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### **Domination and Myth in the Works of George Grant and C.B. Macpherson**

The domination of one individual by another, of one state by another state, is the observable daily reality of politics. In some situations the struggle to dominate is softened, or at least disguised, by conventions of fairness and restraint, or mitigated by requirements of reciprocity; in others it is stark and brutal; but in whatever form it occurs the outcome is always in some sense a relationship of subordination. Few would deny that this is so, yet responses to it vary profoundly.

On the one hand, there are those who view domination as inevitable, and all the familiar dichotomies of political analysis—ruler-ruled, elite-mass, patron-client, oppressor-oppressed, exploiter-exploited, master-slave—as no more than expressions of a constant factor in the human condition, regrettable perhaps, but as natural and necessary as the air we breathe. On the other hand, there are those who view the admittedly pervasive fact of domination as the product of historically derived social and political arrangements and their justifying ideologies, which pervert man's 'true' nature and tragically misdirect his energies. The former include most of those who constitute the mainstream of modern political science with its focus on power, its self-conscious empiricism, and its assumption of ethical neutrality. The latter, though a minority, include some philosophically important and influential contemporary political theorists from both the conservative and radical sides of the ideological spectrum. Among these dissidents are the two pre-eminent Canadian political thinkers of their time, George Grant and C.B. Macpherson.<sup>1</sup>

What I wish to show in this essay is, first, that a focus upon the concept of domination illuminates a central concern in an important body of Canadian political thought, specifically in the works of Grant and Macpherson, whose treatment of domination is, in my view,

highly significant and revealing even though their writings are not generally perceived as comparable—indeed, their philosophies may otherwise fairly be described as diametrically opposed to one another; and second, that in the works of each the treatment of domination is heavily tinged with unacknowledged mythic and symbolic overtones.

Domination, however, is not a concept which is commonly part of the vocabulary of modern English or American political discourse, nor, when it is used, is its usage always entirely clear and unambiguous. Before turning to Grant and Macpherson, therefore, it is necessary to take a brief look at the concept itself and its place in recent political thought. In particular, I wish to distinguish between what I regard as its main European and Canadian usages.

## I

While the word 'domination' necessarily entails a relationship of control, subservience or dependency, different usages stress different manifestations, implications or causes of such a relationship. European writers, on the whole, have tended to stress the social and psychological dimensions of domination, and this is generally so whether they treat it as arising ultimately from basic human nature or from the conflict of economic classes.<sup>2</sup> Philosophers and critics ranging from Herbert Marcuse to E.M. Cioran and Alexandre Kojève, for example, have all concerned themselves with the meaning and philosophical significance in Western culture of what they perceive as the pervasive reality of domination; that is, domination considered as a social and psychological phenomenon.

For Marcuse, all social institutions are "institutions of domination"; hence it follows that politics is but an organized system of domination, and economics a manipulation of scarcity in the interest of domination. He does not deny that some repression of desire on the part of individuals is necessary for civilized life, but all control above the necessary minimum constitutes "surplus-repression"<sup>3</sup> and it is this which serves as the primary instrument for the domination of one individual or group by another. Those who dominate thus sustain or enhance their positions of privilege; those who are dominated are induced to accept the "rationality of domination" as their own rationality: "the societal authority is absorbed into the 'conscience' and into the unconscious of the individual and works as his own desire, morality and fulfillment."<sup>4</sup> In consequence, the dominated are prevented from grasping mankind's potential for true liberation, for,

Marcuse claims, modern technology has at last made possible the elimination of material scarcity and by so doing has opened the way for human life to be lived without arduous labour.<sup>5</sup> In other words, man's complete domination of nature through technology has made obsolete the domination of man by man—if only mankind would but realize it.

For Cioran, however, to admit even the possibility of such an end to domination is to subscribe to a shallow misunderstanding of it. He too sees domination in social and psychological terms, but for him it is not a remediable illness of modern Western civilization; it is the very *core* of that civilization. Secular man, whose life is bound by his conception of time, must *always* pursue material desires which are greater than his needs; that is the only quest he is able to understand.

By making us frenetics, Christianity prepared us in spite of itself to create a civilization of which it is now the victim: did this religion not create too many needs, too many demands? Initially upward, these needs and demands were gradually corrupted and externalized . . . .<sup>6</sup>

Technology, no matter how refined and productive, can for Cioran never be an instrument of freedom, for domination is inherent in the materialism which technology serves:

I seize an object, I consider myself its master; as a matter of fact I am its slave, as I am the slave of the instrument I make, the tool I use. Every new acquisition signifies a new chain . . . .<sup>7</sup>

There is no political solution to domination in Cioran's pessimistic vision, nor even an individual refuge from it, except perhaps in a religion of asceticism and renunciation, although even that is doubtful.

Earlier, Max Weber too had come (by a somewhat different route) to a pessimistic conclusion about the ineluctable reality of domination, which he perceived as arising not from technology alone but from the modern conjunction of technology and bureaucracy. These together, he believed, were at work to create "the shell of that future bondage to which one day men will perhaps be forced to submit . . . if a purely, technically good, that is, rational bureaucratic administration and maintenance is the last and only value which is to decide on the manner in which their affairs are directed."<sup>8</sup> This view, as we shall see, is powerfully affirmed in the writing of George Grant.

The seminal influence on the European treatment of domination,

however, is not Weber but Hegel, and in the contemporary era, Hegel as transmitted through his influential translator and interpreter, Alexandre Kojève. It is Hegel's magnificent and exhaustive exploration of every philosophical and political implication, and every psychological nuance, of relationships of domination and servitude which still powerfully directs European political thought, both Marxist and non-Marxist, toward a consideration of those relationships. The dilemma which it is forced to confront is stated by Kojève, paraphrasing Hegel:

If man is nothing but his becoming, if his human existence in space is his existence in time or as time, if the revealed human reality is nothing but universal history, that history must be the history of the interaction between Mastery and Slavery: the historical "dialectic" is the "dialectic" of Master and Slave.<sup>9</sup>

And, as Hegel definitively shows, that relationship is not merely economic but also, and above all, social and psychological, involving indeed the profoundest levels of individual human consciousness.

## II

In contrast to the European, the English and American traditions of political thought for the most part make little analytical use of the concept of domination beyond employing it in a limited sense to identify power relationships which are explicitly (and usually physically) coercive. The basic tension of politics is portrayed in terms of tyranny and freedom, rather than domination and liberation.<sup>10</sup> Yet in one national sub-stream of the Anglo-American intellectual culture there exists a major exception: in Canadian, or more specifically *English-Canadian*,<sup>11</sup> political and social thought, as well as in its historiography and literature, the idea of domination has occupied a centrality of place which is in some respects more typically European. Moreover, though originally the English-Canadian conception of domination differed significantly from the European in content, it has since come to be strongly influenced by it.

The earlier conception arose out of the efforts of English-Canadian historians to express the underlying reality of their community's relationship to empire and was therefore always more overtly and specifically political than any European theory, but also less attentive to the psychological dimensions of domination. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in the works of Harold Innis, whose writing still

influences the English-Canadian treatment of domination and remains the profoundest theoretical expression and most sustained and systematic application of what might be called the older or 'indigenous' English-Canadian approach. For Innis, relationships of domination and dependency were inherent in the patterns of imperial control, French and English, within which Canadian economic activity developed.<sup>12</sup> Like Weber, he saw technology and bureaucracy as instruments of domination, to which colonial political institutions presented no effective barrier since it was their function to service and facilitate the extractive process, the exchange of staple commodities for imported technology, which in turn only deepened the condition of dependency. Innis was not unaware of the social and psychological implications of domination; indeed, he penetratingly analyses the process by which native peoples were reduced to dependency through the fur trade and while he recognizes that domination involves the subtle imposition of a whole climate of economic rationality and stimulated needs, he does not pursue the consequences of this for individuals.

Most modern efforts to interpret the Canadian historical experience have revolved around expansions or variations on the domination-dependency theme. From Donald Creighton, A.R.M. Lower and J.M.S. Careless with their 'Laurentian' and 'metropolitan domination' theses to the neo-Marxism of Tom Naylor, and in political studies from C.B. Macpherson's early work *Democracy in Alberta*(1953) to John Huthcheson's *Dominance and Dependency: Liberalism and National Policies in the North Atlantic Triangle*(1978) a concern with domination, in the Innisian sense of the word, remains a vital feature of English-Canadian thought. It is, finally, to *Domination*,<sup>13</sup> a volume of essays published in Toronto for the University League for Social Reform and edited by Alkis Kontos, that one must turn for an extended contemporary application of the concept, in English, which is not a translation of a European work. In it the European and English-Canadian perceptions of dominations are mixed but it is the European which predominates, particularly in Kontos' own concluding essay, "Domination: metaphor and political reality."

What Kontos is concerned to promote is nothing less than a vision of politics "restored to its active, humanizing task"<sup>14</sup>, as opposed to its negation, which he traces (whether rightly or wrongly need not concern us here) to Hobbes "who fully impoverished politics by reducing it to the function of policing society."<sup>15</sup> The effect, he claims, has

led to an understanding of negative, bad, or abnormal politics exclusively in terms of tyranny which, "from classical times on, has been generally perceived as the arbitrary abuse of power." Since tyranny is an undoubted evil, and also widespread and shockingly visible in its cruelties and excesses, our revulsion from it unfortunately "blinds us from seeing inadequacies and inhumanities in what passes as a normal, healthy state of the body politic."<sup>16</sup>

Yet tyranny is but one form of oppression, and while it is the most undisguisedly brutal (and therefore perhaps the most easily combated), there are others. Of these, Kontos argues, the most pervasive, as well as the most subtle, insidious and pernicious, is domination:

Domination, compared to all other modes of oppression is unique in that the dominated remain oblivious of their domination. The establishment and maintenance of domination is effected on psychological grounds: the dominated internalize the external social structure, which achieves a reorientation of their energies, desires, and perceptions. The world of the dominated is a falsified reality that has been granted the semblance of the natural, which in turn grants it an aura of rationality and legitimacy.<sup>17</sup>

It is oppression in the form of domination, he insists, not tyranny, which is the true enemy of human freedom in modern Western industrial society. There are obvious affinities here with the Marxian concepts of "alienation" and "false consciousness", as well as with Marcuse's notions of "surplus-repression" and "repressive tolerance", and some of the same philosophical objections would seem to apply (for example, on what grounds may one assert that another's reality is "falsified"?) but the basic point he is making is an important one, and, as will be evident, his argument serves as a useful preface to the thought of Grant and Macpherson, to whose work we must now turn.

### III

It is essential to begin with Grant. No contemporary theorist has more compellingly explored the fundamental, inescapable issues of politics. In language at once spare and poetic, throughout the total corpus of his work he never ceases to ask why, *and to what end*, men and societies behave as they do. Modern social science, with its obsessive asking of "how does it work?" and its overwhelming fondness for explanation in terms of "system" he sees as no more than a



revealing symptom of the malaise of Western civilization. Like a voice echoing from ancient Greece, Grant insists on asking "what is good?". Such a perspective places him clearly outside the framework of values and assumptions of his own time and place. Instead, he presumes to speak from the perspective of all eternity, and to examine modern philosophies, particularly liberalism, the prevailing philosophy of the age, especially in North America, in the light of a more ancient tradition of contemplative thought.

For Grant, liberalism is a set of beliefs which proceed from the central assumption that man's essence is his freedom and that therefore what chiefly concerns man in his life is to shape the world as he sees fit. Accordingly, on the liberal view, "there must be no conceptions of good that put limitations on human action. This definition of man as freedom constitutes the heart of the age of progress."<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically, however, the result is not freedom but domination (or "mastery", a term Grant frequently prefers and uses synonymously), since the individual, with no conception of any value higher than his own freedom, becomes alienated alike from his physical environment, his fellow man, and his own spiritual dimension. The result is an unrestrained struggle for domination over the physical world and the glorification of technology, for it is technology which is the immediate practical means by which such domination is achieved.<sup>19</sup> From the treatment of the natural environment as something to be dominated it is but a short step to what Grant refers to as "the core of the twentieth century—the unlimited mastery of men by men."<sup>20</sup>

A key concept in Grant's account of this evolution in Western civilization is "the primal", which he does not define but uses in the sense of fundamental world view, or basic belief about the place of man in the universe. Thus, for the Greeks the primal was "chthonic," meaning a form of living "undivided from one's own earth".<sup>21</sup> For centuries of Europeans it was also a primal, though in competition with Christianity; the complete severance from Greek thought came only with the rise of Calvinist protestantism, "a turning away from the Greeks in the name of what was found in the Bible,"<sup>22</sup> and the development of the new empirical sciences in the seventeenth century.

For North America, then, the fateful primal was the encounter of Calvinist protestants with the new land. The land was at first almost indomitable, but gradually yielded and with increasing swiftness became an unequalled provider of material wealth, thus confirming the rightness of the views of its conquerors, and accounting for the persistence of those views into our own time. "Now," Grant writes,

"when Calvinism and the pioneering moment have both gone, that primal still shapes us. It shapes us above all as the omnipresence of that practicality which trusts in technology to create the rationalised kingdom of man."<sup>23</sup> The identification of technological domination with freedom is the effective, if appalling, core of modern liberalism: "What makes the drive to technology so strong is that it is carried out by men who still identify what they are doing with the liberation of mankind."<sup>24</sup>

The overpowering image which emerges from Grant's writing is of a world in which domination is the ever-present reality, its particular instances arising from, and made inevitable by, the ideological dominance of a crude faith in technology. Thus, like Weber, he sees individuals as being forced to function "within the enormous institutions made necessary by technology" and under the practical domination of the "ruling managers" for whom "this drive to practicality moves to become little more than a will to mastery governing the vacuous masses."<sup>25</sup> Even the severest critics are ultimately ineffectual because they too are captivated by the deeper assumptions of technological liberalism. As it is for individuals so it is for nations. Canada, ultimately, is not a quiescent satellite of the United States because of direct American intervention or control but rather because Canadians, and especially the Canadian ruling classes, share the values of their American masters; they "see themselves at one with the continent on all essential matters."<sup>26</sup>

Grant's vision is unrelievedly sombre, his condemnation uncompromising even when he pleads for understanding of the noble but tragically misguided hopes of human betterment which in the past contributed so much to the present debacle. He speaks in a voice of profound regret that what was inevitable has at last come to pass. Like Cioran, he offers no prescriptions: "What is worth doing in the midst of this barren twilight is the incredibly difficult question."<sup>27</sup>

Yet there is also in Grant's work a strong sense of the enduring relevance of contemplative philosophy and a view of man which is religiously rather than empirically derived. Behind Grant's discussion of "the primal" there lies a conception of human nature which owes much to Christian theology. Man is understood to be both good and evil, capable of living his life in the pursuit of sublime and deeply understood ideals but equally capable of devoting his energy and intelligence to the pursuit of gratification through domination in the name of some shallow or fallacious ideology. In what he calls the "remnants" of European Christianity Grant vividly identifies the



everyday manifestations of the good life to be found in the Greek-influenced Christian tradition:

. . . public and private virtues having their point beyond what can in any sense be called socially useful; commitments to love and to friendship which lie rooted in a realm outside the calculable; a partaking in the beautiful not seen as the product of human creativity; amusements and ecstasies not seen as the enemies of reason.<sup>28</sup>

Such values, however, are far from the prevailing values of technological liberalism. To remain in touch with them is to be a social anomaly, alienated from the dominant public ideology of the age, for "the primal" which shapes Western civilization in the modern era is one which admits of no vision or purpose which transcends man's own mundane reality.

Grant is no systematic historian of Western political thought. His sweeping surveys of vast, centuries-long philosophical and cultural developments are often brilliantly insightful but rarely supported by sustained or detailed analysis. Instead, he adopts the stance of the contemplative philosopher to whom particular events are important only insofar as they illuminate man's spiritual condition or chart the gradual unfolding of "fate". There is in this stance, however, less detachment than might seem to be implied. Grant's language is full of powerful imagery and conveys an intensity of personal feeling which is more typically found in poetry. His use of the personal voice is at times direct and even confessional:

I know how distant from North Americans is the stance of contemplation, because I know the pervasiveness of the pragmatic liberalism in which I was educated and the accidents of existence which dragged me out from it. To write so may seem some kind of boasting. But the scavenging mongrel in the famine claims no merit in scenting food.<sup>29</sup>

This is not to suggest that Grant's philosophical stance is *merely* a literary device, but it must be noted that it also serves that function. For it is clear from a close reading of his work that its distinctive quality is not solely derived from his declared philosophical perspective; to an extent that is more than incidental it springs also from his poetic evocation of mood.

Above all, he conveys in his work, by means both direct and subtle, a persistent feeling of loss and deprivation. It sometimes surfaces as an important theme, it is sometimes expressed in a single word or phrase, but it is never absent. It is perhaps most obvious and concrete

in *Lament for a Nation*<sup>30</sup> because it is there applied specifically to the realities of Canadian politics. In that essay Grant touched a painful nerve of many English-Canadians who shared his anguish and sense of outrage at the loss of those qualities they most valued in their own historical community. Even though the submerging of English Canada with its conservative traditions of restraint and order into the mainstream of American technological liberalism may have been inevitable, and, by some accountings, economically beneficial, Grant perfectly articulated the stubborn feeling that it was still a loss to be regretted and even mourned.

His *Lament*, however, is more than a personal statement; it is also an important key to the structure of his thought. The fate of English Canada touches him acutely because he happens to be a part of it, but he also knows that ultimately its fate is but a symptom of the wider malaise of Western civilization.<sup>31</sup> Thus, throughout his work there runs a powerful recurring image of deprivation as the defining feature of modern technological society, a deprivation not of nationality (which even in *Lament* stands for something larger than is usually understood by the word), but of spirituality and a conception of "the good" which transcends modern man's quixotic struggle for domination in the name of "freedom".

Grant's portrayal of modernity as a condition of deprivation is the very antithesis and negation of liberalism. Thus he sees the absence of restraint not as an enlargement of human life but as a further impoverishment of it:

It may be said that to use the language of deprivation is to prejudice the issue, because what has gone can more properly be described as illusions, horizons, superstitions, taboos which bound men from taking their fate into their own hands. This may be the case. What has been lost may have been bad for men. But this does not change the fact that something has been lost. Call them what you will—superstitions or systems of meaning, taboos or sacred restraints—it is true that most Western men have been deprived of them.<sup>32</sup>

The possibility that what has been lost may have been bad is of course rejected; indeed, it seems to have been introduced only for rhetorical impact, for Grant has elsewhere made perfectly clear his belief that "the idea of limit is unavoidably the idea of God . . . not a value we create. God is that which we cannot manipulate. He is the limit of our right to change the world."<sup>33</sup> This is the essential core of Grant's philosophy. It is in the light of it that his interpretation of history and his social criticism must be understood.

However, if domination is inevitable without such a concept of limit, how, in specific political contexts, is the concept to be interpreted, and perhaps equally importantly, by whom? Grant does not tell us. His concern is to show us the consequences of politics *without* such a notion, which he does brilliantly; that it may be impossible of realization does not alter what for him is its absolute necessity. But this necessity is not something which can be rationally demonstrated, any more than the idea of God itself. Ultimately, therefore, Grant's political philosophy rests upon a foundation of religious faith: one either believes in the truth of his fundamental proposition or one does not.

In structure, Grant's thought follows in striking parallel one of the central themes of Christian mythology, the theme of the Fall of Man and his consequent Loss of Paradise.<sup>34</sup> Domination and deprivation, Grant intimates, are inevitably part of the human condition because of man's imperfect nature; the more man aspires to the status of a God, the more alienated he becomes, ceaselessly struggling for mastery, yet doomed to live "in a monastic vulgarity in which nobility and wisdom have been exchanged for a pale belief in progress, alternating with boredom and weariness of spirit . . ." <sup>35</sup> Logically, such an argument does not entail the proposition that the past was better than the present, but it is plain from Grant's treatment of time that he subscribes to such a view. What is located in the past is not only the Paradise of biblical mythology but actual historical eras, in Greece and in pre-Reformation Europe, in which men lived more spiritual, and hence more fully human, lives.

#### IV

It is appropriate at this point to turn to the work of C.B. Macpherson. Like Grant, though far more systematically and thoroughly, he is concerned to draw out the present implications for men and societies of momentous developments in the history of Western political thought, particularly in the seventeenth century; like Grant, he is concerned to explore the conditions under which men may lead more fully human lives; and like Grant, when he deals with actual political events it is never in isolation but in the context of wider patterns of culture and ideology. Nevertheless, in their basic assumptions and core beliefs no two philosophers could be more irreconcilably at odds.

Indeed, the major thrust of Macpherson's writing, sustained consistently through many works of scholarship and social criticism, may

be seen as nothing less than the defense and rehabilitation of the very same secular vision of man as a rational, morally autonomous being which Grant identifies with liberalism and so eloquently condemns. For Macpherson the massive reality of domination in the world is not the result of man's pursuit of freedom but rather of his failure to achieve it, and in Western civilization his failure to achieve it is above all the result of a false perception of man's nature which perpetuates and legitimates a condition of domination. This false perception first found widespread acceptance in the seventeenth century and has ever since formed the ideological basis of Western capitalist "market" societies. "What was new from the seventeenth century onwards," he writes, "was the prevalence of the assumption that unlimited desire was rational and morally acceptable."<sup>36</sup> Man thus came to see himself as a dominator and appropriator of nature, a consumer of utilities, a possessive individualist whose aim was to maximize the satisfaction of his appetites.

The result is a society characterized by "invasive relations between all men"<sup>37</sup> and a state which functions as "an engine of domination."<sup>38</sup> What is thus denied man is "self-mastery", which Macpherson defines as "the ability to live in accordance with one's own conscious purposes, to act and decide for oneself rather than to be acted upon and decided for by others."<sup>39</sup> While Macpherson treats domination as operating by and through economic and political institutions, in the manner of Innis, he also goes beyond Innis in that his conception never loses sight of the psychological consequences for individuals. The vivid word which recurs in his portrayal of it is "invasion"—as in the phrase "invasion by others" or "invasion of one man by another",<sup>40</sup> meaning a curtailment of freedom which is personal and psychological rather than (or as well as) physically coercive.

To find an alternative to his rather chilling vision of the life of man in market society Macpherson, like Grant, turns to the Greek and pre-seventeenth century European tradition: "From Aristotle until the seventeenth century it was more usual to see the essence of man as purposeful activity, as exercise of one's energies in accordance with some rational purpose, than as the consumption of satisfactions."<sup>41</sup> It is precisely in this older notion that he sees the potential for a modern reformulation of liberal-democratic theory in terms of man's right to maximize the development of his essentially human capacities rather than in terms of his right to acquire and to dominate.

To this point, it might appear that Macpherson's view is very close to Grant's. Even their language is similar. The passage from Grant,

quoted earlier, in which he identifies the elements of the good life to be found in the Christian tradition, is strongly echoed in Macpherson's account of man's uniquely human attributes:

These attributes may be variously listed and assessed: they may be taken to include the capacity for rational understanding, for moral judgement and action, for aesthetic creation or contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes, for religious experience.<sup>42</sup>

The similarity, however, is more apparent than real. For Grant, the development of man's capacity to understand goodness and to act nobly is only possible if man first accepts the idea of an externally imposed limit to his activities, a "sacred restraint," a recognition that there are purposes in the universe higher than his own. If there is no such limitation, he contends, morality is merely a matter of habit or expediency: "if there is no theoretical limit there is no practical limit and any action is permissible."<sup>43</sup> For Macpherson, on the other hand, there is no purpose higher than the development of human potential. There must, of course, be limits to human action, but the justification for such limits must be entirely secular and humanistic: "all individuals should be equally able to use and develop their natural capacities."<sup>44</sup> In the interest of equality, therefore, it follows that no individual should be allowed to dominate another. In Macpherson's terms, there should be no "net transfer of powers" in transactions between individuals:

I am suggesting that just as we can now do without the concept of man as an infinite desirer of utilities so we can do without the concept of man as an infinite desirer of power over others, and can install, with some hope of its realization, the concept of man as an exerter and developer of his *own* powers.<sup>45</sup>

Like Marcuse, Macpherson believes that this shift in perspective is made possible by the "technological revolution", which has given modern man the means of ending material scarcity and so at last realizing "the Marxian vision of man freed for the first time in history from compulsive labour."<sup>46</sup> This will not *necessarily* happen, at least not in market societies, because "the tendency will be for the directors of the productive system to do everything in their power to confirm Western man's image of himself as an infinite desirer,"<sup>47</sup> but the *potential* is there; all that prevents its realization is man's continuing failure to grasp this essential truth.

The contrast with Grant is revealing. Man occupies undisputed pride of place in Macpherson's universe; there is never the slightest doubt that human freedom is unambiguously good *and attainable*, or that the maximization of human capacities, as long as it is understood in a developmental rather than an acquisitive sense, is in itself the worthiest of goals. Modern technology, moreover, is viewed positively as an instrument of progress; there is no hint that it might instead lead inexorably to new forms of domination.

In style, Macpherson's writing is notably less personal than Grant's and more conventionally scholarly in tone and approach. He relies less on single sentences of aphoristic brilliance and more on logically developed extrapolation from stated premises, while his use of adjectives is generally more neutral and restrained. Language, however, can be deceptive: the overall effect is extraordinarily powerful. No less effectively than Grant, Macpherson addresses his audience in a philosophical voice of challenging singularity; his imagery too reflects a profound personal conviction about the nature of man and his place in the universe; and his evocation of mood is equally vivid. But where Grant speaks the language of *fate* and *deprivation*, Macpherson speaks the language of *hope* and *retrieval*.

In its underlying structure, moreover, Macpherson's thought, like Grant's, parallels one of Western civilization's most emotionally potent and imaginatively sustaining mythic themes: the theme of Prometheus Unbound. For MacPherson, man is a creature of natural goodness and reason who would create a society of perfect harmony and freedom from domination if only the institutional and ideological shackles which bind him and distort his true nature could be swept away. There is no sense of autonomous evil in Macpherson's work. In his discussion of man's capacities there is no admission that man might also possess a capacity for wilful domination, or that cruelty, mayhem and self-destruction might also be 'natural'. All of these things are of course undeniably present in the world of reality, as Macpherson is well aware; what he is concerned to deny is not their existence but their *inevitability*. Evil, he implies, is always environmental in origin and not the result of a tragic flaw in man's essential nature. Indeed, at the core of his philosophy there lies a vision of human perfection as uncompromising and as radiant as Shelley's vision of:

*Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,  
Whose nature is its own divine control,*



*Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;  
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;  
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove  
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!*<sup>48</sup>

Macpherson's affinity with the Romantics is no less strong than his debt to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Ultimately, the rational humanist asserts the necessity of faith, not in God, as Grant would insist, but in Man:

That men if freed from scarcity and from intellectual error . . . would live together harmoniously enough, that their remaining contention would be only creative tension, cannot be proved or disproved except by trial. But such a proposition is basic to any demand for or justification of a democratic society.<sup>49</sup>

It is only in such a society that domination would be finally absent from human relationships, allowing each person to lead a fully human life. It is axiomatic for Macpherson that freedom does not entail conflict: in a democratic society there would be no destructive contention, no struggle for mastery, no "boredom and weariness of spirit" such as Grant foresees, but only the purposeful harmony of individual human beings freely developing their own innately good capacities.

## V

In Grant and Macpherson we find concepts of domination which are incorporated into comprehensive philosophical structures, reflecting different visions of the nature of man, sustained by different myths, and radiating in each case from a central core of faith. To approach their thought from the perspective of domination is, therefore, at the very least, to find a useful point of comparison between theories which otherwise seem to proceed along lines which never intersect. The extraordinary manner in which their treatment of domination is related to, or draws upon, symbol and myth does not in either case weaken the force of their arguments; on the contrary, such associations serve as reminders of the links which join the concept of domination to some of the most fundamental themes of the Western imagination.

A concern with domination also serves to focus attention upon an important issue which must be dealt with, or covered by a large assumption, in any attempt to formulate a comprehensive theory of politics, whether to justify or condemn existing political ideals and ar-

rangements or to prescribe new ones. For Grant, the absolute necessity of limits to human action which are grounded in religious faith, as the only alternative to domination, logically precludes the translation of his philosophy into programmatic terms. Macpherson, in this sense, is the more complete political theorist. His Promethean faith in man and his confidence in the moral neutrality of technology are perfectly compatible with a programme of gradual progress toward the elimination of domination.<sup>50</sup> The substantial parts of his thought which I have not attempted to discuss in this essay and which deal so extensively and prescriptively with such matters as democracy and property rights (and have no equivalents in Grant) may be seen first of all in this light, even though in themselves they may be regarded as among the premier achievements of contemporary political theory.

Finally, the degree to which both Grant and Macpherson have absorbed important aspects of European political thinking into their work, while building upon and expanding an earlier indigenous tradition, marks a significant development and maturation in English-Canadian political thought. They also further clarify the distinctive place of that thought in the wider Western tradition of which it forms a part, for the one particular Anglo-American national intellectual culture in which domination in all its conditions and consequences has, for understandable historical reasons, received the fullest and generally the most sophisticated treatment is that of English Canada. A concern with domination, indeed, may be the definitive feature of the English-Canadian intellectual tradition.

## NOTES

1. Both Grant and Macpherson have attracted considerable critical scrutiny as well as considerable followings. See Larry Schmidt, ed., *George Grant in Process: Essays and Conversations* (Toronto: Anansi, 1978) and Alkis Kontos, ed., *Powers, Possessions and Freedom: Essays in Honour of C.B. Macpherson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).
2. For a discussion of the treatment of domination in European neo-Marxist thought see Trent Schroyer, *The Critique of Domination: The Origins and Development of Critical Theory* (New York: George Braziller, 1973). This neo-Marxist concern, Schroyer suggests, arises from the realization that the lack of an adequate theory of domination is the "missing link" in Marx's philosophy (p. 18).
3. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 33-34.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 80; see also idem, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press), pp. 4-5; for a lucid interpretation and comparison with Marx see Edward Andrew, "Work and Freedom in Marcuse and Marx," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, III:2 (June 1970) pp. 241-256.
6. E.M. Cioran, *The Fall into Time*, tr. by Richard Howard (Chicago: Quardangle Books,

- 1970), p. 66; see also Susan Sontag, "On Cioran", *TriQuarterly*, no. 11 (Winter 1968), pp. 5-20.
7. Cioran, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
  8. Max Weber, *Gesammelte politischen Schriften* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), p. 151, as quoted and translated by Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 223.
  9. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, tr. by James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books), p. 9. I am grateful to Richard Vernon for bringing this point to my attention, and for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.
  10. See, e.g., Sir Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).
  11. I do not mean to suggest by the use of this term that the idea of domination is absent from French-Canadian social and political thought for that is obviously not the case, but, as far as I am aware, it seems to be present mainly as a literary convention, or as a device of social criticism derived from Frantz Fanon and applied specifically to French-English antagonisms, as in Pierre Vallières' *Negres blancs d'Amérique*.
  12. Innis' thesis is elaborated in the whole vast corpus of his work from *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930; rev. ed. 1956) to *Empire and Communications* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).
  13. Toronto: (University of Toronto Press, 1975).
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
  17. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.
  18. George Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 56.
  19. This is not to imply that Grant considers technology to be merely a means, for it is clear from his use of the term that he sees it also as an end in itself, the pursuit of which is the motive force of modern industrial societies. See George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: Anansi, 1969), pp. 32-34 *passim*.
  20. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
  22. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
  24. *Ibid.*, p. 27; see also *idem*, *English-speaking Justice* (Sackville: Mount Allison University, The Josiah Wood Lectures, 1974).
  25. *Technology and Empire*, p. 27.
  26. *Lament*, p. 41.
  27. *Technology and Empire*, p. 78.
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. "I have implied that the existence of a sovereign Canada served the good. But can the disappearance of an unimportant nation be worthy of serious grief? For some older Canadians it can. Our country is the only political entity to which we have been trained to pay allegiance." (*Lament*, p.3)
  31. *Technology and Empire*, p. 63.
  32. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.
  33. George P. Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 2nd ed., 1966), p. 81 (emphasis added).
  34. For a brief but suggestive comment linking Christian mythology and political thought see Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 158-9.
  35. *Technology and Empire*, p. 24.
  36. C.B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 18. See also *idem*, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 53-68.
  37. *Democratic Theory*, p. 271.
  38. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
  39. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 71.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
43. *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, p. 81.
44. *Democratic Theory*, p. 19.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 37, and *idem*, *The Real World of Democracy* (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1965), pp. 60-67.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
48. *Prometheus Unbound*, Act IV, 11. 400-5 (Carlos Baker, ed., *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (New York: Modern Library, 1951), p. 124.
49. *Democratic Theory*, p. 55.
50. See e.g., C.B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).