

**CHARLES TAYLOR AND GEORGE GRANT ON THE
PROBLEM OF INSTRUMENTALISM: EXPRESSIVISM
AND JUSTICE AS ALTERNATIVE ONTOLOGIES**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines arguments against instrumentalism from Charles Taylor and George Grant. Taylor's view is essentially a critique of Enlightenment naturalism. He argues that naturalism alone cannot sustain modernity's high moral aspirations, and that moderns need other moral sources. Alternatively, Grant's critique argues that technology divides subject and world as object. This division is particularly critical when humans are objectified, and understood as means for a subject's ends.

Taylor's best response to naturalism is his expressivist anthropology, which combines the Herderian view that humans are expressive self-defining subjects with the Hegelian view that subjects require recognition from other subjects. Taylor's expressivist anthropology demands that we recognize our interlocutors as subjects rather than objects, and thereby resists technology directed at the human – what Heidegger terms cybernetics.

Grant's reply to instrumentalism also confronts cybernetic technologies. Grant argues that a notion of humans as wills, a view initiated by Augustine, is central to technology as mastery. Accordingly, Grant draws from pre-Augustinian sources, integrating Platonism and Christianity into a conception of justice that demands that we give "authentic others" their due, and is thus against a view of other as object.

The thesis argues that Taylor's position is preferable to Grant's because the former allows for modes of technology when enframed benevolently, thus providing a means to overcome systematically hunger and disease, while the latter denies technology *tout court*. A Grantian critique of expressivism is considered but rejected because its

primary claim that expressivism is an extension of will as mastery is difficult to support. Grant's account of justice is also criticized because it relies too heavily on an interpretation of Plato that is difficult to reconcile with how moderns understand the world empirically and intellectually.

DEDICATION

For Cara

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM OF INSTRUMENTALISM

This thesis is concerned with philosophical analyses of and responses to what has been variously called, *inter alia*, technology, “scientism,” Enlightenment naturalism, secular humanism, and instrumentalism. While each of these terms has a distinct nuance, they arguably share the same animating centre. For example, each embraces instrumental reason and scientific modes of understanding to the exclusion of emotive or expressivist modes. Furthermore, instrumentalism, technology, scientism, Enlightenment naturalism, and secular humanism collectively challenge perspectives that do not share the basic tenets of instrumentalism – which we might define roughly as the view that ideas are instruments of action, and that the truth or value of an idea is determined by its utility or usefulness.

I refer to instrumentalism as a problem primarily because it enjoys a privileged place in intellectual discourse, very often to the exclusion of ontological, theistic, emotive, or expressivist modes of understanding. These non-instrumental ways of conceptualizing the world can be very powerful, and their exclusion has definite ramifications for moderns, both in the way that individuals understand themselves and the universe, and in the realm of theory. For example, the absence of powerful ontological views in the public sphere has been formative of the way that moderns attempt to theorize about morality. The result is visible in utilitarian and contractual moral theories, which can be useful when discussing what is normative or right to do, or

what our obligations are to others. However, utilitarianism and contractualism are not as effective in debates about what it is good to be.¹ For critics of instrumentalism, the primary claim is that something morally and politically valuable has been lost in the modern world as a result of what one might call the hegemony of instrumentalism.

The two philosophers that I will primarily consider in this thesis examine the role – both positive and negative – that an instrumental way of being and way of seeing the world has shaped modern moral and political discourse. The first of these is Charles Taylor, arguably one of the most respected and influential philosophers in the world today. Taylor is a polymath and has written on a vast breadth of topics, such as moral theory, multicultural theory, modern selfhood and its roots, and epistemology. Not surprisingly, Taylor's analysis of naturalism is wide-ranging and interdisciplinary, and draws from his research in a variety of fields. Similarly, George Grant, the second figure discussed, provides us with a critique of technology that brings together philosophical perspectives on metaphysics, ethics, religion, and politics. Unlike Taylor, who assembles a modern response to the moral and political challenges posed by naturalism, Grant holds the view that we must look to certain pre-modern sources to come to grips with the threat of technology.

¹ Fergus Kerr discusses the central place of this subject in Charles Taylor's magnum opus *Sources of the Self*. Kerr argues that Iris Murdoch is influential in Taylor's view that modern moral philosophy stresses "the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life." See Fergus Kerr, "Taylor's Moral Ontology," in *Charles Taylor*, ed. Ruth Abbey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 89-91. See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). 1-8.

The Insufficiency of Naturalism as a Moral Source

Much of Taylor's critique of Enlightenment naturalism develops out of his account of the "modern moral order." Taylor argues that the modern moral order consists of three major sources: expressivism, theism, and Enlightenment naturalism.² The third component, naturalism, embraces instrumental reason and has spawned an approach to the study of humans based on science that Taylor finds inadequate. Taylor largely sees this axis of the modern moral order as the "dominant outlook of modern Western technological society" that by itself is unable to meet the self's intrinsic need for strong moral sources.³ Taylor holds the view that both theism and expressivism – the latter of which I will discuss extensively below – offer a stronger moral foundation than a "stripped-down secular outlook" can provide on its own.

Taylor's critical assessment of naturalism arises throughout much of his work. Taylor identifies himself as a "monomaniac" whose primary philosophical concern has been to challenge the view that humans are best understood in scientific terms.⁴ Taylor's *Philosophical Papers*, for example, is highly critical of such an approach within the

² See Taylor. 495-521. Taylor refers to the tripartite structure of the modern moral order elsewhere, but his description of the modern moral order is markedly clear in the final chapter of *Sources*.

³ Ibid. 234.

⁴ Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, ed. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*; 1 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).1.

realm of the social sciences.⁵ Similarly, Taylor's *Sources of the Self* – along with his later work on secularity and religion – is largely an attempt to show that a modernity that excludes expressivist or theistic sources, and relies solely on naturalist or secular humanist sources, is running the risk of living beyond its moral means.⁶

Taylor's argument rests on the claim that "high standards need strong sources."⁷ For Taylor, individual humans hold many things in their lives to be goods, such as "rational mastery," "a rich conception of family life," expressive fulfilment," or "fame."⁸ Furthermore, he argues that we not only hold such goods to be valuable, but that we also value them differently, so that each human has a hierarchy of goods which ranks various life goods. According to Taylor, we are able to create a hierarchy of goods because of access to higher-order goods, or "hypergoods," which he defines as "goods which not only are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about."⁹ Hypergoods, then, are essential to our moral appraisals. However, for Taylor, it is essential that we do not limit our

⁵ See Ibid. and Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, ed. Charles Taylor, Philosophical Papers; 2 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). While Taylor's concern with naturalism and the human sciences is important and influential, the thesis is concerned more with naturalism as moral source. For a critique of the Taylorian view of naturalism and the human sciences, see Clifford Geertz, "The Strange Estrangement: Taylor and the Natural Sciences," in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). 83-95. Geertz argues that Taylor homogenizes and oversimplifies the natural sciences: "[In Taylor's account of the natural sciences, we] are confronted not with an articulated description of a living institution, one with a great deal of history, a vast amount of internal diversity, and an open future, but with a stereotype and a scarecrow – a Gorgon's head that turns agency, significance, and mind to stone." For Taylor's response to Geertz, see Charles Taylor, "Charles Taylor Replies," in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). 233-236.

⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 517.

⁷ Ibid. 516.

⁸ Ibid. 41-52.

⁹ Ibid. 63.

understanding of moral intuitions to normative action, but that we also include “what makes life worth living” as a significant facet of our moral life.¹⁰

Taylor’s critique of the inability of secular humanism to uphold some of modernity’s highest moral standards focuses on the need for adequate hypergoods to support those standards. He argues that modern moral commitments – which include the affirmation of ordinary life, the importance of human freedom, and the desire to alleviate human suffering – are difficult to sustain through a stripped-down secular frame of reference or worldview alone. Taylor takes the view that many of modernity’s moral aspirations are “transvaluations,” incorporated into Enlightenment moral theories but originating from pre-Enlightenment theistic views. Consequently, while there is general agreement about the value of modernity’s package of moral commitments, Taylor argues that there is little agreement about the sources, mainly since Enlightenment naturalism, in its present hegemonic formulation, precludes the very moral sources that gave rise to some of our highest moral aspirations. What enlightenment naturalism seems to lack, according to Taylor, is the ontological vision – or hypergoods – to sustain many of modernity’s moral goods.¹¹

Taylor argues that the diminished place of expressivist and theistic sources, sacrificed for instrumental hegemony, has given rise to five “axes of unease” within the modern world. These include: 1.) a fracturing of the self, resulting from the suppression of body, emotion and spirit by the supremacy of instrumental reason; 2.) a single-minded “moralism” that stresses obedience to normative rules rather than notions of what it is

¹⁰ Ibid. 4. This view of morality closely ties hypergoods to identity. See also page 1, footnote 1 above.

¹¹ Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity, Key Contemporary Thinkers* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002). 113-119; 210.

good to be; 3.) the dominance of “pitiable comforts” which are flat, stale, and insufficient for a rich human life; 4.) a “tragic axis of design” that tends to see the natural world as benign, often making it difficult to face and make sense of human suffering; and 5.) the exclusion of heroism arising out of the modern commitment to equality.¹² Taylor’s basic argument is that secular humanism alone cannot support our high moral commitments, and that other types of hypergoods are necessary to rescue us from these axes of unease. Insofar as secularism is exclusively humanistic and excludes other moral sources – like expressivism and theism – Taylor posits that moderns will continue to suffer from these axes of unease. It is through the inclusion of other moral sources that we can: rediscover a unity of self; explore new ways of understanding the good in order to bring a renewed richness and texture to human life; re-conceptualize our relation to the natural world; and revive heroism.

Technology and Human Mastery

What Taylor refers to as naturalism is encompassed by Grant’s notion of “technology.” In his important book *English-Speaking Justice*, Grant observes that a historical relationship exists between liberalism and technology, with both emerging from the same source and context. In his view, the interdependence between liberalism and technology is generally perceived as necessary. This perception is founded upon the common belief that the “truly liberal society” can only be achieved once humans are able to master the potentialities of modern science, with instrumental reason ever-presently at

¹² Charles Taylor. “History, Secularity, and the Nova Effect.” 2001 Laing Lectures. Regent College, Vancouver, BC.

the helm.¹³ The consequence of this inter-connection is that liberalism has flourished as the framework for ethical and political discourse within technological society. This interdependence is deepened further because liberalism is conducive to technology.

However, Grant detects an estrangement between technology and liberalism. In Grant's view, the core of human freedom will be challenged as technology is increasingly directed towards the mastery of humans. This technological mastery manifests itself in two major ways in modernity. First, much scientific work deals with "cybernetics" – a term Heidegger utilized to encompass all technologies that are "concerned with the control of human beings."¹⁴ Examples of this include behaviour modification, genetic engineering, and population control.¹⁵ Second, technological society is becoming increasingly bureaucratized. Termed the "iron cage of rationality" by Max Weber, bureaucratic social forces enslave the individual to the quotidian routine and eliminate spontaneity.¹⁶ In both cybernetic science and bureaucratization, the power of technology turns against the freedom of individuals, and thus becomes an anti-liberal force.

For Grant, "technology" is not simply reducible to computers, televisions, cellular phones, and the like; these are mere manifestations of a co-penetration of "techne" and logos," of "knowing" and "making," of the sciences (what must be) and the arts (what

¹³ George Grant, *English-Speaking Justice* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1974). 3.

¹⁴ Ibid. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid. 9.

¹⁶ Ibid. 10-11.

might be).¹⁷ Drawing largely from Heidegger, Grant defines technology as the “endeavour which summons forth everything (both human and non-human) to give its reasons, and through the summoning forth of those reasons turns the world into potential raw material, at the disposal of our ‘creative’ wills.”¹⁸ Technology, then, is a *way of seeing the world* – or as Grant puts it, “Technology is the ontology of our age.”¹⁹ It divides the subject from the rest of nature – both human and non-human – and transforms the natural world into “means and supply,” raw material subdued and altered to achieve the subject’s ends.

Furthermore, Grant understands technology to arise from a conception of humans as free wills. This insight becomes central as his philosophy of technology develops, with the will described by Grant as the “primal affirmation” that shaped and guided North American society.²⁰ Grant’s understanding of the role of will in shaping the world technologically was first formed by his study of Nietzsche. The latter’s notion of “will to power” was at the heart of what Grant recognized to be the driving force behind technology. However, as Grant’s philosophy of technology developed, he came to hold the view that the central role of the will as mastery in technology did not originate in Nietzsche, but rather in *Christian* sources. The will’s Christian make-up is saliently exemplified in the potent formulation of the will developed in light of Calvinist theology.

¹⁷ The development of Grant’s philosophy of technology is complex, and tracing it is certainly beyond the scope and focus of this thesis. Grant’s writings concerning the will and its role in technology were mainly written during the last two decades of his life. This later understanding of technology as will is his most mature view, and is therefore significant for analyzing his academic work concerning modernity. For an analysis of the evolution of Grant’s understanding of technology, see Ian H. Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality, and Wilderness* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997). 81-95. Also, for an account that focuses on the role of Heidegger in Grant’s mature view of technology, see Arthur Davis, “Justice and Freedom: George Grant’s Encounter with Martin Heidegger,” in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). 139-168.

¹⁸ Grant. 82.

¹⁹ George Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1986). 32.

²⁰ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 63-64; 76.

However, Grant ultimately saw that it was Augustine that was the initiator of the conception of humans as wills, and this meant that a turning away from western – that is, *Augustinian* – Christianity would be necessary to revive justice in the face of technology.

Taylor's Expressivist Reply to Naturalism

Taylor's most robust and developed challenge to naturalism consists of a vision of the modern "self" as an expressive self-defining subject. Taylor's expressivism is deeply rooted in his work on Herder's expressivist understanding of human subjectivity, including Herderian views on language as well as a new conception of art that developed alongside Herder's philosophy. Taylor's expressivist theory of human subjectivity is central to his understanding of modern selfhood and to his "philosophical anthropology" – or "ontology of the human" (as Nicholas Smith refers to it).²¹ The central role of expressivism in Taylor's ontology of the human largely gives rise to what is perhaps his most important contribution to political theory, his "politics of recognition."

Taylor holds the view that a philosophical anthropology that stresses the expressivist content of human subjectivity can shift debates about ethics and politics to include non-naturalist perspectives, such as theistic ones. However, Taylor's expressivism arguably does much more than that, largely because he adds important Hegelian elements to his Herderian foundation. This distinctly Taylorian expressivism, with its Hegelian twist, emphasizes the role of other humans in the development of individual identity. Furthermore, Taylor's expressivism requires communion with the natural world and sees nature as a unity. This idea is expounded by Herder, but is

²¹ Smith. 117; 237. Taylor-scholar Smith describes Taylor's "ontology of the human" as "an account of the distinctive, essential features of human reality." See also Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*. 1-12.

arguably given a more developed philosophical formulation in Hegel. Consequently, because Taylor's expressivism recognizes the central role that nature – both human and non-human – plays in human expression and the unfolding of individual subjectivity, it stands as a possible remedy to technology. Within the context of Taylor's expressivist ontology of the human, neither humans nor the natural world can be understood as means and supply for the ends of a subject, because both are integral components for self-defining subjectivity.

Grant's Christian-Platonist Account of Justice

From a Grantian perspective, Taylor's expressivist response to the problem of technology is unsatisfactory. The primary reason why Grant would object to Taylor's expressivism – or any form of expressivism – is that central to Taylor's ontology of the human is a conception of humans *qua* free wills. According to Grant, it is precisely the view that the essence of humans is freedom that gives rise to the human will in its various dispensations. Furthermore, as Grant sees it, technology itself originates out of a conception of humans as wills, because it is the will of the subject that stands over the world and demands that it give “its reasons for being the way it is as an object.”²² Because of the role of the will in technology, Grant turns away from the language of freedom to respond to the mastery of humans by humans.

Grant argues that the best response to technology is found in the western revelatory legacy and its most lucid account of justice “written down most beautifully in ‘The Republic’ of Plato” and its “perfect living out...[which] is unfolded in the

²² George Grant, "Thinking About Technology," in *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: Anansi, 1986). 21.

Gospels.”²³ However, because of the central place of the doctrine of free will in western Christianity, Grant claims we must look to non-Augustinian forms of Christianity. Grant argues that once the Rubicon is crossed where human free will is accepted as autonomy, as embodied in the will to mastery, no form of Christianity can succeed.²⁴ Consequently, Grant saw the answer to the problem of the will in Eastern Christianity, with its rejection of the human and divine essence as will.²⁵ It is with his realization that human free will leads to the technological tyranny that characterizes modernity that Grant defines freedom as nothing more than our potential indifference to goodness.²⁶ Furthermore, Grant’s later writings turn to the language of fate and destiny²⁷ – rather than freedom – to describe technological society. Grant’s most mature understanding of technology recognized the mastery of the will to be “that which binds us.”²⁸

Against technology, Grant embraces a conception of justice that is rooted in both Athens and Jerusalem. Grant wants to return to classical – that is Platonic – understandings of love, wherein “we love otherness...because it is beautiful.”²⁹ Justice, defined Platonically by Grant as “what we are fitted for,” requires us to love the being of other subjects. This conception of justice is founded upon the idea that being is good – a perspective that is at odds with technological modernity, where nature is seen as means and raw material to be made over. Grant’s notion of justice also draws from Christian

²³ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 87.

²⁴ Ibid. 65.

²⁵ This insight was in large part reached through Grant’s research on Simone Weil and a text titled *The Greek East and the Latin West*, by Phillip Sherrard. See William Christian, *George Grant: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). 231-239.

²⁶ George Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity,” in *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: Anansi, 1986). 55.

²⁷ Grant, “Introduction” *Technology and Justice*, 9-10. See also Ibid. and Grant, “Thinking About Technology.”

²⁸ Ed Andrew and Zdravko Planinc, “Technology and Justice: A Round Table Discussion,” in *By Loving Our Own*, ed. Peter Emberley (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990). 186.

²⁹ Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity.” 39.

sources, which Grant understood to be in certain ways continuous with Platonism.³⁰

Grant argues that Christianity did not change the definition of justice, but extended “what was due to others and [included] an account of how to fulfil that due.”³¹ However, a difficulty arises with Grant’s Christian-Platonist conception of justice in light of his critique of technology. How does one fulfil the call to charity demanded by his notion of justice *without technology*? Without technology, it is not clear how we can overcome the problems of scarcity in a systematic and large scale way so that we can give others their due.

Freedom and Technology

In the philosophies of Taylor and Grant, we have two views that shed light on the potential problems of instrumentalism. Taylor’s account focuses on moral sources and emphasizes that a stripped-down naturalist perspective alone cannot sustain our moral aspirations. Grant’s critique centres on the ways that technology manifests itself as the subject’s mastery of an (human or non-human) object. For both philosophers, then, instrumentalism, especially when it is applied to human interrelations, is a problem that merits serious philosophical examination. However, Taylor and Grant are divided on the role that freedom is to play in potential responses to technology. On the one hand, Taylor’s expressivist anthropology puts a great weight on the importance of free expression in the realization of the self. This Taylorian expressivism unites humans both with other humans and with nature. For Grant, on the other hand, technology is built on a

³⁰ In an as of yet unpublished essay, Grant-scholar Ian Angus examines the (often tenuous) continuity between Grant’s Platonism and his Christianity. See Ian Angus, *Socrates’ Joke* [Web Page] (accessed June 1 2004); available from <http://ianangus.ca/>.

³¹ Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity.” 54.

conception of humans as free wills. For the Grantian, this means that any attempt to challenge technology necessarily requires a turning away from the view that the essence of humans is freedom. Expressivism fails to avoid this view of freedom, on a Grantian perspective, and therefore is not an adequate reply to instrumentalism.

Because Grant's philosophy of technology provides what is potentially a direct critique of expressivism, I will discuss Taylor's perspective first. This way of organizing the thesis will allow for an easier transition as we move in chapters three and four to Grant's critique of expressivism. Although the thesis also provides a criticism of Grant's position, this is not done from an expressivist view. Therefore, the need to present Grant's substantive view early on is not as necessary. Furthermore, this approach is desirable because Taylor's response to instrumentalism is not as extreme as Grant's, both in its approach and evaluation. Taylor's view is more historically "local" and critically analyzes instrumentalism from *within* modernity. More importantly, Taylor provides a *modern response* and accepts certain modes of technology. On this point, Grant's position is much more severe and wants to turn away from technology root and branch. Moreover, the Grantian polemic against technology is essentially one against modernity. Grant's view is less historically proximate than Taylor's and evaluates technology from a pre-modern view.

Brief Outline of Chapters

Now that an introduction to the problem of instrumentalism has been presented, I would like to provide the reader with a short outline of the thesis, and specifically, a sketch of how I will argue in relation to the problematic set out above. In the next

chapter, I will focus on Charles Taylor's expressivism. This will require a discussion of the philosophical roots of his expressivist anthropology. I will argue that Taylor draws mainly from Herder for his expressivism, and incorporates the Herderian anti-designative theory of language into his philosophy. Furthermore, in addition to considering Herderian contributions to Taylorian expressivism, I will argue that Taylor borrows a dialogical view of human subjectivity from Hegel, and as such, brings together in his expressivism an anthropology that counters Enlightenment naturalism, especially insofar as it concerns the view of humans as means and supply. Taylor's expressivism, then, will be presented as strongly Herderian with a critical Hegelian dialectical element. Through this unique expressivism, Taylor presents an ontological case that human subjectivity necessarily consists of self-realizing expressive activity and requires recognition from interlocutors *qua* subjects. It is through these two activities – expression and recognition – that subjects can reach the highest potentialities of their subjecthood. Through this expressivist anthropology, Taylor provides a case against the view of other humans as objects or means to another's end.

In chapter three, the focus of the thesis will move to Grant's philosophy of technology. Like Taylor, Grant's central concern arises from technology in its cybernetic applications. Grant perceives that technology understood as mastery has turned itself against the freedom of humans. Furthermore, Grant traces the roots of technology and concludes that its source is found in the anthropological assumption that humans are essentially free wills. Because this claim is central to his philosophy of technology, I will demonstrate how Grant's philosophy of the will developed, with particular emphasis on how his view was influenced by Augustinian and Nietzschean formulations of the human

will. The argument will be made that the most mature Grantian view of the will recognizes Augustine as the initiator of a conception of humans as wills, and that Grant consequently accuses Augustine of laying the foundation for technology as mastery. Chapter three concludes with a discussion of Grant's reply to technology, which consists of a Christian-Platonist rendering of justice. This conception of justice demands that we give other humans their due and recognize them as "authentic others," and is thus a perspective that is against a view of the other as object or means and supply.

The fourth chapter is primarily an analysis of both the Taylorian and the Grantian responses to technology. I will show first the commonality between Taylor and Grant's understanding of technology. Arguably, both philosophers recognize that the objectification of other humans is the *sine qua non* for technology as mastery. However, Grant and Taylor diverge on the question of whether technology should play a continued role in modernity. For Taylor, technology simply needs to be enframed within the context of an ethic of benevolence in order to turn away from technology as mastery. He argues that technology is given its efficacy by profound moral sources, and to ignore this and turn away from technology root and branch is to abandon an important means to achieve our charitable aspirations.

Against this, a Grantian argument will be presented which claims that Taylor overlooks the role of the will in technology as mastery. This argument against expressivism claims that an expressive self is an analogue for a notion of the human as will. Moreover, this Grantian argument claims that expressivism cannot shed its proximity to the will, and must therefore be rejected because of its propinquity to a technological ethos. In light of this critique, one might claim that Grant's response to

technology is superior to Taylor's because the former takes into account the role of the will in technology as mastery.

However, against this view, I will argue that Taylor's view is superior to Grant's in at least two major ways. First, as will be shown below, the Grantian critique of expressivism rests on a reading of Plato that incorporates an ontic understanding of the theory of the forms. In other words, Grant builds his case on a Platonic ontology that claims that being is good. I will argue that an acceptance of Grant's Platonic ontology would require a massive reorientation of how moderns see the world. Because of the manner in which we now understand the world intellectually and empirically, a radical idealism like the one operative in Grant's philosophy seems irreconcilable with modernity. On these grounds, I claim that the Grantian criticism that expressivism is technological is seriously limited. Second, Taylor's view is preferable to Grant's because the former does not abandon technology *tout court*. Because Taylor allows for certain modes of technology – namely those enframed within the context of an ethic of benevolence – his perspective is capacious enough to respond to the Christian call to charity on a worldwide scale. Technology for Taylor can and should be used to deal systematically with the suffering that humans experience because of the insufficiencies of nature. Conversely, Grant's philosophy, which rejects technology in its entirety, does not seem to provide an adequate response to the problems of scarcity, or offer a way to extend charity globally. The fifth and final chapter is a recapitulation of the first four chapters, and frames the general argument of the thesis in relation to the problematic set out in the first chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPRESSIVISM

Now that I have introduced both Taylor and Grant's critiques of instrumentalism, I want to turn to Taylor's expressivist ontology of the human to show in detail how it argues against naturalism. As noted above, Taylor's expressivism is rooted deeply in the philosophy of Herder, and is central to Taylor's politics of recognition. In this chapter, I want to provide a portrait of Herder's expressivism as interpreted and understood by Taylor. After I have presented this Herderian expressivism – including Herder's formative philosophy of language – I will demonstrate how expressivism is operative in Taylor's politics of recognition of identity.

Moreover, I will identify a Hegelian twist in Taylor's expressivism that brings a notion of recognition to bear on his expressivist anthropology. This Taylorian expressivism stands against instrumentalism, most specifically in its cybernetic forms, by connecting human subjectivity to interlocutory subjects who provide the recognition required by a subject. In other words, Taylor's expressive self is only a self when it is recognized by other selves who also seek recognition. On this view, one's interlocutors cannot be simply understood *instrumentally*. Selves are bound together in what Taylor calls "webs of interlocution," and their selfhood is intimately tied to mutual recognition. Through dialectical interaction, subjects mutually shape one another and thus rely on the dialogical relationship to reach together the highest potentialities of human subjectivity.

Taylor's Hegelianism

Herder is arguably one of Taylor's most important philosophical sources and is at the centre of Taylor's view of human subjectivity. However, before proceeding to Taylor's focus on Herder, something must be briefly said about the role of Hegel in Taylor's philosophy. Taylor is generally read as a Hegelian, so a substantial section on the role of Herder may seem to obfuscate on first glance the role of Hegel in Taylor's philosophy. However, while Hegel's contribution to Taylor's philosophical thought is significant, it is arguably the place of Herder in Taylor's work that is unique, and which is central to his expressivism. It is Taylor's expressivism – rather than, for example, his philosophy of history (which is quite Hegelian) – which comprises his most thorough response to naturalism. Consequently, a close examination of Taylor's Herderian roots is not meant to obscure the place of Hegel in Taylor's philosophy. Instead, it is simply the case that Taylor draws more heavily from Herder for his expressivist anthropology than he does from Hegel.

Furthermore, although Taylor's philosophy may contain a number of Hegelian themes and perspectives, it is arguable that Taylor is not a "pure" Hegelian for at least two key reasons, both which merit a brief mention. First, Hegel, in contradistinction to the Romantics, held the view that synthesis must be achieved through reason rather than art or intuition.³² However, unlike Hegel, Taylor recognizes the value in the Romantic view of art. For the Romantics, art is able to communicate truths that may not be communicated through other media, such as philosophical discourse. Conversely, for

³² Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). 12; also Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, 1st paperback ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). 48-49.

Hegel, philosophy can more effectively disclose higher truths than can art. While he obviously recognizes the value of philosophy, Taylor shares some affinity with the Romantic position, declaring the view that subordinates art to philosophy *a priori* to be a “depressing prospect.”³³ For Taylor, then, our best access to the highest truths must come through a combination of reason *and* art or intuition. Consequently, it seems evident that Taylor diverges from Hegel on the exclusively primary role of reason in achieving synthesis.³⁴

A second place where he diverges from a purely Hegelian position involves Taylor’s Christianity. Following Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel, Taylor argues that the Hegelian view which holds that “the only locus of God’s spirit is in man, and that this spiritual life is nothing but the unfolding of conceptual necessity, [rules] out the kind of radical freedom to which faith relates.”³⁵ Such a view, Taylor posits, leaves no place for the “essence” of Christianity. This view is also taken up by Karl Barth, who claims that “making the dialectical method of logic the essential nature of God” means that Hegel cannot accommodate the Christian concepts of grace and divine love.³⁶ Indeed, Taylor notes, the Hegelian philosopher seems to have no need for prayers of petition or thanks: “What [the Hegelian] does is to contemplate his [sic] identity with cosmic spirit, which is something quite different [from a Christian conception of prayer].”³⁷ Consequently,

³³ Taylor, *Hegel*. 479.

³⁴ The fact that Hegel seems to deny the role of artistic expression prompts commentator Michael Rosen to argue that perhaps Hegel was not an expressivist at all. See Michael Rosen, *Hegel’s Dialectic and Its Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). 124. For a brief reply to Rosen, see Smith. 250, footnote 12.

³⁵ Taylor, *Hegel*. 493.

³⁶ Barth, quoted in *Ibid.* 493.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 494.

Taylor concludes that Hegel's ontology is incompatible with the Christian faith.³⁸ In light of Taylor's own Christianity, and his claim that Hegel's ontology is incommensurable with Christianity, it is difficult to identify Taylor as a "pure" Hegelian. Taylor's theism cannot accommodate a view of God as rational necessity.

Nevertheless, although Taylor may see flaws in certain aspects of Hegelian philosophy, it is also essential that we recognize that Taylor's expressivism contains an important Hegelian twist. Taylor draws from Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave and thereby places expression within a community of recognition. I will discuss this element of Taylor's expressivism below in my examination of his politics of recognition. Before considering this Hegelian "nuance" in his expressivism, however, it is necessary to consider first the formative role of Herder in Taylor's expressivist anthropology. It is to Taylor's account of Herder's expressivism that I now turn.

Taylor's Expressivism: Herderian Roots

Herder's expressivist philosophy can perhaps be best understood as a reaction against the conventional (naturalistic) anthropological account of the Enlightenment. This Enlightenment anthropology – which is still significantly operative today – objectifies human nature, divides the human mind into different (and often opposing) faculties, and envisions the human as instrumentally rational, independent of emotion and will.³⁹ As Taylor succinctly puts it, Herder's expressivism "can be seen as a protest against the mainstream Enlightenment view of man [sic] – as both subject and object of an

³⁸ Ibid. 494.

³⁹ Ibid. 13.

objectifying scientific analysis.”⁴⁰ Against this, Herder developed an anthropology that stressed elements of human expression, and it is this Herderian approach that is central to Taylor’s own anthropological perspective.

The Enlightenment model of the self-defining subject was accompanied by an objectification of things and stressed the dichotomy of subject versus object. This essentially prohibited that any conceptions such as “meaning,” “expression,” and “purpose” be used as descriptors for objective reality, since such notions were restricted to the mind of the human subject.⁴¹ Expressivism, on the other hand, can be seen as an attempt at a renewed anthropology that allowed for meaning, purpose and expression beyond the mental life of subjects. Accordingly, the central idea in expressivism is that “human activity and human life are seen as expressions.”⁴² For Herder, this takes place at both the individual and the political level. This idea of expressivism was radically new and radically modern. Human life was not just the realization of purpose within Herder’s expressivism, but also the realization of a *self*:

[Expressivism] added the epoch-making demand that my realization of the human essence be my own, and hence launched the idea that each individual (and in Herder’s application, each people) has its own way of being human, which it cannot exchange with that of any other except at the cost of distortion and self-mutilation.⁴³

⁴⁰ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*. 1.

⁴¹ Taylor, *Hegel*. 14.

⁴² Ibid. 14.

⁴³ Ibid. 15.

Taylor notes that Herder was not necessarily the originator of this idea. Indeed, we can see nascent elements of it in Rousseau, for example.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Taylor holds the view that it is Herder who gives expressivism its most seminal formulation, adding the pivotal idea that each human has a unique subjectivity and mode of being, and that each human has his or her own particular “measure.”⁴⁵ Herder maintained that humans are able to reach their “highest fulfilment in expressive activity,” and this allows human lives to be conceptualized as “expressive [unities].”⁴⁶

In order to account for Herder’s expressivism as a radically modern anthropology, Taylor identifies two ideas that are active in Herder’s anthropology, but are absent in Aristotle’s classical view of a human life as fixed and fulfilling an idea independent of the human subject. First, Aristotle saw human life as oriented towards equilibrium and stability. On this view, there are external forces that threaten that order and harmony, but the human form is nevertheless inclined towards order.⁴⁷ This is quite distinct from Herder’s theory, which incorporates a notion of free subjectivity. On Herder’s view, “[The] human form involves an *inner force* imposing itself on external reality, perhaps against external obstacles.”⁴⁸ The realization of the human form may tend towards equilibrium and order, as posited by Aristotle, but what is essential for Herder is that the

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*. 1. What is original in Rousseau is that he aligned the distinctions between good and evil, virtue and vice, with the “distinction between dependence on self and dependence on others. Goodness is identified with freedom, with finding the motives for one’s actions within oneself.” Notably, Rousseau’s view is not radically subjectivist. While it is true that the inner voice identifies what is good, it is also true that the inner voice is rooted in a conception of universal good. See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 355-363.

⁴⁵ Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). 30.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*. 2.

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Hegel*. 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 15. Emphasis added.

realization is generated *internally*, as a “manifestation of an inner power.”⁴⁹ Each human life is in the hands of the subject herself, and it is this radically subjective element that is absent in the Aristotelian view of the human form and human life.

The second idea that Herderian expressivism challenges in the Aristotelian view concerns the determinacy of human life. According to the latter, the “idea” which a human life realizes is determined before the life has even been lived. For Herder, on the other hand, “the realization of a form clarifies or makes determinate what that form is.”⁵⁰ The determinacy of the life of a human subject becomes so only by being expressively fulfilled. To explain this idea, Taylor describes how a person may express herself to another, and through the process of this explanation, also make what she feels more clear or exact. By making her feelings determinate, she can empower herself to realize her aspirations. This can also work in another direction. If the subject acts in a situation where she has perhaps not clarified her ideas for herself, taking actions which themselves are not based on clearly defined ideas or emotions may actually bring intellectual and emotional clarity. Taylor reasons, “[The] fullest and most convincing expression of a subject is one where he [sic] both realizes and clarifies his aspirations.”⁵¹

Herderian expressivist anthropology, then, is based on a theory of *self-realization*. Each individual life is unique, and we are compelled to actualize and fulfil the potential of that subjectivity. As such, as Taylor notes, the act of expression takes on moral significance. Each of us is called to realize our unique self, and we have a duty to express that self authentically. Moreover, through this free subjectivity, we make *ourselves*

⁴⁹ Ibid. 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 16.

⁵¹ Ibid. 16.

determinate via our realization and clarification of aspirations. Taylor sums this up nicely:

In the course of living adequately I not only fulfil my humanity but clarify what my humanity is about. As such a clarification of my life-form is not just the fulfilment of purpose but the embodiment of meaning, the expression of an idea. The expression theory breaks with the Enlightenment dichotomy between meaning and being, at least as far as human life is concerned. Human life is both fact and meaningful expression; and its being expression does not reside in a subjective relation of reference to something else, it expresses the idea which it realizes.⁵²

It is evident how Herder's expressivist anthropology provides a picture of the human subject that counters the Enlightenment view of rational man. Furthermore, Herder's theory of free subjectivity also incorporates a view of human life as necessarily and essentially social. According to Herder, our highest expressive potentialities are only possible within the context of a community and culture. However, this is not to say that society and culture are to be understood instrumentally, with humans meeting their needs and overcoming various obstacles via their membership in a society. Indeed, this is precisely the atomistic and utilitarian view that Herder was reacting against. Instead, Herder understood the community to itself have a "level [of] expressive unity."⁵³ Herder described the *Volk* as "the bearer of a certain culture which sustains its members; they can isolate themselves only at the cost of great impoverishment."⁵⁴ Just like each subject has its unique measure and way of expression, so too does a given culture or society. Each culture has a unique idea or form which it ought to realize, so that we can speak of a sort of cultural or group authenticity. As noted by Taylor, Herder is thus not only the

⁵² Ibid. 17.

⁵³ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 2.

founder of modern nationalism, but he actually provides an important bulwark against “modern expressive *individualism*.”⁵⁵

The expressivist view of subjectivity also attempts to unite the human with her environment. As noted above, on the expressivist view the human subject is not divided between body and mind – as was the case with the Enlightenment view of humans – but is instead conceived as an expressive unity. Furthermore, we should recall that human expression takes place within a necessary context, such as a society or culture. Similarly, expressivism recognizes that subjective expression also requires the context of *nature* to be actualized, and that the relationship between humans and the natural world must be understood in terms of expression.⁵⁶ Consequently, the universe is itself understood as a form of expressive unity. Taylor writes,

[To] see nature just as a set of objects of potential human use is to blind ourselves and close ourselves to the greater current of life which flows through us and of which we are a part. As an expressive being, man [sic] has to recover communion with nature, one which had been broken and mutilated by the analytic, desiccating stance of objectifying science.⁵⁷

Of course, this idea was taken up most significantly by Goethe and embraced by the Romantics, but it is deeply rooted in Herderian expressivism. Herder’s anthropology reacted against a view of nature as means and supply, and added philosophical expression to the less formulated thought of earlier thinkers, like Rousseau, who also conceptualized a necessary unity between humans and the natural world.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 3. Emphasis added.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 3.

To recapitulate briefly, the expressivist theory re-conceptualized the human in an attempt to overthrow the scientific anthropology of the Enlightenment. We can draw out four key points that expressivism embraces: 1.) the freedom of the subject is the *sine qua non* for this new subjectivity, because free expression is essential for the realization and clarification of the self; 2.) human life is best understood non-dualistically, since expression through language is necessary for thought – a claim that challenges the Cartesian thesis that divides body and mind; 3.) human expression can only reach its potential within the context of a *Volk*, or a community of interlocutors, and one must recognize that each *Volk* has a unique expression that is not contingent on the expression of the individual human subject; and 4.) human expression requires communion with the natural world, and the universe is itself to be understood as expressive unity. Taylor identifies these four ideas as important Herderian ideas that are taken up by Hegel.⁵⁸ However, what is important here is that we recognize that these four concepts are salient in Taylor's own anthropology, and are essential elements of his philosophical response to instrumentalism and foundational for his politics of recognition.

Language and Art: The Media for Expression

I have set out above what for Taylor are the primary Herderian contributions to an expressivist theory of subjectivity. However, to provide an even fuller picture of expressivism, it is necessary to consider the primary media through which human expressive activity takes place. The first of these is language, so a look at Herder's philosophy of language is needed to understand both how and why language is essential

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Hegel*. 24-28.

for an expressivist anthropology. The second medium for expression that will be considered is art, though art understood not in an Aristotelian *mimetic* way, but as an *expression* of the potentialities of nature and the human. As Taylor argues, the new theories of language and art are important not simply because they are philosophically rooted in expressivism, but because both “formed part of a new developing theory of man [sic].”⁵⁹ In other words, both theories formed alongside Herderian expressivism, but also significantly shaped Herder’s anthropology. I will consider Herder’s philosophy of language more extensively here, primarily because the new expressivist conception of art can be understood – and is by Taylor and Herder – as a language. Therefore, the expressivist view of art can be best understood as an *extension* of Herder’s philosophy of language.

The new understanding of art that arose in the eighteenth century was founded upon a conception of expressivist subjectivity. Traditionally, within much of the western world, art tended to be approached on Aristotelian terms. For Aristotle, art was to be understood in terms of mimesis. On this view, all art, whether poetry, tragedy, or music, is a “mode of imitation” of what is found in nature.⁶⁰ Against this, the new conception of art that developed alongside expressivism saw the artistic process not as imitation, but as the creation of artistic objects that expressed an idea or emotion without necessarily referring to some object in nature beyond the artwork itself.⁶¹ The shift from the mimetic to the expressivist perspective saw a new focus on the creative process of the artist. On this new view of art as expressive, Taylor notes that a work of art is understood as an

⁵⁹ Ibid. 21.

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. James Hutton (New York: Norton, 1982). See particularly chapters 1-5.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Hegel*. 18.

expression of the “profound feelings of the artist,” where the process of creation “completes” the artist and “expands her existence.”⁶² Taylor points out that the new conception of art is not subjective in what he terms the “restrictive sense.” That is, a work of art was to be understood as a referent to truth. The artistic process was not simply seen as an outpouring of emotion, but as a means to transform those feelings and thoughts into their highest forms. Taylor puts this as follows: “[The] highest art is so because it is true to Nature; but not in the sense of an imitation, rather as the highest and fullest expression of its potentialities.”⁶³ Not surprisingly, since this conception of art gives humans a medium through which to express some of their highest potentialities, Taylor argues that this understanding of art replaced religion in some respects. On the spiritual import of art, Taylor states, “The awe we feel before artistic originality and creativity places art on the border of the numinous, and reflects the crucial place that creation/expression has in our understanding of human life.”⁶⁴ This new view of art stresses the transformative power of the artistic process, with expression giving an artist access to some of nature’s highest “truths.”

Alongside this new understanding of art, which arguably reached its apogee in the work of Goethe and the Romantics, Herder developed a philosophy of language that is continuous with his expressivist anthropology. The main idea in Herder’s philosophy of language is that human language is not simply and purely referential but fundamentally expressive. In Taylor’s work, Herder’s philosophy of language is treated most extensively in his *Philosophical Arguments*. I would like to provide a gloss of Taylor’s

⁶² Ibid. 20.

⁶³ Ibid. 20.

⁶⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 376.

chapter in that text titled “The Importance of Herder.” Arguably, this is important and necessary for two major reasons. First, Herder’s work on language is arguably the most formulated and philosophically rigorous element of his writing on expressivism, and is therefore required for a more complete picture of his expressivism. Secondly, I want to make it clear in the present chapter that Taylor takes Herder’s work seriously. It might be argued that Herder has disappeared – or at least has been overlooked – in the history of western philosophy. For Taylor, much of the impetus for his work on Herder, following his mentor Isaiah Berlin, comes from a desire to “rescue” someone who for him is a much neglected “hinge figure” in the way we think about human language and meaning.⁶⁵

Herder’s philosophy of language begins as rejoinder to what has been called the “designative” approach to the study of the link between language and meaning. The designative approach is taken up by thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, and perhaps most significantly for Herder, Condillac. According to Taylor, the designative approach can be defined as follows: “Words get their meaning from being used to designate objects. What they designate is their meaning.”⁶⁶ The importance of Condillac – at least for Herder – is that he begins with this premise and tries to provide an account of the origins of human language. It is precisely this account from Condillac that Herder’s philosophy of language rejects.

Condillac begins with a distinction between what he identifies as “natural signs” and “instituted signs.” In a hypothetical story illustrating how human language might

⁶⁵ Charles Taylor, “The Importance of Herder,” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). 79-99.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 80.

have originated, Condillac describes two pre-linguistic children in a desert. These two children have the capacity to utter sounds or cries as “natural expressions of feeling.” These types of utterances fall into Condillac’s category of natural signs.⁶⁷ However, Condillac claims that these natural signs can and do develop into instituted signs, which for him are what we use in human language. The contentious issue for Herder concerns the *process* which Condillac claims takes place in this fable whereby natural signs become instituted signs. Condillac argues that when child A witnesses child B uttering some natural sign – Condillac uses the example of a cry of distress – child A comes to perceive the natural sign as signifying something – in Condillac’s example, that which causes child B’s distress. Eventually, child A would learn to use – that is, verbally – the original cry (of distress) to designate the object (of child B’s distress). Through this type of process, a natural sign becomes an instituted sign, and each child would have her first word. Through more and more interactions of this type, each child would build up her lexicon and human language would develop.⁶⁸

In his *On the Origin of Language*, Herder declares Condillac’s account to be utterly inadequate.⁶⁹ Condillac, Herder argues, presupposes the existence of human language without adequately discussing where it comes from and how exactly it comes about. Herder argues that the two children in Condillac’s hypothetical account already have the *capacity* to understand that a word refers to something else. Condillac’s account – at least on Herder’s reading – does not discuss how that capacity develops in the first place. As Taylor puts it, “[Condillac’s] explanation amounts to saying that words arose

⁶⁷ Ibid. 80.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 80.

⁶⁹ Johann Gottfried Herder, *On the Origins of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). 99-103.

because words were already there.”⁷⁰ Once one has the capacity to understand the referential quality of words, then as a matter of course it would follow that one would be able to go through the process that Condillac depicts with his two children in the desert. However, for Herder, it is precisely this capacity that must be understood and Condillac seems to neglect exactly this point.

Taylor notes that Herder does not offer us a suitable alternative to account for the origins of human language.⁷¹ Nevertheless, through his critique of Condillac, Herder does provide us with an expressivist philosophy of language that challenges the designative approach. From his critique of Condillac’s story about the origins of language, Herder puts forward some positive contributions to the philosophy of language that are founded in expressivism. The following quote from Taylor encapsulates the essence of Herder’s philosophy of language:

On [Herder’s] theory words have meaning not simply because they come to be used to point or refer to certain things in the world or in the mind, but more fundamentally because they express or embody a certain kind of consciousness of ourselves and things, peculiar to man [sic] as a language-user, for which Herder uses the word ‘reflectiveness’ (*Besonnenheit*). Language is seen not just as a set of signs, but as the medium of expression of a certain way of seeing and experiencing; as such it is continuous with art. Hence there can be no thought without language; and indeed the languages of different peoples reflect their different visions of things.⁷²

This view of language represents a radical shift away from the designative theories of human language developed by philosophers such as Locke and Condillac. For Herder, words do not simply represent the things that they identify because language must be

⁷⁰ Taylor, "The Importance of Herder." 81.

⁷¹ Ibid. 83.

⁷² Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*. 17-18.

recognized primarily as the means by which a human subject reflects on the world and a medium through which she expresses herself.

One of the key ideas in Herder's philosophy of language is his concept of *Besonnenheit* or "reflectiveness." According to Herder, the human subject is necessarily situated in the world and language must therefore be understood as a "reflective stance towards things" in the world.⁷³ Human language develops out of the subject's feelings and attitudes about particular phenomena that arise from the connection between the situated subject and the objects around her. Taylor points out that the relationship between a subject and the objects around her can be understood and described outside the linguistic dimension.⁷⁴ However, this cannot be the case when the subject's actions towards and involving objects are understood in expressive terms, where the action "both actualizes [the] stance of reflection and also presents it to others in public space. It brings about the stance whereby we relate to things in the linguistic dimension."⁷⁵

For a subject to operate within the linguistic dimension, she must correctly understand what words mean, or as Taylor puts it, she must be able to "use and respond to signs in terms of their truth, or descriptive rightness, or power to evoke some mood, or recreate a scene, or express some emotion, or carry some nuance of feeling, or in some such way to be *le mot juste*."⁷⁶ This is closely linked with what Taylor calls a "holism of meaning."⁷⁷ What this idea implies is that a given word cannot have meaning in and of itself, independent of other words. Instead, a single word only has meaning against the

⁷³ Taylor, "The Importance of Herder." 92.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 92.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 92.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 84.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 93.

background of an articulated language: “A word has meaning within a lexicon and a context of language practices, which are ultimately embedded in a form of life.”⁷⁸ The notion of a “linguistic dimension” is Taylor’s, but the idea is rooted deeply in Herder. As Taylor himself notes, Herder’s objection to Condillac’s story of the origins of human language consists primarily in Herder’s recognition that a child that understands a cry of distress from another as a word must already be operating in the linguistic dimension.⁷⁹ Alternatively, in Herderian terms, to perceive a cry as a word requires that a subject be able to *reflect* – and this reflection is necessarily by a subject that is situated. And since – as noted above – the act of expression actualizes the stance of reflection, not only does the situated subject who uses language operate in the linguistic dimension, but her expressive speech acts help “[*constitute*] the linguistic dimension.”⁸⁰

Taylor argues that Herder’s claims about the “constitutive role of expression” and the “holism of meaning” combine to underpin a number of formative ideas in the philosophy of language that seriously challenge a designative concept of language. First, the designative theory of language tends to support the view that words are simply tools that a language user controls to achieve her ends. Against this, the expressivist view conceptualizes language not as something that we simply employ, but that also shapes us as we use it. Furthermore, language is not a static thing, but is constantly remade through speech activity. Language, then is to be understood as a “pattern of activity by which we express/realize a certain way of being in the world...but the pattern can be deployed only

⁷⁸ Ibid. 93.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 87.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 92. Emphasis added.

against a background we can never fully dominate...In relation to language, we are both makers and made.”⁸¹

Second, the designative approach to language maintains that words are used primarily to chronicle and convey human thought – what Taylor identifies as the “descriptive dimension” of language.⁸² On the classical designative view, language simply communicated what was already felt or thought by the subject. Herder’s expressivist view of language, on the other hand, stresses that language does not simply *describe*, but also enables humans to *transform* feeling through an expressive linguistic act. Taylor describes what is radically innovative in this notion:

The revolutionary idea implicit in Herder was that the development of new modes of expression enables us to have new feelings, more powerful and refined, and certainly more self-aware. In being able to express our feelings, we give them a reflective dimension that transforms them.⁸³

A purely descriptive understanding of language overlooks the manner in which language can expressively transform inchoate emotions. Against this, Herder’s expressivist theory of language underscores the transformative role that language plays in humans achieving a more refined self-awareness.

Third, Herder provides us with a capacious conception of what can be understood to be human language. If language is envisioned as an expressive activity through which human subjects transform emotions and thought, then it follows that modes of expressive activity outside of speech and prose should be recognized as a part of our linguistic arsenal. Thus, the creative activities of poetry, dance, music, and other forms of art are

⁸¹ Ibid. 97.

⁸² Ibid. 97.

⁸³ Ibid. 97-98.

incorporated into Herder's philosophy of language as media for expression. Because of this insight, it is not difficult to see how the expressivist view of art discussed briefly above is in many ways continuous with and builds on Herder's contribution to the understanding of human language.

Lastly, Herder's expressivist view maintains that it is important to stress that human language necessarily develops within the context of a *Volk*. If language is not purely descriptive as believed by the designative approach, and language is constantly being re-created through the "life of the speech community," language cannot develop within a solitary subject. As Taylor puts it, "The language I speak can never be, the web I can never fully dominate and oversee, can never be just *my* language; it is always *our* language."⁸⁴

I have tried to provide an account of the multi-faceted construction of Herderian expressivism. This expressivism emphasizes the uniqueness of individual human subjects, and underscores the moral imperative underlying self-realization. Furthermore, this self-realization through expression necessarily takes place both among other subjects – within a *Volk* – and within the context of nature. It is within these contexts that subjectivity is expressed through the media of language and art – though as noted above, there is a continuity that runs between speech and other creative activities such as poetry, dance, and music.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibid. 98-99. This last contribution from Herder is a particularly monumental one for Taylor, and is at the core of much of his work on Quebecois and Canadian politics.

⁸⁵ For an account of how a conception of embodied subjectivity and human linguistic capacity are operative in and fundamental to Taylor's hermeneutics, see Nicholas H. Smith, "Taylor and the Hermeneutic Tradition," in *Charles Taylor*, ed. Ruth Abbey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 29-51.

Taylor spends significant space discussing Herderian expressivism in nearly all of his books, be they on the sources of secularity, ethics, religion, epistemology or political philosophy.⁸⁶ A very sound argument can be made that Taylor has internalized many elements of Herder's expressivism, and that a neo-Herderian anthropology is central to Taylor's own philosophical work. Indeed, Taylor himself acknowledges his Herderian roots in *Reconciling the Solitudes*, where he describes how Herder strongly resonated with him because of Taylor's own bilingual upbringing and his concomitant political sensitivity for the predicament facing Francophones in Canada. He writes,

In Herder I found inspiration, ideas that were very fruitful for me, precisely because I was from [Quebec]. I was able to understand him from the situation I had experienced outside school, outside university, and I was able to engage with his thought, internalize it, and (I hope) make something interesting out of it."⁸⁷

Perhaps surprisingly, regardless of Taylor's importance as a philosopher today and the central role that Herderian expressivism seems to play in Taylor's philosophy, little secondary work has been produced on the Herderian sources of Taylor's ideas. Consequently, having provided a brief sketch of Taylor's own account of Herderian expressivism, I would like to turn to Taylor's politics of recognition to demonstrate briefly how Herder's view of expressive subjectivity informs Taylor's politics, and how this view of human subjectivity – after being re-shaped via Taylor's politics of recognition – potentially functions as a buttress against Enlightenment naturalism.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ont.: Anansi, 1991). 25-29; Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today : William James Revisited*, *Institute for Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Series* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). 79-107; Taylor, "The Importance of Herder." 79-99; Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*. Especially 1-14; Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." 30-32; Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*. 227-234; Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 368-390; Taylor, *Hegel*. Especially 13-27; 81-84; 567-570.

⁸⁷ Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, ed. Guy Laforest (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). 136.

Taylor's Expressivism: A Hegelian Twist

Taylor's politics of recognition begins with the insight that the identity of a subject is closely linked to the way that others apprehend and respond to the subject's perceived identity. For Taylor, identity here refers to "a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being."⁸⁸ The argument is that one's identity is shaped largely by the recognition, non-recognition and misrecognition by/from others. Where the first is withheld, and the latter two exist, the identity of either a group or individual can become distorted and damaged because, following Taylor's formulation, one's interlocutors significantly shape one's identity. On this view, a denial of recognition constitutes a form of violence against identity. Furthermore, this becomes particularly devastating when a "destructive identity" is externally imposed and eventually becomes internalized, often resulting in self-deprecation. Taylor's examples of groups that have been oppressed by this type of misrecognition or non-recognition include women, African-Americans, and aboriginals. According to Taylor, the result of misrecognition and non-recognition has often been a "crippling self-hatred." Therefore, to understand a lack of recognition as merely a lack of respect is to ignore the detrimental consequences it can have on individual and group identity.⁸⁹

We should recall the Herderian view of the human that calls for one to discover her own way of being. This is necessarily generated from within the individual and cannot be dictated by society alone. However, it is essential for Taylor – following *Hegel*

⁸⁸ Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." 25.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 25-26.

– that we recognize the constitutively dialogical nature of human existence, especially as it concerns self-realization. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor famously asserts, “One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it.”⁹⁰ In other words, selfhood is necessarily a social phenomenon. Taylor further expands on this idea:

I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding – and, of course, these classes may overlap. A self exists only within what I call ‘webs of interlocation.’⁹¹

Taylor’s notion of webs of interlocation is certainly reminiscent of Herder’s *Volk* insofar as the latter is related to the self-realization of individuals. Furthermore, this self-realization involves a coming to grips with “languages of self-understanding,” evoking the Herderian claim that language is an activity that allows humans to express and realize a particular way of being in the world. Like Herder, Taylor argues that it is crucial that we recognize that different modes of expression – and here he refers to the “languages” of speech, prose, art, gesture, and love – develop only through interaction with others.⁹² The languages necessary for our self-understanding require that we interact with our various interlocutors and the self requires some form of community, or *Volk*, to allow it to take shape.

While Taylor’s claim that a self exists only among other selves is related to Herderian expressivism, a *dialogical* notion of identity is distinctly Hegelian. This is the

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 35.

⁹¹ Ibid. 36.

⁹² Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition.” 32.

Hegelian twist in Taylor's expressivism alluded to above; there is no conception of a *dialectic* between persons within a community in Herderian expressivism. Herder's philosophy has been closely linked to modern nationalism, particularly its most violent historical dispensations. The addition of this Hegelian twist allows Taylor's expressivism to counter the potential negative manifestations of expressivism present in Herder's formulation. It is Hegel, and his notion of a "dialectic of recognition," that provides the basis for reciprocity in Taylor's politics of recognition. This Hegelian idea is famously presented in the dialectic of the master and the slave, which for Taylor provides the earliest important contribution to the politics of recognition.⁹³ Taylor sums up the idea underlying the dialectic of the master and the slave, which is central to his expressivism and his politics of recognition, as follows:

[Humans] seek and need the *recognition of their fellows*. The subject depends on external reality. If he [sic] is to be fully at home this external reality must reflect back to him what he is. In the dialectic of desire, we are faced with foreign objects which we then destroy and incorporate; what is needed is a reality which will remain, and yet will annul its own foreignness, in which the subject can nevertheless find himself. *And this he finds in other men in so far as they recognize him as a human being.*⁹⁴

The addition of Hegel's dialectic of recognition to Taylor's expressivism connects the subject to her interlocutors much more deeply than is evident in Herderian expressivism. In light of this Hegelian addition, Taylor's notion of subjectivity contains a requirement for recognition that surpasses Herder's notion of a *Volk* as a context for expression.

In Taylor's formulation, mutual recognition is necessary if subjects are to be properly "recognized as human beings," and such a view seems to exclude a conception

⁹³ Ibid. 35-36.

⁹⁴ Taylor, *Hegel*. 152. Emphasis added. See also Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." 50.

of others as objects that can be treated instrumentally or violently.⁹⁵ The recognition of a subject by her interlocutor is only valuable if the interlocutor herself is recognized as a human being; in other words, for recognition to be meaningful, it must be by a subject.⁹⁶ Consequently, for a subject to receive recognition, she must be surrounded by other interlocutors *qua* subjects who themselves receive recognition. The need for the reciprocation of recognition is clear – it is in the best interests of both a subject and her interlocutors to reciprocate.

Because of this Hegelian twist, Taylor's expressivism situates expression – and the realization of identity – within a dialectical context that is absent in Herder. Therefore, we have in Taylor's expressivism a view that draws mainly from Herder, but that includes a pivotal addition from Hegel. This formulation of expressivism from Taylor comprises what is arguably his most developed and unique response to instrumentalism. Taylor's conception of human subjectivity stresses the importance of interlocutors as subjects, and as such, potentially acts as a bulwark against what was referred to above as cybernetics – manifestations of technology which are imposed on humans. The Hegelian twist in Taylor's expressivism intimately ties the unfolding of our identity to those around us, and thus builds a strong case for the importance of recognition. Within Taylor's perspective, there is no room for the use of our interlocutors as simply means for our ends. Those around us must be recognized as unique free expressive subjects that have their own measure, as Herder puts it. In Taylor's

⁹⁵ Similarly, Jean Bethke Elshtain argues that the Taylorian notion that one is a self only among other selves leads to what she terms a "deep toleration" in Taylor's philosophical anthropology. See Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Toleration, Proselytizing, and the Politics of Recognition: The Self Contested," in *Charles Taylor*, ed. Ruth Abbey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 137-138.

⁹⁶ This line of reasoning is discussed extensively in Taylor's presentation of Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave. Taylor, *Hegel*. 152-157.

expressivism, then, we have a reply to instrumentalism that attempts to overcome the division between subject and object, uniting the human subject with her interlocutors.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Similarly, Taylor's expressivism, following Herder (as discussed above), requires that humans seek communion with nature. By connecting our subjectivity to the natural world, expressivism provides a framework which potentially overcomes the technological stance of human subjects standing over the world as object and demanding that it give its reasons. On the expressivist view, the natural world is conceived as a *subjective* unity, not as an object to be used as means and supply. However, this insight is Herder's and not Taylor's. Taylor's main contribution through his expressivism is concerned primarily with our social, political, and moral interaction with other humans. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Taylor's expressivism in a muted way also takes into account our relationship with the natural world.

CHAPTER THREE: TECHNOLOGY, THE WILL, AND JUSTICE

In chapter two, I provided a sketch of Taylor's expressivist ontology of the human. This understanding of human subjectivity depicts individuals as free beings that make themselves determinate through expression. Through the act of free expression, subjects make possible self-actualization. Furthermore, I argued that this expressive ontology of the human provides a challenge to naturalist perspectives and the problem of instrumentalism. In this chapter, I turn to Grant's argument against technology. Grant's philosophy of technology argues that a conception of humans as free wills is at the root of the problem of instrumentalism and cybernetics. In chapter four, a Grantian argument will be considered that states that Taylor's expressivist response to instrumentalism dangerously includes a notion of freedom similar to that which Grant associates with technology as mastery. On these grounds, it will be shown that a Grantian would have to reject the expressivist response to instrumentalism. However, to make this argument, it is necessary to first lay out Grant's conception of the place of the will in technology.

In the first chapter, I alluded to Grant's claim that technology and liberalism are closely related and even emerge from the same source. In the opening pages of *English-Speaking Justice*, he asserts,

[Close] identification [between technology and liberalism] rested finally in a widely shared belief that the *same account of reason* which resulted in the discoveries of science, also expressed itself humanly in the

development of political regimes ever more congruent with the principles of English-speaking liberalism.⁹⁸

This idea resurfaces later in the same text: “[The] assumptions underlying contractual liberalism and underlying technology both come from the *same matrix of modern thought*.”⁹⁹ Lastly, in the final book he published before his death, Grant again asserts, “[The] *same account of reason* which produced the technologies also produced the accounts of justice given in...modern political philosophies.”¹⁰⁰

It is evident that Grant traces the roots of technology and liberalism back to the same account of reason and matrix of modern thought. Arguably, the best account of what Grant means by the “same matrix of modern thought” can be uncovered by examining his discussion of the “will.”¹⁰¹ Consequently, in this chapter I will outline Grant’s philosophy of the will to explain why he argued that technology developed from the idea that the human essence is freedom. This requires a brief look at Grant’s historical account of the relationship between liberalism and technology. Furthermore, I will consider Grant’s sources for his concept of the will. Finally, I will argue that Grant considers a Greek and Christian account of justice to be the best remedy for the will to technology.

Liberalism and Technology: Early Compatibility

In “Part III” of *English-Speaking Justice*, Grant turns to his training as a historian and considers the North American socio-historical milieu in which technology initially

⁹⁸ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 3-4. Emphasis added.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 85-86. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ Grant, “Thinking About Technology.” 26. Emphasis added.

¹⁰¹ Arthur Kroker makes a similar argument, claiming that Grant may have “stumbled upon the DNA of modern society” through his reflections on the will. Arthur Kroker, *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1984). 39-42

flourished. He claims that Calvinism – and its later secular forms – was well-matched to the task of overcoming the wilderness of the new world: “This rougher [Puritan] Protestantism was more suited to the violent situation of conquering a new continent.”¹⁰² More specifically, Grant claims that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination led to a focus on the practical life, largely because doctrinal views regarding human depravity and God’s inaccessibility outside of revelation cut Puritans off from the contemplative life.¹⁰³ Grant discusses this in *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. The passage is quoted here at length:

Above all, it must be emphasized that Calvinism was an immensely practical faith. This is what distinguishes it from Lutheranism, which was essentially mystical. Calvin’s doctrine of the Hidden God by whose inscrutable Will men were elected to salvation or damnation meant that they believed themselves cut off from the contemplation of God, except as He revealed Himself in the Bible, and particularly in Jesus Christ. Though predestinarianism and emphasis on the Fall might seem to lead to a passive quietism, they in fact led to concentration on the practical life, because men cut off from contemplation sought in practicality the assurance that they were indeed the recipients of grace.¹⁰⁴

Grant saw how Christian charity and justice together with the Calvinist conception of the free will gave efficacy to technology, since the overcoming of nature through mastery is strongly associated with the “overcoming of hunger and labor.”¹⁰⁵ Protestantism in general, in Grant’s view, with its emphasis on Scripture, focused on building God’s

¹⁰² Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 60.

¹⁰³ George Grant, “In Defence of North America,” in *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: Anansi, 1969). 35-36.

¹⁰⁴ George Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, ed. William Christian (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). 77. Of course, this analysis was not expressed by Grant as a polemic against Calvinist theology. Rather, Grant was trying to uncover the formative ideologies of the west that shaped the embryonic stages of North American technological society. There is also a discussion of Calvinism’s suitability for overcoming the North American wilderness in Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 60.

¹⁰⁵ Grant, “Thinking About Technology.” 15. For a discussion of the moral ideal behind technology see Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 12.

kingdom on earth.¹⁰⁶ With its theological underpinnings leaning towards the practical, Puritanism was at the forefront of the endeavour to actualize God's purposes in the world.

Consequently, Grant argues, Calvinism (including its secular derivatives) was a primary force in shaping the continent technologically. Grant reasons that the Calvinist understanding of individuals as free wills fostered the development of technological civilization. This primal affirmation (as alluded to above), with its basis in Calvinist theology, "[affirmed] human beings as 'will'"¹⁰⁷ and even allowed for an apprehension of "the whole as 'will.'"¹⁰⁸ Through the employment of instrumental reason, the will was empowered to "create," and to stand as subject over world/object.¹⁰⁹ The human will attempted to tame the natural world by envisioning it as raw material to serve the human end of comfortable survival in an inhospitable environment. Driven by the moral imperative to overcome scarcity and severe working and living conditions, Grant argues, the Puritan reading of the Bible resulted more in "a driving will to righteousness than a hunger and thirst for it."¹¹⁰ This driving Calvinist will, coupled with the demands of Christian charity, provided the rudiments for an unrestrained technology. The natural world, perceived as an unbridled threat to human welfare, was transformed into a seemingly limitless plunder of natural resources through technology.

¹⁰⁶ George Grant, "The Uses of Freedom - a Word and Our World," in *Collected Works of George Grant: Volume 2, 1951-1959*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). 337-338. This essay originally appeared in *Queen's Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (Winter 1958): 515-527. Reprinted in *Queen's Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (1993): 185-197.

¹⁰⁷ Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 63-64.

¹⁰⁸ Grant, "Thinking About Technology." 18.

¹⁰⁹ George Grant, *Time as History*, ed. William Christian (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). 25-26.

¹¹⁰ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 60.

On Grant's view, insofar as liberalism refers to "the belief that man's essence is his freedom,"¹¹¹ and that "political liberty is a central human good,"¹¹² a liberal society is fertile ground for deeply rooted technology. Technology is embraced as the force that can free moderns from labor and scarcity, and thus gives humans the freedom to pursue desired ends. Similarly, a liberal society – that is, one that lacks conservative institutions such as religion, which have historically held back technology's progressive thrust – clears the way for unrestrained knowing and making.¹¹³ Consequently, Grant observes, technology and liberalism worked in tandem in the nascent stages of modern society.

Liberalism and Technology: Contemporary Contradiction

In *Technology and Empire*, published in 1969, Grant perceives in his society a genuine acceptance of the co-penetration of technology and liberalism. The will to technology was based in a desire to increase human freedom. However, he was wary of the potential direction of technology:

It is [the identification of liberalism with technology] which makes our drive to technology more dynamic than the nihilistic will to will which is emptied of all conceptions of purpose. It may be...that this drive to practicality moves to become little more than a will to mastery governing the vacuous masses. But that is not yet how we understand our present.¹¹⁴

So, in the late sixties, Grant observes a will to technology that is couched in the language of liberalism, rather than the willing of Nietzsche's nihilists, who will without being

¹¹¹ Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 118.

¹¹² Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 4.

¹¹³ George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, New ed. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994). 70-71.

¹¹⁴ Grant, "In Defence of North America." 27.

morally driven.¹¹⁵ However, the publication of *English-Speaking Justice* (five years later) signals a shift in Grant's views on the relationship between technology and liberalism.

In *English-Speaking Justice*, Grant observes a growing contradiction between liberalism and technology. This contradiction is most manifest in technology as cybernetics, where the will to know and make is directed at humans. Many new technologies are of this type, according to Grant, but in much of his later work, he focuses on abortion as a threat to the freedom of human foetuses. His attention was drawn to issues surrounding abortion largely due to the case of *Roe vs. Wade*. In this groundbreaking case, the highest American court concluded that no state government has the legal right to ratify legislation that would prevent a citizen from having an abortion within the initial two trimesters of pregnancy.¹¹⁶

To talk about abortion as technological requires one to recall what Grant infers in the idea of technology. In the case of abortion, according to Grant, the unborn are summoned forth as raw material, at the disposal of the wills of the parents and doctor to meet their desired ends.¹¹⁷ The view that abortion is technological is founded on the Grantian definition of technology referred to above in chapter one: the "endeavour which summons forth everything (both human and non-human) to give its reasons, and through the summoning forth of those reasons turns the world into potential raw material, at the

¹¹⁵ Grant, *Time as History*. 45.

¹¹⁶ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 74.

¹¹⁷ Not surprisingly, this element of Grant's work was – and continues to be – extremely controversial. For a critical account of the development of Grant's position on abortion, including its place in Grant's philosophical work as a whole, see Leah Bradshaw, "Love and Will in the Miracle of Birth: An Arendtian Critique of George Grant on Abortion," in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). 220-239.

disposal of our ‘creative’ wills.” Ian Angus clearly re-phrases Grant’s definition of technology as follows:

Technology was thus finally defined [by Grant] as a “summoning forth” that necessarily creates a difference between the summoning and what is summoned, between creative willing and disposing over resources. Thus technological humanity is continually provoked to be self-transcending in order not to be reduced to a resource.¹¹⁸

Through the lens of technology, those able to “self-transcend” (as Angus puts it) will be able to manipulate and to control the world to achieve their desired ends. Furthermore, because modernity is “beyond good and evil,” technology recognizes no categorical limits to the mastery of the world as object – a critical fact for Grant, especially as it relates to technological mastery applied to humans.

While abortion was the issue that saliently displayed the rupturing of liberalism and technology for Grant, cloning and stem cell research provide other contemporary examples of the will to technology turning itself against the freedom of humans. However, regardless of the examples of cybernetic technology considered, all manifestations of the will as mastery applied to humans lead to the same inevitable outcome on Grant’s view. As modernization and technology increasingly limit human freedom, Grant argues, they will encroach upon and undermine existing conceptualizations of liberal morality.

Furthermore, as modernity gathers itself to deal with the problems of modernization, the circumstances increase in complexity because the modern response

¹¹⁸ Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality, and Wilderness*. 92.

consists of the employment of more technology to “resolve” the situation. Grant argues that these new technologies will impinge further on human freedom:

Much of the new technology upon which we are going to depend to meet the crises in the ‘developed’ world is technology turned towards human beings. The new adage of rulers and educators is that to the mastery of non-human nature must now be added mastery of ourselves. The desire for ‘mastery of ourselves’ (which generally means mastery of other people) results in the proliferation of new arts and sciences directed towards human control, so that we can be shaped to live consonantly with the demands of mass society.¹¹⁹

In the very solutions to the crises which technology imposes on the modern world, humans become even more ensnared in the technological mire. On Grant’s analysis, technology is no longer directed towards the universal liberation of humankind.

Technology and liberalism have become discrete social forces, with the will to mastery of the world (both human and non-human alike) slowly eroding human freedom.

Alternate Visions of the Will: Augustinian and Nietzschean Formulations

The preceding sections described Grant’s analysis of the increasingly tenuous relationship between technology and liberalism. As noted above, Grant maintains that both liberalism and technology arise from the same primal affirmation, which he identifies as human free will. I will now consider the roots of Grant’s philosophy of the will, a process which will uncover why he claims that the will gives rise to both technology and liberalism. Two thinkers in particular were formative in Grant’s conception of the will, Augustine and Nietzsche. Grant saw Augustine as a pivotal figure because, as an influential church father and theologian, his doctrine of the will shaped western Christianity, and consequently, the western (Christian) world. He brought the

¹¹⁹ Grant, “Thinking About Technology.” 16.

vision of humans as free wills to the forefront of western thought. Nietzsche, on the other hand, helped Grant see the character and pervasiveness of the will in the modern world. Nietzsche, then, is not an originator of the modern will, but rather for Grant one of its greatest historians. Through Nietzsche's philosophical writings, Grant came to understand the centrality of the will in shaping the modern technological world.¹²⁰

To understand Nietzsche's philosophy of the will it is necessary to consider and place it within his understanding of "time as history". For Grant, Nietzsche understood time as history more profoundly than did any other modern scholar.¹²¹ Because human existence consists of a "coming to be and a passing away," humans have tried to understand their temporality.¹²² History is understood as the spatiotemporal context in which people exist. For many theists, history is the context in which God acts (or, for the Platonist, where instantiations of forms reveal themselves). However, history has also come to be understood as that which humans make. The view of history as providence shifts to history as progress largely because of the modern notion of freedom, which Grant argues originates in Reformation theology.¹²³ Because humans see themselves as free beings, they have come to understand themselves as the "spearhead who can consciously direct the process from which [they] came forth."¹²⁴ History, conceived as *process*, is always oriented to the future. As Grant observes, "[Moderns] conceived time

¹²⁰ For an important analysis of Grant's interpretation of Nietzsche and the will, see Ronald Beiner, "George Grant, Nietzsche, and the Problem of a Post-Christian Theism," in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). 109-138. Beiner argues that Grant does not provide a "distinctively Grantian reading of Nietzsche," but instead fuses together the Straussian radical historicist view of Nietzsche with the Heideggerian view of Nietzsche as the philosopher of technological mastery *par excellence*.

¹²¹ Grant, *Time as History*. 32.

¹²² Ibid. 13.

¹²³ Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 44-45.

¹²⁴ Grant, *Time as History*. 12.

as that in which human accomplishments would be unfolded; that is, in the language of their ideology, as *progress*.”¹²⁵ With time understood as historical progress, moderns see the future as potentiality – that which they have yet to become and accomplish. This is where the will becomes central:

To enucleate the conception of time as history must be to think our orientation to the future together with the will to mastery. Indeed the relation between mastery and concentration on the future is apparent in our language. The word will is used as an auxiliary for the future tense, and also as the word that expresses our determination to do.¹²⁶

Nietzsche illuminated for Grant that the modern will is bound up with a conception of time as history. It is within this forward-oriented temporality that the modern exercises her will to mastery, or as Grant puts it, “When we say that somebody has a strong will we mean that there is a resoluteness through time about his determination to carry out his purposes in the world.”¹²⁷

The last quote leads one into what Nietzsche means by the term “will” – the determination to carry out one’s purposes – but certainly requires some unpacking. Grant describes how the will of the subject imposes itself on the world/object: “[Will] becomes the assertion of the power of the self over something other than the self, and indeed of the self over its dependencies. The dependence of desire passes over into the mastery.”¹²⁸ Grant states further that this mastery generated by the will results in what Nietzsche calls “violence”: “Willing is that power of determining by which we put our stamp on events (including ourselves) and in which we do some violence to the world.”¹²⁹ Grant’s usage

¹²⁵ Ibid. 16. Emphasis added.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 17.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 21.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 23.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 22.

of the term violence is grounded in his understanding of Hegel's dialectical philosophy of history. For Hegel, doing – or perhaps one might say *making* – always manifests itself in negation.¹³⁰ By imposing one's will on nature, the subject changes what the willed object *is*, and therein commits violence on the object's *being* by negating the determinate. Moreover, through its violent willing, modernity moves ever closer to what Grant sees near its center: "[The] will's challenge to itself to make the world."¹³¹ As this process unfolds, the will to technology becomes an ever-larger threat to those that are being "made," for through the process they are violently *unmade*.

For Nietzsche, the will to power is a fundamental part of modernity because, through it, moderns are able to create meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. Through active willing, time as history is given significance.¹³² Grant argues,

In the conceptions of history now prevalent among those 'creative' men who plan the mastery of the planet, changing the world becomes ever more an end in itself.... We will, not so much for some end beyond will, but for the sake of willing itself. In this sense, the challenge of the will is endless to the resolute, because there is always more 'creation' to be carried out. Our freedom can even start to make over our own species.¹³³

The desire for meaning, then, leads the 'creative' wilfully to make history. History is rendered meaningful as the 'creative' impose their wills on an "accidental world."¹³⁴ Notably, in the present historical context, the will to technology is underpinned by the (often secularized) Christian motive of charity – to overcome poverty, disease, labour, etc. However, Nietzsche predicts, the secular Christian underpinnings will be purged and

¹³⁰ Ibid. 27. Grant's understanding of will as negation would become more developed as he read the works of Nietzsche's epigone Heidegger. Nevertheless, the conception of doing (or willing) as negation first entered Grant's thought through Hegel.

¹³¹ Ibid. 24.

¹³² Ibid. 24.

¹³³ Ibid. 27.

¹³⁴ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 80.

this will give birth to the “nihilists,” amoral humans that will purely for the sake of willing. They have no knowledge of the good, and are unyielding in their will to mastery, a mastery that will be violent, cataclysmic, and never-ending.¹³⁵

A fine line indeed separates Nietzsche’s nihilists and those moderns that Grant terms ‘creative.’ Nevertheless, for Grant, it is clear that the human will forcefully leads human history in this lamentable and wicked direction. Yet, as mentioned above, Nietzsche is not the originator of the western understanding of humans as free wills. Instead, the roots of the doctrine of the will are found in the theology of Augustine. Unfortunately, Grant never published a systematic piece on Augustine’s doctrine of the will and its impact on western thought. Nevertheless, it is possible to piece together passages from Grant’s various works to flesh out a general understanding of his take on Augustine’s doctrine of free will.

Grant saw Augustine as the primary synthesizer of classical philosophy and transcendence with Christian revelation and will.¹³⁶ On the incorporation of classical philosophy into Christianity, Grant writes, “That indeed is the accomplishment of Augustine, that he did not scorn truth wherever it was to be found but took the truth of Platonism and gave it new illumination through the light of Christ.”¹³⁷ With this synthesis, according to Grant, Augustine effectively ushered in the view of human freedom as the ability to organize the world according to human desires and needs.¹³⁸ Augustine’s theology gave rise to individualism – that is, the individual will – in western

¹³⁵ Grant, *Time as History*. 45-46.

¹³⁶ Christian. 189.

¹³⁷ George Grant, “Charles Cochrane,” in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 217.

¹³⁸ Christian. 189. See also Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 38-48.

Christianity.¹³⁹ Furthermore, Augustine's contribution to western Christianity fostered an emphasis on God's omnipotence and shifted focus away from God's weakness as incarnated in the crucifixion.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, Grant posits, "When Christian belief was secularized into the doctrine of progress it gave almost unlimited opening to a belief in our own power as a means to the forgetting of our own limitation."¹⁴¹

However, Grant had a great respect for Augustine because he successfully married together the teachings of Grant's two masters: Christ and Plato.¹⁴² Consider Grant's account of the will within the bounds of the Natural Law that evolved among the ancient Greeks. For the ancients, reason was prior to willing – with reason here meaning knowledge of the universe: "There is an order in the universe that human reason can discover and according to which the human will must act so that it can attune itself to the universal harmony."¹⁴³ For the Greeks, then, the free will requires the framework of reason – for "God...is reason itself."¹⁴⁴ There was a moral imperative among the Greeks to surrender the free will to what Plato would describe as knowledge of the good. This resonates strongly with Augustine's account of freedom, which consists of surrendering the will to divine law:

Freedom does not mean the ability to make an unambiguous choice between open possibilities. We become free only insofar as we base our relevant actions on the law; we lose our freedom as we disregard the law. Thus in traditional Christian theory the highest stage of the good life is to

¹³⁹ George Grant, "Celine's Trilogy," in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity: Art, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). 43.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 76.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 51.

¹⁴² Grant characterized his academic corpus as an apologetic of Jesus and Socrates. See George Grant in William Christian, "George Grant and Religion," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1991). 43.

¹⁴³ Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 27-28.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 28.

be beyond choice. To be free is to be a slave. *As St. Augustine puts it: 'to be able not to sin is a great liberty; not to be able to sin is the greatest.'*¹⁴⁵

The last line of the above quote brings one to the crux of Augustine's doctrine of free will. As descendants of Adam, all humans inherit the depravity and corruption of original sin. Because of the fall, people are unable to live free of sin: "A man's free will avails for nothing except to sin."¹⁴⁶ Adam and Eve pre-fall lived in a condition of "*posse non peccare*" – that is, they were able to be free from sin. Post-fall, the descendants of Adam and Eve are "*non posse non peccare*" – they are not able to not sin.¹⁴⁷ Thus far, Augustine's account of freedom is a bleak one for humankind. However, according to Augustine, all is not lost, because God can bend the human will in line with His will through grace: "For the Almighty sets in motion even in the innermost hearts of men the movement of their will, so that He does through their agency whatsoever He wishes to perform through them."¹⁴⁸ Without grace, then, the human will is incapable of good acts, and can only lead to sin. True liberty is only possible when an individual will is beyond choice, a slave to God's will and law.

The Augustinian doctrine of free will *prima facie* appears quite unlike Nietzsche's concept of will to power. The former is about submission and enslavement through grace to the will of God, and the latter consists of autonomy, imposition and violence through negation. For Nietzsche, strong individuals will to make history, to create meaning within chaos. For Nietzsche's "last men," then, one can characterize the will to power as part of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 36. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, cited in Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999). 272.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 272.

¹⁴⁸ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, cited in Ibid. 273.

an attempt to overcome hopelessness. This seems to diverge from Grant's reading of Augustine:

[Augustine] knew that despair was wrong, because despair always assumes that the issue of history lies finally with ourselves. But clearly it is not with ourselves that the ultimate issue lies. Our hope lies rather in One who is power and reason and love, Who has indeed most manifestly shown that power and love and reason are in Him, One – eternally.¹⁴⁹

Augustine may be responsible for introducing the doctrine of free will to western Christendom – and on those grounds, Grants is initially extremely critical of Augustine – but it is clear that Grant recognized a certain nobility in Augustine's theology. It is worthwhile keeping in mind the key differences between Augustine and Nietzsche and their accounts of the human will as I turn in the next section to Grant's own philosophy of the will.

Grant and the Will

In a key passage in "The Triumph of the Will," published in the final year of his life, Grant delineates a historical shift in what the idea of free will signifies. The passage is worth quoting at length:

What is meant by the seemingly simple word 'will'? In the pre-modern world it had a certain meaning which was particularly emphasized in Christianity, because the word's spoken in Gethsemane – 'Yet not My will but Thine be done' – were paradigmatic for Christians. It meant appropriate choosing by rational souls. With the coming of modernity, it has come to mean something quite different. When 'will' is thought modernly it means the resolute mastery of ourselves and the world. To understand this modern illumination of the word 'will,' it is necessary to put aside entirely that old faculty psychology, in which will was understood as a power or faculty of the soul, having to do with free

¹⁴⁹ George Grant, "The Paradox of Democratic Education," in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 187.

choices. Rather, will is the center of our aiming and seeking, the holding together of what we want.... Will comes to mean in modernity that power over ourselves and everything else which is itself the very enhancement of life, or, call it if you will, 'quality of life.' Truth, beauty, and goodness have become simply subservient to it.¹⁵⁰

It seems in this quote that Grant perceives a move towards Nietzschean notions of will. However, it is imperative that the shift itself not be attributed to Nietzsche, for as Grant acknowledges, Nietzsche's greatest contribution to philosophy is his penetrating articulation of the crises of modernity: "He made explicit what had been implicit."¹⁵¹ Moreover, Nietzsche's writings enabled Grant to recognize the will as the primal affirmation that shapes the modern world, and this recognition compelled Grant to trace the roots of the conception of human essence as will.

In addition to the passage from "Triumph of the Will" (cited above), there is a presence throughout Grant's work of what seem to be variant descriptions of human freedom and the will. These appear to fall into the two general categories set out above: a paradigmatically Christian notion of the free will – rooted in Augustine's doctrine – and a distinctly modern will.

When the first of these conceptions appears in Grant's writings, it is generally steeped in Platonic language. This should come as no surprise, since as discussed above, a large part of Augustine's greatness for Grant stemmed from his ability to incorporate Greek philosophy with the teachings of the Gospels. An example of this is found in "Faith and the Multiversity":

¹⁵⁰ George Grant, "The Triumph of the Will," in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 143.

¹⁵¹ Grant, *Time as History*. 34-35.

We can only fulfil [the requirements of the world] here below insofar as we partake to some degree [in the perfection of God]. Indeed goods in the here and now are only good in that they participate in goodness itself. Our freedom is just our potential indifference to such a high end.”¹⁵²

Unlike modern liberal accounts of liberty, Grant’s here merely consists of the capacity to ignore the good. This corresponds well with Augustine’s doctrine of free will: true liberty is enslavement to God’s will. The same idea resurfaces later in the same essay. Here discussing Plato, Grant writes, “For Plato freedom is not our essence. It is simply the liberty of indifference; the ability to turn away from the light we have sighted.”¹⁵³ All humans fail to achieve perfection because they all have the freedom to disobey God – or, to describe it in Platonic terms, all have the capacity to ignore the good. This account of the free will is consonant with both that of Augustine and the Greeks.

However, when Europeans came to the New World, there was a turning towards Calvinist Protestantism and a concomitant turning away from the Greeks.¹⁵⁴ What the Puritans met on this new continent was a forbidding and often hostile wilderness. It was within the context of this encounter that human free will came to be seen as something different: “[Our] wills were burnished in that battle with the land.”¹⁵⁵ In the time of the Greeks, the strong were called on to be resolute, but that unyieldingness came from a trust in an immutable universal – or divine – order. However, in the Puritan’s “antagonistic” encounter with the land, a shift took place towards a will to mastery. Grant articulates his views on this new embodiment of free will:

¹⁵² Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity.” 55. See also George Grant, “Conversation: Theology and History,” in *George Grant in Progress*, ed. Larry Schmidt (Toronto: Anansi, 1978). 107.

¹⁵³ Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity.” 75.

¹⁵⁴ Grant, “In Defence of North America.” 19-20.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 18.

In the modern call, human wills are called to a much more staggering challenge. It is our destiny to bring about something novel; to conquer an indifferent nature and make it good for us.... We now see our wills as standing above the other beings of nature, able to make these other beings serve the purposes of our freedom. All else in nature is indifferent to good. Our wills alone are able, through doing, to actualize moral good in the indifferent world.¹⁵⁶

This new understanding of free will pits the subject that wills against all else, for the world is there to serve the purposes of individual wills. Similar to Nietzsche's "last men," the modern sees herself as the maker of history through the imposition of her will on nature. History is made by humans through willed acts of "creation," an activity previously considered a purely divine endeavour.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, gone are traditional conceptions of justice and goodness that demand obedience and articulate some notion of limit on human willing.¹⁵⁸ Justice has gone from being a framework or horizon against which we are "measured and defined" – or as Grant often describes it, "what we are fitted for" – to something we *create* in our autonomous willing.¹⁵⁹ Goodness thought modernly, according to Grant, is not about limit and obedience, but refers instead to a comfortable "quality of life." The free will gives humans the potential to achieve such a comfort, for "[freedom] for [modern] man is the ability to get what he wants."¹⁶⁰ This manner of conceptualizing human freedom signals what Grant terms the "living forth of the triumph of the will," which gives rise to "otherness," wherein the one dominates the other, the

¹⁵⁶ Grant, *Time as History*. 24.

¹⁵⁷ Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 21-22.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 99-100. See also Grant, "Thinking About Technology." 31.

¹⁵⁹ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 74; 86-87.

¹⁶⁰ Grant, "The Uses of Freedom - a Word and Our World." 335.

subject the object, and the essential the inessential.¹⁶¹ The triumph of the will is presently of ultimate concern, because it is no longer just the untamed land that is viewed as means and supply. “Means” and “supply” within technological society have become characteristics of humans – people have become the raw material subject to human willing.

On Grant’s account, the modern will oriented towards mastery initially emerged as a strong force out of necessity, as Puritans attempted to overcome the wilderness of the New World. Consequently, this conception of the will may appear to be distinct from Grant’s Augustinian account of free will, since the former seems to be historically contingent. Indeed, it is arguable that Grant saw the two perspectives as distinct in his earlier considerations of free will. However, as Grant’s philosophy of technology developed, he realized increasingly that the vision of humans as wills, arising out of an ontological conception of human freedom, was ultimately responsible for the modern co-penetration of knowing and making. Moreover, and of monumental importance for Grant, the vision of humans as free wills entered the western world through Christianity. In *Time as History*, one can see the beginning of the realization for Grant that the modern will is not distinct from the Augustinian will. Glossing Nietzsche’s philosophy of will to power, Grant writes, “[Because] men are wills, the strong cannot give up willing.”¹⁶² The footnote attached to this statement reads as follows: “Who ever more agreed with St

¹⁶¹ Grant, “The Triumph of the Will.” 147-149. It is worth noting Grant’s use of the term “other”. In his writings on Simone Weil, and his later work on justice, he generally refers to the other as subject, or as that which is authentic and loved. Elsewhere, such as in the essay cited here, he refers to “otherness,” where people are viewed as objects. Grant’s use of “otherness” as objectification should not be confused with his eventual adoption of Weil’s terminology of the “authentic other.”

¹⁶² Grant, *Time as History*. 45.

Augustine's dictum '*Quid sumus nisi untates?*' [What are we except wills?]"¹⁶³ The implication here is that *both* Nietzschean and Augustinian accounts of free will share the same origin: *a vision of human beings as will*. Grant began to recognize that the tyrannical will to mastery finds its basis in Augustine.

Near the end of his life, Grant had a more developed understanding of the role that Augustine played in the development of western Christian thought, and the eventual impact his theology would have on Luther, and through him, Calvin.¹⁶⁴ Augustine initiated the vision of humans as free wills, and this vision reached its apogee in Calvinism and its later secular forms. In the following excerpt, Grant places the responsibility on Augustine:

I have no doubt at all that Western Christianity made some great errors in its origins, and here – and I say this with great hesitation, because he is a genius – I blame St Augustine. I think it was Augustinian Christianity that came in to shape both Catholicism and later Protestantism, which led to this Christianity, which in turn led to this extreme secularized form of itself as progress. And you know I have no doubt that Christianity is true...[but] I think Western Christianity is, in a sense, through.... I think that this kind of Procrustean, triumphalist Christianity led Western civilization to go out into the world, thinking it could do anything to other civilizations; and it was even more terrible when it had become secularized Christianity.¹⁶⁵

It is notable that this insight came to Grant late in the development of his thought. Grant had studied Augustine during his graduate work at Oxford, so Augustinian ideas had been percolating in Grant's mind for over forty years. However, as Grant increased his focus on the centrality of the will and its role in technology – themes that Grant centres on in

¹⁶³ Ibid. 45, footnote 1.

¹⁶⁴ Grant states, "[It does not] seem accidental to me that Protestant modernness was first magnificently proclaimed by Luther, who had once been an Augustinian monk." See Grant, "Celine's Trilogy," 43.

¹⁶⁵ George Grant, "The Moving Image of Eternity," in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 218. This transcript comes from the CBC Radio show *Ideas*, originally aired in 1986.

Time as History and *English-Speaking Justice* – he came to see the seeds of the will as mastery in Augustine’s theology. So, while Grant does not explicitly name Augustine as the initiator of what would become the will to mastery until the final years of his life, it is arguable that he began to perceive it as early as 1969 with his work on *Time as History*.

Grant’s “New” Account of Justice

In the last sections, I provided an account of the development of Grant’s philosophy of the will. We can sum up Grant’s general argument as follows: 1.) technology develops out of a conception of humans as free wills; 2.) although the modern will is given its clearest modern philosophical treatment by Nietzsche, it actually arises out of Augustinian Christian sources; 3.) the will to technology is intimately related to the idea that the essence of humans is freedom; and 4.) freedom understood in Platonic terms is nothing more than our potential indifference to the Good. Because of this line of reasoning, Grant turns away from the language of freedom in his response to technology. Grant dispenses with the notion that our human essence is freedom and instead embraces a traditional account of justice as the best remedy for technology. This is a necessary

move, in Grant's view, because a liberal ontology of the human, as shown in modernity, inevitably leads to the will to technology.¹⁶⁶

Grant describes the "core" of the last century as "unlimited mastery of men by men."¹⁶⁷ This technological mastery was accompanied by a liberal politics that provides for the possibility of equality in goods. However, Grant argues, these forms of contractual liberalism are incapable of providing equality in *justice*. In a society oriented to the will to mastery, those with silent voices in a contractual – or "provisional" – understanding of justice have become subject to "otherness."¹⁶⁸ On these grounds, Grant argues, even the most authoritative contractual account of justice – such as that of John Rawls – falters.¹⁶⁹ While contractual liberalism successfully promotes the will to technology, it is incapable of identifying why justice is our due, and has a difficult time identifying any acts as

¹⁶⁶ It should be clear that Grant is not against political freedom, but rather the view that the essence of humans is freedom. The *ontological* – not the political – conception of freedom gives rise to the will. Grant states, "When we talk of political freedom, what sane human being could be against that? The word only becomes dangerous when it is tied to will, and it comes to mean man's power to make the world as he wants, outside any received structure of justice." Grant, "Conversation: Theology and History." 106. See also Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 4-5. However, even though it seems evident that Grant supports political freedom, he does not make it sufficiently clear in his philosophical work how he hopes to reconcile it with a Platonic "received structure of justice" which puts significant limits on individual freedom. Because Grant does not explicitly describe how political freedom and a received structure of justice can be brought together, and because he gives strong philosophical support for the latter, Grant seems to leave himself open to the charge from liberal critics that he does not give political freedom the attention it deserves.

¹⁶⁷ Grant, "In Defence of North America." 25.

¹⁶⁸ Grant, "Thinking About Technology." 30. See comment on page 60, footnote 161 above regarding Grant's use of the term "otherness."

¹⁶⁹ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 13-47. In Grant's view, Rawls' ethics is inadequate for supporting ideals such as freedom and equality because the concept that people are essentially calculators is fundamentally problematic. Grant asks, "[Why] does Rawls' account of the 'person' make equality our due? Why are beings who can calculate and cannot avoid choices worthy of equal inalienable rights? After all, some humans can calculate better than others. Why then should they not have fuller legal rights than the poorer calculators?" Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 35. These questions from Grant get at the crux of the problem inherent in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. If "equal inalienable rights" are contingent on an individual's ability to calculate effectively, then it follows that humans deficient in this capacity – such as the unborn, infants, those suffering from mental disorders, etc. – are not due the same rights as the proficient calculator. It is worth mentioning that Rawls idea of "reflective equilibrium" could respond reasonably to Grant's line of reasoning. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis, it is enough to recognize Grant's view.

categorically wrong.¹⁷⁰ It is with this critique of technology and contractual liberalism in mind that Grant tries to revive a classical – that is, Greek and (non-Augustinian) Christian – account of justice to deal with modernity’s moral and political crises. He directs moderns towards western religious and philosophical meta-narratives for a theory of justice that can transcend technology and replace a purely contractual understanding of the socio-political.

Grant’s notion of justice as what we are fitted for is founded in Platonic ontology and the view that being is good: “In the old language ‘good’ means what any being is fitted for. It is a good of animals to breathe; we are not if we do not. The good of a being is what it is distinctively fitted for.”¹⁷¹ Grant expands further on the relationship between justice and the Good:

“[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 of 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.”¹⁷²

In Grant’s view of justice, then, we have a notion that we owe other beings a certain due because their being is good, and inasmuch as we have knowledge of it, we will love the Good. Justice, on this traditional view, is immutable and as we come to know its content, we come to love it. Grant argues that such a vision of justice is incongruent with technology and contractual understandings of justice:

What has been lost [in modern definitions of justice] is the belief that justice is something in which we participate as we come to understand the

¹⁷⁰ Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 86.

¹⁷¹ Grant, "Faith and the Multiversity." 42.

¹⁷² George Grant, "Justice and Technology," in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 438.

nature of things through love and knowledge. Modern theories of justice present it as something human beings make and impose for human convenience.”¹⁷³

For Grant, the will to technology changes what is meant by “good,” and the transformation leads moderns farther from the traditional account of goodness and the related notion of justice, because the will to technology “exalts the possible above what is.”¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, contractual theories of justice on Grant’s view have as their end a comfortable self-preservation.

Grant claims that because science provides moderns with objective theories of “how things are,” physical reality is described by the language of “necessity” and “chance.”¹⁷⁵ Within this context, nothing meaningful can be said about justice, goodness, beauty, and love in Platonic terms. Technology does not see being as good – being is nothing more than raw material to be understood and transformed or re-made by the will to technology. Consequently, Grant argues that technology and the old conception of justice are at odds because an object cannot be perceived as beautiful, and science views nature as object.

Through the lens of technology, then, that which stands outside of the subject is objectified. Grant summarizes what viewing something (or someone) objectively consists of:

Object means literally some thing that we have thrown over against ourselves. *Jacio* I throw, *ob* over against; therefore “the thrown against.” The German word for object is *Gegenstand* – that which stands against. Reason as project, (that is, reason as thrown forth) is the summoning of

¹⁷³ Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity.” 60. See also Grant, “Justice and Technology.” 439.

¹⁷⁴ Grant, “Thinking About Technology.” 32-34.

¹⁷⁵ Grant, “Faith and the Multiversity.” 60.

something before us and the putting of questions to it, so that it is forced to give its reasons for being the way it is as an object.¹⁷⁶

When something is viewed as object, it is recognized as external and in opposition to the subject. Furthermore, within the technological paradigm, an object is *knowable*. Such knowledge is obtained by standing over an object and dissecting it – or as Grant puts it, we summon an object before us and force it to give its reasons for being the way it is.

Grant argues that the conception of something or someone as object precludes the view that it is beautiful. He claims, “In all scientific explanations we are required to eliminate the assumption of the other as itself beautiful.”¹⁷⁷ The shift that occurs whereby we can no longer perceive the other as beautiful takes place when we see the other as object rather than as an authentic other. Grant reasons that if we attend to something as an object then we cannot love it as beautiful, for “love is consent to the fact that there is authentic otherness.”¹⁷⁸ If we love something as authentically other, Grant argues, we will not stand over it and ask its reasons for being the way it is. Instead, we will love its being, for being is itself good: “To love something with intelligence is to want it to be.”¹⁷⁹

Grant’s account thus far is unmistakably Platonic. However, Grant’s theism underpins his philosophy in general and his view of justice in particular. Indeed, one cannot approach Grant’s philosophy without accounting for his Christianity.¹⁸⁰ As Grant notes in his journal, “For me it must always be *Credo, ut intelligam* [Understanding

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 36.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 40.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 38-39.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 64.

¹⁸⁰ William Christian makes a similar argument, claiming that one cannot understand Grant’s work on Nietzsche without understanding the way Christianity directs Grant’s thought (See “Editor’s Introduction,” in Grant, *Time as History*. xxxvi).

originates in belief].”¹⁸¹ St Anselm’s dictum provides a maxim for Grant’s philosophy, and to ignore this is to misinterpret Grant. His view of justice is no different and is informed by his religious views. Grant contends that Christianity did not change the definition of the Platonic account of justice, but extended what was due to others and provided an account of how that due was to be fulfilled.¹⁸² Grant draws from the Gospel account where Jesus discusses the first two commandments in tandem. In the book of Matthew, responding to a question regarding the greatest commandment, Jesus asserts the following:

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. *And the second is like it:* ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.¹⁸³

Grant argues that it is crucial that Jesus claimed that “the second is ‘like unto’ the first.”¹⁸⁴ Just as the Christian is directed to love God with heart, mind, and soul so should she love other humans. For Grant, this amounts to a universalization of justice, an extension of the due owed to others that had not occurred in the world of the Greeks.¹⁸⁵ The Christian account of justice, like the Platonic, demands that we give others their due. The view of justice encapsulated in the gospels requires Christians to live a life of charity, for that is part of the due owed to others. Central to this account of justice is the

¹⁸¹ Cited in Christian, *George Grant: A Biography*. 93.

¹⁸² Grant, "Faith and the Multiversity." 54.

¹⁸³ "Gospel of Matthew," in *Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). Chapter 22:37-40. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁴ Grant, "Faith and the Multiversity." 54.

¹⁸⁵ Grant’s understanding of the impossibility of universal equality – or “social homogeneity” – in the pre-Christian world of the Greeks owes largely to the work of Hegel, and the Hegelian commentator Kojève. See George Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom," in *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: Anansi, 1969). 86-89.

requirement that one love the being of others.¹⁸⁶ The will to mastery that stands over others as objects is anathema to this Christian notion of justice described by Grant.

Grant's Platonic-Christian account of justice was formatively influenced by the philosophy of Simone Weil. Like Grant, Weil was a Christian-Platonist. Consequently, her views on justice are relatively continuous with and easily incorporated into Grant's philosophy. According to Weil, as the "I" is surrendered for the sake of love – what she calls "decreation"¹⁸⁷ – the result is an *attention* and *receptivity* to the other. Weil's notion of decreation arises out of her critique of the western Christian view that creation is an act of "self-expansion." For Weil, the creation of the world "is a withdrawal, an act of love, involved with all the suffering, renunciation, and willingness to let the other be, that are given in the idea of love."¹⁸⁸ In other words, by creating the world, God decreates Himself – through withdrawal – because His love for what He has created wants them to exist. He surrenders himself for the sake of love.

Weil's notion of decreation is arguably an attempt to reformulate Christianity without the will.¹⁸⁹ Notions of love, receptivity, attention and renunciation replace the view of the human as will. Through self-renunciation, we turn away from the vision of

¹⁸⁶ For an account of the centrality of the notion of love in Grant's philosophy, see William Christian, "George Grant and Love: A Comment on Ian Box's "George Grant and the Embrace of Technology", " *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 16, no. 2 (1983). 349-354.

¹⁸⁷ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). 78-86. I am greatly indebted to Randy Peg Peters for illuminating how Weil's notion of decreation is formative in Grant's mature understanding of justice.

¹⁸⁸ George Grant, "In Defence of Simone Weil," in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). 264.

¹⁸⁹ Weil's Christianity is clearly against Augustinian formulations that embrace the primacy of the will and instead favors a Platonic perspective. Grant sums up Weil's view: "[She] stands unequivocally on the side of saying that the affirmation of the being of God is a matter of knowing and not of willing – that is, that belief or unbelief is never a matter of choice or commitment, but of intellect and attention." George Grant, "Introduction to Simone Weil," in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 251.

self as will; the “I” is surrendered so that the authentic other can be. For Grant (and for Weil), being is after all what we are fitted for. Grant’s account of justice brings together Platonism and Christianity, and embraces Weil’s concept of decreation. This fusion combines the following views: 1.) justice is what we are fitted for; 2.) being is good; 3.) a result of Christianity is that justice is due to all humans; 4.) we should see our neighbours not as objects but as authentic others; and 5.) love requires us to surrender our “I” – or will – so that the other can be. This Grantian account of justice stands against technology and the will to mastery because it requires us to see others as owed love. It is particularly forceful against cybernetic technologies – those that remake the human. Grant’s view of justice is also applicable to the non-human natural world, for if being is good, then it stands that we should not remake nature.

Louis Greenspan insightfully claims that “Grant had often seemed like a Christian version of Zarathustra, declaring to unknowing multitudes that liberal humanism is dead.”¹⁹⁰ We might add to Greenspan’s insight that Grant is a *Christian-Platonist* version of Zarathustra, that declares not only the end of liberal humanism, but also the end of the contractual forms of justice that underpin contemporary liberalism. Contractual conceptions of justice, Grant contends, are founded on convenience rather than a notion that justice is our due. For example, the social contract on the Hobbesian account is entered into so that individuals can avoid living a life that is “nasty, brutish and short.” In other words, the individual in the Hobbesian state of nature enters into the covenant for self-preservation. In a state so conceived, on the Grantian view, little if anything can be

¹⁹⁰ Louis Greenspan, “The Unravelling of Liberalism,” in *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity: Art, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. Arthur Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). 218.

claimed categorically wrong – one is required to obey rules legislated by the state only because a failure to do so would propel you back into the “inconvenient” state of nature. Grant reasons that because justice is understood within contractual liberalism as convenience, it is incapable of adequately limiting technological mastery as successfully as a Christian-Platonist notion of justice, which puts categorical limits on how we can treat other humans. This latter view of justice calls on us to love others and treat them as subjects rather than objects, and counters cybernetic technologies where the will as mastery turns against humans.

CHAPTER FOUR: ASSESSING TAYLOR AND GRANT'S ONTOLOGICAL REPLIES TO INSTRUMENTALISM

In chapters two and three, I discussed two alternative critical responses to instrumentalism. Charles Taylor's perspective is expressivist, and opposes cybernetic manifestations of instrumentalism. This expressivism contains both Herderian and Hegelian threads, resulting in a robust anthropology that stresses the dialectical nature of human subjectivity. Taylor's expressivism stands against the instrumentalist mastery of humans and the natural world because the expressive self cannot reach its highest potentialities if disconnected from the social and the natural world. George Grant, on the other hand, turns to Platonic and Christian sources and fleshes out an account of justice that is in stark opposition to technology. Central to Grant's view of justice is the Platonic ontological claim that being is good.¹⁹¹ This ontology provides Grant with the formulation of justice (following Weil) that we should surrender or decreate ourselves so that the authentic other can be. Through the act of decreation whereby we surrender our "I," we become able to love the being of the other – a love that impedes the objectification of the other. Because of his recognition of the negative role of the will in technology, and the concomitant relation between an ontological notion of freedom and

¹⁹¹ Although the focus of the thesis is more on the application of instrumentalism or technology to humans, it was noted above (page 41, footnote 97) that Taylor's expressivism adopts the Herderian claim that nature is best understood as a unity, and that such a view creates a framework wherein humans seek to commune with nature rather than dominate it. Similarly, Grant's adoption of the Platonic view that being is good parallels Taylor's in that both provide philosophies that envision the natural world as more than simply resource. Nevertheless, they each base their claims on different philosophical views, with Taylor formulating his view in Herderian (and consequently Hegelian) terms and Grant couching his position in Platonic terms.

view of humans as wills, Grant turns away from the language of freedom to respond to technology as mastery. Correlatively, because of the stress that Taylor places on free expression, a Grantian rejoinder to Taylor's expressivism arises. The argument can be made that (from a Grantian perspective) Taylor's expressivism is simply more modern technology, resulting from the affinity between the acts of expressing and willing. This critique of Taylor's expressivism will be fleshed out below.

In the present chapter, I will analyze both replies to instrumentalism. Perhaps the greatest divide between Grant and Taylor and their responses to instrumentalism is that the former looks to pre-modern – that is, classical and pre-Augustinian Christian – sources, while the latter provides a perceptibly modern perspective. Taylor's reply to instrumentalism is modern in at least two ways. First, as discussed in the second chapter, Taylor's notion of an expressive self is founded on an anthropology that arose as a counter to the Enlightenment view of the human. Taylor himself argues that Herder's expressivism is radically modern because a notion of expressive subjectivity opposes the classical Aristotelian view of human life. The second major way that Taylor's view is modern concerns the role of technology. For Taylor, as will be discussed below, the fact that technology consists of powerful moral sources means that a turning away from instrumental hegemony need not include a denial of technology *tout court*. According to Taylor, a technology bolstered by both expressivism and the Christian demand for charity provides for a suitable – indeed, the best – response to problems of scarcity. Technology, when understood appropriately, can serve as an irreplaceable measure for dealing with disease, human suffering, and hunger in a systematic and global way.

In the section that follows, I will look at Taylor's view of technology. It will be shown how Taylor incorporates technology into his philosophy through a revival of moral sources. By stressing the moral sources of technological development, Taylor argues that we can "enframe" technology outside of the context of domination. Following this, I will provide a Grantian rejoinder to Taylor's expressivism and view of technology. The argument will be made that, from a Grantian perspective, Taylor's understanding of technology is inadequate and overlooks the centrality of the will in instrumentalist domination. For Grant, the will is the primal affirmation that shaped the west technologically, and it is the will to technology that separates the modern from the pre-modern. Consequently, on this view, only a pre-modern perspective that rejects a view of humans as wills can viably respond to technology as mastery.

Taylor on Technology

Like Grant, Taylor recognizes the moral and political pitfalls of technology as mastery. And like Grant, Taylor understands that the danger of technology stems from the objectification of and disengagement from that which stands before us. Taylor reasons,

In objectifying or neutralizing something, we declare our separation from it, our moral independence. Naturalism neutralizes nature, both without us, and in ourselves. This stance of separation is what blocks us. It prevents us from opening ourselves to the élan of nature, both within and without. One of the great objections against Enlightenment disengagement was that it created barriers and divisions: between humans and nature; and perhaps even more grievously within humans and themselves; and then also, as a further consequence, between human and human.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 383.

The separation between the subject and her environment fractures the continuity between the individual and universal subjectivity fostered within an expressivist view. Within a framework of technology as mastery, the subject sees the world as object, and as Grant would put it, stands over it. Additionally, largely because of the impact of Cartesian dualism, this objectification can even be directed at one's own self. This self-objectification principally occurs because of the Cartesian scepticism concerning empirical reality, and the parallel denial of the body's senses. On this view, our body is an object in some way discontinuous with the rational self.¹⁹³ Within this dualistic conception of the human, it is conjectured that our rational part has the potential to rule over our physical or sensual self.

Also in line with Grant, Taylor holds the view that technology understood as a means to overcome that which threatens us tends to lead to technology as domination or mastery. Taylor comments on the ideal of self-determining freedom fed by instrumentalism, identifying it as a precursor to technology as mastery:

[Moderns hold the view that] we are free when we can remake the conditions of our own existence, when we can dominate the things that dominate us. Obviously this ideal helps to lend even greater importance to technological control over our world; it helps to enframe instrumental reason in a project of domination, rather than serving to limit it in the name of other ends.¹⁹⁴

In this excerpt from Taylor, we can recognize something like a Grantian recognition of the relationship between freedom as human essence and technology. When we attempt to dominate that which stands against us, we come to conceptualize our freedom through technology within a framework of domination.

¹⁹³ Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*. 102-103.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 101.

Nevertheless, for Taylor, it is essential that “rich moral sources” have fed the development of technology. Too often, he argues, debates about technology come down to a polarized dispute between “boosters” and “knockers.” The boosters of instrumentalism envision technology so instrumentally and atomistically that they ignore the moral sources that underpin technology. Conversely, the knockers tend to see technology only in terms of domination.¹⁹⁵ What these polarized views seem to overlook, Taylor claims, is that technology has been essential to overcoming scarcity and relieving human suffering. In other words, while technology *can* be about mastery, it is often motivated by *charity*. A fundamental fact of technology – identified by Bacon – is that the thrust behind the “new science was not only epistemological but also moral.”¹⁹⁶ In other words, science has a humanistic side:

[Instrumental] reason comes to us with its own rich moral background. It has by no means been simply empowered by an overdeveloped *libido dominandi*. And yet it all too often seems to serve the ends of greater control, of technological mastery. Retrieval of the richer moral background can show that it doesn’t need to do this, and indeed that in many cases it is betraying the moral background in doing so.¹⁹⁷

By retrieving and stressing the moral ideals that underpin technology, Taylor argues that technology can be accessed for charitable purposes without being characterized by a *libido dominandi*.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 96.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 104.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 105.

Taylor posits that we need to seek an “alternative enframing of technology” outside of the framework of domination.¹⁹⁸ To overcome technology as domination, Taylor claims, we need to move away from an understanding of technology only within “the context of an enterprise of ever-increasing control, of an ever-receding frontier of resistant nature, perhaps animated by a sense of power and freedom.”¹⁹⁹ Technology conceived as such – that is, as control animated by power and freedom – will tend to lean towards domination. Consequently, Taylor argues that technology can and should instead be enframed *morally*, as an ideal “in the service of an ethic of benevolence towards real flesh and blood people.”²⁰⁰ Technology and disengaged reason should be understood as ideals that further this moral end.

Furthermore, this alternative enframing requires and is based upon a re-conceptualization of the content of human agency. Humans can no longer be understood “as the disembodied ghost of disengaged reason, inhabiting an objectified machine.”²⁰¹ For Taylor, it is this scientific view of the human that leads to the enframing of technology within the context of domination. For an alternative enframing of technology in the service of an ethic of benevolence, Taylor argues that we must respect that humans are “embodied, dialogical, [and] temporal.”²⁰² In other words, and not surprisingly, this alternative enframing calls for us to respect key aspects of human agency described in

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 106. As Taylor himself acknowledges, his discussion of enframing draws greatly from Heidegger and his essay “The Question Concerning Technology.” See Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*. Footnote 55. Notably, Taylor’s use of a notion of enframing allows him to avoid a theory that speaks of *controlling* technology in a particular way, such as for humanistic ends. He recognizes that the latter approach to technology – that of control – is itself technological. Consequently, Taylor wisely adapts Heidegger’s language.

¹⁹⁹ Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*. 106.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 106.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 106.

²⁰² Ibid. 106.

Taylor's expressivist anthropology. Taylor's expressivism provides a framework that envisions the human as: 1.) a unity, where body and mind cannot be understood dualistically; 2.) embodied and consequently requiring a certain level of communion with nature; and 3.) dialogically connected to her interlocutors, because subjects need recognition. In light of this potential alternative enframing of technology that incorporates an expressivist anthropology and a demand for charity, Taylor claims that technology need not be about the domination of nature by rational power and freedom. He states, "Although there is a bent or slide towards the stance of dominance, nothing says that we *have* to live our technology this way. The other modes are open."²⁰³

An obvious strength in Taylor's position is that he seems to be able to save technology from the context of pure dominance. He challenges instrumental hegemony through expressivism, yet uses expressivism as a basis for a proposed enframing of technology that allows it to be used in the service of an ethic of benevolence. In other words, Taylor's perspective maintains a place for technology in the service of charity. Technology enframed within a framework founded on rich moral sources acts as a bulwark against scarcity and human suffering. As we will see below, Grant's philosophy of technology is deficient on this point, and provides no substantive resolution for the rejection of technology vis-à-vis the Christian demand of charity as a systematic response to human suffering.

²⁰³ Ibid. 107. Original emphasis.

A Grantian Critique of Expressivism

As shown in the last section, Taylor utilizes a notion of enframing to resuscitate the moral content of technology. Taylor provides a theory of technology that departs from the framework that envisions freedom and power in the service of mastery. According to Taylor, we are not forced ineluctably to enframe technology as mastery. As he puts it, there are other modes of technology available to us. However, it is arguable that from a Grantian perspective this view of technology is naïve. A Grantian would argue that Taylor's position is both persuasive and attractive because it is easy and does not look closely enough at the problem of technology. More specifically, a Grantian would claim that Taylor underestimates technology, and does not recognize freedom as will as the driving force behind technology as mastery.

To understand why Taylor's version of technology is not deep enough from a Grantian perspective, it would be necessary to be able to show that an expressivist ontology of the human is consistent with a notion of the human essence as will. For Grant, the inclusion of an ontological conception of freedom – as opposed to a political one – in a theory of human nature is problematic because such a view tends to bring about a conception of humans as wills. This account of freedom is best avoided, Grant argues, because such a view allows us falsely to understand ourselves to be free when we re-make the world. He writes, “[Freedom] becomes dangerous when it is tied to will, and it comes to mean man's [sic] power to make the world as he wants.”²⁰⁴ By contrast, a key claim for expressivism, as noted in chapter two, is that the freedom of the subject is essential for expressive subjectivity, because free expression is necessary for the

²⁰⁴ Grant, "Conversation: Theology and History." 106.

realization and clarification of the self. To show that expressivism is itself technological, the Grantian would need as such to demonstrate that free expression is an extension or analogue of the will.

In order to recognize the Grantian point that a common thread runs through both expression and a concept of will, it is important to recall two features of the will as mentioned briefly in chapter three. First, the will only manifests itself through the negation of what is. Grant writes in *Time as History*, “As Hegel so clearly expounded, doing is in some sense *always negation*. It is the determination that what is present shall not be; some other state shall.”²⁰⁵ Second, a view of the human as will negates the notion that being is good. Because the will only manifests itself in negation of the what is, being through acts of human will is always negated. If being is continually negated through willed action, “what is” can never be apprehended as good, but instead as that which must be overcome and negated. In light of this argument, it is clear that from a Grantian view, Platonism is incommensurable with Hegelian dialectics. On the one hand, for the Hegelian, universal subjectivity, or *Geist*, expresses or manifests itself in negation through a dialectical movement towards a higher synthesis. On the other hand, for the (Grantian) Platonist, negation through acts of will amounts to violence against being, and this negation of being does away with our potential to recognize goodness through the medium of instantiated reality. Grant’s allegiance is clearly with Plato here. Moreover,

²⁰⁵ Grant, *Time as History*. 27. Emphasis added.

and perhaps not surprisingly, the Grantian critique of expressivism presented here is essentially a Platonic argument against Hegelianism.²⁰⁶

In order to show the alleged affinity between expressing and willing, let us briefly recall how Grant portrays the latter. Following Nietzsche, Grant describes the will as the determination to carry out one's purposes within history.²⁰⁷ This is exemplified in the use of the word "will" as an expression of "our determination to do," as well as its use as an auxiliary for the future tense.²⁰⁸ Willing, then, is not fundamentally an activity that finds its locus in the realm of thought. Instead, the will is manifested as action within the context of historical reality, or as *doing*. Furthermore, this action is motivated by our determination to achieve our purposes, to attain our ends. Moreover, on Grant's Platonic view, this action of the will in historical reality is necessarily "negative," because doing negates being.

Like the understanding of humans as will, which develops (according to Grant's historical account) out of an ontological account of freedom as first seen in Augustine's doctrine of free will, Taylor portrays expression as by a subject that is essentially free (as per his anthropology). On this point, there is a similarity between expressivism and will.

²⁰⁶ In his second appendix to *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, added in 1966, Grant acknowledges his preference for Plato over Hegel. Grant notes that his discontentment with Hegelian philosophy was due largely to the influence of Jacques Ellul and Leo Strauss. See Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. 122. We can see Grant's debt to Strauss on this point in "Tyranny and Wisdom." There, Grant writes, "Strauss...interprets Hegel's moral-political teaching as founded on Machiavellian or Hobbesian teaching. He maintains that the teaching about master and slave is directly based on Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature. That is, Hegel as much as Hobbes constructs his political doctrine on the assumption 'that man as man is thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints or as a being that as guided by nothing but a desire for recognition.' But the Hobbesian state of nature cannot be reconciled with the conception of nature common to the classical political philosophers, who asserted the beneficence nature or the primacy of the Good." Grant declares that this Straussian criticism of Hegel is accurate from his view. See Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom." 104-105.

²⁰⁷ Grant, *Time as History*. 21.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 17.

However, unlike the will (on Grant's account), expression is now intimately tied to thought. On this point, Herder's expressivism was revolutionary in the philosophy of language. Out of Herder's theory of language, the formative argument that clarity in our thought requires expression through some medium continues to be influential in contemporary debates about the relation between thought and language. The place of expression in constituting the mental life of a subject provides an important separation between expressing and willing. Nevertheless, even though he argues that expression is necessary to clarify thought, Taylor asserts that expression does not take place within the mind of the subject. Instead, he claims that "the inescapable medium of expression is *external reality*."²⁰⁹ Similar to willing, expression takes place within the realm of empirical reality.

Does the fact that expression is manifested external to the subject mean that expression for Taylor is the same as acting or doing? In "Action as Expression," Taylor responds to precisely this question.²¹⁰ He argues that expression is closely related to both our desire for something and our action that manifests itself to acquire that something. He states, "[There] is a reason to speak of action as the natural expression of desire...[Expression] manifests desire by embodying it in public space."²¹¹ Or, alternatively put, "The natural expression of wanting is trying to get."²¹² In other words, action is the manifestation of our expression of desire. We begin with an aspiration towards a particular end (desire). This desire may not be actualized or expressed.

²⁰⁹ Taylor, *Hegel*. 129.

²¹⁰ Charles Taylor, "Action as Expression," in *Intention and Intentionality*, ed. Cora Diamond and Jenny Teichman (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979). 73.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 89.

²¹² *Ibid.* 87.

However, when a desire is manifested as expression in public space – that is, outside of the mental realm of the subject – it is embodied as action. Consequently, Taylor’s view of expression is not exactly synonymous with action. Desire, expression, and action are closely linked but not coextensive with one another. However, Taylor *does* hold the view that expression *publicly manifested* is actualized *as action* in physical reality.

If we accept the Grantian premise that doing or action always negates being, then it may seem *prima facie* that expressivism does indeed manifest itself as negation. However, it is important to note that Grant does not claim that all action or negation is *will*. Such a claim would be ludicrous, for it would imply that all human action – including selfless acts of charity, or even purely causal involuntary movement – are acts of will as mastery, and therefore technological. What makes an action an act of will for Grant is that it is done by a subject that understands itself to be fundamentally a free agent aimed at realizing its *own* purposes in the world. For Grant, this understanding of subjectivity is contrary to the view that envisions the subject as moved to action, say through recognition of the good, or by the grace of God. In other words, Grant sees the will to technology to be beyond an objective conception of good and evil, and as such non-receptive to it.

Must we then accept the Grantian charge that the expressive self, like the will, negates what is and undermines the view that being is good? We saw above in chapter two that it is through expression that a subject makes herself determinate, but it would seem that Taylor also holds that it is through expression that a subject acts on her desires. Moreover, the Herderian theory of subjectivity advocated by Taylor states that the “human form involves an inner force *imposing itself on external reality, perhaps against*

external obstacles.”²¹³ Furthermore, Taylor’s expressivism accompanies an ontology of the human that stresses human freedom. Because of these facets of Taylor’s expressivist anthropology, there appears to be a certain plausibility to the Grantian argument that expressivism can be understood technologically insofar as it overlooks the animating power of the will in technological mastery. To recapitulate briefly, expressivism would seem to be included under Grant’s critique of the will in the following ways: 1.) both arise from a view of the human as essentially free; 2.) both manifest themselves in doing or action; 3.) in both cases, action arises from our desire to achieve certain ends; and 4.) if we accept a Grantian framework, both manifest themselves in negation of the what is.

Thus far, it seems that Grant’s understanding of technology and the role that free will plays in mastery is indeed capable of providing a legitimate critique against certain aspects of Taylor’s expressivism. Grant’s philosophy of technology demonstrates the danger of freedom when it is associated with will as mastery. The notion of humans as will appears to be strongly related to mastery of nature – both human and non-human – because it provides the conceptual framework that allows us to envision what stands before us as an object that we can control and re-create to help us achieve our ends.

However, it is more doubtful whether a case can be made for the stronger point that a common thread runs between expression and the will to technology, for a crucial determining factor in identifying an action as will to technology on Grant’s view is that the subject committing an act sees herself beyond an objective notion of the good. The action must be understood by the subject to be beyond moral limits outside of those

²¹³ Taylor, *Hegel*. 15. Emphasis added.

imposed by the subject herself – she must see herself as beyond good and evil.²¹⁴

Arguably, Taylor's theism does not allow him to envision the subject in such a way. An important part of Taylor's philosophical project has been to challenge moral subjectivity, and to revive more publicly binding moral sources such as theism (as Taylor understands it). The importance of theism in general and Christianity in particular for Taylor is clearly evident in his recent shift in scholarly focus to the sources of secularity, but it is also present in a muted way in Taylor's previous scholarship.²¹⁵ In light of Taylor's allegiance to these non-subjectivist moral sources, it seems that the claim that expressivism is technological is seriously limited. Taylor's expressivism may depict humans as essentially free – a view that the Grantian would be forced to reject, considering the relationship described by Grant between an ontological concept of freedom and the will to technology. However, Taylor's deep theistic affinities seem to preclude expression outside of a conception of the good. On these grounds, it does not seem that Taylor's expressivism can be understood as analogous to technology as mastery.

Adding to the limits set by theism (and other hypergoods) on human action is Taylor's expressivist anthropology itself. It was claimed in chapter two that Taylor draws on aspects of Herderian and Hegelian philosophy to give us a vision of human subjectivity that is antithetical to the instrumentalist anthropology that arose out of the

²¹⁴ Drawing on the Nietzschean insight that moderns are “beyond good and evil,” Grant describes why the will to technology recognizes no limits: “Once we have recognized what we can now will to create through our technology, why should we limit such creation by basing our systems of ‘justice’ on presuppositions which have been shown to be archaic by the very coming to be of technology....Once we have recognized ‘history’ as the imposing of our wills on an accidental world, does not ‘justice’ take on a new content?” Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*. 80.

²¹⁵ For example, in the final chapter of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor states his allegiance to “certain theistic perspectives” – which he identifies as “Judeo-Christian theism” – over naturalist accounts. He claims that the exclusion of theistic perspectives from modern moral discourse results in a “stifling of the spirit” that moderns had best overcome. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 517-521.

Enlightenment. Moreover, the expressivism that Taylor advocates includes as a central point the requirement for mutual recognition. Particularly because of this demand for recognition, the Grantian claim that expressivism is an aspect of will to mastery is untenable. While Taylor's expressivism does have a notion of *willed* acts through expression, it is difficult to make the argument that such expression manifests itself as will *as mastery* in light of key elements of Taylor's anthropology, such as the view that a self exists only amongst other selves. This Taylorian tenet is incongruous with the mastery of others as objects that takes place within the context of technology. To envision other humans as an objects is to deny that they are selves or subjects. Such a move, on Taylor's view, would be detrimental to one's own subjectivity.

A further problem with the Grantian critique of expressivism arises because Grant's view relies heavily on Platonic ontology, and a rejection of this view of Platonism would be another strong objection to the Grantian critique of expressivism. The more serious problem, however, is that this potential difficulty in Grant's view also undermines his own response to technology. This issue will be discussed below.

Charity and the Need for Technology

In the section above, I examined a potential Grantian criticism of expressivism. Although I argued against the stronger claim that a common thread runs between expression and will, I also argued that there is something to the Grantian criticism that certain facets of Taylor's expressivism are unable to shed their proximity to will. Taylor's expressivist anthropology supports the view that freedom is an indispensable part of subjectivity, and the idea that freedom is part of the human essence is central to the will

as mastery on Grant's perspective. Grant's conception of justice consciously diverges from counter-technological views that include and even embrace notions of freedom and will. Indeed, on Grant's view, a notion of self as will is anathema to the concept of decreation that he integrates into his account of justice. On this line of reasoning, it thus far seems that Grant offers a superior argument against instrumental hegemony, or more specifically, technology as mastery.

However, it is notable that Grant vacillates in his critique of technology when it comes to the technological response to charity. For the best part of his mature philosophical writings, Grant wants to deny technology root and branch, yet seems unable to look past the gains in charity and human dignity that have resulted from technology. If we recall the booster-knocker polarities described by Taylor, Grant does not fall easily into either camp. On the one hand, it would seem that Grant sits somewhere in the knockers' camp, since he sees technology only in terms of domination. On the other hand, even though he holds such a view, Grant like Taylor is quite aware of the moral sources that have fed technology (as discussed above in Grant's historical account in chapter three). It is notable that the acknowledgement of the moral imperative behind technology is enough for Taylor to retain a place for technology in his perspective. Conversely, for Grant, the fact that technology is rooted at a very deep level in western Christianity is cause for him to "rethink" his theism.

Although Grant sees the need to turn away from triumphalist dispensations of Christianity, the call to charity is a key and undeniable teaching of the Gospels on Grant's reading. Furthermore, the call for charity is closely linked to Grant's conception of justice. The link between the two can be formulated as follows: 1.) justice demands that

we give others their due; 2.) Christianity demands that we love our neighbour as ourselves; 3.) the due of others then is to be treated with love, and this manifests itself in charity.²¹⁶ Regardless of the Christian church's failure to live out consistently this divine call to charity, Grant argues that the demand is certainly encapsulated in the teachings of Jesus. Grant declares,

At the height of the gospels, we are shown the moment when a tortured being says of his torturers that their due is to be forgiven. Despite all the horrors perpetrated by Christians, both in the west and more particularly outside the west, despite all the failures of Christians to understand the consequences of justice for law, nevertheless the rendering to each being is its due, in the light of the perfection of that rendering, could not be publicly denied among Christians. Indeed Christianity calls human beings not only to the reasonable decencies of the particular purposes and goods of this or that situation, but to be perfect as God in heaven is perfect.²¹⁷

It is certainly the case that Grant's own view of Christianity demands charity.

Furthermore, the fact remains that technology has historically served charitable purposes.

Indeed, the innumerable instances of humanitarian charity, motivated by an ethic of benevolence, move Taylor to incorporate certain modes of technology into his perspective on instrumental hegemony. Conversely, Grant's view is unable to do this because technology on his view is always manifested as the will of the subject negating what is. This factor, especially as it relates to cybernetic modes of technology, forces Grant to reject technology *tout court*.

²¹⁶ For Grant, the link between love and charity is self-evident. For example, he notes that one of the Greek words for love, *agape*, is best translated as "charity". See Grant, "Faith and the Multiversity," 73.

²¹⁷ Ibid. 54-55. It is clear that for Grant, charity is the *sine qua non* for any dispensation of Christianity. In his "Introduction to Simone Weil," he writes, "[By] whatever language one may choose to define Christianity, it is impossible to escape the statement that charity is at its centre." (cited in Christian, *George Grant: A Biography*. 419, footnote 14). Furthermore, as noted by William Christian, Grant believed that Christianity exceeded Greek philosophy "because charity was the highest duty for a Christian." See Christian, *George Grant: A Biography*. 68-69.

As a result of this condemnation of all forms of technology, the following questions must be posed to Grant: How are we to attempt to overcome scarcity, disease, and human suffering, as *agape* seems to require of the Christian, without technology? Furthermore, how do we give others their due – that is, how do we treat them justly – in situations where technology provides the best remedy, as is perhaps best exemplified by healthcare that requires the products of science? Grant was clearly aware of this problem, but he never wrote anything that adequately deals with the status of charity without technology. Instead, we see a palpable level of hesitancy in Grant's condemnation of technology insofar as it relates to charity. Consider the following excerpt from "Thinking About Technology":

Modern human beings since their beginnings have been moved by the faith that mastery of nature would lead to the overcoming of hunger and labour, disease and war on so widespread a scale that at last we could build the world-wide society of free and equal people. *One must never think about technological destiny without looking at the justice in these hopes.*²¹⁸

The vacillation in Grant is clear. His philosophical formulation requires him to turn away from technology, but his embrace of justice and charity force him to recognize that technology has contributed positively to the systematic overcoming of human suffering. We see the same irresolution in Grant's criticism of Strauss in "Tyranny and Wisdom." There he writes,

[No] writing about technological progress and the rightness of imposing limits on it should avoid expressing the fact that the poor, the diseased, the hungry and the tired can hardly be expected to contemplate any such limitations with the equanimity of the philosopher.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Grant, "Thinking About Technology."15. Emphasis added.

²¹⁹ Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom."103.

Again, Grant recognizes that charity has been advanced by technology. This moral gain cannot be simply ignored by the critic of technology.

Unfortunately, Grant does not provide an adequate account of how his philosophy of technology can be better combined with his view of justice and charity.²²⁰ Although Grant takes the role of the will in technology as mastery seriously, his philosophy leaves technology and the requirements for charity at odds with one another. On these grounds, as noted above, a Taylorian perspective is more successful than a Grantian one: Taylor's employment of an alternative enframing of technology allows him to critique technology as mastery but retains technology in the service of charity.

Expressivism or Justice?

In chapters two and three, I presented George Grant and Charles Taylor's philosophical responses to instrumental hegemony. Taylor's perspective brings together Herderian expressivism with an element of Hegelian dialectic, resulting in a unique and important expressivist anthropology. This Taylorian anthropology challenges the Enlightenment naturalistic conception of the human which consists of an objectification of human nature, is highly Cartesian – that is, dualistic – and privileges the rational to the exclusion of the emotive self. Expressivism, on the other hand, embraces a notion of the self that is realized through expression. Drawing on Herder's philosophy of language, Taylor makes the case that expression takes place through the medium of language. Furthermore, Taylor provides us with a capacious definition of language that incorporates

²²⁰ This criticism of Grant's inability to combine his account of technology with the Christian demand for charity is also made in Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality, and Wilderness*. 90; and Angus, "Socrates' Joke."

both what might be described as “rational” expressive media (spoken language, prose) as well as more emotive media of expression (dance, poetry, sculpture, painting, music, etc.). Finally, Taylor’s perspective incorporates a view of technology that counters technological domination while retaining science in the service of benevolence. He achieves this through his application of an alternative enframing to technology that stresses the charitable impetus for scientific advancement. This alternate enframing provides a framework that discourages a notion of technology as mastery.

Conversely, Grant’s perspective holds that we should turn away from all modes of technology. He comes to this conclusion through a historical and philosophical account of the development of technology. Grant argues that technology as mastery arose out of the primal western affirmation that humans are wills. The role of the view of the human as will in relation to technology was brought to Grant’s attention through the philosophy of Nietzsche. However, Grant’s historical analysis eventually caused him to identify Augustine as the initial source of the will to technology, and this insight forced Grant to re-evaluate western Christianity. Grant argues that when we perceive ourselves as free wills and see the world through the lens of technology, we are bound to view external reality as that which stands against us and must therefore be stood over and overcome through acts of will. Largely because of his concern regarding cybernetic technologies, Grant argues that we should turn away from technology and, correspondingly, the view of humans as free wills. Grant turns to the western revelatory inheritance – in other words, Christianity and Platonism – to establish a notion of justice that demands that we give others their due. His view of justice incorporates a notion of decreation, drawn from Simone Weil, which claims that we should surrender our “I” – or, will – for the sake of

agape, or charitable love. Grant maintains that only through a rejection of the self as will can we revive a proper notion of justice wherein humans are not treated as means or supply, because justice on this view is what humans are fitted for.

Both Taylor and Grant put forward a unique and forceful response to the problem of instrumental hegemony. However, as discussed above in the present chapter, Taylor's philosophy exceeds Grant's insofar as the former incorporates technology in certain modes that underscore an ethic of benevolence. Moreover, Taylor's view leaves us with a means to respond to the demands of charity through an enframing of technology that emphasizes moral sources. This facet of Taylor's perspective adds to the attractiveness of his expressivist anthropological account as a challenge to Enlightenment naturalism.

Furthermore, Grant's philosophy of technology stresses the role of the will as mastery in technology as domination. As discussed above, the Grantian view that the will to mastery emerges from an ontological conception of freedom is capable of providing a legitimate criticism of certain elements of Taylor's expressivism. Because of his hyper-awareness of the role of will in technology as mastery, and the relationship between an ontological notion of freedom and its proximity to will, Grant's turns away from a modern liberal response to technology. Instead, he draws on classical sources to give an account of justice that acts as a bulwark against the objectification of humans, and consequently, cybernetic modes of technology. However, Grant's view also denies technology root and branch. As pointed out above, this total rejection of technology creates an obstacle for the realization of modernity's charitable objectives. Consequently, Grant's response to technology leaves us with no answers to the problems of scarcity, disease, and human suffering.

Although both the Taylorian and Grantian views have obvious strengths, they cannot both be accepted because Grant's view – if true – seriously undercuts Taylor's. Taylor provides a perspective that seems to be against technology as mastery, but if his expressivism is an extension of the will to mastery as the Grantian will want to claim, then it must be rejected because it can only lead to more technology as mastery. However, as I argued above, the weaker Grantian claim that Taylor's expressivism contains certain facets that are related to will as mastery is a legitimate criticism, while the stronger claim that expressivism is continuous with the will as mastery is more doubtful.

Another problem exists in the Grantian critique of Taylor's expressivism, and as noted above, this additional problem has critical ramifications for Grant's reply to technology. I want to argue here that the Grantian critique of expressivism is tenuous at best because it relies heavily on an ontological interpretation of Plato. The claim that I am making is that Grant can only sustain his critique of expressivism through a very specific reading of Plato's doctrine of the forms. As claimed above, Grant's criticism of Taylor's expressivism is essentially a Platonic critique of Hegelianism. More specifically, Grant founds his assessment of expressivism on the Platonic ontological claim that being is good. This ontology claims that empirical reality is comprised of instantiations of ideas, or what Plato calls forms. On this view, through instantiated reality we are given access to the good. Grant's presentation of Platonism seems to rest on an acceptance of this literal and metaphysical reading of Plato's theory of the forms. As a result, Grant's Platonism is radically *idealist*, and it is his idealism that underpins his view that being is good.

There is no doubt that Plato's contribution to western intellectual thought is immeasurable. However, the interpretation of Plato that Grant embraces is certainly at odds with how moderns view the world.²²¹ The acceptance of Plato's metaphysics as presented in Grant's reading of the theory of the forms seems to require a massive reorientation in how we encounter the world. For example, how moderns grasp the world empirically or "matter-of-factly" has been integrally shaped by science. The disciplines of physics, chemistry, and biology have inestimably influenced how we understand humankind and the universe around us. One need only consider the impact of atomic theory and Darwinism as examples of scientific perspectives that are deeply entrenched, and that seem to challenge Platonic metaphysics. Furthermore, the way we understand ourselves and the natural world intellectually also seems to be in opposition to Grant's view of Platonic metaphysics. An excellent example here is the way that we conceive of history and how it plays an important role in many contemporary philosophical formulations, of which Taylor's philosophical anthropology is an exemplar. Moderns take history seriously in a way that a Platonist cannot because the latter's perspective is ahistorical.

If Grant's critique of expressivism requires the claim that being is good – as I would argue it does – and this view is founded on a reading of Plato that stresses the metaphysical nature of the theory of the forms, then Grant's critique of Taylor's expressivism is certainly limited in the context of modernity. The shifts in orientation necessary for moderns to become Grantian-Platonists seem too great. Our modern

²²¹ Taylor offers a similar critique of Iris Murdoch, arguing that she gives away too much to Plato's metaphysics. He claims, "No one today can accept the Platonic metaphysics of the Ideas as the crucial explanation of the shape of the cosmos." See Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. 93-96. See also Kerr. 98.

intellectual and empirical sensibilities seem too great an obstacle for any widespread acceptance of Platonism as Grant presents it.

Furthermore, Grant's Platonic idealism and ahistoricism also seem at odds with his Christianity, and correspondingly, his view of charity. Christianity cannot be just idealism because it is necessarily historical. This is the case because incarnation is an historical event and not simply an idea for the Christian. Similarly, acts of charity are manifested in historical reality, not in the realm of ideas. Indeed, it does not seem clear how Platonic ahistoricism and idealism can be reconciled with Christianity and the incarnational necessity of history. Grant does not discuss this tension, but his vacillation regarding technology appears to be symptomatic of his inability to reconcile Christianity with his Platonism. On the one hand, Christianity compels him to attend to the requirements of history, such as the need to extend charity on a large scale to overcome human suffering, disease, and hunger because of the deficiencies of nature. On the other hand, Platonism leads to his view that technology must be denied root and branch because being is good and the will to technology always manifests itself in negation.

As noted above, the tension between Grant's interpretation of Platonism and the way moderns understand the world also weakens the power of his account of justice. For the reasons discussed above, few moderns will find the Platonic ontology advocated by Grant to be philosophically convincing. This has obvious ramifications for his notion of a received structure of justice, which for him is deeply rooted in a literal reading of Plato's theory of the forms. Similarly, the Christian notion of justice embraced by Grant may resonate more strongly with moderns than does Platonism, but is still not philosophically convincing for many. Consequently, because Grant's account of a received structure of

justice is founded in a Christian-Platonist perspective that seems to be based as much in faith as it is in thought, its viability as the best response to technology is significantly diminished.

Of course, Taylor also sees theism in general and the Judeo-Christian tradition in particular as a viable and valuable moral source, as well as an important response to instrumentalism. As Taylor himself notes, theistic issues “have been at the center of his concern for decades,” but have remained implicit because of the “nature of philosophical discourse...which has to try to persuade honest thinkers of any and all metaphysical or theological commitments.”²²² Taylor recognizes the difficulties that arise when theistic perspectives are introduced into philosophical debate. Consequently, Taylor’s philosophical project underscores that theistic moral sources are significant, but also that they represent only one possibility amongst a few key others, such as the expressivism examined in this thesis.

Although this section of the thesis has highlighted the ways that Taylor’s view is preferable to Grant’s, it is vital that the Grantian philosophy of technology is not simply dismissed. George Grant’s philosophy takes the problem of technology seriously. He provides a historical account that describes the development of the will as mastery, and describes how such a view of the will gave rise to technology. Grant traces how the will arose out of Christianity, and by doing so, stresses how the will to mastery is linked to an ontological conception of freedom, such as that advocated by Augustine and Calvin.

²²² Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?,” in *A Catholic Modernity: Charles Taylor’s Marianist Award Lecture, with Responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain*, ed. James Heft (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). 13.

Moreover, Grant spent much of his intellectual life wrestling with what is arguably the most influential philosophy of technology, that of Martin Heidegger. Notably, the notion of enframing employed by Taylor is Heideggerian, suggesting that he also takes the work of Heidegger seriously. However, it is in Grant's philosophy that Heidegger plays a central role, and much of Grant's scholarly contributions for the last decades of his life are perhaps best described as a meditation on Heidegger's technological account. Indeed, Grant's view of justice was meant as a reply to what he saw as a serious flaw in Heidegger. Arthur Davis describes this Grantian objection:

Grant differed from Heidegger...in drawing attention to the fact that modern science allows no place for a concept of justice based on the way things are in nature and in human nature. If we are only accidents in an implacable universe, Grant argued, there is no reason to be just. For Heidegger, the concepts of nature and human nature as well as the Platonic concept of justice were part of the 'metaphysical' thinking we need to overcome.²²³

It is undeniable that Grant's philosophical work takes the problem of technology seriously. His deep understanding of how modernity has been affected by the combining of knowing and making forced Grant to look beyond modern responses to technology as mastery. It is this rationale that led Grant to Platonism and Christianity as the strongest response to technology and will as mastery.

Nevertheless, in light of the problems with the Grantian perspective discussed above, it is arguable that Taylor's critique of and response to instrumentalism is superior to that of Grant. As claimed above, Taylor's expressivism acts as a countermeasure against technology in its cybernetic forms while retaining a view of technology that serves the objectives of charity. While Grant's view of justice also provides an important

²²³ Davis. 144.

response to technology as mastery, his inability to incorporate technology in the service of charity is a weakness that is absent in Taylor's perspective.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINAL RECAPITULATION

I argued in chapter four that Taylor's expressivist anthropology and Grant's account of justice each challenge the problem of instrumentalism. Furthermore, I considered the Grantian critique of Taylor's expressivism which argues that the latter is too closely related to the concept of will. I argued that this Grantian view made two claims, the weaker point that certain parts of expressivism parallel a notion of will as mastery, and the stronger point that Taylor's expressivism is an extension of the technological will. While the weaker claim provides a valid criticism of expressivism, I argued against the stronger claim, largely in light of Taylor's attraction to and advocacy of publicly binding hyper-goods such as theism. Furthermore, the argument was made that the Grantian criticism of Taylor's expressivism rests heavily on a reading of Platonism that seems irreconcilable with modernity. In light of the massive reorientation that seems necessary for moderns to accept Platonic metaphysics, I argued that Grant's critique of expressivism is limited. In addition, the irreconcilability of Plato and modernity makes it difficult to advocate Grant's account of justice as the best response to technology. While Grant may be applauded by some for his argument that humans are not beyond good and evil, and are bound by a given structure of justice, such a view as he presents is unlikely to be philosophically convincing for many moderns

Finally, Taylor's view of technology was argued to be preferable to Grant's insofar as charity on a large scale seems to require at least some acceptance of

technology. Taylor's view that we can enframe technology within a context of an ethic of benevolence allows him to incorporate science in the service of charity. Grant's view of technology, conversely, provides no recommendations for how to deal systematically with the problem of scarcity.

The thesis began with each philosopher's critical assessment of instrumentalism. Taylor's critique aims at Enlightenment naturalism and the scientistic anthropology that conceptualizes humans as dualistic, emphasizing human rationality over emotion. Taylor argues that this scientistic view lacks the moral sources to uphold modernity's high moral aspirations. Moreover, Taylor claims that our moral ideals, such as an ethic of benevolence or the demand of charity, require other sources such as expressivism and theism. While Taylor has recently shifted his philosophical focus to consider theism and secularism, it is his expressivism that is more developed and comprises his best response to instrumentalism.

In chapter two, I presented a portrait of Taylor's expressivism that draws most centrally from Herder, but which incorporates what I termed a Hegelian twist. These two sources combine in Taylor's expressivism to provide an ontology of the human that links the unfolding of our "selves" intimately to our interlocutors. Following Hegel's dialectic of recognition, Taylor claims that a self can only exist within webs of interlocution. Taylor reasons that because our self-actualization requires recognition from other *subjects*, we are compelled to extend recognition to our interlocutors to advance their own subjecthood.

Through his argument that subjects can only reach their highest potentialities through both expression and recognition, Taylor gives us an anthropology that seemingly

prohibits cybernetic modes of technology. On Taylor's view, we can only be subjects if our interlocutors are also subjects, and this precludes us from viewing them as objects to be controlled or dominated. His anthropological and philosophical response to instrumentalism does away with technology enframed as domination, but stresses that technology can be alternatively enframed within the context of an ethic of benevolence. Through his account of technology, and particularly through his case for expressivism, Taylor effectively revives what he identifies as one of modernity's key moral sources. Furthermore, Taylor's perspective arguably exceeds Grant's because the former retains certain modes of technology and therefore the means to overcome human suffering, hunger, and disease.

The thesis also presented the Grantian critique of technology. Grant argues that the threat of technology is acutely evident and disturbing when we consider its application to humans. He claims that technology has turned against the freedom of humans, particularly those that have weak public voices or wills, such as the unborn. Indeed, as was shown, the notion of will is central to his philosophy of technology. Because we see ourselves as wills, Grant argues, we envision external reality as that which stands against us and must therefore be overcome through willed action. Moreover, the will to technology creates a framework wherein we see nature as object, or as means and supply for our ends. As the will to mastery has gained in potency, we have increasingly turned our wills against other humans.

Unlike Taylor, who turns to modern sources (i.e. Herder and Hegel) and emphasizes the view that humans are expressively free, Grant forms his response to technology on Platonic and Christian foundations and turns away from the language of

freedom. Grant argues that what is needed is a traditional account of justice as what we are fitted for, rather than a contractual theory that depicts justice as convenience. The account of justice that Grant presents builds on the Platonic views that being is good and that we should love what is. This is bolstered by the Christian demand that justice and charity must be universally extended. Finally, Grant's view of justice incorporates Weil's idea of decreation, which calls on us to sacrifice our wills out of love for the authentic other. Because the will always manifests itself in negation of being, and the being of others is good, Grant argues that justice demands that we forfeit our "I" so that the other can be.

Grant's philosophy of technology and his account of justice provide an important critique and response to cybernetic technologies. Whereas Taylor's view employs a notion of recognition to connect the subject to her interlocutors, Grant demands love for the other, or *agape*, to achieve the same ends. Thus, both perspectives are forcefully against technology as mastery directed at humans. However, as argued in chapter four, Grant's philosophy of technology is limited in two major ways. First, Grant's view is underpinned by a rendering of Platonic ontology that seems unconvincing within the modern context. Second, Grant leaves us no adequate way to deal with the demands of charity as a systematic response to scarcity. His denial of technology in its totality critically limits his overall perspective because he is unable to put forward an alternative means to eliminate human suffering, hunger, and disease – a criticism that cannot be waged against Taylor's view.

In their responses to the problem of instrumentalism, Grant and Taylor both offer ontological perspectives insofar as both say something about human essence. Taylor's

approach is anthropological and claims that humans are essentially subjects that self-actualize through a combination of expression and recognition. Grant's ontology is deeply Platonic and comprises both the idea that being is good and that justice is what we are fitted for. Although Grant and Taylor rely on alternative ontologies, both see instrumental hegemony as a serious problem that requires substantial philosophical examination. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, through their notions of expressivism and justice, both present challenges to instrumentalism that strive to renew our moral sources and oppose technology as mastery.

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