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4.1
George Grant on the Transcendence of the Beautiful and the Good

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In this paper I consider why George Grant (1918–1988), the Canadian Rhodes scholar and philosopher who taught at Dalhousie University and McMaster University for forty years, maintained so resolutely a conviction that many are prone to ridicule, and that conviction is that the Beautiful and the Good are beyond the grasp of reason because they have the status of transcendentals. George Grant's encounter with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger shaped his thinking in crucial ways. Heidegger, Grant argued, offered the most incisive analysis and commentary on the darkness of the times. His ideas exposed the manner in which technological reason has made us not only forgetful of, but also incapable of dealing with, questions concerning the sort of life for which a human being is fitted.

1. PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

But Grant was unwilling to give Heidegger the final word on the matter. To do so would be to succumb to despair. What is more, Grant believed that Plato's philosophy offered ideas that allowed one to formulate a rejoinder to Heidegger's analysis of the destitution of modernity. A key to understanding Grant's estimation of Plato requires appreciating how deeply his reading of Plato was affected by Simone Weil. In a two page typescript that seemed to be some sort of introduction to Weil and her ideas, Grant stated that Weil was "incomparably [his] greatest teacher" because she was "both a saint and a philosopher . . . She was a saint in the sense that she gave herself away to divine charity. She was a philosopher in the sense that she wrote carefully and clearly about those matters which in the tradition philosophers have considered most important" (cited in Forbes 185).

Grant noted this about the passion that drove Weil's thinking:

> Perhaps if one were to single out one subject that more than any other binds the whole [of her thought] together one could put it in her own words: "I am ceaselessly and increasingly torn in my intelligence and in the depth of my heart through my

> inability to conceive simultaneously and in truth, of the affliction [*malheur*] of men, the perfection of God and the link between the two" (Grant, "Introduction" 248).

To help us grasp the importance the problem of evil had for Grant, let us the turn to an early piece of his, "Two Theological Languages." That essay is an attempt to do what that essay announces as necessary, to rethink theology for the present—since theology comes into existence at the meeting point of the infinite and finite, and since the finite is ever changing, the need to renew the relationship between the infinite and the finite is perpetual. Grant's belief on this matter is also reflected in the controversial sentence that opened his report on the state of Canadian philosophy for the Massey Commission (1951). "The study of philosophy," he declared, "is the analysis of the traditions of our society and the judgement of those traditions against our varying intuitions of the Perfection of God" ("Philosophy" 4).

"Two Theological Languages" probably began as a talk, given in 1953, to a group of Presbyterian and United Church ministers. The starting point for the essay is that both philosophy and theology are faith seeking understanding. "Theology," Grant avers, "teaches us of the final purpose and unity of our existence" and when it fails in that purpose, we see the rise of various self-help and therapeutic regimens that are waiting to take the place of real theology, peddling **naturalist** dogma instead of the truth of **God's mystery**." And theology is prone to fail, inasmuch as "it is the most taxing study because it deals with the ultimate" (TTL 50; emphasis mine).

One language that Grant treats is "that of the perennial rational theology which finds its first clear expression in Plato and Aristotle and which carried over into the main body of philosophy in the West" (TTL 51). While Grant's explicit purpose in this lecture was to reconcile the language of rational theology with the language of faith, the importance this lecture had in the evolution of Grant's thought was that composing the talk exposed for Grant the limitations of rational theology and distanced Grant from that way of doing theology.

Grant pointed out that "the two key words of [the language of rational theology are, of course,] reason and desire. Man's proper end is one to which he is directed by nature. Reason is not merely a slave to the passions, but gives us an idea of the highest good, or God, wherein not only this or that particular desire will be satisfied, but that very unity which is ourselves will find felicity. Reason not only gives us the idea of the highest good but makes us desire that good" (TTL 51–2).

The other theological language is the ethical language of the Bible. It uses, Grant stated, "words such as: 'responsibility,' 'guilty,' 'sin,' 'temptations,' 'remorse,' 'disobedience,' and, above all, 'rebellion.' Let me illustrate . . . at least the superficial difference between these two languages from the idea of responsibility. In the Biblical language this notion means that I could have done at one time or another what I did not do. That is what I mean by responsibility. Now, of course, according to the first, a rationalist language, that is an absurd, meaningless notion, for in that language the self **determines** the self" (TTL 52 Emphasis mine).

The central difference separating the two languages of theology concerns their respective views of freedom. In the language of rational theology, 'freedom' means "the individual's acceptance, conscious and intelligent, of what he most is. Freedom, in this sense, is the gift of truth" (TTL 52). The Biblical language uses the word 'freedom' in an altogether different sense. "Freedom in this second language is here not the gift of truth—something inferred from our reason. It is given apart from reason." Commenting on this article in retrospect, Grant suggested that in this piece he uncritically embraced the language of Jerusalem, the language of the Biblical tradition. That is not really so: the article is very much an attempt to reconcile the theological languages. As much as Grant wanted later to distance himself from (what he retrospectively casts as) his uncritical embrace of the language of Jerusalem, the claim, central to the Biblical tradition, that freedom is given apart from reason, remains a key tenet of Grant's philosophical anthropology. (What changes in his thinking is how he came to understand, with SimoneWeil's help, revelation in its relationship to love or charity), Grant comments on the Biblical view of freedom and its relation to the concept of grace: "Freedom here [in the theology of the cross] is not dependent on goodness or the perfection of life. In this second view of freedom the wicked are fully as free as the good. It is an absolute freedom. When this second language uses the word it doesn't mean the conscious acceptance of principles—that is the acceptance of necessity. It means the unfathomable and irrational, an abyss into which all reasons are swallowed up" (TTL 52). Summarizing these two views of freedom, Grant writes that there are "[f]irst, the intelligent freedom which is involved in our achievement of self-perfection and which is deducible from our rational nature, and second, that irrational freedom which is prior to good or evil and which eludes the categories of reason and can only be known experientially"(TTL 52–3).

"Two Theological Languages" also suggests why Grant would come to reject rational theology (including Hegel's), for in that article Grant criticizes rational theology for its proclivity to "disregard the problem of evil, or to trivialize it." The theology of the cross, on the other hand, gives affliction its full weight of significance: Grant was later to come to the belief that the incarnation of divinity in the world in the figure of Jesus confers a significance on sensuousness that is deeply manifested in the torture of Jesus. He maintained that Jesus' suffering shows the impossibility of Socrates' serenity and beauty as a final stance in human life.

"Two Theological Languages" still shows the influence of Hegel, for the essay is partly a Hegelian attempt at reconciliation of these antithetical languages. Nonetheless, Sheila Grant is correct to point out that "Two Theological Languages" marked "the beginning of his distrust of rational philosophies of history," i.e., Hegel, for the essay also suggests that no reconciliation was possible: the Christian revelation is higher than reason, and that is all there is to it (Sheila Grant 249). What is swaying George Grant in the direction of repudiating Hegel is the central place he accorded the mystery of the problem of evil, an issue that would remain

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central for him throughout his life (as it was for Weil). For Grant would come to accuse Hegel of the shortcomings of rational theology, including trivializing the problem of evil and of maintaining there is an essential continuity between the Absolute and the contingent. Grant, we will see, strived to work out a philosophy in which the Absolute—the Good and the Beautiful—were transcendent. In the manuscript for an uncompleted book on acceptance and evil, in a section dealing with Isaiah Berlin, Grant remarks, in an obvious reference to Hegel, that authors of that philosophy of history (that is, in works that try to give a rational account of history) "prevent those who believe them from seeing the facts as they have been" ("Acceptance" 275). The evident facts of cruelty, pain and oppression are blurred until one can no longer see good and evil for what they are, Grant maintained. In the rational philosophy of history, "Evil is gradually turned into good." Twenty-five years later, he wrote, in the same vein, "What was always the thorn that kept me from accepting Hegel was those remarks in the philosophy of history, about wars being winds that whip up stagnant pools. That is the idea that good can come out of bad in a way we can understand" (275).

Grant takes "Two Theological Languages" to an extraordinary conclusion, one that presages how he would to re-connect his thought to Plato's:

> Now, of course, it is certain that whichever of the two languages one uses, it is clear that when it comes to the problem of evil, obviously one cannot say anything intelligible. Here at last we can talk of abysses with good cause. [Grant had previously highlighted the importance of the term 'abyss' in the Biblical language.] To put the same problem in a different way, it is impossible (if one uses the first language) to say why the infinite mind differentiates itself into finite minds; or to use the other language, it is impossible to understand why God created the world. But here is the point—don't those two languages mean something quite different? For doesn't the first imply that the world is continuous with the infinite—while the second implies that the world is discontinuous with and in some mysterious sense independent of the infinite. And isn't the idea of creation an analogy drawn from unfathomable freedom and, therefore, when we say that the world is created we mean that the idea is a mystery into which the mind is swallowed up, just as they are when we try to understand what it is for us to be responsible (TTL 57).

Grant proposes that the idea that the world is continuous with the infinite has authorized the use of reason to deal with the world—indeed, for Grant, that notion laid the ground for the development of technology.

2. GRANT'S CONVERSION AND RATIONAL THEOLOGY

But a transformative experience also helped prepare Grant for his critical commentary on rational theology. When Grant went to Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship to study theology during the Second World War, Grant, a pacifist, volunteered for the Merchant Marine and was preparing to ship out. The required medical

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examination revealed that he had tuberculosis. He tried to board ship regardless, but was caught out. So he took a job as a farm laborer, work that, in his condition, left him exhausted. This was in November and December, 1941, and the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th of that year caused him deep distress, for it meant that the millions of American citizens would now suffer the hardships of a war economy. So distressed was he that his friends feared he was about to have a nervous breakdown.

George Grant would ride his bicycle from the town where he was staying to the countryside where he worked. One December morning, in 1941, he was riding up a road with gates across it to keep the sheep and cattle from straying. Grant got off his bicycle to open one of these gates, walked his bike through, closed the gate behind him and got back on his bicycle. As he remounted the bicycle, he did so with the quiet assurance that God exists. He wrote his mother to tell her how he was doing, and the journey he had taken:

> It is . . . a journey . . . to a different plane of existence. Spiritually it has been so far that it is as if I wasn't the same person who started out . . . there is no fear for my mental health as just recently I feel as if I had been born again. Gradually I am learning there are unpredictable tremendous forces—mysterious forces within a man that are beyond man's understanding driving him—taking him along courses and over which he has little or no control (in Christian 86).

In an episode of the CBC Program SPECTRUM, titled with the foreboding anti-Hegelian title, "The Owl and the Dynamo," aired on February 13, 1980, Grant recounted,

> You used to have to set out about five in the morning to ride to the farm. You know in England there are these gates across the road—and all I can say is I got off the bike, opened the gate, went through it, shut the gate, and it just came to me that I thought "God is." It never left me. I wasn't thinking much at that time. It came to me later [after encountering Weil?] that I was not my own. In other words, beyond space and time there was an order. All I can say is that it happened at that moment and it has always sustained me (in Christian 390).

That there is an "order beyond space and time" was a principal theme of Grant's writings—I should think that it looms larger in his writings than the theme with which he is commonly identified, that of depredations of technology. This experience, intimating an order beyond space and time, provided the fundamental basis for Grant's repudiation of Hegel.

There is another way of enucleating the core meaning of the realization that there is an order beyond space and time. Henri Nouwen, a Roman Catholic theologian who was deeply influenced by Greek Orthodox thought and practice, opened a book of his with this question "To whom do we belong?" He continued "This is the core question of the spiritual life. Do we belong to the world, its worries, its people and its endless chain of urgencies and emergencies, or do we belong to God and God's people?" (Nouwen 31) The question really is the crucial one for spiritual life.

When Grant says that there is an order beyond space and time, he is implying that his answer to the question "To whom do we belong" is different from the answer that moderns provide, and different from the answer that Hegel provided.

It is closer to the answer the Plato provided, and closer still to the answer offered by Platonic Christians (such as we find in the Eastern Orthodox tradition). It is also close to the answer that Simone Weil provided, in her concept of *metaxu* (something that both separates and joins); for Weil, the world can neither be identified with God, nor is wholly separate from God. "God penetrates the world and envelops it all sides, being . . . outside space and time yet being not entirely distinct from these but governing them" (*Intimations* 103).

Grant recognized well the appeal of Hegel, and his signal importance. In a conversation with David Cayley, he pointed out that Hegel had been deeply affected by the French Revolution:

> The French Revolution, which was the great revolution, was based on the idea you were going to produce . . . a worldwide society of free and equal human beings and this is what history was about. This was the basis of the idea of progress [which Grant accuses the Hegel of the theology of glory of accepting]; that with modern science you could produce a worldwide society of free and equal human beings. Now that was a prodigious vision and seen, I'm sure, most deeply and most completely by Hegel. Ancient philosophy had been the rational or free side of this; Christianity had brought in equality, and the two together, when they were made concrete in the world, would make possible this worldwide society of rational and equal human beings. . . . The great distinction of the ancient world was between nature and convention; the great distinction of the modern world has been between nature and history . . . [A]fter the war I came to believe that this idea of progress working itself out in the world was something one could believe and hold, and of course, the great thing about Hegel was that one could it with the Christian religion (Cayley 65–6).

This is what Grant claimed he was thinking just after the Second World War. But another thought on the relation of Hegel and Christianity co-exists in Grant's writings uneasily with this notion of the relation, and, indeed, soon came to supplant it. Grant also gives voice to that thought in his conversations with Cayley: "There was always present in my remembrance that what is absolutely final as far as Christianity goes is that God's purposes are inscrutable, but I fell into the [Hegelian] temptation of thinking of life or the purposes of God in human life as too scrutable" (Cayley 67).

3. GRANT'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL ON FREEDOM, HISTORY, AND ONTOLOGY

Hegel is the philosopher of a) history and b) freedom. Grant treats the two topics quite separately. The first, after all, is the product of the theological language of reason (or, as he sometimes characterized it) of glory, that implies the continuity

between the Absolute and the contingent, and affirms that reason is capable of knowing the good. He realized, however, that Lutheran theology of the cross is also part of the matrix from which Hegel's philosophy emerged, and it contributed to Hegel's idea of freedom. Luther's own theology emphasized the inscrutability of God's will and, consequently, human freedom; but this freedom was converted, in Hegel's philosophy, into the idea that reason or history is a self-determining process.

Furthermore Grant increasingly accepted Leo Strauss's critique of Hegel's progressivism—that is the point of "Tyranny and Wisdom," that great essay on tyranny in *Technology and Empire*. Strauss, Grant suggests, thinks that Hegel's progressivist vision expresses itself politically in two ways: in the belief that all human beings may become philosophical; and that philosophy and science will take the place of religion. Strauss recognized these beliefs are basic to Hegel, in the sense that they are necessary to understand why Hegel would believe that a worldwide society of rational, free, equal human beings would be possible; but Strauss, Grant pointed out, said "no" to them both. Grant found himself seeing more and more the profundity of Strauss' stance.

But in the end, Grant did not so much argue his way out of his belief that Hegel provided the best account of the modern as he simply came to see history in a different perspective. The new perspective was influenced by Weil and her interest in Eastern Christianity. Grant was in fundamental agreement with Heidegger concerning the error of onto-theology: theology is the study of God, ontology is the study of being. To describe metaphysics as onto-theology is to assert that metaphysics fuses the study of God with the study of Being. This is exactly what Grant believed the consequence of rational theology to be: God becomes the Logos, the Prime Ratio, the *ens realissimum*. When the Divine is understood as the *ens realissimum* (the most real being), the *ens summum* (the highest being), the *ens originarium* (primal being), and the *ens entium* (the being of beings), then the other beings of which the Divine is the source or the essence can be understood through reason—this is so because God, according to this view, is the supreme being (*ens summum*) and the condition of all other beings, which rank under him as the being of all beings (*ens entium*). As the *ens entium*, He—that is Reason, Logos—is the inner most being of all beings. We understand them in understanding Him, and we understand Him through reason. He is therefore that through which we are able to fathom (and control) beings. Thus, Grant came to understand onto-theology as that which enabled technology to come forth as religion, that is, as that which (according to this view) co-ordinates and brings into a unity all that subserves a good quality of human existing.

4. GRANT AND EASTERN CHRISTIANITY

Grant needed an alternative to onto-theology, the West's dominant way of doing philosophy, and one appeared in the wake of the interest Weil aroused in Grant in

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Eastern Christianity (Inroduction 250). *The Greek East and the Latin West*, by Philip Sherrard, enabled Grant to understand that Christianity's evolution into a form of modernist onto-theology was the consequence of the particular fusion of Greek philosophy and Judaeo-Christian spirituality that occurred in the Latin West, particularly as Scholastic thought. Sherrard's book gives a central role to a somewhat technical theological issue that divided the Greek East and Latin West.

One of Sherrard's assertions is that the Western church made a grave theological error when, at the Third Council of Toledo in 589, it embraced the view that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father. This doctrine, known as the *filoque* doctrine, received papal confirmation in 1014. The Western church's adoption of the *filoque* doctrine resulted in a major rupture between the Western and Eastern branches of the Christian faith. Sherrard argued (and Grant was to take up the view) that the Eastern Church remained closer both to the Gospels and to Platonic philosophy when they maintained that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. As Sherrard says,

> "The Christian Revelation makes it quite clear what is the single divine principle. It is the Father. The Father is the unique, all-embracing source and font of all living and of everything that is . . . Thus, there is one God, not because there is one Essence, or one power, but because there is one Father" (61).

The theologians of the West conceived of God not so much as the Father but as Being, "the idea of the *Summum ens*, of the absolute One in whom no distinctions of any kind could be admitted" (Sherrard 67). The insertion of the *filoque* clause into Western doctrine had the effect of obscuring the difference between God's essence and being and of rendering God scrutable. Thus, the identification of God with being had the effect of circumscribing the mystery in God and of reducing His transcendence. The introduction of the *filoque* clause resulted, then, in God's being understood more as rational, and in making God a little more available for human's subjective purposes. Furthermore, identifying God with Being resulted in an emphasis on God's simplicity. Sherrard notes, "What may be said is that the emphasis placed, first in Augustinian, and later, and to a greater degree, in Scholastic thought, on the idea of the absolute simplicity and non-differentiation of the divine Essence considered more or less exclusively as an ontological principle, as pure Being, made it impossible for the Latins to admit the Trinitarian doctrine maintained by the Greeks" (68).

The difference between the Eastern and the Western tradition Sherrard alludes to here involves the distinction drawn by Orthodox theologians since the time of Gregory Palamas, among *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and *energeia*. *Hypostasis* one distinguishes from substance: substance is self-sufficient, but *hypostasis* is openness towards communion with others. Orthodox theologians often speak of each of the Divine Hypostases as a Personhood. God's *ousia* and *energeia* flow from the Personhood of the Father. Eastern Orthodox theologians maintain that it is crucial to maintain fully the distinction between the Divine's Being and his acts, or, as it is more properly put, between God's essence, which in Eastern

Orthodoxy is called "*ousia*" and His activities in the world, which they refer to as his "*energeia*" (= *actus* in Latin). (However, *energeia* was not understood as *actus* was by the Romans, as a force that poushes beings into being. The Greeks understood *energeia* as that which leads beings toward becoming that which can fulfill the purpose that brought them into being in the first place).

An even greater difference separates God's *ousia* from the Personhood of the Father. The nature of the Trinity, on any Christian theology whatsoever, is a complex matter, and it would not be possible here to go into all the complexities of the Orthodox views on the matter, even if these lay within the sphere of my competence (which they do not). Suffice it to say that Orthodox ontology proposes that the Divine *ousia* (or *esse*) comes from the Personhood of the Father, which is thus prior to *ousia*, or being. The Son is begotten of the Personhood of the Father (of the Father *hypostasis*) and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *hypostasis*. So the Father is affirmed as the sole source (*arche*) and cause (*aitia*) of both the Divine essence (*ousia*) and the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All three persons of the Trinity share the same *ousia*. God's *ousia* is his *esse*, his being, while His *energeia* allows us to experience something of the Divine, whether through sensory perception or intellectually or noetically. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, God's *ousia* has no existence or subsistence in another or any other thing. God's *ousia* is beyond *nous* (He is therefore incomprehensible to human beings), beyond being and beyond nothing. God's *ousia* is uncreatedness, beyond having existence, beyond being non-existence. God in essence is above all ontological forms. The source, the origin, of God's *ousia* is the Father *hypostasis* of the Trinity; thus, the Trinity is One God in One Father.

Eastern Orthodox theologians maintain that Scholastic theology downplays the difference between God's *ousia* and His *energeia*. They maintain that Scholasticism treats God's *ousia* as *energeia* and *dunamis*, and that has the effect of making his *ousia* appear scrutable. God's *ousia*, Western theologicans can conclude, can be experienced as a substance, essence, being or nature. Eastern orthodox theologians, on the other hand, maintain that God's *ousia* is infinite and inscrutable (or, to use their own term, incognoscible).

In regard to God's relation to the world, Gregory Palamas proposed the reality of God has three emanating aspects, which are, in order of descent (1) the permanently unnamable essence (*ousia*), which is wholly beyond our participation; (2) the three hypostasis or persons, which are united by virtue of the Father being the *arche* and *aitia* of the Son and the Holy Spirit; (3) and the uncreated *energeia* (energies and acts), which provide a means for God's unmediated union with what He has created. The created world, then, participates in the divine *energeia*, but not in his essence; thus, the three hypostases themselves lie beyond the economy of participation and salvation, and the unnamable essence even further beyond.

Sherrard, and after him Grant, considered the *filoque* debate important because it concerned reason's reach—Grant realized that debate had important

implication for how far reason could go towards understanding the divine. The Eastern Church, Grant accepted, remained closer to Plato, and Grant explained to students that the theological difference between the Eastern and Western Churches paralleled the philosophical difference between Plato and Aristotle, "You'll just have to allow me as a Platonist to speak. You'll remember that in 509b of the *Republic* Plato says the Good is beyond being. Therefore what divides Platonists from the Aristotelians is that the Aristotelians say that the fundamental question is the question of Being and the Platonists say that it is the question of the Good" (in Christian 234). Grant took from Sherrard the conviction that Scholastic metaphysics dealt with the structure of the Trinity by treating God as Being—thus he came to see that Scholasticism was a form of onto-theology.

Grant maintained that Heidegger's critique of technology centered on the relation between subject and object in the act of knowing. The particular configuration of the relation that led to the ascendency of the regime of technology arose within the framework of onto-theology. Onto-theology conceives the object of knowledge to be an objective given, something whose *ens* can, as it were, be extracted from the object as it is grasped and held before the subject. In onto-theology, precisely because it takes God as the *ens entium*—that is, precisely because it treats God as immanent in His Creation and so as knowable through human reason—beings are brought forth as the noematic correlates to a noetic process whose essential character is calculative reasoning. To put this point another way, since onto-theology treats God as the Prime Ratio and the *ens summa*, God appears as the pinnacle of a metaphysical hierarchy in which human being serves as the subject and all else as objects to be controlled through ratiocination.

Through Sherrard's influence, Grant came to understand that the errors of onto-theology predate modern Western Christianity (or Protestantism). So, while Heidegger accused Socrates of having initiated metaphysics, Grant, under Sherrard's influence came to identify Aristotle as the culprit: it was he who was responsible for God's being described in the Latin west not as "pre-Ontological [as in Greek Orthodox thought], but as purely ontological, reality—as, in fact, Being itself" (Sherrard 67–68).

Grant is not as clear on the importance Sherrard had for his thinking on technology and the Good as we might wish—indeed he is not as forthcoming as we might wish about the importance that the distinction between the Greek East and the Latin West had for him. I believe that it is only because Grant, as a theologian, or, more exactly, both as a teacher of the history of theology and as a theologian of history, felt inadequate to the task of providing an account of the theological contours of the history of the Greek East. But I believe the truly radical character of Grant's theory of technology can be understood only by understanding Grant's doubts about the onto-theology that is the framework of the thought of the Latin West, and his belief that the Greek East avoided the deficiencies of onto-theology. So we shall have to engage in the dubious exercise of making Grant say what in fact he never said.

We can glimpse something of Grant's troubles with onto-theology by recalling that, for a time, the Aristotelian revival in the 12th century made understanding nature's mysteries, *scientia*, primary, and elevated reason above will and above love. Scholasticism pictured humans as being in search of the causes of things, that is, in search of the reasons "why" phenomena occurred (with God always the ultimate reason "why"). Thus, Aristotelian scholasticism sought to organize human knowledge, the product of human curiosity about the world, around the idea of Being; accordingly, Scholasticism organized what we understand about the world into a ladder of knowledge, leading up to source of intelligibility.

But soon enough, humans wanted not order, but freedom (which by this time was understood as the freedom to act—the freedom to exercise the will and to produce effects). It sought the Ultimate not as the Good that could be known through contemplation, but as Being, which is known through action—that is, through the will. We see this in the philosophies of Duns Scotus (ca. 1266–1308) and William of Ockham (ca. 1287–1347), who accorded priority to the will. Consider Scotus: in opposition to Thomistic intellectualism, Scotus reverted from the Scholastic-Aristotelian position to the Augustinian, affirming the primacy of the will (even for God). God created the world through an act of His will. This voluntarism resonates throughout Scotus' metaphysics, taking a step that would echo down the centuries into present-day modernity, Scotus depicted everything as radically contingent. God's will assigned to every thing its own nature: to fire He assigned the nature of heating, to water that of being cold, to the air that of being lighter than earth, and so forth. But God is free; hence His will cannot be bound to any object. God could have created differently—this is the consequence of assigning creation neither to Reason, nor to Love, but to Will: neither reason nor love is responsible for things being as they are. No reason can be given why things are as they are, other than that God willed them be so. God could have willed differently—that principle, Scotus deemed, is necessary to ensure God's freedom. According to Scotus' philosophy, it would not have been absurd for God to have made fire to be cold, water to be hot, or earth to be lighter than air—a voluntarist theory of creation leads to the conclusion that the universe could have been ruled by laws opposite to those which presently govern it. Ockham, for his part, develops a form of divine prescriptivism, according to which the ultimate philosophical justification for a moral prescription is that God wills it.

Scotism and Ockhamism were the philosophies whose tenets led Europeans out of the Middle Ages. Both accorded primacy to the will, not to reason. And both combined this voluntarism with a form of empiricism—an attenuated form to be sure, but even for that, still highly significant. They, and especially their followers, began to critique the search for pure understanding as "useless." Thus, they initiated a crucial historical transformation by proposing that understanding divorced from power was pointless.

Out of this comes that emphasis on action, and, so, on willing that is a key feature of modernity. Francis Bacon is usually assigned the role of the culprit

responsible for convincing Westerns that action is higher than contemplation. That seems correct. Here is one comment he makes, repudiating the idea of the ladder of knowledge: "For the wit of man [complained Bacon] if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of god, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit" (*Advancement*, Book I, sec. 4. par. 5).

Here Aristotelian *scientia*, pure understanding and knowing, is subjected to parodic derision. The rejection of knowledge for its own sake joined with the new belief that the well-being of humans was the primary end of knowledge (this Renaissance humanism is exemplified by Erasmus of Rotterdam), with the result that knowledge no longer is a virtue of contemplation, but has become the groundwork for what the political philosopher Barry Cooper calls "action into nature." Here is Bacon again, now speaking of the scientific research establishment of Solomon's House set up on Atlantis for the material benefit of the human race: "I will give thee the greatest jewel I have. For I will impart unto thee, for the love of God and men, a relation of the true state of Solomon's House . . . The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible" (*Atlantis*, 265).

Bacon even gives voice to the co-penetration of knowing and making, one of Grant's great themes (though for some reason, Grant doesn't give attention to Bacon). In the *Novum Organum*, Bacon attacks those who harbor too much respect for the philosophical systems of antiquity: "[N]or must we omit the opinion, or rather prophesy, of an Egyptian priest with regard to the Greeks, that they would forever remain children, without any antiquity of knowledge or knowledge of antiquity; for they certainly have this in common with children, that they are prone to talking and incapable of generation, their wisdom being loquacious and unproductive of effects" (I 71, 276).

We see that line of thought originating with Duns Scotus and William of Ockham was passed down to Bacon, and through his influence became central to the modern understanding of knowledge. This view held that power, not understanding, is the measure of thinking. Contemplating the nature of the Good was no longer the mark of a life well-spent, as it was amongst Platonists. The stress on power led, as we all know, to a rebellion against life as it has been given us, and desire to substitute a second nature, a constructed nature, for created nature. Here nature is no longer the object of *theoria* (which in Eastern Christianity also refers to illumination as when one sees and experiences God) but a material that is subject to human action, to be used in humans' production of a second nature.

If earlier eras had seen human happiness to be fulfilled perfectly only in the hereafter, the humanist leanings of the Renaissance began to demand that that fulfilment be met in the here-and-now. Wisdom must be in the service of man.

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John Randall makes the acute comment that "the Baconian spirit can be best described as a kind of naturalistic Augustinianism, aiming at human salvation and beatitude in this world, through a kind of natural wisdom controlling the forces of nature in the interests of human power." He continues, "In a society thus already committed to power and salvation as the ultimate aim of all knowledge, the developing technology, the increasingly elaborate forces of production, were able to give a strong impetus to knowledge that would procure a power over nature" (225).

These statements sum up Grant's ideas on the theological contours of the intellectual history of the Latin West, a summary necessary to understand why Grant found so fruitful Simone Weil's emphasis on Greek Christianity. Grant had come to see that the Scholastic view that God is the *ens entium*, the Being of beings, had the effect of making God scrutable. The mysteries of nature, of being, could be unlocked. As knowledge became understood as the power to produce effects, the mysteries came to be thought of as falling within the province of will. Consequently, people of the Latin West arrived at the belief, still monstrously widespread, that all that is can be remade, endlessly.

5. GRANT'S CRITIQUE OF SCOTUS AND BACON'S VOLUNTARISM

Grant had come to see that the will had been given a central place in Western Christianity. In modernity, Beauty subserves the enhancement of the quality of human life; so, too, with goodness and truth. The modern account of liberty is founded on the ability to ignore the Good as the *Summum Bonum* that calls us. Contrast what Grant describes as the traditional Christian view of goodness and the worth of natural things with that of Bacon. On the traditional view, as Grant sets it out in "Faith and the Multiversity," "[w]e can only fulfil [the requirements of the world] here below insofar as we partake to some degree [in the perfection of God]. Indeed goods in the here and now are good only insofar as they participate in goodness itself. Our freedom is just our potential indifference to such a high end" (55). If the Greeks had been called upon to be resolute, their unyielding valor was grounded in the belief in an immutable order. On the modern understanding, by way of contrast, history is made by humans through willed acts of "creation." (*Mass Age* 22–3) Autonomous willing has assigned us the privilege of creating (*English-Speaking* 86–7). And what we create is a better quality of life, a goal that beauty, truth and goodness subserve. In Grant's words:

> In the modern call, human wills are called to a much more staggering challenging. It is our destiny to bring about something novel: to conquer an indifferent nature and make it good for us. . . . We now see our wills standing above other beings of nature, able to make these other beings serve the purposes of our freedom. All else in nature is indifferent to good. Our wills alone are able, through doing, to actualize moral good in the indifferent world (*Time* 24).

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Grant recognized the crucial historical connection between the idea that the mysteries of nature can be made to disclose their depth and the centrality that Western thought has accorded the will. He looked beyond the tradition of Latin Christianity for a way out, for a tradition that maintained that the mysteries could be fathomed neither by reason nor through the exercise of will, a tradition that acknowledged the limits of reason and will. Weil and Sherrard pointed Grant towards a solution to the problem of the will in Western Christianity: Eastern Christianity had rejected the idea that the essence of humans and the Divine is will. As Grant said of Weil, "She stands unequivocally on the side of saying that the affirmation of the being of God is a matter of knowing and not of willing" (*Introduction 251*).

Thus Grant, again through Weil and Sherrard, found in the Christianity of the Greek East a body of thought that, although enfolded within Christianity itself, nonetheless escaped the faults of onto-theology. It is a commonplace that Eastern Christianity knew no Scholastic transformation, that it has remained essentially Patristic. In Eastern theology, God was not to be understood as the *ens entium*, the rational principle dwelling in things; indeed, in Eastern Christianity, God is understood as beyond being. But to say that God could not be understood through reason raises the question whether God can be understood at all. What must be said first to this question is that the apophatic tradition is much stronger in the Eastern Church than it is in Western Church. According to the Eastern Church, God is unknowable in the sense of being inscrutable.

6. WEIL AND GRANT ON KNOWLEDGE THROUGH LOVE AND BEAUTY

Nonetheless, intimations of the divine are possible. Grant was much taken with Weil's assertion that "Faith is the experience that the intelligence is enlightened by love." Love, as knowledge, is an opening toward the Divine. Grant next associated Love with Beauty. For Grant, the Beautiful is associated with idea of being worthy of Love, and Love, in Grant's metaphysics, has escaped the transformation of being that has occurred under the regime of modernity, a regime founded on a paradigm of knowledge that depicts the act through which one obtains knowledge as, essentially, one in which the subject probes objects. The modern conception of knowledge accords objectivity an important value; on this model, beings are summoned before us and are required to give an account of themselves. But one phenomenon eluded the expansion of the will that has arisen from this understanding, and that is love—love understood as the "consent to the fact there is authentic otherness" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 38).

Grant's philosophy is unusual in according to love a significant epistemic role. On the modern account of knowledge, reason (that is calculative reason) summons objects before itself to give an account of themselves. This brings objects under our will. However, it is evident that authentic otherness could not be so summoned. By contrast, love, as the consent that there is authentic Otherness,

releases others to come forth according to their natures (that is, as truly other). Weil goes so far as to assert that even God's love acknowledges otherness, for God's way is not that of force. God does not act except by consent, "This Love, which is God himself, acts, since he is God, but he acts only as far as he obtains consent. It is thus he acts on the souls of men" (*Intimations* 118).

This is the way of genuine love. However, for most, genuine love has receded from the realm of possibility (and even for the exceptional, genuine love manifests itself only rarely). Weil pushes the corruption of Christianity back earlier even than Scholasticism. For her, it lay in the fusion of Christianity with Roman thought: "the Roman conception of God," she maintained was that Jehovah/God is like an emperor, exercising sovereignty over subjects as slaves: "The Father of Christ, accommodated to the Roman fashion, became a master and owner of slaves. Jehovah furnished the necessary means of transition. There was no longer the least difficulty about welcoming him" (*Roots* 277). Weil deemed this Roman transmutation of the Father of Christ into a slave owner a cultural event of major significance, one that echoed all the way down to the twentieth century: it helped distinguish the Latin West from the Greek East.

Weil used her insight into the transformation of the idea of Divinity that occurred with the Romans to challenge the traditional idea of natural law, which the Scholastics (and the neo-Scholastic Jacques Maritain) made central to the metaphysical undergirdings of their ethical theories. Weil quotes the neo-Scholastic philosopher Jacques Maritain as saying that "the notion of right is even deeper than that of moral obligation, for God has a sovereign right over his creatures and he has no moral obligation to them" (*Roots* 265). Notice a peculiarity here: one might maintain there is an impersonal aspect to the Lord's rule: that He commands the universe and in its totality it conforms to the Lord's will. But Maritain goes further; he maintained that God has sovereign rights over his creatures, including people—this really is what is involved in the Emperor/slave-owner conception of divinity. Weil was appalled by Maritain's assertion—in her later works, from the London period, she maintained that obligations absolutely have precedence over rights. What is common between the Roman conception of God and the Scholastic conception, in Weil's view, is the belief that God is in the universe: God's command governs the universe as the Emperor's edict governs the slave-people.

Grant took up the point Weil made in her rejoinder to Maritain, and incorporated it into his critique of liberalism. In the concluding chapter to *Lament for a Nation* (1965), a short work that created a minor public sensation with its argument that Canada was destined to disappear into a universal and homogeneous state whose centre was the United States, Grant turned explicitly against what he found most disturbing in the Hegelian doctrine of progress, namely that claim Hegel had adopted from Schiller, that "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht" (the history of the world is the judgement of the world, from "Resignation," last line of the penultimate stanza). Grant argued that in the Hegelian system, "the doctrines of progress and providence have been brought together" (*Lament* 99).

That is, emphasis on the notion of historical development, though seen as the development toward higher forms of human cognition and of human life itself (this is what is implied in the doctrine of progress), made God's will scrutable, for that view of history maintains that God's will is accomplished in these higher forms (this is what is implied in the doctrine of providence). In portraying the future as necessarily a higher stage than the past, the doctrine of progress, in Grant's eyes, reconfigures evil, loss, destruction and the whole suffering of historical life, as good, for it portrays them as redeemed through their role in the higher achievement of future development. This, Grant notes, justifies a view of God as an agent of force. That view ends by dismissing the problem of evil, for it explains that the force God exercises is necessary force. As Grant says,

> But if history is the final court of appeal, force is the final argument. Is it possible to look at history and deny that within its dimension force is the supreme ruler? To take a progressive view of providence is to come close to worshiping 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. As a believer, I must then reject these Western interpretations of providence. Belief is blasphemy if it rests on any easy identification of necessity and good (*Lament* 100).

Grant here makes use of the notions of supreme ruler and force—these notions, too, he derived from Weil and they are crucial to his teachings regarding the role of will in the modern way of knowing. Though they occur throughout her writings, the place where Simone Weil articulated those ideas most forcefully is in a remarkable piece of literary criticism, "The Iliad, or A Poem of Force," in which Weil showed that the Roman conception of God as the Emperor over slaves had precursors in the Greek world. It is worthwhile in this context to state Weil's conception of force. She defined force as "that which makes a thing of whoever submits to it. Exercised to the extreme, it makes the human being a thing quite literally, that is, a dead body." (Those who want to connect this idea of force to Marxist critiques of the pandemic condition of commodification and to that critique of capitalization which ties it to warmongering are free to do so, for they are right.) In Homer, the gods are not at all what most people believe they were for Greeks, viz., anthropomorphic beings; rather, they represent natural forces beyond human control—death, love, war, sunshine, etc. (See Grube 150). Thus, superstition is not a matter of believing in the gods, but of believing that humankind can control these superhuman forces. Superstition is the attempt to hide the fickleness of force. Here, then, the idea of God as Sovereign is connected to the idea of controlling chance. That link had a decisive influence on Grant's thinking, for he commonly describes technology as human's effort to control chance, to obtain the liberty to make happen in non-human nature what we want to happen.

At its most fundamental—we might say most base—level, force is physical and its *telos* is to reduce humans to corpses. But, Weil asks, what of the "force that does not kill, i.e., that does not kill just yet?" (*Force* 4). What Weil formulates

in response to that question is tantamount to a theory of communication/social relations. Weil imagined social relations as operating according to a rigid mechanics just as the laws of physical science do: the principle of gravity controls physical relations; an analogous principle, prestige, governs social relations. To explain how social relations operate according to a rigid mechanics, we have to acknowledge that force operates in social relations: relations between human beings involve "a kind of balance between unequal amounts of force," Weil maintained (*Force* 14). And force in social relations derives at least three-quarters of its strength from prestige (19). Prestige "rests principally upon that marvelous indifference that the strong feel toward the weak, an indifference so contagious that it infects the very people who are the objects of it" (19). The slave, Weil suggests, internalizes the attitudes of the master and so is turned against his or her own interests.

There is an evidently Hegelian tenor to this discussion of prestige—the passage sets out an idea of a struggle for recognition whose core character is a struggle to the death. It almost certainly struck Grant, too. But Weil's discussion of the *Iliad* was directed toward the end of proposing a critique of this concept of force and to understanding the limits on force. Weil argued that a transformation of our desire is necessary, without which we remain enthralled to idols of public opinion and prestige. Weil also maintained that only eternity can accomplish that transformation. Grant realized that Weil's critique joined with Sherrad's commentary on Latin Christianity to expose the limitation of Hegel's ideas on intersubjectivity and civil society. He needed to know in what terms other than prestige a person cries out to be read.

Grant saw in the Hegelian doctrine of progress (and, indeed, in the doctrine of progress that moderns have embraced) a confusion between what (following Weil) he referred to as the order of necessity and the order of the good. Grant argued that Plato (*Republic* 493c), and the ancients generally, preserved a distinction between the eternal (or the Good) and necessity, which is a realm of becoming which participates in the eternal, but remains as other to it. It was only by so distinguishing between the eternal and the historical that the distinction of good and evil could be retained. Grant found the same distinction in Christianity that he found in Platonism, for Christianity maintains that God's will, Providence, is not scrutable; so, we are called to look not to human history but to Christ, and most fully, to his crucifixion, for our theology.

7. GRANT ON OTHERNESS AND THE GOOD IN PLATONISM AND IN CHRISTIANITY

Grant saw in the Hegelian uniting of progress and providence a radical reduction of all otherness to human historical life, ultimately to human subjectivity and will. Grant believed that otherness—both the otherness of God and of other beings—can be preserved only by recognizing an order of the good (or of justice) that precedes human willing and activity.

Thus, the recognition of otherness (and of authentic Otherness), and, finally, of transcendence, Grant saw as the key to overcoming the errors of onto-theology. Indeed, Grant distinguished two levels of recognition of otherness. First, there is its Platonic form, in which that recognition of otherness affirmed justice as the love of the beautiful in otherness; this form resulted in virtue's limiting one's willing, something that is made possible by the illumination of one's intelligence by the love of the Good. Second, there is its more radical Christian form, in which love of otherness results in giving away of one's self for the sake of the other, who experiences radical affliction or the absence of the Good. Together these forms of recognition affirmed that relation of the human being to the good as receptive or participatory and not as generative or determining. For Grant, religion, art and philosophy are all forms of participation, and so in a broader sense they are all religious. There is certainly a human activity in each, but what elevates them is that they are responsive to and have their being within a relationship to an eternal source.

Inspired by Plato's *Timaeus*, Weil wrote that the sacramental beauty of the world calls us to a knowledge that "all that we touch, see and hear is the very flesh, and the very voice of absolute Love" (*Intimations* 103). Thus, it constitutes another way, other than affliction, through which the otherness of divine reality descends and enters our lives; while affliction conquers us with brute force, beauty is ushered in by our love of otherness, and it topples the regime of the self from within. Though it addresses us first of all carnally, beauty calls for renunciation:

> "The beautiful is a carnal attraction which keeps us at a distance and implies a renunciation. This includes the renunciation of that which is most deep-seated, the imagination. We want to eat all other objects of desire. The beautiful is that which we desire without wishing to eat it. We desire that it should be" (*Gravity* 149).

Grant would have taken this last comment to imply our rising above that relation to an other which brings it forth as an object, on which we can impose itself; in the new relation which beauty calls forth, what we experience is allowed to stand forth in genuine otherness. This distance ensures the transcendence of the other, and so the reality of Transcendentals. Of the words "God," "truth," "justice," "love," and "good," Weil wrote,

> "These are the words which refer to an absolute perfection which we cannot conceive. . . . What they express is beyond our conception . . . To use them legitimately one must avoid referring them to anything humanly conceivable and at the same time one must associate with them ideas and actions which are derived solely and directly from the light which they shed" ("Personality" 33).

Thus, for example, Weil wrote of beauty as being utterly inarticulate, for it cannot really speak of what it indicates in such a rudimentary manner:

> Beauty can be perceived, though very dimly and mixed with many false substitutes, within the cell where all human thought is at first imprisoned. And upon her rest all

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> the hopes of truth and justice, with tongue cut out. She, too, has no language; she does not speak; she says nothing. But she has a voice to cry out. She cries out and points to truth and justice who are dumb, like a dog who barks to bring people to his master lying unconscious in the snow ("Personality" 29).

We cannot apprehend beauty it itself: it is a transcendental. So frequently did Simone Weil insist on the principle *finitum non capax infiniti* that she has frequently been accused of dualism and Gnosticism. The Trappist monk and writer Thomas Merton went so far as describe Weil's as a "satanic theology," a theology which, he maintained, "hides Christ from us altogether, and makes him so impossibly beautiful that he must remain infinitely remote from our wretchedness" (142).

Where did Weil locate these truths one affirms with a love of what is perfect—affirms as one affirms the experiential facts of a geometric theorem? She answers this question in these words:

> There is a reality outside the world, that is to say, outside space and time, outside man's mental universe, outside any sphere whatsoever that is accessible to the human faculties. Corresponding to this reality, at the centre of the human heart, is the longing for an absolute good, a longing which is always there and is never appeased by any object in this world. Another terrestrial manifestation of this reality lies in the absurd and insoluble contradictions which are always the terminus of human thought when it moves exclusively in this world. Just as the reality of this world is the sole foundation of facts, so that reality is the sole foundation of good. That reality is the unique source of all the good that can exist in the world: that is to say, all beauty, all truth, all justice, all legitimacy, all order, all human behaviour that is mindful of obligations. Those minds whose attention and love are turned towards that reality [this is a very Eastern Orthodox conception, by the way] are the sole intermediary through which the good can descend from there and come among men ("Draft" 219).

Accordingly, the total beauty of the universe "cannot be contained in anything tangible, though it is itself tangible in a certain sense" ("Love of Religious Practices"120). Her allusions to participation of beauty of tangible particulars in the whole of beauty are uniformly Platonic; even something as simple as the solution of school-book mathematics exercise is "the image of something precious" and, given the requisite intensity of *attente*, "every school exercise . . . is like a sacrament" ("Reflections" 73; "Love of the Order" 112).

The language of "God," "truth," "justice," "love," and "good," operates in space that Weil came to call "The Impersonal." Weil's Impersonalism maintains not only that the human "expectation for good" is more than what counts as personality, but also that we are obliged to respect humans even when they show no signs of being persons—this is the sort of view that divided Grant from most liberal thinkers on matters of rights (and, notoriously, on the matter of the "right" to abortion). Weil maintained that the impersonal is morally prior to the individual human personality. That runs against the grain of liberal conceptions of the human being (including the version the neo-Scholastic Jacques

Maritain propounded). For Weil, in the impersonal may alone be that which sustains our infinite love and concern and allows us to transcend our own personal aspirations in order to care for another. Grant connected Weil's beliefs about the impersonal to her interest in Greek Christianity ("Introduction" 252).

Grant also connected Weil's opposition to Maritain to the struggle against liberalism. If Weil attacked Maritain's idea of *la personne*, Grant, in *English-Speaking Justice*, critiqued John Rawls's (and, more generally, the liberal) conception of the person. And if Weil critiqued Maritain's according rights precedence over obligations, Grant similarly critiqued Rawls' theory of rights. In contrast to Hobbes, Locke, or the American founders, Rawls did not ground rights in natural law (that is to say, in nature or nature's God), but in an abstract contract made between abstract "persons"—this is such a long way down from Plato's grounding justice in a wholly transcendent Good, a Good that is so completely other to things of the world that it is beyond being. (Recall Socrates' remark to Glaucon, in the *Republic* 509b, that "the Good is not being but superior to and beyond being in dignity and power," a remark that really gets a rise out of Glaucon.) According to Rawls's theory, only "persons" have rights. Who counted as a "person" remained, according to Grant, obscure to the point of being unfathomable: "the word 'person' is brought in mysteriously (one might better say sentimentally) to cover up the inability to state clearly what it is about human beings which makes them worthy of high political respect" (*English-Speaking* 33). Grant understood, then, that the troubling question that Rawls' doctrine (and liberalism generally) raises was what might prevent a good Rawlsian from excluding certain categories of humanity from the status of "person"?

Grant understood, too, that for Weil, the experience of being bound to what we are fitted for is central. Weil pointed out the "souls are matter, psychic matter, subject to a mechanism as inexorable as gravity." The understanding soul consents to this necessity. Grant's thoughts on beauty relate to this consent:

> The final affliction to which all come is death. The only difference between people is whether they consent or do not consent to necessity. What most supports the possibility of this consent is our attention to the beauty of the world. For that beauty is our one image of the divine. And of its very nature it is not known as purposeful, but only as lovable, in the sense that a great work of art has no purpose outside its own being. In [Weil's] language, the beauty of the world is caused by the divine son because it is the mediator between blind obedience and God ("Introduction" 235).

Love calls us towards an openness—an openness to "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" ("Platitude" 140). Love also calls us to recognize to acknowledge that justice is what we are fitted for.

As Grant says of justice,

> "[In] affirming that justice is what we are fitted for, one is asserting that a knowledge of justice is intimated to us in the ordinary occurrences in space and time, and that

through those occurrences one is reaching towards some knowledge of good which is not subject to change, and which rules us in a way more pressing than the rule of any particular good" ("Justice and Technology" 432). And "What has been lost [in modern conceptions of justice] is the belief that justice is something in which we participate as we come to understand the nature of things through love and knowledge. Modern theories of justice present it as something humans make and impose for human convenience" ("Faith" 60).

8. CONCLUSION: GRANT'S PESSIMISM ABOUT MODERN SOCIETY AND HIS FAITH IN THE FUTURE

By the time he came to write "Faith and the Multiversity," Grant's 30 years of deliberating on Simone Weil's theology had led him to the conclusion that the civilization of Christian West was flawed at its core—flawed both morally and spiritually. If working out the ideas for *Lament for a Nation* had brought him to the conclusion that Canada was fated to disappear into the universal homogeneous state, by the time he came to compose the essays collected *Technology and Justice* (1986), he was ready to argue that the civilization of the Christian West was fated to disappear—to collapse from within. As a Christian, however, Grant expressed faith that this collapse held out a promise—that something nobler would replace the vanished civilization. "Faith and the Multiversity" (1986) is one of the key pieces propounding that hope. The darkness of our age, the absences within it, point to a presence or a light. The task of the thinker begins with "bringing the darkness into light as darkness" (in Cayley, 170). Grant maintained the Platonic conviction (that we might connect with the idea of *anamnesis*) that there is, within our humanity, a relation to the eternal and that this relation (this participation in the Divine, I would be inclined to say) is so central to our being that its very absence can be known and recognized as such:

> Deprivation can indeed become absolute for any of us under torture or pain or in certain madnesses. We can become so immersed in the deprival that we are nothing but deprivation. Be that as it may, if we make the affirmation that the language of good is inescapable under most circumstances, do we not have to think its content? The language of good then is not a dead language, but one that must, even in its present disintegration, be re-collected ("Platitude" 141–142).

Thus, the nihilism of modernity reveals an order that precedes, and is untouched by, the whole history and unfolding of modernity. This belief, like the belief that humans have an essential relation to the Good (or, to the Divine), a relation that can become obscured but never eradicated, is further testimony to the influence of Sherrard and Eastern Orthodox Christian on Grant. For Grant this order is most completely captured in the traditional language of "Justice" or "the Good." The Good, or Order of Justice, provides the groundwork for our knowing in advance that there are actions which we ought not to do. As Grant says,

"This affirmation about justice can be put negatively by saying that if we are realistic about our loves and realistic about any conceivable conditions of the world, we must understand that justice is in some sense other to us, and has a cutting edge which often seems to be turned upon our very selves" ("Justice and Technology" 439).

Grant turned to the ancients to bring to light the understanding that the world is the Order of Justice. (I am using the term "order" here to evoke the idea of harmony.) According to the ancient belief, human being (*Dasein*, in Heidegger's lexicon), is placed within the Order of Justice and there, within the Order of Justice, he or she discovers that for which he is fitted. The ancient account of justice understood it as dependent upon the Good, upon a principle beyond time and human history. This eternal source, beyond time and human history, ensured justice's "otherness," and its priority. Modernity, by contrast, is the "very dimming of our ability to think justice lucidly" ("Justice and Technology" 437).

Reflecting in the "Appendix" to "Faith and the Multiversity" on his Platonic Christianity (on his being "a lover of Plato within Christianity") Grant re-iterated his belief that Plato's great teaching was the interdependence of loving and knowing:

> The close connection between Socrates and Christ lies in the fact that Socrates is the primal philosophic teacher of the dependence of what we know on what we love. In the central books of the *Republic*, Plato uses the image of the sun, the line and the cave to write of the journey of the mind into knowledge. In those images sight is used as a metaphor for love. Our various journeys out of the shadows and imaginings of opinion into the truth depend on the movements of our minds through love into the lovable. Indeed there are many ways of thinking about Socrates' 'turn around' from interest in such phenomena as clouds to his late interest in human matters. But one of these is his recognition of the interdependence between loving and knowing (72–3).

The experience of beauty calls us to recognition of the interdependence between loving and knowing. In that same "Appendix" Grant redescribed the new epistemic stand love requires.

> The philosophy of [Plato's] dialogues is impregnated with the idea of receptivity or as was said in the old theological language, grace. What is given us and draws from us our loving is goodness itself; the perfection of all purposes which has been called God. . . .
>
> Of course, for both Christianity and Platonism, goodness itself is an ambiguous mystery. In Christianity, God's essence is unknowable. In *The Republic* it is said that goodness itself is beyond being. Both Christianity and Platonism have therefore often been ridiculed as final irrationality. If the purpose of thought is to have knowledge of the whole, how can we end in an affirmation which is a negative of knowing? It is, above all, these agnostic affirmations which bring Platonism and Christianity so close together ("Faith," 74–5).

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