

The Notion of Philosophy in the Thought of George Parkin Grant

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I analyze George Grant's understanding of North American culture through an explication of his notion of philosophy.

This work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter gives a historical and philosophical background of George Parkin Grant's thought. Such an account of Grant's life is essential precisely because an inquiry into the meaning of the philosophical act cannot be abstracted from the very particular life that he had to live. Grant's understanding of the fundamental meaning of philosophy is intimately bound to his Christian faith. Therefore, I clarify how for Grant the question regarding the essence of philosophy is united with the question of the relationship between faith and reason.

In the second chapter, I develop Grant's understanding of technology in order to address the nature of the relationship between philosophy and technology. According to Grant, technology is an all-encompassing ideology that brings forth a redefinition of the very nature of the philosophical act. This is particularly evident once we look closely at the way technology redefines the meaning of human knowledge, nature, and destiny from a horizon that excludes any trace of transcendence and substantial otherness from reality.

The third chapter addresses Grant's critique of liberalism. In particular, I focus my attention on what Grant sees as the central postulate of liberalism, namely, the absolutization of human freedom. Such an understanding of human freedom constitutes the core of the liberal interpretation of both morality and of justice. The centrality of human freedom, viewed as an absence of any bond or dependence, is a clear instance of the technological ontology typical of modernity.

In the fourth chapter, I illuminate Grant's specific understanding of North American culture. He argues that North America represents the apogee of the modern technological ontology, and therefore it is essential to come to terms with it. To exemplify Grant's judgment on North America, I analyze his argument regarding the philosophical presuppositions of pragmatism. According to Grant, pragmatism, as a

philosophical account and as an educational theory, embodies the technological rejection of thinking implicit in modernity.