

# GEORGE GRANT

## *Language, Nation, The Silence of God*

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**M**Y MOST VIVID RECOLLECTION OF FIRST HEARING about George Grant's political philosophy and his views of modernism is a lecture by Dennis Lee. Like most of my colleagues, I had some sense in the early 1970's that Grant was, if not a deeply admired, a much respected philosopher, an intellectual of considerable force, the author of at least two books that went some way toward redefining the terms by which Canada was to be understood and the conditions of contemporary life that called for a re-definition. But at the same time, like most of my colleagues, I was aware too of what seemed to me a certain crankiness in Grant's style and thought that made his best work painful and uneasy reading. A recent tribute to Grant "as Canada's foremost political philosopher" qualifies its position oddly by remarking that "one cannot but think that George Grant has become important without becoming influential" and that "Instead of reading his own works and participating in his relentless ethical quest, men of Grant's own generation have been content to make him a fellow of the Royal Society."<sup>1</sup> Some such qualification or unease may have been in my mind as Lee began to lecture to a large freshman class in a Humanities course on "Canadian Culture" about Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and *Technology and Empire*. Two strong, conflicting emotions possessed me during the lecture: one, embarrassment at Lee's obviously painful struggle to articulate a deeply-felt but somehow complicated series of arguments; another, something akin to awe at the degree of conviction in his view that Grant's moral position was somehow absolutely and fundamentally right. The effect of the lecture was quite extraordinary in its odd mixing of obscure and hidden emotions with feelings as immediately authentic as testimony or religious witness. It was only later, when in fact I read Lee's brilliant "Cadence, Country, Silence,"<sup>2</sup> that I understood what it was I was hearing that day or why it should have had the effect on me — and I dare say on the class — that it did. Later too I began to understand the reason for the class's fascination with a writer who by all usual standards should have proved repellent to them.

Writing of Grant's political and social thought in his essay "Loyalism, Technology, and Canada's Fate,"<sup>3</sup> Ramsay Cook begins by pointing to two unresolved

paradoxes which underly Grant's work: one is the combining of political polemic and political philosophy in *Lament for a Nation*,<sup>4</sup> perhaps a confusion rather than a paradox; the other is the development in Grant's thought of two ideas, both part of "an extremely important Canadian tradition," one "the moral unity of the English-speaking world," the other "a desire for full Canadian status."<sup>5</sup> The paradox, at least in its second and more fully formed version, develops out of both Grant's special view of the philosopher's role and his account or, rather more accurately, his interpretation of Canadian history; but given the history of his intellectual development, it has its meaning as well in his sense of how it is possible at all to speak of God in history, when it is necessary, and what sorts of reticence are called for. His work, in other words, calls at the very least for a theory of language, a political theory, and religious witness.

Those philosophers and theologians who attempt to write of his "thought in process," the development of his ideas and argument, begin with some apology about the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of finding points of view from which to approach Grant's work: "Because all Grant's ideas are inter-related, it is almost impossible to divide his thought into four categories, and the very nature of conversation precludes such simple categorization."<sup>6</sup> Having said so much, the writers proceed to present Grant from four points of view, "Canadian Politics," "Intellectual Background," "Theology and History," and "Philosophy." There is a certain symmetry and even inevitability in the pattern, as suggested by the roughly similar divisions indicated in the poet Dennis Lee's account, "Cadence, Country, Silence," and the historian Ramsay Cook's version, "Loyalism, Technology, and Canada's Fate." Grant's major argument, changing as it develops, revolves about the same polarities throughout: history and eternity; time and revelation; progress and transcendence; mastery and excellence; ancient and modern. Part of his complexity and even cranky obscurity stems from his willingness to shift the level of the argument without necessarily altering his vocabulary to adapt to the apparent demands of, say, polemics as opposed to theory; part from his unexamined assumption that vocabularies hold at all levels. The extent that it is not possible to speak of "Christ" and "the second person of the trinity" interchangeably does not seem to have concerned Grant. The point of beginning therefore seems appropriately the question of language, if not indeed theory of language.

**G**RANT "DOES NOT ENGAGE in merely intellectual exercises," observes Barry Cooper (citing Lawrence Lampert's "The Uses of Philosophy in George Grant," *Queen's Quarterly*, 81 [1974], 495), and consequently his "is philosophy in a sense that would exclude it from most philosophy journals."<sup>7</sup> On

the one hand, as Cooper observes, Grant goes out of his way to avoid identifying his work as philosophy, saying *Lament for a Nation* is “not based on philosophy but on tradition” while *Technology and Empire* does “not presume to be philosophy” but is “written out of the study of history of political philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> That is to say, it is not philosophy as we now think of that study, nor as we once thought of it, though it would aspire to the latter not the former. If it concerns itself with thought and reason, it has to do with the question of the good, with the idea of nobility, excellence, with truth, not linguistic philosophy or logical analysis. Equally, then, Grant would say “his work is essentially a practical affair,” “addressed to specific questions of policy,” though it hopes to transcend “the occasions that inspired [it].”<sup>9</sup> Not abstruse, but about “practical, common, lived experience” and therefore the real concern of real men, not the cynical interests of the learned and esoteric. It is with intent that Grant distinguishes “the condition common to the majority of men” and the concerns of “the clever” in *Lament for a Nation*. Philosophy, in its outcome, is addressed to the one; mere journalism to the other.

But though the noblest ideals of thought and imagination are thus addressed and genuine illumination may be sought, a question arises, a disturbing prospect presents itself. It is one thing to dismiss as beyond the concern of the majority of men the interests of the linguistic philosophers, say Moore or Russell and the whole of the gigantic enterprise which is *Principia Mathematica* and post-idealist thought. It is quite another not to address oneself at all to the questions of Wittgenstein or to find mere cynicism and cleverness in Russell. The closing passages of the *Tractatus*, George Steiner reminds us in *Language and Silence*, are among the most austere, the noblest, the most courageous in the language of philosophy. To put them aside is to open a way not to the best utterance, or that worthy of all men, but mere confusion. The questions raised by Grant’s political theory may very well prove to be questions of language, terminology, not attitude. What, for example, is the meaning of “universal” in “universal homogenous state”? What is the significance of speaking of “Christian man” as “the finest flower of all western civilization has produced”? To what sorts of irony are we invited to address ourselves in rhetoric of this sort? “The vast majority of Canadians are a product of western civilization and live entirely within the forms and assumptions of that enterprise.”<sup>10</sup> Consider the intent and the possibilities one might attend to in the use of a word like “entirely” in a sentence of such heavy import. Or in this version of contemporary art, what sort of critical precision is being given to the adjectives: “Even the *surest* accounts of our technomania — the *sperm-filled* visions of Burroughs — are themselves spoken from the shallowness they would describe.”<sup>11</sup>

There are two large issues in Grant’s argument here, not small weaknesses of diction or flavour in style. One has to do with the political subject Ramsay Cook

raises when he speaks of one of the two main ideas in the development of Grant's thought, "the moral unity of the English-speaking world." The other has to do with Grant's view of what has been called post-modern art, a view related to his argument about the nature and significance of technology in contemporary society and hence his view of the nationalist state, the Canada of his imagination. Both have to do with linguistic as well as ethical concerns.

As a moral philosopher, Grant naturally assumes the position that the English-speaking British world of the nineteenth century offers a point of departure for his account of the nature of Canadian society, its history and development, and its present character as a defeated country. I say "naturally" since, as Ramsay Cook reminds us, there are historical and family reasons to account for Grant's position, though the historical justification offered by Cook, I think, should have been open to rather more rigorous criticism than Cook offers.

The tradition from which Grant derives his argument of the morality of the English-speaking world is, of course, the loyalist tradition in Canada. Its family roots lie in the work and thought of both his grandfathers, Principal G. M. Grant and Sir George Parkin, both as Ramsay Cook indicates "prominent British-Canadian intellectuals in the late nineteenth century . . . moral philosophers and theologians . . . leading imperial federationists" and both as well are particularly "liberal Christians who identified the progress of mankind with the preservation and spread of Anglo-Saxon civilization."<sup>12</sup> Grant's identification with the imperialist, loyalist tradition is established early in his writing, and while because of his family background and history, it comes as no surprise, it early commits him to a series of difficult contradictions and tensions. The moral bias of his thought is to be expected and remains a constant, but the question of mankind's progress becomes a vexed one as he increasingly sees it identified with technological advance, a problem that occupies him more and more as he turns to the question of the nature of technological society. The British character of Canadian society derives, Grant argues, from its rejection of the American revolution, its consequent conservatism and "emphasis on social order in contrast to the extreme individualism of the United States" and its Commonwealth connection.<sup>13</sup> Yet the American roots of Canadianism remain potent and indeed irritating to the Canadian loyalist in particular. A puzzling tension in Grant's thought makes itself apparent here. *Home* itself, a key word in Lee's account of Grant's influence on poetic possibilities, is an ambiguous place and therefore in the end indefinable for Canadians: it is at once America (lost place), Britain (twice lost), and Canada (undefined). The paradoxes here we will explore later.

The moral defence of the imperial connection is, in Grant, the usual, that is to say the traditional and historical defence, but that is not without its vexations. In 1945 in a pamphlet entitled *Canada Must Choose: The Empire Yes or No?* Grant wrote,

We cannot judge the British Commonwealth from our petty interests alone (however well these are satisfied) but on the highest criteria of political morality. For today in the modern world, with it more than with any other political institution, lies the hope of Christian man, of ethical man, of man the reasonable moral being who stands before God and history. One can indeed say that ethical man, reasonable man, is a last remaining fragment of the dark ages, and that the new man is one ruled by Marxian economics or Freudian sex — mankind, in fact, who is brutal and unreasonable, unethical and material, who is ruthlessly dominated by his appetites. Then we can disavow the British Commonwealth. But if we believe in Christian man, the finest flower of all western civilization has produced, then there can be no doubt that our chief hope in the survival of such values is the survival of the British Commonwealth. Canada has a vital responsibility. Canada must choose.<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to believe the writer of those lines could have read Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or that the word "colonial" could have had any meaning to him, other than the institutional context that enables him to speak of political morality in the terms he does. In the context of Canadian history, of course, some sense can be made of this argument, as Cook tries to do. But when the writer extends the argument to include the history of the middle ages and the development of modernism in the work of Marx and Freud, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to understand the kind of "morality" involved. It is perhaps no accident that the only means open to Grant in his discussion of political philosophy is, finally, then, an attack on the institution of "empire," and that if the British could be subsumed to a nostalgic past, the American empire could become the focal point of contemporary evil. "A central aspect of the fate of being a Canadian," he has said, "is that our very existing has at all times been bound up with the interplay of various world empires."<sup>15</sup>

To turn from the political and moral questions in Grant's thought to aesthetic ones may seem an evasive and peripheral move, but indeed the ways into his thought at times are as apparently labyrinthine as the arguments themselves. Grant is not an aesthetic philosopher, any more than a linguistic one. His position is everywhere moral and ethical. But in part, as Dennis Lee's "Cadence, Country, Silence" makes clear and the later *Savage Fields* even more evident, Grant's account of modernism not only says a good deal about his view of modern culture, it suggests key links between technology, society, and culture, and because these in his argument are linked equally with both language and politics, the topic turns out after all to bear heavily on some of his major concerns. To a certain degree, some of his angularity of argument and style has to do with the oblique way he chooses to find his way into his most passionately held convictions. So it is that Dennis Lee finds his way to an account of his own poetics by means of Grant's politics, and then from that to an odd and deeply moving world-view that opens out to the perspective from which to offer a critique of contemporary barbarism

under the guise of defending its brilliance and courage. Lee is of course profoundly sympathetic to what can be called Grant's eschatological methodism, though *he* would never call it that and something in the one character echoes in the other. *Civil Elegies* is the poetics of Grant's political lament; *Savage Fields* the critical ground of *Technology and Empire*. We shall have reason to develop this point later.

Interestingly, it is in the midst of a discussion of the so-called fact-value distinction, the closest Grant comes to an analysis of contemporary language and its implications, that he allows himself his most revealing critique of modernism in art. There is, as always in Grant, a kind of sombre grandeur in his attack, but that should not conceal the real nature of his argument.

The languages of historicism and values which were brought to North America to be servants of the most advanced liberalism and pluralism, now turn their corrosive power on our only indigenous roots — the substance of that practical liberalism itself. The corrosions of nihilism occur in all parts of the community. Moreover, because our roots have been solely practical, this nihilism shares in that shallowness. The old individualism of capitalism, the frontier and Protestantism, becomes the demanded right to one's idiosyncratic wants taken as outside any obligation to the community which provides them. Buoyed by the restless needs of affluence, our art becomes hectic in its experiments with style and violence. Even the surest accounts of our technomania — the sperm-filled visions of Burroughs — are themselves spoken from the shallowness they would describe. Madness itself can only be deep when it comes forth from a society which holds its opposite. Nihilism which has no tradition of contemplation to beat against cannot be the occasion for the amazed reappearance of the "What for? Whither? and What then?" The tragedy for the young is that when they are forced by its excesses to leave the practical tradition, what other depth is present to them in which they can find substance? The enormous reliance on and expectation from indigenous music is a sign of craving for substance, and of how thin is the earth where we would find it. When the cthonic has been driven back into itself by the conquests of our environment, it can only manifest itself beautifully in sexuality, although at the same time casting too great a weight upon that isolated sexuality.<sup>16</sup>

There is nothing new here, unless it is the tone. The same apocalyptic rumblings had been heard, in a variety of ways, from 1945 on. Mailer's "White Negro," Levin's "What *Was* Modern," Barth's "The Language of Exhaustion," Sontag's "The Aesthetic of Silence," Steiner's *Language and Silence* all develop from different perspectives accounts of modernism as the extremity of an aesthetic and cultural dilemma intensified by a virtually psychotic social condition. All, it is worth noting, go far beyond the crudely worked-out limitations of Grant's account of the problem in "the languages of historicism and values" and several even suggest there develops in the direction and character of contemporary modernism, quite unlike anything implied in Grant's account, a paradoxical resolution to the very barbarism it entails in its "nihilism."

“What is the nature of an experimental action? It is simply an action the outcome of which is not foreseen. It is therefore very useful if one has decided that sounds are to come into their own, rather than being exploited to express sentiments or ideas of order.” “Sound comes into its own. What does that mean? For one thing it means that noises are useful to new music as so-called musical tones, for the simple reason that they are sounds. This decision alters the view of history. . . .”<sup>17</sup>

John Cage’s bold re-thinking of sound as musical value is not unlike Sontag’s re-thinking of silence as poetic value. Both offer possibilities closed off by Grant’s ethical stance about sentiment and ideas of order. No depth from shallowness. No substance from thinness. But yet the world does not end. Nor does it close off precisely where Grant would have it closed. Perhaps the analysis of language could have been carried further than it seemed necessary to him. And indeed the same reservation might be offered to Grant’s account of nationalism and technology, the political analysis to which he resorts when the cultural after all proves inadequate.

**T**ECHNOLOGY, IN FACT, RECEIVES a far more careful account in Grant than does language. He has read with extreme care those modern thinkers who have given thought to the subject, Ellul and Strauss in particular. Ellul’s definition of technology or technique is the one adopted by Grant, probably because of its comprehensiveness and its clear implication: “Technique is ourselves.”

“By technology I mean,” Grant writes citing Ellul’s definition from *The Technological Society* (London, 1965, p. xxxiii), “the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity.”<sup>18</sup> The definition, as Grant indicates in his preface, is “implied throughout ‘In defense of North America’” and elsewhere, notably in “The University Curriculum” where it is given and in “Tyranny and Wisdom,” all important essays in *Technology and Empire*. A curious addition to the initial defining sentence is given in “The University Curriculum” where to the question of rationally arrived at methodology two other motives, and very odd ones indeed, are added: one is *belief* and the other purpose: “the improvement of the race.”<sup>19</sup> “The dynamism of technology,” Grant tells us, “has gradually become the dominant purpose in western civilization because the most influential men in that civilization have believed for the last centuries that the mastery of chance was the chief means of improving the race.”<sup>20</sup>

The kinds of question one might be tempted to raise in talking about Grant’s account of an apparently inevitable process moving to a given kind of society

differ strikingly if one looks only at an account of "methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency" rather than if one considers "what the most influential men have believed" especially to the end of "the chief means of improving the race." About that last subject men have believed very odd things indeed, some of which appear in Grant's own argument.

In "Tyranny and Wisdom" Grant "attempts to introduce what is for me the most important controversy in contemporary political philosophy," presumably what Strauss and Kojive have written about, "whether the universal and homogenous state is the best social order"<sup>21</sup> — in other words, about the controversy between the ancient and the moderns on the "battle of books." Much of *Technology and Empire* is an account of the inevitability of the "universal and homogenous state," an aspect of that controversy, and Grant's own account of *Lament for a Nation* summarized in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" tells us the degree to which the earlier book addressed itself to the same questions:

A couple of years ago I wrote a book about the dissolution of Canadian sovereignty. These days when psychologizing is the chief method for neutralizing disagreeable opinions, my psyche was interpreted as a harking back in nostalgia to the British Empire and old fashioned Canada. This was the explanation of why I did not think that the general tendencies of modern society were liable to produce human excellence. In this era when the homogenizing power of technology is almost unlimited, I do regret the disappearance of indigenous traditions, including my own. It is true that no particularism can adequately incarnate the good. But is it not also true that only through some particular roots, however partial, can human beings first grasp What is good . . . ? What I said in that book was that the belief that human excellence is promoted by the homogenizing and universalizing power of technology is the dominant doctrine of modern liberalism, and that the doctrine must undermine all particularisms and that English-speaking Canada as a particular is wide open to that doctrine.<sup>22</sup>

The subtlety and power of Grant's argument has been fully evident in the degree to which it spoke to Canadian nationalists and through the sixties gave vivid force to their views. Lee's defence of an ironic Canadian poetic voice may be only the best example, particularly in his expression of the means by which the Canadian writer must learn to speak of *our* loss and deprivation. Yet at the same time the vivid and curiously ironic defence of particularities is shot through with a thoroughly unpleasant distrust of the very rootedness that Grant ostensibly defends, "the juice of [those] roots which for most men sustain their partaking in a more universal good," while contemporary history itself renders his account of a raceless and classless society, the universal and homogenous state, as meaningless as the history of the empires whose potency he "defends."

At the heart of Grant's argument is his assumption of "universality" in technology and "contemporary" civilization: "Like all civilizations the West is based on a great religion — the religion of progress. This is the belief that the conquest



of human and non-human nature will give existence meaning. Western civilization is now universal so that this religion is nearly everywhere dominant."<sup>23</sup> Aside from the curious qualification in "nearly everywhere," one notes the confident language of Western dominance is now qualified (in technological as well as other terms) by such matters as the so-called energy crisis and new ecological assumptions about the paradoxical effects of technological development. It is no longer as easy as it was in the 1960's to believe, with respect to Africa and Asia and South America, that "non-western nations have taken on western means, both technological and ideological, as the only way to preserve themselves against the West."

Curiously, at the very moment Grant speaks of a "raceless and classless" state, nationalist and regional particularities manifest themselves in ways presumably rendered ineffective by the barren positivist cultures he writes of. The definition of Canada, in its historical roots, appears now, for example, less a matter of the tension between English-Canadian nationalism and American continentalism than of the federal-provincial or centralist-regionalist polarities. In fact, the terms in which it is possible to speak of cultural identity and political structure in Canada have been significantly altered from those which Grant would apply to the ones Professor Frye offered at about the same time that *Technology and Empire* appeared. In 1971, in the preface to *The Bush Garden*, Frye developed an argument very like Ramsay Cook's in *The Maple Leaf Forever*. Cook depends on a distinction between nation-state and nationalist state, Frye on a distinction between "the political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality," a tension which, Frye says, "is the essence of whatever the word 'Canadian' means." Historically, at least, the regional-national tension makes more sense now than the loyalism of Grant.

In the final analysis, Grant's account of nationalism and imperialism is vitiated by an odd kind of inflexibility in thought which makes for intense drama but less possibility than one might have hoped for from so profound a thinker. There are harsh judgments of men in this work, unyielding and uncharitable. Consider Grant's comment on the question of whether "later arrivals from Europe have so placed their stamp on North America as to have changed in essence what could come from that primal." What "later" means soon becomes clear: "... the obvious facts about the power of Catholicism in our politics, or the influence of Jews in communications and intellectual life, or the unexpected power for continuance shown by ethnic communities, mean only that recent traditions have coloured the central current of the American dream."<sup>25</sup> Whatever this means, it is clear "North America" means the United States, not Canada, for "Catholics" does not include the kind of French-Canadian politician of whom Hugh MacLennan has written at length, nor does "Jews" in "communications and intellectual life" allude to Innis, McLuhan, and Frye. The remark, in short, is not

worthy of serious intellectual discourse. Elsewhere, too, Grant remarks that comedy is an art he has not mastered, evident surely from the bad joke that follows: "As for pluralism, differences in the technological state are able to exist only in private activities: how we eat; how we mate; how we practise ceremonies. Some like pizza; some like steaks; some like girls; some like boys; some like synagogue; some like the mass. But we all do it in churches, motels, restaurants indistinguishable from the Atlantic to the Pacific."<sup>26</sup>

And in the end, too, one becomes aware of other kinds of inflexibility in Grant. For all his talk of particularities, he does not accept the possibility of rootedness, not in North America, for he says we are not "autochthonous," of the earth. Yet if a man is not of the earth, where is he from? What is his place? At the other extreme, there is what Grant speaks of as "our only indigenous roots — the substance of . . . practical liberalism itself." The difficulty becomes apparent: thought is rooted, imperial; feeling is not. And out of that paradox of rootless emotion and indigenous thought grows the whole web of ideas in which, as Grant would have it, modern man is entrapped. "The pure will to technology . . . gives sole content to [the] creating [of the world]."<sup>27</sup>

NO VERSION OF GRANT'S THOUGHT, of course, is complete if it does not take into account not only that which is said in his major works but equally that which is not said. He is one of those rare writers, indeed "spirits" may be the best word, whose work finally presents itself through a series of reticences and silences. That which is not said because it proves to be that which cannot be said. It is this irony, if that is the right word, which adds resonance to his work and which gives it its peculiar modernity. For the most part, but not solely, the silence has to do with God. In *George Grant in Process* there is a "conversation" during which he addresses himself to some of the questions that can be raised. He does give an account of his conversion, his acceptance of God, during World War II and he puts the point in these terms, describing the experience of conversion:

Obviously, there is much to think about in such experiences. All the Freudian and Marxian questions (indeed, most: the Nietzschean questions) can be asked. But I have never finally doubted the truth of that experience since that moment thirty-six years ago. If I try to put it into words, I would say it was the recognition that I am not my own. In more academic terms, if modern liberalism is the affirmation that our essence is our freedom, then this experience was the denial of that definition, before the fact that we are not our own.<sup>28</sup>

This, one recognizes, is the essential George Grant: his hatred of modernism and its liberal definition of the self as its own freedom; the powerful resistance to

technology and its attempt to rationalize the means of mastery of both the external world and the human being, man himself; the extension of his loyalist ambivalence about America and its dream of the self as free and self-assertive; the American Empire as the embodiment of modern liberalism and technology, and the Canadian surrender to that self-indulgent southern dominance. "We are not our own." One recognizes, in that, the definition not only of "conservatism" but also of the lost Canada he laments. Its definition is deprivation and the dignity by which one learns to live with that loss.

It is in the same "conversation" that Grant's revealing words about Simone Weil appear. He responds to the comment that "she's a mystic," said with some implication of lack of academic respectability.

That was much later, after her early life in the proletarian movement in France and in the Spanish war. She was taught by a very able Kantian, and then at the end of her short life understood Plato. She had an immediate and direct encounter with the second person of the Trinity. I take her writings as combining the staggering clarity of her French education with divine inspiration. I take them as perhaps occasionally mistaken in detail, and as sometimes beyond me, but as the great teaching concerning the eternal in this era.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the only way to account for the extraordinary lapse in rhetorical tact in this comment, notably in the comment on "an immediate and direct encounter with the second person of the Trinity" is to suggest a painful embarrassment in Grant's version of the subject. This is the subject about which he can say nothing, "great teaching concerning the eternal." If any writing would have made sense here, or elsewhere in Grant, it would be that which drew directly and immediately on the gospel. But that he will not do. For one thing, as David and Edwin Heaven suggest in their article on Grant and Weil, the better way is not articulated in Grant's work.<sup>30</sup> His task is conceived negatively as "The destruction of inadequate sources of hope," and only in a veiled way points toward affirmation.<sup>31</sup> In part, because of the great distance he feels between himself and "the great thinkers and saints"; in part, because even to write as he does of his task as a philosopher is not necessarily to have thought the good and certainly not to have loved the good. Once, as David and Edwin Heaven remind us, he summarized his position on this question, and in doing so raised with the kind of rigour one has come to expect of him, the intolerable question he must live with, the intolerable answer he must sustain, and the wisdom with which he is able to do so:

Nevertheless, those who cannot live as if time were history are called, beyond remembering, to desiring and thinking. But this is to say very little. For myself, as probably for most others, remembering only occasionally can pass over into thinking and loving what is good. It is for the great thinkers and the saints to do more.<sup>32</sup>

Even to have said this much is to have gained a difficult way. Beyond that, George Grant does not propose to go.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Larry Schmidt, "Introduction" to *George Grant in Process: Essays and Conversations* (Toronto: Anansi, 1978), p. ix.
- <sup>2</sup> Dennis Lee, "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space," *Boundary* 2, 3, no. 1 (Fall 1974), 151-68.
- <sup>3</sup> Ramsay Cook, "Loyalism, Technology, and Canada's Fate," *The Maple Leaf Forever* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), 45-67.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- <sup>6</sup> Larry Schmidt (ed.), *George Grant in Process*. See esp. "Part V. A Grant Bibliography" by Frank K. Flinn. The bibliography lists some 50 items which Flinn divides into three groups concerned with major phases of Grant's thought: 1) "The Time of Chastened Hope"; 2) "An Era of Retractions"; and 3) "The Face of Moloch"; that is, an early period of liberalism; a second phase of changes developed in Grant's account of modernity; and a third which with *Time as History* examines the dynamic willing of modernism.
- <sup>7</sup> Barry Cooper, "*A imperio usgus ad imperium: The Political Thought of George Grant*," *George Grant in Process*, p. 22. "In a rather similar way, the study which still uses the name of 'philosophy', has made itself into a particular science, with its own particular rigors, concerned with the analysis of language, methods, and thought." *George Grant, Technology and Empire* (Toronto: Anansi, 1969), 125.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>10</sup> *Technology and Empire*, p. 64.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39. My italics.
- <sup>12</sup> "Loyalism, Technology and Canada's Fate," p. 49.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>14</sup> Cited in Cook, p. 52. See also Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 3-25.
- <sup>15</sup> *Technology and Empire*, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," p. 63.
- <sup>16</sup> George Grant, "In Defense of North America," *Technology and Empire*, pp. 39-40. It is worth comparing here Grant's remarks on the "present" state of the humanities in the university in "The University Curriculum," pp. 126-27, an equally controversial passage because of its narrowly conceived version of science and the language of objectivity.
- <sup>17</sup> John Cage, "History of Experimental Music in the United States," *Silence* (London: Calder and Boyers, 1968), pp. 68-69.
- <sup>18</sup> "The University Curriculum," *Technology and Empire*, p. 113.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> "Tyranny and Wisdom," *Technology and Empire*, p. 81.
- <sup>22</sup> "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," *Technology and Empire*, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

- <sup>24</sup> Northrop Frye, "Preface," *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. iii.
- <sup>25</sup> "In Defense of North America," p. 26.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-40.
- <sup>28</sup> George Grant, "Conversation: Intellectual Background," *George Grant in Process*, p. 63.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- <sup>30</sup> Edwin B. Heaven and David R. Heaven, "Some Influences of Simone Weil on George Grant's Silence," *George Grant in Process*, p. 68.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 69. On the question of the "homelessness" of modern man, it is instructive to compare the views of particularity, rootedness, and "ancestors" in, say, Grant and Margaret Atwood. If there are no North American gods in Grant's world, they do appear in the shamanistic wilderness of Atwood.

## TWO SERMONS

*Ralph Gustafson*

2.

### SERMON ON ACCUMULATION, A BRIEF ONE

Growth, not accretion. Quantity  
Is the fever of the times, the gross  
Product, accumulations swamp  
The mind, God and Gallup, Pericles  
And Marx, may the noisy podium  
Find distinction. Number nothing  
Except by the heart. Who falls in love  
With people? The earthworm for his antics,  
Dolphins for their song, each  
For love, ears stopped to the sum  
The mythy sirens prove, Odysseus  
On his periplus ten years home  
To true Penelope who spun.  
Learned scholars doubt if Adam could add.