Imaging God: Creatureliness and Technology

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I. Concerning Technology

The variety of ways of construing how humanity is in the image of God suggests a profound interrelation of tradition and context in theological reflection on the *imago dei*. For example, Colin Gunton has recently argued that the dominant ways of interpreting the *imago dei* at the present time are stewardship and the duality of male and female.[1] It is not hard to see how contemporary discussions on the relations between humanity and non-human nature, and between men and women, inform such a selection. The recent work of Peter Hodgson furnishes us with a second example: being in the image of God, he argues, comprises three spheres: self-relatedness, other or world-relatedness and wholeness. Again, it is not hard to discern how such a construal is informed by the identification of three dilemmas which are, Hodgson considers, constitutive of our contemporary (Western) context: liberation from unjust social relationships; relations between Christianity and other religions; relations between humanity and non-human nature.[2] In the presentation of the *imago dei*, we may safely say, tradition and context are deeply interrelated.

In what follows, I shall develop one aspect of recent Christian tradition—that *sociality* is the mark of the *imago dei*—in order to explore how humanity might be in the image of God in a technological society. Thus in the last two sections of this paper, I 'expand' Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reading of humanity as social by including the themes of *spatiality* and *temporality*.[3] It is as social, spatial and temporal, I shall argue, that humanity is to be understood as imaging God. Why do I come to this conclusion? Why, for a technological society, is humanity best understood in terms of *sociality, spatiality* and *temporality*? I arrive at this expansion of the Augustinian theme of sociality by way of two engagements with the philosophy of technology.[4] These engagements are the subject of sections II and III.

In section II, I present some aspects of the work of Martin Heidegger, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas. All three struggle with the issue of the relation between humanity and nature as mediated

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by technology. The important conclusion which I draw for theology from their work, in all its differences, is that a full conception of technology encourages the view that human-nature relations are always reciprocal. Tendencies towards romanticising nature in Heidegger and Marcuse—contemplation is the best response to the mind-set of technical reason embedded in technology (Heidegger); a true technology will have to wait on a different human relation to a 'resurrected' nature (Marcuse)—are to be rejected. A conclusion implicit in Habermas's position—that nature is constituted only by human interests—should also be rejected. These philosophical readings remind the theologian of the importance of the configuration of humanity in, with and alongside nature. Expressed theologically, imaging God in a technological age requires the extension of the *imago dei* by reference to the concept of *spatiality*.

The second engagement with the philosophy of technology (to be found in section III) addresses the matter of the change wrought in humanity by technology. Here I consider the work of Antonio Gramsci on the reshaping of the human worker in the technological practices of the assembly line production processes of Fordism. If humanity is, as I shall argue, being altered through its technology, what can intelligibly be said about the constancy of human nature as suggested by the notion of *imago dei*? What must be resisted, I suggest, is the theological temptation to propose some 'fixed' aspect—in abstraction from the actual life of humanity—as the core of the *imago*. To go this way is to view the *imago dei* as antecedent: it functions as a template untouched by social contingencies and historical becoming. Section III concludes with an example of such theological abstraction: the early work of Reinhold Niebuhr, which is in part an engagement with the phenomenon of Fordism, in fact fails to note the theological implications for the *imago dei* of the reshaping of humanity in technology. One way of overcoming such theological abstraction is, I suggest, by attention to the *temporality* of humanity. Such temporality stresses that humanity images God in and through social contingencies and historical becoming; the *imago dei* neither denies history nor represses social change.

Section IV offers further elaboration on the *sociality, spatiality* and *temporality* of humanity as the marks of the *imago dei* in a technological society. If the meaning of *imago dei* cannot be established and practised without reference to technology, what is it for humanity to image God today? As social, temporal and spatial, I shall argue, the practice of humanity is oriented on God and seeks to redouble God's blessing of creaturely life. By way of the development of this claim, I set out a series of protocols which seek to flesh out how humanity might enact

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these marks of the *imago dei* in a technological society.

In section V, I suggest that the themes of sociality, temporality and spatiality embody a certain trinitarian practice in and through which humanity both is, and seeks to become, *imago dei*. In such fashion, and in direct reference to the concept of God, a theological case is made for the Christian claim that to be a creature is itself a blessing and that humanity enjoys a distinctive relationship to the triune God.

II. Interpreting Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Habermas

In this section, I discuss three philosophical treatments of technology. The problematic—how is humanity in the image of God?—is here sharpened by theological attention to various voices in the philosophy of technology. Thus theological reflection on the internal—constitutive—relations between humanity and non-human nature in the form of technology is situated in the presentation and criticism of positions in the philosophy of technology. The underlying aim is to show that the expansion of the concept of sociality is required. That expansion is secured by the extension of the social being of humanity to include the dimension of *spatiality*.

A helpful place to begin is the issue of the definition of technology. At one level, there is no difficulty in arriving at a definition. Technology is best understood not in the singular but as plural. We are surrounded by technical artefacts or objects. Designed by (computer-assisted) humans, these artefacts are at our disposal. Most modern people would be loath to give up these technologies. Consider only the medical technologies available in ante-natal care and in child birth. Yet a very narrow account of technology—technology as artefacts—emerges here. With this account comes the tacit understanding that technology is the practical outworking of science, which is in its turn sacrosanct. Thus technology shares in the near divine status of science.

Hints in the philosophy of technology from thinkers as diverse as Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, John Dewey and Herbert Marcuse recommend a different view: technology precedes science, *praxis* precedes *theoria*.[5] Let us call these *praxiological* readings of technology. Here I shall discuss only the work of Heidegger, Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas.

The theological employment of Heidegger's writings is difficult, given the German philosopher's association with National Socialism. Yet his essay, 'The Question Concerning Technology', is of such importance in the philosophy of technology that it cannot be ignored.[6] Wherein lies the significance of this essay? Two conclusions which emerge from Heidegger's writing on technology merit attention

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although neither can be accepted as Heidegger presents them. The first matter is the distinction which Heidegger draws between technology and technique (the first refers to technological activity, the second to the mind-set embedded in technology). The second matter is the 'overcoming' of the 'challenging-forth' of technique.

In common with Karl Marx, Heidegger stresses the alienation of humanity through technique. But differently from Marx, Heidegger invites us to consider not the economic and political context in which technology is located but the framework in which we think on technology. For technology is not to be grasped in its essence as concerned merely with means. Heidegger calls such an account the 'anthropological' definition of technology.[7] Instead, instances of technology must be understood within a wider interpretive horizon of technique. For Heidegger is concerned not with our customary 'anthropological' definition of technology but rather with its essence. If we enquire after this essence we learn that technology is not applied science. Instead, according to Heidegger, modern science *follows* the technical mind-set. Thus although it is true that, chronologically, technology follows on the emergence of modern science (indeed, there is a time lag of 150 years), yet the possibility of modern science is given in a certain way of confronting the world. 'For already in physics the challenging gathering-together into ordering revealing holds sway.'[8] That is, the employment of modern science, not least in its attempt mathematically to represent the world, is in itself 'technical' in the sense that it wishes to order the world for human use.

But what is the essence of technology of which Heidegger speaks? Briefly, we may say that this essence is the 'challenging-forth' of Being: in technique, a certain truth of Being is revealed. That is, the aim of technique is to order the world as 'standing reserve'—as available for human use.[9] 'Enframing' is the word used by Heidegger to characterise a world whose ordering is such that it can be used as a standing reserve by and for humanity.

So what is privileged in technology is that revealing which orders the world as standing reserve. Given the omnipresence of such technique, is there any hope? In the final and most difficult section of Heidegger's essay, we encounter the opaque claim that Enframing as the essence of technology is ambiguous for it invites a different, non-technical, interpretation. Instead of regarding the world as a standing-reserve, a mode of encounter is invited which privileges a revealing of the world in terms of 'granting'. This mode Heidegger names *poiesis*. In the mode of *poiesis*, we are engaged by presences which 'come forth into appearance'. (Heidegger suggests that art provides the locus where the insight into a reality which 'grants' might be best seen and

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protected.)

It is difficult to know what Heidegger means by this ending. In a posthumously published interview, Heidegger opined that so deep did the sensibility of Enframing run in the West that 'Only a god can still save us'. Heidegger continues: 'I think that the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god.'[10]

At first glance, such a view might seem to have already thematised the issue of technology for theology. Thus Heidegger's own response to the matter of the omnipresence of technique—'only a god can still save us'—seems amenable to theological appropriation. For Heidegger suggests a way in which we can be reoriented away from technique by way of attention to the revealing of the world in the manner of 'granting'; in theological terms, such reorientation could be based on an understanding of nature as gift.

Yet, as Richard J. Bernstein has argued, problematic here is the occlusion of praxis in Heidegger's thought.[11] To grasp this, we need to explore in more detail how Heidegger conceives the 'free relation' to technology which is the aim of his questioning. At the conclusion of the essay on technology, Heidegger appeals, as we have seen, to the *poiesis* of reflection and art as the place in which a non-technological understanding of being may be kept alive.[12] The difficulty with such an account, as Bernstein has pointed out, is that Heidegger thereby contrasts all forms of technology with *poiesis*. Lit up in the clearing of Being which the questioning of technology has led us to recognise, all technical objects are mere instances of technique. Over against the piety of contemplation, all technology has the same profile. For Heidegger invites only two stances before the revealing forth of Enframing: poetic meditation or the acceptance of technological cause and effect.

But are there only two such stances? Heidegger invites us to switch between the essence of technology and poetic meditation, between the domination of Enframing and aesthetic resistance. But such a position suggests that the various social meanings of technologies are of no interest. By offering us only the perspectives of Enframing and *poiesis* for the consideration of technology, Heidegger has occluded, as Bernstein notes, the important zones of the political and the social (except in terms of the technologically dominated realm of being). Heidegger's appeal to a 'god' and meditation thus undercuts consideration of the social context of technology.

In contrast, the work of Marcuse and Habermas directs us, as is well known, to social context. Heidegger, Marcuse and Habermas may have

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in common the view that science and technology function as an ideology, specifically as a dominating form of rationality.[13] However, Marcuse and Habermas implicitly reject Heidegger's romanticism. Yet we must also note that Marcuse and Habermas only present again the problematic which Heidegger so unerringly identifies.[14]

Marcuse insists that nature is known by human communities through their practices in and through which nature is constituted; human interests in knowing nature disclose nature. Yet he also—inconsistently—makes a claim for a biological basis to socialism in order to show that the needs of nature (including human nature) are being contradicted.[15] Marcuse wishes to provide a point of epistemic access to 'pure nature' in order to ground his critique of a commodified society: 'Nature' judges society. But his epistemology denies such a site: that which is in need of liberation (that is, nature from human interests) cannot also be the basis of human liberation (of humanity by nature). Similarly, Habermas requires an account of noumenal nature: the practices of science and technology are located, he argues, not in particular social interests but instead in a 'trans-social "species-interest"'.[16] Thus one aspect of the species-interest of humanity is the controlling of nature towards the support of human life. But Habermas now encounters epistemological problems formally identical to those of Marcuse. For, again, nature operates here in a dual way: as the trans-social basis of the human species-interest of work and as constituted by human interests. Habermas's hermeneutic insists that there is no knowledge without interests but the noumenal trans-social cannot be constituted by human social interests. Habermas would thereby appear to be denying to his position access to the knowledge it requires.

However, these two interpretations—a biological basis for socialism and nature as the basis for the quasi-transcendental of the human species-interest of work—press an important point. As Steven Vogel notes, Marcuse and Habermas seek 'to assimilate conclusions about the active character of our relations with nature to [a] prior commitment to a "materialism" that sees nature as independent of the human'.[17] Heidegger's appeal to the self-disclosing presence of Being in meditative thinking presses the same issue: beyond the human grasping of nature in technology there is a hint of the reality and presence of non-human nature as gift.

What is the theological way forward? An easy appeal to 'only a god can still save us' is ruled out. For the privileging of poetic meditation suggests that the 'true' interpretation of technology resides in a location abstracted from social and economic history (although not 'history' understood in a different, 'existential' sense). What is occluded in this appeal to contemplation is the range, effects and value of technological

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practices. Yet Heidegger, Marcuse and Habermas also suggest—in their different ways—that humanity does not by its technology unambiguously dominate non-human nature. Reflection on technology suggests that theology should not lose sight of the issue of the independence of non-human nature as this emerges in the relations between active humanity and non-human nature.

In section IV, I shall consider this matter of the habitat of humanity—our active relations with an independent nature—by reference to the concept of *spatiality*. However, I now turn to the second issue raised by the consideration of technology: new technical practices demand a new humanity; technological developments require the alteration of humanity. Here the matter of the temporality of humanity is raised: how, as caught up in technological processes of change, are human beings to be understood as in the image of God? At issue here is the theme of the *temporality* of humanity.

III. A Technological Creature: Gramsci, Niebuhr

In technology creatureliness, and our understanding of creatureliness, is being transformed. For if my praxiological reading is correct, technology is not best understood as the practical application of science: technological transformation resists idealist explanations of the origins of technology. Such transformation also resists the theologian's appeal to the concept of the *imago dei* as a means of abstracting humanity from its technology. In order to explore these claims for theology, I present the account of Fordist technology from the writings of Antonio Gramsci.

The technology of Fordism has changed us: Gramsci's notebooks, written in prison from 1926, elaborate this claim. In Fordism not only is nature transformed but so also is humanity: Fordist production practices require a new sort of worker. The central point I wish to underscore here is that Gramsci persistently makes connections between the development of Fordist processes of production and the development of 'superstructural elements'. In other words, Gramsci links, in a careful way, changes in patterns of production and changes in human sensibility and patterns of consumption.

The matter of high wages, the suppression of the 'animality' of the human being, the mechanisation of the worker, matters of sex and alcohol: discussion of these is directed towards understanding how it is that the new process of production 'selects' a new form of worker: 'a new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process'.[18] Or, writing more forcefully, Gramsci maintains that 'Life in industry demands a general apprenticeship, a process of psycho-physical adaptation to specific conditions of work, nutrition, housing, cosmos,

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etc. This is not something 'natural' or innate, but has to be acquired.'[19]

For Gramsci, Fordism is in the process of reconstructing society and society's workers. Thereby Gramsci presses the point of the material basis of technology. For the account of the reconstruction of the worker in Fordist production practices resists the claim that the origins of technology are idealist. Thus Gramsci's view must be distinguished from those who hold that scientific knowledge is prior to technological application and that the conditions of technology are idealist. Indeed, such idealist interpretations of technology are common. For example, Christian philosopher Frederick Ferré focuses on *mental* capacity: technology is defined in terms of 'practical implementations of intelligence' in which there is a clear stress on the importance of scientific knowledge. Further, although he stresses that 'practical' refers to technological artefacts yet he speaks of 'their origin in intelligence'. Reference to institutions, markets and processes—the material basis of technology—is placed in the background.[20]

To follow Gramsci at this point is to require the reconstruction of the *imago dei* in order to develop a theological way of considering the transformation of humanity through the technological practices of Fordism. To follow Ferré is to avoid this challenge by centring the *imago dei* in human rationality. But the theological cost of Ferré's move—the distancing of humanity from modern social and economic processes—is, arguably, great. That is, instead of the concrete life of technological humanity being presented in theological theory, we are offered the abstraction of the human mind somehow separated from and prior to the material—here, technological—processes of modern society.

That Christian theology finds ways of idealising and abstracting the *imago* can be detected in the treatment of this same theme of Fordism in the early work of Reinhold Niebuhr. During his pastorate in Bethel, Detroit, Niebuhr was in a position to view these matters first-hand. As a consequence of this proximity, Niebuhr lambasted Henry Ford's claims to be a philanthropist in a number of editorials for *The Christian Century* published in 1926.[21]

Yet, in my judgement, when it comes to the theorising of these insights later in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) and *Reflections on the End of an Era* (1934), the tendency of theology towards abstraction is everywhere evident. Niebuhr's reading of the dynamics of a Fordist society leads him to suggest that society is governed by power and coercion. At this point, there is little that the sensitive religious conscience can offer. Even in the concluding chapter of *Reflections on the End of an Era*, he is careful to note that the assurance of grace is real but hardly practical.[22] Yet Niebuhr also argues that religious illusion is required in order to tackle some of the deeply entrenched forms of social

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power (which would include ownership of Fordist processes of production). Niebuhr thus makes religion a matter of transcendence (inwardness?) and then offers a demythologised version of that transcendence as politically efficacious towards the securing of social change.

My principal concern with Niebuhr's position is the contrast drawn between the assurance of grace and the search for social justice. The assurance of grace highlights that all are caught up in a sinful situation. But Niebuhr insists that this may weaken the passion required to overcome injustice: 'The knowledge of the equal sinfulness of all human nature is not completely compatible with a social purpose which sets the relatively good ideal against the relative injustices of society.'[23] In the perspective of grace, relevant social distinctions and determinations—the plurality, diversity and, crucially, inequalities—of modern Western life are obscured. Thus, ironically, Niebuhr's account of transcendence is so constructed as to have only tangential engagement with the sorts of practices—Fordism, for example—which moved him towards the theoretical positions taken in the early 30s.

In Niebuhr's analysis, we have the levelling of pertinent distinctions in the perspective of the assurance of grace. What is the result? The transformation of human workers in Fordism, and the implications that this might have for theology, are not delineated. Thus how Fordism affects the theological interpretation of humanity is occluded. Humanity as *imago dei* is presented as abstract: separated from the flux of historical change. The reconstruction of the *imago dei* to take account of the transformations of human nature in modern work is not required. In its failure to grasp the *temporal* dimension of being in the image of God, Christianity here places itself as tangential to the discussion of the vital contemporary issue of technological change.

IV. In the Image of God: A Theological Proposal

Where have we got to? I began this article by stressing the continuing importance of the concept of sociality for the interpretation of the *imago dei*. I have argued through sections II and III that the *imago dei* should not be employed to separate humanity either from non-human nature or social processes.[24] To this end, I have proposed the extension or expansion of the theme of *sociality* by the introduction of the concepts of *spatiality* and *temporality*.

How are the concepts of *spatiality* and *temporality* of use to the theologian seeking to reconstruct the concept of the *imago dei* for a modern technological society?

First, we have seen that neither meditative contemplation nor

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awaiting some renewal of nature in which humanity is to be transformed are appropriate ways of grasping human relations with nature.[25] There is no escape from technology, and hence technological creatureliness, by these routes. Rather humanity enjoys technologically mediated relations with an independent nature. The expansion of the concept of sociality to permit careful and detailed consideration of the givenness of the natural conditions of the human habitat thereby requires the concept of *spatiality*.

Second, if the notion of being in the image of God is to be presented credibly, it must be by way of a theological account of technological creatureliness. 'Top down' presentations of the *imago dei* which separate humanity from the flux of historical becoming are to be resisted. For creatureliness is not separable from technology. Yet in and through technology, such creatureliness is being changed. In their inability to give an account of such alteration, 'top down' readings of *imago dei* are ruled out. The expansion of the concept of sociality to permit 'bottom-up' consideration of the technological alteration of humanity thereby requires the concept of *temporality*.

Thus the reconstruction of the *imago dei* presented here draws on tradition (sociality) and the technologically mediated horizon of our contemporary society (temporality, spatiality). Yet, as Ernst Bloch once noted, 'correctness is not yet truth'.[26] Whether drawing on tradition or context, 'imaging God' is not mere description. Rather, the truth of the *imago* must also indicate how humanity is both constituted by and open to God. The 'directive meaning'[27] of the *imago* is God; the concept must invoke and involve God as well as humanity. How is the closeness or nearness to *God* claimed by the *imago* to be understood?

I answer this question in two steps. First, in this section, I suggest that being in the image of God is a vocation which needs to be practised. A set of protocols, which seeks to rule out false ways of construing a theological anthropology in a technological society, comes with this pedagogy. Second, in section V, I offer an account of the nature of the God whose gift to humanity is creaturely life as social, temporal and spatial. The conception of God which supports the practice of being in the image of God is, I conclude, trinitarian. The triunity of God emerges (in the last section) as the fundamental protocol for the articulation and practice of being in the image of God in a technological society.

Being in the image of God, I have said, is a vocation which needs to be practised. The vocation of human beings, as presented here, is to be social, temporal and spatial. What are the protocols given with these marks of theological anthropology which rule out false construals of this vocation?

First, technological practices which are not founded upon, or work

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against, the social character of humanity are hereby called into question. For technology must not be understood as located outside the social practices of humanity; nor is technology some *deus ex machina* which resolves social problems. Amnesia regarding the social origins and effects of technology takes many forms. One example is the confusion caused by the claims regarding the efficacy of the technology of nuclear deterrence. Whether or not the deterrence deters, it was never likely that social problems could be resolved by the technology of deterrence or by the technological fix of the 'protection' of the Star Wars programme. Here we have an ideology of technology: a set of social, economic and political problems is transposed onto a claim about the use and efficacy of a certain technology. A second example: theologian Ronald Cole-Turner has noted that some medical therapies, although anticipated to be of considerable benefit, are in fact not pursued because pharmaceutical companies cannot see how a profit is to be made.[28] The medical needs of humanity are here sidelined by important economic interests. In contrast, the position I am proposing here embodies the claim that to be attentive to God is to be attentive to the quality of the social life of humanity.

Second, interpretations of humanity as separate from social contingencies and historical becoming are denied. The concept of *imago dei* cannot be conceived abstractly: the technological lives of actual human agents form part of the matrix for the theological consideration of how humanity images God. In the previous section, I argued that Reinhold Niebuhr fails in his early work to note the implications of such a claim for the interpretation of theological anthropology. A further attempt to deny the *temporality* of humanity might include the recent renewal of the 'end of ideology' thesis in the work of Francis Fukuyama. Drawing on a reading of Hegel's historical ontology (not, we may note, Hegel's dialectics), Fukuyama claims that the rational direction of history is to secure liberal democracy and capitalism. Democracy and consumerism are thereby 'natural' to humanity.[29] This version of the end of history promoted by Fukuyama can be seen as the attempt falsely to ontologize our current technological practices not in the life of humanity but rather in a particular epoch. In truth, it is not so much that Fukuyama stops history; rather he 'substantialises' it, thereby founding current technological practices in the present 'non-negotiable' positivity of capitalism. Theologically, there can be no attempt to deny the emergence of humanity in a technological society through the appeal to such reification. For that which is natural is also historical. So, as temporal, humanity, in all its practices, is oriented on God.

Third, humanity's technological practices must be understood as being oriented towards understanding humanity 'in the middle' (to use

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer's phrase). The ambiguous power of technology should not tempt us to consider that human interests govern nature; humanity is itself natural and its relationship with non-human nature is (partly) one of reciprocity and mutuality. The 'extension' of nature is such that humanity is *not* placed at the leading edge of history but rather 'in the middle'. As spatial, humanity is not apart from nature. To make this point is dangerous in the sense that the politics of fascism has made central a construal of some biological categories: blood, race, soil. But the concept of *spatiality* is neither a biological nor a natural category. Rather, *spatiality* is the attempt to specify how the social and temporal life of humanity is 'mapped over' its natural conditions in dynamic ways: both in continuity and discontinuity with non-human nature. The construal of active humanity in its physical conditions—a stress on the habitat of humanity—is one mode of the orientation of humanity on God.

V. A Trinitarian Pedagogy

As vocation, then, the *imago dei* is oriented on God: humanity enjoys a closeness or nearness to God through the practices which approximate to the truth of the sociality, temporality and spatiality of humanity. On this view, the blessing of God is given in the social, temporal and spatial dimensions of creatureliness. The task of humanity is to seek the 'redoubling' of such blessing: to be attentive to the ideologies and idolatries which resist the practice or discipline of humanity as social, temporal and spatial. To practice such a pedagogy is thus to be oriented on God. In this redoubling, the fullness of God is present and humanity participates anew in the life of God. Thus God's blessing is redoubled only through the actual practices of concrete human living.

One way of gaining a perspective on my argument is to make a comparison with the ever popular concept of stewardship. As enactment of the *imago dei*, stewardship stresses the importance of good environmental administration.[30] But the concept of stewardship rests on a dubious assumption: the transparency of technological practices. Stewardship allows that technology can be wrongly used; technology can also fail through poor design or construction. Yet because technology is considered only as a dimension of effective management, the social location of technology is not considered. Furthermore, how technology might be reshaping humanity is displaced: in the concept of stewardship, the temporal aspect of humanity is not foregrounded. Last, stewardship stresses human transcendence over nature thereby denying spatiality. In short, we are presented by the concept of stewardship with an abstract concept of humanity.

Theologically, an abstract account of *imago dei* leads to an abstract

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account of God.[31] Of course, the very best theological treatments of stewardship—Douglas John Hall's *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*[32] is a good example—seek to make a connection with the doctrine of God. Yet the suspicion remains that the connection with the notion of God in fact undercuts the commitment to the theme of stewardship: the richness of God's life present to the life of humanity cannot be expressed adequately by reference to stewardship.

I have said that the vocation of humanity is the redoubling of the social, temporal and spatial aspects of humanity. Such attention, the practice of a pedagogy, is the orientation of humanity on God. If, as I claim, the proposal for the *imago dei* made here is not abstract, how are we to think concretely of the God of which humanity is in the image? Who is this God we glimpse in the socio-historical relations of natural humanity? This God is trinitarian: the stability of the social life of humanity is given by the Logos; the gift of time is given in the eschatological act of the Creator; the contingent place of humanity is given in the actions of the Spirit who seeks the perfecting of creation. Here is the fundamental theological protocol in the consideration of the *imago dei*.

For humanity to be befriended by this God is thereby a call to a trinitarian pedagogy.[33] Creatureliness is here not only a state of affairs but also a discipline. Creatureliness is both gift and demand, a 'given' and a task, both fact and *praxis*. In a technological society, the true practice of creatureliness is the affirmation of the social life of humanity, the denial of the abstract character of humanity and a denial of the pre-eminence of human 'history' over 'nature'. Such creatureliness is the sustained practice 'which does not leave us chafed by our own skin'[34] but rather enables us to live more fully in the presence of the triune God.

In the skilful practice of creatureliness the triune life of God is anticipated: the social, eschatological and 'contingent' life of God is given proleptically in the demand and task of creatureliness. To practice such creatureliness is to learn that we are not God. Yet it is also to learn that the Godness of God invites us to review the practice of our creatureliness in the horizon of a technological society. That is, the otherness of God invites attention to the Christian pedagogy of creatureliness and insists on the unfinished character of this practice. For, as Bonhoeffer noted in prison,[35] God addresses us in the midst of life.[36]

1 Colin E. Gunton, 'Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology: Towards a Renewal of the Doctrine of the *Imago Dei*', Christoph Schwöbel and Colin Gunton (eds.), *Persons, Divine and Human* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), pp. 57–58.

2 Peter Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: Towards a Constructive Christian Theology*

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(London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 200.

3 Bonhoeffer's work—especially *Creation and Fall* (London: SCM Press, 1959), *Act and Being* (London: Collins, 1962), *Sanctorum Communio* (London, Collins, 1963)—is central to the reaffirmation of human life as social for Christian self-understanding. Barth took up, but then somewhat restricted, Bonhoeffer's account (see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), p. 194f. The Trinitarian renaissance in contemporary theology has supported and extended this direction. The work of Jürgen Moltmann is a good example; for his most recent detailed statement, see Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 215–243.

4 Of course, Augustine does not interpret the *imago dei* as social. Instead, in a reading which became determinative for Western theology, Augustine on the one hand ascribed the *imago dei* to the faculty of reason (*City of God* XIII, 24) and understood the three-fold form of the human intellect by analogy to the Trinity (*De Trinitate* XIV, XV)—both these point towards individualism. Yet, O'Donovan correctly notes that 'In Augustinian political theology...sociality itself was given in creation' (Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 14). For the nature of created humanity as social: see Augustine, *City of God* XII, 28; XIX, 5. An attempt to revive this Augustinian aspect is made by Daniel W. Hardy, 'Created and Redeemed Sociality', in C E Gunton and D W Hardy (eds.), *On Being the Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), pp. 21–47.

5 See Don Ihde, *Philosophy of Technology: An Introduction* (New York: Paragon House, 1993), pp. 29–44.

6 Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and other essays* (New York: Harper and Row, Torchbooks, 1977), pp. 3–35.

7 Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 5.

8 Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 22.

9 Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 14.

10 Heidegger, 'The Spiegel Interview' in Günther Neske and Emil Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), p. 57.

11 Richard J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 118. In its reading of Heidegger's philosophy and politics, my account is deeply indebted to Bernstein's.

12 Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 32.

13 Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 85.

14 See especially Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964). Habermas's detailed critique can be found in 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', *Toward a Rational Society*, pp. 81–122.

15 I rely here on the analysis of Steven Vogel, 'New Science, New Nature: The Habermas-Marcuse Debate Revisited' in Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay (eds.), *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 23–42. Cf. Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (New York: SUNY, 1996), especially chapter 5.

16 Steven Vogel, 'New Science, New Nature', p. 28.

17 Vogel, 'New Science, New Nature', p. 24.

18 Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 286.

19 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, p. 296.

20 Frederick Ferré, *Philosophy of Technology* (Athens & London: The University of

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Georgia Press, 1995), p. 26. In the report of Terry J. Tekippe, Bernard Lonergan also operates with such a view. Technology originates as an idea and, in a primary sense, always remains an idea. The idea of technology is always located in the mind of the inventor. Lonergan does not deny the importance of institutions, resources and markets; yet the origin of technology is not traceable to these. See Terry J. Tekippe, 'Bernard Lonergan: A Context for Technology' in Carl Mitcham and Jim Grote (eds.), *Theology and Technology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 71–90.

21 Reinhold Niebuhr, 'Henry Ford and Industrial Autocracy', *The Christian Century* Nov. 4, 1926, p. 1354; 'How Philanthropic is Henry Ford?', *The Christian Century* Dec. 9, 1926, pp. 1516–17. Niebuhr's experience with Fordism was direct: as a pastor in the Bethel district of Detroit between 1915 and 1928, he observed the process at first hand and recorded his thoughts in his diary; these reflections were later published as *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic* (New York: Willett, Clark and Colby, 1929). See also Reinhold Niebuhr, 'Autobiographical Reflections', in Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Brettall (eds.), *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 5.

22 In this necessarily brief summary, the reader is directed to Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribners, 1960); Reinhold Niebuhr,, *Reflections on the End of an Era* (New York: Scribners, 1934) for the detailed argument of Niebuhr's position.

23 Niebuhr, *Reflections on the End of an Era,* p. 284.

24 Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Psychology* (Dartington: Resurgence, 1995), pp. 16–17 notes how Christians use the *imago* to separate humanity from non-human nature.

25 Such a contrast merely replays the antithesis noted by Karl Marx between the ethos of industrial capitalism and the sensibility of romanticism.

26 Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), volume 1, p. 268.

27 I owe this phrase to Daniel W. Hardy.

28 Cole-Turner gives the example of the lack of corporate interest in a vaccine against malaria: see Ronald Cole-Turner, *The New Genesis: Theology and Genetic Revolution* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 54.

29 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

30 See H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), p. 42. For a critique of the presumption of the capacity for good administration in stewardship models, see Clare Palmer, 'Stewardship: a case study in environmental ethics' in Ian Ball et. al. (eds.) *The Earth Beneath* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 67–86; and Kathryn Tanner, 'Creation, environmental crisis, and ecological justice' in Rebecca Chopp and Mark Taylor (eds.), *Reconstructing Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 109–13.

31 With particular reference to the Trinity, Moltmann has pressed the anthropological consequences of an abstract conception of God: see Jürgen Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 10–20.

32 Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), esp. pp. 183—87

33 Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

34 Stanley Cavell, cited in Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity* (London: SPCK, 1997), p. viii.

35 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1971), p. 282.

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