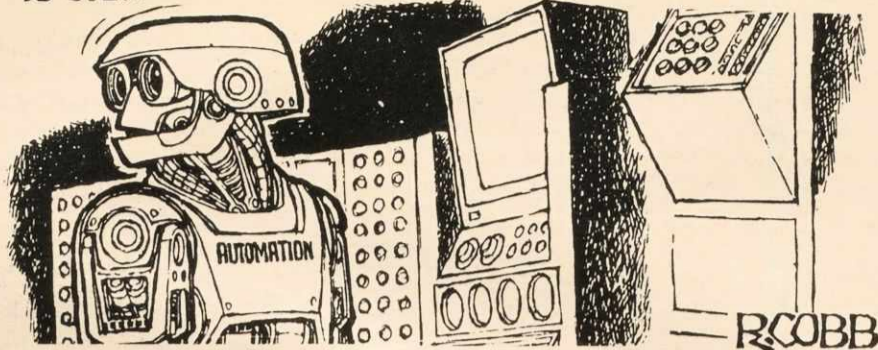


Summons to questioning

OH...HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?—
THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION
IS OVER... WE WON....



by Elizabeth Hiscott

The modern model is not "sufficient to the needs of human beings. How is it possible in the midst of that paradigm and its stranger and wilder consequences, to reach into the truth that the world proceeds from goodness itself?" — George Grant

Those are the words of a disillusioned man. George Grant, dubbed Canada's leading political philosopher, takes us through six stimulating essays on a tour of technological civilization in his latest book, *Technology and Justice*.

His writing, he says "centres around the modern paradigm of 'knowledge': behaviourist explanation in terms of algebra." It is not a book just for scholars. For those without Grant's mental agility, the ticket for the tour is

dedicated concentration. The trip is worth the cost of the ticket.

His essays are entitled "Thinking about Technology", "Faith and the Multiversity", "Research in the Humanities", "Nietzsche and the Ancients", "The Language of Euthanasia", and "Abortion and Rights". Some of the work was co-authored by his wife, Sheila.

Grant is a passionate and brooding philosopher, a thinker whose voice prods one's conscience like darts penetrating an unwary victim's flesh.

He begins his book explaining the meaning of the word 'technology'. He describes the particular novelty of our world — "a new and unique co-penetration of arts and sciences... making and knowing... a new unity in

our will to be masters of the earth and beyond." He notes that we can make happen, and can have done to us, what has never been possible, "our political and social decisions are interwoven with the pursuit and realization of technological ends."

Grant's vision of this tapestry is the cause of his pessimism. He writes that there was just in past hopes of a technological destiny. "(The) mastery of nature (would) create a world-wide society of free and equal people." What was envisaged has not come to be.

Grant points to the harm already done to the natural world by technological pollution, to which "political response has been a call for even greater mobilization of technology". Some of it has been turned towards control of human

beings, "so that we can be shaped to live consonantly with the demands of mass society".

Grant compares the traditional and modern meanings of certain words involved in the evolution of ideas. In reference, he presents a parade of some of the world's greatest thinkers — Socrates, Plato, Darwin and Freud.

Technology and Justice, George Grant, House of Anansi Press, 1986, 133 pages, paper, \$8.95.

He writes that technology "has required changes in what we think is good, in what good is, how we conceive sanity and madness, justice and injustice, rationality and irrationality, beauty and ugliness". Grant doesn't have much respect for some of the new conceptions. He says there is "a pressing need to understand our technological destiny from principles more comprehensive than its own."

"Western people (and perhaps soon all people) take themselves as subjects confronting others as objects." Grant seems to blame this on a misuse of the methodology of science. "The project of reason to gain objective knowledge... to summons different things to questioning."

Grant regrets what he sees as the modern division between love and intelligence. Grieving for the lost tradition, Grant is unable to see stability in our new society being carried by "fate" toward a destiny he finds "so difficult to understand". There is much of a prophet of doom in Grant, and one cannot be sure if he really believes it is too late for human intervention.

Grant discusses 'justice' and Nietzsche's philosophy, which included extinction of people "in the name of justice" and genetic experimentation "necessary to the highest modern justice". He warns that, in thinking of the consequences of those ideas, we should not concentrate only on Nazi Germany's activities. One can relate them to what is happening in the western world — mass infanticide and genetic experimentation carried on "in all the leading universities".

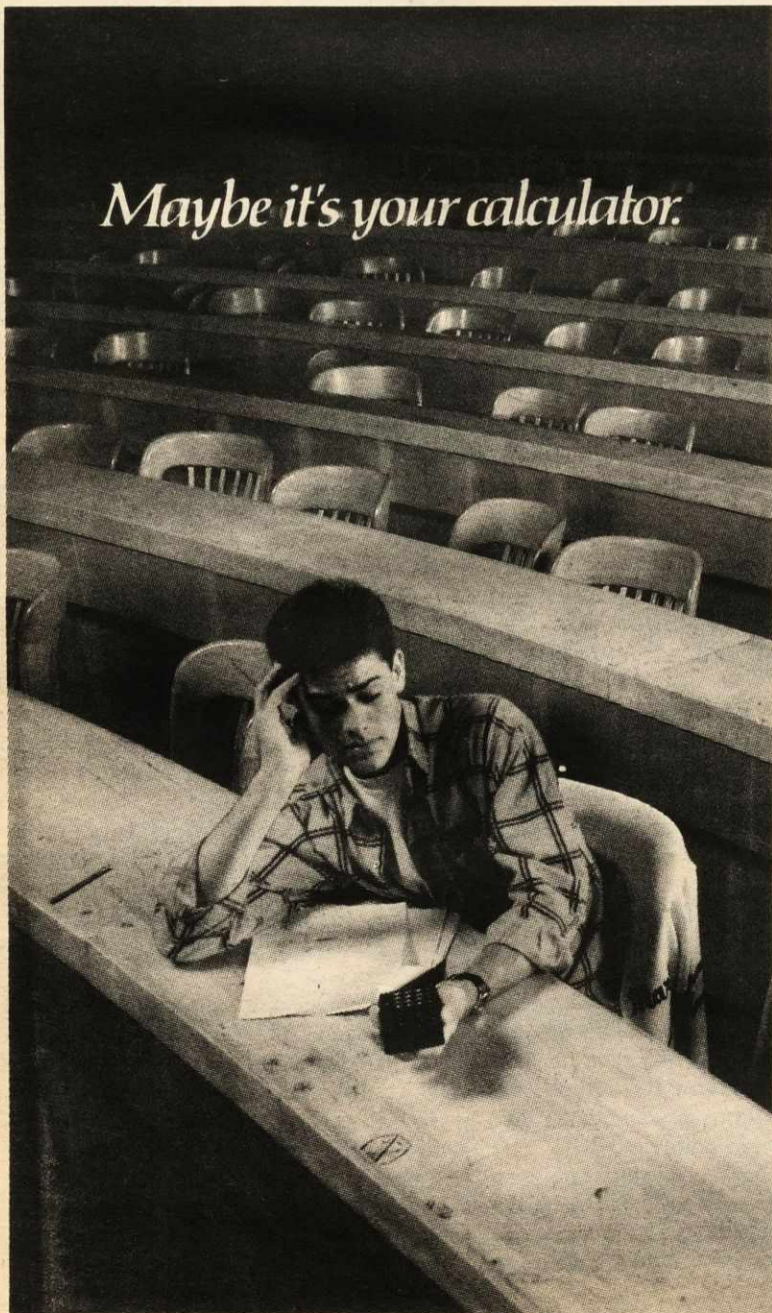
Grant argues against abortion in the name of 'rights'. Denying the fetus rights undermines the basis of all our rights. He warns that the basis on which some court decisions in euthanasia cases are made — 'quality of life', discrimination against 'persons' and 'non-person' — may be extended to include other groups such as the mentally retarded and the aged.

Grant points out that a special language is used to 'soften up' people so they may approve of activities such as euthanasia. These include 'personhood', 'quality of life', and 'dying with dignity'.

On the issues of euthanasia and abortion, Grant sometimes sees only black and white there are shades of grey. A weakness in his argument is the reaching of conclusions not justified by the evidence presented.

Grant is a trinity of spirits — past, present, and future — who inspired us to repeat Scrooge's question: "Are these the shadows of the things that will be; or are they the shadows of the things that may be, only?"

George Grant, Canadian author, Rhodes Scholar, once Killam Professor of Philosophy at Dalhousie University, and past chair of the department of religion at McMaster University, does not answer that question.



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