious, an animal governed by brute instinct, as Rousseau had said, with no rule of action higher than his

own impulses, appetites, and inclinations and with no rule of thought higher than his subjective fancies".[97]

However, Hegel still saw technology as a necessary instrument for political ends; specifically, for the creation of the universal and homogeneous state. The conquest of nature was important for at least two reasons. First, Hegel fully realized that economic well-being was an indispensable condition "for the development of moral freedom ... poverty leads to stagnation, indignity and is destructive of all the virtues, so necessary for the attainment of moral freedom".[98] Second, as Kojève points out in his Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, in Hegel's master-slave dialectic the work of the slave, his manipulation and transformation of "the given (social) conditions of his existence", [99] leads to the idea of freedom, because the slave comes to know that he has the ability to change nature. In response, the slave creates a series of ideologies "to reconcile the idea of Freedom with the fact of Slavery"; [100] the third and last slave ideology is Christianity, which we have already seen is a crucial factor in the development of the universal and homogeneous state.

Marxism too, according to Grant, has standards by which the use of technology may be judged. Marx believed that "when man's control of nature has eliminated scarcity, the

objective conditions will be present for a society in which human beings no longer exploit each other".[101] Grant says that according to Marxist theory [102]

[w]ith the end of exploitation, men will not be alienated from their own happiness or from each other. A society will emerge in which the full claims of personal freedom and social order will be reconciled, because the essential cause of conflict between men will have been overcome. This worldwide society will be one in which all human beings can at last realize their happiness in the world without the necessity of lessening that of others. This doctrine implies that there are ways of life in which men are fulfilled and others in which they are not. How else could Marx distinguish between man's alienation and its opposite? Marxism includes therefore a doctrine of human good (call it if you will, happiness). Technological development is a means by which all men will realize this good... In Marxism, technology remains an instrument that serves human good.

As Professor Mathie puts it: "Marxism as it presupposes a conception of man's good that entails limits on human freedom sees technology still as an instrument rather than as an end in itself".[103]

It was the influence of Nietzsche that finally set technology free from any higher political ends by inaugurating the "third wave of modernity". Strauss says that "Nietzsche retained what appeared to him to be the insight due to the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century. But he rejected the view that the

historical process is rational as well as the premise that a harmony between the genuine individual and the modern state is possible".[104] Nietzsche brings the implications of historicism to full fruition. As Grant writes in Time As History, Nietzsche held that it is necessary to admit "the absence of any permanence in terms of which change can be measured or limited or defined...we are required to accept the finality of becoming".[105] According to Nietzsche, the recognition by modern thought that man's purposes are not cosmically sustained creates a crisis; nature comes to be seen as "indifferent to moral good and evil",[106] and reason "is only an instrument and cannot teach us how it is best to live".[107] The public world comes to be inhabited by two types of beings - the last men and the nihilists. The last men "are those who have inherited the ideas of happiness and equality from the doctrine of progress",[108] wherein the content of happiness is lowered to the provision of entertainment and comfort. The nihilists "know that all values are relative and man-made...[but] because men are wills, the strong cannot give up willing. [The nihilists] would rather will nothing than have nothing to will".[109] Grant writes: "As nothingness is always before them, they seek to fill the void by willing for willing's sake. There can be no end to their drive for mastery".[110] With the absence of universal standards for human conduct, meaning in

life becomes the exercise of the will to create. As a result the use of technology as a tool of the will becomes in itself of primary importance in a world given over to the open-ended creation of meaning; the process of creating itself becomes a final purpose filling the void left by the disappearance of permanent standards for moral behaviour.

In a discussion of the moral foundations of liberal democracy in chapter two, we will examine Grant's perception of the consequences of the belief that nature is morally indifferent and that man creates his own meaning in life through resolute acts of will. For now it is necessary to complete our study of Grant's era of retractions by examining his reconsideration of practical political questions within his new theoretical framework.

D. GRANT'S REVISED VIEWS ABOUT CANADA

1. THE DEFEAT OF CANADIAN NATIONALISM

Grant's rejection of Hegel led to changes in his opinions on practical issues; because it was impossible to synthesize ancient and modern thought, the acceptance by those who were politically powerful of modern progressive assumptions meant that a progressive conservative political stance became a contradiction in terms: the progressive element ultimately overwhelmed the conservative element.

Grant radically revised his beliefs about the fate of Canada in the post-war world. His early belief in the political and cultural independence of Canada rested on a continued special relationship with Britain. However, by 1965 Grant had a fundamentally different message. In Lament for a Nation he first began to speak about the defeat of Canadian nationalism; that book was written 'to mark "the passing of Canada as a sovereign state ... into the American technological empire".[111]

According to Grant, this defeat arose from the disappearance of the conservative social and political traditions that had distinguished Canada from the United States: "reverence for the past, a sense of the common good and the priority of public order over individual

freedom".[112] Grant declared: "The impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada." [113]

Why had conservatism become impossible in Canada? Grant speaks of a number of reasons. First, he pointed to "the collapse of British power and moral force" [114] since 1945, the result of which was "to destroy Great Britain as an alternative pull in Canadian life", [115] away from the American way of life. And in any case, Grant said, "British conservatism was already largely a spent force at the beginning of the nineteenth century when English-speaking Canadians were making a nation". [116] Professor Reimer says that Grant presumably means that "British conservatism had already become historicist and progressivist in its view of man and society". [117]

Second, and more importantly, Grant emphasized the significance of the decisions made by Liberal governments in Canada after 1940. Grant writes that Liberal policies from 1945 to 1957 [118]

proceeded from the recognition of certain realities: that the Canadian economy was part of the total resources of North America; that Canada was an undeveloped frontier within that total, and the capital necessary for that development would come largely from the United States; that North America was committed to a capitalist structure in which the control of production would be in the hands of "private" corporations, while the government would only

play a supervisory role.

This commitment by the Liberal party to technological expansion through the infusion of American investment made Canada "a branch-plant society of American capitalism".[119] Grant says in Lament that a society directed by such policies "may reap enormous benefits, but it will not be a nation. Its culture will become the empire's to which it belongs. Branch-plant economies have branch-plant cultures." [120] Grant means by this statement that capitalism and the technological domination of nature it promotes work to exchange traditional national particularities for a uniform adherence to a materialistic way of life; he writes that capitalism [121]

is, after all, a way of life based on the principle that the most important activity is profit-making...It is this very fact that has made capitalism the great solvent of all tradition in the modern era. When everything is made relative to profit-making, all traditions of virtue are dissolved, including that aspect of virtue known as love of country.

Grant says that the Liberals were able to implement their policies because they had "a mandate from the Canadian people", [122] particularly the English-speaking bourgeois, who Grant believes do not and have not wanted "anything particularly distinctive to be built on the northern half of this continent". [123] The result is "immersion in the

culture of the United States and subservience to the purposes of the American empire in the world". [124]

2. THE SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Could this integration into continental capitalism have been prevented? When speaking in Lament about the rush in the 1940's toward "cultural and economic integration with the United States", [125] Grant said: [126]

Any hope for a Canadian nation demanded some reversal of the process, and this could only be achieved through concentrated use of Ottawa's planning and control. After 1940, nationalism had to go hand in hand with some measure of socialism. Only nationalism could provide the political incentive for planning; only planning could restrain the victory of continentalism.

However, Grant argues in Lament that no such planning and control of foreign investment was possible, because Liberal governments of the day "never questioned the ultimate authority of business interests to run the economy". [127] Furthermore, the economically powerful men who ran Canadian business were not nationalists; Grant says that "[m]ost of them made more money by being representatives of American capitalism and setting up the branch plants". [128]

Unfortunately, Grant does not explain how the control

of American investment and the resulting lowered rate of economic development could have led to a culture in Canada much different from that of the United States. As we have seen, in Lament Grant connected American investment in Canada to the promotion of capitalism, and capitalism and the use of technology to the promotion of cultural homogeneity. However, he does not establish that without American capital, Canadians would not see profit-making as the central concern of life; in all probability they would still think this way. Indeed Grant himself argues in Lament that most Canadians did not have a "political creed that differed from the capitalist liberalism of the United States";[129] that was precisely the reason why Liberal policies in the 1940's and 1950's were not challenged.

Grant's apparent approbation of socialism in Lament as a tool of Canadian nationalism was largely responsible for his "wide-spread reputation of being a red tory";[130] that is, a "conservative influenced by socialism".[131] His concerns in that book reinforced his general distrust of unrestrained capitalism; in Philosophy in the Mass Age he said that the "continuing rule of the businessman and the right of the greedy to turn all activities into sources of personal gain... is the very symbol of the unlimited and the disordered".[132] However, as Professor Reimer points out, Grant's socialism later became more problematic.[133] For

example, in Technology and Empire Grant writes that the "directors of General Motors and the followers of Professor Marcuse sail down the same river in different boats".[134] That is, to Grant the "right" and the "left" share assumptions more fundamental than those which divide them; he says that "[a]ll political arguments within the system...take place within the common framework that the highest good is North America moving forward in expansionist practicality".[135] No one doubts "the central fact of the North American dream - progress through technological advance".[136]

This alleged failure of the right and the left to promote any principles beyond efficient economic development leads Grant to criticize modern politics in general. Grant believes that "the modern practice of politics is increasingly occupied with the simply administrative".[137] To Grant there is almost no disagreement among the governing elites of the western world about the highest political objective - economic expansion through the technological domination of nature. Political conflict only arises over the means to this universal end. Some might say that the market is best for encouraging and exploiting technological advances. Others might prefer a mixed or socialist economy. But these differences are subsidiary to a common technological exuberance that facilitates the expanding

economy.

3. PRE-MODERN CONSERVATISM

Professor Reimer concludes that Grant's realization "that both liberalism and socialism lead us down the path to a universally administered homogeneous society ... makes him into a conservative".[138] Grant's conservatism should be carefully defined. He is not simply an opponent of sudden, radical change who advocates a "sufficient amount of order so the demands of technology will not carry...society into chaos".[139] Instead Grant favors "an ancient non-historicist type of conservatism";[140] he is a conservative "in the sense of being the [custodian] of something that is not subject to change".[141] That "something" of course is the traditions of Athens and Jerusalem that he has adopted.

Grant's conservatism explains his sympathetic attitude toward French Canadian nationalism, even when the Parti Quebecois posed a serious threat to the continuance of confederation. Grant says that French Canadians "had roots in something much greater than anything the English-speaking world had. They had roots in a very great Catholicism",[142] a "great tradition that was outside modernity".[143] Grant says that since it is hard to believe that the general English-speaking bourgeois desire

some sort of cultural independence from the United States then "it seems to me good that the French should try some other way of defending themselves for their survival".[144] But Grant is not optimistic about their chances for success. The problem is that while French Canadians have desired to remain separate, they also want "the advantages of the age of progress";[145] indeed, much of the leadership of the Parti Quebecois "takes for granted that the expansion of technology is almost automatically good". Grant says that these two ends "are not compatible...Nationalism can only be asserted successfully by an identification with technological advance; but technological advance entails the disappearance of these indigenous differences that give substance to nationalism".[146] Grant points to the desire of French Canadians to control their own economy. He writes: [147]

To run a modern economy, men must be trained in the new technology over human and non-human nature. Such training cannot be reconciled with French-Canadian classical education. An elite trained in the modern way may speak French for many generations, but what other traditions will it uphold? The new social sciences are dissolvents of the family, of Catholicism, of classical education. It is surely more than a language that Levesque wishes to preserve in his nation. New Orleans is a pleasant place for tourists. The dilemma remains.

4. BEYOND HOMOGENEITY

To Grant, cultural uniformity - as regrettable as that is - may not be the worst consequence of the disappearance of the pre-modern conservatism he has adopted. Grant is not sanguine about modern political and philosophical "advances" in the West. In fact, Grant's most recent and thought-provoking work questions the very foundations of modern liberal society. He claims that liberalism and technological progress, while previously interdependent, "may not necessarily be mutually sustaining, and...their identity may not be given in the nature of reason itself".[148] Liberalism has traditionally maintained that technological progress, by facilitating political moderation and economic well-being, is the prerequisite for the creation of a humane society. However, Grant believes that the increasing use of technological science for illiberal ends forces a reconsideration of this view. Grant gives two main examples to support his argument. The first is American involvement in the Vietnam war. Grant has written that "the ferocious determination of the Americans to keep Indo-China within the orbit of their empire has made clear that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...were not intended to be applicable to the tense outreaches of that empire".[149] The second example of the

problem arises in North America itself with the spectre of the "mastery of human beings"[150] through "behavior modifications, genetic engineering [and] population control by abortion".[151] One of the startling things about Grant is that he believes that these problems arise not from the degeneration of liberal ideals but from their fulfillment. To Grant, liberal democracy carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. An understanding of Grant's position requires a discussion of his views on the relationship between commerce, religion, and liberal democratic government. Through this discussion we are able to see the tension in Grant's thought between his defense of constitutional bourgeois liberalism and his critique of it as theoretically unstable.

II. THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

A. THE TRADITION OF BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM

As we saw in chapter one, Grant is to a large degree a follower of Strauss. Almost all other Straussians align themselves with neoconservatism, a movement that defends the kind of constitutional order associated with classical liberalism. In the 1960's neoconservative writers were particularly concerned with the radical New Left movement. They perceived the New Left to be a threat to liberal democracy, or at least a challenge necessitating the re-evaluation of liberal democratic principles. Typically, Grant does not fit the neoconservative mold. His own treatment in the 1960's of the New Left's unhappiness with modern society was sympathetic. He felt that Abbie Hoffman and young people like him were "trying to get apprehensions of the good in the deepest way".[11] Like the neoconservatives, however, Grant has at times taken care to point out the historical decency of liberal democracy. But he goes beyond the neoconservatives by claiming that liberal theory ultimately threatens this traditional decency. This part of Grant's work constitutes the core of what Flinn and O'Donovan see as the third phase of Grant's career. In it Grant turns from the details of Canadian life to the study

of political liberty in the technological society.

The neoconservatives' masters are classical liberals like Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, and the Founding Fathers of the United States. These men built a new science of politics from the premise that man is primarily and permanently a self-interested creature. When we move to the so-called second stream of modernity, we enter a world where man's nature develops historically. Therefore, it can be conquered like the rest of nature. Man becomes raw, indeterminate matter that can be shaped and molded without limit. There is no permanent factor in human nature which must be taken into account when building a political regime, the way the ancients considered man's telos and the classical liberals accepted man's self-interest. The truth that Grant and the neoconservatives recognize is that in terms of practice, classical liberalism produces a type of decent politics that is far less destructive of man than the radical remaking of society that can find its theoretical basis in Rousseau's fundamental criticism of Hobbes and Locke. Grant's point is that if one can manipulate external factors to change human behaviour, then there is no need to respect traditionally recognized rights that were once irreducible consequences of a permanent human nature.

Grant's preference for the bourgeois liberal society that we associate with Locke is repeated throughout his

writings. Grant writes that the English "were sheltered from the extremities of European political thought because of their success under bourgeois constitutional liberalism".[2] Grant argues that this situation was beneficial because "the pursuit of self-preservation, though not the highest end, is certainly more decent and moderate than the extremities of communism or national socialism".[3] Likewise in Lament for a Nation he argues: "The doctrine of human nature of Locke and Smith may be inadequate compared to the classical teachings, but it is less destructive of humanity than the later doctrines, which assert that men are completely malleable to perpetual conditioning".[4] Thus bourgeois liberal regimes are superior because they "preserve constitutional government and respect for the legal rights of individuals in a way that the eastern tyrannies do not".[5]

A similar appreciation for the historical decency of bourgeois liberalism led Grant into a major disagreement with Jacques Ellul. In the introduction to Philosophy in the Mass Age Grant expressed his debt to Ellul, describing Ellul's book The Technological Society as a work in which "the structure of modern society is made plain as in nothing else I have read".[6] There are many similarities between the views of Grant and Ellul on modern society. Ellul, like Grant, laments the demise of Christianity in modern society.

For instance, he writes in Perspectives On Our Age that in the modern age "there is the suppression of meaning; the ends of existence gradually seem to be effaced by the predominance of means".[7] To Ellul this elevation of means over ends signals the death of human spirituality. Indeed, Ellul claims that the denial of final purposes leads humans to find meaning only through hedonistic pleasures and, among the powerful, through the mastery of nature for its own sake. North America is the most highly developed technological society in the world; therefore, Ellul is especially harsh in his evaluation of its concern for spiritual matters. This attitude represents what Grant calls the European contempt of North American society as "barren of anything but the drive to technology".[8]

Grant rejects this assessment of life in North America. His disagreement with Ellul is obvious throughout "In Defence of North America". Grant does not believe North America has been as spiritually bankrupt as Ellul claims. The title of Grant's essay reflects this position. Grant defends North American society from the charge that the manipulation of nature for short-term economic gain or the satisfaction of self-assertion has been its sole motivation for action. As he states in English-Speaking Justice, "the institutions and ideas of the English-speaking world at their best have been much more than a justification of

progress in the mastery of human and non-human nature".[9] Grant argues that there may be almost monolithic certainty about the public good in North America, but it is not derived merely from the desire to will. Instead, Grant says that North Americans have identified the technological society with the liberation of mankind from hunger, disease, and overwork.[10] The purpose of action has been "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...this is the governing goal of ethical striving".[11] Grant believes that this idealism has created a moral framework for the technological domination of nature; it has indeed provided spiritual objectives - perhaps not as exalted as those from Athens and Jerusalem, but still much more expansive than the pure desire to dominate nature.

B. THE THEORETICAL INADEQUACY OF BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM

1. RELIGION AND POLITICS

While Grant defends the traditional decency of bourgeois liberalism, he differs from most neoconservatives by criticizing such liberalism as theoretically incapable of supporting the idea of natural rights. The problem that

Grant identifies in the liberal project is the concurrent rejection of and need for religion. To put the core of Grant's thought on this matter into perspective, it is useful first to gain a more thorough understanding of bourgeois liberalism's traditional treatment of the relationship between religion and politics.

To repeat, the classical liberals' rejection of the ancient understanding of politics came from a desire for civil peace. As Hobbes maintained, the ancient approach to politics tends towards a violent political process; if one believes in a summum bonum and in the idea that government is a proper means for its achievement, then a moderate political process becomes difficult. The representatives of different conceptions of what is right and proper for man cannot see each other as legitimate holders of political power since there is only one best way, and whoever best understands that way possesses an inherent right to rule. The answer to this problem was to banish the idea of a summum bonum from the public sphere, and to restrict the question of man's highest ends to the conscience of the individual. To this end the separation of church and state was absolutely fundamental because religion had been the chief offender against the notions of equality and government by consent.

The strong conviction of the early liberals about the

benefits of the neutral state might imply that the construction of a complete wall between church and state would be most conducive to the establishment of the good regime. However, this was certainly not the position of the liberals who were most influential in North American political thought, the Founders of the United States. For example, the Declaration of Independence invokes the name of God; on the practical side, the Founders granted tax exemptions to church property. If religion was so dangerous to the liberal state, why mention God at all? The answer is that while the Founders agreed that the liberal democratic state should remain neutral between various religions so that no one doctrine was officially established, they did not feel that the state should remain neutral between religion and irreligion. In brief, the Founders believed that while liberal political principles and institutions "do not presuppose a Supreme Being, their preservation does".[12]

This belief in the politically salutary effects of a certain level of religion was widespread at the time of the founding of the United States. For instance, during the Massachusetts convention to ratify the constitution it was said that "without the prevalence of Christian piety and morals, the best republican constitution can never save us from slavery and ruin".[13] Tocqueville claimed: "I do not

know whether all Americans have a sincere faith in their religion - for who can search the human heart? - but I am certain that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions. This opinion is not peculiar to a class of citizens or a party, but it belongs to the whole nation and to every rank of society." [14]

Furthermore, the First Amendment debates are often characterized by the concern that the constitutional entrenchment of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship might have "a tendency to abolish religion altogether". [15]

It is interesting to note that Madison, when replying to this concern, stated that to him the language of the First Amendment meant only that "'Congress should not establish a religion, and enforce the legal observation of it by law'". [16]

Why were the Founders concerned about the retention of religious sentiment among the American people? Washington suggests some of their reasons in his Farewell Address. He writes: [17]

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private

and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

The importance the Founders placed on the development of character should not be overemphasized. The Federalist Papers in fact advocate a diminished reliance on individual character and a greater reliance on proper institutions as the means to a peaceful political process. It was the Anti-Federalists who were more concerned about the political importance of human character.[18] However, it is still true that the Founders did not ignore the significance of some level of personal morality; Federalist Number 55 is a good example of this attitude. Even Jefferson saw the importance of religion in American society. He felt that the preservation of liberty depended on the "support of religious conviction, specifically, the conviction in the minds of the people that it is the gift of God".[19] It therefore must be the policy of government to promote religious conviction by "supporting religion in the form of a 'multiplicity of sects' while favoring no particular one

of them".[20] Thus the American Founders saw a connection between religious belief, which in those days meant Christian faith, and the moral character necessary to control passions like greed and hatred which were inimical to liberty. Therefore the existence of at least a minimal level of piety had public significance.

2. THE NEED FOR PIETY

Grant also speaks of the social importance of religion. He shares many of the concerns that occupied the American Founders over two hundred years ago. Some of these concerns are discussed in "Religion and the State". In that essay Grant states that religion, a "system of belief...that binds together the life of individuals and gives to those lives whatever consistency of purpose they may have",[21] has not only personal but public significance. He says that "the state has an interest in the beliefs of its members in so far as those beliefs have bearing on the maintenance (and indeed perhaps even the improvement) of public order and on the authority of the state necessary to its survival".[22] This is particularly true of constitutional government because it can "hardly continue to exist, if society has reached the point where the state can only maintain its

proper authority (and through it, public order) by the widespread exercise of police power rather than by the free consent of the majority of its citizens".[23] These thoughts led Grant to consider what beliefs are necessary "to that minimum public morality without which constitutional government is not possible".[24] More specifically, Grant asks: "Does public morality rest on the wide-spread practice of piety?".[25]

Grant's main concern in "Religion and the State" was simply "to raise doubts about certain of the arguments"[26] used by the participants in the debate over the proper role of religious education in the public school system of Ontario. A more thorough examination of the place of religion in a liberal democracy is found in English-Speaking Justice. In that book Grant says that Christian piety is a necessary requirement for an adequate account of justice. He is doubtful that a doctrine of natural rights and the idea of the universal equality of all men can stand up against a nonteleological account of the world, like that adopted by the first and second streams of modern political thought. Grant asks the following questions: "How, in modern thought, can we find positive answers to the questions: (i) what is it about human beings that makes liberty and equality their due? (ii) why is justice what we are fitted for, when it is not convenient? Why is it our

good?"[27] Early liberals like Locke and Hobbes thought they could answer Grant's questions by pointing to the permanent nature of man; specifically, that humans are always motivated by a fear of violent death. Grant outlines the original contractarian teaching in the following terms:

[28]

In the social contract, we agree to government and its limitations upon us because it is to our advantage, in the sense that it protects us from the greatest evil. That contract is the source of our rights because we have consented to be social only upon certain conditions, and our rights are the expressions of those limiting conditions. All members of society are equal in the possession of these rights, because whatever other differences there may be between human beings, these differences are minor compared to the equality in our fundamental position: to be rational is to be directed by the dominating desire for comfortable preservation. Justice is those convenient arrangements agreed to by sensible men who recognise the state of nature, and what it implies concerning the greatest evil.

Thus in the thought of Hobbes and Locke the state of nature gave men an absolute reference point, albeit a negative one, compared to the political views of the ancients, on which to base a theory of human rights.

However, these early liberal views have come under the criticisms of continental European philosophy, as described in chapter one. Strauss demonstrates that the influence of Rousseau and Nietzsche shows that older forms of liberalism that postulated the permanency of human nature

are only way stations on the road to a skeptical liberalism that excludes all meaning, all ideas of an irreducible human nature, and so all theoretical brakes on human freedom to mold man without end and to justify this activity by redefining the content of justice.

3. MODERN CONTRACTUALISM

Grant says that if modern liberalism wants to retain some notion of universal human rights within the contractarian tradition, it can do so only on the basis of a theory such as that propounded by John Rawls. In English-Speaking Justice Grant describes Rawls' A Theory of Justice as a new form of contractual teaching not dependent on the naturalistic fallacy that trapped Hobbes and Locke. Rawls posits an "original position" which allows the formulation of universal principles of justice. If we imagine ourselves under a "veil of ignorance", without any knowledge of our particular circumstances, we would choose fairly the principles of justice for our society; we would "have an interest in choosing the universal principles of our society which would be good for all its members, not simply to the advantage of some".[29]

Rawls's relies on self-interest in the "original position" to formulate the principles of universal justice.

But how does self-interest make us react when the "veil of ignorance" has been lifted and we are conscious of our position in society? Grant wonders how Rawls's theory fits with what we know about everyday life. How can it dissuade anyone in the real world from acting to the detriment of his fellows when it is advantageous to do so? Grant argues that individuals, particularly those who run the "massive private corporations and the public corporation which coordinates their welfare", [30] will pay more attention to their real interests than to the hypothetical interests of the original position. Why would anyone imagine himself as potentially poor, stupid, and weak when he is in fact rich, intelligent, and strong? No powerful person would imagine himself in a vulnerable position and say to himself: "The universal rules of the original position forbid what I am now contemplating". As Professor Orwin asks, when we are actually in society "[w]hy...should we act on a wholly imaginary interest rather than on our real one? Unless Rawls can show that it is in our interest to pretend that justice is in our interest, he will not have shown us a thing". [31]

Grant notes that Rawls's idea of justice as fairness - in Orwin's words, as "refraining from making favourable exceptions for oneself" [32] - appears to point back to the thought of Kant. Rawls himself sees his theory as "highly

Kantian in nature'".[33] In English-Speaking Justice Grant outlines how Kant derives his ideas about legal equality.[34]

Because the highest purpose of human life is to will autonomously, the best political regime must be such as could be willed rationally by all its members. In this sense, consent becomes the very substance of the best regime. It must be a state based on 'the rights of man', that is, giving the widest possible scope to external freedom, because any limitations on external freedom stand in the way of the exercise of our autonomy. These rights must be universal throughout society, because all human beings are equal in the sense that they are all open to the highest human end of willing the moral good. Inequalities between human beings are only concerned with lesser goods, such as intellectual or artistic powers. Concerning what matters absolutely we are all equal in the fact that the rational willing of our duty is open to all.

Grant claims that despite Rawls's appeal to Kant, it is "a dimmed and partial Kant which emerges".[35] Kant makes clear how he justifies the universal rights of man. Kant's propositions about justice and the equal treatment of all human beings are ontological statements; he derives moral conclusions from an understanding of the nature of things.[36] Rawls's analytic philosophy refuses to derive the nature of justice from the way things are. Instead Rawls derives them "from the way things aren't".[37] To quote Grant: [38]

For all Rawls's appeals to Kant, the central ontological affirmations of Kant are absent from Rawls. Clearly in Rawls' account of philosophy there can be no fact of reason. Justice, therefore, cannot be justified as coming forth from the universal morality given us in reason itself. Rawls cannot make the affirmation that the good will is the only good without restriction, or that the good will is that which wills the universal moral law. His account of philosophy does not allow him such statements about the supreme good.

However, Rawls offers no alternative on which to base terms of equal justice.[39] In Kant's philosophy "we are equal in what is essential. In our moral willing we take part in the very form of reason itself".[40] But Rawls sees human beings as calculators of their self-interest. Grant asks: [41]

But why does Rawls' account of the 'person' make equality our due? Why are beings who can calculate and cannot avoid choices worthy of equal inalienable rights? After all, some humans can calculate better than others. Why then should they not have fuller legal rights than the poorer calculators? Why do either of these human abilities justify the primacy of equality, or the different level of our rights compared with those of other species?

As Orwin says about Rawls's philosophy: "We should be nice because it is nice to be nice".[42]

Professor Badertscher writes that "one wonders how it

is that contractual liberalism, so painfully lacking in adequate foundations, has been sustained as the dominant morality of the English-speaking world".[43] Grant gives two reasons. First, the "long ascendancy of English-speaking peoples, in the case of England since Waterloo, and the United States since 1914, was achieved under the rule of various species of bourgeois".[44] This commercial and political success created great confidence in the liberalism under which it was achieved, a confidence that prevented the English from taking seriously the challenges posed by Rousseau and Nietzsche.[45] The second reason for the continued moral bite of liberalism has been its relationship with Protestantism. Grant argues that we have lived within a "civilizational contradiction" that adopted modern thought "while picking and choosing among the ethical 'norms' from a dead past".[46] In Grant's words: "In so far as the contemporary systems of liberal practice hold onto the content of free and equal justice, it is because they still rely on older sources which are more and more made unthinkable in the very realisation of technology".[47]

This point is made even more explicitly by Grant in "Abortion and Rights": [48]

The legal and political system, which was the noblest achievement of the English-speaking societies, came forth from

our long tradition of free institutions and Common Law, which was itself produced by centuries of Christian belief. Ruthlessness in law and politics was limited by a system of legal and political rights which guarded the state and other individuals. The building of this system has depended on the struggle and courage of many, and was fundamentally founded on the biblical assumption that human beings are the children of God. For this reason, everybody should be properly protected by carefully defined rights.

As Professor Muggeridge says, Grant claims that in British societies, "there was a natural tendency for Peace and Order to be accompanied by Good Government because British jurists have traditionally stressed the connection between positive and God-given law, and British social reformers appealed directly to Christian values".[49] Grant believes, however, that the last vestiges of the Christian spirit of justice are now being swept away. He finds evidence for this assertion in the increasing use of technology for illiberal ends. His primary example is the problem of abortion, which he calls the most important issue facing the western world at this time.[50] Grant perceives a crumbling of humane liberalism at its core in the United States Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, which struck down legal prohibitions to abortion in the first three months of pregnancy. He interprets this decision as an ontological statement that implies a particular view of human beings; namely that they are not children of God but

accidental conglomerations of matter, a view that to Grant "destroys any reason why any of us should have rights".[51] Why is this so? Grant says that if human beings are seen as "accidental beings in a world that came to be through chance"[52] then [53]

[j]ustice 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 may be 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 foetus loses out on this ethic, so will the weak, the aged, the infirm, 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. The most powerful among us will then decide who are to have rights and who are not.

Grant seems to be saying that if humans are created, then the idea of equal rights should be respected because to do so leads man to an accomodation with God's eternal order. If humans are not created, then there is no reason to recognize equality, because man does not lose anything if he casts off restraint in the pursuit of self-interest. Grant therefore is fearful of the lessons taught by the acceptance of abortion. One of his latest articles emphasizes the significant increase in abortions performed in this country each year.[54] He believes that the intellectual climate

that allows such an increase is dangerous: "Such an absolute denial of right to unborn children has moved Canada down the road to a society where no rights are safe, and where the sanctity of the individual is openly rejected".[55] Grant believes that "[t]he end of this road is tyranny - a tyranny in which legal protection is based on power".[56]

4. THEORY AND PRACTICE

These ontological questions are important to Grant because of the importance that he attributes to the relation between theory and political practice. Grant's key assumption is the declaration he makes in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" that "man cannot help but imitate in action his vision of the nature of things".[57] That is, Grant believes that it is important that modern justice has an inadequate theoretical basis because of the eventual impact that this situation will have on practical matters. In particular, Grant believes it is essential that individuals who enjoy political power feel themselves limited by some doctrine of natural rights. As Grant puts it: "When traditional loyalties no longer hold the most intelligent, will not political activity grow increasingly chaotic unless

a sufficient number of those responsible give themselves to systematic thought about the final purpose of their engineering?"[58] Grant agrees with Coleridge's statement that "'whatever the world may opine, he who hath not much meditated upon God, the human mind, and the summum bonum, may possibly make a thriving earth-worm, but will most indubitably make a blundering patriot and a sorry statesman".[59] Grant says that as the Christian tradition disintegrates, "the worst tragedies will occur where great responsibility operates in metaphysical confusion".[60]

Against Grant's theoretical analysis one could point to the indisputable fact that people continue to use the language of rights and to take it seriously. Grant says that relativism should break down our seriousness about the inviolability of certain principles, but in fact it seems that people do not fall prey to theoretical contradictions; they, as it were, believe in natural rights while keeping relativism in another part of their minds. For example, civil libertarians display passionate opposition to certain injustices and denials of human rights; it seems to be only a partial explanation to say that their actions are motivated by a fear that if the rights of others are infringed, so too will their own rights eventually be threatened.

It is along these lines that Professor Orwin questions

Grant's perception of the general tendencies of liberalism. Grant thinks that the inability of liberalism to provide a firm foundation for the idea of equality sets the stage for a constriction of the rights of those who are unable to defend their own interests, the most obvious example being abortion. Orwin argues that Grant does not pay enough attention to the facts. Orwin writes: "The actual tendency of liberalism however (its 'unthought ontology') is very nearly the opposite of what Professor Grant presents it as being. Far from being dangerously restrictive and threatening daily to grow more so, the liberal notion of humanity is determinedly, nay dogmatically, inclusive".[61] Roe v. Wade is not an exception to this rule because it does not withdraw legal protection from a class of human beings that previously enjoyed it; "foetal personhood was without solid foundation in the precedents, whether in the constitution or the common law".[62] The decision is in fact "a vesting of a novel right [the right to an abortion] or an extension of an established one to some class which had not previously enjoyed it".[63]

But does a mere lack of legal precedent foreclose the argument that the foetus has been denied something in Roe? After all, abortion means that the foetus ceases to exist; it is denied continued existence. Grant emphasizes that whatever it is about humans that makes them worthy of

equal rights, it is difficult to exclude the foetus from those rights because it is, or is able to become, human. What separates the foetus from a child is the same thing that separates a child from an adult: the passage of time. Should children have a lesser right to existence than adults? Even Orwin is impressed by Grant's concern that Roe treats members of the same species differently. He admits that Grant's analysis of Roe "has some justification in theory, but it seems out of touch with liberal practice...".[64] Grant would respond that the continuation of current practice is by no means assured, especially when the prevailing assumptions of society are relativistic. Therefore we should look for a better basis for equality than A Theory of Justice. Grant is correct on the theoretical level; relativism is a severe challenge to the idea of natural rights, except perhaps on the basis of self-interest. Fortunately there are still many people who are committed to rights for broader reasons. It may not be intellectually consistent, but it is true.

In English-Speaking Justice Grant to some extent anticipates Orwin's argument. He considers whether the corrosion of relativism is countered by the fact that "our liberalism so belongs to the flesh and bones of our institutions that it cannot be threatened by something as remote as ontological questioning".[65] We enjoy the

advantage of "the old and settled legal institutions which still bring forth loyalty from many of the best practical people".[66] Indeed, such "living forces of allegiance protect the common sense of practical men against the follies of ideologies".[67] Many modern liberals possess the wholehearted but unthought confidence that "all sensible men have sufficient clarity about ends to get on with the job of realizing those ends, without spending their time thinking about what the job is".[68]

Grant also notes the argument that modern society may provide a milieu for "continuous religious revivals which produce that moral sustenance necessary to the justice of...society".[69] He speculates that perhaps the greatness of liberal society lies "in the fact that the general outlines of social cooperation are laid down and maintained by a secular contract, while within those general rules the resources of religious faith can flourish, as long as such faiths do not transgress the general outline...the greatness of the system is that the tolerance of pluralism is combined with the strength of religion".[70]

However, Grant believes that the modern secular state is becoming less and less pluralistic. We are led increasingly to a "monism of meaninglessness"[71] because no one can find any meaning to existence when the idea of a telological universe is rejected. At the end of the day

Grant is still not content to entrust the theoretical basis of justice to modern liberalism. He maintains that justice now moves to a "lowered content of equal liberty"[72] because the manipulation of human and non-human nature cannot be restrained by modern assumptions about the nature of reality. Grant writes: "The 'creative' in their corporations have been told for many generations that justice is only a convenience. In carrying out the dynamic conveniences of technology, why should they not seek a 'justice' which is congruent with those conveniences, and gradually sacrifice the principles of liberty and equality whey(sic) they conflict with the greater conveniences".[73]

Because of this situation Grant finds himself in a difficult situation when he sets out to comment on liberal society. He believes that the continuing health of society depends on a proper understanding of justice, one very different from the prevailing view. But on the other hand, he also recognizes that bourgeois liberal societies have enjoyed a moderate and decent form of practical politics. Thus in English-Speaking Justice Grant admits: "At the practical level it is imprudent to speak against the principles, if not the details, of those legal institutions which guard our justice".[74] Yet this is precisely what Grant does throughout that book. He has attempted in his later writings to lead others to see the problems that flow

from the basic assumptions of liberalism. It might be said that he himself is making others conscious of the civilisational contradiction between the remnants of Christianity and the tenets of modern philosophy. In a sense this is a dangerous activity, at least if one accepts Grant's own assumptions about the relation between theory and practice. To explain this problem in Grant's work we must examine his manner of writing and his idea of the role of the philosopher in the twentieth century.

III. GRANT'S MANNER OF WRITING

A. GRANT AND PLATO

So far we have followed the development of Grant's thought up to his views on the moral foundations of liberal democracy. This chapter concentrates more on the form than the substance of Grant's work. The first part of this chapter seeks to understand Grant's disconcerting habit of disclaiming any knowledge of a teleological universe while at the same time uttering what appear to be protestations of faith in the Christian religion. This examination takes place within the context of claims that Grant's writings contain an esoteric as well as an exoteric message. The chapter continues with an analysis of Grant's changing conception of the role of the philosopher in the twentieth century. The debate over whether Grant has a positive message for his fellow citizens, caused by Grant's limited philosophical agenda, will then be examined. The chapter concludes with a consideration of Grant's attitude toward liberal democracy.

Grant's conversion to Platonism has left his connection to the modern world similar to Plato's (and Socrates') bearing to the classical world. To begin with, Grant and

Plato's respective philosophical opponents possess more than a passing resemblance. Early Greek thought maintained that the laws by which men live were gifts from the gods.[1] Sophist teachings challenged that position by holding that law and morality were merely products of convention;[2] they were the offspring of expediency and the pre-requisite for communal living without incessant violence. Thus the Sophists's teachings were not oriented toward an ascertainment of the nature of the universe; instead the Sophists emphasized the production of the successful man of affairs.[3] As Professor Guthrie states: "Practical life was what mattered [to the Sophists], and one could learn how to live without bothering one's head to find out whether the world was the product of divine mind or the fortuitous result of collisions between innumerable atoms blindly jostling one another in infinite space".[4]

Grant portrays dominant contemporary beliefs as similar to the teachings of the Sophists. He claims that within modern society the moral relativism that has freed man from ancient ethical doctrines has darkened as perhaps never before the idea that human existence has a meaning and a purpose which is independent of man's freedom to make his own moral laws; indeed according to Grant there is a bland indifference among modern men to anything but the expansion of their respective national economies.[5] Grant perceives

the manipulation of nature for short-term economic gains to be the chief purpose of human existence in the modern age; the concentration upon such finite ends is the supreme spirit of the twentieth century.

This relentless pursuit of technological progress can be thought of as the height of the practical life. And this modern Sophistry, to Grant, is just as heedless about the necessity of understanding the nature of reality to act rightly in the world as was the original. For example, Grant criticizes men like Sir Karl Popper who deny the possibility of any objective morality but take for granted "that the truths of morality are somehow immediately intelligible to all men of good will".[6] Both ancient and modern Sophists ask: "Why waste time on metaphysics when we all know what is worth doing?".[7]

Twenty-three centuries have passed, and the ancient dilemmas remain. Modern political thought has assailed the Christian bases of universal justice just as the Sophists refused to accept Zeus's commands through the Delphic Oracle as the fountain of absolute law for mankind.[8] Plato and Grant react strongly to these harbingers of social disorder. Plato was convinced, in the face of growing impiety and political turmoil, that proper personal behaviour and political reform depended on following immanent and unchanging laws. Plato said that these laws were based on

the twin pillars of a "belief in a world of intelligible Forms or 'Ideas' existing independently of the things we see and touch, and the belief in an immortal soul existing in separation from the body, both before birth and after death".[9]

Similarly, Grant contends that the uncritical acceptance of the ends of man as defined by modern society is a corrupting influence in private and political life. Indeed Grant often uses Platonic terminology when speaking of the ultimate source of morals. He claims, for example, that it is unwise to live without "listening or watching or simply waiting for intimations of deprival which might lead us to see the beautiful as the image, in the world, of the good".[10]

Strong beliefs, though, do not necessarily lead to political action. Even Plato was disillusioned with Athenian politics; internecine strife and the execution of his friend Socrates discouraged his political ambitions. Plato's Seventh Letter describes the transformation of his political ambition into bewilderment with the degraded political life in Athens. Yet Plato did in fact act politically; that is, he disputed the nature of the Good Life with his fellow citizens. He wrote dialogues to convince the would-be statesman that "he will not be fit to advise his country until he has attained self-knowledge, or

the knowledge of good and evil".[111] Plato founded an Academy intended to train young politicians for philosophic rule. He made no less than three trips to the court of Dionysius II.^o These attempts to educate future rulers demonstrate Plato's continued hope to wield some sort of benign political influence for the benefit of his fellow citizens.

Interesting parallels exist in Grant's life. Grant also has been disillusioned. His earliest writings forecast the development of a humane world order buoyed by the spirit of classicism and Christian humanitarianism. As we have seen, Grant tells a different tale today. He is a harsh critic of contemporary politics, which is to him no more than the administration of the technological society; Canada is too closely linked with the United States, and so on. Plato acted politically when faced with the social evils of his day. What is Grant's response as a philosopher to the problems of his time? In fact Grant seeks to educate his fellow citizens in the ways of justice; his means and motivation for this task must now be examined.

B. ESOTERIC WRITING

Grant's pedagogical strategy has generated an

interesting dispute among his commentators. Some writers have seen in Grant's work an esoteric as well as an exoteric teaching. The significance of this distinction was rediscovered by Professor Strauss. Strauss pointed out that classical and early modern philosophers often disguised their true teachings because they wished to avoid persecution and a summary rejection of their views. The unsuspecting reader derived an exoteric message, apparently compatible with prevailing attitudes, which the writer thought socially useful. A much closer reading of the same work revealed to the attentive reader a second hidden or esoteric message. This teaching revealed the writer's true beliefs, which were invariably at odds with prevailing public sentiment and potentially damaging to moral or political order if widely disseminated. The esoteric message was conveyed by means of certain accepted literary techniques. Two techniques in particular have been linked to Grant's work.[12] The first is irony - "the art of indirect speech"[13] - which includes the use of apparent textual inconsistencies, allusion, and dramatic action to colour the writer's apparent meaning. The second is prudence - "the art of strategic silence"[14] - in which a writer's silence on a particular topic or argument itself implies an added level of meaning to a patent teaching.

Professor Christian claims that for all of Grant's

writings the reader "must be prepared to dot the i's and cross the t's himself".[15] He refers to the "hidden and dark recesses"[16] of Grant's argument. These comments seem to imply that Grant himself has emulated his master Plato by using the classical techniques of esoteric writing. However, it is difficult to see much evidence of an esoteric message in the bulk of Grant's work. In fact there appear to be only a few places in his writings which bring up the possibility of an esoteric message, and these instances involve only the reconciliation of apparent textual inconsistencies.

1. IRONY

Professor Badertscher has pointed out a possibly significant inconsistency in English-Speaking Justice, one that in fact introduces us to the problem of Grant's professed uncertainty about man's ultimate destiny. Near the end of that book Grant writes that the truth of the idea that justice is what men are fitted for "cannot be thought in unity with what is given in modern science concerning necessity and chance".[17] Two sentences later Grant says that this account of justice "has not been thought in unity with the great theoretical enterprises of the modern world"[18] (emphasis added). There seems to be a

discrepancy between these two statements: one holds out some hope for a reconciliation of ancient justice and modern thought; the other does not. One rule for the interpretation of esoteric writings is that textual inconsistencies can signal the existence of an esoteric message; one assumes that the writer has not unthinkingly made a glaring error. For example, in his study of Montesquieu, Professor Pangle discusses part of the Preface to the Spirit of the Laws as follows: [19]

[Montesquieu] begins by asserting the lawfulness, that is, the permanence, orderliness, and knowability of the whole. The things that are, the "beings", fall into a scheme of five classes or kinds: "the Divinity," "the material world," "the intelligences superior to man," "the beasts," and "man." Each kind of being has its own kinds of "laws" or "necessary relationships."

Pangle then points out what appears to be an inconsistency in Montesquieu's handling of the classes of being. He writes: [20]

Montesquieu proceeds to discuss each kind of being in the order stated, except that instead of discussing the "intelligences superior to man," or the angels, in the central place after "the material world," he begins to discuss "individual intelligent beings" in that place and never again mentions intelligences superior to man. Soon afterwards it is made explicit that "individual intelligent beings" refers to "men"; at the outset of The Spirit of the Laws, angels are replaced by men at the center of the scheme of being.

Pangle expands on Montesquieu's hidden message in these terms: [21]

By this device Montesquieu conveys more than the lesson that angels and angelic ways do not exist, or are irrelevant to reflections on man and politics. By first mentioning prominently, and then dropping, "intelligences superior to man," he intimates that there is no intelligence superior to man's and that therefore nothing is inherently mysterious or incomprehensible to perfected human reason.

Is Grant's inconsistency in English-Speaking Justice of the same nature as Montesquieu's manipulations? Badertscher does not think so; he believes that this inconsistency is not a true example of ironic writing; it is "only apparent, a consequence of the prophetic character of [Grant's] writing".[22] By this statement I take Badertscher simply to mean that Grant warns his readers that if men do not attempt to reconcile the Christian Gospels and Platonic philosophy with the great theoretical enterprises of the modern world - modern philosophy and the discoveries of modern science - then these bodies of knowledge will remain apart. Badertscher seems to imply that Grant feels that the idea of eternal justice can be reconciled with modern philosophy and natural science if the right effort is made. But is it really true that Grant believes that an ultimate reconciliation of absolute justice and modern thought is possible? At times it seems he is not entirely sure. For

example, in the conclusion to Lament for a Nation Grant points out the differences between classical and modern philosophy and the differing accounts of human freedom these positions entail. He then says that a detailed discussion of these matters would be inconclusive "because I do not know the truth about these ultimate matters".[23] Even more surprising is Grant's statement in "A Platitude", when discussing the triumph of modern thought over ancient philosophy and revelation, that "[w]hat we lost may have been bad for men".[24]

However, in contrast to this aporetic position we have strong indications that Grant in fact does possess an understanding of ultimate matters. The plainest are Grant's comments about Christianity. Charles Taylor repeats a statement that Grant made about Simone Weil: "[W]hen she says Christ visited her, came down to her, I have to believe this. I have to know that did happen".[25] It is hard to imagine a more direct expression of faith than this assertion. How then do we explain the apparently inconsistent statements Grant makes about his knowledge of ultimate matters? Perhaps an explanation of a more prosaic inconsistency in Grant's thought will help. In an article on Jean-Paul Sartre, Grant calls Sartre "a maker of the modern mind" and "a brilliant writer".[26] But Charles Taylor tells us that a few years later Grant considered

Sartre a "third-rate thinker, third-rate writer".[27] Why does not Grant so describe Sartre in his essay on Sartre's thought? Grant simply may have changed his mind, having written about Sartre precipitously, before he fully understood the extent of Sartre's accomplishments. This would not be the first time that Grant wrote about something without understanding it fully; he admits to this failing in the introduction to "Religion and the State". However, a more charitable explanation for the inconsistency is that Grant wants us, in his initial work on Sartre, to take Sartre seriously. Regardless of the ultimate validity of his thought, Sartre was the "most influential of the existentialists",[28] and to Grant what the existentialists have to say "is something which an educated man must come to grips with if he wants to live beyond the superficial".[29] Similarly, Grant may at times claim ignorance about the truth of ultimate matters in an attempt to appear as an impartial scholar on a quest for truth, without predispositions, who can dispassionately evaluate the practical and theoretical consequences of ancient and modern thought. Indeed, S.R. Noel analyzes Grant's professed ignorance about the value of lost traditions by explaining it as "introduced only for rhetorical impact, for Grant has elsewhere made perfectly clear his belief that [God] is the limit of our right to change the world".[30] Apparently

Grant feels that truth may best be served by leading his readers towards older systems of meaning by pointing out the limitations of modern thought while masquerading as an agnostic, in order to lessen the risk of alienating readers who might reject out of hand any perceived attempt to proselytize.

However, even if Grant's aporetic utterances can be explained, there still remains an interesting problem in his work which stems from his comments about the validity of modern science. Grant describes quantum mechanics and modern biology as the "undoubtable core of truth which has come out of technology".[31] He also seems to accept, as we have seen, the truth of the Christian revelation. The problem arises from Grant's statement in Time As History that "the enormous corpus of logistic and science of the last century is unco-ordinate as to any possible relation it may have with those images of perfection which are given us in the Bible and in philosophy".[32] He also claims that "you cannot hope to combine successfully an ahistorical political philosophy with a natural science which is at its heart historical".[33] We are left with two opposing truths in Grant's writings - the truth of a universal order, and the truth of modern science - that cannot be reconciled. Traditional esoteric writers like Montesquieu resolved the apparent inconsistencies in their writings by indicating

indirectly which message an attentive reader should accept. Grant is different. He does not really write ironically; that implies two messages: one useful, one true. Grant does have two messages, but he says that both are true, even though he is not sure how they fit together.

The existence of these two truths leads to a problem in Grant's views on the influence of theory on practice. Grant has often claimed to take this relationship seriously. For example, in "A Critique of the New Left" he wrote that "[a]ction without thought will be an impotent waste of time. In this ferocious era, if we are ... to be effective citizens, then our first obligation is to be free. And by free I mean knowing the truth about things, to know what is so, without simplifications, without false hopes, without moral fervour divorced from moral clarity".[34] On the other hand, in English-Speaking Justice he writes: "For those of us who are lucky enough to know that we have been told that justice is what we are fitted for, [the relation between absolute justice and natural science] is not a practical darkness, but simply a theoretical one".[35] Here Grant says that theoretical darkness is not a practical problem. Professor Box questions whether Grant as a Platonist can "consistently maintain the distinction between theoretical and practical darkness".[36] In any case, these theoretical difficulties mean that Grant relies on faith to

inform his practical activities. One wonders whether the secular faith of modern liberals in the dignity and inherent worth of man is so different.

2. STRATEGIC SILENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHER

As we saw in chapter one, Grant's writings initially leaned toward diagnosis and exhortation. His analysis of the post-war world in The Empire: Yes or No? and the prospects for Canadian nationalism in "Have We a Canadian Nation?" led to positive prescriptions: we must support the British Commonwealth, we must hold on to our conservative traditions. When Grant wrote "Religion and the State" in 1963 he still assumed that certain doctrines from Athens and Jerusalem could be "conservatively appropriated or publicly sustained in our present society".[37] But by 1969, as previously noted, Grant admitted that such conservatism had "no possible application in the society to which it is addressed",[38] even though he continued to think that what he had said was true. He confessed that to think that there is a point in discussing such matters "as if they could have public relevance in the English-speaking world of the twentieth century is absurd".[39] For example, his criticisms of the naive, almost utopian hopes of the New Left revolved around the perception that there was no evidence that modern society could be "turned towards the ends of human excellence".[40] Grant wrote that "the American system with its extension into Western Europe

seems...supremely confident and to have the overwhelming majority of its citizens behind it".[41] Given these views it is hard at times to imagine why Grant has bothered to write at all. Yet he does continue to seek out an audience. Charles Taylor calls Grant "the most public of philosophers".[42] He participates in the political life of his nation as surely as did Plato. He writes his essays for magazines like Saturday Night and Canadian Dimension, not for professional journals. He contributes book reviews to The Globe and Mail. He lectures on national radio. But despite all this activity, Grant's current philosophic agenda is much more modest than before. Grants says that [43]

the darkness which envelops the western world because of its long dedication to the overcoming of chance is just a fact. Thinkers who deny the fact of that darkness are no help in illuminating a finely tempered practice for the public realm. The job of thought at our time is to bring into the light that darkness as darkness. If thinkers are turned away from this by becoming tamed confederates in the solution of some particular problem, they have turned away from the occupation they are called to.

Grant claims that the modern predicament "is too enormous in the history of the race to permit one to say: I'm against it, or I'm for it. The main thing, you know, in my life, is just to see what it is".[44]

Such statements about the role of philosophy in modern

times have caused doubts about the existence of any positive message in Grant's writing. For example, Professor Box sees in Grant's work only the destructive analysis of contemporary society; he says that Grant's views "may be enlightening but they certainly are not constructive".[45] According to Box, Grant's understanding of modern society precludes the promulgation of any alternatives to modern assumptions about the world. Box fastens on Grant's statements that those who are led to examine the account of human excellence that is promoted by the technological society "are held by the modern account of knowledge, and can only judge modernity in its own terms"[46] - that is, on the basis of whether or not present institutions and practices lead to an increase in human freedom. Box believes the central theme of Grant's recent work is the proposition that "any theoretical alternatives to the modern account are bound to be inadequate",[47] because no one accepts the idea of eternal principles of truth that can provide the only sure basis for criticizing modern society.

In contrast, commentators like Christian, Taylor and Lampert discern a constructive side to Grant's work. These writers believe that Grant delivers a positive message, but in an esoteric fashion, by prudent indirection instead of earnest exhortation.[48] Grant himself seems to give some support to this interpretation of his method of teaching.

For example, in the concluding chapter of Time As History, when Grant expresses his suspicion of the assumptions of the modern age, he admits that his own beliefs are not presented or defended because "it is questionable how much it would be possible to argue them in the modern world... [for] all those statements are made from out of an ancient way of thinking".[49] As Professor Lampert says, Grant, like Socrates, knows nothing for a purpose;[50] Grant has deduced that a detailed declaration of "what he takes the ultimately true things to be"[51] would serve no useful purpose; the philosopher's task is not to engage in "unSocratic didacticism".[52]

Grant's reluctance to speak at length about his personal beliefs may be explained in this way, but what about Grant's constructive side? What is the positive message that writers like Christian see in Grant's work? Ironically the message appears to stem from Grant's destructive analysis of justice in the English-speaking world. A comparison with Plato is again in order. English-Speaking Justice is similar to the initial chapters of the Republic, in which Socrates disputes the nature of justice with Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus. The essence of the Socratic method is "to convince the interlocutor that whereas he thought he knew something, in fact he does not. The conviction of ignorance is a necessary first step to the

acquisition of knowledge, for no one is going to seek knowledge on any subject if he is under the delusion that he already possesses it".[53] Grant effectively employs this technique in English-Speaking Justice. Most individuals probably believe that western liberal traditions provide a sure foundation for justice. The frightening possibilities that Grant describes for a future type of justice that is based on power and convenience are intended to move his readers to reconsider their opinions. Grant wishes to disabuse people of the unthought assurance that modern thought is conducive to a secure theory of justice. The constructive side of this process, in Taylor's opinion, is that "[in] predicting the worst, Grant also reminds us of the best - especially those classical standards of justice and freedom by which he judges our modern era and finds it wanting. He arouses not only our apprehensions of man's propensities to evil, but also our own awareness of man's timeless quest for the good. He seems to challenge us to prove him wrong".[54] Taylor also speaks of glimmerings of hope that run through Grant's work: the possibility of living in the ancient Christian faith in the modern world, the occurrence of "intimations of deprival" that point to a natural order, the pronouncements that justice is good and that injustice is evil. From such hints Taylor sees a hope, perhaps a conviction in Grant that "our current course can

be reversed".[55] Christian seems to agree; he takes Grant's message to be "a prophecy which he (Grant) hopes is self-defeating".[56] In fact Christian sees Grant's description of the spirit of the modern age as a challenge to reconcile modern science and classical philosophy. Christian writes: "Only if [Grant] can terrify us enough with the prospects of the impending darkness, will we see the need to struggle to remain in the light".[57] And like Taylor, Christian sees in Grant's work an "attempt to retard, arrest and reverse the triumph of the calculators".[58] Badertscher also thinks along these lines. He claims that Lament for a Nation paradoxically resulted in a revival of Canadian nationalism, and wonders whether English-Speaking Justice will encourage a similar rehabilitation of the idea of nature of justice.[59]

These are certainly more sanguine views of Grant's work than a reader like Box would allow. In this respect Box has probably emphasized the wrong parts of Grant's work. It is difficult to see how Box can say that Grant's analysis has compromised his "ability to make clear his own religious and philosophical loyalties".[60] Christian criticizes Box for this statement. Christian writes that "Grant has never stopped, and I suspect will never stop, telling us that there is a transcendental world that always and truly is".[61] For instance, on the first page of English-

Speaking Justice Grant tells us that "we are called to think... technological civilisation in relation to the eternal fire which flames forth in the Gospels and blazes even in the presence of [the assumptions of modern society]".[62] Such statements make it difficult to conclude that Box is correct in stating that Grant's own position is obscure. Yet Christian and the others have probably leaned too far in the other direction. Their comments about a possible reversal of western thought clash with Grant's frequent assertions about the power of modern society and the overwhelming support it receives from its citizens. Too little attention has been paid to one of Grant's favorite pieces of wisdom - More's aphorism that "when you can't make the good happen try to prevent the very worst".[63] This attitude conveys the impression that Grant is fighting a rearguard action;[64] there may be in fact no call for large-scale political reform, no blueprint for the remodelling of society, only the attempt to make the best of a bad situation.

Is there then a positive but esoteric teaching in Grant's work? Grant does present a theoretical alternative to the modern project. But the idea that he believes that it can publicly succeed is less compelling. Beyond this, we still must question the suitability of describing Grant as an esoteric writer at all. It is true his reluctance to

detail his own philosophy is similar to the strategic silences used by certain classical and modern writers. However, it is difficult to say that Grant is really concealing anything, since he does indicate explicitly, albeit briefly, his own views. And ultimately Grant's personal views do not require full concealment. Other writers have used the full panoply of esoteric literary techniques to hide their personal conception of the truth about the world because they did not believe in the basis of the piety that they recognized as conducive to political stability. Such writers feared the consequences if their true beliefs fell into the hands of the common man. For this reason they did not attack directly the politically salutary opinions held by the masses - that there is a divine order, that man's destiny rests on his just conduct in this life, and so on.

Grant is different. In chapter two we saw that he explicitly questions the theoretical underpinnings of the salutary belief that modern liberalism provides an adequate basis for the principles of justice and human equality. One might think this imprudent, especially because, as Grant himself says, liberal democracies have protected human rights better than have the eastern tyrannies. Why then does Grant write of the moral bankruptcy of liberalism? The answer is that he believes, unlike traditional esoteric

writers, in a divine order, and that that order and the absolute standards of morality it implies are essential to the continued existence of decent political action in the west. Therefore the ancient account of justice must be studied in all seriousness by individuals who have felt that contractual liberalism could supply the theoretical needs of liberal democracy. As Grant says in English-Speaking Justice: "It is folly to take the ancient account of justice as simply of antiquarian interest, because without any knowledge of justice as what we are fitted for, we will move into the future with a 'justice' which is terrifying in its potentialities for mad inhumanity of action".[65] Some of Grant's most straightforward comments on the purpose of his work after his rejection of Hegelianism are found in the introduction to the Carlton Library Edition of Lament for a Nation. Grant thought it necessary to respond to critics who claimed that writing about the defeat of Canadian nationalism in some way encouraged "the fulfilment of the prophecy".[66] He wrote: [67]

We live in an era when most of our public men are held by ignoble delusions - generally a mixture of technological progressivism and personal self-assertion - all that is left of official liberalism in the English-speaking world. In such circumstances a writer has a greater responsibility to ridicule the widespread ignoble delusions than to protect the few remaining beliefs which

might result in nobility.

Grant would agree that undermining traditions like the confidence people feel in liberal democracy is a bad thing. However, Grant believes that in the modern world these traditions will be undermined anyway. In Grant's mind the thing to do is to lead men back to the roots of decent political practice, which he has found in traditional Christianity.

Thus Grant's ultimate aim appears to be the preservation of the decent political practices associated with liberal democracy. In one sense, there is a much greater possibility in the natural right teachings of Plato and the Church for the moral moderation that Grant so urgently desires, and which he acknowledges has been achieved in a superior degree under liberal democratic principles. Both Platonism and Christianity propose the existence of an ordered universe from which man may derive objective standards of right and wrong. However, it is the grand irony of political philosophy that religious warfare, caused to some extent by the differing views that men held about the nature of absolute moral standards, was responsible in the first place to the rejection of the older ways of thinking; their rejection was sought in order to bring moderation to political life. Hobbes wrote shortly after the pall of the Thirty Years War had been lifted from

Europe. Grant appears to accept the hard lessons of pre-modern politics; there is no indication that he would return us if he could to that political framework. Instead Grant appears as a friend of liberal democracy. Like the authors of the Federalist Papers, he criticizes in order to cure, not to destroy.

Grant's prescription for the continuing health of the liberal tradition is interesting; he wants us to reconsider the validity of ancient thought, but he does not seek to inoculate us against Nietzsche or the other moderns. Grant says that "it is not a negative activity to read [Nietzsche], but a positive one, in the sense that through his critique one comes to see what are the essential assertions of Christianity, and what it is to think them true".[68] In fact, he believes that our present problems stem precisely from an inattention to philosophy. Grant believes that the difficulty that the English-speaking world faces is that "we have been so long disinterested or even contemptuous of that very thought about the whole which is now required".[69] He writes: "No other great western tradition has shown such lack of interest in thought, and in the institutions necessary to its possibility. We now pay the price for our long tradition of taking the goods of practical confidence and competence as self-sufficiently the highest goods".[70] As a result Grant says that our "lack

of a tradition of thought is one reason why it is improbable that the transcendence of justice over technology will be lived among English-speaking people".[71]

Professor Box claims that there is a difficulty with Grant's statements concerning the problems that an unphilosophical temperament has engendered in the English-speaking world. Box points out that Grant elsewhere has claimed that it is precisely the English-speaking world's disinterest in philosophy that has spared it the disorders of public nihilism.[72] If one accepts the truth of this last statement, Box says, then it is hard to see the value in encouraging in our society the philosophic enterprises that have elsewhere led to complete relativism. Using Grant's own arguments one might just as easily say that a nation of shopkeepers is in fact more likely to retain a decent respect for justice. To Box this inconsistency makes it difficult to know whether Grant's criticism of the theoretical insufficiency of liberal democracy is a noble effort to revive ancient theories of justice or an ill-advised enterprise that helps to fulfill his own dire prophecies.

On further reflection, however, Box's criticism of Grant seems somewhat too harsh. While the consequences of Grant's work may be problematic, it is still unfair to charge Grant with inconsistency in the matter of the use of

philosophy in North America. Certainly Grant does not see any inconsistency; for him, the two-edged sword of philosophy is a paradox. The place of philosophy in our society is to Grant both a strength and a weakness of our political life; to repeat, the alleged absence of philosophy has insulated us from the corrosive effects of European thought on the moral foundations of liberal democracy.[73] On the other hand, the absence of a tradition of philosophy or, as Grant puts it, a steadfast attention to the whole, leaves us ill-prepared to meet the intellectual challenge presented by modern relativism.[74]

However, the paradox of philosophy arises not so much with the mere presence or absence of a steadfast attention to the whole, or a stubborn attempt to think clearly about the nature of reality, but in the ultimate decisions about existence based on that attempt. This point leads us to speculate about the effectiveness of Grant's thought. Professor Schmidt has written that "one cannot but think that George Grant has become important without becoming influential, and that this gives some indication of how unphilosophical a nation he inhabits".[75] Grant claims that we require the practice of philosophy - the contemplation of the eternal - to guide politics and morals properly. Unfortunately Grant himself has admitted that he cannot reconcile the truths of eternal moral standards with

the truths of modern science. In fact, Grant tells us that his knowledge about eternal absolutes is based on faith. He understands the world in a direct, mystical and largely inexplicable manner quite apart from philosophy.[76] He admits that reason is insufficient to determine truth. Philosophy may help us to think critically about the inherited wisdom of the past, but it is revelation that is Grant's ultimate guide. If a thinker of Grant's stature admits theoretical defeat, it seems somewhat unfair of Professor Schmidt to explain Grant's perceived lack of influence by the unphilosophical nature of his audience. But Schmidt does seem to be right in his basic point: while it is encouraging to see a man like Grant promoting a teleological understanding of the universe, it is hard to see a wide application of his views in a society that he says is materialistic to its core.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that the writings of George Grant have generated considerable scholarly interest over the years. At times it seems as though commentary on Grant's work has developed into a separate subdivision of political science in Canada. And discussions of Grant's work continue to pour out: Professor Kroker considers Grant's work in Technology and the Canadian Mind.^[1] Professor O'Donovan recently has produced an extended explanation and criticism of Grant's writings in George Grant and the Twilight of Justice; even the Chesterton Review^[2] has come out with a special issue devoted to Grant. The explanation for all this attention is simple. As Professor Schmidt says in George Grant in Process, political scientists, historians, philosophers, and theologians "acknowledge the gravity of the questions [Grant] has raised, and are forced into dialogue with him".^[3]

The diversity of Grant's readers reminds us of the unusual nature of his political thought. Grant does not talk about interest groups, electoral systems, or legislative assemblies. He only briefly hints at his views on the proper role of the state in the economy. In the

analysis of political ideologies he is far from orthodox. He sees Marxism as a conservative movement because it retains an idea of human good. He believes that modern conservatives and socialists share assumptions more fundamental than those which divide them. He thinks that modern liberalism is a force that threatens rights rather than one that protects them. As we have seen, Grant does not define liberalism as a theory about the purposes of government; rather, to Grant liberalism is an affirmation about the nature of reality: humans are free to create their own values. Grant is less concerned with the detail of the political process than with its underlying theoretical basis. His concern is with the most fundamental political question of all: what makes human beings equal to one another? Why do they deserve equal treatment? In Grant's view most North Americans would agree with the Declaration of Independence that the equality of human beings is self-evident. Like these people Grant thinks equality is a good thing, but he wants to be sure that future generations will enjoy its benefits. He therefore attacks the inability of contractual liberalism to support rights outside of considerations of convenience, and claims that the increasing rate of abortion in this country puts us on a slippery slope towards the widespread denial of the rights that we currently take for granted. The slippery slope

argument is never very satisfactory because it is so conjectural, but when an issue as important as the right to existence hangs in the balance, we must pay attention to every reasonable concern about the nature of the views that ultimately shape public policy. As Grant says, there are theories at work in the world, and we had better understand them.

This, then, is Grant's problem, and it is a serious theoretical concern: if there is no such thing as a permanent human nature, if man is completely malleable and the world does not provide any meaning for human life, then where does one derive standards of good and evil that can guide the process of politics? Grant does not attempt a systematic answer to this question; he only points the way. But to Grant it is a path that anyone can travel. As he says in George Grant in Process, "Anybody whose life is given over to philosophy needs to read the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians regularly. Anybody is open to love, and that is the supreme act".[4] Because Grant believes that love and not will is primary, he is outside the mainstream of modern thought. And while he may not succeed in changing the dominating assumptions of the public realm, he does force people to think. Grant can say with Hooker: "'Posterity may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream'".[5]

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

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