

## Modernity, Technology, Nationality

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The fact that events happen does not imply they are good.  
George Grant<sup>1</sup>

“Probing the structure of modernity was Grant’s life work,” Andrew Potter concludes.<sup>2</sup> While the concept<sup>3</sup> can become complex, for George Grant it could be summarized as the historical tendency toward the homogenization of human life, discernible most pointedly in Canada and the United States. It had been achieved through the centuries-long substitution of technological progress for moral striving. “[T]he central fact of the North American dream,” Grant observed, is “progress through technological advance.”<sup>4</sup>

While that North American faith may not be as “religiously defined”<sup>5</sup> as the demand for economic justice had been for many Marxists, Grant wrote (here at the end of the 1960s when the Marxist dream was still alive), that our faith in technological advance enjoys “a freedom and flexibility about it which puts nothing theoretical in the way of our drive towards it.”<sup>6</sup> Some two decades before the disappearance of the Soviet Union and consequent proclamations of the “end of ideology,” George Grant chided “the clever [who] now say, it is the end of ideology.”<sup>7</sup> We live in the ideology of technology, a promised land where distraction renders forgiveness forgettable, replacing moral or material striving with momentary and virtual satiation.

Such secular salvation punctuates the steady stream of searching, our constant craving refocused first from God to the public sphere, now to the

screens in front of us, screens that stare back at faces transfixed as if by the presence of God. Nothing-everything has changed, as our new subject positions – subjects of the screen – subject us to the never-ending search for something we cannot find there. “[T]echnique is ourselves,” Grant knew.<sup>8</sup> It is not we who search, as the phrase implies at least one degree of separation. Rather we are prosthetic extensions of screen. Searching is our sacrament, testimony to the truth that awaits not in heaven, but surely in the sequence of sites Google or Bing brings.

Communion occurs no longer by consuming symbols of divinity or through acts of social solidarity. Even in the presence of others we experience fusion through devices that make us mobile while holding us steady, close-in-hand. In our screened workstations we live in “monistic vulgarity,”<sup>9</sup> a striking phrase Grant uses to emphasize the demeaned humanity homogeneity incurs. What have we become, Grant wonders? What were we already? While the vulgar and the sacred have always split the human condition, Grant is registering the loss of at least the pretense that being alive has a moral purpose, however modestly and variously that might be defined. Whether focused on a personal god or an impersonal regime of self-divestiture seeking enlightenment or social justice, this sense of life having a meaning, a point, that life matters in and beyond itself: this sense of immanence or transcendence<sup>10</sup> vanishes in the eternal now of staring at screens.

Spiritual or social discipline and devotion devolve into instrumental rationality. Calculation replaces supplication. “The present darkness is a real darkness,” Grant affirmed.<sup>11</sup> Not spiritual discovery or social understanding but capital accumulation through technological advancement becomes the salvation

to which one kneels, perhaps not in prayer. Pleading in the present becomes the disciplined demand for new product development and dissemination, with wealth – not absolution – as the fantasy of the future. In his genealogy of the present, the great Weimar critic Siegfried Kracauer also pointed to “the *emptying out* of people’s spiritual/intellectual space,” and such “transformations of the self ... are [also] transformations of the outside object-world, of reality, which is gradually robbed of its substance and compressed to a point where its structure depends on the self.”<sup>12</sup> Long before Lasch, Kracauer knew modernity meant cultures of narcissism.

The “modern project,” Grant lamented, has led us “away from excellence.”<sup>13</sup> Kracauer quipped: “Value is not produced for the sake of value.”<sup>14</sup> Seeking moral excellence – always aligning ourselves to what is right – requires acknowledgement of the other, not reducing her or him or it to the means to our ends. “When life becomes dominated by self-serving,” Grant reminded, “the reality of otherness, in its own being, almost disappears for us.”<sup>15</sup> And “when otherness has become completely absent for us,” Grant (1986, 73) added, “we are hardly human beings at all.”<sup>16</sup> The cultivation of our humanity occurs within the reality of our inhumanity<sup>17</sup>, Grant knew, rendering the ancient aspiration for the ethical – summarized in Grant’s question “what is worth doing with our freedom?”<sup>18</sup> - as also political, as his citation of Plato makes clear: “In political terms, Plato places the tyrant as the worst human being because his self-serving has gone to the farthest point. He is saying that the tyrant is mad because otherness has ceased to exist for him.”<sup>19</sup> Are narcissism and tyranny, then, reciprocally related?

The disappearance of the other is the chief sign of narcissism, that inability to escape one's own projections. Is narcissism the chief cultural consequence of modernity, if we understand modernity as our subsumption in the "technological sensorium"?<sup>20</sup> It has been the eradication of difference – through genocide, through the Holocaust specifically – that marks modernity as mired in its salvational undertow: damnation. For Grant, it is the denial of alterity – including the presence of God, once the quintessential conception of otherness – that severs subjectivity from its embeddedness in the world, from acknowledgment of the world as simultaneously inseparable from and ultimately opaque to us, never reducible to its use-value. Attuning ourselves to the good, to right conduct in the world, sounds now only religious. Now, Grant points out, "Good is what is present in the fulfillment of our given purposes."<sup>21</sup> It is that conflation of calculation with consequences<sup>22</sup> that creates the vicious volatility of human action in modernity, as apparently intrinsic tendencies toward violence now become rationalized as collateral damage in accomplishing the objective of the day. While it has damned millions, it is the salvational potential of technology – its promise of progress, its subsumption of moral purpose within product development and profiteering – that calls us to worship today.

Modernity is, then, no despotic scheme imposed upon us against our will. Rather modernity is a materialization of that will. Not always conscious, as the term "will" connotes in the vernacular, for Grant it has converted to a compulsion to materialize whatever is possible. Indeed, "the possible is exalted above what is," Grant concluded.<sup>23</sup> Grant emphasized that within modernity a "universal and egalitarian society is the goal of historical striving."<sup>24</sup> How is thy

will to be done? “This state,” Grant explains, “will be achieved by means of modern science – a science that leads to the conquest of nature.”<sup>25</sup> This compulsion to conquest, Grant continues, includes not only “non-human nature, but human nature itself.” And where is the epicenter of this ongoing possibly history-ending event? “Particularly in America<sup>26</sup>,” Grant argued, “scientists concern themselves with the control of heredity, the human mind, and society.”<sup>27</sup>

Grant’s naming of the totalizing scale of modernity’s teleology – the “drive to the planetary technical future is in any case inevitable”<sup>28</sup> – and locating its epicenter in the United States simultaneously abstracts and concretizes the catastrophe that comes if we cannot figure our way out of it. We live, Grant appreciated, “in an age when the alternatives often seem to be between planetary destruction and planetary tyranny.”<sup>29</sup> The catastrophe to come – climate change, nuclear accident or terrorist attack, certainly overpopulation – will come as yet *another* catastrophe. It has already happened. Grant remembers. In his introduction to the Carleton Library Edition of *Lament for a Nation*, he references the decade before the Holocaust begins. Reflecting on the United States (and the political protests there over the Vietnam War), Grant thinks “of political polarization during the Weimar Republic.”<sup>30</sup> While that polarization was specific to German political culture and to that historical moment it also conveyed the violent multiplicity of modernity. While history never repeats itself, remembrance reconstructs the present, dislodging us from identification with it. But now, Grant worries, “Our memories are killed in the flickering images of the media, and the seeming intensity of events. There is weakened in us the simplest form of that activity of re-collection which Plato knew to be the chief means to

wisdom.”<sup>31</sup> While one can hardly promise wisdom, we can, in this moment, recollect an instance of the future in the past.

### Lament for a Nation

The very intricacy and variety of Weimar culture, and the tensions it contained, have made it the archetypal emblem of what we understand by modernity.  
Detlev J. K. Peukert<sup>32</sup>

The tendency toward totalization that technology enforces is not democratic in character. In the service of capitalism – “our society is above all a machine for greed,”<sup>33</sup> Grant knew - technology has contributed to totalitarianism, some ninety years ago, and not only in America, but in Germany, where, Peukert explains,

Part and parcel of the new [totalitarian] mood was an abandonment of the ideal of progress through technology that had originated with the Enlightenment but had become perverted into a merely materialistic utilitarian ideology in the course of the economic expansion of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup>

As moral aspiration morphed into technological advancement for the sake of profit maximization, the question of ethics became quaint. The politics of resentment followed as Germans - outraged, humiliated and suffering financial stress due to the military loss in World War I diplomatically aggravated at Versailles - now experimented with a parliamentary politics unprecedented in German history.

Despite the political polarization and economic destabilization, the “roaring twenties” were celebrated by many as the “culmination” of

modernization, e.g. decades of intensifying rationalization and efficiency, and not only in technology and the economy but in social and psychic life as well, where, Peukert<sup>35</sup> notes, “a substitute religion of social and technological utilitarianism and a euphoric faith in progress inspired a cult of ‘Americanism’.”<sup>36</sup> Such optimism was erased, first by the Great Inflation, followed five years later by the Great Depression, but even during the days of optimism, this “dream of modernity” was a nightmare shattered by deafening demands to return to traditional German values and assumptions, demands not only from the past but from the future, from “prefigurations of a critique of modernity we can now call post-modern.”<sup>37</sup> These often violent repudiations of the present fused into a “conservative revolution”<sup>38</sup> that featured what Jeffrey Herf characterizes as an “irrationalist embrace of technology.”<sup>39</sup> Over the decade this “reactionary modernism”<sup>40</sup> was formulated by a series of influential intellectuals, among them Hans Freyer, Ernest Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Werner Sombart, and Oswald Spengler, with Martin Heidegger formulating a more ambivalent analysis, and one that would very much influence George Grant.<sup>41</sup> As Eric Weitz underscores:

The notion that right-wing politics generally and Nazism in particular were the work only of material-minded, self-interested elites coupled with a collection of thugs and brutes is one of the major misinterpretations that has managed to prevail over the decades. In fact, German conservative revolutionaries were, in many cases, serious thinkers and writers, who also happened to be profoundly antidemocratic and, in many but not all instances, anti-Semitic as well.<sup>42</sup>

For many, anti-modernism<sup>43</sup> was inseparable from anti-republicanism<sup>44</sup>, as the Weimar Republic was associated with the lost war, the Versailles Treaty, economic crises, cosmopolitan mass culture (itself associated with Jews), and political liberalism.<sup>45</sup> These affronts - symptomatic, conservatives insisted, of German political and cultural degradation - demanded cultural renewal through an energizing "barbarism."<sup>46</sup> For "reactionary modernists,"<sup>47</sup> Herf underscores, technology would come to provide the primary prospect of such renewal, provided it could be freed from the commercial (decoded as Jewish) interests the Weimar Republic served.<sup>48</sup>

There were several influential formulations of this fantasy that would, in decades to come across the Atlantic, subsume national within technological progress. In this earlier still bifurcated version, the future didn't seem so bright, as the promise of technology had been usurped by those seized by the avarice of free-market capitalism. Oswald Spengler's "brooding pessimism," most famously articulated in his *The Decline of the West*, obscured (Herf points out) his embrace of technology, which he associated with the "creative, productive domination over nature that faces the alien world of parasitic, unproductive, cosmopolitan finance."<sup>49</sup> Despite this enemy, triumph was possible, Spengler asserted, depicting (in Herf's words) "technological development as a heroic ascent, a creative emancipation of the species from its natural limits."<sup>50</sup> That prosthetic potential of the body was also imagined by Ernest Jünger, whose writings of the 1920s, Herf summarizes,

repeatedly contrast the lifeless and mechanized human body with the animated and self-moving instrument of human will - that is modern technology. Whatever unconscious motivations may have fed this cult, it



manifested a consciousness that sought cultural renewal and intoxication through technical advances.<sup>51</sup>

Evidently technology is not only intoxicating, it is sexy. It was about this time Freud was suggesting that the obsession with technological innovation was a sublimation of sexual energy, arguing it was “the diversion of primary destructiveness from the ego to the external world [that] feeds technological progress.”<sup>52</sup>

It was in the Weimar Republic, then, that technological advance came to mean cultural renewal, and cultural renewal spelled self-regeneration. Drawing on the *Fronterlebnis* (front experience) of World War I to reconcile political reaction with modernity and modern technology<sup>53</sup>, Ernst Jünger affirmed the “man-machine symbiosis” as the dynamic fusion of human will and technology.<sup>54</sup> For Jünger, technology contributed not only to self-renewal, it revolutionized the body as well, as the machine does nothing less than biologize utopia with its promise of flawless functioning.<sup>55</sup> For Jünger, technology, sacrifice, and destiny were dynamically interwoven.<sup>56</sup> For us, sacrifice is not in fashion and we prefer not to think about destiny. For us, the triumvirate is technology, pleasure and profit. In each series technology incorporates eschatology, materializing the future and its fantasies of an after-life into an eternal perfectible now. Subjectivity dissolves into behavior and performance, into alternating sequences of striving and satiation. Enter the era of the posthuman.<sup>57</sup>

For Jünger, technology eclipsed individuality. In fusion with machines – “voluntary uniformity” in Jünger’s phrase<sup>58</sup> - one is freed from self-limitation and external constraint, able to attain whatever the will wants. Like the conformity

consumer capitalism compels, technology converts atomized individuals into instruments – “mass ornaments” in Kracauer’s phrase<sup>59</sup> - of national will. “Criticism of dehumanization at the hands of technology was common coin in Weimar,” Herf allows, adding: “What is distinctive about Ernst Jünger<sup>60</sup> is that he seems to welcome the process by which human beings are instrumentalized.”<sup>61</sup> Becoming flawless – in our time the cyborg or the “fyborg” (any bodily enhancement/transformation through any temporary technological intrusion into the body<sup>62</sup>) – incurs an intoxicating tension that promises to materialize transcendence in the rejuvenation of the nation.

For Hans Freyer, the problem facing the nation was the incorporation of technological advancement without destroying Germany’s distinctive *Kultur*. For Freyer, only the political Right could foster the fusion of technology and soul.<sup>63</sup> For Freyer, what was necessary was the formulation of a “philosophy of technology” that reconciled *Kultur* and *Bildung* with *Technik* and *Zivilisation* by acknowledging the heretofore unrecognized contribution of the latter to the former.<sup>64</sup> In the political program of the Left, ending the economy’s domination of society required a proletarian revolution. On the far Right, as formulated by Freyer, ending the economy’s domination of culture demanded the establishment of an authoritarian state. A revolution of the *Volk* against dehumanizing industrial society required the “unification” of the *Volk* and the state.<sup>65</sup> On both the Left and Right, the individual disappears into the collectivity, into the workers or the *Volk*, respectively.

Many individuals did disappear. In *The Jews and Economic Life* (1911) and in *German Socialism* (1934), Werner Sombart reduced questions of capitalism, technology, and cultural renewal to matters of race.<sup>66</sup> Like Spengler and Jünger,

Sombart associated technology with an active, Nietzschean will to power and, Herf points out, “Sombart spoke more and more about technology *and* culture rather than technology *or* culture.”<sup>67</sup> It was soulless finance that constrained culture and technology. What fate had befallen Germany, Sombart decried, that the will to power that creates technology had instead recast individuals as numerals, objects of business transactions. For Sombart, Herf explains, if “capitalism stood for the primacy of commerce over technology, then anticapitalism simply meant the reversal of this relationship by making technology predominant over commerce.”<sup>68</sup> What was politically urgent, Sombart insisted, was the rescue of this finest form of the German will – technology – from its subservience to finance capitalism. “A ‘technopolitics’ must replace *laissez-faire*”<sup>69</sup> and true enough, before the decade was out, technology came to signify national service not private profit.<sup>70</sup> It also became associated with “fantasy and [the] imagination rather than [with] abstraction”<sup>71</sup>, the former animations of the German soul destined to prevail over the latter, the dry calculations of a predatory finance capitalism.

How, in one decade, could technology be detached from its association with death and destruction (in World War I) and then - with the establishment of the Weimar Republic, that instrument of parasitic finance capital that destroyed (in the 1923 hyperinflation) Germany’s wealth - recast as creative labor in the service of rejuvenating German culture and thus the German nation?<sup>72</sup> Herf summarizes: First, technology was reconceived as fundamentally aesthetic, not dehumanizing, in fact capable of “comprising new, stable forms that constituted beautiful alternatives to a flabby and chaotic bourgeois order.”<sup>73</sup> Those “stable forms” would have their political correlates condensed into state

authoritarianism. Second, technology was no mechanistic abstraction severed from our inner lives. Indeed, technology represented that inner life as an externalization of it, indeed the materialization of the will to power. “This Nietzschean motif,” Herf notes, “celebrated the domination of nature with Social Darwinist overtones and excoriated antitechnological romanticism as effeminate and escapist.”<sup>74</sup> To unleash this cultural potential of technology required releasing it from finance capitalism (and from the Jews who presumably controlled capitalism). So freed, technology would produce the primacy of politics as the state, not the economy, would structure society. Fourth, technology was dissociated from the destruction and defeat of World War I by realigning it (and this was the specific accomplishment of Ernst Jünger) with the masculine camaraderie of the *Fronterlebnis*. Fifth, technological development became a “uniquely German project” to be protected from “the financial swindles of the Jews.”<sup>75</sup> As the key country located *between* East and West, Germany was destined to exceptionality. It alone could combine technology *and* soul. Whereas the Americans and the Soviets were both mired in materialism, Germany would become again a close(d) community, indeed a society defined by its political coherence, its cultural purity and vitality materialized in its technological innovation. In summary, technology came to define the new German national identity.

“As long as nationalism remains a potent force,” Herf cautions, “something like reactionary modernism will continue to confront us. The prospects for a better world will not be aided by an illiberal alliance between Western intellectuals who have lost faith in the Enlightenment, and those of the developing nations who mistakenly equate modernity with technology alone.”<sup>76</sup>

George Grant drew a distinction between nationalism and nationhood, implied in his definition of “national articulation” as “a process through which human beings form and re-form themselves into a society to act historically.”<sup>77</sup> In my terms, becoming historical requires subjective and social reconstruction, ongoing enactments of remembrance and agency attuned to the right, “justice” in Grant’s term. Justice, Grant pointed out<sup>78</sup> (in his critique of Rawls), cannot be derived from calculations of self-interest. Nor, I would add, can justice coincide with “the people” or the “state,” however administered its legal codifications are by the latter, however contained in the social imaginaries of the former. “For justice,” Grant suggested, “is the inward harmony which makes a self truly a self - or in more accurate language which today sounds archaic: Justice in its inward appearance is the harmony which makes a soul truly a soul.”<sup>79</sup> Justice, Grant concluded, is “not only an arrangement to be realized in any given society, but also a state of the individual which was called a virtue.”<sup>80</sup> In my terms, reparation requires reconstruction, simultaneously subjective *and* social.

#### Grant’s Lament

Life as little brother often leads to political naivety and even self-righteousness.  
George Grant<sup>81</sup>

“There is no such thing as modernity in general,” Herf concludes from his study of the Weimar Republic: “There are only national societies, each of which becomes modern in its own fashion.”<sup>82</sup> Canada inherited two versions of modernity, one French and one English, the former, Grant thought, less inclined to emphasize the exercise of freedom over the cultivation of virtue, in part due to the character of Quebec Catholicism.<sup>83</sup> “To Catholics who remain Catholics,”

Grant wrote, even before he became mesmerized with the work of Simone Weil, “whatever their level of sophistication, virtue must be prior to freedom.”<sup>84</sup> In the secularization of Protestant Christianity that had become modernity, eschatology had been reconstrued as confidence in progress, at times (as in Nazi Germany) tempting a fanatical embrace of the future. North America, Grant reminded, had been imprinted by Protestantism, and for him the persisting puzzle was why “Protestantism, centered as it was on a great affirmation of freedom and the infinite, has been the dominant force in shaping a society which is now so little free and so little aware of the infinite.”<sup>85</sup> To solve this puzzle Grant knew he had to work from the present, that convergence of secularization, science, and technology known as modernity. But modernity, as Herf reminds, took different forms according to the nation, its cultures, and the historical moment.

The influence of location was a key element in Grant’s analysis of Canada’s modernity. In the United States, individualism, capitalism and technology had fused with the nation’s faith in its divinely inspired exceptionalism, producing a volatile, at times explosive, mix of economics, politics, and culture. Canada had been destined to be different from the United States, Grant believed. It had intended to be a society, in Emberley’s paraphrase of Grant, “more ordered, more reasonable, more caring, less violent, and less enthused by reckless dreams.”<sup>86</sup> Technology, however, has its own intentionality, one that incorporates the manifest destinies of nations and their inhabitants through its totalizing – in Grant’s terms its “universalizing” and “homogenizing” - tendencies. Contained within these deceptively simple terms, Emberley points out, are the progressive dreams and apocalyptic nightmares of modernity: universal liberation requiring universal tyranny, the “reality of

creeping sameness."<sup>87</sup> For Grant, Emberley summarizes, technology compels a "fundamental" shift in the "human spirit" as it dissolves what "in the past had provided us with moral and intellectual ballast."<sup>88</sup> Emberley concludes:

Universalizing and homogenizing, technology's driving principle of "efficiency" demanded the suppression of local differences, particular loyalties, and credible resistances. Whatever lingering pockets of "autochthony" might declare opposition, the spirit of the regime – sustained by its continental ruling class of technicians and administrators, and the officially sanctioned discourse of instrumentality and efficiency – regarded their opposition as nothing more than folly sentimentality.<sup>89</sup>

Whether "difference" is embodied by nations or cultures or classes within nations or across borders, it is "difference" that disappears in modernity.<sup>90</sup>

Recall that for Grant technology is not only gadgets but modes of being, including forms of social organization and individual thinking. He attributed the death of democracy – as had Harold Innis before him<sup>91</sup> – to the technology of information exchange, in particular to propaganda presented as news. "Where can people learn independent views," Grant asked, "when newspapers and television throw at them only processed opinions. In a society of large bureaucracies, power is legitimized by conscious and unconscious processes."<sup>92</sup> Grant could not have been surprised by the Murdoch mess – the cellphone hacking, the corruption of the London police and apparently of British politicians – but he would still have been dismayed by the public's willingness to allow the man to own *any* newspaper or media outlet. The tendency toward hierarchies, even authoritarianism – can we invoke the historically specific term "fascism" here? - in the very organizational structure of the contemporary corporation is

clear enough in Murdoch's case, but "organization men"<sup>93</sup> have always risked political conformity when succumbing to the never-ending demand to the maximize profits.<sup>94</sup>

"[P]opulist democracy is a dying force in contemporary America," Grant judged, perhaps prematurely, but surely he was right to add that it does not belong to those who work for "Simpson's-Sears or General Motors."<sup>95</sup> Not only do corporations – Grant characterized them as "private governments"<sup>96</sup> - destroy democracy, but his examples underscore where. "A branch-plant satellite," Grant pointed out, bitterly, "which has shown in the past that it will not insist on any difficulties in foreign or defense policy, is a pleasant arrangement for one's northern frontier. The pinpricks of disagreement are a small price to pay."<sup>97</sup> Here Grant is not naming a department store or a kind of car but Canada itself.

As it was the case in Weimar Germany, "nationalism," Grant appreciated, "can only be asserted successfully by an identification with technological advance, but technological advance entails the disappearance of those indigenous differences that give substance to nationalism."<sup>98</sup> Not only corrosively, from within, does technology destroy difference. It seduces with the promise of progress. "Over the years the independence of Canada had been continually eroded," William Christian argues, "not so much by the external actions of the Americans, as by the increasing acceptance of the attractiveness of the American vision of modernity."<sup>99</sup> Technology trumps culture because it dissolves it, bleaching it of its multivariate dynamic distinctiveness – often contained in traces of the past – sacrificed for "modernization."<sup>100</sup> In modernization the very concept of "citizen" disappears, replaced by the "consumer." In consumer capitalism, Grant knew, "most human beings are



defined in terms of their capacity to consume. All other differences between them, like political traditions, begin to appear unreal and unprogressive. As consumption becomes primary, the border appears an anachronism, and a frustrating one at that."<sup>101</sup> In the inexorable drive toward economic integration, Grant argued, Canadians will cease to see "what all the fuss is about ... [After all] the purpose of life is consumption, and therefore the border is an anachronism."<sup>102</sup> Modernity means the universal state.

What *is* the fuss all about? Or, as some in this room might even ask, what fuss? Has not modernity meant reduction in disease, overwork, hunger and poverty? That Grant readily acknowledged, but, he added, "as soon as that it is said, facts about our age must also be remembered: the increasing outbreaks of impersonal ferocity, the banality of existence in technological societies, the pursuit of expansion as an end in itself."<sup>103</sup> Modernity means demands for economic expansion that enforce cultural homogeneity, and that apparent historical inevitability for Grant specifies the "fate of any particularity in the technological age."<sup>104</sup> Indigenous cultures, singular individuals, distinctive nationalities - all face the same fate as does Canada. "Canada," Grant pronounced, "has ceased to be a nation."<sup>105</sup>

The nation and the memory of its peoples disappear, but the state - in service to the economy - remains. Affluence, we are persuaded, depends upon ongoing technological advancement, and that advancement "develops within a state capitalist framework."<sup>106</sup> Manufacturing profit through technological development, corporations control the state, evidently even on occasion in Canada. Christian suggests that "the decisive factor, in Canada's case, was that the large corporations, where real power lay, knew nothing of loyalty, only

interest. That directed them south."<sup>107</sup> Grant knew that "The wealthy rarely maintain their nationalism [patriotism] when it is conflict with the economic drive of the day."<sup>108</sup> The wealthy are not guilty alone, as, Grant allowed that "many people in North America no longer appeal to any ideology beyond our affluence."<sup>109</sup> The ideology of affluence reproduces itself not only through the promise of profit and pleasure but through its corollaries: pain and deprivation. But it is, Grant advised, "only in listening for the intimations of deprivation, can we live critically in the dynamo."<sup>110</sup> Not the manufactured fear U.S. politicians propagate, but the quiet desperation Henry David Thoreau acknowledged before heading for Walden Pond.<sup>111</sup>

The great Weimar critic Siegfried Kracauer, Thomas Levin explains, linked the "intimations of deprivation" - feeling uprooted, isolated, emotionally vulnerable - of the 1920s German white-collar class to the "new social obsessions" e.g. "consumption" and "compensatory leisure" associated with Berlin's cafés and cabarets.<sup>112</sup> Kracauer focused on this historic redirection of human attention along lines, Levin notes, later taken up in Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility."<sup>113</sup> Recall that Benjamin had been preoccupied with the perception that technology possessed, in George Lukacs's phrase, "a phantom objectivity," an autonomy so "all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people."<sup>114</sup> Rationalized and instrumentalized, relations among those surviving in technological states become task-specific and numbered, measured not in meaning but in quantified outcomes. These structures of subjectivity and sociality are technologically reproduced. Can they be reconstructed?

For cultures that had attributed social cohesiveness to God, the triumph of modernity was at once horrifying and liberating. The Weimar Republic was not only a democracy under siege, it was a culture in crisis. For Germany's right-wing intellectuals, the "liberation" of technology from the Weimar Republic's social and political regulation became synonymous with the triumphant recovery of the German soul. Reducing government regulation might free corporations to pursue profit even more aggressively, but that fact was, during the 1920s, incidental to Germany's right-wing intellectuals. The "profit" they sought in liberating technology from government regulation was cultural and political. Their confidence that "economic [specifically technological] advance could overcome a cultural crisis"<sup>115</sup> represented a novel idea for Germans, Herf points out. No longer "novel," this idea - that technological advance can overcome cultural, economic, educational crises - has faded into the background. It is our assumption. It prompts the automatic purchase of new equipment and the sponsorship of institutes as it promises to cure climate change. In its status as salvational, technology, George Grant understood, becomes "pervasive."<sup>116</sup>

### Conclusion

Who is to recount how and when and where private anguish and public catastrophe may lead men to renew their vision of excellence?  
George Grant<sup>117</sup>

George Grant knew that submergence in the technological present requires not resistance but reconstruction and in its historical sense. Such reconstruction requires becoming aware, as Emberley summarizes, of "traces of practices, understandings, ways of life, and lived-experience which are pre-

technological in our cultural and political legacy."<sup>118</sup> Grant knew that one could not escape technology, but one could, again in Emberley's words, find one's way "between local parochialism on the one hand and the deracinated life of the modern universal and homogenous state on the other."<sup>119</sup> As in Weimar Germany – whose dissolution was followed by arguably the first "modern universal and homogenous state" – finding passage between provincialism and an incapacitating deracination, demands, as Emberley notes, "attentiveness and courage."<sup>120</sup> After all, "in no society," as Grant was keenly aware, "is it possible for many men to live outside the dominant assumptions of their world for very long."<sup>121</sup> We cannot live outside them, but as educators, like Grant, we can decline to coincide with them.

"We thought we could pick and choose, as in a supermarket," Christian reminds, summarizing Grant's dismissal of the technology-is-neutral argument, that it is only a tool we can use (or not) according to our convenience.<sup>122</sup> That thought is itself technological, affirming, however inadvertently, our demotion to "standing reserve," Heidegger's concept mentioned this morning.<sup>123</sup> At first we thought "only nature would be subject to human will," but "ourselves not."<sup>124</sup> But we are not exempt from our prostheses' power over us, Grant knew, as we have "bought a package deal of far more fundamental novelty than simply a set of instruments under our control. It is a destiny which enfolds us in its own conception of instrumentality, neutrality and purposiveness."<sup>125</sup> As we disappear into the technoculture we created and which now recreates us as its subjects, technology surpasses our capacity to grasp it. "We apprehend our destiny by forms of thought which are themselves the very core of that destiny," Grant lamented.<sup>126</sup> Like Weimar's reactionary modernists whose work Jeffrey Herf

describes, our faith in technology's triumph substitutes technical advancement for moral striving and democratic dialogue. As if conscious of the idolatry technology insinuates, Grant challenged us to "understand our technological destiny from principles more comprehensive than its own."<sup>127</sup> For Grant, "Thought is steadfast attention to the whole."<sup>128</sup>

Grant did not imagine that "the whole" could be grasped, intellectually or otherwise. It was one's relationship to that which exceeded understanding that absorbed Grant's attention in his final years. He reaffirmed his Christian faith as he reasserted his contempt for the cult of convenience, whether exercised in academics or abortion. I suspect it was his anti-abortion arguments – and perhaps his somewhat strange obsession with Céline – that have contributed to his present obscurity. For me it is Grant's courage that remains, expressed through his insightful critiques and searing laments. Grant formulated and followed his convictions, always engaged with his countrymen and the historical moment, seeking the timeless truth he discerned as lodged within the particularities of each. He followed his thought, his attention to the whole, wherever it led him, at whatever cost to his worldly status. He lamented his nation, took on technology, turned his back on Toronto, and not due to personal quirkiness – although there was that – but in fidelity to an ancient conception of justice and truth.

"To put the matter in a popular way," Grant wrote, "justice is an unchanging measure of all our times and places, and our love of it defines us."<sup>129</sup> It was the love of justice – no contract, as his critique of John Rawls underscores – that attunes us to "the whole," that demands attention and duty. It is our love of justice, Grant insisted, that inspires us to exceed what technology has made of us.

It is in fact our calling to “understand our technological destiny from principles more comprehensive than its own.”<sup>130</sup> What principles could be “more comprehensive” than *those* principles - calculation, instrumentality, obsession – that the technological imperative installs? By the end of his life, Grant felt he had found it. The primary principle was love, which Grant conceived as “consent to the fact that there is authentic otherness.”<sup>131</sup> On Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1988, George Grant died. His critique of technology remains with us, a testimony to the capacity of thought to exceed what is, including the idols whose vassals Grant suspected we have become.

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<sup>1</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 37).

<sup>2</sup> Potter (2005, xxxix).

<sup>3</sup> “It was precisely because the process of modernization had been so blatant and rapid since the end of the nineteenth century,” Peukert (1992, 187) explains, “and because even the last trappings of Wilhelmine tradition were then jettisoned after 1918, that opposition to modernization in Germany was so radical and so self-tormenting.” See note 22 in previous presentation.

<sup>4</sup> Grant (1969, 30).

<sup>5</sup> Grant (1969, 25).

<sup>6</sup> Grant (1969, 25).

<sup>7</sup> Grant (1969, 25).

<sup>8</sup> Grant (1969, 137).

<sup>9</sup> Grant (1969, 24).

<sup>10</sup> See Pinar 2009, 26-27.

<sup>11</sup> Grant (2001 [1969], 68).

<sup>12</sup> Kracauer (1995, 129, 130).

<sup>13</sup> Grant (2001 [1969], 65).

<sup>14</sup> Kracauer (1995, 78).

<sup>15</sup> Grant (1986, 38).

<sup>16</sup> Grant (1986, 73).

<sup>17</sup> The ancient war – good versus evil – intensifies, if Epstein (2010, 6) is right: “Digitization will amplify our better nature but also its diabolic opposite.”

<sup>18</sup> Grant (1969, 138).

<sup>19</sup> Grant (1986, 39).

<sup>20</sup> “[M]odernity is coeval with ... the designed environment of the technological sensorium,” Arthur Kroker (1984, 60) explains: “We now take our ‘environment’

with us in the form of technical ‘extensions’ of the human body or senses. The technostructure is both the lens through which we experience the world, and, in fact, the ‘anxious object’ with which human experience has become imperceptibly, almost subliminally, merged.” Is this last point that becomes crucial in understanding the pervasiveness of narcissism in advanced technological societies. As if emphasizing that point, Kroker (1984, 61, emphasis added) adds: “If, indeed, we are now ‘looking out’ *from inside the technological sensorium*; and if, in fact, in the merger of biology and technology which is the locus of the electronic age, ‘we’ have become the vanishing points of technique.” It is the impossible project of extrication from the “technological sensorium” that both Grant and, evidently McLuhan, endorse. “No less critical than Grant of the human fate in technological society,” Kroker (1984, 58) tells us, “McLuhan’s imagination seeks a way out of our preset predicament by recovering a highly ambivalent attitude towards the objects of technostructure.” As Richard Cavell (2002, 190) points out: “Yet McLuhan does not posit a way outside his environment except through technology itself.” It’s not obvious to me how, if technology is the environment, it can provide passage “outside.” Only nature – however socially constructed that term is (see, for instance, Wapner 2010, 6) but hardly “artifactual,” as McLuhan argued (see Cavell 2002, 170) – can be “outside” technology.

<sup>21</sup> Grant (1986, 42).

<sup>22</sup> Nowhere is the association of outcomes with objectives clearer than in Ralph Tyler. “All aspects of the educational program,” Tyler (1949, 3) tells us, “are really means to accomplish basic educational purposes. Hence, if we are to study an educational program systematically and intelligently we must first be sure as to the educational objectives aimed at.” The first sleight-of-hand occurs in the decree that curriculum is a means to an end: that in the first sentence. The second, enabled by the insert of the cause-effect transitional word “hence”, is to focus first on “purposes”, now suddenly recast as “objectives,” a word with a different meaning and one that commits one to instrumental rationality. The centrality of “will” (in Grant’s term) ensures education as a form of technology. Its Orwellian undertow surfaces in linking objectives to evaluation. “The process of evaluation,” Tyler (1949, 105-106) continues, “is essentially the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realized by the program of curriculum and instruction. However, since educational objectives are essentially changes in human beings, that is, the objectives aimed at are to produce certain desirable changes in the behavior patterns of students, then evaluation is the process for determining the degree to which these changes in behavior are actually taking place.” As Tero Autio has observed, authoritarianism in the U.S. is enacted under the cover of “behavioral change.”

<sup>23</sup> Grant (1986, 34).

<sup>24</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 52).

<sup>25</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 52).

<sup>26</sup> For Grant (2005 [1970], lxi), “the central problem for nationalism in English-speaking Canada has always been: in what ways and for what reasons do we have the power and the desire to maintain some independence of the American Empire?” He adds: “It would be impertinent indeed to define what is the chief problem for French-speaking nationalism.” What is the effect? “Life as little

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brother,” Grant (2005 [1970], lxxi) observed, “often leads to political naivety and even self-righteousness.” Curiously, in the Weimar Republic America was also considered the epicenter of modernity.

<sup>27</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 52).

<sup>28</sup> Grant (1969, 139).

<sup>29</sup> Grant (2005 [1970], lxxv).

<sup>30</sup> Grant (2005 [1970], lxxiii).

<sup>31</sup> Grant (2005 [1970], lxix).

<sup>32</sup> Peukert (1992, 164).

<sup>33</sup> Grant (1969, 64).

<sup>34</sup> Peukert (1992, 241-242).

<sup>35</sup> Peukert (1992, 277).

<sup>36</sup> After the hyperinflation of 1923 had been stabilized, a “stabilization phase” (lasting until the Great Depression) began, inaugurating, Herf (1984, 19) explains, “a period of expanded investment and rationalization in industry. It was during this period of relative prosperity and political stability that Americanization, Fordism, and class harmony based on corporatist arrangements fostering expanded productivity reached their zenith.” While “modern consumption was one sign of the golden years of the Weimar Republic,” Weitz (2007, 149) points out, “‘rationalization’ was the other. The term meant, most basically, the application of scientific methods to production in order to expand output, with less labor. Technological and managerial improvements were all the rage. Businesses combined, mechanized many processes, and shed workers.” Isn’t this what the insistence on technology in schools is partly about, increasing productivity, reducing costs (at least personnel costs), while rhetorically inflating the importance of teachers to disguise the scapegoating and dismantling of the profession? (Pinar 2012)

<sup>37</sup> Peukert (1992, 277-278).

<sup>38</sup> Peukert (1992, 278). The Austrian poet Hugo von Hoffmannstah, Herf (1984, 32 n. 6) points out, was the first to use the term “conservative revolution” and in 1927, referencing the many Germans who sought “not freedom but communal bonds.” Fifty years later, in the United States, those “communal bonds” would take not only the form of national culture – Reagan’s embrace of patriotism was unrelenting – but of subcultural – some would say subaltern – forms as well. “[T]he conservative revolution of the Reagan years provoked the return of the repressed,” Cusset (2008, 131) suggests, “the notorious *referent*, evacuated by these formalistic versions of French theory, made a sudden comeback under the name of *identity politics*.”

<sup>39</sup> Herf (1984, 3).

<sup>40</sup> Herf’s phrase: see 1984, 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Evidently Heidegger had become important to Grant in the late 1950s, as William Christian (1996, 194) reports that he told his senior philosophy class at Dalhousie in 1959 that he found Heidegger “so important because his late works give us insight into how the particular world we inhabit came into existence.” And “about 1967,” Christian (1996, 268) continues, “a colleague [at McMaster where Grant had by then moved], Ed Alexander, translated Heidegger’s *The Question Concerning Technology*, and George’s graduate seminar spent the whole year studying the mimeographed pages.” After reading Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*



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lectures, Grant came to conclude, in Christian's (1996, 294) words, "that the very process that brought technological civilization into being simultaneously eroded the validity of all perspectives other than its own." Later, Grant would judge Heidegger's philosophy a failure because it did not "understand the happiness that arises from the hunger and thirst for justice" Christian (1996, 354). "The intellectual importance of Heidegger to George [Grant]," Christian (1996, 428 n. 23) concludes, "can be inferred from the fact that, at George's death, he had copies of nineteen works by the German philosopher in his library."

<sup>42</sup> Weitz (2007, 334).

<sup>43</sup> For a definition that limits the concept to the last one hundred years, see Peukert (1992, 81-82) or footnote 22 in "Grant 1." Grant's (2005 [1965], 52 n. 15) temporal scale is much broader: "I use 'modern' to describe the civilization of the age of progress. This civilization arose in Western Europe and is now conquering the whole globe and perhaps other parts of the universe. 'Modern' is applied to political philosophy to distinguish the thought of Western Europe from that of the antique world of Greece."

<sup>44</sup> See Peukert (1992, 188).

<sup>45</sup> Other important Weimar figures saw synergies where others experienced only irreparable conflict. Herf (1984, 40) points out that "Walter Gropius, the leading spirit of the Bauhaus, saw no conflict between cosmopolitanism, social democratic values, and reason, on the one hand, and beauty on the other. Given a sufficient measure of reason and passion, Gropius saw no reason why technology should pose a threat to mankind. The Bauhaus embraced technology as part of modernity in a broader sense."

<sup>46</sup> Herf (1984, 21).

<sup>47</sup> Herf (1984, 32).

<sup>48</sup> In Herf's (1984, 1-2) terms, Weimar's "reactionary modernists combined political reaction with technological advance." Rejecting the German Right's "backward-looking pastoralism," reactionary modernists pointed instead to "a beautiful new order replacing the formless chaos due to capitalism in a united, technologically advanced nation" (1984, 2). They did not succeed immediately, as "considerable antagonism to technology persisted in the Weimar Right" (1984, 38). Reactionary modernism was not limited to Germany; Herf (1984, 219) cites Henry Ford as "American reactionary modernist."

<sup>49</sup> Herf (1984, 55).

<sup>50</sup> Herf (1984, 65).

<sup>51</sup> Herf (1984, 72).

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Herf (1984, 72). In *The Mechanical Bride*, Richard Cavell (see 2002, 44) points out, that aggression is depicted as self-directed, as, McLuhan asserted, "the subject has become displaced in an 'annihilation of the human ego' that has taken place through the identification of humans with their machines." This is no self-enclosed affair however, as for McLuhan the unconscious itself – dramatically depicted as "the ever-mounting slag-heap of rejected awareness" is, in Cavell's words, "extruded into the technological environment." *That* too could explain the hold technology has over humanity, couldn't it?

<sup>53</sup> Herf (1984, 70).

<sup>54</sup> Herf (1984, 79).

<sup>55</sup> Herf (1984, 79).

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<sup>56</sup> Herf (1984, 84).

<sup>57</sup> “[W]e have already become posthuman,” Foster (2005, 5) announces, a state that “emerges when technology does in fact ‘become me,’ not by being incorporated into my organic unity and integrity, but instead by interrupting that unity and opening the boundary between self and world” (2005, 10).

“Opening the boundary between self and world” invites fusion, indeed, narcissism, and the disappearance of the public, including civic, sphere. This is calamity restated as a technical even cultural advance.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Herf (1984, 100).

<sup>59</sup> The mass ornament, Kracauer argued, represents, in Levin’s (1995, 18) words, a “new type of collectivity organized not according to the natural bonds of community but as a social mass of functionally linked individuals. Yet these very formations are still in some sense opaque, composed as they ... sacrifice meaning for the sake of an abstract unity of reified elements.” In Kracauer’s (1995, 83) terms: “The human figure enlisted in the mass ornament has begun the *exodus* from lush organic splendor and the constitution of individuality toward the realm of anonymity to which it relinquishes itself when it stands in truth and when the knowledge radiating from the basis of man dissolves the contours of visible natural form.” Working from within is required to discern the humanity within the anonymity of the ornament.

<sup>60</sup> Heidegger was “personally close” to Jünger, Herf (1984, 108) points out, although characterizing Heidegger as a “reactionary modernist” would stretch the concept. “But,” Herf (1984, 108) adds, “it would be fair to say that his Nazi sympathies in the 1930s had a greater deal to do with his views on technology, some of which bore striking resemblance to [Jünger].” Recall that for ten months - from April 1933 until February 1934 - Heidegger served as rector of the University of Freiburg, during which time he delivered a number of lectures and speeches that “openly and enthusiastically supported” Hitler and National Socialism (Herf 1984, 110). By February 1934 it had become clear to Heidegger that upholding the autonomy of the university was an illusion, and he submitted his resignation.

<sup>61</sup> Herf (1984, 103).

<sup>62</sup> Weaver (2010, 193).

<sup>63</sup> Herf (1984, 125).

<sup>64</sup> Herf (1984, 126).

<sup>65</sup> Herf (1984, 128).

<sup>66</sup> Herf (1984, 130).

<sup>67</sup> Herf (1984, 134).

<sup>68</sup> Herf (1984, 143).

<sup>69</sup> Herf (1984, 150).

<sup>70</sup> Herf (1984, 171).

<sup>71</sup> Herf (1984, 175).

<sup>72</sup> See Herf (1984, 224).

<sup>73</sup> Herf (1984, 224-225).

<sup>74</sup> Herf (1984, 224-225).

<sup>75</sup> Herf (1984, 225). Many of these theorists of technology - “reactionary modernists” - were not biological racists like the Nazis, Herf (1984, 226) points

out, “but by the time those who cared realized that differences existed, it was too late.” Moreover, not only rightists were persuaded by the promise of technology. The trade unions and Social Democrats had also endorsed technological progress, Peukert (1992, 112) points out, judging it a “vehicle for the achievement of social reform. Increased productivity would, presumably, lead to higher wages and shorter working hours and would make for easier and safer working practices.” As is the case today, there was then political consensus on the centrality of technology in fantasies of the future. What is clear to us, living in the future (of the past), is that technology has, in many instances, decreased working wages as it has decreased the total number of jobs, as increasing productivity requires fewer workers.

<sup>76</sup> Herf (1984, x).

<sup>77</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 13 n. 3).

<sup>78</sup> Grant (1998 [1974], 43).

<sup>79</sup> Grant (1998 [1974], 45).

<sup>80</sup> Grant (1986, 54).

<sup>81</sup> Grant (2005 [1970], lxxi).

<sup>82</sup> Herf (1984, 1).

<sup>83</sup> Quebec, Christian (1996, 248), “was a place he knew and loved.” Grant “had experienced French Catholicism when he was young,” Christian (1996, 248-249) continues, “and it made a powerful impression on him. In other circumstances its oppressiveness would have made him its enemy, but now George saw it, *faute de mieux*, as the only sustaining bulwark against the inroads of the universal and homogenous state.” Likewise, Quebec enabled Canada to resist assimilation into the United States. Without Quebec, he once said in a CBC interview, Canadian nationalism can’t be thought.

<sup>84</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 74).

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Christian (1996, 173).

<sup>86</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxx).

<sup>87</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxxi).

<sup>88</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxxi).

<sup>89</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxxii).

<sup>90</sup> In this revelation, Grant was not alone. Pasolini believed that consumer capitalism had effected “cultural genocide” (Mariniello 1994, 115, 125).

<sup>91</sup> Innis’ first communications essay per se, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” had appeared in the *Journal of Economic History*, in 1942 (see Watson 2007, 249). For Innis, Watson (2007, 383) explains, “newspaper technology was like an addictive drug that accelerated this destructive process while at the same time obliterating those long-term critical faculties that could identify the basis of the problem,” namely the loss of capacity to concentrate, to analyze, to think critically. Instead, a “new” form of “ecstasy” – titillation, expectation, appetite for constant change, as in ever-changing fashion – is taken up by contemporary communications technologies, in Innis’ time most prominently the newspaper, now devoted, in Watson’s (2007, 384) words, to “fuelling the most banal forms of consumerism rather than towards the conservation of a cultural heritage.” Because the newspaper appropriated the vernacular, it was, in Innis’ assessment, all the more predatory. Through the “mechanization, amplification, and transmission of the vernacular,”

communications technologies like the newspaper “increase social hysteria, irrationalism, and the appeal to force at the expense of rational, contemplative rule based on the an appreciation of the strengths and limitations of the social heritage of the West” (Watson 2007, 385). McLuhan, argued – Richard Cavell (2002, 35) explains, quoting McLuhan – “that it is the formal or structural implications of the newspaper that are significant, not its content, in the same way that modern art ‘lack[s] ... a message’, and that this form inevitably points towards unity.” While I am incredulous at this argument – that content does not matter, only its “structural implications” – McLuhan’s conclusion (here at least) seems similar Innis’ and Grant’s.

<sup>92</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 41).

<sup>93</sup> In his *Verbi-Voco-Visual Explorations* (1967) Marshall McLuhan comments that organization men “would be ashamed to be caught reading during business hours. Any activity so private, silent and meditative is disloyal to the ways of organization” (quoted in Cavell 2002, 109).

<sup>94</sup> Teamwork and collaboration are among the keywords of organization “men,” and questions of leadership – insofar as these imply ethical judgment – devolve into matters of management. “If economics and technology are taken to be the great inevitable forces of our day,” John Ralston Saul (2005, 12) points out, “management is more like a support system that makes the other two seem inevitable. The abrupt rise to hyper-respectability of managerial schools and their matching with large corporations led by technocrats has had the astonishing effect of confusing management with leadership. And if leadership is reduced to management, well then, problems are not to be solved. They are to be managed. In fact, they are no longer problems.”

<sup>95</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 14).

<sup>96</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 9).

<sup>97</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 85).

<sup>98</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 75).

<sup>99</sup> William Christian (1996, 250). Grant, Christian (1996, 250) reminds, “could not unequivocally condemn those who succumbed to the beguiling allure of modernity,” including America’s version. “Those who criticize our age must at the same time contemplate pain, infant morality, crop failures in isolated areas, the sixteen hour day” (quoted in Christian 1996, 250).

<sup>100</sup> School reformers in the U.S. frighten parents and policymakers by conjuring up the concept of the global workplace, intensely competitive, ever changing, increasingly technological, and for which – of course - schools fail to prepare our children. This secular salvational sermon – prepare for the next life or be damned! – is as old as its Christian substrate. In 1927 Kracauer (1995, 78) complained: “A system oblivious to differences in form leads on its own to the blurring of national characteristics and to the production of worker masses that can be employed equally well at any point of the globe. Like the mass ornament, the capitalist production process is an end in itself. The commodities that it spews forth are not actually produced to be possessed; rather, they are made for the sake of profit that knows no limit.” It is as if we live in the Weimar Republic.

<sup>101</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 88).

<sup>102</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 87).

<sup>103</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 92).

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<sup>104</sup> Grant (2005 [1970], lxxii).

<sup>105</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 85).

<sup>106</sup> Grant (1969, 74).

<sup>107</sup> Christian (1996, 248).

<sup>108</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 14).

<sup>109</sup> Grant (1969, 74).

<sup>110</sup> Grant (1969, 141).

<sup>111</sup> See Kimmel (1996, 44).

<sup>112</sup> Levin (1995, 25-26).

<sup>113</sup> Levin (1995, 26).

<sup>114</sup> Herf (1984, 31).

<sup>115</sup> Herf (1984, 32).

<sup>116</sup> Grant (1986, 17).

<sup>117</sup> Grant (1969, 132).

<sup>118</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxxiv).

<sup>119</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxxiv).

<sup>120</sup> Emberley (2005 [1994], lxxxiv).

<sup>121</sup> Grant (2005 [1965], 41).

<sup>122</sup> Christian (1996, 358).

<sup>123</sup> Contemplating computer technology twenty-five years ago, Ted Aoki (2005 (1987), 153) sounds a little like George Grant: "How, then, is this essence [of computer technology] revealed? It is revealed as an enframing, the ordering of both man and nature that aims at mastery. This enframing reduces man and beings to a sort of 'standing reserve,' a stock pile of resources to be at hand and on call for utilitarian ends.... But by so becoming, man tends to be forgetful of his own essence, no longer able to encounter himself authentically. Hence, what endangers man where revealing as ordering holds sway is his inability to present other possibilities of revealing. In this, it is not computer technology that is dangerous; it is the essence of computer technology that is dangerous." Aoki's distinction reminds us that it is the way of being technology invites that threatens revelation and that it is our responsibility to decline the invitation. Still, the threat is "revealed" through the machine, apparently only harmless if not in fact helpful, and in that misrecognition our "inability to present other possibilities of revealing" becomes installed (like a virus). That means that, as Grant – and later C.A. Bowers (1995, 12; 2000, 8) – knew, computer technology is indeed "dangerous."

<sup>124</sup> Christian (1996, 358).

<sup>125</sup> Christian (1996, 358).

<sup>126</sup> Grant (1986, 32).

<sup>127</sup> Quoted in Christian (1996, 358).

<sup>128</sup> Grant (1998 [1974], 84).

<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Christian (1996, 354).

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Christian (1996, 358).

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Christian (1996, 359).