The Political Moralism
of Jacques Ellul

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In recent decades the discipline of political philosophy has become increasingly permeated by a growing body of critical literature that calls into question some of the major philosophical premises of modern political theory. Figures such as Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and others have spawned a renewed interest in a variety of pre-modern modes of thought as a remedy for the various ailments that have emerged alongside the considerable civilizational achievements of the modern West. Based on the recent work *Anarchy and Christianity*, one is now tempted to place the sociologist Jacques Ellul into this category. Ellul is best known for his exhaustive research on the role of science and technology in shaping Western civilization. Works such as *The Technological Society* earned him an international reputation as a persuasive interpreter of the post-industrial world. Part of this reputation stems from Ellul's attempt to understand the contemporary West in explicitly theological terms. With the publication of *Anarchy and Christianity* Ellul has continued this tradition of insisting upon an essentially spiritual response to the problems of modernity.

For the most part, the argument in *Anarchy and Christianity* is quite consistent with Ellul's earlier works in political and social theology, and one may safely conclude that the book is (despite its brevity) a fair representation of Ellul's mature thoughts on political theology. In addition, the book offers the reader a unique glimpse into Ellul's personal convictions on the level of action. That is, we

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are not given a scholarly analysis so much as an extended answer to the question: what shall we do with our lives, given the spiritually debilitating conditions of the technological society?

As such, the book presents the reader with an excellent opportunity to gain insight into the legacy of Jacques Ellul, for he himself must recognize that his final prescription for action will speak loudly, and may in the minds of some overshadow his indisputable academic achievements. From this perspective *Anarchy and Christianity* raises some intriguing questions. The work is a passionate call to social reform on the part of a profoundly spiritual man. This call to reform is grounded in a type of radical, principled moralism that has proven to be quite influential among contemporary critics of progress. For these reasons, *Anarchy and Christianity* invites exploration. How well-grounded is the radical moralism espoused by Ellul, especially in light of his own professed attachment to Christian principles? Why is it that Ellul sees a need to extend his critique beyond the parameters of more traditional critics of modernity, and what are the possible consequences of such an extension? Seeking answers to questions such as these may help shed light on the ability of Ellul's own principles to produce genuine social and political renewal.

The argument in *Anarchy and Christianity* builds on Ellul's previous work on science, society, and technocracy. The enemy in *Anarchy and Christianity* is the "almost infinite growth of power, authority, and social control" that tends to characterize the modern state.[1] According to Ellul, this growth in power can be traced back directly to the power of the technician who stands behind the scenes, "provid[ing] the inspiration and mak[ing] things possible" (AC, 22). As Ellul has argued elsewhere, the scientist and technician are given their power in order that they may soothe the anxious modern soul. They are the priests of the new age, here to grant a new sense of meaning by filling the spiritual void left by the evaporation of traditional religious belief. Attempts to limit their power according to standards of justice that derive from traditional sources are doomed to fail. There is no reason to expect modern science and technology, as theoretically unlimited phenomena, to be limited in practice according to anach-

Technicians the priests of the new age.

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[1] Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 22; hereinafter cited in the text as "AC."

ronistic moral and religious standards. Ellul is convinced that the Western world (democratic or not) faces a rather certain destiny that can only be described as a kind of Brave New World in which all vestiges of our humanity have been subordinated to the imperatives of efficiency and comfort.[2] The amount of social and political control now being exercised is so vast that the ordinary channels of political change have been rendered useless; any voice that opposes the mission of the managerial state is ruled out of bounds in principle. Modern progressivist ideology has all but overwhelmed politics itself; there is no longer any possibility of legal resistance or compromise.

Ellul favors Christian anarchy.

As a result of these circumstances Ellul is convinced that anarchy can be "the only serious challenge" (AC, 22). By associating himself with anarchy, however, Ellul does not intend to dissolve social organizations entirely, and he does not intend destruction for destruction's sake. In fact, he is quite vehement in his opposition to violence in all its forms. Rather, Ellul outlines a form of Christian anarchy which to him is essentially pacifist and works not by means of force but by persuasion. Furthermore, Ellul does not identify with anarchism to the point of discarding the very idea of God. He understands the desire to be free from all political, economic, and intellectual masters; but he is entirely unwilling to reject the internal spiritual order that is brought to bear on the soul that lovingly seeks God. On the most general level, then, his response to modernity is not unlike many others in the post-War period: a rediscovery of some form of personal moral anchor, in opposition to the surrounding sources of disorder, as a way out of the nihilism of the twentieth century.

Admires Anabaptism.

In order to appreciate Ellul's response it is necessary to keep in mind the Biblical source for his views. His anarchism holds that, for true Christians, there is really only one source of genuine authority, and that is Christ. For Ellul the Christian faith "does not bring us into a world of duty and obligation but into a life of freedom" (AC, 4-5). For this reason Ellul sees much to admire in "the true spirit of Anabaptism, which rejects the power of rulers" and is "true anarchy" (AC, 8). Official power, in all its forms, is a fundamental rejection of the true teachings of Christ. Power implies that individuals

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[2] See, for instance, Ellul's classic work *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), especially ch. 5 ("Human Techniques") and ch. 6 ("A Look at the Future").

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somehow lack the ability to find personal fulfillment and therefore must rely on the force of others to provide it for them. Christians must reject this idea, for to accept it means that one denies the essential character of Christ as Liberator. True Christians are under no obligation to obey the political authorities, because, by definition, Christians have been spiritually liberated from the very causes of wickedness. In other words, the law does not apply to true Christians, because true Christians no longer live by law or commandment; they live by love for God. They should be governed by a conscience transformed by Christ, and therefore have no use for official authority.[3]

Interestingly, Ellul extends this notion of spiritual liberation to the church. He is distrustful of an organizing church hierarchy, as well as the institutional authority represented by church officials. In suggesting that the "revelation of Jesus ought not to give rise to a religion," Ellul seems to recognize that it is often the tendency of a church institution with its dogmatic pronouncements to divert attention from the spiritual center of the Christian message. Doctrines and legal pronouncements, he says, fail to do justice to the experiential heart of Christian faith. For instance, he notes the tendency of traditional Christian theology to portray God principally as master and commander of humanity, as opposed to a lover and liberator of humanity. Drawing on a number of scriptural references, Ellul argues that "the biblical God is above all the one who liberates us from all bondage . . . [and] each time he intervenes it is to give us again the air of freedom" (AC, 39). The tendency of churches to focus on doctrinal teaching has produced an air of authority that inverts the true message. Through a form of sophistry disguised as theology, the churches have succeeded in making human commandments out to be the commandments of God. Although he does not say so directly, we can be reasonably sure that, for Ellul, the root cause of this inversion is the desire for earthly power on the part of church officials. No other conclusion may be reasonably drawn from Ellul's recitation of a long list of instances in which church and state have collaborated in authoritarian politics. Ellul declares that "the church is always on the side of the state" (AC, 30).

Opposes hierarchy and authority in Church.

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[3] On this point Ellul expresses his basic agreement with the anarchic tendencies of Christoph Blumhardt, Karl Barth (especially his 1919 commentary on the Epistle to Romans) and Soren Kierkegaard. Concerning the latter, Ellul mentions in particular Vernard Eller's *Kierkegaard and Radical Discipleship* (Princeton, 1968).

While such convictions stem principally from his understanding of the freedom of a Christian, they also stem from his reading of the book of Revelation. In Ellul's view the entire book "is a challenge to political power" (AC, 72). In *Anarchy and Christianity* his remarks are confined to his interpretation of two symbols found in Revelation: the symbol of the two beasts and the symbol of the Great Babylon. Ellul understands the primal beast as representing Rome, and by extension political power in general. It is this power which "has authority, which controls military force, and which compels adoration (*i.e.*, absolute obedience)" (AC, 72). The second beast, in turn, rises out of the earth and "makes all the inhabitants . . . worship the first beast" (AC, 72). Ellul sees the unmistakable sign of political propaganda in the symbolism of the second beast, insofar as the second beast seduces the people with fine speeches and induces them to follow the first beast quite voluntarily. Again, Ellul does not say so directly, but it seems likely that he would place in the camp of the second beast any theologian who would insist upon Christian obedience to civil authority. The second symbol, that of the Great Babylon, contains a similar message about the radical opposition between the majesty of God and the pretensions of all earthly powers, whether they be political or economic. In Ellul's interpretation, power "in every form" is understood as "the great harlot," the seducer of mankind, and "we can expect from it neither justice, nor truth, nor any good—only destruction" (AC, 74). It is for this reason, he says, that the earliest Christian communities were "totally hostile to the state" (AC, 74).

Challenges political power.

As a result of his reading of the Bible Ellul tends toward a form of radical apoliticism that finds concrete expression in a number of specific proposals. For instance, he recommends that the true Christian refrain from all forms of political participation by exercising a radical and thoroughgoing conscientious objection. This would include objection to military service, voting, paying taxes, forced schooling, forced vaccination, and "to all the demands and obligations imposed by our society" (AC, 15). This is not to say that Ellul opposes education in principle, or that he favors the spread of disease. His concern is with the nature of political power itself, seen in the light of Biblical teaching. The "enemy today," he says, is the "omnipotence and omnipresence of administration," which is not only incompetent to teach and cure but can never be trusted to pursue its ostensibly noble ends in a way that respects human freedom

Rejects political participation.

and dignity (AC, 16). The state invariably serves the ends of those in power, despite whatever good intentions may have initially motivated the office-seeker. Whatever the state touches, it destroys. Therefore any form of political participation (even the casting of a ballot) represents a compromise with the forces of corruption. Understandably, then, Ellul refers to the "famous theory of the rule of law" as a "lie from beginning to end" (AC, 16). By the same token he rejects entirely the notion of a just war, on the grounds that no Christian is ever under an obligation to die for the "Great Harlot." On the contrary, for Ellul all Christians are called to a life of purity, one achieved by resisting all forces of evil at every turn.

On one level, Ellul's Christian anarchism may have some appeal, especially for those who take moral and spiritual matters seriously and are thoughtful about topics in political theology. Those who experience the pull of the transcendent, and desire the freedom to orient their existence accordingly, cannot help but rebel at attempts on the part of the modern managerial state to transform persons into fit members of a technique-oriented society. There are times when the state is, as Nietzsche said, the coldest of all cold monsters (AC, 2). In addition, Ellul may be on target when he points to a form of rebellion as an integral part of Christian historical practice. The monastic tradition has existed for centuries as a refuge for the world-weary "rebel" who refuses to compromise with the mundane pursuits of ordinary living. Apoliticism, furthermore, is not confined to the Christian world; in the *Republic* Plato's philosopher, after having seen the beautiful world outside the cave of *doxai*, has little desire to return to the darkness. The "enlightened" may be tempted by Ellul's vision of small, autonomous Christian communities, organized on the margin of all political, financial, administrative, and legal authorities. Such communities, which Ellul refers to as the "most serious form of socialism," would be responsible for their own economic well-being, as well as for their own religious and cultural education (AC, 3, 17-23). These communities (assuming they could ever overcome the many obstacles to their very formation) would be the only way to avoid entrapment in the relentless tentacles of the technological society. They would be, in Ellul's words, the "sole and last defense of the individual" (AC, 23).

However tempting Ellul's apoliticism appears, one should be careful about recommending it as a response to the problems of modernity. One might be suspicious, for instance, of Ellul's repeated in-

Favors autonomous communities.

sistence on rejecting all church authority along with all state authority. The individual who retreats into his own private spiritual world may be freed from the bothersome encumbrances of citizenship, but he or she is in no way guaranteed to find peace, order, and happiness in that private world. In practice, a philosophy of withdrawal may yield a prescription for self-destruction as often as a prescription for renewal. Ellul attempts to protect the integrity of his apoliticism by grounding it in the "authority" of the Bible. But there is something suspicious about a thinker with self-proclaimed Anabaptist tendencies grounding his thought in any form of "authority." Under the premises of his own theological tradition, why must his interpretation of the Bible be any more valid than the thousands of others in existence? Or, for that matter, why should the Bible itself be a more reliable guide to action than any other treatise? Since Ellul does not place any confidence in any sort of authoritative teaching institution or tradition, it seems that his case is in the end based on little more than a wish that those who take him seriously will not take his individualism too far. What precisely is to prevent a small autonomous community from degenerating into a breeding ground for violence in the name of some antinomian morality? Throughout *Anarchy and Christianity* Ellul expresses his disgust at violence in all its forms. But given the strife-ridden history of religious sectarianism in the Western world since the Reformation, and given the recent rise in religious fundamentalism of all types, how much confidence can we place in such disclaimers? To put the issue in slightly different terms: is it not fairly easy to imagine a situation in which perpetrators of violence seek to justify their actions by drawing on Ellul's own individualistic political theology?

Political escapism has affinities with technocracy.

Such problems are particularly disturbing from the point of view of specific sources of disorder in the contemporary West. This is because Ellul's political escapism can be characterized as a form of transcendentalized political gnosticism, not completely unlike the destructive political ideologies of the twentieth century.[4] For Ellul the world as created has no place in it for Christianity; Christians cannot be in the world without being of the world. To use the language of the political theorist Eric Voegelin, the world has become a

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[4] The use of the term "gnostic" to describe the dominant symbolism of the modern world was popularized by Eric Voegelin's *New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), especially pp. 107-61.

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prison from which the Christian wants to escape. The world is "an alien place into which man has strayed and from which he must find his way back home to the other world of his origin."[5] According to Voegelin, this experience of "flungness" is always potentially dangerous from the point of view of society. The primary danger stems from the tempting prospect of escalating pious criticism, even to the point of seeking the violent destruction of the old, corrupt world in preparation for the coming of the new. Nature, including human nature, is assumed to be essentially changeable by human action. From this perspective, one may have to question the extent to which Ellul is truly a reaction *against* modernity. The technocracy that he so eloquently laments *also* can be seen as stemming from an experience of alienation. At the extreme, the technocrat hates the world as it is, and seeks to transform it according to a utopian image. As Andrew Kimbrell has noted, the technocrat desires "to insert, recombine, rearrange, edit, program, and produce human and other biological materials" as a means toward overcoming his estrangement with the given product of creation.[6] For Voegelin, as long as this experience of "flungness" is present, political activity is apt to be both revolutionary and violent, in both its transcendentalized and immanentized forms.

Furthermore, it is possible to question Ellul's apoliticism from the point of view of one of his own stated purposes: the restoration of civility to political and social life. In *Anarchy and Christianity* he focuses much of his argument on what he sees as the generally anarchic disposition of the earliest Christian communities. Ellul leads us to believe that the power of the Roman state was such that those communities, like our own, had little choice but to resist the civil authorities in almost all instances, St. Paul's utterances to the contrary notwithstanding (AC, 77-84). In so doing Ellul admits his agreement with the familiar charge during the late Roman empire that Christianity was incompatible with citizenship, and was therefore responsible for the fall of the empire (AC, 92). Given the nature of Christian spirituality, this was indeed a weighty charge; even the Christian Marcellinus remarked that "it is manifest that very great

    [5] Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1968), 9.
    [6] Andrew Kimbrell, "Second Genesis: The Biotechnology Revolution," *Intercollegiate Review* 28 (Fall 1992): 11.

calamities have befallen the country under the government of emperors practicing, for the most part, the Christian religion." [7]

For Ellul this apparent incompatibility of power and right is almost the essence of Christianity. However, in siding with the pagans (and Christians like Marcellinus) on this question, Ellul must face up to the Augustinian defense of the Christian citizen in the *City of God*, and by extension to the whole tradition of obedience to which Augustinian thought gave rise. Augustine thought it a weighty matter that any religion be considered incompatible with the peace of civil society, so much so that he took great pains to point out that a rebellious apoliticism is not the essence of Christianity, and that the civil authorities and their laws have nothing to fear from Christians. Like Ellul, Augustine would exhort Christians to pray for the civil authorities (AC, 82); but, on that account Augustine would not expect them, upon conversion, to cease being civil authorities. Rather, they would become transformed in their capacity as public servants:

> If the kings of the earth and all their subjects, if all princes and judges of the earth, if . . . the publicans and the soldiers, were all together to hearken to and observe the precepts of the Christian religion regarding a just and virtuous life, then should the republic adorn the whole earth with its own felicity . . . .[8]

Such passages are typical; there is no mention in Augustine of any Christian duty to abandon the republic and retreat into one's private world. Such is the privilege of a select few, whose calling leads them to the life of perfect denial. The body of Christians as a whole is under no obligation to partake of Holy Orders. Christian happiness is attainable by being in the world, even insofar as one holds a position of political power in as corrupt a regime as that of Rome. Indeed, to argue the contrary would be to act as an accomplice in the destruction of civil society, for it means that one is willing to allow the abandoned offices of power to be filled by the unscrupulous. Ellul admires some of the early Christians who, being "unconcerned with the fate of society," refused to hold public office

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[7] St. Augustine, *Letter 136-2*, trans. by J. G. Cunningham, in Marcus Dods edition (Edinburgh 1875), II, 175.

[8] St. Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. 2, ch. 19 (Dods translation, 1950, Random House), 58-59.

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(AC, 92). But if this is how we are to understand Christianity, then Augustine himself would have to agree that, yes, Christianity is in fact the cause of disorder, violence, and barbaric civilizational breakdown.

One might also contrast the position of Ellul with that of the nineteenth-century American social critic Orestes Brownson. In opposition to the radical political moralists of his time, such as Henry David Thoreau, Brownson suggested that Americans take serious note of the principles that were being used to settle moral issues such as slavery.[9] If the principle of radical civil disobedience takes hold, the result will not be an increase in freedom but an increase in tyranny. Insofar as the radical abolitionists sought to destroy the established constitutional order, argued Brownson, they worked to destroy the only means by which their own rights could remain secure. Moreover, the weak will be the first victims under the new order, because they will be the least able to defend their liberty. Brownson, like Augustine, sees that the moral judgments that Christianity places upon humanity and society are dependent upon the continued existence of some form of Christian community as a teaching medium, and that such communities are placed at great risk in the absence of law. The irony here is that the pacifist fringe communities piously advocated by Ellul would have the most to lose from his proposals. Brownson recognized this possibility with respect to the slavery issue, and he therefore maintained that the moral wrong of civil disobedience overrides the moral wrong of slavery. The former dilutes and weakens the medicine by which the latter may be cured. Brownson's criticism means that Ellul must give up the claim that his particular call to action represents the only "moral" alternative, just as Henry David Thoreau must give up the claim that the only place for the truly moral person in an immoral society is in prison. In the case of Ellul, as in the case of Thoreau, an intense desire for perfection has blinded the political moralist to the true demands of social and political responsibility. Both thinkers are willing to abandon the law, and implicit in this abandonment is a willingness to allow the rest of society, the "unelect," to survive or

Abstract moralism masks contempt for actual human beings.

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[9] See in particular the contrast between Brownson's essay "The Fugitive Slave Law" and Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience." My own study of Orestes Brownson deals with this topic (among others) at length (*In Search of the American Spirit: The Political Thought of Orestes Brownson* [Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992]).

perish in a Hobbesian world of violence and uncertainty. The irony is that the abstract political moralism of thinkers such as Ellul may in reality mask a contempt for the actual human beings that make up society. Has Ellul really secured the moral high ground from his technocratic opponents? Is the placing of Ellul alongside other critics of modernity really justifiable?

Christians need rule of law.

Unfortunately, *Anarchy and Christianity* does not admit into the discussion a possible antidote: the mainstream classical and Christian tradition of political philosophy. Ellul is explicit about this exclusion; he aims to set his readers straight about "two thousand years of accumulated Christian error or mistaken traditions" (AC, 7). However, thinkers such as Brownson and Augustine are touched on implicitly. As previously mentioned, Ellul's authoritative touchstones are the Bible (as he interprets it) and the practice of the early Christians. Throughout *Anarchy and Christianity* Ellul tends to portray the early Christian communities as pristine depositories of the true faith, with each successive generation moving further and further away from their ideal. This "incredible betrayal" consists of the eventual accommodation of Christians to civil authority, and Ellul's explicit explanation is that most people tend toward "conformity and ease of obeying" (AC, 79). However, Ellul also suggests implicitly that part of the reason for the betrayal has been the tendency of theologians (Augustine included, presumably) to take the Pauline call to obedience out of context and manipulate it for their own purposes (AC, 79). Such an inference would be perfectly consistent with the overall logic of *Anarchy and Christianity*, especially Ellul's understanding of the Second Beast in the book of Revelation. Ellul tends to dismiss the Augustinian tradition by suggesting that its basis for existence is merely to serve the ends of some hierarchical power. This dismissal means that Ellul never gets to Augustine's *argument*, *viz*. the idea that the republic can be made more just by the conversion of those in power, and that law-abidingness is not only a virtue but is conducive to the earthly well-being of Christians. Indeed, for Augustine the small, autonomous communities that Ellul holds out as an ideal can only exist where state and church are recognized as legitimate authorities.

Given these difficulties with Ellul's Christian anarchy, one would do well to consider alternatives available to those seeking genuine spiritual fulfillment in the modern world. There is, of course, the more traditional counterpart to Ellul's philosophy of withdrawal:

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the monastic life. From the point of view of the individual, a spiritual retreat that is tied to long-standing theological tradition avoids the antinomian volatility of an Ellulian community. This alternative, however, avoids addressing directly the pressing need for a restoration of civility to the exercise of political power. To be sure, monasticism in general may have some long-term salutary effect upon the public order. The mere presence of monastic communities and their works serves as an unspoken call to justice on the part of all human beings. But even if more individuals were capable of such lives of sacrifice, one would still have to face the immediate threat posed by the power of the modern state.

Perhaps a more fruitful alternative may be found in the contemporary Canadian philosopher George Parkin Grant. Ellul is not the only thinker to offer a moral criticism of the technological society; Grant has done impressive work on the subject, and often arrives at similar conclusions. In *Technology and Justice* Grant suggests that technological absolutism has a way of incrementally imposing itself on our civilization in a manner that leaves society as a whole almost powerless to defend against it. For Grant the main reason for this danger seems to be that technology carries with it a peculiar language of liberation that very successfully masks its relentless quest for absolute mastery over all nature, including human nature.[10] Much of Grant's work exhibits a pessimism reminiscent of Jacques Ellul. In *Technology and Empire*, for instance, Grant speaks at length, in somber tone, about the North American technological "wasteland." The "corrosions of nihilism" have taken hold in "all parts of the community." [11]

George Grant a moral critic of technological society.

Grant refuses, however, to allow his own recognition of the power of modern technological existence to push him toward a radical public apoliticism or escapism. For this reason, followers of Ellul might do well to consider Grant's perspective. It is true that Grant lives a somewhat reclusive private life; it is true that he has not published any lengthy treatises on political philosophy; and it is true that much of the work he has published carries with it an unmistakable tone of despair. But if one looks closely at Grant's arguments, one does not find the same sharp Manichean-like distinction

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[10] See, for instance, Grant's essay entitled "Thinking About Technology" in *Technology and Justice* (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1986), 11-34.

[11] George Parkin Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), 27, 39.

between political and spiritual matters that one finds in *Anarchy and Christianity*, and on that account one does not find Grant justifying "life on the fringes of society." Rather, upon close examination one discovers that Grant actually sees the dismal civilizational "destiny" of the West as an important context for his own search for wisdom. In *Time as History,* Grant is explicit about his rejection of those who take refuge in a "past which inoculates us from the present." [12] Indeed, the Grant of *Time as History* sees the necessity of actually embracing the concrete conditions of the present, however dismal they may be. Life in the Platonic cave, for all its tragedy, may produce in us a spiritual awakening of sorts, a longing for the brightness of eternal good that is known fully only in its relation to what it is not. In this sense Grant, unlike Ellul, tends to be willing to see the providential hand of God in the advent of modern technological existence. [13]

What seems to moderate Grant's moralism (and that of Brownson and Augustine as well) is an appreciation of the classical Greek tradition. The Greek mind tends to serve as a "corrective" to the volatility of Christian moral passion, primarily because the Greeks are continually preoccupied with maintaining the harmony of an essentially unchanging human nature. Grant's respect for Plato (developed under the influence of Leo Strauss) will not let him abandon the naturalness of political life, despite occasional ventures to its borders. The philosopher is eventually compelled to return to the cave. Not so for Ellul; he rejects the Greek and Roman idea that humans are by nature social and political creatures. Ellul's call to Christians to live on the fringes of society shows that, for him, the Christian revelation has superseded, rather than fulfilled, that nature. In fact, that nature is practically irredeemable; it is evermore the province of the forces of darkness, and the task of Christians is to call their fellow human beings out of it. Grant's Christian sympathies, on the other hand, bring him *toward* the corruption at the heart of contemporary politics. To be sure, Grant has his own apo-

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[12] George Parkin Grant, *Time as History* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Company, 1969), 48.

[13] One is reminded here of Ellul's careful delimitation of the providential powers of God in *Anarchy and Christianity*, 36-37. It is certainly the case that the notion of a providential God acting in and through the tragedy of actual historical events tends to undermine Ellul's call for a static, almost timeless Christian community that should remain unaffected by and detached from the corrupt nature which surrounds it.

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litical tendencies. But these tendencies do not prevent him from seeing the things of this world, political things, as redeemable. He recognizes the possibility of redemption for modern man as a socially integrated citizen, as demonstrated by the tone of his essays dealing with the subjects of education, abortion, euthanasia, imperialism, and constitutional rights. It is difficult to imagine Ellul orienting his form of political moralism in the direction of these concrete realities. Grant seems to have understood clearly the social and political obligations that attend the soul that has been "turned around." Thinkers such as Grant might represent a more genuine form of political moralism, one better equipped to offer resistance to the gnosticism at the heart of modern technological society.