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George Grant on the Meaning of our Love of the Beautiful

George Grant learned of Simone Weil when the CBC sent him a copy of one of the first English-language collections of her contemplative letters and essays, *Waiting for God*, so he could review it on air. That was in 1951. He read Weil on and off over the next few years. However, it was not until June 1958, when he made a 40-hour train journey from Toronto to Edmonton, that he read her closely. His diaries record the feelings that reading her aroused. On the first day, he noted, "I am going to give up trying to be a philosopher. I know nothing after reading Miss Weil." Continuing to read her on the return trip, he commented, "I have been reading Miss Weil but she gets on my nerves and I find her absolutist mysticism tiring." Nonetheless, he averred that she was "nearer the truth than anyone else." Again, he remarked that what he read of Weil's "affects me with great moodiness about how one should spend one's life. It makes me react against this raging pursuit of knowledge into a more rounded view that gives some place to the social virtues and bliss of mysticism."

Weil influenced Grant's ideas on many topics, but among the most important of these was the relation of love and otherness. Grant distinguished two levels of recognition of otherness. First, there is its Platonic form, in which the recognition of otherness affirms justice as the love of the beautiful in what is other to the self; this form results 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 the absence of the Good as radical affliction. Together these forms of recognition affirm 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 relation to an eternal source—they have an aspect of receptiveness and are participatory forms of experience.

Let us examine how a conception of beauty that makes primary its relations to love and to otherness might preserve the transcendence of the Beautiful and the Good, by maintaining that beauty is not something of which reason can give an account, nor anything that belongs to the dominion of the will. We shall see this alternative is delineated in Kantian aesthetics and Pythagorean metaphysics. Indeed, the theory of beauty that will emerge is an amalgam of those two doctrines.

Grant found in Weil the basis for a higher epistemology, founded in love. Love, our experience of faith teaches, transforms the intellect; but the intellect remains a faculty of knowing. Thus, love has epistemological significance (as well as moral importance). The experience of beauty opens us towards the mystery to which love attunes us. It is through love that the eyes operate, allowing us to see beauty— in fact, to see at all. Simone Weil's favorite poem was George Herbert's "Love (III)," from *The Temple*.

> Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
> Guiltie of dust and sinne.
> But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
> From my first entrance in,
> Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
> If I lack'd any thing.
>
> A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:

> Love said, You shall be he.
> I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
> I cannot look on thee.
> Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
> Who made the eyes but I?
>
> Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
> Go where it doth deserve.
> And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
> My deare, then I will serve.
>
> You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
> So I did sit and eat.

Who made the eyes but Love? In a passage of which Grant was much enamoured, Weil describes the role this poem played in her coming to Christ.

> Chance—for I always prefer saying chance rather than Providence—made of a young English Catholic a messenger to me. For he told me of the existence of those English poets of the seventeenth century who are named metaphysical. In reading them later on, I discovered a poem . . . It is called "Love." I learned it by heart. Often, at the culminating moment of a violent headache, I make myself say it over, concentrating all my attention upon it and clinging with all my soul to the tenderness it enshrines. I used to think I was merely reciting it as a beautiful poem, but without my knowing it the recitation had the virtue of a prayer. It was during one of these recitations that, as I told you, Christ himself came down and took possession of me.

For Weil, as for Grant, love was a key to aesthetics. Lawrence Schmidt lays out nicely Weil's beliefs on creation and beauty.

> The cosmos is the result of God's "superabundant generosity" and, as such, is sacramental. The beauty of the universe, its order and harmony, serve as *metaxu* or intermediaries between the realms of the necessary and the good: they relate humanity to the eternal. Love of beauty is one of the forms of the implicit love of God. "The beauty of the world," she wrote,
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> > is the cooperation of divine wisdom in creation. 'Zeus made all things,' says an Orphic line, 'and Bacchus perfected them.' This perfecting is the creation of beauty; God created the universe, and his Son, or first born brother, created the beauty of it for us. The beauty of the world is Christ's tender smile for us coming through matter. [Here is the idea of beauty as *metaxu*; by conceiving of the beauty of the world in a mediating role, Weil preserved the distinction between the Divine, who is Wholly Transcendent, and the Divine Energies, which are manifest in the Order he brings forth.] He really is present in the universal beauty. The love of beauty proceeds from God, dwelling in our souls and goes out to God present in the universe. It is also like a sacrament.

Beauty, Weil offers, discloses the highest reality: "The essence of reality is beauty, or the highest *convenance.*" The term "*convenance*" expresses an idea on which Weil expended much effort; even so, it is difficult to tack down. Here is one extraordinary passage that helps us discern what she intended by that term.

> Our universe is a cross-section in the universe, cut at the place that corresponds to the dimensions and to the structure of our body. Thus the universe is only known to us subjectively; our organism also, but the *convenance* between them is a fact.

There is a harmony between our body and the cross-section in the universe, I think she means. Reality is the highest form of harmony, for it is the exemplar of the mutual adaptation of parts. This, of course, is a Pythagorean-Platonic idea that the *Timaeus* has made familiar to us all. Elsewhere, Weil stated that we must believe that the world's beauty is "in relation to the body and psychic structures of each of the thinking beings that actually do exist." The meaning of that "in relation," I contend, is "proportionate to" (or "harmonically proportionate to").

Here are other statements Weil offered on beauty that I believe support this interpretation. The conclusion of *The Need for Roots* states, "The order of the world is the same as the beauty of the world. . . . It is one and the same thing, which with respect to God is perfect Wisdom, with respect to the universe, perfect obedience, with respect to our love, beauty, with respect to our intelligence, balance of necessary relations, with respect to our flesh, brute force." This something, which is one and the same, as Wisdom, as beauty, as the balance of necessary relations, I suggest is some form of harmony.

In the "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," in *Waiting on God*, she wrote:

> The beauty of the world is not an attribute of matter in itself. It is a relationship of the world to our sensibility, the sensibility that depends on the structure of our body and our soul . . .We must have faith that the universe is beautiful on all levels, and more generally that it has a fullness of beauty in relation to the bodily and psychic structure of each of the thinking beings that actually do exist and of all those that are possible. It is the very agreement of an infinity of perfect beauties that gives a transcendent character to the beauty of the world. Nevertheless the part of this beauty we experience is designed and destined for human sensibility.

Beauty is adapted to the bodily and psychic structures of each one of us, and will be for all who come after us. There is an infinity of possible adaptations of beauty, yet all are in fundamental agreement. The form of their agreement preceded us, and will remain unchanged, throughout all time to come. This is Weil's argument—her very Platonic argument—that beauty is transcendent. And since it is designed and destined for our sensibility, it possesses the form of purposiveness, though it is purposiveness without purpose.

The love of the beauty of another human being was also considered sacramental by Weil. Carnal love is "essentially the longing for the Incarnation . . . If carnal Love on all levels goes more or less directly towards beauty, it is because beauty in a human being enables the imagination to see in him something like the equivalent of the order of the world." Notice that word "order"—again, this means harmonic order. Beauty—the beauty of others and the beauty of the world as a whole—spares us the madness of self-absorption. Weil wrote, "Beauty captivates the flesh in order to pass right to the soul." Or again, 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. Once again, there is in this conception no hint of pantheism, for such a soul is not in this body but contains it, penetrates it, envelops it upon all sides, *being itself outside of space and time*; being not entirely governing them distinct from these but governing them. And this soul allows itself to be perceived by us through our sense of beauty, as an infant finds in its mother's smile, in an inflection of her voice, the revelation of the love of which itself is the object.

And, 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.

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.

Yet, Weil maintains, although the love of beauty in general is connected to the love of carnal beauty, we cannot truly grasp true beauty, or true love. Though she knew she accepted the Incarnation, and recognized the carnal implications of that dogma, she did not reconcile herself to the joys of the flesh. "In Plato's eyes carnal love is a degraded image of true love. Chaste human love (conjugal fidelity) is a less degraded image of it. Only in the stupidity of the present day could the idea of sublimation arise." Grant, we will see, differs, in believing that all love has a common source.

Ordinarily, the flesh, as desiring, projects itself forward in images of future possession. Beauty, however, arrests the imagination. "The beautiful takes our desire captive and empties it of its object, giving it an object which is present and thus forbidding it to fly off into the future." Beauty arrests us: thus, Weil can say that "Beauty is eternity here below." We shall see that Grant too, in his writings on beauty, maintained that beauty vouchsafes the experience of what is beyond time.

Pure love does not involve the desire to possess. "To love purely is to consent to distance, it is to adore the distance between ourselves and that which we love." Beauty, Weil proposes, evokes a love that is a consent to otherness—and Grant concurs. Weil is more extreme even than Kant on the disinterestedness of the experience of beauty, for she links it with the redemptive experience of the impersonal. Disinterestedness, she avers, endows the experience of the beautiful with ethical significance:

> Beauty is a sensual attraction keeping one at a certain distance and implying a renunciation, including the most intimate kind of renunciation, that of the imagination. One wants to devour every other desirable object. Beauty is something one desires without wishing to devour it. We merely desire that it be.

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.

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 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.

We cannot apprehend beauty in itself: it is transcendent. So frequently did Simone Weil insist on the principle *finitum non capax infinitum* that she has been accused of dualism and Gnosticism (a charge Grant took care to refute). The Trappist monk and writer Thomas Merton went so far as to 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."

In her so-called "Last Text," on the Church sacraments, she wrote,

> I believe in God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the teachings of the Gospel.
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> I believe, that is to say, not that I make mine what the Church says on these points, affirming them as one affirms the experiential facts of geometric theorems; but I adhere to them out of a love of the perfect, ungraspable truth that is locked in these mysteries.
>
> I do not recognize any right of the Church to limit the workings of the intelligence or the illuminations achieved by love in the domain of thought.

Where did Weil locate these truths one affirms with a love of what is perfect—as one does the experiential facts of a geometric theorem?

> 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.

Accordingly, the total beauty of the universe “cannot be contained in anything tangible, though it is itself tangible in a certain sense.” Her allusions to participation of beauty of tangible particulars to the whole of beauty are uniformly Platonic: even something as simple as the solution of a school-book mathematics exercise is “the image of something precious” and, given the requisite intensity of *attente*, “every school exercise . . . is like a sacrament.”

Grant understood 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.

Grant understood, too, that for Weil, the experience of being bound to what we are fitted for is central. Weil pointed out that “souls are matter, psychic matter, subject to a mechanism as inexorable as gravity”—this is one thing that puts the Good, which is not subject to necessity, so far beyond us. But, she averred, the understanding soul consents to this necessity. Grant concurred.

> 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 her [Weil’s] language, the beauty of the world is caused by the divine son because [like the divine son] it is the mediator between blind obedience and God.

Love calls us towards 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.” Love also calls us to recognize that justice belongs to our εἶδος.

> [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.

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.

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 Christianity 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."

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 is placed within the Order of Justice, and there, within the Order of Justice, he or she discovers that for which he is fitted. Modernity, by contrast, is the "very dimming of our ability to think justice lucidly. Something has been lost." 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.

All this is utterly Platonic, of course. So, too, is the belief that, although the Good is an otherness, and a transcendental, the beings of the world owe their being to Goodness—that is to say, to the Order of Justice. Justice is the presence of the Good in the world and, above all, in the recognition of "otherness." This "otherness" is encountered in the nature and variety of things in the world: the marvelous diversity of beings with which we are confronted, and which technology would reduce merely to moments of the will. Love of the Good illuminates the intelligence. That was what Socrates said in the *Republic*: as the sun is to light and the eye to the thing seen, so is the Good to truth and being and the intelligence to things known. The Good is the largely invisible source of understanding.

Given the Platonic contours of Grant's aesthetics—the belief in the transcendence of the Beautiful, the recognition of the role of ἔρως in leading us to intimations of the Beautiful, the understanding that those intimations are connected to that integrative feeling of mutual adaptation of the parts to one another and to the Whole—it is remarkable that the only occasion (that I know of) when Grant wrote critically of Plato concerned the ancient philosopher's aesthetics.

We have seen that Weil argued that the beautiful elicits an experience in which what is experienced is not experienced as an object, but can come forth in genuine otherness, on which the self has no design. In "Faith and the Multiversity" Grant argued similarly, stating that "Only as something stands before us in some relation other than objective can we learn of its beauty and from its beauty . . . Indeed, the central difficulty in using the language of beauty and love, in the affirmation that one knows more about something in loving it, is that in that language beauty was known as an image of goodness itself. Yet through the modern paradigm of knowledge the conception of good has been emptied into uncertainty." Grant insists that beauty allows that which is beautiful to stand forth in genuine otherness, even while he goes farther than Weil does in allowing that beauty addresses us carnally.

> Of course the beauty of the world manifests itself most intensely for us in the beauty of other people. The manifold forms of love, for example sexual and parental, friendship and admiration, take in each case many forms themselves. Who could in a lifetime write down the ways in which sexual love penetrates every movement of consciousness and is never absent in any loving of the beautiful—present even when that love is universal?
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> Indeed the manifold ways in which sexual instinct and love are held together and detached from each other make up much of our existing. One the one hand, sexual desire can be the recognition of others as beautiful; on the other hand, it can be the occasion of such calculated self engrossment that other people are made instruments for producing sensations. Sexual desire can be the occasion when we see the truth of what others are, in the flame of attention; or it can lock us in the madness of ourselves so that nothing is real but our

imaginings.

That we know more about something by loving it was what Simone Weil pointed out, by saying that "Faith is the experience that the intelligence is enlightened by love." Grant stated, "in [Plato's accounts of] the Sun, the Line, and the Cave, the metaphor of sight is to be taken as love. That which we love and which is the source of our love is outside the cave, but it is the possibility of the fire in the cave and of the virtues that make possible the getting out of the cave." Faith follows love, and allows us to see the world in and through love. Love is the apprehension of otherness, not simply as otherness, but also as beautiful. So Grant could affirm with Weil that "Love came down into this world in the form of beauty." In this understanding, justice is experienced as beautiful and so takes one beyond recognition of the natural law to the actual affirmation of other natures as beautiful in their otherness.

Moreover, like Weil, Grant came to suggest that the experience of otherness seizes the attention, and prevents the mind from flying off elsewhere—for example, to a future. It consolidates experience in the present. It was not in Grant's manner to speak of the ways in which the eternal is vouchsafed to us. He generally let Weil speak for him about love. As for the experience of beauty, he often allowed Mozart to speak. In "Faith and the Multiversity," he cites an extraordinary letter from Mozart that tells us that when he composed, he experienced something beyond time,

> The piece becomes almost complete in my head, even if it is a long one, so that afterwards I see it in my spirit all in one look, as one sees a beautiful picture or a beautiful human being. I am saying that in imagination I do not understand the parts one after another, in the order that they ought to follow in the music; I understand them altogether at one moment. Delicious moments . . . But the most beautiful is to understand it [the entire composition] all at one moment. What has happened I do not easily forget, for this is the best gift which our God has given me.

To this Grant adds, with characteristic discretion,

> Two points may be made, not to add anything to these words, but because the dominant language in modern education may cut us off from listening to the words. First, it has been a central theme in modern philosophy that there is no such thing as 'intellectual intuition.' This has gone with the teaching that the great mistake of the Platonic tradition has been the affirmation of such. 'Intuition' comes from the Latin *tueor*, to look. When Mozart says that after composing a piece of music he sees it 'all in one look' and when he says he understand it all at one moment, he is surely describing an act which can properly be named 'intellectual intuition.' Secondly, it is worth remembering when Mozart speaks of understanding (in the German the very similar word *verstehen*) he did so at a time when Kant was exalting reason above understanding, in the name of his account of human beings as 'autonomous.' This was to place on its head the teaching of Plato in which understanding is the height for human beings. Indeed the English word 'to understand' and the German *verstehen* were in their origins filled with that very sense of receptivity which Kant lessens in the name of our freedom.

What Grant does not say (probably due to discretion) is that to the artist is vouchsafed an intuition of what is beyond space and time. But he does ask, insightfully, "What is given in those

[works of art] that are most worthy of attention? What is it that enraptures us about them, so that even in the desolation of King Lear or K. 491 we are enraptured. Can we describe that enrapturing as the immediate engrossment in the beauty of the work, which points to good which is quite unrepresentable?"

Responding deeply to artwork can also be an act of love, and is subject to the same modalities as *ἔρως* is: there is that sudden eruption of the erotic, of love, into one's life that knocks one head-over-heels, and there is the lingering, abiding-with love, that continually deepens (there are even those modalities of *ἔρως* we call flirting and childhood crushes).

> Only twice in my life have I been so ravished with love for the works of an artist that the very substance of my soul seemed within these works. The first time was when I really listened to the music of Mozart in my twenties; the second when I read Céline's trilogy in my sixties . . .
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> It must be admitted that reading can easily become a vice. I have spent large portions of my life reading trash. Who can always do without drugs? Such reading can be like the mirror of the Lady of Shalott, confining one's experience to a safe and dreamlike vision. But great works of art are the very smashing of the mirror, the restoration of reality—or to use R. G. Collingwood's metaphor, "medicine for the worst disease of the mind, the corruption of consciousness."
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> This of course raises the mystery why someone else's account should sometimes be able to restore one to reality more completely than one's own experience. Simone Weil's description of language is worth pondering here. She says that language is a mean proportional between thought and the tangible.

The fundamental importance of harmony is evident again.

Reflecting in the "Appendix" to "Faith and the Multiversity" on his Platonic Christianity (on his being, as he said, "a lover of Plato within Christianity"), Grant reiterated 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.

In that piece Grant also insists, against Weil, that all forms of love partake of a single character, to which we can properly attribute the descriptor "erotic."

> The relation between Christ and Socrates is denied by those who would distinguish absolutely between two Greek words for love, *eros* and *agape*. Paul's hymn to love [1 Corinthians 13] uses the word *agape* which is best translated as charity. Plato's symposium is concerned with *eros* which is best translated as desire . . . There are clearly different kinds and examples of love. But this does not seem reason to draw too sharp distinctions between them, and in doing so deny that all love is one . . . When charity is without *eros* it can become

> administrative dictate.

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 . . .
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> 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. Without this agnosticism humans tend to move to the great lie that evil is good and good evil. In Christian language this great lie is to say that providence is scrutable.

Who, now, can abide in unknowing? What modern possesses negative capability? Technology has closed us to those states—for technology's edict, which is becoming the moral principle of our dark age, is that everything is available for knowing: this must be, for what moderns mean by the Good is mastery.