The Ellul Forum

Number 75 Fall 2025



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The Ellul Forum

About

Jacques Ellul (1912–94) was a French thinker and writer in many fields: communication, ethics, law and political science, sociology, technology, and biblical and theological studies, among others. The aim of the *Ellul Forum* is to promote awareness and understanding of Ellul's life and work and to encourage a community of dialogue on these subjects. The *Forum* publishes content by and about Jacques Ellul and about themes relevant to his work, from historical, contemporary, or creative perspectives. Content is published in English or French.

Subscriptions

The *Forum* is published twice a year. Annual subscriptions are $48 USD. Subscriptions include membership in the International Jacques Ellul Society, and subscribers receive regular communications from the Society and other benefits. To subscribe, please visit www.ellul.org.

Submissions

The *Forum* encourages submissions from scholars, students, and general readers. Submissions must demonstrate a degree of familiarity with Ellul's thought and must engage with it in a critical way. Submissions may be sent to ijes@ellul.org.

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Ellul and Charbonneau on Culture, Science, Nature, Freedom

Christian Roy

The recent reissue in book form in France of early publications where I presented for the first time Jacques Ellul and Bernard Charbonneau as a tandem of thinkers I dubbed the "Gascon Personalists" turned out to be a mixed blessing and a missed opportunity, due to a lack of bibliographical references, biographical context, and significant input from the author. I vowed to make up for this in English versions, starting in the *Ellul Forum* by properly translating and introducing two shorter texts used in that book as filler to my original scholarly article on the topic,[1] and completing them with an original Charbonneau text that should have belonged with them.

Appearing first here is an interview with Jacques Ellul that likely does not appear in any bibliography. It consists of passages from my single, long conversation with Ellul, on the first stop of a quest to meet veteran intellectuals across Europe whose witness I was intent on gathering for my doctoral research on the beginnings of the French Personalist movement around the Ordre Nouveau group, overshadowed in the literature by Emmanuel Mounier's review *Esprit*. Having been told just before leaving Montreal for France that Ellul had been part of that scene, as an avid reader of *The Technological Society*, talking with him was a top priority. The mostly historical and biographical interview took place at Ellul's home in Pessac on July 7, 1988. *The Technological Bluff* had just come out, and I remembered relevant parts of a more general discussion about it when an Education issue was being planned in 1991 by Montreal's *Vice Versa* magazine, to which I was a regular contributor from its founding in 1983 to its folding in 1997. I thus

Roy, Christian. "Ellul and Charbonneau on Culture, Science, Nature, Freedom." *Ellul Forum* 75 (Fall 2025): 3–17. © Christian Roy, CC BY-NC-ND.

selected some excerpts about culture and its transmission and repackaged them as an exclusive Ellul interview for *Vice Versa*, for which I also got Charbonneau to write original articles in special issues on themes related to his concerns, namely Work (fall 1992), Media (fall 1991),[2] and the Environment (fall 1990).

Charbonneau's contribution to the latter is translated here: a powerful concise statement of his emphasis on Science rather than Ellul's Technique as the force driving Development as "natural disaster" (a difference with his friend that I explained in my paper for the IJES conference in Chicago in July 2024, whose proceedings have just come out[3]), and an apposite complement to Ellul's interview on Culture, since Charbonneau paired his books on Culture and Science (as two sides of the same coin) in the diptych *Nuit et Jour* (Economica, 1991). In that same Environment issue, Charbonneau's text was followed, as it is here, by an article of mine introducing his life and career to the general public. It may be viewed as a first sketch of my scholarly joint treatment of them together with Ellul's in 1992, stemming from my more impactful first meeting with Charbonneau in the Bearnese countryside the day after Ellul told me how to reach him there, off the grid.[4] Taken together, these three overlooked texts, aside from being documents of my first contacts with these two thinkers to whom I have devoted much of my own career as an intellectual historian, may serve as an introduction to the intertwining of their journeys and concerns, not always as fully understood by many Ellulians as Ellul himself might have wished.

Cultural Transmission or Technological Bluff?

Interview of Jacques Ellul by Christian Roy[5]

Jacques Ellul's abundant oeuvre as an essayist consists essentially in anguished testimony to the great transformation of the human species taking place under our eyes: its shift from a sociocultural environment tied to Nature to a technical environment shorn of all bonds save those of its own implacable logic of exponential development. This original reflection on the central issue of our time, initiated before the war in Bordeaux within the personalist movement together with Bernard Charbonneau, constitutes the

public face of their common doctrinal work, whose prophetic relevance was highlighted in a recent issue of *Vice Versa* on the environment.

I met Jacques Ellul in 1988 on the occasion of the conclusion of his Technique trilogy with the publication by Hachette of *Le Bluff technologique*. That interview revolved around culture in the sense of past heritage, and of the issues raised by its transmission (at school and elsewhere) in a world ruled by Technique, particularly from the angle of relations between cultures. Here are some excerpts.

Ellul: I first want to say that we have to specify what we mean with the word "culture." If it has the old French sense of, basically, what is intellectual and aesthetic, that's a certain aspect: there are literatures, there is poetry. But already at this level, cultures are terribly ravaged under the impact of technical means. By which I mean that, everything having been said and coming too late, or contemplating the Imaginary Museum that Malraux has shown, the modern artist has a way out: there are technical means that allow him to do things that indeed had never been done before. We can make, create new sounds that have never existed, etc. So, is that still supposed to be culture in the traditional sense? I would say no, to the extent that culture always had popular roots. Now, with these creations of a technological type, whether it be a creation—not of painting, but of computer-generated images, or music also produced through IT means—, is it art that can be said to be rooted in the world? Absolutely not. When you take an average person, what it boils down to is that he absolutely cannot identify with this culture. He even will not identify with what is being broadcast on television. It is very curious. I had one of my students do a thesis on the way a series of programs we had selected were received in a popular milieu, and we almost always got a surprising answer—for instance, about *Dallas*. "It's stupid, but we can't help watching it." There you are. So, for me, it was extremely significant because they did not at all recognize their own culture. But there was this fascination with the device, there was this fascination with the *show*,[6] etc., so people watched it. It is not at all the same thing as a culture. I would say: when Bach took folk tunes, etc., and made his music with that, well, it was appreciated by very simple folk, or young people. I think of my grandchildren, for instance, among whom the older ones, used

to rock music, which for them actually represents noise, hearing Bach for the first time, were dumbfounded, telling me, "But this means music is something completely different from rock!" And I told them: "Yes, it's kind of something else than rock." And so, they had no prior culture, no training, and they experienced a shock, it's true. . . . Thus, I believe that our culture, what is called culture in this sense, cannot honestly be spoken of as culture.

Roy: What about the Anglo-Saxon, anthropological sense?

Ellul: There, now if we now take the anthropological sense, Technique is there also extraordinarily destructive—to the extent that customs, parental structures, social habits, etc., are eliminated when they conflict with the imperative of this or that technical development. It is striking to take stock of, I think, a phenomenon that also gets to me on the environmental level: I mean, the devastation of the Amazon rainforest these days, to manage to get roads going through them, on the one hand, and also to get the wood needed for paper—it is extremely striking to the extent that it purely and simply destroys a whole set of Indian cultures: tribes are getting scattered, etc. In the same fashion, in the African world, it is very obvious (I have seen this concretely in Morocco) that young people who are used to working in factories no longer have at all the same relationship as before to the father as head of the family, to the tribal chieftain, as it were.

Thus, there is a kind of destruction of cultures. Now I am actually very hesitant when people talk about contacts between cultures, about pluricultural society. For there to be a pluricultural society, there needs to be cultures! But in reality, what we are witnessing is the creation of a kind of global conformism, because as soon as Africans or Maghrebians reach a certain standard of living, they have exactly the same types of reactions, the same types of behaviors as any Frenchman, Englishman, or German.

Roy: Can we still say that Frenchmen, Englishmen, or Germans have a French, English, or German culture, since it is standardized by the technical system?

Ellul: It is standardized by the technical system, and what is worse is that the leaders don't even realize what is happening, and if I take the model (since we have been speaking about neighboring foreign countries) of

learning foreign languages, it is extremely striking. I am on the board of a pretty major high school, and I have been talking with language teachers about what they have their pupils do. And they answered me, "But we are forced to do this, because it goes with the exams." Neither in English, nor in German do they study any classics. There is no literature anymore. On the other hand, they have them read newspapers and learn everyday language. So, I was told, "Now that actually matches the tests. First test: we give them a German or English newspaper article to read, and they have to write a summary of it. Second test: they have to listen to a tape in English or German, and they must give answers about all that was said on the tape. Third test: draft a business- or administrative-type letter." Which means that they can complete all their English study without having ever read Byron, nor Shelley, nor still less Shakespeare, of course. Now I for one think that it is not only the destruction of culture, it is a mistake. To the extent that someone knows the classical language well (and I am thinking for instance of German, which was formed by Schiller and Goethe), well, then, they will very quickly learn the common language, the colloquial language; it takes a month to adapt to journalistic vocabulary, it is easy, whereas the opposite is not true. Somebody who will have learned to read the newspaper will not be able to read Goethe at the first try.

Roy: Well, nobody in the system is supposed to be interested in what Goethe might be saying.

Ellul: No, exactly. And therefore, this is indeed the negation of a cultural tradition.

Roy: In the face of all these encroachments by Technique that IT only magnifies, you said in your book that the game is over, so what should be our attitude under these conditions, in the face of this determinism that is there, without most people being aware of it, but which is there by that very fact?

Ellul: [...] I believe some people are beginning to realize, among scientists (not all, but many of them) and on the other hand among top technicians, who are also starting to wonder. And I very recently had a captivating experience: I was invited to give a lecture at the High Technology Club. I must

say that I was a little intimidated, because I was before a hundred and fifty senior technicians, who were a lot cleverer than me, of course, and we had a wonderful discussion in which they were—and I mean all—asking questions such as, "But can we continue producing dioxin like we are doing?" Really questions that ecologists used to ask themselves—now it is senior technicians who are asking them. So, it ended in a way that astonished me. One of them got up and said, "Listen, we still have to understand that our society is not going to go on like this if it does not recover its spiritual foundations." So, hearing the boss of an extremely big firm make this statement, I for one have nothing to add! It's really striking! So, if those circles start becoming aware, I am convinced that, little by little, the rest will too.

Scientific and Technical Development: Human Liberation or Natural Cataclysm?

by Bernard Charbonneau[7]

Hidden within clouds of sound and fury, more than ever, the future comes like a thief. Whether it be as the wanderings of a poor Galilean peasant two thousand years ago or as the abstract calculations of another Jew about the structure of matter sixty years ago.[8] We are living through a single event, concealed by the din of history, amplified by the media's loudspeakers: the ruthless development (which was once progress) of sciences and techniques, of which our crises and our wars are but the foam. Capitalism and socialism would not be what they are if steam had not moved the tools, of stone and then of steel, that until then had extended man's thought and hand. And in war or in peace, our tomorrows will essentially be what nuclear energy, information technology, and genetics make of them.

But for men whose mind had until then been dominated by religion and politics, whose naïve vanity held for certain that their ideas drove the world, it was out of the question to be determined by what they held to be means; all the more so as these used to provide them with instant power and profit. Even the flash of Hiroshima could not reveal to them that the conclusion of a planet-wide war was not so much the defeat of a Western totalitarianism as the advent of the atomic age.

The explosion of sciences and techniques is no more an issue today than it was yesterday, as the evolution of language demonstrates. Progress, with its moral and humanistic connotations, has now become Growth, less in quality than in size, or better yet, Development, the sheer fact of the material extension of human power, the oceanic self-evidence before which everything must bow. There can be no question of wondering about the effects; we will see about that later. Nor about ends, ever more non-existent. Whether of the Right or the Left, politics consists only in developing Development and somehow adapting individuals, societies, and their cultures to it. To calm anxiety, words are enough, but as for what matters, none are needed. Even though scientific and technical development are omnipresent in life, in the street as on the frontlines, at the factory and then at the office, down to the privacy of homes and the byways of the countryside, in leisure as at work, it remains clandestine, as it were, in spite of an ecological revolt that is shoved off to some ghetto.

This for two perfectly contradictory reasons. On the one hand, while in theory human freedom provisionally continues to shape the Future, scientific and technical means are neutral; our mechanical slaves do not make us pay dearly for their services with some harms or constraints—something that any glance at the streets of our cities belies in vain. But on the other hand, this fate against which we can do nothing (surely, we are not going to . . .) is identified with Freedom, not only with man's emancipation vis-à-vis nature, but from the dark forces that used to obsess him until then. Science and technique are neutral . . . thus positive in their very nature . . . an obvious contradiction that can only be accepted through a refusal of consciousness.

Now, some are beginning to doubt these certainties. Simple reason, just as ecology, teaches us that in life, everything is connected. That every cause produces a commensurate effect, beneficial or harmful, which risks being the latter to the extent that chance rather than conscience determines it. The power of the cyclone unleashed by the sorcerer's apprentice is such that we are beginning to discover its negative effects on nature and the planet. And perhaps even more on what used to be the rationale for Progress: freedom. If development continues at this rate, our species hardly has any other choice but that between economic chaos followed by a social and military

explosion, in which it runs the risk of physically destroying itself, and a peace managed in every detail by Science and the world State, in which freedom would be abolished along with its diversity.

The environmental movement's *raison d'être* is not only to defend nature, but first to give back to man what is proper to man; to master, instead of a now largely vanquished nature, that dark force of which he is nonetheless the author: social development. An unprecedented enterprise, which is yet the exact opposite of past centuries' revolutions, utopian to various degrees, whose slogans it is not a matter of repeating again and again. Is man capable of mastering himself, of controlling his ability to know, hence, to use? Otherwise, like so many other species, he will disappear in turn, a victim of that fate which makes life grow to death.

But from the start, it is not up to society to dominate its own development; until now, tribes and empires have waxed and waned as the tides do. True knowledge is personal and not collective. Each individual is the narrow door of conscience: this doubling of life that, after it, alone can, at least temporarily, defeat the universal wear and tear of time and death. There is no other "negentropy." To ecologists: there is no such thing as peace or freedom guaranteed by institutions, soft technologies; alone is soft the will to leave the sword in its sheath, not to yield to the power of the tool and, which is much more difficult, that of the automaton. Above all, alone is soft that knowledge which fosters respect and understanding for what is, that causes us not to succumb to the giddiness of that knowledge which, by taking it to pieces, is a source of power over men and things. But what hardness of spirit is needed to impose such softness on oneself!

The current acceleration is but the duplicate of the original explosion. There too, evolution suddenly accelerates. After the interminable reign of Matter, there was that of Life, so much briefer and more limited in Space. And now each of us is facing the advent of a freedom that is first of all his own. Or the final fall, back to the bottom of social man and the Life that preceded him. Is the human individual capable of taking charge, not just of himself but of the social fact and the powers of which it is the source, Science and the State? No one will do it in his place; it is not the State's business to criticize the State, nor that of Science, at most that of each scientist. But is

it not asking too much of the anthropoid of origins that he master the social phenomenon?

In that case, the human phenomenon would be but a pointless extension of geology, being as blind as the movements of matter. What the previous generation had taken for Progress would be but an avatar of that dark power that raises then cancels mountains of an altogether greater height than our towers, and causes to light up and go out countless suns compared to which our megatons are not even sparks. For lack of what? Of less than nothing: of thinking.

Nature and Freedom: Bernard Charbonneau's Lonely Struggle

by Christian Roy[9]

Born in Bordeaux on November 28, 1910, Bernard Charbonneau grew up there playing in the streets without fear of cars, and where they ended, the forest began. The city was still a space for humans amid never-distant nature, where man found his place because he had been wrestling with it for centuries, creating the countryside in the process. Then, as a teenager, Charbonneau noticed a change: children and cats had had to vacate the streets of Bordeaux, now entirely given over to cars, whose traffic became the city's *raison d'être*. Nature too was beaten back, as the countryside was gradually replaced by the shapeless heap of the suburbs.

Everywhere, space as the tangible locus of freedom was giving way to its organization in terms of . . . organization, of its integration in the circuit of a cycle with no end beyond its own means, ever-more reductive of any spontaneity, of any obstacle to their efficiency. Charbonneau then had an inkling of the nature of technique, as something that secreted the society it needed, irrespective of human needs. He grasped the cosmic scope of this concrete assault on his own freedoms, as on those of any human being. To reflect upon, and attempt to react to, this Great Molting of the human species (as he would call this total and sudden triumph of organization over nature at the expense of freedom—and thus of man), while in high school he started approaching people he thought might be able to tackle with him the issue that left him no rest—the only one of our time, on which all others depend, but which he had to wait decades to find a hearing for.

Bernard Charbonneau yet found in Jacques Ellul a faithful partner in an endeavour he pursued with him in the milieu of the *Esprit* and Ordre Nouveau personalist groups that came into being in Paris in the early 1930s. In their non-conformist stance of rejection of both liberal and totalitarian ideologies, to overcome the crisis of civilization by grounding it anew in a sense of the concrete and spiritual person, these movements seemed potentially receptive to the issues Charbonneau sought to probe and translate into action. This is what he attempted to do with Ellul, by impressing his outlook upon the personalist groups of southwestern France, independently of Paris. This autonomy was sealed in 1938 by a break with *Esprit*, whose main concern had turned out to be to ease the Catholic intelligentsia's shift to the left. But the previous year, Charbonneau had published in the *Journal intérieur des groupes personnalistes du Sud-Ouest* a text that sounded like a manifesto, likely the first one of political ecology, over thirty years before its assumed beginnings: *Le sentiment de la nature, force révolutionnaire*, in which he declared that Feeling for nature as a revolutionary force "must be to personalism what class consciousness has been to socialism."

"To study modern feeling for nature," it states,

> is to see it be born with industrial civilization, get overheated in reaction to it, to sketch its history is to investigate the way some advances of said civilization come into conflict with our essential needs, it is therefore to clarify the root causes of the personalist revolution, by distinguishing them from the conflicts within the political superstructure that merely touch the surface of our daily life.

For in a civilization that has become too heavy, man "weakens and falls prey to social determinisms, since the latter have inertia going for them, while he can live only by continuing against them the ancient struggle waged against nature," only leaning on it instead, this time, "because we know we go to the mountain only to seek a new life, and that we will be able to live it every day only by creating anew, against current disorder, a complete society: an economy, a law, a politics." To give feeling for nature "the doctrinal edge that will turn it into an action movement," it was thus in isolated campsites in the Pyrenees that Charbonneau would attempt to forge it in the fire of a community of men and women engaged in this reflection in touch with the

immediate realities of nature, and thus with the keenest edge of the human condition, so as to find its common measure anew.

This attempt was interrupted by the war, in which Bernard Charbonneau refused to take part, being wholly devoted to the question that remained, whoever was the victor. This stance was validated by the Hiroshima explosion as its literally blinding mark. For nobody would see that, regardless of ideology or personal morality (since the A-bomb was not Hitler's doing, and its developers were like saints or children), the liberation of energy by science mobilizes all of the real within a single system, the better to give it over to chaos. Only an independent and superior authority could halt this drift of science, by assigning limits to its power. Failing this, "all things are equal and come down to more or less power"—under a variety of banners as decoys diverting us from the fearsome responsibility henceforward incumbent upon us, both as a species and as persons.

It was however to no avail that reflection camps resumed after the war, helmed by Charbonneau and Ellul with some of the latter's law students as new members. They never issued into action, not even the project of a "Bordeaux School" devoted to a critique of the "scientification" of the world, which would have had a ready constituency in Jacques Ellul's vast foreign audience. For since the translation of *La Technique ou l'enjeu du siècle* (Armand Colin, 1954) as *The Technological Society* (Knopf, 1964), Ellul's books were well received abroad, especially in the United States. Charbonneau had to resign himself to attempting to communicate in writing a reflection that he had been leading with his friend since the 1930s. He was hardly more successful in this, since there was a price to be paid in the 1960s for keeping a distance from the Paris-centered intellectual circuit, and especially for breaking the taboo of Progress. He had himself fled this Moloch from Bordeaux to Pau (where his geography classes in the field made a lasting impression), and then wherever he could give a free rein to his two reasons for being: thinking and fishing. That meant the surrounding country of Béarn, despite inroads from suburbia that forced him to look ever further afield for its antithesis: the European countryside, his model for fruitful and harmonious interaction between man and nature. He would lament its disappearance in *Tristes campagnes* (Denoël, 1973), having ven-

tured to come to its rescue in the Nature et Progrès movement for organic agriculture, which he helped found in 1964. He would finally find his way to concrete action at the head of the Comité de défense de la côte landaise, to come to the defence of this wooded coastal area (where, as a Scout, he had had his first taste of true freedom, in tackling nature's resistant otherness), after it was targeted by a Mission de développement to turn it into a suburban tourist attraction.

Many future grandees of political ecology had until recently been actively involved in the public endeavor of liquidation of Europe's countryside and peasants, for the benefit of agribusiness and the tourism industry, also known as Town and Country Planning (Aménagement du territoire): suffice it to mention Green presidential candidate René Dumont, on behalf of the Monnet Plan. But in the aftermath of the May '68 revolt, when "the diffuse uneasiness fostered by untamed development openly burst into the public eye in 1970, decreed the 'Year of the Protection of Nature' by the Council of Europe, the green light is given by the highest political authorities. It will be talked about; that is an order." Not much more is going to happen, until the current media hype about the environment, since for the powers that be which allow such discourse, it is really only ever a matter of "taking the lead to control the phenomenon" of a protest that is liable to spread to "the very principle of industrial society: growth." Now, Bernard Charbonneau "did not come to ecology late in the day like some intellectuals of his generation: whether scientific or ideological, ecology came to him," including in the guise of Ecoropa, the European Network for Ecological Reflection and Action that he cofounded in 1976 with fellow personalist Denis de Rougemont, among others. Leaning on a lifetime of reflection and experience matured in solitude, finally validated by society, he would articulate a penetrating critique of the ecological movement in which he found continuity with his own struggle. Bernard Charbonneau indeed placed his hope in it, in the conviction that, by "calling into question the totality of the industrial world in the name of the preservation of nature and freedom down to the humblest details of daily life, it can give back to politics both content and meaning." No less than the creation of a new world on a human scale.

Notes

1. Christian Roy, *Aux sources de l'écologie politique: Le personnalisme "gascon" de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul* (R&N, 2025). Re-issue of the eponymous article in *Canadian Journal of History / Annales canadiennes d'histoire* 27 (April 1992): 67–100 (Best Essay by a Graduate Student Award).
2. Bernard Charbonneau, "L'Information médiatisée: connaissance ou divertissement?" *Vice Versa* 35 (Nov.–Dec. 1991: "Mass Media: Information Manipulation Spectacle"), pp. 6–9, was reissued as an appendix to Bernard Charbonneau, *La Société médiatisée* (R&N, 2021). The translation of this 1985 book is about to be completed on the crowdfunding website https://www.patreon.com/christianroy-media; this means that a manuscript will soon be available for any interested publisher (suggestions are welcome!).
3. Christian Roy, "Beyond Ellul's Technique: Science as *Ultima Ratio* According to Bernard Charbonneau," in David W. Gill and Lisa Richmond, eds., *Questioning Technology with Jacques Ellul* (Wipf and Stock, 2025), 123–47.
4. See my recent interview by Michael Morelli at https://open.substack.com/pub/personalistmanifestos/p/the-history-and-spirit-of-personalism.
5. "Transmission de la culture ou bluff technologique? Propos de Jacques Ellul recueillis par Christian Roy." *Vice Versa* 33 (May–Jul. 1991): 21–22. The original article transcript can be downloaded at https://www.academia.edu/130304873/TRANSMISSION_DE_LA_CULTURE_OU_BLUFF_TECHNOLOGIQUE_Propos_de_Jacques_Ellul_recueillis_par_Christian_Roy. The original issue can be downloaded at https://viceversaonline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/1991_No33.pdf.
6. Translator's note: In English in the original.
7. Bernard Charbonneau, "Le développement scientifique et technique: Libération de l'homme ou cataclysme naturel ?" *Vice Versa* 30 (Sep.–Oct. 1990: "Environnement: Apocalypse Inc."), 10–11. The original article transcript can be downloaded at https://lagrandemue.wordpress.com/2025/06/20/bernard-charbonneau-le-developpement-scientifique-et-technique. The original issue can be downloaded at https://viceversaonline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/1990_No30.pdf.
8. Translator's note: This allusive statement of the author's core assessment of the stakes of the Anthropocene could be rephrased as follows for greater clarity: Just as the life and death of Jesus Christ went unnoticed in his time, before becoming the hinge of world history, so the implications of the atom bomb (planetary

life and death being henceforward given over to Science and Technique), issuing from Robert Oppenheimer's interwar nuclear physics research, were hardly realized in the wake of the Hiroshima explosion, as Charbonneau noted at the time (and would keep reminding his readers), in identifying it as the entry into a new millennium, in a public lecture in Pau in 1945, "L'An Deux Mille." See its unauthorized translation by Louis Cancelmi as "The Year 2000," https://www.signals-noise.com/2017/03/17/bernard-charbonneau-political-ecology/.

9. Christian Roy, "Nature et liberté: Le combat solitaire de Bernard Charbonneau." *Vice Versa* 30 (Sep.–Oct. 1990: "Environnement: Apocalypse Inc."), 12–14. The original article transcript can be downloaded at https://lagrandemue.wordpress.com/2025/06/19/christian-roy-nature-et-liberte/. The original issue can be downloaded at https://viceversaonline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/1990_No30.pdf.

10. Bernard Charbonneau, *Le système et le chaos*, 2nd ed. (Economica, 1990), 192. This is the new, updated edition of a work published by Anthropos in 1973 with the subtitle *Critique du développement exponentiel*. It is in the same collection that Jacques Ellul's *La Technique ou l'enjeu du siècle* and *Propagandes* were reissued in 1990, and that Bernard Charbonneau's sweeping analytic-poetic treatment of the State's march through the centuries and all regimes was published in 1987. Written in 1947–48, *L'État* failed to find a publisher in those postwar years, when an intelligentsia captivated by Stalin expected from his omnipotence the achievement of Paradise on earth. Many of Charbonneau's works underwent the same fate for having defied fashions and offended specialties, being impossible to categorize because they were too personal, so clear-eyed that they were impossible to process in their own era. They may now be discovered at last, since Economica has just undertaken the publication of Charbonneau's complete works, starting this fall with a first volume entitled *Nuit et Jour*, bringing together two books, his 1965 essay *Le Paradoxe de la Culture* on culture as diversion from reality—which is left to science, the latter being critiqued in *Ultima Ratio*, the previously unpublished other wing of this diptych. There should follow as an upcoming volume *Je fus, essai sur la liberté*, treating freedom as the foundation of Charbonneau's thought, initially self-published at Imprimerie Marrimpouey Jeune in Pau in 1980. Two other unpublished essays are now availble as such "samizdats" from B. Charbonneau: *Le plus et le moins: de la hiérarchie*, fiercer than ever in the purportedly egalitarian society described in *La société médiatisée*, subjected to critique in a way that Charbonneau finds wanting among ecologists, all too easily obsessed and manipulated by the media. [2025 update: All works mentioned have since been published or

reissued in French, except for the former samizdat, whose title would translate as *More and Less: On Hierarchy*.]

11. It was already sketched in broad outline in notes that I have been able to see from that period, as well as in the manuscript of *Le Grand Pan est mort*, written by Charbonneau before and during the war, about nature's obliteration under the combined attacks of industrialization and tourism, the latter born of the nostalgia it drives in the new environment destined to replace it: the suburbs. This critique of their universal proliferation was expanded in *Le Jardin de Babylone* (Gallimard, 1969, translated into Japanese). [2025 update: An unauthorized English translation of the Spanish edition is downloadable as *The Garden of Babylon*, at https://libcom.org/article/garden-babylon-nature-revolutionary-force-bernard-charbonneau.]
12. It was also Denoël that published his polemic against *Teilhard de Chardin, prophète d'un âge totalitaire* (1963, translated into Dutch), *Dimanche et Lundi* (1974) about the leisure/work dichotomy, *Notre table rase* (1974) and *L'Hommauto* (1967).
13. Bernard Charbonneau, *Le feu vert. Autocritique du mouvement écologique* (Karthala, 1980), 32–33. [2025 update: This book was translated by Christian Roy as *The Green Light: A Self-Critique of the Ecological Movement* (Bloomsbury, 2018).]
14. Charbonneau, *Le système et le chaos*, 247.
15. Charbonneau, *Le feu vert*, 7.
16. Charbonneau, *Le feu vert*, 139.

Reflections on Limits

Patrick Chastenet

Still unknown to the general public, the Protestant sociologist Jacques Ellul (1912–94) first became known in the United States for his work on technique and propaganda. It was also on the other side of the Atlantic that his books on theology found the largest readership. Along with Bernard Charbonneau (1910–96), whose work is even more unjustly overlooked, he deserves to be called a pioneer of political ecology. As early as 1935, the two Girondins laid the groundwork for a society on a human scale that voluntarily limits its growth. One of Ellul's original contributions was to analyze the ecological crisis in ethical and political terms, in two separate but closely related registers: sociological and theological. While Christianity is often blamed for being at the root of the ecological crisis, Ellul turned the tables. His message can help us today to avert ecological disaster because it provides a critical sociology for limiting growth and—for Christians—a biblical theology that calls for limiting the power of technique.

Limiting Growth

Not only did Ellul denounce the technocratic approach to man's relationship with his environment, which, in the name of the general interest, mistreats populations while destroying nature, he also challenged the very principle of an environmental policy that claims to protect the planet without renouncing growth. He invites each of us to take action to limit the extent of destruction, as he did with Charbonneau by leading the Comité de défense de la côte aquitaine (Committee for the Defense of the Aquitaine Coast, 1973–82). Acting as a counter-expert, the committee orga-

Chastenet, Patrick. "Reflections on Limits." *Ellul Forum* 75 (Fall 2025): 19–28. © Patrick Chastenet, CC BY-NC-ND.

nized resistance to the government's project to exploit a "green deposit." By opposing widespread concrete development and the transformation of the Atlantic coast into a seaside resort with its array of hotels, golf courses, marinas, expressways, and supermarkets, Ellul put his motto into practice: think globally, act locally. Unconvinced by the financial argument that mass tourism enriches year-round residents, he saw the government project as a windfall for developers and an opportunity for mayors to finance facilities that are as expensive as they are useless.

At a time of rampant deforestation, it is worth remembering that Ellul also campaigned to limit deforestation, both locally (in his neighborhood) and regionally (in the Landes de Gascogne). His approach to ecology was fundamentally human, in the sense that it always put people—residents, users, foresters, farmers—at the heart of the system. When this walker hears a government minister boast that the battle for the forest has been won, he tempers his enthusiasm. Fast-growing conifers, suitable for making paper pulp, are being grown at the expense of hardwoods, which produce more oxygen. These trees are planted in rows for convenience, which does nothing to slow erosion. But above all, the government statistics refer to forests in the strict sense of the term and ignore the isolated trees found in towns and villages. The proverb needs to be reversed, because it is the forest that hides the tree. Forests, as defined by the ONF [National Forests Office], are growing, but isolated trees are threatened everywhere by urbanization, hence the need to reintroduce them on a massive scale into the heart of our cities. Ellul regretted that forests are now uninhabited. But we are desertifying the forest just as we are sacrificing the countryside by closing schools, post offices, and railway lines. He wanted to see foresters return to live in the forest and farmers remain country-dwellers.

Ellul opposed the state, corporations, and banks that sacrifice farming communities by encouraging monoculture and agribusiness, causing soil depletion, animal suffering, and the ruin of small farmers. He wanted to rebalance the city/countryside relationship, keeping in mind that the progress of mechanization is detrimental to agricultural jobs. The CAP [Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union] hastened the ruin of small farmers and destroyed farming culture, which created traditions as well as human-

ized landscapes. The former disappeared, while the latter gave way to roads, housing developments, and tourist facilities. Rural exodus was encouraged by a policy that promoted over-exploitation of land and monoculture. The government has favored agribusiness, which requires very large properties, fertilizers, and heavy equipment but also leads to unbearable debt. Farmers' net income is falling, while national production volume is increasing. Ellul lamented that in France the number of farms had fallen from three million in 1938 to less than one million in 1988. The latest census puts this figure at 390,000, or less than 1.5 percent of the working population. Ellul advocated an alliance between farming communities and the environmental movement.

He also questioned the relevance of the nuclear power program at the local and national levels, refusing to even distinguish between civil and military nuclear power. He considered the growth in energy needs cited by EDF [the state-owned Électricité de France corporation] to be fallacious. The oil crisis came at just the right moment to justify accelerating the construction of nuclear power plants, when there was an opportunity to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Nearly twenty years before the Rio Summit (1992), Ellul established the precautionary principle: "When the hypothetical disadvantages outweigh the expected advantages, the operation should not be attempted."[1] Opposed to any form of techno-solutionism, he would have disapproved of the current policy of accelerating electrification, which is based on a scenario of constant increase in energy consumption, when what is needed is to reduce consumption and diversify sources.

But isn't it also and above all as a Christian that Ellul raises the question of the limits of human control—via technique—over nature? How far can we go?

Limitation of Power

Ellul asserted that there is no such thing as human nature, but at the same time, "what seems to [him] to define the human is precisely this ability that is given to him of setting limits for himself."[2] Is this a simple aporia, or an expression of Ellulian thought reflecting the dialectical movement of the Bible? Christianity is both a negator and a producer of limits. Man

asserts himself as both man and creature only when he comes up with the rule "Thou shalt not kill."[3] Instead of submitting to "natural" brutality, man decides to limit it through law, good manners, and self-control. Since there is no such thing as a constant human nature, Ellul tells us, it is impossible to base any idea of limits on it. *L'homme peut-il alors tout faire?* [Can/may man then do anything/everything?] Does *tout* mean anything at all ["anything"], or the maximum possible ["everything"]? Does *peut* mean what is possible for him ["can"], or what is permitted to him ["may"]? Is it up to man to set the limits on what is forbidden? If so, he can move those limits. Is it up to Nature to do this (in which case, it is neutral), or is it up to God? But is this God the Almighty, who imposes limits on the sea, or is it Jesus Christ, who places us before our responsibility as liberated human beings?[4]

Are there pre-established limits, a sacred domain? No, replies Ellul, after reviewing three questions that are still relevant today: the very structure of matter through the disintegration of the atom, the artificial creation of life, and ecological balance. The desacralization of the world through the revelation of the biblical God is the very guarantee of all freedom. Ellul recalls two biblical truths. First, all men are sinners. They must continue to act while knowing that evil is mixed in with what they produce. But second, they must not forget that in Jesus Christ, all sins are forgiven. All freedom of action is given to man. But there are several categories of limits in the Bible. There are objective limits and subjective limits, limits set by God and those discovered by man, explicit limits and limits that Ellul describes as strange, limits rejected by Judeo-Christianity and those set by Jesus Christ, limits in Creation and in the Covenant.

By affirming an absolute transcendent, the God of Israel destroyed the sacred that man placed in nature. He rejected as superstitions the limits and taboos of a world now composed of things and no longer of magical deities populating forests, mountains, and springs. Man knew he was limited in a sacred universe. Christianity broke this balance by de-ritualizing religion. Man then found himself in a world that was increasingly explainable but void of meaning. Max Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world, which became an instrument of accusation against the Christian West in the writings of many authors, inspired two remarks of Ellul:

- Judeo-Christianity has historically played both ways. It freed man from his magical-religious beliefs and made the rise of science and technique possible, but today it is considered responsible for ecological disaster, for having encouraged excess. But while this sacredness ensured the protection of nature, at the same time it acted both for the benefit of man and to his detriment.
- Yet at the heart of Revelation, the movement of desacralization failed. The sacred reinvested Christianity. Man alienated himself by his own means of liberation. By transferring all sacredness to the desacralizing factor of technique, he allowed himself to be possessed by a new power. But if the liberating God rejects *a priori* limits, this does not make for inconsistency, since limits are found in Creation and in the Covenant.

Limits in Creation and in the Covenant

The biblical accounts of Creation are given to show that the world is not the product of chance, nor the result of a theogony, as was understood in the East. It is a God who is constantly present and at the same time concerned for the freedom of the one whom he wanted to be his free respondent within creation. The presence of the Creator is limit itself. It is not an external limit like that of the Garden of Eden, but a limit of speech that presupposes recognition. God does not set immutable limits, nor does he create in man a nature that contains his own limits. Man is called to discover the limits in his relationship with this Creator. God invites him to make his own decisions, in freedom but under the weight of responsibility. It is therefore consciously that man will impose limits on himself in relation to this Creator. It is a matter of self-limitation.

The widespread view of a chosen one of God placed at the summit of the creation, to dispose of it without limit, is strictly inaccurate. The Covenant is not a blank check granted to man, for the promise of liberation does not erase the Law. Some commandments may seem strange to us, but they are there to signal that not all means are good. Man is placed by God in an eminent position but, at the same time, within a network of limits to be interpreted by seeking their meaning. The limits explicitly formulated in the Torah are not objective limits, as law inscribed in Nature once and for

all. They are the expression, in the here and now, of the Creator's will. Man must receive them as a personal commandment from God, but their substance must be interpreted. The Bible distinguishes between two kinds of limits: those given as a commandment, and those to be discovered by man.

The "Commandment Limits"

The Sabbath occupies a central place. It establishes a suspension not only of work but also of all technical uses. It signifies the suppression of the pursuit of efficiency and a return to worship, that is, the restoration of a right relationship with God and a liberating relationship with the natural world. The Sabbath is a grace given by God. The "condemnation" is lifted. It is on the basis of this condemnation that man develops his means of power. If nature no longer produces thorns, then the obsession with technique is ended. The suspension of work, and therefore of technique, is compensated for by the Lord's free gift. The Sabbath confirms that technique belongs to the world of necessity. If we devote our Sundays to screens, we remove the limit that consisted of inserting a time freed from technique into the socially technicized course of the week. The Sabbath is in itself a limit to technique, explains Ellul, but it has no value in itself. It has meaning only to the extent that we live out our faith. Otherwise, technique takes over everything. In the Bible, what validates work is the institution of the cessation of that work. Ethically speaking, technique must be relativized, just like work or politics.

Ellul reminds us that the Sabbath was also instituted for animals (Ex 23:12). Man has no right to behave toward them as their absolute owner. Animals must not be exploited to the extreme limits of their strength. It is only after the new covenant that man is allowed to kill animals for food and that he becomes for them a source of fear and terror. But killing an animal is still bordering on murder. For Ellul, Mosaic law is not mere superstition but a reminder of the limits of what man may do to animals. The important thing is not to believe that man may eat animals only after removing their souls (by bleeding them) but that God clearly willed to prevent excessive and aberrant use of animals. Moreover, before the Flood, man was strictly vegetarian. Having become carnivorous, he introduced terror into creation,

but he must remember that animals also are loved by God. It should not be forgotten that not only does the Sabbath rule apply to animals also, but above all that men and animals are promised—together—eternal salvation, as the books of Jonah and the Prophets attest. Whether animals have souls is of no importance whatsoever other than to allow them to be treated as machines or piles of meat: "It was the same reasoning that justified the concentration camps: 'Jews are not human beings.'"[5] Denouncing battery farming and new methods of fattening pigs, chickens, and sheep as an explicit sin in the early 1970s, Ellul did not hesitate to compare their "ignoble and unnatural" living conditions to those of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps.

The limit placed on man by God extends to the entire natural environment, especially trees (Deut 20:19). Even in times of war, God forbids the felling of trees. The besieger has the right only to use them for food and shelter. In Leviticus 25:1–24, at the same time as Yahweh gives the land to the Israelites he affirms its right to a sabbatical rest in the seventh year: "You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard [...] it shall be a year of rest for the land." Here again, it is only a superficial reading to see this as the consecration of a hypothetical agronomic practice, when it is, above all, a question of establishing a margin of freedom within which the land escapes human control. Within this margin, man is no longer the master, and he must restore nature to its true owner if he wishes to benefit from divine protection: "The earth *first* enters into the Lord's rest," Ellul emphasizes, "*before* being at the service of man!"[6] The Old Testament makes man's security directly dependent on his respect for the truce he must grant to the earth during sabbatical and jubilee years. If man wants to live in the land in safety, he must submit to these laws, which are intended to remind him that he is only a guest. "Man's vocation is to preserve and cultivate this world without exhausting it."[7]

Today

When man crosses the line, God does not intervene brutally but allows things to take their course. This is our current situation in the ecological drama that we are experiencing, as Ellul explained back in 1974:

> We have unleashed our power, we have exploited to death, destroying species, riches, possibilities, natural balances, cycles, and produce. We have wasted at an incredible rate [...] we have polluted the oceans, so that human safety is no longer assured.

For him, the fundamental question is "that of the limits to the exploitation of creation." Ellul believes, however, that appeals to reason will remain ineffective. Telling humans that they are sawing off the branch they are sitting on, scaring them, invoking the planet left to our children or the end of the world, or developing scientific arguments will not bring about the salutary conversion that alone can avert disaster.

Even though he rightly cites the case of Native Americans as a model of balance between nature and man, and defends himself against any apologetics, Ellul believes that in a "technological society," only faith in Revelation can change our behavior toward nature. He argues that only the biblical God has the unique designation of "being love, for the whole of his creation, of which man is both the mirror and the image of God in this creation."[8] Under these conditions, this God cannot bear to see it reduced to nothingness. Unfortunately, the transformation of creation into Nature has paved the way for technological excess. Yet he points out that we must not confuse the right to do everything with the right to do anything. Man is both free and responsible before God. Faith in Christ does not mean powerlessness but the choice of non-power: that is, the voluntary renunciation of doing everything that one could do. Ellul bases his ethics on self-limitation, that is, on the refusal to submit to Gabor's Law that everything that can be done, will be done. From an ethical point of view, what is possible is not necessarily what is desirable.

Ellul draws two observations from his biblical theology of limits. Even if the consequences of crossing these limits affect society as a whole, Christians and Jews may not accept them, provided only that they are aware of their role. Generally, they are not. Yet only to the extent that people see what Christians live out with regard to technological excess will they be able to take the latter's words on limits seriously. These words will remain dead letters if Christians behave like everyone else, or if those who know and respect the limits hide the fact that they are Christians. But, Ellul

warns, the question also concerns the church. It is not by an encyclical that the church must demonstrate its awareness, but by its very being.[9] If the church does not embody a bulwark against the technological vertigo that is overwhelming our societies, the various categories of limits already mentioned will remain mere proposals.

Second, insofar as Christianity has contributed to ruining the balance of the so-called "natural" order, we find ourselves in a completely unpredictable situation. The negative work of Christianity is becoming apparent. If man wants power without accepting God's power, none of the limits he has gradually discovered will hold any longer. The limits internalized by faith no longer apply, because they are rejected by the spirit of the age. Faced with what he defines above all as a spiritual problem, Ellul envisages four outcomes: catastrophe through annihilation (atomic war or total pollution), exponential population growth leading to final chaos, the establishment of totalitarianism, or the call to limits, which presupposes a recognition of the status of *creation* and a change in behavior: "Hoping and believing in this Revelation is the only motivation strong enough to make us want our limits (knowing the price to pay!)."[10]

Conclusions

In Jacques Ellul's mind, what is generally referred to as the "ecological crisis" is above all a spiritual problem. While freedom is central to his thinking ("Nothing I have done, lived, or thought can be understood without reference to freedom"[11]), it involves an ethic of responsibility, with which it forms an inseparable pair. Admittedly, the Word of Christ desacralized the world and allowed science and technique to flourish. Man now has the right to do everything, but not to do just anything. The only thing prohibited to to Christians is that they close their heart toward God and their neighbors. This is expressed very well by the Apostle Paul: "Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial" (1 Cor 6:12). Ellul says that we must act as if God did not exist and that everything depended on us. Is not the essence of the human persons their ability of self-limitation? In a world literally encumbered by technique, the chosen limit is what allows freedom and responsibility to be linked in a dialectical relationship.

Ellul thus turns the accusation against Christianity on its head. It is not by respecting the biblical word that man has caused the ecological crisis; rather, it is because he no longer believes in the Creator God that he behaves irresponsibly toward Nature-Creation. In the midst of an ecological crisis, and provided that we soften the peremptory character of some of his formulations, Ellul's work provides the basis for an ethics that is valuable for not only for Christians but also anarchists, socialists, environmentalists, and degrowth advocates, who do not treat the religious and the spiritual with the same disapproval.

Notes

1. Jacques Ellul, "Atome: d'une question stupide à un pari stupide." *Réforme* (Aug. 10, 1974).
2. Jacques Ellul, *Éthique de la Sainteté* (Labor et Fides/Olivétan, 2024), excerpt in *Réforme* (Jun. 11, 2020), 4.
3. Ellul repeats this example in both *Théologie et technique* (Labor et Fides, 2014) and *The Ethics of Holiness*.
4. Ellul, *Théologie et technique*, 179.
5. Jacques Ellul, "Le rapport de l'homme à la création selon la Bible." *Foi & Vie* 73, no. 5–6 (Dec. 1974), 147.
6. Ellul, *Théologie et technique*, 212.
7. Jacques Ellul and Patrick Chastenet, *À contre-courant* (La Table Ronde, [1994] 2023), 236.
8. Ellul, *Théologie et technique*, 215.
9. Yves Ellul dates the manuscript of *Théologie et technique* to "the 1970s," so there can be no reference to the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015).
10. Ellul, *Théologie et technique*, 234.
11. Patrick Chastenet, *Introduction à Jacques Ellul* (La Découverte, 2019), 3.

Jacques Ellul and the Preservation of the World

Jean-Philippe Qadri

> Can we say that there is glory of God, hope for the world, when we waste coal and oil reserves, when we disrupt the ecological order, when we pollute the water and air, when we destroy forests, when we devastate cultivated land, when countless animal species disappear before our very eyes... Can God's glory still appear in this polluted, pestilential, emaciated nature, covered in death?[1]

The influence of Jacques Ellul's analyses in ecological and degrowth circles is now well documented.[2] This article aims primarily to revisit the reasons behind his involvement in defending the environment and the meaning that should be attributed to it—being understood that, for Ellul, reason and meaning come from biblical revelation: "When it speaks [...] to our faith by asking questions," it "makes man responsible (obliged to respond) and sends him back to his freedom."[3] Thus, after considering the relationship between technique and ecology as early as 1966,[4] Ellul, who had become editor of *Foi & Vie*, brought ecology into confrontation with theology in the October 1974 issue. For him, it was impossible to avoid both "the ecological question, the risk of destruction of the living environment by the expansion of human means" and the "fundamental theological problem [of] the place of man in nature—or creation."[5]

In fact, alongside Ellul's concern for man and society in an increasingly technological world, a chronological review of his writings highlights the emergence and growth of his concern for Creation over the years. Thus, after recalling the definition of "world" in Ellul's writings, I will contrast his observation of its decomposition with the need for its preservation. It appears that the theme of "preserving the world" is present at the very beginning of his work and reappears regularly thereafter, right up to his last

Qadri, Jean-Philippe. "Jacques Ellul and the Preservation of the World." *Ellul Forum* 75 (Fall 2025): 29–75. © Jean-Philippe Qadri, CC BY-NC-ND.

interviews. The aim will be to discern how this theme is linked to the gradual awareness of the "ecological catastrophe"[6] and then to see how the preservation of the world is linked to contemplating this. This will lead us to return to an aesthetic dimension that is often neglected in Ellul's thinking. Finally, and because this contemplation of the world is in turn associated with the revelation of God's gratuitous love for the world, we will note the particular role assigned by Ellul to the Church and to Christians as servants of God's presence in the world and bearers of hope for mankind, even as "the growing conviction that we are faced with seemingly insoluble problems, insurmountable difficulties" imposes itself. These are "enormous problems that concern us all, which we know we cannot leave to others to solve—from hunger, to overpopulation, to pollution..."[7]

I. The Wear and Tear of the Earth

Naming the World

Because Jacques Ellul has some reservations about using the concepts of environmental protection or nature,[8] he often marks this distance by putting them in quotation marks[9] and prefers the two theological notions of Creation and World. Nevertheless, common usage sometimes prevails, even in the most intimate poetry:

> Man said, "I produce"—the riches that blossomed
> at the end of generations of work
> responded unchecked to the violation of things—
> Nature destroyed, and man is responsible!
>
> [...]
>
> The aborted rivers the forced conduits
> and the mountains denuded of trees, that mourn their absence
> the exhausted veins and empty pockets
>
> [...]
>
> Wear and tear of the earth and of your own life[10]

Elsewhere, quoting Romans 8:21 from memory, Ellul can say that "nature suffers and groans in the pains of childbirth," while Paul clearly speaks of the sufferings of the creation.[11] Then, in *What I Believe*, the terms "world" and "nature" are used explicitly one for the other:

> We are introducing into the world, at the same time, new substances, chemicals that did not exist before, and new materials made from these chemicals. We are introducing new bacilli and unexpected disturbances to nature. We are not just imitating nature (the talking machine or the acting robot), we are not just producing correspondences in this nature, but we are disrupting it with interventions as traumatic as an earthquake or typhoon. With one difference: these are accidental and sporadic, while our interventions are permanent and regular; eutrophication of the lakes and rivers, the progressive disappearance of forests, either through massive deforestation (even the Amazon basin is victim of this) or through acid rain, progressive decrease in oxygen production, and at the same time a massive production of CO_2, which is accumulating in layers in the atmosphere. [...] Increasing production of non-biodegradable materials, which are flooding our lives... These are not just nasty arguments put forward by environmentalists, they are realities recognized by scientists, the long-term effects of which we are unable to measure: the production of a new element that cannot be broken down by human activity. A total change in our ecosystem.[12]

In this quotation, "our ecosystem" reminds us how much Ellul's ecology remains centered on man as a person and on humanity as a species: "Ecology is not a defense of Nature in itself, but of the protection of man, by and against himself."[13] Nature is therefore to be understood as the "natural environment," the first of the environments in which man has evolved according to his theory of the three ages and three environments (nature, society, technique).[14]

Since "each 'environment' subsists in a minor form in the subsequent period (nature in the societal period, nature and society in the technological period),"[15] the World, then, would be the superimposition of man's three environments in their not only material but also spiritual dimension. This echoes the definition that Ellul gives to the term "world" as it appears in the Gospel of John:

> Thus, for me, the world in question is indeed the universe that we perceive as an object, the world of things, but also, at the same time, the world of men (which we now call society); it is as much the cosmos of the heavens and earth as it is of the State and Commerce (thus it does not strictly coincide with creation). [...] It is this world that we know that is the world of rebellion and opposition toward

> God. [...] *But at the same time* [...] it is this world that is loved by God.[16]

The world does not coincide with Creation, for Creation is God's gift to men so that the world may be. Furthermore, Creation, as God intended it for man, has been inaccessible since the Fall, because "from the moment there is rupture between God and man, there is also rupture between man and his environment. Man will devastate what was his place of 'delights,' and 'the whole of creation suffers and sighs.'"[17]

Everything That Has Begun to Die

The verses given above, which are excerpts from *Oratorio*, Ellul's long poetic work on the subject of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, are inspired by the biblical condemnation brought upon "those who destroy the earth" (Rev 11:18). In fact, Ellul's social involvements and positions are haunted by the obsessive question of the world's life and death.[18]

As early as 1945, he noted that "our world is dying" and invited the readers of *Réforme* to concern themselves with "knowing what our world is dying of."[19] Two years later, he gave a series of lectures in Switzerland, which were published the following year in *Presence in the Modern World*. In it, he reaffirmed that we must know "what is the deadly tendency of our world," whose will is "a will to death, a will to suicide."[20] During that period he meditated on the figure of Cain. Adam's pride had led to a rupture with God and heralded a rupture with the rest of creation. Cain's murder of Abel confirmed this rupture: Cain "broke the kinship of the world and of men" and lost "the protection of God," which was expressed through "a certain familiarity, in the literal sense, with men and nature." This "truly impossible situation" of a nature subjected to the violence of men is precisely what "our modern world is dying of."[21]

Twenty-four years later, the same regrets reappear in *Hope in Time of Abandonment*. The themes of ongoing death and the desire for suicide seem about to be left behind, since Ellul believes that "we are now in the final stage of this decomposition."[22] Because we have "built a world of powers"[23] based on the constraint of things "in the sole service of man," "we condemn them to extinction"[24]—and ourselves along with them. It appears that "the rapid

development of man's technical powers" brings with it his "diminishment": man is led "to fade away before his work, or rather to disappear,"[25] he has "eroded"[26] and now lives according to "a denial of everything that has until now been his history and virtue,"[27] in a self-negation that pushes him "to destroy everything that is fragile" and in the despair of one who "devotes his energies to killing everything that has begun to die," namely

> everything that does not offer stubborn resistance, simple feelings, and "natural" virtues, elementary joys, and ecological balance, family and love, childhood (destroyed by being pampered) and adolescence (rotten by being glorified), modesty and honor, speech and meaning, God and Nature.[28]

In *The Betrayal of the West* (1975), the disappearance of man himself is set alongside the degradation of the elements and forests:

> We, too, are now confronted with a choice: Shall we continue to will western man? We must make this choice with the clear understanding that if we cease to make it, western man will cease to exist. We cannot go on indefinitely flouting reason and freedom. We Westerners at the present time are treating our world and the human type it has produced in exactly the same way as the technicians (the masters of rational methods) have, in the view of ecologists, treated the air, water, oceans, and forests. The technicians thought these things were so vast and inexhaustible that they could do anything they wanted with them: "Pour millions of tons of waste into the ocean—the ocean will always be there." Not so! We are suddenly discovering that the ocean is dying—and we are panicking.[29]

Nine years after *Hope in Time of Abandonment*, Ellul returns to the disappearance of speech and ecological balance and links these two dimensions that are essential to man but whose fragility condemns them in the construction of this world of powers. Ellul reveals the paradox of a technique that leads to the decomposition of nature and speech, even as it holds man in the illusion of their permanence. Indeed, the tools of communication seem to favor speech, while the means of reproducing the image make it possible to raise mass awareness of nature's beauty. But this is a fiction:

> The fiction of always being, as always, in a world of water, wind, trees, and animals. [...] We are currently experiencing the prophecy of E. A. Poe, when the painter, passionate about the model of his beloved, as well as his art, "*would* not see that the tints which he spread upon

> the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. And when many weeks had passed, [the last] brush was given, [...] the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, [...] he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice 'This is indeed *Life* itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved: —*She was dead*." It is not certain that we ever have this view of what is dying and that we see so clearly living in our images.[30]

The experience of the beauty of images of the world is not the same as the beauty of the world. By playing on the "confusion of the living world with the world shown,"[31] the mediation of the world by technique induces fascination, wonder, and entertainment in most people, which contrasts with the awareness it produces and the respect it inspires in a few.

The Plundered Planet

Fairfield Osborn's Book

Jacques Ellul became aware of the "feeling of nature" at an early age thanks to Bernard Charbonneau.[32] But when did he first become convinced that an ecological catastrophe was underway? It is difficult to pinpoint a date for an awareness that clearly developed over several years, but we can legitimately consider the period 1949–50 to be a turning point. We will see that in 1981, Ellul regretted not having placed ecology at the heart of his programmatic book *Presence in the Modern World*, published in 1948. It so happens that in the same year, in the United States, Fairfield Osborn published *Our Plundered Planet* and William Vogt published *Road to Survival*. Both books were quickly translated into French and appeared in 1949 as *La Planète au pillage* and in 1950 as *La Faim du monde*.[33] The first mention of ecology in Ellul's writings seems to date back to this period, which corresponds to the writing of *The Technological Society*. Addressing the issue of agricultural techniques, Ellul uses the example of the "20 to 40 million ecologically displaced persons [in Latin America], persons occupying lands which ought not to be under cultivation."[34] He then refers to three "experts on agricultural issues": the geographer Josué de Castro,[35] agronomist René Dumont,[36] and ecologist William Vogt. Vogt is also quoted in the section on technical universalism:

> Vogt emphasizes this fact, for example, when he shows [from an ecological point of view] that in the domain of agriculture the most up-to-date techniques have become universal. Never before, says Vogt, has man destroyed his natural environment "with the inexorableness of an armored division. These 'civilized' forces of destruction, which have been developed under our influence, have conquered the entire globe to such a degree that Malays, Hottentots and Ainos are spreading the plague."[37]

Fifteen years later, in his commentary on Second Kings, Ellul meditates on the figure of the conqueror, which he allusively associates with Gabor's Law, since, if the conqueror "recognized that it is from God that he derives his power, then he could not use all the means that God allows him." Now, from the Assyrian, the biblical conqueror, Ellul moves directly to the Technician, then to the Scientist and the Politician. The four figures have in common their refusal to accept any limits, by disregarding those set by God. If the Assyrian placed himself under the gaze of his Creator, "he could not massacre, treat men as mere things," while "the Technician could not waste nature as he does today; the Scientist could not strive to uncover all the world's secrets; the Politician could not claim the nation state, the totalitarian state."[38] Fairfield Osborn, at the end of the Second World War, contrasted war between men with the war of men against nature. In 1966, Ellul does not contrast these two wars, nor does he contrast them with a third (that of rationalism against reason), but he recalls the common root of all these evils denounced in the biblical text: "The indictment is not about the millions of victims, the waste of nature, the intellectual madness, but the attack against the Lord."[39]

That same year,[40] Ellul, writing *The Ethics of Freedom*, develops the ideas of *Politics of God, Politics of Man* and on this occasion introduces two clear references to Fairfield Osborn's book:

> [It is said that] Science reveals the wonderful secrets of creation[.] All this is rhetoric[.] The reality [is] "La Planète au pillage." It is the frenzied exploitation of "riches," to the point of depletion (oil, coal). [The] reality is the killing, the extermination of entire animal species, the pollution of the air and water. The reality is the seizure of power over everything for the sake of senseless waste, the destruction of the soil by delusional farming methods.[41]

The second reference is accompanied by an allusion to the divine order of Genesis 2:15, all of which constitutes a commentary on the pretext of freedom in Galatians 5:13, which anticipates by a year Lynn White Jr.'s criticism of the role of Christianity in the ecological crisis.[42]

> It is true that Christian freedom has desacralized nature, opened up the possibility for man to intervene freely in the natural environment, and that it could be the restoration to Adam of the divine order to "cultivate and keep the garden" [Gen 2:15]. Unfortunately, man has not used this desacralization of nature, no longer guarded by sacred terrors, formidable gods, and spirits, in the freedom of service, respect, and temperance, but instead has made of precisely this freedom a pretext for unleashing his spirit of domination. He has exploited nature without limit or restraint, he has "plundered the planet," he has thought only of increasing the means of his power, and has violated secrets that God might have revealed to him, but which he took without hesitation—like Adam. He exhausts resources and destroys animal species with boundless technical savagery. What characterizes modern technique is precisely this spirit of power that Paul warned us not to give ourselves to.[43]

Ellul would subsequently return several times to the idea of the "exploitation of nature" as a consequence of its desacralization by biblical revelation, but he was careful to distinguish between Christianity, which produced the conditions for the modern drama (and for which "the substance of the faith had itself disappeared or had been totally adulterated")[44] and the Christian faith that gives the courage to face it (because it receives God as Liberator and Creator, and his Son as the only Lord of Creation[45] and true Lord of the world[46]).

Carl Amery and Bernard Charbonneau

Ellul does not seem to have been familiar with Lynn White's article, which he never mentions. On the other hand, he did read Carl Amery's book *The End of Providence*, which popularized White's thesis among European readers in the 1970s.[47] Ellul's position, in his response to Amery's arguments, remains faithful to the biblical revelation of a creation given and entrusted to man.[48] It foreshadows that of the American agrarian Wendell Berry, who in turn will return to the biblical text without limiting himself

to Genesis 1 to criticize the "indictment of Christianity by the anti-Christian conservationists."[49]

Between these two camps, Bernard Charbonneau, drawing on Amery's book, takes up the criticisms of the ecological camp against the Christian religion. But he brings significant nuances to the discussion, aided by his knowledge of the biblical text and, certainly, by his virulent yet friendly dialogue with Jacques Ellul on this subject.[50] As soon as *Feu vert* was published in 1980, Ellul encouraged French environmentalists to use it as the basis for a "doctrine" that would unite their different movements.[51] In his second review of the book, Ellul explains the book's thesis that, for environmental action, "everything is based on the relationship between nature and freedom":

> Nature cannot simply be protected for its own sake, and everything in it obeys necessities. But if we limit ourselves to defending and restoring "natural" processes, we are not taking into account what makes man unique. Conversely, if we blindly play for man's freedom, which is explosive (with science and technique), it blindly destroys nature. For nature is not without man, and man is not without nature. Freedom must know how to take necessity into account. Necessity must be overcome by freedom.[52]

Ellul's thinking easily agrees with "this decisive and radical view" of Charbonneau since, as early as 1966, through his dual reference to Genesis 2:15 and Osborn's book, Ellul establishes an explicit link in what will become *The Ethics of Freedom* between ecological concern and the "order of preservation willed by God" for man from the beginning.[53]

Collapse

Rereading these texts now, one cannot ignore the theme of collapse, which, since the success of Jared Diamond's book,[54] has taken over from that of the crisis of the 1970s.

In 1972, the scientists of the Meadows report predicted a risk of global economic collapse by 2030. Ellul also links the "ecological explosion" to this publication commissioned by the Club of Rome. He approved of its warning against pollution that the environment cannot absorb, the depletion of non-renewable raw materials, and exponential and indefinite growth in a finite environment. He contested the alarmist tone and certain elements of

the report (for example, the time remaining before the depletion of certain raw materials), but acknowledged that the problems it raised were real.[55]

The stunning effect of the Meadows report has only grown stronger to this day, as year after year, the accumulated data confirms the simulations of 1972. To the point that they constitute a fundamental argument in the collapsist discourse. Many intellectuals criticize collapsology due to its religious resonance and the political apathy it tends to produce.[56] In fact, it is indeed a secularization of the doctrine of the end times. Ellul himself uses the theme of collapse when he addresses these times:

> The entire Apocalypse, chapter 24 of Matthew, and [the second epistle of] Peter (3:10) tells us that we are heading toward a final catastrophe that will destroy the world and the church, before the kingdom of God appears in a new creation. First comes chaos, in which all our religions, pieties, cultures, and institutions collapse.[57]

Ellul embraces this revelation of the end of human history. In *Hope in Time of Abandonment*, he suggests that

> those who reject this reading of history, this vision of a radical judgment, of a collapse of the world into its own destruction in order to pass into a new creation and the resurrection and recapitulation of history, are expressing that they have no hope—and do not know what it is.[58]

And yet, unlike some collapsologists who withdraw from the world in anticipation of a catastrophe considered inevitable, Ellul asserts that "we must be fully immersed in all the adventures of this world" in order to always oppose the fatality it engenders.[59] Prospects lead to despair and withdrawal. It is not a biblical revelation that calls us to work in hope [*espérance*] against all hope [*espoir*], so that the Word may be proclaimed, "so that man may live in this universe"[60]—"so that his society may be livable and he himself may live in it"[61] and accept the "price to be paid" for this, it being understood that "the price to be paid, that of economic and technical retrogression, is very high."[62]

He constantly reminds Christians that they are "the light of the world" (Matt 5:14)[63]—and thus called to bear witness to the world's salvation—but also "the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13)[64]—and thus called to act here and now for the world's preservation. The last things do not obliterate the

penultimate things. Indeed, the covenant that God made with men is "not only a covenant of salvation with Abraham, but also a covenant of preservation made with Adam and Noah."[65]

Ellul's thinking on this point echoes that of Origen, who was one of the first to establish an explicit link between the Gospel metaphor of the salt of the earth and the idea that Christians participate in the preservation of the world. For Origen, it is "they who, by their faith, are the cause of the world's preservation. For the end of the world will come *when salt has lost its flavor and there is nothing left to salt and preserve the earth*."[66] Ellul suggests such a connection when he reminds us that we must "fight on both fronts as hope demands, against the silence of God on one side, and against the evil that reigns in the world on the other," which implies "that God's intervention will take place both unexpectedly (like a thief) and explosively (*the cyclone attracted by the drop in pressure* ...) and that this will effectively call everything into question."[67]

II. For a Livable World

From the Preservation of the World to the Preservation of Creation

The theme of the preservation of the world, central to Ellul's work, evolves over the years: from the mid-1960s onward, the preservation of the world of human life more and more explicitly involves the preservation of God's Creation for man.

The Preservation of the World

The preservation of the world is a question that runs through the history of Western theology and philosophy. From the beginning of the Reformation, it has been found in the Lutheran and Calvinist currents of Protestantism. Thus, in article 8 of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, God is the one who preserves the "natural existence of these things" such as air, light, food, drink, or the "regular movement of the stars," but also the one who maintains "legitimate temporal organizations (*legitimae politae*)."[68] The *Augsburg Confession* already presented God as "the creator and preserver of all things, visible and invisible" (article 1)[69] or as the one "who creates and preserves

nature" (article 19).[70] And the *Apology*, referring to article 19, recalls that God "founded nature and preserves all that exists."[71]

For Calvin, "the Creator's intervention consists [...] in protecting life by setting limits on violence."[72] Morality and legal and political institutions participate in God's will for the "preservation of the universal world."[73]

This is how Ellul, in 1939, then a young lecturer at the faculty of law in Clermont-Ferrand, envisaged law: "By following the law, one is not just, but it is only in doing so that the minimum justice necessary for life in society is preserved."[74] It was along these lines that he wrote in 1948 (explaining the difference between an impossible post-Christian era and the post-Christian civilization that is ours) that "the Bible shows us not the possibility of a Christian civilization but the existence of a certain order, a certain place for institutions, willed by God, and that ensures, not salvation, but the preservation of the world."[75]

Ellul summarizes thus the numerous developments he had made on this subject in *The Theological Foundation of Law*, two years earlier. In particular, by obeying the law, man "participates in the work of preserving the world,"[76] and, conversely,

> the judicial and administrative organization and the rules that govern it are intended to enable the maintenance of life, and man submits to this goal [...]. This quest is in fact ordered toward the preservation of the world, and man acts through his rules of justice to preserve the world, as *homo faber*, and this is precisely one of the goals assigned by God to the law, which is an element of God's patience toward the world.[77]

But while Ellul takes up the concept of "preservation of the world," he resolutely rejects those of Providence or ongoing creation. For Ellul, it is never a question of *providence* but of *presence*: "It is really about the mystery of God's presence at the heart of his creation, despite the Fall."[78] Similarly, the "orders of creation" (marriage, work, church, and magistrates)[79] are accepted, but they are dissociated from any natural law. Ellul thus distinguishes himself from "many Christian intellectuals and theologians whose main work was to include God within the world, to make him a condition of this world's existence or continuation." His opposition stems from the

fact that "this need of a closed world is in direct opposition to the idea of creation": if God is present in the world, it is as the Wholly Other; because "the Creator is outside the Created," it is impossible to put him "in service to this history."[80]

This is perhaps one of the reasons why Ellul changed his interpretation of law four times (the 1940s interpretation corresponds to the second).[81] He was never entirely satisfied with it, but ultimately arrived at the conviction that law is a response given by man (and no longer by God) to the challenge of society and Creation, since it is a response to the questioning "by time, by space, and by the other."[82] Consequently, the numerous developments concerning the "preservation of the world" found in *The Theological Foundation of Law* (1946) remain valid for understanding Jacques Ellul's later thinking but also for grasping the issues of our time. Because law, a human creation, must help man to live and to sustain life, it encounters "biblical revelation or biblical thought"[83]:

> To enter into a covenant with God is, first, to be able to live, and then to make a commitment to maintain life. From this we derive the general idea of preserving the world. [...] Therefore, to place man in a situation such that life is impossible for him is to go against the purpose of law. Law must be such that man, when asked the question, "Do you want to live—and do you want to sustain life?" can answer yes. This does not mean that he will necessarily answer yes (it is sin that drives man toward death), nor that he will know how to live (for he cannot do so without grace), but simply that the social, economic, and political conditions of existence, created by law, are such that man is not driven to death.[84]

The warning against any abuse of the law which, from being a work for life, would become a deadly work, remains as valid and relevant as ever:

> When law organizes society for the happiness of man, or for production, or power, or glory, or wealth (that is to say, all of these: as exclusively for the sake of ...), and not for judgment, law ceases to preserve the world. Because God preserves it *only* for judgment, and when law does not fulfill this mission, it becomes in society an element of disorder, anarchy, and death.[85]

Let us also note the link between law and speech, two fragile works of man

that God can invest with his grace, one to participate in the preservation of the world, the other to participate in its salvation:

> But what does this mean: to preserve the world for the Judgment? It has nothing to do with the conception of a bloodthirsty God who keeps the world in suffering only to better condemn it. In reality, judgment is achieved through the preaching of the Word within this world, and it is the Word alone that separates, like a sharp sword: that is to say, it judges (Heb 4:12). Thus, the world is in reality preserved so that the Word may be spoken there, so that salvation in Jesus Christ may be proclaimed there.[86]

This dialectic between preservation and salvation is found in *Presence in the Modern World* (1948). In this book, which heralds the work of the next forty years, as it was conceived during the war and as he would complete it with *Reason for Being* (1987), Ellul contrasts the involvement and witness of Christians. The first corresponds to "participation in the preservation of the world, which is a fruit of the application of ethics"[87] and which is in accordance with "the order of preservation that God wills for it."[88] The second corresponds to the proclamation of the Gospel. If Christian involvement is oriented by and toward proclamation, the necessity of involvement remains: The Christian, because he is a human being, not because he is a Christian, "must participate in the preservation of the world, he must work effectively to achieve it."[89] This effective participation, which works to make the "world livable,"[90] is coupled with a particular participation, which serves its salvation, which we will return to (cf. part III, below). But already, both have in common the Pauline sense of urgency (Col 4:5; Eph 5:15):

> It seems to me that this participation, both effective and particular, in the preservation of the world can be reduced to the idea of redeeming the time. [...] There can be no separation between preaching and behavior, that redeeming the time is both a work of preservation (and it is even that which is the authentic work of preservation) and a work of salvation.[91]

Thus, even without sharing Ellul's Christian faith, his reader can agree with him on the need to work "while it is still day" (John 9:4), especially since the urgency (ecological, social, democratic, moral, spiritual, etc.) is being felt. But when it comes to the relationship between the Christian faith and the main ecological movements, the connection cannot be complete.

For Ellul, the ecological emergency, despite its magnitude and catastrophic consequences, is only a symptom because it is linked to the spiritual urgency of man without hope, which is its cause: "It is not the external ruins denounced by ecology that are the most terrible, but the internal ruin"—and this ruin consists of man's "unbreakable subjugation" to the technological system.[92] There is no life possible without criticism of the technological system:

> We are beginning to realize that technological society risks being radically unlivable (at least for what has hitherto been considered to be man ...) [...] To become involved in environmental protection and ecology without questioning technical progress, technocratic society, and the passion for efficiency is to engage in an operation that is not only useless but fundamentally harmful, because it will ultimately lead to nothing.[93]

That is why

> the world must be preserved by God's ways, and not by human technique (which can enter into God's ways on condition that mankind cares about the judgment on technique and its submission) and it must be preserved in a certain order willed by God, and not on the plan that mankind makes of this order (a plan that can be accepted by God on condition that men care about a certain truth, about authentic justice).[94]

In other words, to protect everything that is fragile in the world, we must take the opposite path to the one taken until now, which is that of Power and that of a totalitarian mindset induced by Technique that leads man to believe that the problems Technique creates will find their solution in it, without it being necessary to question the spirit of Power that drives this approach. On this point, *Presence in the Modern World* contains the seeds of an entire ecological critique of the technological environment. But only in seed form, only in embryo, and Ellul, in the preface he wrote for the Swedish translation of the text in the early 1980s, makes a self-criticism:

> There is a major omission in this book, which I should have already placed at the heart of my work at that time, and that is Ecology. Several of us were concerned about the effects of technique on nature, but although I glimpsed the main effects of technique here, I did not know how to give to the destruction of the natural environment, biological cycles, etc., the place it should have had [even though] the

> book should be read as a draft, a program, a sketch of the work that gradually developed subsequently. It is likely that if a serious theological reflection had been undertaken in 1945 on this question of ecology, we could have influenced the evolution a little, because at a time when the reign of technique was beginning in earnest, if it was impossible to impose ends on it, it would have been possible to alert public opinion to the enormous dangers of these means, to the total risk that this multiplication of objects, the mechanism of economic growth, the unlimited use and depletion of earth's resources, pollution (the risk of which a very few people foresaw) ... and perhaps the weight of public opinion could have stopped certain developments. I should have thought of that at the time.[95]

The Preservation of Creation

Ellul's self-criticism can be considered quite severe with regard to a sketch written thirty-three years earlier (and be surprised, on the other hand, at the lack of consideration given to ecological problems in *Autopsy of Revolution* and *From Revolution to Revolts*, published in 1969 and 1972, several years after Ellul became aware of the issue).[96] However, this clearly means that the preservation of the world, on the one hand, is not identified solely with the "question of ecology" and "the destruction of the natural environment" and that, on the other hand, the link between the two was not explicit enough. On this point, a new stage in thinking was reached in 1964 with *To Will & To Do*. Mention is made of the "order of the preservation of creation" identified with "the order necessary for the world to live." This order is governed by "scientific laws" and the "rules of life," and when man claims to escape them "biologically and chemically" he risks dying and disappearing "inevitably."[97] Indeed,

> life can be sustained only thanks to the total and detailed network of constraints. From the unknown constraints that dominate Matter and Worlds, to legal and social constraints. Everything is held together by the iron shackles that sustain it. And freedom leads to destruction, because this freedom now lies outside of love. If the planet no longer follows its orbit, if animals want to be free in terms of food or reproduction, if humans want to be free from laws. ... Necessity from top to bottom is the condition for the fallen world's preservation, and when any freedom whatever is affirmed it leads to death.[98]

In this text, which contrasts "destruction" with the preservation of the world, the laws that man must follow are no longer just those of the magistrate but also those of physics and of life itself. Furthermore, the shared alienation of man, animals, and the planet from the necessities that "dominate Matter and Worlds" heralds a meeting that will take place on November 28, 1977, in the hospital pavilion of the Bagatelle Social Center in Talence. There, Ellul will lead "an information session to reflect on and discuss" the theme of "Ecology: fashion or necessity?"[99]

It was not until 2018 that the last chapters of Ellul's introduction to his Christian ethics were published, but they must be dated, along with *To Will & To Do*, to the early 1960s. The argument, still theological, makes "the work of Preservation and that of Salvation" inseparable, both understood as "works of God," whose will is inaccessible to man "by his natural means."[100] Not only "is preservation realized only in Jesus Christ," but "the history of the World has no intrinsic value: it is integrated into the history of Salvation."[101] If the one cannot exist without the other, the former must find its *raison d'être* in the latter: "It is only if the world does not realize God's will in any way (not even for its preservation) that it is and can only be integrated into the adventure of Salvation for its *very* preservation."[102]

In other words, for Ellul, the preservation of the world does not aim to return to a golden age or the advent of a utopia but to enter into an "ethic of struggle and hope," borne by the "urgency of salvation."[103]

We have seen that in the early 1970s, Ellul no longer followed the traditional response of classical theology, which considers law to be "one of God's means, along with the State, for the preservation of the world until the judgment."[104] Yet Ellul maintains this judgment on the State, since he subsequently refers several times to his 1967 article on the theology of the State. In this article, following the interpretation of the Pauline epistles by Oscar Cullmann and Karl Barth, he states that

> the State is not simply a politico-legal organism, it has a "spiritual" dimension; it is part of the world but also part of the world of invisible things. [...] In the hands of Christ, it becomes part of the work of salvation, and not only of the preservation of the world.[105]

On this point, there is therefore continuity with the position that, through

the biblical text, "God reveals to the believer a number of things about political power" and enables him to establish a theology of the State that "is of the order of dogmatic knowledge" and belongs "both to the order of preservation and to the order of Reconciliation."[106]

In 1975, Ellul published, with updated notes and bibliography, his theology of the City, written between 1947 and 1951. He maintains that the "order of preservation willed by God"[107] does not concern nature alone but the world of man as a place that has been built against God: Because God exercises his judgments and condemnation without the conscious action of man, "far from asking us to destroy Babylon, he asks us to preserve it."[108] The preservation of the city is desired "because God wills the preservation of his people, whose material fate is linked to that of Babylon."[109] Ellul is aware that this theology will appear "supremely selfish to outsiders," but the members of the church "have value *only* because they bear the word of God."[110] And this witness to the world does not come without an involvement within the world. Because men need to hear a word of grace and a call to repentance for their salvation and to change the very structures of this world, the responsibility of Christians "is not only to proclaim the Gospel but also to participate in the proper functioning of the world, in its preservation, in the expression of the Gospel in the form of justice, freedom, and equality."[111]

During that period, in his commentary on Revelation Ellul emphasizes "the considerable importance given to the presence of the bearers of the kingdom for the persistence of the world"[112] while their absence implies "a tearing apart of all nature,"[113] to the point that "the world is no longer preserved, that the order established in creation no longer exists."[114]

This commentary, which marks the convergence of the preservation of the church and of nature, of the world and of creation, confirms the evolution that Ellul has brought to the theme of the preservation of the world, associating it more and more with that of Creation. This involves a deepening, on the one hand, of the theology of Creation and, on the other hand, of the figure of Adam and the relevance of this figure through that of Jesus Christ. For example, *Theology and Technique* discusses the Creator as "a faithful God who is constantly present and concerned both with the freedom of the one

he wanted to be his free respondent at the center of this creation, and with the preservation of it."[115] A few years later, an article from 1981 states that "through election, we are once again in the situation of Adam before the Fall, with the duty to keep, preserve, and cultivate this world."[116] And finally, in *Les Combats de la liberté*, Ellul specifies that

> the love that is in Christ should alone inspire our actions, not only in terms of witness but also in terms of preservation. Man must be able to live in order eventually to glorify God by his life. Man must be able to live his own life in order eventually to love God. Consequently, we must work to make this life livable, and therefore rebuild a place and a group for him, help him put down roots, and heal this social disease just as we must try to heal physiological diseases.[117]

This imperative concerns everyone, Christian or not. Indeed, since

> man haa preserved a remarkable sense of what is *useful*[,] he knows how to create useful techniques, useful law, useful morality […]. And consequently, he also knows how to preserve, he participates very positively in the preservation willed by God. But, since his separation from God, man has been inhabited by a passion for death. He is invincibly drawn to nothingness, destruction, chaos, madness. Every time he brings order, he sinks into another disorder.[118]

It is on Christians, therefore, that the heavy responsibility lies of a lucidity that does not sink into nihilism, aware that it is not a question of hastening the decomposition of the world but of safeguarding it: "Any positive element that can be preserved, must be preserved and adopted as a sign of God's patience."[119]

Subsequently, it was not until the interviews published in 1994 that we heard once again the invitation to participate in the preservation of the world. Returning to the dominion given to man over Creation in Genesis 1:28, Ellul notes that this verse is

> a command given to man before [...] his rupture with God. Moreover, just before this injunction, it is said that God created man in his image [Gen 1:26]. It should therefore be said: "Govern, order, subdue nature, as God does, that is, with love." Man has a vocation to preserve and cultivate this world without exhausting it. When hunting bison, the North American Indians knew when to stop in order to preserve the future. Today, however, we forget this basic rule that there cannot be infinite development in a finite universe.[120]

On this increasingly strong assertion that preserving the world requires preserving Creation, Ellul's theological work joins the "object of ecology," which is both the search for a "livable, sustainable [...] kind of relationship" between man and his environment and the discovery that "there are a certain number of rules to be observed, there is a certain respect for the environment, because if we destroy this environment, there will be no more life for man either."[121]

Ellul, a Conservative?

At this point, we cannot ignore the condemnation of "intellectually unacceptable conservatism" that a certain category of political ecology has placed on Ellul.[122] Ellul himself never ceased to be called upon to respond to this. Thus, in *Autopsy of Revolution*:

> There is no value to be obtained. There is an organized stand to be made against a monumental assault, against a mutation that I consider negative. Must we always come back to that? Is a physician struggling *against* a disease doing a negative job because he is *against*? As I see it, the negative character of what I ask revolution to combat makes the struggle itself positive. Yet in order to be positive, no new value or program is required.
>
> Next you will say that my approach is purely defensive, hence conservative—lo, that monstrous word is out! Again, I say no, for I see no hope of conserving: only of conquering. We must move ahead. Think of the physician again: in combatting disease, is he seeking to re-establish the state of health that preceded it? No, for he is aware that his patient's body (as well as his state of mind) has changed, and that with health restored it will gain a *new* equilibrium but will never be the same. Moreover, the battle against disease stimulates therapeutics research and the discovery of new remedies, making that aspect a positive and "progressive" one. Indeed, it is the only genuine progressive one. Modern progressivism is but a faint response to the over-all social situation. Our sole concern is to be resolved that, in the technostatist assault on human being, we shall recover the humanity in each of us [...], and shall defend ourselves. We must recognize the invasion as a plague (instead of as the supreme gift enabling man "to realize himself," the ultimate illusion that technology fosters through manipulation).[123]

It is understood, however, that any response is futile since theological considerations necessarily make you a *reactionary*. The reality is that the preservation of the world as Ellul understands it is an opposition to the world's closing in on itself. The point was clear from *Presence in the Modern World*:

> The situation of the Christian in the world is a revolutionary one. His participation in the preservation of the world is to be, in the midst of the world, an inexhaustible revolutionary power. It is indeed a question of the preservation of the world. For, in our time [...] "conformity to history" leads to catastrophe, to the death of many men (we have seen this!), to the disappearance of the possibilities of a human civilization, to the technical establishment of suicide. For the preservation of the world, it is currently necessary for a genuine revolution to take place.[124]

It is not the current state of the world that must be preserved, nor its past, about which we must avoid the temptation to want to "preserve it, protect it, entrap it, put it in a museum, in a stone sarcophagus, as beautiful and gilded as possible, to be sure that it will not escape."[125] On the contrary, it is a matter of keeping alive the memory of what the fallen world has never been (a Garden of Delights), the desire for what it will be (the New Creation), the possibility of a spiritual life as well as a material one, the testimony to the necessity of an openness toward the Wholly Other in a world tempted by unity in the sole mode of technology. What must be preserved is love for the world, not its covetousness, because "this fragile and torn earth is our only place, it is our only homeland."[126] What must be preserved is lucidity about the times we live in and a taste for the struggle for the "living world,"[127] the responsibility and vocation of man as much as that of the church—and the memory, of both times and beings, history and places. For the danger that man poses to the world lies as much in confusion (with new commonplaces such as "man, an animal like any other," or even "animal, a man like any other") as in forgetfulness. In particular, the forgetting of the call addressed to man to preserve the world (the neighbor who is an unfortunate man, but also the tree in the city[128]) when it is coupled with the forgetting of a fallen Creation, but one whose enduring beauty is destined for man's equilibrium.

III. For the Glory of God

> I think that the rupture of natural cycles, the ecological disruption and the growth in population will oblige man to take a new direction.[129]

The Sole Place

Harmony as a Vocation

In 1987, in *What I Believe*, the call to preserve the world becomes more urgent and takes on poetic tones that we find in the psalms. Starting from the earth understood as "our Eden" and "our pleasure"—where everything was "good, beautiful, harmonious, and pure, including sensual pleasure," and the observation that it is no longer the "sole place" made for man, Ellul asserts that "it must become so again."[130] Anticipating Elon Musk's recent pretensions to colonize Mars in order to escape the problems accumulating on earth and to make humanity "a spacefaring civilization and a multiplanetary species,"[131] or those of Jeff Bezos to colonize the moon in order to move heavy industry there and thus "save the earth" while "maintaining the growth of this civilization,"[132] Ellul calls for wisdom:

> Come back to earth and work to make this earth human, livable, harmonious. For this is our way out. The earth is our only place. Rediscover the joy of the earth. Instead of hating it because of its disasters, and destroying it through the senseless exploitation of agribusiness, mineral resources, and hydrocarbons, instead of the delirious waste of these riches slowly accumulated over millions of years and which we will exhaust in a few decades, [...] contemplate the fullness of the countryside, the grandeur of the mountains, the majesty of the ocean, and the mystery of the forest. This is made for you if you are inhabitants who receive there all that is necessary to be happy, as mankind has been for millennia.[133]

He then takes care to develop his understanding of the divine order of Genesis 2:15 regarding the work that mankind must accomplish:

> To restore our only homeland to itself. [...] To cultivate it well so as not to exhaust it, make it hideous, or distort it, to guard it well, both against itself so as to restore its lost harmony, and against ourselves so as to find in it the limit and measure of our hubris! Man, the measure of all things, certainly. But the earth too, our garden, is the

> measure of all things, that is to say, of reasonable and permissible actions for man.[134]

Ellul observes that, for thousands of years, man has pushed his genius in the direction of excess and exploitation, out of greed and contempt for his vocation:

> We are in the process of carving up the garden, and our earth will soon be nothing more than a pile of lifeless bones if we continue to devour it like this. The last traces of Eden are disappearing. Is this an ecological discourse? I fear rather that it is an elegy on the death of the earth, which was not our vocation as human beings. We were called, and we sensed it vaguely, to create harmony, balance, a right distribution of forces and resources, an equitable sharing of the earth's abundance. But this concern was stifled by power.[135]

Man has committed himself to a dead end with the idea that "it is enough to be powerful, to accumulate resources and to profit from everything." By neglecting the spiritual dimension of our being, by demythologizing and de-signifying the world, we are causing "the death of the world in which we find ourselves."[136]

This is one of the themes of the poem "Pilgrimage to the Civilization of Death": because we have created "an omnipresent / omnipotent omni-spatialized globalized civilization" in which "everything usable is already used,"[137] "we find ourselves face to face / without any poetry" and, as a result, "without any reciprocity / without any depth density mass thickness / without myths or halos."[138] But myth (which for Ellul is revelation) does not have the ambiguity that covetousness has sought to attribute to it:

> Look at the old myth of Genesis [...] Nowhere does it say that God gives Adam an earth and garden over which he is the absolute, unlimited, arbitrary master, and that this man's destiny is to exploit this good to the point of death. On the contrary, he is at the summit and center so that it might be respected; he is its guardian, that is to say, he must safeguard it, maintain it in a state of beauty and goodness, which was God's plan. He is the guarantor. He is responsible, that is, he will have to answer to this God for what happens there. And this God can always ask him, What have you done with this beauty of the world, with its harmony, its perfection?[139]

Beauty Destroyed

Observing the "divorce of the eye / and of the Word,"[140] Ellul establishes a link between the degradation of the world and the disappearance of the poetic and mythical word from the field of human thought. Technical morality,[141] which causes this degradation, presumes this disappearance:

> We live in an age where, from an aesthetic point of view, innovation is an end in itself. There is no longer any content or reference point or fixed point. Beauty, meaning, all that is futile. There are only methods and innovations—corresponding in their pure form to the convergence between a consumer society and the presupposition of progress.[142]

The disappearance of attachment to the world's beauty accompanies the entry into modernity represented by the "three geniuses" and "great evildoers of humanity" that are Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, with their rejection of all transcendence and the "radical power of a Wholly Other."[143] Because "what we are is a vague product of chemical combination"[144] to the point that we are "convinced that we are nothing extraordinary in the universe," man's contempt for himself is accompanied not only by "the destruction of what is human in man"[145] but also contempt for Nature and the destruction of its beauty:

> The process that we once denounced in our fight against the "development" of the Aquitaine coast is continuing on a global scale: take a place of admirable nature, a hilly forest, diverse undergrowth, a vast lake on one side, the ocean on the other. The developer arrives: how can we access these beauties? Roads, we cut through the forest with roads. "Picturesque" developments are needed (marina, etc.). And the ground is dug up for water, gas, electricity, and telephone lines. The undergrowth gradually disappears. Plots are divided up. And advertising begins: a tranquil and pure lake, wonderful air, boundless forest, deserted beaches stretching as far as the eye can see along the ocean. Hundreds, thousands of people are seduced by a paradise. We begin to cut down the trees. We need lots for everyone. And we build, we build endlessly. The trees always fall. The lake becomes a stinking pool of dirty water. The beach is swarming with nudists. Nothing remains of what attracted people here in the first place. We have destroyed the beauty and health of nature, [...] the logic of technique combined with that of money and power.[146]

Ellul's observation foreshadows the recent thesis of "hatred of nature" by philosopher Christian Godin, who denounces our "unconscious desire for self-destruction" and "the devastating power of the death-drives that the very progress of the techno-economy has unleashed upon the world."[147]

What Shall We Do?

Rediscovering Meaning

We can understand why Ellul asserted in 1969 that the "necessary revolution" aims at "nothing less than the breakup of the technological society" and requires three imperatives: first, a return to "the virtue of the individual citizen"; second, the growth of lucidity and knowledge by each one (or growth in the awareness of the "man in the street"[148]); and finally, contemplation as the "highest point of rupture" with this society.[149] For "the truly revolutionary standpoint" is that of "contemplation instead of frenetic agitation."[150] We find again the call given in *Presence in the Modern World* to preserve the world through a non-technical action, but in its secular version. It is therefore not surprising that this call is repeated in *Prayer and Modern Man*, written at the same time as *Autopsy of Revolution*, with Ellul asserting that it is

> precisely because our technological society is entirely devoted to action, [that] those who retreat to their rooms to pray are truly radical. Everything will come from this. And this act in society, which is in fact an act upon this society, goes much further than the concrete involvements that it does not evade.[151]

Ten years later, when asked about this book, Ellul returned to the link between prayer, contemplation, and involvement. On the one hand,

> prayer addressed to the one living God, the only guarantor of human being and freedom, implies both the contemplation of this truth and the involvement of a person who is freed by grace to enter into a higher truth and a more complete reality of man.[152]

On the other hand, modern man needs "rest, meditation, contemplation," that is, the "ability to stop and address someone other than the crowd around us."[153] In *Living Faith*, Ellul goes further. He affirms the need to rediscover wonder at nature, "for the grace of animals and the beauty of

flowers," with the assurance that this beauty and gratuitousness are for man, that they belong to the "order of pleasure" and an "additional grace."[154]

> We must rediscover faith in a beauty formed with us in mind. The stars are not blind heavenly bodies when—and because—we look at them. The poets are right, not the mathematicians. The stars send us signs charged with meaning, just like the ocean, like the explosion of plant life in spring.
>
> If we still had the fundamental confidence that everything was made for us and is directed to us, that we are the caretakers of reality, we should then be a great deal more prudent and modest.[155]

Although he distanced himself very early on from the reformer of Geneva, Ellul nevertheless shares Calvin's faith in God, who has given "beauty to the flowers" but also "to the plants, trees, and fruits" to "rejoice [man's] sight with their beauty" and so that man may experience "some pleasure in seeing [them]." Likewise, he gave "some grace to gold, silver, ivory, and marble" and, in general, to "many things, which we must hold in esteem without their being necessary to us."[156] Consequently,

> all things are given to us by God's benevolence, and [...] they are like a deposit for which we will one day have to give an account. We must therefore administer them in such a way that [...] we have to think about who it is who calls us to account, namely God, who [...] has so strongly recommended [...] temperance and modesty [...]; from whom no management is approved except that which is ordered to charity.[157]

Ellul says nothing else in his commentary on the "old myth of Genesis" that follows the development on the world's beauty. Man and woman as humanity (Adam) were destined to be "the stewards of the world out of love, for the sake of love. If God tells them to 'rule over' [...], this comes *immediately* after the proclamation that man and woman together are the image of God. The image of God is Love; there is no other."[158]

Regaining the Fabric of Life

It is the evacuation of beauty from the realm of aesthetics that explains why Ellul turned his attention to the question of art in the technological society. In fact, *The Empire of Non-Sense* was published in the same year as *Living Faith* (1980).

Note that Ellul's stance toward art is not conservative in terms of form: Because "our old cultural universe is completely outdated [...] we can no longer paint like Angelico or G. de la Tour." Yet, man "retains beliefs, memories buried deep in his subconscious, feelings and emotions that go back thousands of years and cannot be erased in a single generation," and "man, in every era, including our own (but for how much longer?), lacks a whole part of his being when his aesthetic sense, his need for a complement both sensuous and meaningful"—that is, his "need for beauty"—are not fulfilled. As for the artist, "he continues to experience the joy of creation, the existential shock of the beauty of forms and colors; he continues to live in a search for expression of his inner turmoil, which is traditional (but for how long?)."[159]

Here again, Ellul is attentive to the conditions of human life. "Art, in all societies, fulfilled a vital function" because it "gave meaning, [...] strength, courage" to live in this world, but also "openness to another universe."[160] Two months before his death, he stated that art "must help us to better understand the world and the faces that surround us"; it is not a game, much less an activity reserved for "artists" only, but "the highest expression of the relationship that man can have with other men and the world in which he lives."[161]

Because man does not exist without the world and Creation does not exist without man, everything comes down to a question of relationship. When Ellul published *The Ethics of Freedom* (1973), he announced that his ethics would be developed in three works, each referring to one of the three theological virtues: the first devoted to freedom and hope, the second to holiness and faith, and the third to relationship and *agape*.[162] While *The Ethics of Holiness* was completed (though never published [until 2024]), Ellul wrote only a few pages of *The Ethics of Relationship*. However, this theme runs through his entire body of work. Thus, in his last book (1992), devoted to delinquents in the technological society, he notes, among the "triggers of deviance" and other conditions that are "deeply disturbing to the human being," "the break with the 'natural' conditions of life" and "the absence of a relationship with 'nature,' water, plants, and animals (now considered increasingly essential)."[163]

Because "harmony is our business," Ellul can say:

> I believe that man's vocation on this earth is to establish a harmony that includes everything we call justice, freedom, joy, peace, or truth. . . . The vocation of man is to produce a harmony among other men as also among the things of this world, among the elements that make up his universe.[164]

And art is a means for each person to attune themselves to the "symphony of the world" and the "song of Creation."[165] Its purpose should be to raise awareness and the aspiration to live a relationship of harmony with the world:

> I am certainly not advocating an art of escapism! But, on the contrary, an art of complex reality, in which goodness, love, truth, innocence, purity, and justice also exist. And we have no right to debase this man, this world, and this creation more than they already are.[166]

There is nothing romantic or reactionary in this need for beauty and meaning. Art understood as a personal activity, freed from technical excess, is a participation in the necessary revolution: "Symbolizing today's reality" has the goal of "producing a force that questions tomorrow's reality. It is already to be setting up another society."[167] Also, in the final pages of *The Empire of Non-Sense*, the fight to safeguard the meaning of art reveals itself to be a fight against "the relativization and reduction of the human"[168] so that art might be "charged now with making our technological universe intelligible and practicable, inspiring our courage so that man can stand up to the enslavement of this progress and this consumerist happiness, provoking the ardent, implacable desire for the absent Wholly Other."[169]

To do this, the artist must once again become "truly creative" and the bearer of "a hope that makes us go forward as conquerors and to conquer."[170] This third and final pillar on which art can be built ("perhaps" ...) points to the figure of the white horse in Revelation 6:2, "that went forth as a conqueror and to conquer." This is not surprising since, for Ellul, this recurring figure is the allegory of the creative and liberating Word of God that accompanies the unfolding of the world's history.[171] It is this figure that is evoked again in the final pages of *Prayer and Modern Man*, for the Christian's prayer, together with the sacrament and the proclamation of the message, is "the actuality of the Incarnation": it places the one who prays "in the final (con-

stantly present) battle against 'nothingness in action'" and allows him to "regain the fabric of life."[172]

Good Stewardship

The exhaustion of the world under the action of men is a consequence of the spirit of power that drives them inexorably to go beyond all thresholds, boundaries, and limits, as soon as the apparent autonomy provided by technology takes precedence over obedience to God's commandment. Now, this commandment is this word that reminds us that "man cannot strictly behave as an absolute owner."[173] Among the commandments likely to challenge man "in the 'ecological drama'"[174] in which he participates, Ellul recalls that of the Sabbath and that of the Jubilee.

The Sabbath establishes the necessity of a day of rest and worship at the end of a week of work (Ex 20:8–11), while the Jubilee establishes that of a year of reconciliation, emancipation, and liberation; this year, called the Jubilee, brings to a close a period of forty-nine years of production (Lev 25:8–54). "The Jubilee is the total emancipation of all slaves, whoever they may be," summarizes Ellul.[175] Consequently, "if we translate this into modern terms, it is clear that the Jubilee is a condemnation of capitalist accumulation, permanent colonialism, and the unlimited exploitation of people and the earth."[176] On this subject, we must also add the intermediate institution, every seven years, of the sabbatical year intended for the rest of the land (Lev 25:1–7).

From these institutions, Ellul concludes that "human security is very precisely linked here with respect for the world in which we live."[177] Such respect, if lived out, would imply a suspension of the means and manifestations of power (production, consumption, escapism). The Sunday closure of stores (even if they were fully automated) would not be experienced as a loss of freedom but as an opportunity to rediscover it. A rediscovery of freedom that must be expressed in ways other than the usual means of compensation (television, cars, cinema, mass tourism, social media, etc.).

Thus, the Sabbath, the sabbatical year, and the jubilee year are biblical institutions that fall within the scope of non-technical means in that they posit that "man does not have the right to do anything whatever, even if he can

materially do it."[178] Because man is a being who does not draw his life from himself and because life is both generous and fragile, it is necessary to set limits in order to preserve it. However, these limits will systematically concern the excessive use of power by those who possess it and, consequently, the exploitation of the weak (slaves, immigrants, widows, and orphans), animals, and the earth. Of course, this limit is not only one of time but also one of quality. Indeed, with such institutions, it is certainly not a question of suspending the use of power one day out of seven and, through this temporary suspension, justifying the unlimited use of power on the other days of the week. The suspension in time goes along with renunciation of intention: one can give a measure to power only by renouncing the use of excessive power. Thus, the *preservation* of the world of life involves *renouncing* the world of power.[179]

Consequently, certain means, although available and highly effective in the objective they serve, must be abandoned. Thus, Ellul condemns intensive farming driven by "'economic' but antinatural conditions":

> Man has no right to exploit all the forces of the animal. There is a fundamental respect for it; however, it should be applied in a modern way, not to work, since animals are hardly used for work anymore, but for example to new methods of fattening, to battery farming, which is a despicable way of treating animals.[180]

Ellul never mentions philosophical vegetarianism as such, but the possibility of theological vegetarianism is nevertheless suggested at the end of his article "Man, Animal, and God." Referring to "the promise of the new creation" in Isaiah 11 as not only the promise of "the reconciliation of man with man, but of man with all nature" (the promise of a time when "animals will be fully delivered, as man is with man"), Ellul asserts that "those who hear the promise of final reconciliation, accomplished by God, *must* already live here and now in this reconciliation. We can see the consequences for the relationship with animals, which can no longer be treated as objects or means."[181]

This possibility, however, is never explained, and in any case, to the best of my knowledge, Jacques Ellul neither advocated nor lived it personally. On the other hand, he clearly states that "the Sabbath is instituted also for

animals (Ex 23:12)" and not only for man (Mark 2:27), "animals cannot be exploited to the extreme limits of their strength, they cannot be exhausted, nor can they be made to produce to the point of death."[182] It is up to people of faith to understand and proclaim that "God sets a limit on what man can do with regard to animals [...] an absolute, radical limit that obliges them to accept that animals and their lives belong to God, that God loves them, that God is the Father for them also."[183]

Ellul's position echoes that of Luther in the first article of his *Larger Catechism*: "Since everything we possess, moreover, everything that is in heaven and on earth, is given, preserved, and protected for us daily by God, we are truly bound [...] to devote them entirely to his service."[184]

The Service of God's Presence

The final pages of *Reason for Being* (1987), this commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes planned in the mid-1940s as the conclusion to his work, are precisely a meditation on the service of God, based on the advice given by Ecclesiastes to the young man: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Eccl 12:1).

> You have appeared in a creation where you yourself are a creature, which means that you are not master of everything and free to do anything you want with yourself and with this creation. And, in particular, you are not the creator of the world! It exists independently of you, and insofar as you are a creature like it, like animals and everything else, you cannot treat it any way you like, according to your desire, your power, your pride. During your youth, at the height of your strength and glory, you have a creator, and that is the true limit to your audacious desire to be master of everything! You have a relationship with the one who is the origin of life, the source of life.[185]

The meditation in *Politics of God, Politics of Man* on the Assyrian conqueror gives way to that of the "warrior who changes the planet through his dazzling conquests," and Ellul retains two of the three modern equivalents with the figure of the Dictator, "creator of a state," and the Scientist, "who thinks he is the creator, and who inevitably leads to the atomic bomb."[186] The criticism becomes clearer because it is more radical: "Every work of power, in which man thinks he is the creator, is a work of nothingness and provokes

nothingness."[187] To prevent the annihilation of the world, we must create in the image of the creator while keeping to our place as creatures:

> Every time you take yourself for a creator (even as an artist!), you are a destroyer, an annihilator; every work of man created in silence, discretion, and humility (in the image of his incognito creator!) is positive, useful, and brings life.[188]

It is not insignificant to see the figure of the Technician (who accompanied that of the Dictator and the Scientist in *Politics of God, Politics of Man*) replaced by that of the Artist. In what has become, according to Ellul, the Empire of Non-Sense, are the two figures not confused? Conversely, will preserving the aesthetic sense of harmony (which does not break the silence), respect (which knows how to be discreet), and moderation (which stems from humility) enable both the Artist and the Technician to rediscover the meaning of something "useful" that "brings life"?

It should also be noted that Ellul reads this verse from Ecclesiastes as an invitation rather than a threat. From his youth, and precisely because of his youth, man can put his strengths at the service of God and thus of the world's preservation. The "intact strengths"[189] of youth are not intended for personal salvation (which is already assured) but for "the service of God's Presence in the midst of this world and this creation."[190] Here again, Ellul associates, without equating them, "world" and "creation," one not going without the other—the second being for the first, as Ellul reminds us in his address to those of his readers who still have reserves of strength: "Remember this possibility of involvement in the service of the Creator for his creation, *and for yourself*."[191]

Such is man's responsibility, since it finds its source in the freedom that God gives him, to honor him, love his neighbor, and safeguard Creation. Such a chain of respect necessarily proceeds from our freedom when it exists "for the glory of God," and while

> the glory of God shines through for those who can see it in creation. The heavens declare the glory of the Lord (Ps 19). The Psalms and Job in particular bear witness to this. The grandeur and beauty of this earth are a certain image that God gives us. And our freedom cannot consist in erasing God's glory in his creation, by erasing, torturing, deforming, destroying it. If our freedom is for the glory of God, this

> implies the most total, complete respect for what God has chosen to manifest his glory. In other words, we cannot take possession of this creation and do with it as we please. [According to Genesis], at most, man is God's steward, [and he] cannot in any way take ownership of it and use this creation as he sees fit.[192]

It is a matter, then, for men to change their attitude to the world and undergo a conversion in outlook toward the world and the things it contains. And this other possible attitude "would consist in involving the things of creation"—and just as well, "our technical products!"—in the biblical hope, which consists in holding firmly that there will be a way out of the "disaster of man" into which the whole of Creation has been dragged. This way out is not created by man, but he can experience it by restoring in the "elements of nature" and attributing to "technical creations that sense of God's glory that is the only possibility of life."[193] It is up to Christians to give "the courage and hope to risk this difficult adventure with a chance of not failing."[194]

Conclusion

It appears that the year 1987, from a publishing standpoint, was an opportunity for Ellul to offer an intellectual and spiritual testament. It was in fact in that year that Ellul published *What I Believe*, a book that brings together the two dimensions of his work, the sociological dimension in the first part of the book and the theological dimension in the second, in a juxtaposition that was unusual at the time. It was also in that year that *Reason for Being* (a meditation on Ecclesiastes announced in the mid-1940s as the conclusion of his work) and *Genesis Today* (a collection of lectures given two years earlier, on the first three chapters of Genesis) appeared. With these three books, Ellul completed the shift he had begun in the mid-1960s and, forty years later, corrected the absence of any treatment of the ecological question in *Presence in the Modern World*.

Significant in this regard is the text written by Ellul on the occasion of the publication of *Genesis Today*, titled "The Relevance of Genesis." Noting that "we live in a world that is being *unmade*"—through the modification of "all social structures, along with all the complexities that formed our material universe," resulting in the "loss of human relationships, [...] along with the

loss of relationship with the living world [and] the loss of space"[195]—Ellul does not offer solutions but three reminders and biblical guidelines that "teach us how to live."[196]

The first reminder is that of the "liberating and accompanying" presence of God, which gives meaning to "our human presence on this earth," that of "dialogue with God, expressing love," and that "immediately refers to our relationship with others."[197] The second of the "guidelines for living" follows—that of a "complete relationship with living things." Because "man is an animal, made to live among animals," "the complete relationship with living things is an indispensable relationship," which is "given to us as the first condition of life," which forbids us from "disposing of it as we please."[198] Finally, the third reminder addressed to mankind today is a warning "against all ideologies." Here again we find the idea of preserving the world: because no decision "is worth destroying life in society," we must reject any dogmatism that claims to "indicate the absolute good for the community." This means rejecting the ideology of science, work, and politics when it confuses everything that can be useful (and good) with the Good, unknown to man, which is exclusively "this Good spoken by God."[199]

Consequently, Ellul also refuses to follow "most environmentalists" he knows because they are "dogmatists who shut the door: 'This is condemned; that is permitted; this is good and that is bad, etc.,'" producing a "schematic world," without "the flexibility and finesse that allow for dialogue."[200] In particular, he rejects a certain form of deep ecology, which reduces man to a parasite on Nature (which he is![201]) without taking into account the misery of man or the grace of God. In 1984, Ellul challenged ecologists on this subject in the columns of *Combat Nature*. He urged them to

> remain vigilant enough to keep ecology from becoming an ideology, [...] so that the defense of the interests of the future and the defense of the interests of the natural environment do not become a mere mixture of doctrine and belief, a catch-all that would only be taken seriously to the extent that, in turn, ecology would become a power using ideology as justification![202]

We must therefore question any "program of action that would lead man to believe that he can accomplish *by himself* his own salvation"—or, from

now on, that of Nature—when "everything depends precisely on Grace."[203] For Jacques Ellul, man's responsibility is related to the preservation of the world, not to his salvation. It is therefore not a question of *saving* the planet, the oceans, or biodiversity: "what is already saved does not need us" and "we know what we must expect," even if "we feel life slipping through our fingers."[204] Instead, it is a matter of preserving "the weight of the one wealth" that is lucidity—"Lucidity, Lucidity, Lucidity"[205]!—and of practicing this ethics of relationship based on love that Ellul never had the opportunity to develop in a volume of his work but that animates all his thinking. And this ethics of relationship must be, like that of freedom and of holiness, an ethics of combat against the forces of destruction that man has unleashed in the world, against the Power "that can be defeated only by its opposite."[206]

Therefore, the church and Christians must embody such an ethic in the world, so that Christianity is taken seriously, because it is "the only way—voice—to challenge this society dominated by power."[207] As for lucidity, it also concerns the lucidity that must be applied to ecology today: when ecology translates into behavior, it must be nourished by what Ellul said about ethics in 1947, since "participation in the world's preservation [...] is a fruit of the application of ethics." Assuredly, "the Christian must participate in the world's preservation," but his

> ethics has no meaning if they are not oriented toward this combat with the world, which must result in the glorification of God. [...] Ethics is inseparable from the preaching of the Word, because the very behavior of Christians truly ruins the work of Satan and tends to build up the body of Christ in the world. But in conclusion, we must return to this idea that ethics is not a means of resolving the Christian tension, it is not a recipe for being righteous, it is not a synthesis of the Christian faith and the values of the world, it is not a facility given to Christians to live without the Holy Spirit.[208]

Thus, to those who work solely for a new earth,[209] Christians must also offer the hope of a new heaven, without which no new earth will come to pass (2 Pet 3:13, Rev 21:1). It is not a question of saying that, since "everything we do is futile and mortal, all of it must be broken" and that we must leave "man upon the ruins of this world."[210] Indeed,

> the church knows, because God reveals it, that there is an order in

> which God places man so that he may live normally. Not so that he may be a saint, but simply, truly a man. [...] An order necessary for the world's preservation, without which either the world's death, or that of man, will ensue.[211]

It is a matter of fighting the good fight, that of faith—that is, the fight of witness and prayer, of engagement and disengagement, of freedom guided by love. And this fight is for God, for man, and for creation. It is not the fight for personal salvation, for

> salvation is far more than an individual matter. And if you will read Romans 8:18–24, you will see that Paul throws us into solidarity with the whole creation. The creation's sufferings, he tells us, arise out of human sin—out of my sin. [...] The creation has been "subjected to vanity"—or futility—because of human sin. Like us, the creation is destined to death, destined to have no further meaning. And if all is connected, [...] then I can't be saved alone. If I've been saved in faith, then that concerns the whole creation. I can't be liberated or emancipated by myself.
>
> Now in these same verses (Romans 8:18–24), Paul also connects the themes of freedom and hope. The world, he says in verse 21, *will* be set free from its bondage to corruption. In this desolate, meaningless world, where evil and injustice always win, it always seems that one life cannot exist except by the death of others. The best of human intentions always seem to be turned around and made into evil. The world consists of darkness. No light remains. But at the heart of this dark world, Paul tells us, hope is nevertheless to be found. There's nothing *but* hope, but there *is* hope. It is there for all—in every life, in each birth, in each act of charity, in each dawn, in each light (even that of the sun!). In all of these, we see signs of hope. And this hope is not merely human. It comes from the One who allows this suffering creation to continue to exist and permits it to *wait*. The creation—and humanity—don't know exactly what they're waiting for. Still, they wait—with the certainty that "All this *will* change." And the voice of God answers, "Yes, they have good reason to wait." This is hope. What they are waiting for, Paul says, is for "God's children to be revealed" (v. 19). Let's be careful here. It's important to understand what this *doesn't* mean. It does *not* mean a judgment where certain of God's chldren will be damned while others are declared to be God's children. No, what's told us in verse 22 is that *all of creation* is involved. The revelation that the creation is waiting for is that *all* are God's children. Now that's something that can heal the sickness

> of creation. All of creation—humans, animals, things—*all* are promised to salvation, reconciliation, new birth, new creation.[212]

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Notes

1. Jacques Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée* (Gallimard, 1972), 225.
2. Recently: Patrick Chastenet, *Introduction à Jacques Ellul*, chap. 6, "Le penseur de l'écologie" (La Découverte, 2019), 89–104; Michel Rodes, preface to *Vivre et penser la liberté* (Labor et Fides, 2014); Frédéric Rognon, "Écologie et technologie: quelle dialectique? Le regard de Jacques Ellul," in *Crise écologique et sauvegarde de la création* (Première Partie, 2017), 97–119; Frédéric Rognon, "Ellul, Jacques (1912–1994)," in D. Bourg and A. Papaux, eds, *Dictionnaire de la pensée écologique* (PUF, 2015), 32–35; Jean-François Petit, "Jacques Ellul: la technique et les origines de l'écologie politique," *Cahiers de l'Atelier* 544 (2015): 39–46. See also Michel Rodes, "Nature et création chez Jacques Ellul," in Troude-Chastenet, ed., *Comment peut-on (encore) être ellulien au XXIe siècle?* (La Table Ronde, 2014); Serge Latouche, *Jacques Ellul contre le totalitarisme technicien* (Le passage clandestin, 2013); Frédéric Rognon, "Les racines personnalistes de l'écologie radicale: Denis de Rougemont, Bernard Charbonneau, Jacques Ellul." *Entropia* 14 (Spring 2013): 187–99; Patrick Troude-Chastenet, "Jacques Ellul: précurseur de l'écologie politique?" *Écologie et Politique* 22 (1998): 105–19; Christian Roy, "Aux sources de l'écologie politique. Le personnalisme 'gascon' de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul." *Canadian Journal of History / Annales canadiennes d'histoire* 27 (Apr. 1992): 67–100.
3. Jacques Ellul, *La Foi au prix du doute. « Encore quarante jours… »* (Hachette, 1980), 132.
4. Jacques Ellul, "Technique et écologie." *Humanitas*. Reference in *Foi & Vie* (Oct. 1974), 190.
5. Jacques Ellul, *Liminaire* 1 (1974).
6. Jacques Ellul, *Théologie et Technique. Pour une éthique de la non-puissance* (Labor et Fides, 2014), 319.
7. Jacques Ellul, *Les Nouveaux possédés* (Fayard, 1973), 256.
8. Cf. Michel Rodes, "Nature et création chez Jacques Ellul," op. cit.
9. For example, Jacques Ellul, *Ce que je crois* (Grasset, 1987), 180; Jacques Ellul, *Le Bluff technologique* (Hachette, 1988), 197.

10. Jacques Ellul, *Oratorio. Les Quatre Cavaliers de l'Apocalypse. Poèmes* (Opales, 1997), 47, 48.
11. Jacques Ellul, *À temps et à contretemps, Entretiens avec Madeleine Garrigou-Lagrange* (Le Centurion, 1981), 18. We know that Ellul's re-reading of Romans 8, when he was twenty-two, formed the second step in his conversion, and that Ellul presents this text as the ground of his entire work (1980).
12. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 32–33.
13. Jacques Ellul, "La Nature et la Foi." *Ouest-France* (Nov. 7, 1981), 1, 3. Reprinted in Jacques Ellul, *Penser globalement, agir localement. Chroniques journalistiques* (Éditions des régionalismes PyréMonde / Princi Negue, 2009), 102–103.
14. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 141–88.
15. Jacques Ellul, "Les trois âges." *Le Monde* (Mar. 11–12, 1979), 2.
16. Jacques Ellul, "Art." *Le Monde dans l'Évangile*, 2–3.
17. Jacques Ellul, "La Nature et la Foi."
18. Jacques Ellul, *Le Livre de Jonas* (Cahiers bibliques de Foi & Vie, 1952), 104.
19. Jacques Ellul, "À propos du libéralisme: essai de réponse et de justification." *Réforme* 38 (Dec. 7, 1945), 3.
20. Jacques Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne* (Roulet, 1948), 35.
21. Jacques Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu, Signification biblique de la Grande Ville* (Gallimard, 1975), 24.
22. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 68.
23. Ibid.
24. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 225.
25. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 68.
26. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 68.
27. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 67.
28. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 68.
29. Jacques Ellul, *The Betrayal of the West* (*Trahison de l'Occident*, 1975) trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Seabury, 1978), 36-37.
30. Jacques Ellul, *La Parole humiliée* (Seuil, 1981), 228–29. Ellul's question is still relevant today and should be asked of hurried travelers in various concrete, glass, and

steel train stations, who periodically see giant photos of vast landscapes or animals roaming free, promoting the quality of the latest smartphone camera ...

31. Ellul, *Le Bluff technologique*, 396.
32. Bernard Charbonneau, "Le sentiment de la nature, force révolutionnaire." *Journal Intérieur des Groupes Personnalistes du Sud-Ouest* (Jun. 1937): 1–53.
33. Fairfield Osborn, *La Planète au pillage* [*Our Plundered Planet*, 1948] (Payot, 1949); W. Vogt, *La Faim du monde* [*Road to Survival*, 1948] (n.p., 1950).
34. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (*La technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*, 1954), trans. John Wilkinson (Vintage, 1964), 108.
35. J. de Castro, *Géographie de la faim. La faim au Brésil* [*Geografia da fome*, 1946] (Éditions ouvrières, 1949); *Géopolitique de la faim* [*Geopolítica da fome*, 1951] (Éditions ouvrières, 1952).
36. René Dumont, *L'Économie agricole dans le monde* (Dalloz, 1954).
37. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 116–17.
38. Jacques Ellul, *Politique de Dieu, politiques de l'homme* (Éditions Universitaires, 1966), 207. Cf. Ellul, "La légitimité de la science." *Sud-Ouest Dimanche* (May 3, 1981), 5. Reprinted in Ellul, *Penser globalement, agir localement*, 88–90.
39. Ibid.
40. Cf. Jacques Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté* (Le Centurion/Labor et Fides, 1984), 7.
41. Jacques Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 1 (Labor et Fides, 1973), 248.
42. Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *Science* 155, no. 3767 (Mar. 10, 1967): 1203–1207.
43. Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 1, pp. 276–77.
44. Jacques Ellul, *La Subversion du christianisme* (Seuil, 1994), 31.
45. Jacques Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit* (Dalloz, 2008), 46, 104; Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu*, 155, 254.
46. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 50; Jacques Ellul, *Fausse présence au monde moderne* (Les Bergers et les Mages, 1963), 16–21; Jacques Ellul, *Le Vouloir et le Faire* (Labor et Fides, 1964), 86; Jacques Ellul, *Les Sources de l'éthique chrétienne* (vol. 2 of *Le Vouloir et le Faire*) (Labor et Fides, 2018), 100, 129; Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 1, pp. 14, 68, 103, 262; Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu*, 211; Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 55; Jacques Ellul, *Vivre et penser la liberté*, 401.
47. Carl Amery, *Fin de la Providence* [*Das Ende der Vorsehung*, 1972] (Seuil, 1976).

48. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 298–306; Ellul, *La Subversion du christianisme*, 61–64, 235–36.
49. Wendell Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation." *CrossCurrents* 43, no. 2 (summer 1993), 149–63 (citation 149); "The Gift of Good Land," in *The Gift of Good Land* (North Point Press, 1981), 267–81 (text in which the response to Lynn White Jr.'s criticism echoes that of Ellul).
50. Bernard Charbonneau, *Le Feu vert* (1980), chap. 6, "Nature et christianisme" (Parangon/Vs, 2009), 79–91. Thus, 83–84: "But it would be a mistake to reduce the Old and even the New Testament to a progressive ideology, as the Judeo-Christian tradition is much richer than that, with countless aspects and authors."
51. Jacques Ellul, "La Nature et la Foi," 1, 3; Jacques Ellul, "Écologie, technique et société." *Cahiers du CPO (Centre Protestant de l'Ouest)* 46–47 (Dec. 1982): 13–20, p. 14; Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 14.
52. Jacques Ellul, "La réalité écologique." *Le Quotidien de Paris* 763 (May 11, 1982), 22.
53. Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu*, 140.
54. Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive* (Viking, 2005).
55. Jacques Ellul, *Le Système technicien* (Calmann-Lévy, 1977), 312–13.
56. Cf. *Philosophie magazine* 136 (Feb. 2020). "Collapsologie. Et vous, croyez-vous à la fin du monde?"
57. Jacques Ellul, *La Raison d'être. Méditation sur l'Ecclésiaste* (Seuil,1987), 65.
58. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 199. Similar phrases and words in Jacques Ellul, *L'Apocalypse, Architecture en mouvement* (Desclée, 1975), 60.
59. "Les grilles du temps: Entretien avec Jacques Ellul: II. – 'C'est au moment où il n'y a plus d'espoir qu'il faut commencer à espérer.'" *Le Monde* (Nov. 9, 1977), 2; Ellul, "Écologie, technique et société," 19.
60. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 65.
61. Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 1, p. 316.
62. Ellul, *Vivre et penser la liberté*, 166, see also 171–72, 191.
63. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 10, 11, 24; Ellul, *Le Vouloir et le Faire*, 24; Ellul, *Fausse présence au monde moderne*, 184; Ellul, *L'Apocalypse*, 171; Ellul, *Vivre et penser la liberté*, 232.
64. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 10, 24; *Ellul par lui-même, Entretiens avec Willem*

H. Vanderburg (La Table Ronde, 2008), 49; Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 2 (Labor et Fides, 1975), 143; Ellul, *L'Apocalypse*, 171; Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 12, 113.

65. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 79.
66. Origen, *Commentaire sur l'évangile de Jean*, Bk VI, §59, §§303; trans. C. Blanc (Cerf, 1970 [Sources Chrétiennes 157]), 363 (my emphasis). Quoted by Michel Fédou, "Modes de vie et figure de l'existence chrétienne de la fin du Ier siècle au début du IIe siècle." *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses*, 2013/4.
67. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 199 (my emphasis).
68. *La Foi des Églises luthériennes. Confessions et catéchisme* (Cerf/Labor et Fides, 2012), 163.
69. Ibid., 42.
70. Ibid., 52.
71. Ibid., 200.
72. François Dermange, *L'éthique de Calvin* (Labor et Fides, 2017).
73. Calvin, *L'Institution chrétienne*, Bk II, chap. 3, §3.
74. Jacques Ellul, "Droit." *Foi & Vie* 106–107, no. 2–3 (1939): 262–80.
75. Jacques Ellul, "Post-chrétienté." *Réforme* 197 (Dec. 25, 1948), 1, 3.
76. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 96.
77. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 69.
78. Ellul, *Le Livre de Jonas*, 97.
79. Ellul, *Les Sources de l'éthique chrétienne*, 99.
80. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 189.
81. Jacques Ellul, "Rencontre à Pessac (le 18 mai 1985)." *Inter-dit* 13 (Fall 1986): 71–91.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 79.
85. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 80–81.
86. Ellul, *Le Fondement théologique du droit*, 80.
87. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 29.

88. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 60.
89. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 29.
90. Jacques Ellul, "Problèmes de notre société." *Le Semeur* 44, no. 4–5 (Feb.–Mar. 1946): 407–26. Reprinted in Ellul, *Vivre et penser la liberté*, chap. 10.
91. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 32, 33.
92. Ellul, *La Raison d'être*, 151.
93. Jacques Ellul, "Plaidoyer contre 'la défense de l'environnement.' III. Le mensonge." *France catholique* 1311 (Jan. 28, 1972), 20. See also Jacques Ellul, "Le techno-système." *Les Cahiers du Boucau. Séminaire de réflexion critique sur l'écologie* (Jul. 1972): 96–103, pp. 100–101.
94. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 33.
95. Ellul, preface to the Swedish edition of *Présence au monde moderne*.
96. Only marginal mention is made of the "destruction of nature" in Jacques Ellul, *De la Révolution aux révoltes* (Calmann-Lévy, 1972), 218.
97. Ellul, *Le Vouloir et le Faire*, 54.
98. Ellul, *Le Vouloir et le Faire*, 53.
99. *Sud-Ouest* (Nov. 25, 1977), A.
100. Ellul, *Les Sources de l'éthique chrétienne*, 99–100.
101. Ellul, *Les Sources de l'éthique chrétienne*, 100.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Jacques Ellul, "L'irréductibilité du droit à une théologie de l'histoire." *Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diritto* 48, no. 2–3 (1971): 220–39, p. 235.
105. Jacques Ellul, "Rappels et réflexions sur une théologie de l'État." In *Les chrétiens et l'État* (1967): 127–80, p. 138.
106. Ellul, *Les Sources de l'éthique chrétienne*, 265.
107. Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu*, 140.
108. Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu*, 119.
109. Ellul, *Fausse présence au monde moderne*, 37.
110. Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu*, 123.
111. Ellul, *Fausse présence au monde moderne*, 91.

112. Ellul, *L'Apocalypse*, 171.

113. Ellul, *L'Apocalypse*, 170.

114. Ellul, *L'Apocalypse*, 171.

115. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 204.

116. Jacques Ellul, "Les sources chrétiennes de la démocratie. Protestantisme et démocratie." In Jean-Louis Seurin, ed., *La démocratie pluraliste* (Economica, 1981), 83–99, 95.

117. Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 22.

118. Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 198.

119. Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 65.

120. Patrick Chastenet, *Entretiens avec Jacques Ellul* (La Table Ronde, 1994), 186; Jacques Ellul, *À contre-courant. Entretiens avec Patrick Chastenet* (La Table Ronde, 2014), 236.

121. Ellul, "Écologie, technique et société," 14.

122. Cf. Pierre Charbonnier, "Jacques Ellul ou l'écologie contre la modernité." *Écologie & politique* 50, no. 1 (2015): 127–46. For the author, environmentalists must distance themselves from "all of Ellul's thinking, in its most radical forms," because it "develops an ethos of renunciation, an ahistorical ideal of a society bound to its natural principles. Reading Ellul and his heirs often means reading about the weird conversion of a conservative culture into the language of ecology, and thus the coloring of ecology by reactionary discourse" (132). For a reasoned response, cf. Daniel Cérézuelle, "Ellul, pionnier d'une écologie réactionnaire?" *Écologie & politique* 59, no. 2 (2019): 123–32.

123. Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution* (*Autopsie de la Révolution*, 1969) trans. Patricia Wolf (Knopf, 1971), 280–81.

124. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 53.

125. Jacques Ellul, *Israël, chance de civilization. Articles de journaux et de revues 1967–1992* (Première Partie, 2008), 30.

126. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 68–69.

127. Ellul, *Le Bluff technologique*, 396.

128. Jacques Ellul, "Monsieur l'arbre." *Sud-Ouest Dimanche* (Aug. 9, 1981), 6; Jacques Ellul, "La forêt cache l'arbre." *Le Monde* (May 13, 1982), 34.

129. Jacques Ellul, "Losing Faith in Technology." *Playboy* 18, no. 2 (Feb. 1971), 55–

56: "I think that the rupture of natural cycles, the ecological disruption, and the growth in population will oblige mankind to take a new direction."

130. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 68.

131. Rémy Decourt, "Conquête de Mars: Elon Musk livre les détails de son projet de colonisation." *Futura Sciences* (Oct. 2, 2017).

132. Julie Bort, "Jeff Bezos Says We Need to Colonise The Moon to 'Save Earth.'" *Science Alert* (Jun. 8, 2019).

133. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 69.

134. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 70.

135. Ibid.

136. Ellul, *La Foi au prix du doute*, 86.

137. Jacques Ellul, *Silences. Poèmes* (Opales, 1995), 77.

138. Ellul, *Silences*, 76.

139. Ellul, *La Foi au prix du doute*, 85.

140. Ellul *Silences*, 78.

141. Cf. Ellul, *Le Vouloir et le Faire*, 2nd part "Morale du monde," chap. 6 "La morale technicienne," 151–61.

142. Jacques Ellul, *Métamorphose du bourgeois* (Calmann-Lévy, 1967), 212–13.

143. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 57, 58.

144. Ellul, *La Foi au prix du doute*, 86.

145. Ellul, *La Foi au prix du doute*, 84.

146. Ellul, *Le Bluff technologique*, 276.

147. Christian Godin, "La nature, c'est beau, on l'aime … forcément?" In Laurent Testot and Laurent Aillet, eds., *Collapsus* (Albin Michel, 2020), 55.

148. Jacques Ellul, "La civilisation à l'épreuve: Les chrétiens dans l'aventure technicienne." *France Catholique* 1257 (Jan. 15, 1971), 20.

149. Ellul, *Autopsie de la Révolution* (Calmann-Lévy, 1969), 329, 331, 332, 334.

150. Ellul, *Autopsie de la Révolution*, 334.

151. Jacques Ellul, *L'Impossible prière* (Le Centurion, 1977), 183.

152. Jacques Ellul, "L'impossible prière." *Certitudes* 100 (Aug.–Oct. 1981): 8–11.

153. Ibid.

154. Ellul, *La Foi au prix du doute*, 86.

155. Ellul, *Living Faith* (*La Foi au prix du doute*, 1980), trans. Peter Heinegg (Harper & Row, 1983), 56–57.

156. Calvin, *L'Institution chrétienne*, Bk III, chap. 10, §2.

157. Ibid., Bk III, chap. 10, §3.

158. Ellul, *Living Faith*, 57.

159. Jacques Ellul, "La croisée des chemins." *Gazette des beaux-arts* 103, no. 1384–85 (May-Jun. 1984): 175–78, p. 178.

160. Ibid., 175.

161. "Rencontre avec Jacques Ellul. La conscience contre les illusions de trop plein." *Medias Pouvoirs* 35, no. 3 (1994): 151–57, p. 156.

162. Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 1, p. 7.

163. Jacques Ellul, *Déviance et déviants dans notre société intolérante* (Érès, 1992), 92–93.

164. Ellul, *Ce que je crois*, 71.

165. Jacques Ellul, preface to Nelly Viallaneix, *Écoute Kierkegaard. Essai sur la communication de la parole*, vol. 1 (Cerf, 1979), i–xviii.

166. Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 65.

167. Jacques Ellul, *L'Empire du non-sens: L'art et la société technicienne* (PUF, 1980), 284.

168. Ellul, *L'Empire du non-sens*, 275.

169. Ellul, *L'Empire du non-sens*, 285.

170. Ellul, *L'Empire du non-sens*, 285, 286.

171. Ellul, *L'Impossible prière*, 183–84; cf. Ellul, *Politique de Dieu, politiques de l'homme*, 221; Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 2, p. 110; Ellul, *L'Apocalypse*, 32–33, 52, 154, 163; Ellul, *La Subversion du christianisme*, 247; Jacques Ellul, *Mort et espérance de la résurrection* (Olivétan, 2016), 170, 181, 197.

172. Ellul, *L'Impossible prière*, 184–86.

173. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 210.

174. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 214.

175. Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 145.

176. Ellul, *Les Combats de la liberté*, 194.

177. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 213.

178. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 210.

179. Cf. Ellul, "Renonciation au monde" (c. 1938), in Ellul, *Vivre et penser la liberté*, 312–44.

180. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 210–11.

181. Jacques Ellul, "L'homme, l'animal et Dieu." *Bulletin juridique international de la protection des animaux* (Sep. 1982–Aug. 1983): 116–21.

182. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 210.

183. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 210.

184. *La Foi des Églises luthériennes*, op. cit., 373.

185. Ellul, *La Raison d'être*, 266.

186. Ellul, *La Raison d'être*, 267.

187. Ibid.

188. Ibid.

189. Ellul, *La Raison d'être*, 268.

190. Ellul, *La Raison d'être*, 269.

191. Ibid. My emphasis.

192. Ellul, *Éthique de la liberté*, vol. 1, pp. 247–48.

193. Ellul, *L'Espérance oubliée*, 225–26.

194. Jacques Ellul, "La responsabilité du christianisme dans la nature et la liberté." *Combat Nature* 54 (Jan.-Feb. 1983): 16–17. Reprinted in Ellul, *Vivre et penser la liberté*, chap. 31.

195. Jacques Ellul, *La Genèse aujourd'hui*, with François Tosquelles (Éditions de l'AREFPPI, 1987), 215.

196. Ellul, *La Genèse aujourd'hui*, 216.

197. Ellul, *La Genèse aujourd'hui*, 216–17.

198. Ellul, *La Genèse aujourd'hui*, 217.

199. Ellul, *La Genèse aujourd'hui*, 218–19.

200. "1685–1985: 3 siècles après la révocation de l'Édit de Nantes: Entretien avec Jacques Ellul." *L'Actualité Religieuse dans le Monde* 22 (Apr. 15, 1985): 23–30, pp. 28–29.

201. Cf. Ellul, *Théologie et Technique*, 130, 138; Ellul, "Écologie, technique et société," 14.
202. Jacques Ellul, "L'idéologie de l'intérêt privé et l'idéologie de l'intérêt public." *Combat Nature* 66 (Nov. 1984): 37–38.
203. Ellul, preface to Viallaneix, *Écoute Kierkegaard*, xviii.
204. Ellul, *Silences*, 87.
205. Ellul, *Silences*, 86.
206. Jacques Ellul, *Contre les violents* (Le Centurion, 1972), 210.
207. "Rencontre avec Jacques Ellul. La conscience contre les illusions de trop plein." *Medias Pouvoirs* 35, no. 3 (Jul.–Sep. 1994): 151–57, p. 156.
208. Ellul, *Présence au monde moderne*, 28.
209. Dominique Bourg, *Une nouvelle Terre* (Desclée de Brouwer, 2018).
210. Jacques Ellul, "L'économie, maîtresse ou servante de l'homme?" in L. Maire, J. Ellul, et al., *Pour une économie à la taille de l'homme* (Roulet, 1947), 43–58. Reprinted in "L'Économie." *Cahiers Jacques Ellul* 3 (L'Esprit du Temps, 2005), 52, 77–78.
211. Ibid.
212. Jacques Ellul, "How I Discovered Hope." *The Other Side* 102 (Mar. 1980): 28–31, pp. 29–31.

The Influence of Jacques Ellul on George Grant's Changing Understanding of Technology, Part II

Dayton Andrew Muncaster

This essay examines the influence of Ellul's account of technological necessity on Grant's understanding of technology in 1969 and beyond. Grant's 1969 publications represent a watershed moment in Grant's understanding of technology. While impressed by Ellul's analysis of the determinism inherent in the technological civilization, he begins to distance himself from Ellul's thought for a variety of reasons. The essay examines the ambiguous nature of Ellul's continuing impact on Grant's understanding of technology. Such analysis is essential in order to clarify how Ellul's influence on Grant relates to Grant's partial appropriation of Heidegger's account of technology. By analyzing Ellul's influence on Grant, particularly through themes such as technological necessity, and the relation between technology and politics, one can recognize Ellul's crucial importance for Grant's account of the technological civilization.

Ellul's Influence on *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*

In *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*, Grant confronts the problem of practical ethics in the technological civilization. Because it is a collection of essays written at various times between 1963 and 1969, *Technology and Empire* reveals Grant's thought during the period when he was most directly influenced by Ellul.

Muncaster, Dayton Andrew. "The Influence of Jacques Ellul on George Grant's Changing Understanding of Technology, Part II." *Ellul Forum* 75 (fall 2025): 77–115. © Dayton Andrew Muncaster, CC BY-NC-ND.

"Religion and the State," originally published in *Queen's Quarterly* in 1963, is an examination of the role of religion in public education. Although the essay was written before Grant came in contact with Ellul's writings, the essay is a valuable glimpse into how his thinking about the technological civilization shifts under Ellul's influence. Grant describes the difficulty in thinking clearly about the relationship between religion and the state. One problem that is particularly difficult to articulate is the role religion plays in the education of young people in North America. Nineteenth-century Western civilization saw the usefulness of religious education in state-funded schools because of the ability of religion to inculcate socially useful habits. Given that Christianity no longer retains pride of place as the public religion of the majority of Canadians, however, Grant attempts to discern whether there should remain a connection between ancient biblical and philosophical truths and the contemporary political system. He deplores the contemporary system of education in Canada, which inculcates the religion of technical mastery in the minds of the young. He links the religion of progress taught in the schools to the growing moral nihilism in Western civilization. The adherents of the religion of progress brazenly advocate for the dissemination of their faith in the public schools without understanding the moral consequences of their faith for Western civilization:

> Has the secular state and the religion of progress which dominates its education, led to widespread happiness in North America in the last forty years? How can we escape the fact that the necessary end product of the religion of progress is not hope, but a society of existentialists who know themselves in their own self-consciousness, but know the world entirely as despair? In other words, when the religion of progress becomes the public religion, we cannot look forward to a vital religious pluralism, but to a monism of meaninglessness. […] Surely the basic problem of our society is the problem of individuals finding meaning to their existence.[1]

The most significant part of "Religion and the State" is the introduction that Grant appends to the version of the essay found in *Technology and Empire*. Ellul's subsequent influence on Grant can be detected in the later addition. Grant is somewhat ironic in tone in claiming that his essay is "an obtuse writing" and that its survival is "a matter of amusement."[2] The reason he gives for the obsolescence of "Religion and the State" is that its prima-

ry argument is premised on a misconception about the true nature of the technological civilization: "The folly of this writing is that it did not grasp what the technological society really is. Therefore the general principles of political philosophy asserted in it have no possible application in the society to which it is addressed."[3]

Grant provides several reasons for his earlier inability to understand the technological civilization. The most important reason for the essay's irrelevance is his refusal to come to grips with the death of Western Christianity in the society to which it gave birth. He admits that "I could not face the fact that the only interpretation of Christianity that technological liberalism would allow to survive publicly would be that part of it (e.g. the thought of Teilhard [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin]) which played the role of flatterer to modernity."[4] By 1969, Grant has come to see that it is no longer possible to ensure the survival of heterogeneous elements in the public sphere. To align oneself with anything other than liberal ideology is to make oneself a stranger to the public realm in North America. He has appropriated Ellul's understanding of the autonomy of technological civilization, which is self-propagating and therefore inevitably invades external moral and religious spheres in order to legitimize itself. The introduction to "Religion and the State" reveals Grant's understanding of the pivotal relationship between liberalism and the technological civilization. When he employs the epithet "technological liberalism"[5] to describe the present state of affairs, Grant is highlighting the relationship between the rise of technological civilization and liberal ideology.

Grant's essay "Tyranny and Wisdom" also elucidates the interrelationship of technological civilization and liberalism. The essay represents his attempt to clarify the scholarly debate between Alexandre Kojève and Leo Strauss. According to Grant, the debate represents "the most important controversy in political philosophy."[6] Kojève is a proponent of Hegelian political philosophy, which asserts that the universal and homogeneous state is the political system most conducive to human excellence. Strauss is a proponent of classical political philosophy, which claims that human excellence can be fully realized only within the paradigm of an eternal, unchanging moral order. These claims are conflicting, because they adhere to different

assumptions about the intrinsic "goodness" of nature and human motivation. While he criticizes Strauss for his "remarkable reticence whenever he writes of Biblical religion, and particularly about the authority that the Bible should have for Western men,"[7] Grant nevertheless agrees with Strauss that the rise of the universal and homogeneous state will entail the death of philosophy and the creation of a universal tyranny. In piecing together Strauss's account of the relationship between biblical religion and modern political philosophy, Grant notes that Christianity has been a precipitating factor in the rise of the technological civilization. With its emphasis on the "fallenness" of nature, Christianity remains one of the primary forces underlying the rise of the ideology of mastery. Because nature is fallen, in the biblical worldview, it becomes possible to conceive of the natural world as inimical to the attainment of human excellence. In order to ensure the achievement of human excellence while in the grip of natural necessity, it becomes necessary to look at the natural world as a vast reservoir of objects to be manipulated by human will. The understanding of nature as a reservoir to be tapped in order to fulfill human goals, combined with the conception of natural necessity, leads Grant to posit the interrelation between Western Christianity and the technological civilization. "Clearly," Grant asserts, "the question arises as to the connection between the religion of Western Europe and the dynamic civilization which first arose there, the spread of which has been so rapid in our century. This is the civilization which in the opinion of both Strauss and Kojève tends towards the universal and homogeneous state."[8]

In the essay "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," Grant further elucidates the connection between the technological drive to mastery and liberal ideology. The United States is the heartland of the technological empire, and understanding the relationship of Canada to the United States is the key to comprehending the fate of Canada in the modern world. Aside from the obvious geographical proximity of the United States, the fate of Canadian sovereignty is also the result of Canada's position as a second-class citizen in the technological empire. Although there are benefits to being "second class members of that system,"[9] American imperialism in places such as Vietnam challenges not only the moral foundations of American hege-

mony but also the moral legitimacy of the modern project as a whole. The technological civilization is forced to commit genocide in Vietnam, and this is a clear manifestation of the inherent violence that lies at the heart of the modern project. In order to maintain the way of life of the citizens in the heartland of the empire, and to maintain its status as the vanguard of technical mastery, American involvement in Vietnam is an example of the inevitable atrocities committed in the name of the technological civilization in its destruction of heterogeneity. Canadian involvement in that imperial venture, however indirect, must force thoughtful Canadians to reconsider their allegiance to the fundamental moral assumptions of the technological civilization. To be a Canadian citizen in the face of the violence of Vietnam inevitably leads certain people to re-think or even reject their political allegiance to Canada: "The events in Vietnam must help push them [a minority of people in the West] over that great divide where one can no longer love one's own—where it almost ceases to be one's own."[10]

The fact that this inability to love one's own is a minority view is the result of the normative identification of liberal ideology and technical mastery with human excellence. In Grant's estimation, the religion of progress is the religion of the majority in North America, with the result that most people refuse to acknowledge the violence inherent in the propagation of the technological civilization. Many North Americans are blind to the intrinsic violence of the technological civilization because of their identification of America (as the vanguard of technological dynamism) with "the belief that questions of human good are to be solved by technology; that the most important human activity is the pursuit of those sciences which issue in the conquest of human and non-human nature."[11] The North American combination of technological mastery and liberal ideology has been carried to the rest of the world with missionary fervor by Western imperialism. For Grant, as for Ellul, the ultimate supremacy of the technological civilization is inevitable, because of its inherent tendencies toward universalism and self-augmentation. The war in Vietnam reveals the depth of the connection between the universalizing tendencies of technological dynamism and the ideology of liberalism:

> Imperialism, like war, is coeval with human existence. But the in-

> creasingly externalized view of human life which is the very nature of the progressive spirit has given and will continue to give an enormous impetus to imperialism. As the classical philosophers said, man cannot help but imitate in action his vision of the nature of things. The dominant tendency of the Western world has been to divide history from nature and to consider history as dynamic and nature controllable as externality. Therefore, modern men have been extremely violent in their dealings with other men and other beings. Liberal doctrine does not prepare us for this violence because of its identification of technology with evolution, and the identification of evolution with movement of the race to higher and higher morality. Such a doctrine could not understand that an expanding technological society is going to be an imperialist society even when it is run by governments who talk and sometimes act the language of welfare both domestically and internationally.[12]

The loss of Canadian sovereignty in the face of American imperialism is significant for the thoughtful minority, because with the loss of the ability to conceive of human excellence as connected to the public sphere, it becomes virtually impossible for such people to decide on an effective course of political action. Rebellion against the imperial system is futile, because resistance in the form of civil disobedience merely constitutes a subtle form of systemic self-legitimation. Furthermore, attempts to reform the system by taking part in the political life of the empire are doomed, because of the monolithic and universalizing nature of technological civilization. Grant asserts that "dissent on major questions of policy is impotent."[13] Finally, loyalty to one of the other major empires on the planet, such as the Russian or Chinese empires, does not represent a valid escape from political impotence, because they are themselves in the process of transforming into technological empires, in which the ideology of technological mastery dominates human and non-human nature. There exists no escape from the iron grip of fate in which the Canadian citizen lives. What small sovereignty Canada retains represents the thin thread keeping Canadian distance in the imperial wars of the empire:

> What lies behind the small practical question of Canadian nationalism is the larger context of the fate of Western civilization. By that fate I mean not merely the relations of our massive empire to the rest of the world, but even more the kind of existence which is be-

> coming universal in advanced technological societies. What is worth doing in the midst of this barren twilight is the incredibly difficult question.[14]

The question of the fate of Western civilization, and its entanglement with the drive to technical mastery, is the subject of "The University Curriculum." The essay represents Grant's attempt to clarify the role of the university in the technological civilization. He cites Ellul's definition of technology as it is set forth in *The Technological Society*: "The primary purpose in Canadian society is to keep technology dynamic within the context of the continental state capitalist structure. By technology I mean 'the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity.'"[15] The drive to mastery over human and non-human nature through the elimination of chance has become the dominant motivating force in Western civilization. The dual role of the university in the technological civilization is to both train and legitimize the dominant civilizational goal. When one considers the relatively high status bestowed on those departments within universities that teach and research technical subjects, it becomes clear that the nature and role of arts and humanities faculties is in question. The social sciences remain essential to the technological society because of their ability to quantify and control the human elements of that society. Modern social science emphasizes the principle of "value-free" research, thus claiming that it can be used to understand and control human nature within an objective paradigm. With the ability to pursue their research objectively, social scientists can deduce facts about human nature and motivation without the constraints of metaphysical or religious presuppositions. "Within the last hundred years," Grant writes, "it has become increasingly clear that the technological society requires not only the control of nonhuman nature, but equally the control of human nature. This is the chief cause of the development of the modern 'value-free' social sciences."[16] Because modern social science is carried on within the framework of "value-free" research, objectivity is purchased at the price of adopting a specific view of human nature: questions about human excellence cannot be considered objectively within an objective, morally neutral paradigm. There can be no objective and factual knowledge about the ultimate ends of human life or about human excellence.

Because of its fundamental assumptions about human nature, modern social-scientific research runs the risk of losing sight of the original intentions underlying such study in the past. Social-scientific research, as it exists in the modern university, has lost the ability to consider the most important questions about human life in its attempt to gain scientific legitimacy:

> Such studies are impotent to lead to what was once considered (perhaps and perhaps not naively) the crucial judgment about "values"—whether they are good or evil. Their scholars have gained their unassailable status of mastery and self-justification by surrendering their power to speak about questions of immediate and ultimate meaning—indeed generally by asserting that such questions only arise through confusion of mind. Such a position provides immunity within the academic fortress, but it can still be asked whether the impotence of mind towards meaning is man's necessary condition.[17]

The inability of the modern university curriculum to address questions of ultimate meaning has created a situation in which the idea of human excellence cannot be raised within the institution that was originally created for that purpose. For Grant, the "value-free" nature of modern social science is the result of assumptions about human nature propounded in the doctrines of modern liberal ideology. Although modern, objective research suggests the impossibility of obtaining knowledge about ultimate human ends, liberalism provides a practical articulation of the modern conception of human excellence. The inculcation of liberal ideology, along with its proper direction as a justification for technological mastery, has become the chief role of the university curriculum in Western civilization. Grant writes, "Class liberalism is the ideological cement for a technological society of our type."[18] This is significant, because liberalism, in providing moral legitimacy for the drive to technological mastery, has fused the technological drive to mastery with the conception of political equality. According to this view, in a technologically advanced society, more people can be freed from the burdens of natural necessity in order to be able to enjoy their freedom, a freedom that provides the vehicle to achieve individual excellence. Thus, liberalism has become a powerful tool in the expansion of the technological civilization:

> Western men live in a society the public realm of which is domi-

> nated by a monolithic certainty about excellence—namely that the pursuit of technological efficiency is the chief purpose for which the community exists. When modern liberals, positivist or existentialist, have criticized the idea of human excellence, they may have thought that they were clearing the ground of religious and metaphysical superstitions which stood in the way of the liberty of the individual. Rather they were serving the social purpose of legitimizing the totally technological society by destroying anything from before the age of progress which might inhibit its victory.[19]

Liberalism is indispensable to the rise of the technological civilization because of its ability to legitimize the drive to mastery as a means to achieve human excellence (defined as political equality). The problem with modern liberal ideology is that it ultimately gives birth to moral nihilism. One of the chief purposes of liberalism in the technological civilization is to mitigate the aridity of the technological drive to mastery. In doing so, liberalism loses much of its earlier nobility of vision: "The demands of the increasingly complex apparatus have dissipated the dream of modern liberalism which sought through education to give substance to equality. The mastery once thought of as a means becomes increasingly the public end."[20]

In the essay "In Defence of North America," Grant asserts that North American foreign policy manifests itself not only in political or military conquest but also through cultural, economic, and ideological imperialism. The imperialism of the technological civilization is fueled not only by collective avarice and personal greed on the part of North Americans but also by the ideological assent given to technology.

North America remains the civilization most fully given over to the drive to technical mastery, because it is "the only society which has no history (truly its own) from before the age of progress."[21] Technological civilization first sprouted in Europe, and with it the modern social sciences and modern liberalism. North Americans are aware that they are not Europeans because North American identity is primally located in the long battle between settlers and the untamed wilderness of the new continent:

> The roots of some communities in eastern North America go back in continuous love for their place, but none of us can be called autochthonous, because in all there is some consciousness of making the land our own. It could not be ours also because the very intrac-

> tability, immensity, and extremes of the new land required that its meeting with mastering Europeans be a battle of subjugation.[22]

For Grant, the great precursor to the moral framework of the technological civilization, Calvinist theology, was a turning away from Greek philosophy to the primacy of the Bible. Both the emerging modern sciences and Calvinist theology attacked medieval Aristotelianism because of its conception of natural theology. According to Protestants, medieval Aristotelianism (manifested most explicitly in the Scholasticism of Aquinas) turned men away from a reliance on Christian revelation as the sole path to knowledge about the divine. The medieval doctrine "encouraged men to avoid the surd mystery of evil by claiming that final purpose could be argued from the world."[23] Calvinism, with its emphasis on the will of the individual sinner before God, highlights the role of the individual's moral choice in effecting one's personal salvation. Calvinism eschewed the attempt to come to knowledge of God through reason founded on knowledge of natural processes. The primacy of biblical revelation as the sole path to knowledge of the divine, combined with the Calvinist emphasis on the independent moral status of the individual believer, made Calvinist theology amenable to the goals and methodologies espoused by the emerging modern sciences. The Calvinist view cleared the way for the conquest of human and non-human nature required in order to survive life in the primeval wilderness of North America in the pioneer era.

Public morality is formed as a response to perceptions of technological practicality, while choice has been relegated to the private, subjective sphere. There remains, especially in North American political leaders, an identification of liberalism with technological mastery. What is more, identification has been made between practical mastery and universal human liberation, which has become the legitimizing slogan of technological expansionism. Grant argues that the entire political spectrum subscribes to the same technological dream in which technological mastery and the liberal doctrine of equality become mutually interdependent. While the political left and the right may bicker over superficial issues, such as the allocation of certain resources to specific purposes, they are ultimately pursuing the same goal. North Americans elucidate a set of collective values in relation to

technical mastery from within the modern paradigm. The modern conception of values as subjective choices is the result of the philosophically naive appropriation of the nihilistic terminology used by more philosophically aware Europeans. The conception of freely chosen social values and their gradual ascendancy in North American society is related to the historicism and objective scientific methodologies that justify and flatter the spirit of technological mastery.

Europe inherited its intellectual tradition of contemplation from Christian revelation. The height in this revelation was religious charity (*agape*) and contemplation became a route to charity. However, in going back to Greek sources, some Renaissance thinkers were led to a form of contemplation not beholden to the doctrines of the Church, and not motivated by Christian charity as the highest expression of human excellence. From the rediscovery of the significance of Greek sources during the Renaissance emerges the political philosophy of Machiavelli and Hobbes, who place their understanding of human nature outside the Christian moral framework. At the same time, the Calvinists attempted to free theology from all non-biblical sources. In the Calvinist attempt to revitalize Christian theology through the return to Christian origins and a literal interpretation of biblical revelation, Calvinists cut themselves off from earlier forms of Greek and Christian contemplation. According to Grant, Calvinism eventually became dominant in Protestant North America, and with the gradual erosion of religious aspects of Protestantism as the dominant moral force in Western life, Calvinist theology became secularized in modern liberal ideology. Modern liberal ideology is essentially future-oriented and secular, and for this reason modern liberalism makes no attempt to regain contemplation as the path to human excellence; the liberal conception of human excellence can be manifested only in practical political and social games.

North American optimism and the naive celebration of technological progress temporarily staved off the moral nihilism that ripped through Europe with the onset of industrialism. Today North Americans think in terms of "values" but often overlook the sobering fact that values represent Nietzsche's suggested means of overcoming endemic moral chaos. According to Nietzsche, the goals of liberalism (political equality and democratic

freedom) represent the final debasements leading to the appearance of "last men," who seek no moral horizon beyond their own base comfort.

North Americans were spared some of the enormous upheavals experienced in Europe with the rise of nihilism. However, they have naively incorporated the philosophical language of Nietzsche into the paradigm of pragmatism—practicality and values-language combined with the morality of liberal ideology. Now, the specter of nihilism has finally risen in North America, manifesting itself in the inability to think critically about technology beyond the normative assumptions of the technological civilization. Grant writes, "Within the practical liberalism of our past, techniques could be set within some context other than themselves—even if that context was shallow. We now move towards the position where technological progress becomes itself the sole context within which all that is other to it must attempt to be present."[24] With the withering away of previous moral horizons in the rise of the technological civilization, the "winter of nihilism" has descended on North America, when all moral questions are inevitably recalibrated in the paradigm of a "reliance on technique."[25]

Grant's *Technology and Empire* represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of his understanding of technology. His thought becomes increasingly preoccupied with the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger, about the possibility of rationalism in the modern era. In several important ways, however, Grant's understanding of technology remains informed by Ellul's account of technology. Grant's critique of modern liberal ideology represents a consistent thread throughout the period after 1969. Another constant is his articulation of the potential for practical morality in the face of technological necessity. Technological necessity operates in the specific determinisms that arise from life in the technological dynamo, which together form a destiny in which modern people remain trapped.

Scholarly Understanding of Ellul's Influence on Grant

Scholars often overlook the continuing influence of Ellul's thought on Grant's understanding of technological civilization. Scholars are aware that Ellul's thought played an important role in Grant's understanding of technology, but many consider Ellul's influence to be limited to a sociological

analysis of technology in the modern world.[26] Many accept Frank Flynn's division of Grant's thought into three stages, in which Ellul's influence has largely been relegated to Grant's middle, penultimate period. Flynn asserts that "as he had taken Hegel as his guide during his first phase, so now [Grant] found in Jacques Ellul […] intimations of the darkness that comes with the co-penetration of North American continentalism and technological mastery."[27] Ellul's thought is considered to be an intermediary stage in Grant's development from his early Hegelian view of technology to Grant's later attempt to grapple with the thought of Heidegger. In *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*, Arthur Davis asserts that Grant's later work is influenced primarily by Grant's encounter with Martin Heidegger. In the same vein as Flynn's division of Grant's thought, Davis suggests that Grant moved away from the influence of Ellul when he came under the influence of Heidegger's account of technology. According to Davis, "Grant had decided that Heidegger understood modern technological science in relation to the decline of religion and morality in a way that another of his formative thinkers, Jacques Ellul, though a Christian, did not."[28] Davis notes that one of Grant's important contributions as a thinker is to point younger thinkers toward the task of thinking Platonic and Heideggerian thought together. Davis states that "Grant did not take us into a way of thinking that combines Heidegger and Plato. But he did insist that the job had to be tackled, and he drew our attention to the failure of others to complete it."[29]

More recently, Harris Athanasiadis, in *George Grant and the Theology of the Cross*, has suggested that Grant's turn from Ellul to Heidegger is the result of Ellul's lack of philosophical depth. Athanasiadis asserts that it is "[Ellul's] inability to perceive the inherent connection between biblical, Calvinist Christianity and the progress of scientific, technological expansion"[30] that turns Grant from Ellul. In Heidegger's understanding of the interdependence of art and *techne*, Grant thought that Heidegger had uncovered an aspect of modern technology that was entirely new, something that the Greeks had not conceived. For Grant the deepest account of modernity is that elucidated by Heidegger, whose account goes beyond others in its turning away from ancient conceptions of human excellence in the Greeks and in Judeo-Christianity. Scholars agree that Grant's appropriation of

Heidegger's vision of modernity as poetic creation is mitigated by Grant's continued acceptance of the Platonic/Christian conception of justice as that for which humanity is fitted.[31]

More recently, Arthur Davis and Henry Roper have summed up this orthodox view in their introduction to the third volume of Grant's *Collected Works* (2005):

> Grant found in the French Calvinist writer Jacques Ellul an analysis that confirmed his own sense that technology could not be seen as simply external, but as transforming those who lived within its horizon, making it difficult if not impossible to think outside the realm of the technological. [...] [B]ut Grant found his thinking unsatisfying because its sociological focus failed to provide an adequate philosophical account of the nature and origins of the technological society. He found what was lacking in Ellul in Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. By the late 1960s he was immersing himself in their writings, particularly Nietzsche's, as he worked on the Massey Lectures delivered on CBC Radio in 1969 and published in 1971 under the title *Time as History*. Grant's encounter with Nietzsche and Heidegger would shape his thought throughout the next decade and beyond.[32]

It is true that Grant, at a conference in his honour, suggests that Ellul's particular brand of positivist Christianity forces Ellul to overlook the interrelationship between the Western interpretation of Christianity and the rise of the technological civilization. Because Ellul adheres to a brand of Calvinism that denies the usefulness of reason as an instrument to attain knowledge of the divine, Ellul eschews philosophical contemplation, particularly the connection between philosophy and Christianity. Grant asserts that in order to fully understand technology, believers must have the courage to boldly examine the relationship between philosophy and Christianity, between reason and love, and the outcome of the relationship in the technological civilization:

> This is very hard for Christians to ask, because it may seem to bring into question our fundamental loyalty to Christianity itself. It was an easy question to face when the western society appeared an unequivocal triumph. Then one could simply say: look at what Christianity is responsible for. But now that modernity appears, not only in the greatness of its achievements but in its ambiguities, it is a more dif-

> ficult question to face. We may easily refuse to try to fathom the relation between modernity and western Christianity, because we may think such a fathoming may put in question what is most dear. But that is not the point. What we are called to do is to think through how the western interpretation of the Bible was responsible not only for the greatness of modernity, but also for what is frightening in it.[33]

Nevertheless, Ellul's influence on Grant continued to figure prominently in Grant's later philosophical reflections, including *Time as History*, *English-Speaking Justice*, and *Technology and Justice*. While it is true that Grant does not mention Ellul in any of his later, major works, Ellul's influence can be discerned beneath the surface of these writings. Through a careful reading of the ways in which Ellul's thought influenced his philosophical understanding of technology, Ellul's continuing importance for Grant's thought becomes apparent.

John Badertscher, in his article "George P. Grant and Jacques Ellul on Freedom in Technological Society," examines the relation between the thought of Ellul and Grant. Badertscher recognizes that while Grant often disagrees with Ellul, Grant nevertheless thinks that a careful examination of Ellul's thought is a "prerequisite to a cure."[34] Not only does Ellul's thought convince him of the inability to implement truly conservative political principles in the modern world, Ellul also clarifies the interrelation of science and technology for Grant. "The border between technical activity and scientific activity," according to Ellul, "is not at all sharply defined."[35] The common view that technologists merely interpret and implement the discoveries made by neutral, objective science is a mistaken supposition. The scientific drive to control and predict human and non-human nature is fully integrated into the mechanisms necessary for the propagation of the technological civilization.

Scientific research, for Ellul, "depends upon technique in its procedures, and upon technological society for its support and goals."[36] According to Badertscher, Grant appropriates Ellul's idea of the interdependence between science and technology in his analysis of the "pure" physical sciences and the social sciences. The appropriation is clear in several of his relatively recent works, such as Grant's 1974 address to the Royal Society of Canada and in his 1969 essay "The University Curriculum." Most significant for

Badertscher is the fundamental agreement between Grant and Ellul on the importance of the interpenetration of science and technology for the "transformation of life in the technological society."[37] The immediate danger in the drive to technological mastery, which represents the prevalent view of human excellence in the technological civilization, is its potential for tyranny. Because the understanding of human freedom espoused by the technological civilization interprets human action as free from moral limit, the possibility of tyranny is ever present. Modern technology, in its attempt to master chance, "involves always the reduction of the different to the same"[38]; and because of this, the fully realized technological civilization will inevitably take the form of the universal and homogeneous state:

> For both Ellul and Grant, then, technological society transforms scientific and political activity, integrating both into a social order whose primary intention is the domination of the human and non-human environment and the elimination of chance. In that context, science increasingly becomes a process which leads to mastery, while in politics the exercise of power tends to displace rational discussion in both democracies and dictatorships.[39]

Badertscher argues that while Grant and Ellul share important ideas about life in the technological civilization, they differ in their understanding of the nature of freedom in the modern era. Ellul regards freedom as a gift that can be realized only through the utter submission of the individual to the will of God as revealed in the Bible. Ellul's conception of freedom is radical, in that he believes the exercise of freedom represents the sole way for the individual to overcome technological necessity. As indicated above, Grant's view of freedom is ambiguous. The modern conception of unrestrained freedom is one of the chief "problems of the modern quest."[40] He considers the corrosive effects of the doctrine of unfettered freedom on social and personal wholeness; he suggests that a palliative to modern notions of freedom might be found in adherence to older traditions of reverence. According to Badertscher,

> Grant sees resources in the human situation from which a response to the problem of freedom can be fashioned. We can yet nurture other human possibilities—the power of recollection or participation in a living tradition, desiring or loving, and thinking. Taken to-

> gether, these powers ground the possibility of reverence, the quality most desperately lacking in technological society.[41]

Badertscher summarizes the divergence between Grant and Ellul on the issue of freedom by suggesting that

> we can say that Grant seeks an understanding of freedom tempered by the restraint of virtue and a sense of the abidingly true, while Ellul regards morality as an enemy of freedom, and looks for ultimate truth only in the immediate encounter of the individual with Jesus Christ through the witness of Holy Scripture.[42]

Badertscher provides a valuable analysis of the theoretical differences between Grant and Ellul, even though Badertscher neglects the practical link between technology and freedom that reveals the depth of Grant's appropriation of Ellul's account of technology. He is clear, however, that while Grant and Ellul may disagree about the moral status of human freedom, both would assert that the drive to technological mastery traps humanity in a web of technological necessity leading to tyranny, homogenization, and banality:

> Though Grant has had further thoughts about Ellul's shortcomings, he has never repudiated this [positive] evaluation of the importance of Ellul's analysis, at least not in print. It is fair to say, then, that Ellul's writings—especially *The Technological Society*—made a major contribution to Grant's own powerful critique of our social order.[43]

Ellul's Continuing Influence on Grant's Understanding of Technology

Ellul's thought plays a prominent role in Grant's lectures at McMaster University. Notes exist from graduate seminars in which Grant "relied on Jacques Ellul and Martin Heidegger to articulate the essential features of the technological society or technique."[44] In his notes for a 1970 graduate seminar on "Modern Technology and Religion," Grant explains Ellul's thought as an attempt to articulate the nature of technology and how one is to live well in the midst of the technological civilization. He suggests that "a discussion of Ellul's theology may help some—not others."[45] Although it is difficult to overlook the importance of Nietzsche and Heidegger for Grant's thought during the period after 1969, Grant's lectures reveal that

Ellul's thought remained central to his understanding of the technological civilization. Indeed, Grant considers Ellul's account of the relation between practical ethics and technological necessity to be superior to Heidegger's account.

For Grant, Heidegger's thought is insufficient for the task of uncovering the true nature of the technological civilization because of his refusal to adequately discuss "the relation of thought to politics."[46] Heidegger's account of technology overlooks the question of how one should live in the technological civilization. According to Grant, Ellul examines the relation between philosophy and politics that Heidegger fails to do:

> This is where I think Ellul comes in. I do not think Ellul has thought certain things as deeply as Heidegger, but I think he has thought politics much more deeply—what is the nature of the practical life? And I do not mean by this that he can think [the question of how we should live in the technological world] better than Heidegger—though that is so—but rather that he can think what is technique in certain ways more deeply than Heidegger.[47]

Grant suggests that Ellul ignores the complicity of Western Christianity in forming the technological civilization and thus Ellul overlooks the connection between "what is given him from revelation and its relation to thought."[48] Nevertheless, in 1970 he considers Ellul's account of technology to be the most profound attempt to clarify practical ethics in the context of the technological civilization.

In an interview discussing *Technology and Empire*, published in the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Grant laments the fact that human beings have created a society in which self-knowledge is largely shaped by the ideology of mastery and the "belief that all problems can be solved scientifically, in an immediate, quantifiable way."[49] Grant's comments are informed by a view of technology in which the individual is increasingly at the mercy of technological necessity, stifling the ability to articulate dissent. Once again, the centrality of the concept of technological necessity in Grant's work indicates Ellul's continuing importance for his account of technology:

> We who have walked the streets of the great metropolis, and seen the giant wars of this century, and live in highly organized institutions which determine us more than we determine them, must feel

> the need not only to live but to know, to think our living—otherwise we are at the mercy of it. And it seems to me at the moment that we are at the mercy of the technological machine we have built, and every time anything difficult happens, we add to that machine. [...] Now this predicament is too enormous in the history of the race to permit one to say: I'm against it, or I'm for it. The main thing, you know, in my life, is just to see what it is.[50]

In Grant's introduction to the 1970 Carleton Library edition of *Lament for a Nation*, he suggests that the exigencies of Canadian politics should be understood within the context of technological determinism. The order of technological necessity and justice are incommensurable. The order of natural necessity in which the human species has always struggled is being replaced by the alternate necessities of the technological civilization. For Grant, technological necessity can be understood only in the context of Western fate. The gradual erosion of Canadian sovereignty, as well as the increasing homogenization of heterogeneous social elements, are the predictable parts of the drive toward liberal egalitarianism and technological mastery. The drive to mastery has created not only the technological civilization but also the economic, social, and political conditions in which the realization of the universal and homogeneous state is considered the height of human excellence. Both Grant and Ellul indicate that the technological drive to mastery cannot be clearly understood without examining its penetration into the minds, hearts, and politics of individual citizens. This remains the most effective way to comprehend the realities underlying North American politics, and particularly the gradual erosion of Canadian political and cultural independence:

> Lying behind the immediate decisions arising from our status within the (American) empire is the deeper question of the fate of any particularity in the technological age. What happens to nationalist strivings when the societies in question are given over, at the very level of faith, to the realization of the technological dream? At the very core of that faith is service to the process of universalization and homogenization. "The one best means" must after all be the same in Chicago, Hamilton, and Dusseldorf.[51]

The technological drive to mastery has been interpreted as the chief political aim of the modern era. But the technological civilization operates

autonomously, according to its own determinisms and necessities. "How much difference can there be," Grant asks, "between societies whose faith in 'the one best means' transcends even communist and capitalist differences?"[52]

Grant's understanding of technological necessity has enormous consequences for his conception of politics in the technological civilization. Ellul's most famous book, *The Technological Society*, is significant for Grant because of the realism with which Ellul describes the pervasiveness of technological necessity in the political, economic, and spiritual spheres. There are important continuities between Grant's thought about politics and Ellul's *Political Illusion*, which examines the nature of politics in the technological society. Ellul's main argument is that the state has become the sole repository of political power in the technological civilization. The form of the modern, bureaucratic state has virtually eliminated private participation in politics. These ideas serve as the platform from which he examines the role of propaganda in the formation of public opinion, and the status of the individual in the political sphere. According to Ellul, the modern state has become the most powerful political entity because it has been invested with quasi-religious authority. The tendency of many citizens to see all problems as falling under the purview of the state reveals that the state has come to be the sole political authority, from which each individual draws his or her own authority. While it is true that certain individuals may be radically opposed to specific state policies, the state has become the political arena in which all problems are presumed to have their solution:

> We cannot conceive of society except as directed by a central omnipresent and omnipotent state. What used to be a utopian view of society, with the state playing the role of the brain, not only has been ideologically accepted in the present time but also has been profoundly integrated into the depths of our consciousness. [...] we can no longer even conceive of a society in which the political function (on the part of the governmental authority) would be limited by external means. [...] The primary role of political affairs is one of the common sociological presuppositions shared by all and growing in all countries.[53]

There are several interesting continuities between Ellul's *Political Illusion* and Grant's political thought. In the George C. Nowlan Lectures presented

at Acadia University in 1969, Grant again states that he supports Ellul's definition of technique. In analyzing the inadequate emphasis in modern politics on ends as opposed to means, he praises Ellul. "I define technique," Grant asserts, "in the words of Jacques Ellul in his book *The Technological Society*—one of the few truly noble books of our era. He writes: 'By technique I mean the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity.'"[54]

The Nowlan Lectures remain important for understanding the strong connections between the political thought of Ellul and Grant. According to Grant, the possibilities created by advances in technical abilities have forced universities and their government sponsors to understand politics in a social-scientific paradigm. Politics has been recast in the modern era as "technical thought," dedicated to being "a servant of the powers of this world."[55] Furthermore, in the desperate attempt to escape from the arid subject-object distinction at the heart of social-scientific political thought, young people are increasingly at the mercy of ideologies that arise from the fusion of philosophical naiveté and the yearning for meaningful existence. For Grant, combining the concept of politics with the state is pernicious because it assumes the modern account has exhaustively described the essence of politics. The modern view of politics reinforces the distinction between the "state" and "society," a distinction "so grounded in our modern way of thinking, that few of us think outside it."[56] There is grave danger in the refusal to question the relation of the state to political power, because without a candid questioning about the essence of politics, one cannot cultivate a realistic understanding of modernity: "We must be careful that we do not think that we are sure what the political is, because, if we do, we may miss the ambiguity of what it is to live at this time."[57]

Grant's suggestion echoes Ellul's argument in *The Political Illusion*. Ellul asserts that the state has become the sole proprietor of politics. The power of the state has increased to a point at which it is virtually impossible to question the supremacy of the state in the political sphere. Ellul writes, "We consider it obvious that everything must be unreservedly subjected to the power of the state; it would seem extraordinary to us if any activity

should escape it. The expansion of the state's encroachment upon all affairs is exactly paralleled by our conviction that things *must* be that way."[58] He also notes that

> Any attempt on the part of any enterprise, university, or charitable enterprise to remain independent of the state seems anachronistic to us. The state directly incarnates the common weal. The state is the great ordainer, the great organizer, the center upon which all voices of all people converge and from which all reasonable, balanced, impartial—i.e., just—solutions emerge. If by chance we find this is not so, we are profoundly scandalized, so filled are we with this image of the state's perfection. [...] We believe that for the world to be in good order, the state must have all the powers.[59]

The investment of the state with complete political power is the result of a deep confusion over the nature of politics. Though the state would seem to be all encompassing, its power is the result of the voluntary investment of political power by individual citizens. The state is no more than the sum of its human constituents, and therefore the state remains essentially without power in its own right. Ellul is not necessarily an advocate of democratic forms of government. Indeed, he often draws attention to the fact that democratic forms of government are by nature the most tenuous and brittle. Both Grant and Ellul consider the nature of politics to be ambiguous, a fact that is brought into even greater focus by their considerable agreement on the form that the state takes in the technological civilization.

For Ellul, political life in the technological civilization is an "illusion" because the people have misunderstood their own relationship to power. The illusion of modern politics rests on the fact that, as the masses become increasingly "politicized," they become concurrently less powerful in relation to the state. As the masses become politicized, their actions fall into lockstep with the necessities of the political machine, which, as part of the larger technological apparatus, runs autonomously, beyond human control. As bureaucracy becomes increasingly technicized, the exercise of political power is transferred out of human control. Even in the modern democratic regimes, where power is understood to flow from the people to their elected representatives, the administrative technique required to run the massive modern state operates according to its own, internal necessity:

> Governmental administration has acquired considerable weight and complexity. It is all well and good to claim that the corps of functionaries can be reduced to some simple rules or statutes, the administration to some general structure. That takes no account of reality. On the contrary, one would have to penetrate into the endless mass of bureaus and their competences, the hundreds of services under a cabinet member, the divisions, the hierarchies, and above all the liaison organs. [...] A dossier must go through five, ten, twenty services, with each adding something and attesting to having taken note of it. As those services are subject to different chiefs, and even belong to different ministries, the channels are not clear. [...] Nobody can have exact knowledge of this vast machinery, and to my knowledge, no organizational chart detailing the various interrelationships exists [in France]. [...] Nobody can grasp the whole, and in reality nobody controls it.[60]

The vesting of complete power in the state brings politics under the control of the administrative bureaucracy. The role of all government bureaucracy is to run the various components of the state apparatus efficiently. But the bureaucracy is not subject to elected officials, or even to the whims of dictators. The reality, for Ellul, is that the bureaucratic administration, as a technique of control and efficiency, operates according to technological necessity:

> There cannot exist at any time, for any of the administration members or for the administrative organs themselves, any true freedom of choice. They can only make decisions dictated by necessity. [...] Nor can the overall decisions be taken at the so-called political level, precisely because of the state's bureaucratic structure. [...] Freedom can in no way enter into the bureaucratic order.[61]

Ellul and Grant agree that the tyrannous potential of the modern state is the result of a common agreement about what constitutes human excellence. If humans can control chance, they will be able to create conditions under which all people will be able to achieve human excellence, defined in the Lockean sense as comfortable self-preservation. Ellul asserts that "today we no longer have the choice: efficiency is regarded as the supreme good by all."[62] The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America each represent different paths to achieve the goal of technical mastery, but they do not differ in understanding that technological efficiency is the highest good for humanity:

> Now it is assumed that all aim at the same ends—and that is true; ends are no longer subject to search or deliberation: the U.S.S.R. pursues precisely the same ends as the U.S., and vice versa. In this search for ends, maximum efficiency is regarded as best. [...] This means that efficiency is no longer a doubtful value; it is the necessary form of contemporary politics.[63]

Similarly, Grant asserts that the goal of human excellence is no longer a political issue, because most people share the view that technological progress represents the height of human striving. Although there may be potential conflicts over the means by which the universal technological state is to be realized, there is no essential disagreement about what the final goal of human striving should be:

> The highest good is thought by the vast majority of men to be the building of the totally realized technological society by the overcoming of chance through the use of the natural and social sciences. That is something put beyond politics because it is not a matter of conflict—because everybody agrees about it. [...] For example, should the realized technological society be brought in under the control of the English-speaking empire, or should power be divided among the [countries of the] northern hemisphere, or should even some of the countries of the southern hemisphere have some power over their own realization of technological civilization. [...] But the central question of rival purpose is not political because almost nobody doubts that this is man's highest pursuit.[64]

Joined to the question of human excellence and the relation of technology to politics is the status of values in the technological society. In the Nowlan Lectures, Grant suggests that the modern distinction between facts and values in the physical and social sciences has led to a "technicizing" of all branches of knowledge. The inability of modern physical and social sciences to properly consider the relationship of their studies to ultimate human ends triggers a great shift toward homogenization. Grant uses the example of the modern "value-free" social sciences as an illustration of the danger inherent in the fact-value distinction. Although the dispassionate studies carried out by the social sciences reveal a great deal about human motivation, social scientific studies are essentially divorced from substantive concepts of human excellence. The lack of moral framework is understandable, because the modern world views technological mastery for the purpose of

comfortable self-preservation to be the highest human goal. The findings of the social sciences, like those of the physical sciences, are put to use by those who finance and use the sciences as mechanisms of control:

> It must also be said that the result of the fact-value distinction in political science has been to turn nearly all thought about politics in our universities into technical thought and thereby make it a servant of the powers of this world. This happens in the following way. Behavioral political science is interested in objective facts, generally the quantifiable. It therefore proceeds to search out all kinds of facts by all kinds of methods—voting studies, surveys, computerization, etc. But these facts are turned over to the practical men of our society for use as discussion of ends (or as they call them values) must be eliminated from their science, there is no reason to say why it is better that those facts be used by decent rather than by wicked practical men. Indeed their science has nothing to say about who are decent and who are not. Indeed, to go further, it seems to me clear that pluralism has not resulted in those societies where modern liberalism (with its belief in the fact-value distinction) has prevailed [...] we live in one of the most monistic societies that has ever been.[65]

Grant's criticisms of values-speech and the social sciences are influenced by his reading of Ellul. The latter's account of technology as the autonomous and universalizing tendency toward efficiency includes a critique of the modern emphasis on values. *The Political Illusion* is an extended meditation on the consequences of values-speech in the technological society. Ellul deplores the politicization of values that results from "the tension between facts and values."[66] He conceives of the lack of any substantive conception of human excellence to be the result of the homogenization of social standards in the technological drive to mastery:

> Justice, freedom, truth, are words still useful in propaganda. But these terms have new connotations: justice now means happiness produced by equal distribution of material goods; freedom has come to mean high living standards and long vacations; and truth, more or less, has come to mean exactness with regards to facts. I could multiply these examples and expand the analysis; but basically, for many reasons, our time lacks guideposts and aims.[67]

In Ellul's analysis the most troubling fact about the modern state is the lack of an external moral framework in its operation. The state is a machine, cre-

ated for the purpose of efficiently carrying out the specific tasks required to maintain and expand political power. Those who suggest that great political reforms or ideological movements can infuse the state or the administration with a moral paradigm are mistaken. "It is not enough," he laments,

> to insist that politics must be subjected to values; such insistence will not bring about a reign of values. It is not even enough that the chief of a party or a dictator should make decisions inspired by idealism or non-material attitudes. For the autonomy of political affairs to come to an end, it would be necessary that they be subordinated to common values; that the machinery of parties or the state have no autonomy—that they cease functioning like machines; that acts and decisions inspired by moral reasons be clearly recognizable as such in the eyes of all. But the people's education has been proceeding in exactly the opposite direction; they are too convinced of the corruption and Machiavellian ways of politics not to consider such autonomy inevitable.[68]

One of the ways Ellul criticizes modern values-speech is in his critique of the conception of politics as the best location for the articulation of meaning. Many citizens consider the state to be moving in a tangible way toward the attainment of specific moral and political goods. The problem with such a view is that it ultimately misses the point about the true nature of the state. The state is a machine, and as such it does not perceive a moral dimension in its actions, except in its presentation of these actions before public opinion through the vehicle of propaganda. As propaganda becomes the vehicle for all contact between the state and its citizens, it becomes exceedingly difficult for an individual to think outside of the framework of the state as a moral edifice:

> But let us ask what would have happened if Hitler had won. We then would never have heard anything of Hitler's concentration camps, the massacres, or the experiments on human beings. Instead, Stalin's crimes of 1945 would have been discovered, and he would have been considered a war criminal. The Russians would have been charged with genocide because of their concentration camps, their massacres in the Baltic countries, the Ukraine, and Rumania. […] In victory, Hitlerism would have softened progressively, after having liquidated all the elements to be liquidated—such as communism. And ten years later the moderation of the chiefs, who by then would have relaxed their hold, would have been admired. […] The Nazi

> doctrine would have been deepened and broadened, eminent philosophers such as Heidegger would have made their contribution to it, and Marxism would have ceased to preoccupy the intellectuals […] and because people would have been submersed perpetually in National Socialist ideology, the latter would have appeared perfectly just at the end of ten years, and the well-known Nazi crimes would have been forgotten.[69]

Public opinion about justice is the plaything of state propaganda. The state should not be considered the vehicle for the realization of any moral principles, because of the fact that "a fundamental contradiction exists between politics and justice."[70]

There also exist similarities between Grant and Ellul in their account of modern liberal ideology. For Grant, the concept of freedom espoused by modern liberalism is extremely dangerous, as is the liberal tendency to flatter the spirit of technological mastery; both contribute to his rejection of liberal ideology. For Ellul, the main problem with liberal ideology is that liberalism ultimately obscures all conceptions of transcendent meaning by attempting to recognize religious pluralism. In *The Political Illusion*, he scorns liberalism and suggests that liberalism "is indifferent to truths, or grants equal footing to all opinions"[71] and does not truly respect human worth and diversity. In allowing all opinions to be understood as equally true, liberalism neutralizes the articulation of moral truth in the political sphere. The reality of the modern world is that politics operates in a moral vacuum. Any attempt to see the individual as a vital participant in the political regime falls prey to idealism. Ellul thinks that modern politics operates according to technological necessity, and thus beyond human control, as all modern politics takes place as a specific technological application within the broader technological framework. The modern technological state is an appendage of technological necessity, and one remains politically naive if one considers the state to be a vehicle for justice in the world. This is the substance of the political illusion, which persuades the individual that the state is omnipotent and that the political regime is the vehicle of moral progress. For Ellul, "concerning the problem of justice, it is an illusion to think that justice can be attained by a political organization of any kind."[72] Justice, like any other "value," is not capable of realization in the political

sphere, because aside from the drive to technological mastery, there exists no unquestioned point of moral reference from which to establish a political consensus. There no longer exists an external moral ideal that can garner comprehensive social agreement and support. Conversely, the universalizing aspect of technology can be witnessed in the widespread agreement about what constitutes significant human activity. Sociologically, the modern notion of justice has been linked to the hope for an elevation in general living standards. According to Ellul, "justice, freedom, truth are words still useful in propaganda. But these terms have new connotations: justice now means happiness produced by equal distribution of material goods; freedom has come to mean high living standards and long vacations; and truth, more or less, has come to mean exactness with regard to facts."[73] Through the widespread use of propaganda and the diminution of the power of the individual in the public sphere, the masses have become convinced that practical affairs cannot be governed by ideals.

Ellul's evaluation of liberal ideology remains influential for Grant's criticism of liberalism. In *English-Speaking Justice*, Grant examines the status of liberalism in the technological civilization. It is clear that liberal ideology is normative when one considers that "our liberalism is the only form of political thought which can summon forth widespread public action for the purposes of human good."[74] On the other hand, modern liberalism is experiencing a crisis through the growing awareness that the combination of liberal ideology and technological progress might not lead inevitably to human excellence. In North America, liberalism takes the form of contractualism. For Grant, contractual liberalism was understood by its founders to be the most rational form of justice, which was considered to be "neither a natural nor supernatural virtue, but arose from the calculations necessary to our acceptance of the social contract."[75] He admits that the concept of political liberty enshrined in modern liberalism is "a central human good,"[76] but modern liberal ideology, based on the contractual understanding of justice, shows signs of weakening in the technological civilization. The contemporary turn from contractualism in the public sphere to the emphasis on ecstatic aspects of private life reveals the weakening of contractualism as the basis for modern life. Grant writes, "Is not the present retreat into

the private realm not only a recognition of the impotence of the individual, but also a desire to leave the aridity of a realm where all relations are contractual, and to seek the comfort of the private where the supracontractual is possible?"[77] In order to understand the relation between modern contractual liberalism and the technological drive to mastery, he examines the account of "personhood" espoused by contractual liberalism. He writes, "These lectures will […] try to enucleate what is being spoken about human and non-human beings in liberal tradition. Only in the light of such an enucleation can one turn to the more difficult question of what is the relation between technological reason and modern liberal reason."[78]

Contractual liberalism became the dominant mode of political thought in England and North America because of its practical achievements. Linked to the practicality of contractual liberalism was the fact that English-speaking philosophy had not yet understood the ramifications of the "European liberalism of freedom"[79] articulated by Rousseau and Nietzsche. "Indeed," Grant asserts, "English political philosophy has been little more than a praise for the fundamental lineaments of their own society, spiced by calls for particular reforms within those lineaments."[80] Philosophical insularity, the result of an agreement throughout the English-speaking world about the superiority of English contractual liberalism, spared "the English from those theoretical viruses which have plagued continental Europeans."[81] The intellectual paucity of English political thought had the benefit of insulating English thinkers from the unsettling results of contractualism in its French and German iterations. The early American tradition of political philosophy was even less perceptive than its British counterpart. The American emphasis on constitutionalism represents the height of liberal contractualism, divorced from substantive conceptions of human excellence:

> Contractualism was less inhibited [in the US] even than in capitalist England, where certain disappearing classes maintained remnantal reverences from before the age of progress. In the United States such remnants as Anglican poetry and piety were largely squashed with the revolution, and reverences brought by later immigrants were easily engulfed and legitimised into the public contractual principle in its purest form.[82]

As England and North America became secularized, the idea of justice

espoused by Christianity was gradually stripped of its religious aspects and repackaged as secular contractualism. The process was possible only because of the relation of secular liberalism to Protestant morality. Protestantism gave contractual liberalism a conception of justice that transcended the merely contractual:

> Why should anyone choose to be a soldier or a policeman, if Lockian contractualism is the truth about justice? Yet such professions are necessary if any approximation to justice and consent are to be maintained. [...] The believing Protestants provided that necessary moral cement which could not be present for those who were consistently directed by contractualism or utilitarianism or a combination of both.[83]

With the end of Protestantism as a powerful moral force in the West, the elite classes in North America "became unable to provide their societies with the public sustenance of uncalculated justice which the contractual account of justice could not provide from itself."[84] And yet, in North America contractual liberalism remains the dominant political ideology of the elite classes. Conversely, the rise of the technological civilization, with its violence and its universalizing determinations, has revealed the moral shallowness of liberal contractualism. Even though North American intellectuals have consistently turned away from a transcendent conception of justice in recent years, there has been widespread agreement about the axiom that justice is good. Intellectuals may have ridiculed earlier traditions of reverence, but these intellectuals have been protected by the memories of older traditions "from trying to think why [justice] is good in the light of what we are told about the whole in modern science."[85]

For Grant, the inability to articulate a substantive concept of justice in the context of the technological civilization has been made explicit in the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Roe v. Wade*. The legalization of abortion exposes the crisis within contractual liberalism. In stating that "foetuses up to six months are not persons, and as non-persons can have no status in the litigation,"[86] the American Supreme Court has made an ontological statement that cannot be reconciled in the framework of contractual liberalism. The primacy of individual rights over any conception of good is the basis for the decision, and thus "the decision [of the US Su-

preme Court] then speaks modern liberalism in its pure contractual form: right prior to good; a foundational contract protecting individual rights; the neutrality of the state concerning moral 'values'; social pluralism supported by and supporting this neutrality."[87] In suggesting that mothers are persons and that fetuses are not, the Supreme Court of the United States has made an ontological declaration about personhood that raises a host of questions about contractual liberalism. The decision to legalize abortion "hand[s] the cup of poison to our liberalism"[88] because it fails to define what it is about personhood that accrues rights in the first place. "If foetuses are not persons," he asks, "why should not the state decide that a week old, a two year old, a seventy or eighty year old is not a person 'in the whole sense'? On what basis do we draw the line? Why are the retarded, the criminal or the mentally ill persons?"[89] Without a clear account of the concept of personhood, what is it about a person that dictates that he or she should be given rights of any kind?

Nietzsche's thought exposes the implications of the lack of a substantive concept of justice. His account provides the clearest articulation of the philosophical realities of the modern era. Now that the Christian God is dead, there no longer remains any reason to live under the moral guidelines espoused by Christianity. Technological and scientific progress has undermined the idea of a teleological purpose underlying nature or history; there no longer remains a reason to consider justice or equality or any other socially useful ideal as inherent to human beings: "Once we have recognised 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?"[90] Contractual liberalism and the drive to technological mastery have emerged "from the same matrix of modern thought, from which can arise no reason why the justice of liberty is due to all human beings, irrespective of convenience."[91] Grant describes the obscurity that surrounds justice in the modern era as "darkness."[92] The darkness that surrounds justice is dangerous because there appears to be no escape from it. In the midst of the technological civilization it is futile to attempt to recall earlier conceptions of justice, because modern science and technology have revealed the

underlying determinations that dictate the realities of life in the natural world. However, neither contractual liberalism nor technological progress can shine light on the darkness that surrounds modern justice, because both contractual liberalism and technological progress eschew concepts of human excellence external to the practical aim of comfort and mastery.

Grant's critique of the moral and philosophical assumptions underlying modern liberalism in *English-Speaking Justice* resonates with Ellul's critique of liberalism, particularly in Grant's emphasis on the status of justice in the technological civilization. Ellul and Grant consider technology to be a determining force in Western civilization. Ellul describes the technological civilization as an "event" that cannot be reversed. There is no escape from technological necessity once a given civilization has succumbed, as he asserts in *The Technological Society*, *Propaganda*, and *The Political Illusion*. The modern citizen is caught in technological necessity, which pervades every aspect of human life: political, economic, religious, scientific. There is no escape from the iron grip of technological necessity: "The point is that we have here an adherence to the ongoing socio-economic development generated by technological motives enforced by technological means, moving in the direction of a technological continuity: there is no longer room for ideological debate."[93] Ellul asserts that

> There cannot exist, at any time, for any of the administration members or for the administrative organs themselves, any true freedom of choice. They can only make decisions dictated by necessity. [...] Nor can the overall decisions be taken at the so-called political level, precisely because of the state's bureaucratic structure.[94]

Ellul's conception of technological necessity as a determining force in the modern world constitutes a continuing influence on Grant's account of technology. In Grant's Nowlan Lectures, he allies himself with Ellul's account of technology: "I agree, largely, with Ellul that technique has become autonomous and automatic and that as the multiversities are a chief instrument of technological civilization they will go on serving that technical drive."[95] The universities, like all other institutions in the technological civilization, are directed to master chance in all aspects of life. And yet the drive to technological mastery remains beyond human control. In *Time as History*, Grant paints a picture of the realities of life in the technological

civilization. He describes the universalizing nature of the technological society:

> When I drive on the highways around Hamilton and Toronto, through the proliferating factories and apartments, the research establishments and supermarkets; when I sit in the bureaucracies in which the education for technocracy is planned; when I live in and with the mechanized bodies and resolute wills necessary to that system; it is then that the conception of time as history is seen in its blossoming. An animating vision is not known simply in a retired academic thinking, but in the urgent experience of every lived moment. The words used to explicate "time as history" may seem abstract, but they are meant to illuminate our waking and sleeping hours in technical society.[96]

English-Speaking Justice ends with the warning that technological necessity has enfolded us completely. The moral darkness that exists in the technological civilization is endemic to technological necessity:

> Analytical logistics plus historicist scholarship plus even rigorous science do not when added up equal philosophy. When added together they are not capable of producing that thought which is required if justice is to be taken out of the darkness which surrounds it in the technological era. This lack of tradition of thought is one reason why it is improbable that the transcendence of justice over technology will be lived among English-speaking people.[97]

In Grant's 1975 speech "Knowing and Making," presented to the Royal Society of Canada, Ellul's influence can be detected in Grant's description of the determinism inherent in technological necessity:

> Where do we find any positive knowledge in the modern world that can give frontiers to the technological imperative—that imperative which was expressed so lucidly by Robert Oppenheimer when he said: "If something is sweet, you have to go ahead with it." The new technologies are taking us into realms of making which occur as it were necessarily, that is, almost outside consideration of human good.[98]

Grant's thought during and after 1969 is increasingly influenced by the moral and ethical issues raised by his encounter with the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger, but his understanding of technology remains deeply indebted to Ellul. Although he disagrees with Ellul's Reformed theology,

"because it refuses to come to terms with reason, except as a human instrument," Grant asserts that Ellul "sees [...] with great clarity at an immediate level."[99] In his 1976 article "The Computer Does Not Impose on Us the Ways It Should Be Used," Grant paints a picture of human fate being inextricably enfolded in the web of technological necessity:

> We move into the tightening circle in which more technological science is called for to meet the problems which technological science has produced. In that tightening circle, the overcoming of chance is less and less something outside us, but becomes more and more the overcoming of chance in our own species, in our very own selves. Every new appeal for a more exact cybernetics means, in fact, forceful new means of mastery over the most intimate aspects of the lives of masses of people.[100]

Throughout his work, there is a sense of determinism that reveals the pivotal importance of Ellul's conception of technological necessity for Grant's understanding of the technological civilization. Indeed, Ellul's influence on Grant's account of technology is more important than scholarly orthodoxy suggests. While there is some truth to the notion that Grant distanced himself from Ellul's interpretation of Christianity, it is possible to see strong links between Ellul's writings about politics, morality, and technological necessity, and Grant's understanding of these subjects.

Notes

1. George Grant, "Religion and the State." *Queen's Quarterly* 70 (1963): 183–97. In Arthur Davis and Henry Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III: 1960–1969* (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 517.
2. Grant, "Religion and the State," 504.
3. Grant, "Religion and the State," 504.
4. Grant, "Religion and the State," 505.
5. Grant, "Religion and the State," 505.
6. George Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom." In George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Anansi, 1969). In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 532.
7. Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom," 556.

8. Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom," 555.
9. George Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism." *Canadian Dimension* 4 (Mar.-Apr. 1967): 21–27. In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 520.
10. Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," 529.
11. Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," 527.
12. Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," 527.
13. Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," 530.
14. Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," 532.
15. George Grant, "The University Curriculum." Originally published in two parts under the title "Wisdom in the Universities." *This Magazine Is About Schools* (1967–69). In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 558.
16. Grant, "The University Curriculum," 562.
17. Grant, "The University Curriculum," 569.
18. Grant, "The University Curriculum," 564.
19. Grant, "The University Curriculum," 572.
20. Grant, "The University Curriculum," 573.
21. George Grant, "In Defence of North America." In Grant, *Technology and Empire*. In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 482.
22. Grant, "In Defence of North America," 482.
23. Grant, "In Defence of North America," 485.
24. Grant, "In Defence of North America," 503.
25. Grant, "In Defence of North America," 503.
26. Frank Flynn, "George Parkin Grant: A Bibliographical Introduction." In Lawrence Schmidt, ed. *George Grant in Process: Essays and Conversations* (Anansi, 1978); Arthur Davis, *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity: Art, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, Education* (University of Toronto Press, 1996); Ian Angus, *George Grant's Rejoinder to Heidegger: Contemporary Political Philosophy and the Question of Technology* (Edwin Mellen, 1987).
27. Flynn, "George Parkin Grant," 198. The division of Grant's work into three distinct periods is also advoctaed by Joan O'Donovan. See especially O'Donovan, *George Grant and the Twilight of Justice* (University of Toronto Press, 1984) and

O'Donovan, "The Battleground of Liberalism: Politics of Eternity and Politics of Time." *Chesterton Review,* 155–66.

28. Davis, *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*, 143.
29. Davis, *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*, 155.
30. Harris Athanasiadis, *George Grant and the Theology of the Cross* (University of Toronto Press, 2001), 126.
31. Davis, *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity*; Athanasiadis, *George Grant and the Theology of the Cross*.
32. Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, xxi.
33. George Grant in Schmidt, *George Grant in Process*, 147.
34. John Badertscher, "George P. Grant and Jacques Ellul on Freedom in Technological Society." In Schmidt, *George Grant in Process*, 80.
35. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 81.
36. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 81.
37. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 81.
38. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 84.
39. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 84.
40. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 86.
41. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 87.
42. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 89.
43. Badertscher, "George P. Grant," 80.
44. George Grant, "Modern Technology and Religion." Unpublished lecture notes, McMaster University, 1970. In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 676.
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46. Grant, "Modern Technology and Religion," 680.
47. Grant, "Modern Technology and Religion," 680.
48. Grant, "Modern Technology and Religion," 681.
49. "Technology and Man: An Interview of George Grant by Gad Horowitz." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 4, no. 3 (1969): 3–6. In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 595.

50. "Technology and Man," 596.
51. George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Carleton University Press, 1970), ix.
52. Grant, *Lament for a Nation*, ix.
53. Jacques Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, trans. Konrad Kellen (Knopf, 1967), 12–13.
54. George Grant "The Practice of Politics" and "Thought about Politics." The George C. Nowlan Lectures (Acadia University, 1969). In Davis and Roper, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. III*, 614.
55. Grant, Nowlan Lectures, 613.
56. Grant, Nowlan Lectures, 605.
57. Grant, Nowlan Lectures, 606.
58. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 13.
59. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 13.
60. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 143.
61. Ellul, *The Political Illusion,* 148.
62. Ellul, *The Political Illusion,* 70.
63. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 70. In a footnote to this discussion, Ellul states: "Even though I am in general agreement with Gaston Bouthoul, I do not share his views when he contrasts the ends pursued by the United States (happiness) with those pursued by the U.S.S.R. (power). These notions are relative to one another. The U.S.S.R. seeks power first, in order to assure universal happiness later. And the United States also seeks power in order to protect its happiness. And both have the same concept of happiness (raising of the living standard), and also of power." Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 70.
64. Grant, Nowlan Lectures, 608.
65. Grant, Nowlan Lectures, 613.
66. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 31.
67. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 31.
68. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 92.
69. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 192.
70. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 196.

71. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 236.
72. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 191.
73. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 30–31.
74. George Grant, *English-Speaking Justice* (Anansi, 1974), 12.
75. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 11.
76. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 4.
77. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 11.
78. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 12.
79. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 50.
80. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 51.
81. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 52.
82. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 56.
83. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 62.
84. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 65.
85. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 68.
86. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 70.
87. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 70.
88. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 72.
89. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 72.
90. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 80.
91. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 86.
92. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 86.
93. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 44.
94. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 148.
95. Grant, Nowlan Lectures, 627.
96. George Grant, *Time as History* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), 9.
97. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 89.
98. Grant, "Knowing and Making." In William Christian and Sheila Grant, eds. *The George Grant Reader* (University of Toronto Press, 1998), 415.

99. Schmidt, *George Grant in Process*, 146.

100. Christian and Grant, *The George Grant Reader*, 432.

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The International Jacques Ellul Society, founded in 2000 by former students of Ellul, links scholars, students, and others who share an interest in the legacy of Jacques Ellul (1912–94), longtime professor at the University of Bordeaux. Along with promoting new publications related to Ellul and producing the *Ellul Forum*, the Society sponsors a biennial conference. IJES is the anglophone sister society of the francophone Association internationale Jacques Ellul.

The objectives of IJES are threefold:

Preserving a Heritage. The Society seeks to preserve and disseminate Ellul's literary and intellectual heritage through republication, translation, and secondary writings.

Extending a Critique. Ellul is best known for his penetrating critique of *la technique*, of the character and impact of technology on our world. The Society seeks to extend his social critique particularly concerning technology.

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