Introduction: The Flesh is Willing but the (Virtual) Spirit is Weak

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> Deconstruction thus turns out to be not the final nail in the coffin of the old God, but rather the affirmation of the religious, not the *leveling* but the *repetition* of the religious… structured like a religion *without religion*… The deferral of presence turns out to imply messianic waiting and expectation, and the deconstruction of presence turns out to be not a denial of the presence of God but a critique of the idols of presence, which at least has to do with Moses' complaint with Aaron as with Nietzsche. It is idolatry to think that anything *present* can embody *tout autre* or claim to be its visible form in history, the instantiation and actualization of *the* impossible, for whose coming, like teary-eyed Augustine, deconstruction always prays and weeps. (Caputo & Scanlon, 1999, pp. 4-5)

> Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. (Marx, 1884, p. 42)

When Marx suggested that 'religion is the opiate of the masses,' he worried that the world's religions were placating potential proletarians and robbing them of their revolutionary spirit. A few decades later, Max Weber turned this sentiment around, noting that rather than an oppressive force in the new era, religion turned to capitalism and technology to release the spirit from oppression. Religion, specifically Calvinism, had been revived through "the spirit of capitalism." The restoration of technology went hand in hand with the restoration of the gospel. As Elder Joseph Fielding Smith asserted in general conference in 1926, without this restoration and

> organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, there would have been no radio there would have been no airplane, and there would not have been the wonderful discoveries in medicine, chemistry, electricity, and the many other things wherein the world has benefited by such discoveries…. I do not believe for one moment that these discoveries have come by chance, or that they have come because of superior intelligence possessed by men today over those who lived in ages that are past. They have come and are coming because the time is ripe, because the Lord has willed it, and because he has poured out his spirit on all flesh." (quoted in Erickson, 2001, p. 5)

In technosectarianism it is always unclear whether the new gospel restored technology or whether it was the other way around, or both. Believers continue to usher forth technological

innovation in the name of God and many continue to excuse the excesses of capitalism by invoking the spirit. This "name it and claim it" materialism is the message delivered in financial guides such as *Business by The Book*, *A Victorious Christian Life*, *Fighting Debt God's Way* and *Your Best Life Now*. "Material wealth is God's way of rewarding those who put Him first," televangelist Jerry Falwell once proclaimed. Currently, megapastor Joel Osteen addresses millions each week with his message that "God wants us to be prosperous." In this extension of dominion theology, God seemingly prioritizes prosperity and commercial success. Recognizing opportunity, corporate investors welcome Osteen's weekly gospel as fuel for the lucrative religious products market, which has been increasing at a record pace since September 11, 2001.

Indeed, commentators on our times note that we— the masses— are lost, again searching for something. Whether it stems from alienation, disenchantment, secularism or a fear that does not yet have a name, there is restlessness, a thirst for meaning and purpose and turn to spirituality and religion. Salvation in shopping, surfing, browsing and blogging is not entirely satisfying. The material girl— Madonna— has herself turned to Kabbalah. But the material (or material girl) is an easy escape and scapegoat. Stripped of any spirituality, the material is of course, vacuous. And the same is said of nature— inspiring but without grace. Neither the corporate nor the corporeal offer up much that is sacred. Inverting the Christian gospel, the flesh is willing but the spirit is weak. Communication is the new opiate of the masses, *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age* notwithstanding. Prosperity theology, techgnosis, transcendental materialism, rational mysticism and Electric Gaia beckon.

Of course, neither the masses nor the brethren could anticipate September 11, 2001 and subsequent events signaling the start of the new millennium. Who or what struck America at the time? The spirit of capitalism, as Baudrillard (2001) so insightfully noted, must have transmuted

into the spirit of terrorism. Religion itself, perhaps a resurgence of fundamentalist doctrine and

what Kroker (2006) calls "born again ideology," produced a new revolutionary subject, a new

crusader, and new terror. In the aftermath, mere mortals are divided and stirred by their simple

accounting of good and evil technology and theology— Daughters and Sons of Light versus

Daughters and Sons of Dark. The prosaic and technological are once again invested with

transcendent significance. Or is this the moment when we redefine technology as theology and

theology as technology, and thereby recognize their historic and metaphysical inseparability?

Secularism no longer seems tenable.

Our premise is that spirituality and technology are co-emergent— mutually

interdependent. We do not have one without the other. This is not merely semantics. Can we

have spirituality without technology? Can we have technology without spirituality? Is the ideal

form of spirituality that without technology? Is the ideal form of technology that without

spirituality? Is there an atheistic technology? Is there an immaterial spirituality?

Cultural, social or technological disaster? Natural disaster or Divine in origin? How do

we account for the spread of HIV-AIDS and famine in Africa, northern ice flows and tundra

melting under the feet of the Inuit, polar bear and caribou, and catastrophe wrought by

earthquakes in Bam, Iran, and the Diamir district of Pakistan, tsunami on the Indian Ocean rim,

and Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf of Mexico? In the wake of panic and widespread destruction,

raging voices question the new world order: Where is God and government, and what

justification might there be? Or is this the justice and wrath of the gods? Suddenly, it does not

seem so far-fetched that we pay for technological hubris underlying climate change. The actors

are different, but the stage is familiar; we have been through this pass before. After the Lisbon

earthquake in 1755, science and secularism competed with theodicy to explain the ravages of

nature. Once again, divine retribution theodicies seem as plausible as science in explaining the occurrence of recent catastrophes. Perhaps neither Gaia nor God is indifferent to technology. Troubling events are once again remixing the heavens and Earth, churning spiritual with material, celestial with terrestrial, infinite with finite, creator with creatures.

On 11 May 2004, when the virtual Church of Fools opened its door as a social experiment sponsored by the Methodist Church and the *Ship of Fools* online magazine, no one anticipated the results (Figures 1-2). During the first two days, 60,000 visitors dropped into the simulated cyberchurch, adopted an appropriate avatar and proceeded to preach, pray or disrupt the proceedings. Wardens monitored the interactions, spiting visitors who got out of line and interrupted the worshipers. On the third day, Satan logged in and blasphemed the entire virtual congregation, prompting creators to remove the shout option and tighten up security. From the start, the wardens had their hands full with virtual iconoclasts who made a mess of the proceedings. The open church policy became much more controlled. After four months of this virtual experiment in recruiting Gen Xers to the Methodist faith, the Church of Fools closed its doors (only to reopen again in late 2006).

Figures 1-2. Church of Fools

This faith-based simulation of The Church of Fools is merely a component of a much larger spiritual gaming phenomenon. Role-playing games (RPGs) such as *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) and *EverQuest* incorporate entire arcana and pantheons into their fantasy worlds. Guides such as *Deities and Demigods* and *The Book of the Righteous* provide rules for creating religions or deploying and directing powers of various gods and goddesses. The much anticipated *Dungeons and Dragons Online* (DDO), released in January 2006, animates D&D's pantheon and draws players into vivid confrontations with demons and divinities through spiritual conquests and fantasies. Similarly, the popular PC game *Black & White 2* challenges players to be a God of War or a God of Peace to "create a society bent on influencing the world either through conquest or peaceful contact." *Sacred* takes players on a quest to locate pagan elements of power to ultimately defeat a demon terrorizing the continent of Ancaria. God games are immensely popular, and in many ways underwrite the video game market and the spiritual gaming boom. One of the newest releases, *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*, takes advantage of patent video game violence to deliver a Christian message of Armageddon and conversion. Think of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Harry Potter with faith. Other technosectarian games, such as *Al-Quraysh, Bibleman: A Fight for Faith, Catechuman, Interactive Parables, Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, Ominous Horizons, Spiritual Warfare, The Shivah* and *Truth Seeker* counter the Gnostic and pagan theologies of DDO and the God games.

Similar to other aspects of culture with the passage of time, religion responded quite readily to the web and virtual environments. Where browsing, surfing, and online games would have drawn the wrath of the holy not long ago, around the adage that the devil was finding employment for idle hands, the world's religions crossed the virtual threshold to embrace new technologies. Religions remade themselves in the form of cyberspace, appearing in cybergarb

beyond the normal brick and mortar institutional form. Synchronicity is no longer an issue. If you didn't make it to the cyber- church, mosque or temple today, you have the option of deferring your appointment with God to a more convenient occasion.

The new parables are derived from cyberspace: "Maybe you just fixed a typo," says one Christian site. "Maybe you re-wrote an entire paragraph. Maybe you didn't mean to hit "save" and you just erased six months of research numbers. No matter... The digital understanding of "save" is remarkably congruent with the biblical notion of "being saved," transgressions can be forgiven. At PreachingPlus.com, we find the GIGO analogy used for the sacredness of the body: "One of the first computer adages which I was taught was garbage in, garbage out. It means that what we put into our computers (or lives) determines what we get out. Any of us who have ever downloaded a computer virus know the truth of this axiom— what we downloaded impacted the whole computer. Yet, how many of us unconsciously download the virus of profanity or pornography or disrespect for others through what we watch or listen to?" FreshMinistry.org notes that there are "over 15,000 web-based prayer circles, the virtual counterpart of physical prayer circles that have popped up on line over the past few years. Even mainline denominations are taking prayer on-line. Churches have begun sending weekly e-mail to their members asking them to pray for fellow members and friends who are ill, unemployed, or grieving."

Invariably, the eternal question arises: What would Jesus have on his iPod? In a poll taken by New Beliefnet.com, 55% indicated that Jesus would not own an iPod. But one should be careful not employ these data to conclude that Jesus would instead own a generic mp3 player or, heaven forbid, Microsoft's Zune! The remainder of those polled suggested that Jesus would have an iPod and would listen to Classic Rock (11%), Traditional Gospel (7%), Christian Rock (13%), Hip-Hop/ Rap (3%), Soul/ Funk (4%) and Songs of King David (11%). One respondent

exclaimed "You know he has one. You know it's the big 60GB model, loaded, flawless and gleaming and radiating a strange liquid ethereal glow and couched in a beautiful custom rainbow-colored biodegradable case made of clouds and eagle feathers and wine" (Morford, 2005). To introduce even more comedy into the question, a spoofer advertised a "Billy Graham: Crusade Special Edition" iPod for those who want to listen to the New Testament in style (http://nickciske.com/fun/godpod/). "iPod Billy Graham Special Edition makes listening to God sheer delight," the ad concludes. Again, morals are derived from technology: "The reason the outside of the iPod is so simple to use and so beautiful to look at is because of the way they designed the inside of the iPod," said Metropolitan Baptist Church Pastor Sal Sberna in one of his iPod theology sermons. "All you do on the outside is push the little button, drive the wheel and pick what usefulness you want out of your iPod, and so when Jesus talks to us about simplification, it must start on the inside."

Between 1997 and 2005, analysts anticipated and responded to this convergence of technology, religion and spirituality with books such as *The Soul of Cyberspace*, *Cyberchurch, Christianity and the Internet*, *Cybergrace*, *God and the Chip*, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*, *In Our Image*, *Give Me That Online Religion*, *Religion on the Internet*, *thelordismyshepoard.com*, *The Internet Church*, *Religion Online*, *The Gospel in Cyberspace*, *God in the Machine*, and *Exploring Religious Community Online*. Hundreds of web sites published and popularized strategies and wisdom for exploring these new convergences, with historical roots found in the origins of religion *and* technology. The perennial longing for something immaterial, or even immortal, runs deep in the cultural fabric of humanity across the world. This convergence of angst, theism, the spirit and technology is not merely limited to

cultural appropriation or the world's religions taking advantage of cyberspace, Gen X habits and aging baby boomer, post-counter-cultural desires.

At the fin de siècle of 1999 to 2000, millennialists zipped messages across the web linking the Y2K programming error to the coming of the end of the world. The end of the world, the programmers countered, would not be due to a programming error, unless through the will of Allah, JHWH, the Buddha or God. Others, like the Ramtha spiritualists, were more optimistic, arguing that the new millennium would usher in a grand re-awakening of consciousness— science and technology were opening new vistas to point the way. Technopagans, whom *Wired Magazine* cast as a "vital subculture of digital savants who keep one foot in the emerging technosphere and one foot in the wild and woolly world of Paganism," embraced cyberspace for new ceremonial magic. Spiritual AI enthusiasts envisioned cyberspace as an Electric Gaia, a larger than (artificial) life form embodying an autopoietic, immortal, theistic consciousness. Ironically, even the Amish and the Mennonites, typically low-technology enthusiasts, were rewarded during the Y2K panic when people rushed orders over the web for technologies that were not dependent on the electrical grid and wired matrix.

We can dismiss this as yet more commercialization of spiritual experience, but we also find a deep and meaningful spiritualization of the void. Re-enchantment is never necessary within aboriginal theology, wherein the natural, spiritual and technological are always already completely integrated if not indistinguishable. Culture and nature are of a single weave, whether within indigenous peoples who speak of "All the Relations," or in the ways of the Achuar of the Amazon, who do not maintain closed and opposed worlds within their cosmologies. Even as ancient wisdom appears in cyberspace, technology nonetheless reinforces an appropriation and exploitation of sacred rites and sites of aboriginal theology. With a touch of absurdity, Vision

Quest now refers to high tech companies and crystal-gazing twinkies as much as to the Lakota

spiritual journey. Eventually exposed as the business of a white software consultant in Ohio, a

classic case of technology abetting cultural theft was Blue Snake's Lodge, a "cybernetic

equivalent of Native holy ground," as one analyst called it (Martin, 1995, p. 108). Thousands of

Indian wannabes flocked to the site where Blue Snake offered up Dreamcatchers, Medicine

Wheels and Peace Pipes, and bestowed names, like Stormcloud Dancer and Darkness Runs From

Her. The virtuality was desecration and fraudulent sacred ground and ritual. The sacred

continues to concentrate and generate spiritual energy; real life is home to sacred oracles and

shrines, but what of virtual life?

What does it mean to claim territory in cyberspace? Or is there anything (left) to claim?

Can cyberspace generate sacred nodes and (web) sites? Or do the nodes merely mark a flow of

spiritual energy through cycles, web and ground? Cyberpowwow.net tests these questions along

with hundreds of other sites breaking virtual ground to honor the spirit. In the mid 1990s,

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, a Coast Salish visionary, created a virtual reality (VR) installation

of a Longhouse ceremony, offering a spiritual experience for natives and non-natives alike

(1996a, 1996b). People are invited into *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* to encounter the spirit of

the salmon, tree or bear. As Yuxweluptun (1996a) explains: "The ground is all Indian, is all

Native, and that's basically how we look at life: everything is Native, everything is sacred. So

that's part of what I wanted to show. You may put these cities on it but it's still Indian land. You

can call it whatever you want, you can call it Vancouver, it's still Salish land, it's still my

Motherland. So you do get a total virtual Native perspective. You cannot think in a Western

concept because you are visually experiencing a Native perspective and yet the whole

phenomena of VR is in a Western context. Simultaneously the unilateral structures of different

cultures meet and it gives you a sense of sharing." "Employing technology that in the past has been used against native people, I created *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* to show people what is happening to me spiritually" (1996b, p. 316).

The Aboriginal, human like the Amish, would otherwise be arrested in a romance of crafts, deriving connections to a higher spirit or God by working nature by hand. This utopian notion of a humbling craft has always been a tempting romance for the artisan as well— the glassblower, mason, silversmith, weaver or woodworker. It is doubtful that Jesus of Nazareth invented the occidental standard height dining table, as implied in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, but nor are his skills incidental to spirituality. In the parable of the carpenter, drawing upon an example of reliable foundations and resources to reiterate the importance of building on and for the spiritual nature of life, he preaches that "the soil of the evolving soul is human and material, but the destiny of this combined creature of mind and spirit is spiritual and divine." Analogously, the Taoists claim, "the soul will come when the body is complete." Some products and technologies, it would seem, corrupt or interfere with spiritual connections offered through meditation on craftwork. False gods are ostensibly always a possible result of work with glass, metal, stone, thread or wood, and now, of course, light, plastic and silicon. Long after Moses ascends Mount Sinai and is handed Ten Commandments chiseled in stone tablets, and descends to vent his anger at the Israelites' idolatry for their golden bull, the monotheistic prophet Isaiah (44:9-20) cautions against the carpenter and blacksmith who, with their skills and power, but choose to shape pagan gods and cast idols.

What is the relationship between material and sacred, representation and essence, symbol and spirit, mortal and Divine? At the interval between immediacy, deification, and reification lies a danger of idolatry. Are iconoclasts fooled by conflating a stained glass image with the Holy or

by conflating the gigantic Buddha carved into mountains with paths to enlightenment? Do they confuse surface manifestations and reification with immanence in presence of Divinity? Or is the iconoclast intuitively accurate? In desecration, are not grace and the sacred destroyed with the material? Is not a possible revelation destroyed with the material? Idolatry, it appears, has many faces. When machines take the place of artisans to make other machines that produce yet more golden commodities, icons and totems, idolatry is twice removed from the hand. Indeed, the Luddite differs from the iconoclast in choosing to smash the machines *and* its products. Even as indigenous peoples and the Amish have demonstrated that we can undermine the demiurge, or more locally, the electronic cottage and digital crafts industry, the artisan's demiurge and Providence converge in robotics, artificial life and intelligent design.

Trying to bring grace, the sacred and the act of creation (and hence technology) back down to Earth, intelligent designers are battling the old guard scientific r/evolutionaries for education and engineering. For example, in the U.S. during 2004-05, seventeen states considered Kansas's lead in enforcing the inclusion of intelligent design in public school science courses as an alternative to evolution. In Florida, an "Academic Freedom Bill of Rights" was passed in the legislature to protect post-secondary students' rights to their beliefs in intelligent design. What creationists could not do with Darwinian science in 1925, intelligent designers are doing with technology in 2007. If technology is not a result of random natural process, why should nature be? This question has architects, engineers and urban planners dreaming of adaptive design while limiting them to immanent teleology and goal-directedness of systems. Ironically, Divine design takes a secular approach, attributing the invention and design of the universe and world to a supernatural creator that cannot be reduced to a sectarian God. This secular shift has not

appeased those who want the Divine hand of creation replaced with corporeality and mortally bound teleotechnology.

Intelligent design inverts a previously suspicious Darwinian hypothesis to revisit the question of telos anew; emergent post-beings and artificial life have cause for concern. For it is a peculiar telos indeed that finds new, strange bedfellows of atheists and secular humanists, skeptical of design as telos, on one hand, and on the other, a pre-Neitzschean skepticism of godless design. Will the Great Artificer once again be reduced to an absent deity, blind force or redundant clock maker? Design, it seems, has come full circle, in becoming the portal— the lingua franca— of both pre- and post-humanistic technologies of the spirit. Whereas in the Gospel of St. John, the act of design characterizing the first line of Genesis is reinterpreted into "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God," the act of design can now can readily again be translated, as Lyotard (1991) generally suggests, to "In the beginning was the *Technologos*…"

Does not intelligent design, in its popular expression, revive the work of Erich von Däniken and *Chariots of the Gods*? God was an astronaut Däniken (1970) asserted: "the gods of the dim past have left countless traces which we can read and decipher today for the first time because the problem of space travel, so topical today, was not a problem, but a reality, to the men [and women] of thousands of years ago." We received visits, he continued, "from the universe in the remote past, even though I do not yet know who these extraterrestrial intelligences were or from which planet they came" (p. 10). The ancient astronaut thesis continues in the televised documentary *Technologies of the Gods*: "ancient civilizations utilized high-tech engineering methods equal to, if not superior to our own and that these technologies were being applied on a world-wide level," as if guided by a higher power (Figure 3). Perhaps intelligent design reminds

us that we owe a spiritual debt to ancient technologies granted to us by Daedalus, Mercury, Minerva, Pandora and Prometheus (Figure 4).
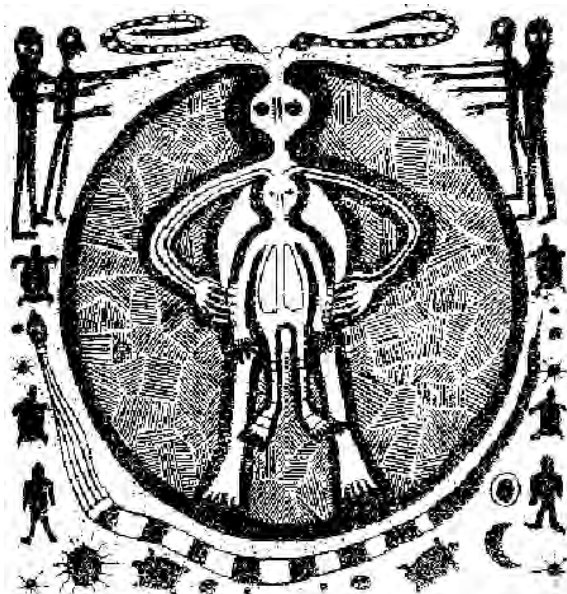

Figure 3. "Ancient Astronaut" hieroglyph.

Figure 4. Daedalus & Icarus

Transhumanists, mutationists, and new r/evolutionaries— the biotechnologists, cosmonauts, cosmologists, cryonologists, cybernauts, geneticists, nanotechnologists, plastic surgeons, and radio astronomers— advocate the re/design of a world of imperfect parts into the form of an organic whole. In a reenactment of Marx's material turn on Hegel's Absolute Spirit, transhumanists turn intelligent designers on their heads, opting instead for a mortal, grassroots, from the ground-up creation of a perfect whole, the utilitarian's Divine. Transhumanists are banking on convergences, or nano-bio-info-neuro-philo-technologies, to effect this gradual transcendence of the human condition. Offering a new creation story and a new outlook on the afterlife and immortality, they invoke the Californian spirit to counter invocations of a God-given natural order. Like the Futurists a century ago, transhumanists managed to turn traditional spiritual pathologies, such as worship of power, novelty and technology, into a new religion—

technosecularism becomes technotheism and transcendental materialism. Who could have predicted that Extropian exuberance, a nose-job, cyborgenic prostheses, and procreative beneficence would be common indicators and precursors for the age of spiritual machines? Who would have thought that engines of creation would obviate the need for intelligent design? In these post-Neitzchean times, redeification necessitates a theology of design and design of theology; coincident with an ascendancy of reification and idolatry is a return of repressed spirit(uality) suspicious of postmodern, transhumanist and technopagan interests.

To be sure, the Golem of technology was always much too clumsy and unreliable (Collins & Pinch, 19xx). Better a Sacred Cyborg be a chosen redeemer to resurrect the new narratives (Barbrook, 1996). In rational mysticism and transcendental materialism, the spirit rises from, and returns to, plastic and silicon, virgin birth is common, robots serve high priests of technotheism, and rendezvous in the afterlife is momentarily deferred. Perhaps New Age and postmodern desires are not far removed from sectarian narratives after all.

However secular, transhumanism suggestively restores the Bauhaus's great cathedral of design (Figure 5). Recall that in the *First Proclamation*, Bauhaus Director Walter Gropius proclaimed: "Let us create a *new guild of craftsmen*, without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist. Together let us conceive and create the new building of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will rise one day toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith." The "crystal symbol of a new faith" in modernism may have been the building. The sacred is found in the building, place or space, object, event and ritual but the body is the crystal symbol of design; the sacred is at once special or supernatural *and* mundane in the process of design. *Machina Ex Dea, Dea ex Machina*.[1]

Figure 5. Lionel Feininger's woodcut from the *First Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus*, 1919.

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The question is: How did we get here? It all seems to have happened while we were looking, as if we were fooled by an illusionist's slight of hand. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour (1993) identified the three great sources of modern authority as divine law, natural law and social law, deriving voices respectively from theology, natural science and social science but rendered mute in modernity. Theologians spoke for God, natural scientists spoke for nature, and humanists and social scientists spoke for society, while at the same time denying the voices of each other. For example, the theologians distrusted science as a source of authority and the scientists distrusted religion as a source of revealed truth. Faith was distrustful of reason and vice versa. Natural scientists distrusted the social scientists. Social scientists were skeptical of

biological determinism even as natural scientists were skeptical of technological determinism; both were skeptical of determinism's spiritual manifestation in predestination. Theologians were blamed for peddling superstition and scientists were blamed for disenchanting the world. Nonetheless, in this system of self-referential checks and balances, the orators for the divine, natural and social shared a mutual distrust for the masses and direct access to knowledge of God, nature, society and the self. As the story goes, while they were feuding and denying the authority of each other and direct access to the masses, or forging a vision for modernity, says Latour, hybrids, mixes or imbroglios of artifacts, natural things, and spirits proliferated behind their backs. Rather than progress to post-modernity, the new hybrids of culture, nature and the divine are proof of incomplete and imperfect conquests, and reopen the verdict over whether we really overcame pre-modernity. Indeed, Latour helps us reopen the amodern question of the divine, spiritual and sacred in technological culture and nature.

The new convergences of technology, religion, spirituality and the sacred respond to, and animate, our feelings of loss, whether of purpose, meaning or story. These convergences echo Jabir Ibn Hayyan's longing for correspondence between natural and supernatural worlds, Augustinian visions of the City of God, the precursor to the Renaissance in writings of Ibn Sina whose commentaries of Aristotle influenced the Scholastics, the optimism of Aquinas when he opened the door of Reason as alternate pathway to Grace and Faith, and the fear of Pascal in the post-Copernican cosmos facing his terrifying realization of the infinity of depths of space against the minuteness and finitude of being. They raise questions of an authentication of Self and Nature in Rousseau's reaction to Voltaire's atheism, and heretical postulates of the Divine as an unnecessary hypothesis in Laplace's advice to Napoleon. In the new convergences, we are reminded of Luther's urgency in elevating the Self as testimonial, in privileging Scripture over ecclesiastic authority by nailing his ninety-five theses on the door of the Catholic church,

Kierkegaard's existential doubts when he advocated a leap of faith, Nietzsche's nihilism in his association of the death of God with our loss of values, and the existential paralysis and angst of Heidegger in his poetic and fascist turns.

Latour's reminder is timely when we think of damage in the name of colonization, modernization, patriarchy, positivism, missionary evangelism, and fundamentalism, we are at once reminded of the corporeal and spiritual limits of the West and modernity. Many whom are aligned against a privileged West or North have neither embraced modern access to nature nor the ethos attached to that conception as championed by modernity. A resurgence of fundamentalism manifests within the Islamic Revolution, and a resurgence of evangelism and talks of Crusades threaten to plunge us into an East-West feudal past with an outcome slipping to the dogs of war. Amidst the violence among world religions, living Bodhisattvas continue to champion the light of Mercy in coming to the aid of the lost, First Nations people appeal to the Great Spirit that is real and protecting, and tribal shaman and medicine woman act as intermediaries between human community, larger ecology and the sacred. Can the truth of the Divine and sacred appearing on currency be separated from that inside the hearts of beings? Must we elevate the spirit within the hearts of humans above that within the fabric of culture and nature?

In this book, we begin where Latour ends— and generally where others fall short in describing our techno-onto-theo-eco-logical condition. In *Culture and Technology*, Murphie & Potts (2003) hesitate when they venture onto the frontiers of AI and encounter the question of the soul in the machine—"at this point," they raise the flag and note, "we are talking of the transfer of the soul, which is a matter for religion or mysticism and outside our scope" (p. 136). Is their hesitation not an invitation to forge ahead? Similarly, in Quinn & Taliaferro's (1997) *A*

Companion to the Philosophy of Religion, technology and nature are bracketed by science. Here, science and technology are given patent treatments through chapters on cosmology, evolution, the mind, and philosophy of technology. In standard anthropological treatments, such as Scupin's *Religion and Culture*, material culture is one aspect of religious cosmologies and technology is subsumed under Scientology. The challenge is to recognize the complex dimensions of both spirituality and technology. Technology cannot merely be reduced to sacred objects, texts and spaces, or the material culture of religious cosmologies. Nor can technology be distinct from intelligent design. Similarly, theorists commonly overlook the spiritual dimension of technology, as with *The Culture of Technology* and *Technology Choice*, where Pacey (1983) and Willoughby (1990, p. 209) map technology as a multifaceted practice with ethical-personal, socio-political and technical-empirical values. We contend that technology embodies and generates ecological-natural and existential-spiritual values as well. The challenge is to break the fragmentary habits of generating independent balance sheets of ecological-natural and existential-spiritual effects, reducing technology to (merely) a causal, determinant actor, agent or force. Heidegger (1954/1977, 1957/1969) cautions us about making a mistake of reducing the technological and theistic to *causa prima*, *causa efficiens* or *causa sui* in the final accounting, the *ultima ratio;* the result of which is the instrumental demand, prayer and resignation to "get technology spiritually in hand" (1977, p. 5).

How does the technological enter into the spiritual? How does the spiritual enter into the technological? Or is it already there, as Latour contends, preserved in premodern consciousness and cosmology, always already manifest? Is technology the fault of our disenchantment and disgrace or was it that religion displaced the spiritual from an initially enchanted world? Is the world disenchanted, or have we failed to recognize the sacred in our hands and midst, under our

feet, in the turn of a wheel, in the abundance of creatures, in the eyes of another being? Is the

hallowed a mere matter of consciousness raising and paradigm shift, necessitating a turn toward

meditation and transcendence on one hand and immediacy and immanence on the other? Is the

Divine revealed within the immanent and transcendent together? Are we merely left with the

pause or refusal as an option?

Conventional, specialized treatments of technology, religion, spirituality and the sacred

allow for in-depth exploration but do not account for recent transformations. For example, in

Theology and Technology, Mitcham and Grote (1984) map their subject according to Historical

Theology, Creation and Nature, Pastoral Care, Environmental Ethics and Religious Bioethics.

Jones and Mathews' (1990) have similar shortcomings in their "Taxonomy of Technology and

Religion." In the *Philosophy of Technology*, Ferré (1988) maps technology and theology through

Judeo-Christian ethics, which range from embrace to rejection and caution in relationships with

technology. This approach to the topic is conventional in that the unit of analysis is theological in

its sentiments *toward* technology. Accounting for cyberspace, Bauwens (1996) maps

"Spirituality and Technology" as The Wisdom Tradition, The God Project and Electric Gaia but

generates shortcomings as he addresses voids in earlier mappings. Hence, we acknowledge a

new imperative for re-mapping technology, religion, spirituality and the sacred (Figure 5) rooted

in the techno-onto-theo-eco-logical condition.

Cosmology & Mythology — Symbology & Iconography — Philosophy — Theology & Hermeneutics — Cryptography & Semiotics — Science & Technology

Technology, Religion, Spirituality & the Sacred

Aboriginal Theology — Natural Theology — Mechanical Philosophy — Humanism — Atheism — Religion

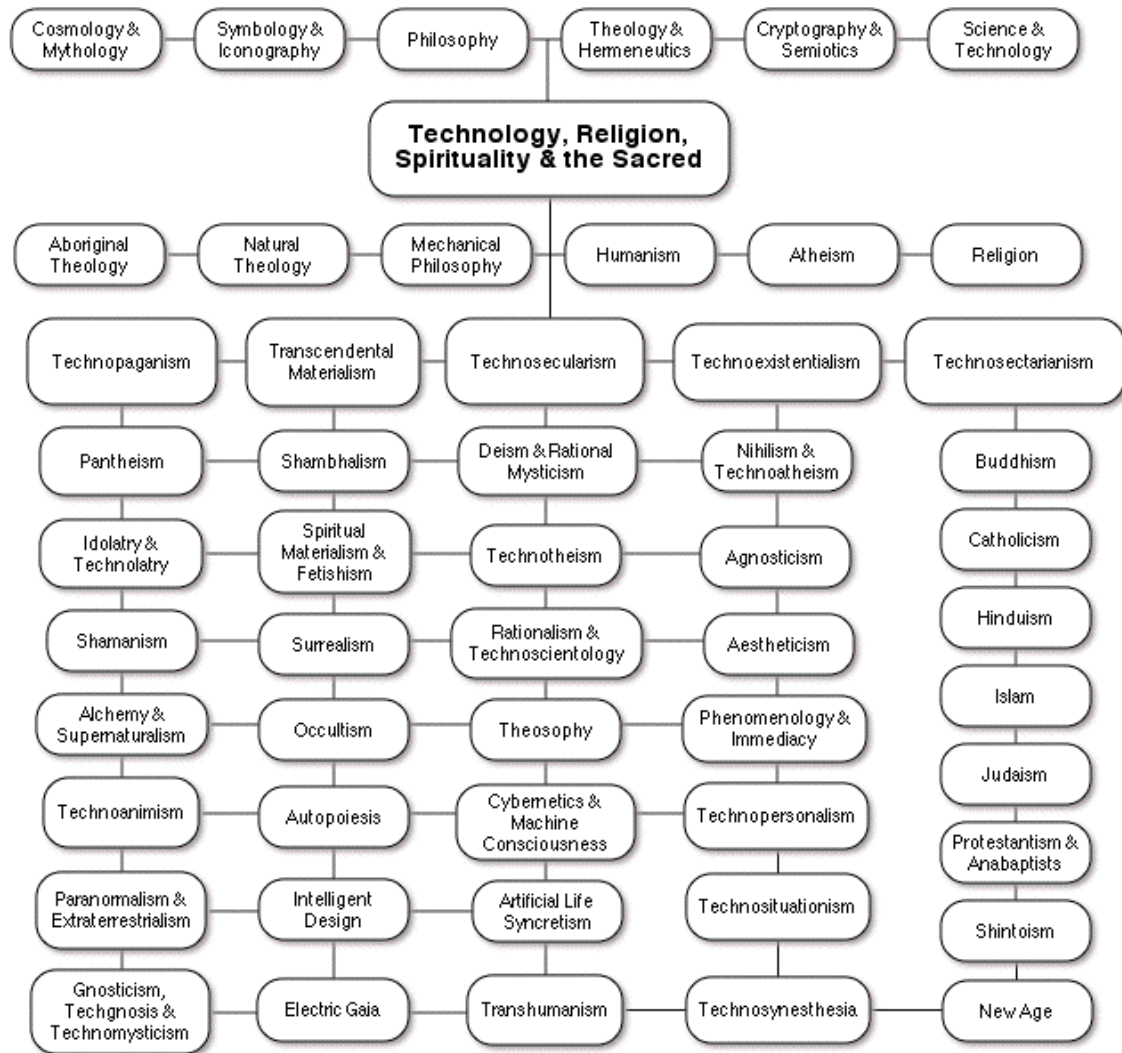| Technopaganism	Transcendental Materialism	Technosecularism	Technoexistentialism	Technosectarianism
Pantheism	Shambhalism	Deism & Rational Mysticism	Nihilism & Technoatheism	Buddhism
Idolatry & Technolatry	Spiritual Materialism & Fetishism	Technotheism	Agnosticism	Catholicism
Shamanism	Surrealism	Rationalism & Technoscientology	Aestheticism	Hinduism
Alchemy & Supernaturalism	Occultism	Theosophy	Phenomenology & Immediacy	Islam
Technoanimism	Autopoiesis	Cybernetics & Machine Consciousness	Technopersonalism	Judaism
Paranormalism & Extraterrestrialism	Intelligent Design	Artificial Life Syncretism	Technosituationism	Protestantism & Anabaptists
Gnosticism, Techgnosis & Technomysticism	Electric Gaia	Transhumanism	Technosynesthesia	Shintoism
				New Age

Figure 5. Mapping Technology, Religion, Spirituality and the Sacred

We mapped this condition to encompass indigenous and natural theology, technopaganism, transcendental materialism, technosecularism, technoexistentialism and technosectarianism. There are conceptual as well as historical dimensions to the map, indicating coexistence, continuities and continua rather than binary oppositions. For example, alchemy resurges in technopaganism and Shambhalism returns in the form of Electric Gaia. Rationalism finds new manifestations in machine consciousness and transhumanism, artificial life in

technosecularism, and nihilism is revived in technoexistentialism. With technology ascendant, all of the world religions have morphed into variants of technosectarianism.

Our task here is not necessarily to testify for theophany, the spiritual encounter, enlightenment, illumination or nirvana; nor is it to endorse particular visionary disciplines or technologies. Rather, we are driven by a problem, discussed over three millennia in various forms, of how literal we may take either spirituality or technology. Are both indescribable and noumenal? What happens upon convergence of the two? With Arendt and Heidegger in mind, we suggest that the convergence of technology, religion, spirituality and the sacred reflects the fundamental techno-onto-theo-eco-logical condition of our times.

* * * * *

"Only a god can save us now," Heidegger remarked in his memorable interview with *Der Spiegel*, published in 1977, after his death (p. 18). We can only "prepare to be prepared for the manifestation of God, or for the absence of God as things go downhill all the way," he continued. Early in the interview he was confronted with his Nazism of the 1930s and his inability to apologize or come to terms with the danger inherent in fascism. The conversation transitioned to the essence of technology and what he called *Ge-Stell*— a framework or matrix— threatening to turn all the Earth into a standing resource. At that moment, after being cornered and haunted by memories of his Nazism and contemplating the totality of technological control over life, there was nothing to do but "to prepare to be ready, to keep ourselves open, or prepared for the arrival or absence of God" (p. 19).

For Heidegger (1977b, pp. 3-52), at stake in the question concerning technology is the possibility of disclosure of Being versus *Ge-stell*. Both he and Hannah Arendt suggest that we

take a step back to a world preceding modern technology to experience immediacy as phenomenon, a step ontologically prior to the naming and formulation of scientific logic. This step back is not regressive; rather, this is a step back over the ground of Being (i.e., God) that has been passed over in the history of western metaphysics. "The onto-theological constitution of metaphysics," Heidegger claims, " stems from the prevalence of that difference which keeps Being as the ground, and beings as what is grounded… Being and beings, the ground and what is grounded, are no longer adequate to utter" (1969, p. 71). For Heidegger, the fundamental character of metaphysics is onto-theo-logic. Separated from theology, western metaphysics, as science and philosophy, could speak of only of beings without Being— reason without presence. Working from Heidegger's basic premise and the turns toward theorizing hybridity taken by scholars such as Haraway and Latour, we complement the premise that we cannot divide— should not separate— reason from being, culture, nature and spirit by characterizing the fundamental condition of our times as techno-onto-theo-eco-logical.

This is what Arendt meant by "the human condition," reminding us that the conditions of existence or being were not banal or given; nor were they secular. Existence or being is conditional and shared, said Arendt, rather than absolute or independent of earth and spirit. For Arendt, (1958, p. 11), the human condition is "life itself, natality [i.e., renewal + revelation] and mortality, worldliness [i.e., materiality + spirituality], plurality, and the earth." Instead of constituting "human nature," the human condition stands for an inventory of what we have in common or what is at stake, as a reflection of "what we are doing" here and now (p. 5). "Whatever enters into the human world on its own accord," she wrote, "or is drawn into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition." Not only conditional, "human existence is conditioned," says Arendt: "The impact of the world's reality upon human existence is felt and

received as a conditioning force. Objectivity of the world— its object- or thing-character— and the human condition supplement each other" (p. 9). While Arendt illuminated conditions for being, and much more humbly, for Being, her portrayal is one of disenchantment through what she calls "world alienation." The contemplative life, including what Weber identified as "inner-worldly asceticism," debased the active life, including technology and any spirit once associated with worldliness. "In the place of the concept of Being," Arendt concluded, "we now find the concept of Process," or the divine turn of nature as Clock or Wheel. Here, God is a cosmic clockmaker or retired designer. On one hand, we are alienated from the human condition of natality and worldliness through a turn inward and preoccupations with the care of the self. On the other hand, we are alienated by "the wish to escape the human condition" of the earth and life itself through technologies (i.e., space travel, genetics) abetting this "rebellion against human existence" (p. 2). Recall the more sectarian historical human condition to which Arendt responds: wretched humans, alone among the animals, with self-awareness of mortality— capable of greatness— yet, equally capable of evil and (self-)deception, who without Divine Redemption, are condemned to corruption upon death (Pascal & Stewart, 1942).

Are alienation and disenchantment part and parcel *of* the human condition or are they, as Arendt explained, symbolic of our descent *from* the human condition? Arendt's crisis of the human condition, the alienation and disenchantment story, is as of yet without a counter-narrative. Of significance, Berman's (1981) *The Reenchantment of the World* came at a time when grand narratives finally folded under the weight of what Lyotard (1984) called the postmodern condition. Are we now left with the "little narratives," Lyotard's petit récits, or perhaps Pepperell's (1995) post-human condition, which Tester (1995) otherwise called the inhuman condition?

And so, full of hope, full of grace, and a fear we cannot name, hungry for meaning and bewildered within a world of petit récits, the search continues, itself an expression of human conditioning. We believe that the interdependencies among technology, religion, spirituality and the sacred are more nuanced than traditional treatments have allowed. Indeed, interdependencies may be an understatement, as the (still sacred) threshold between technology deism, and theism has been, for some time, transgressed and worn, if not unreal. Is the portal open or closed? This is the techno-onto-theo-eco-logical question and condition.

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[1] For our purposes here, spirituality means any aspect of humanity's connection to something other than itself. This includes deism (natural revelation), and theism (revealed revelation), yet also expands to include even other human relationships. Spirituality in its broadest sense is an evidence of, or attempt to explain, human transcendence.