

# TECHNOLOGY, RELIGIOSITY, AND THE CHANGING FACE OF HUMANITY

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# TECHNOLOGY | HUMANITY

## Human-technology relationship

is (almost) as old as the human species

- **There is not one single point in history at which humans were free from technology**
  - As a species, humans had never lived a tech-free life
- **'Technology' as part of the human imprint**
  - To be human is to be technê

# TECHNOLOGY | HUMANITY

【excursion】

## THE CLASSICAL UNDERSTANDING

- the capacity to utilise tools (technology) as a distinctive mark /defining trait of 'being human'

## IS NO LONGER VALID

- Challenged fundamentally by numerous findings from ethological researches over the past 2 decades or so
- Many other species exhibit sophisticated capacities of using tools

YET: technology has been an integral part of human life ever since the beginning of history

# TECHNOLOGY | HUMANITY

- Technology as mediator (medium) between humans and the rest of the world
  - Humans use technology as the means (medium) to:
    - Comprehend (figure out about)
    - Communicate with
    - Shape
    - Manipulatethe world around them
- Marshall McLuhan: media as extensions of humans
  - Media broadly understood

# TECHNOLOGY | HUMANITY

While **HUMANS USE TECHNOLOGIES** to serve their own purposes,

They are also **SHAPED BY TECHNOLOGIES** in their .....

- Understanding of the world
- Expression of selves
- Interaction with their surroundings

→ Often **shifting the course of civilization** ... religion included

# CHRISTIANITY | TECHNOLOGY

Religion – in particular Christianity –  
has had an intensely ambivalent

## LOVE-HATE

relationship with technology

# CHRISTIANITY | TECHNOLOGY

Church / religious authorities often betray

- FEAR
- SUSPICION
- AVOIDANCE
- SKEPTICISM

of technology

While at the same time have often

- USED
- EMBRACED
- APPROPRIATED

technology to their own benefit

# CHRISTIANITY | TECHNOLOGY

Christianity as **BENEFICIARY** of technology:

- **Writing technology**

- formation of written Scriptures ~ c. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC – 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD
- end of oral tradition, closing of the Biblical canon

- **Printing technology**

- availability & popularization of the Bible ~ 15<sup>th</sup> century.....
- The Protestant Reformation ~ 16<sup>th</sup> century.....

# CHRISTIANITY | TECHNOLOGY

Christianity as **BENEFICIARY** of technology:

- **Voyaging technology**

- missionary enterprise ~ 16<sup>th</sup> century.....

- **Mass communication technology** ~ 20<sup>th</sup> century

- evangelism through the media – radio, film, TV, music discs, ... etc.

# CHRISTIANITY | TECHNOLOGY

From its very beginning,

**Christianity** has always been a

**technologized religion.**

Without (media) technology,

it would not have existed ...

... in the way we know it today.

# CHRISTIANITY | TECHNOLOGY

Yet  
churches (as institutions)  
and Christians (as individuals)  
are **seldom conscious** of  
the **implications** of the technologies employed.

# TECHNOLOGY IN CHURCH

The WhatsApp deacons meeting.

The smart phone app Scripture reading.

The PowerPoint hymn singing.

The PowerPoint sermon.

The downloadable church bulletin.

The QR Code attendance record.

The cyber / online church.

The Alexa prayer.

Common sight. No big deal.

Right?

# TECHNOLOGY IN CHURCH

Technology use in the church  
**mirrors** technology use in daily lives  
in the society's mainstream.

**Nothing particularly religious.**

# TECHNOLOGY IN CHURCH

Churches / Christians are usually oblivious to the **RELIGIOUS, THEOLOGICAL, EXISTENTIAL** implications of their technology use.

They may not even realise that there ARE such implications.

What will change (are changing) when church life (and daily life) becomes more & more **DETACHED FROM THE MATERIAL?**

# TECHNOLOGY IN CHURCH

## 【transitions】

- Oral tradition → written text (shortly after Jesus)
- Scribal copying → printing (post-Guttenberg)
  - ~ mass availability of the Bible

## → Shift in religious sensibility:

- Ways of transmitting / receiving religious information
- Perceptions & value & understanding of the Divine
- Essential nature of faith

# TECHNOLOGY IN CHURCH

Late modern digital-virtual technologies:

Pushing humans away from materiality

~ the paper, the person, the body, the touch, the smell.....

A sense of

**REVERSE / COUNTER INCARNATION?**

# A FEW STEPS FURTHER

【wild imagination of the SF freak?】

The human species (and thus humanity) could be 'evolving' beyond (read: moving away from) the state with which we are familiar.....

- Virtual technology → partial immaterial existence
- Genetic engineering → enhanced material body
- Cyborg (cybernetic-organism) technology → blurred human-machine differentiation
- Artificial intelligence → enhanced mental capacity

# A FEW STEPS FURTHER

【NOT the wild imagination of SF freak】

Virtual technology.

Genetic engineering

Cyborg.

Artificial intelligence

These are realities NOW.

Things that can **reformulate** humanity is happening NOW.

# POSTHUMAN SPIRITUALITY

Changes occurring.....

- Human modes of communication & relationship to one another
  - Human self-understanding (as a species)
  - Human perception of own position within the world / universe
- Altered / altering mode of human existence
- Altering human understanding & imagination of the Divine

# POSTHUMAN SPIRITUALITY

Much have been said about the worship of technology (such as AI) as religion / idolatry, but .....

What if the android (human-like robot) who works for you .....

- asks to go to church with you?
- asks to learn about the Christian faith?
- asks to become a Christian, to be baptized.....?
- wants to go to seminary?
- preach and pray on the pulpit?

What if your highly intelligent android phone asks for the same???

# POSTHUMAN SPIRITUALITY

**CAN** THAT HAPPEN?

DO YOU **ALLOW** THAT TO HAPPEN?

WOULD YOU **ACCEPT** HER/HIM (IT?) AS A SISTER IN CHRIST?

Your answer to such questions is  
of course a product of your view of technology  
and of the future of humanity.