

УДК 37.037

TECHNOLOGY, SELFHOOD, AND POSTMODERN HOPING**William S. Schmidt**

This paper considers human self-understanding and identity formation as a fluid process significantly impacted by contextual realities. Current contextual realities include the philosophical assumptions of post-modernity which profoundly shift the assumptive base from which human self-understanding flows. Among the features of post-modernity are: 1. Erosion of the sense of a timeless authentic core to selfhood; 2. Collapse of classical metaphysics; 3. Breakdown of meta-narratives; 4. Valuing of nature over history; and 5. Intensive challenges to Theodicy. These post-modern vantage points not only challenge our understanding of time, space, and order, they significantly challenge our understanding of human identity.

The formerly solid and stable self, whether understood as core of personhood given by God, or as a socially constructed ego relatively stable over time has collapsed. In its place we now see selfhood as fluid, liminal, and continually reshaped by the relationships in which one participates. These changes are mediated by new and pervasive technologies of simulation, tele-presence, and electronic intensification. This electronic and digital saturation of life has profoundly changed our social and psychological experience of time and space, the real and the simulated, the serious and the entertaining. In this study I intend to examine the specific effect of technology upon evolving selfhood within post-modernity, from the vantage point of Spirituality.

This paper will provide insights around the potential for technology to both de-center but also re-center human experience and human identity. I propose that in moving away from Ontology toward praxis, in re-examining the nature of memory, as well as demonstrating the possibility of new forms of mutuality, the technological post-modern world we inhabit can strengthen hope and human possibility.

Key Words: *Technology, Post-modernity, selfhood, identity, spirituality, hope*

What might be the effect of post-modernity on selfhood, and subsequent hoping? Hope, when understood as a spiritual notion, has fallen on hard times as have other terms of ultimacy, what Edward Farley calls “the effacement or disempowerment of deep symbols.”[1] If this is correct, then what can it mean to hope in a post-modern world? Can the meaning of hope be re-enlivened and re-animated?

The Manifestations of Post-modernity

There is some dispute as to the period which marks the emergence of the post-modern. Some identify its origins with the trauma of World War II, with Auschwitz and Hiroshima its predominant symbols. Others point to the Vietnam War as accelerating a process of dislodging former sources of authority. Still others see the technological revolution as intensifying a process of intense change at economic, social, political and personal levels.

Wherever one places the emphasis, the predominant feature of post-modern reality is change, and one could say, accelerating change. These changes are visible in two ways. In the first instance we are experiencing profound changes to the external landscape of our economic, political, technical, environmental, and institutional lives. Not only is our outer life impacted, however, but these profound changes also touch the internal landscape of our psychological, spiritual, and relational experiences. In other words, they impact personhood, and the very nature of self-construction. These inner and outer shifts create a collective psychic environment which forms the “spirit of the age” within which we seek to find meaning and construct lives of some cohesion and integrity.

Post-modern Presuppositions

How might the philosophical presuppositions of post-modernity impact self-construction and subsequent hoping? For us to talk concretely about contemporary hope, we must engage not only the technical side of contemporary life, but also the post-modern assumptive base. We must engage these presuppositions directly, in order for our contemporary hoping to have relevance.

There are five readily-identified features to post-modern views of reality[2; 22-35]:

1. Erasure of Self – there has been an erosion of the idea that there is a timeless, authentic core self to which we return either by growth or spiritual transformation. The autonomous self-authenticating self or soul has collapsed.

2. Erosion of classical metaphysics – the notion of an objectively-given divine reality or objectivity of truth has been seriously challenged.

3. Breakdown of meta-narratives – the reading of history as following a master plan has less and less coherence. History is no longer seen only through its grand sweep as a unified story. Post-modernity rejects the imposition of coherence onto history, because it clamps a false closure onto open-ended stories, and silences those outside of the prevailing myth of origin and destiny.

4. Valuing of nature over history – in classic theological models, nature was devalued as an inferior force in relation to the rational quality of history and the human control of ‘wild’ nature. In this hierarchical arrangement, nature was seen “as an inferior mass of directionless energy in need of human subjugation and oversight.” [3; 30] The postmodern view suggests rather an emerging sense of equality among all species, with an interconnected web of life, containing wisdom within its wholeness.

5. Failure of Theodicy – for post-modernity it no longer automatically follows that the goodness of any conceived Deity means the preservation and development of humanity. Is the universe really only ordered to serve human flourishing?

These are among the questions which post-modernity raises and which hope must take seriously if it is to remain hope, in order to serve our world in life-giving ways. In short, with the advent of post-modernity has come a re-orientation toward time and space, a loss of divine Otherness, the loss of the objective truth claims which this Divine Other affirmed, and a loss of a cohesive sense of self.

Paul Lakeland identifies post-modernity as calling into question or radically challenging our understandings of time, space and order, and I would add, identity [4; 2]. Simon Gottschalk, recognizes the identity implications of accelerated change, namely, that there results a deconstruction of the very sense of self [5; 20]. The formerly solid and stable self, whether understood as core of personhood given by God, or as a socially-constructed ego stable over time, has collapsed. In its place we now have self understood as fluid, luminal, and continually reshaped by the relationships in which one participates. All of this is mediated by new and pervasive technologies of simulation and tele-presence. An electronic, digital, and media saturation of life has profoundly changed our social and psychological experiences such as

time and space, the real and the simulated, the serious and the entertaining[6; 27]. But how specifically has technology impacted evolving selfhood?

Technology and Post-modern Selfhood

As suggested, among the most obvious manifestations of our post-modern milieu is the saturation of an electronic envelope through television, computers, electronic games, surveillance cameras, smart phones, and tablets etc., which together generate a grid which simulates and activates feelings, desires, interactions and fears. In short, this electronic grid generates its own so-called, “virtual” reality. What, however, is the nature of this reality?

I would suggest that it is not the physicality of electronic presence which is at issue, but its mediating power. It is the filter through which we encounter our world, one another, and ourselves. Our dreams, desires and their fears are shaped by the medium itself. Our perceptions and self-reflections, even our consciousness itself, is shaped by the images and the logic which is contained within the electronic instrument.

For example, the cell phone carries within it the logic of availability. With it the boundary of presence has shifted. There is literally no place where one cannot be reached, and this carries within it its own force whether we are conscious of it or not. This is not necessarily a good or a bad force. It simply means we are now subject to new conditions of availability and participation. The new technology sets in motion new patterns of dependency and fear, new forms of merger and mirroring patterns.

Contemporary models of television viewing further illustrate the fluidity of consciousness that comes with this particular form of technological immersion. The presence of hundreds of channel options for most users through cable subscriptions, the presence of multiple televisions in even modest residences, and the habits such as channel surfing and the popularity of split screen televisions, generate a multiplicity and fluidity of imaginal stimulants which can promote fragmented and disoriented consciousness. One could characterize such consciousness as buffeted by rapidly shifting intensifications which can flip from indifference to over-invested identification, from terror to chronic boredom[7; 28].

Our “normal” personal environments now often include consistent uprootedness, rapid obsolescence, and high-speed transactions likely replacing longer-term interactions. Narcissistic recognition by others becomes a much more intense need in a society where identities are paraded. Participation and belonging in communities and relationships becomes lived

out more vicariously or even voyeuristically as evidenced by the popularity of reality television. Commitment anxiety intensifies, even as paranoia becomes driven not so much by fear of physical harm but by fears of the emotional needs another might bring, demand, or frustrate within oneself[8; 28-32].

What are the possible effects upon self-cohesion brought about by technological change? I have been assisted in my reflection by the work of Kenneth Gergen who himself builds upon the efforts of Walter Ong[9]. Ong offered an insightful analysis of the shifts in forms of thought which transpired in the transition from oral to print cultures. He notes that in oral cultures meanings are more directly accessible because when face-to-face contacts are the channel, they allow for a more direct and perhaps clearer base from which to infer a speaker's intent and authenticity. Everything from facial expression to gestures and context is more readily available to an oral audience. With a print culture, a separation of time and space has entered the communication. This makes the problem of hermeneutics, of meaning, intent, of ascertaining the so-called mind of the author, that much more crucial. One's judgments about reliability became much more logically and rationally-based rather than based upon their felt-rightness, or narrative proximity.

Now, with technological advances generating a communications superhighway, inevitable changes to meaning-making and self-construction again ensue. According to Gergen, the formation of a so-called integral self as a source of moral action is compromised or at least challenged[10; 103]. This erosion of integral selfhood occurs through the following forces. First, we are confronted with a multiplicity of voices, information, and conflicting moral standpoints. We are bombarded by multiple realities and often conflicting claims on economic, political, environmental and relational levels. This disparate noise threatens to drown out the inner voice as guide for moral action.

A second result of technological immersion is an exponential expansion in our range of relationships, with transience and flux institutionalized. While on one hand we often encounter our neighbors less and less, we have a multiplicity of relationships that can span continents. Because information moves so rapidly, reactions and opinions are shifted with greater frequency. The life-span of ideas, products, and activities is shortened. As Gergen notes, already in the early 90s, one in three American workers had been with their employer for less than five years [11; 104]. His word for this trend is "plasticity".

A third effect is a less obvious result of an inundation of images, information and narratives. Under such conditions of bombardment, public sanction and public demonstration becomes a criterion for legitimacy. With technologies' ability to extend cultural memory, past cultural products are easily stored, retrieved, and re-cycled[12; 105]. So, action in the here and now is increasingly seen as "more of the same" or even predetermined. This makes the question of authenticity more acute.

A fourth effect is what can be called transience. The consistent reminders and reinforcers of one's identity are no longer as present resulting in a less unified sense of self. A genuine interior life requires the reliable availability of others who provide the necessary mirroring and emotional participation with us to hold and reflect back to us our own emerging self. Because this participation is increasingly absent in our fluid world, there results the erosion of an integrated self, with a corresponding loss of an interior centeredness. This eroding center handicaps our ability to be at home with ourselves even as it makes moral action in the world less clear. It is not so much that there is a disappearing interior but an empty or fragmented one[13; 106]. Instead of cohesion or centeredness, one is left with isolated, unlimited fragments, each with their own voice responding to isolated or disconnected circumstances.

Exile and Diaspora as Metaphors for Post-modern De-Centering

Jewish spirituality has had some experience with the loss of center, and their wisdom may well be helpful to offer as we address the question of cultivating hope in a post-modern world. I propose that the Jewish experience of the Babylonian captivity and exile in 586 B.C.E., and furthermore the destruction of the second Temple and the diaspora of 70 C.E., are apt metaphors for our own dispersal of cohesion and unifying center of meaning.

As the prophet Isaiah reports in chapters 40-55, the Jews taken to the power center of Babylon were not threatened with annihilation as we normally think of it. By all evidence they were treated rather well in Babylon. Most of them seemed to settle into a normal life. While it is true that the First Temple was destroyed and the monarchy of David had collapsed, the real danger was that the seductions of Babylon itself would overwhelm a now de-centered people. Not only was the center of the people's faith, David's Temple and his kingdom, destroyed, but their very identity as a people was threatened by assimilation. For Isaiah, the desolation of exile was certainly the loss of a

homeland, but above all, it threatened the loss of identity. Hence Isaiah's cry, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

I suggest that Babylon is an apt metaphor for the contemporary challenge of engaging a post-modern culture which offers its own assimilations and de-centering pressures. In a culture of rampant individualism, eroding selfhood, unabated consumption, condensed time and space, and loss of grand narratives, how do we engage this culture, take it seriously, live in it, but at the same time sing the Lord's song in it?

Hope as portability

An answer can be found within the very events of the exile in 586 B.C.E. and even the final desolation and destruction of the second Temple in 70 C.E. What is profoundly illustrated in these cataclysmic events is the principle of portability. A hopeful response to destruction has been at the heart of the Jewish faith and is visible even at the time of the destruction of the First Temple. As Jonathan Rosen sees it, the exile and the return which followed, transformed Judaism from a local religion into one that could cross borders, and was in a sense preparing itself to live without a land[14; 79]. As the people returned from exile the Temple was rebuilt, but far more important, in Rosen's view, is that Ezra the scribe began to transcribe the fragments of their faith-story into what we now call the Hebrew Bible.

The Jewish people became aware that words were portable and durable, and a vision was established which recognized that even exile and destruction could be overcome with portability and representation, i.e., the written word. This truth became absolutely vital for the Jewish faith after 70 C.E., when an even more final destruction occurred and the second Temple was destroyed. The Talmud is the product of this process of consolidating the identity of a people who had learned not to exclusively identify faith with a place or a time.

The great Jewish philosopher Abraham Heschel has noted that Jews do not need to build temples in space because they recognize that the Sabbath is a cathedral built in time, not space[15; 72]. Rosen echoes this view by suggesting that the Torah and the Talmud are also a Temple, only in this instance not only spanning time, but also space, built in this instance out of words, laws, and stories. In connecting Jews from across multiple borders and across many ages the Torah and Talmud served as a metaphysical Jerusalem, a virtual Jerusalem, with a durability and an elusiveness all at the same time. There is a creative tension visible within Judaism, between the

visible and the invisible, between embodiment and disembodiment. From Rosen's point of view this tension is worked out in two very different ways between Christianity and Judaism, with perhaps both directions necessary for sustaining hope in a post-modern world.

From Christianity we hear that in the beginning was the Word and that the Word was made flesh/finite. The movement is from Word or Truth toward embodied existence in the world in the here and now. In Judaism the opposite movement is visible. Here flesh/finite becomes Word and Truth. When the Temple, the physical embodiment of God's presence was destroyed, then faith and the hope it contained took that former physical presence, that flesh, and turned it into Word beyond the Temple. Yes, there was loss occurring with this transition; the loss of a physical center, the loss of a tangible home and localized identity. But there was also a greater measure of freedom gained, a larger world inhabited by God's presence.

The emergence of the Talmud offered Jews a virtual home in the midst of uprootedness and grew out of the need to pack their identity into words and move out into the larger world[16; 14]. The living word of the Torah and the Talmud became the basis for the survival of a people who had lost their home and their center of meaning, the Temple. They became the people of the book with its profound portability and inherent hopefulness.

It is not too far-fetched in my estimation to see the technological revolution, the so-called computer age, as generating a new global diaspora. We are now able to be everywhere, with an infinity of information and knowledge sweeping us along. In this ever-expanding tidal wave, we can be easily de-centered and lose our wholeness, our sense of home. At the same time, we may yet find wholeness and its spiritual twin hope in the midst of scatteredness, in the midst of the electronic diaspora.

If post-modernity has the power to shift the boundaries of reality, time, space, order, and identity, then hope is surely subject to the same forces. If reality becomes virtual, then perhaps hope has its own virtuality, its own erosion and de-centering, but perhaps also its own participation in this shifting world.

Dynamic perspectives of hope

If hope is to be relevant as a spiritual force within post-modernity, it would be useful to try to define and describe it in clear and precise ways. I would therefore begin by defining hope as follows: **hope is a commitment to the horizon of transcendence**[17].

Hope is a deep impulse in us that extends our spirit into the open possibilities before us. There is a transcendence beckoning us, calling us, drawing us into a here and now realization of ourselves as persons, as communities, and as a world. These open possibilities, the sky of our existence, are not simply an openness to this or that choice of one action or another. It is an openness to creative possibilities, to cohesions of meaning in which beauty, truth, and justice can be realized. We are drawn by Hope into the fuller realization of ourselves as embodiments of beauty, truth and justice.

Simultaneously, within hope, the sky of our existence must meet the ground of our lived reality. It is in this encounter of earth and sky, of the particular with the possible, that hope lives or dies. If we focus only on the sky, on the factor of transcendence, then, our hope becomes reduced to escapism, otherworldliness and ultimately life and world denial. If our focus is only on the ground, then we run the risk of falling into stoicism or a reduction of our being into what is immediately at hand. We become swallowed up by immediacy and hope dies. Hope is a commitment to the horizon of transcendence.

There are two fundamental dangers to hope of which we must remain aware in order for hope to retain its empowering capacity. The first danger to hope is subjective, in which we reduce hope to a human virtue, like courage, confidence or optimism. This is simply a belief in human possibility and has no real depth or true vision. It does not embrace reality in its fullness, but plows ahead either through naivete, or ungrounded boldness.

The second danger to hope is objective. Here we rely on belief in a particular outcome in whether its secular or sacred forms. As a secularist, I objectively reduce hope to a belief in progress, a belief that the forces of improvement will carry us into our utopian future. Or, if I am naively or innocently spiritual, my belief in divine intervention or divine guarantees reduces hope to an otherworldliness in which God works it all out in the end. Neither of these forms of pseudo-hope has staying power and neither is adequate for a post-modern world.

Elements of dynamic hoping

If hope must avoid dangers of collapse into optimism or blind belief, what does engaged and transcending hoping look like? There are three paradoxical elements which define this dynamic rhythm of hope[18; 95-110]. The first element or paradox of hope is between the burden and trauma of our current state and the yearning for a new reality. All states of suffering whether

individual or communal are the context of hope. Hope and suffering, hope and fragmentation, hope and incompleteness, all share common ground. There where we struggle, where we are victimized, where darkness has enveloped our hearts or our land, there the seed of hope resides. African-Americans in slavery lived in hope as is readily visible in their music. Hope was nourished in the hearts of the German Medical students Hans and Sophie Scholl and their collaborators, who resisted the Nazi 'juggernaut' and paid with their lives for their quiet protest. They called their organization the White Rose, a symbol of incredible vulnerability yet beauty in the midst of sheer terror and oppression.

Whenever the dark night is entered either individually or communally, then hope beckons. This dark night can include the experiences of loss, the search for meaning, the entrapments of addiction, the erosion of community, and the onslaught against the earth. This first paradox of hope is that it embraces reality and truly faces what is. Into this darkness enters Spirit, what I would call the Spirit of Imagination. The spirit of imagination declares that the boundaries of reality are wider than they seem[19; 209]. This does not mean that the particulars of one's reality fade, but that they are stretched toward a larger horizon. This is the horizon of transcendence where new possibilities and creative impulses break into awareness. Hope engages both: it fully embraces the real, even as it opens itself to that which is beyond our current struggle.

A second paradox of hope is that it must both wait and act. Hoping involves waiting[20; 152]. When we hope we wait for resolution, liberation, and release, an easing of our state of suffering. But this waiting is not a passive act in which we are indifferent or neutral. Hopeful waiting involves a leaning into the dilemma, not a shrinking from it. It requires a dual holding capacity: a holding of the tension of the here and now, and a holding of the prospect of transcendence. Even in conditions where no physical activity is possible, the waiting called for in hope is active in that it guides its inner resources toward the horizon of transcendence. Our attitudes, our feelings, our deepest wishes are the inner activity essential for hoping.

A third paradox of hope is that it is particular and persistent[21; 101]. For hope to be hope it must be here and now, not in the sweet by and by. Hope is a way of being in an immediate situation of difficulty and struggle, a way of engaging one's distress in its immediate manifestations. This precludes hope from being simply a belief or a stance or a principle that one

blindly hangs on to. Its other pole, however, is hope's durability over time. Although it is fully here and now, it persists beyond the immediate actual situation. It has a staying power, a tenacity, which is rooted in a recognition of a larger and wider and deeper reality than the one currently defining one's life. As Edward Farley states, "hope is an existential refusal of the domination of the tragic." [22; 102] But what is the basis for such hoping? What makes the horizon of transcendence reliable?

Edward Farley correctly notes that historically hope has been grounded predominantly in ontology or being, rather than in its praxis considerations. In other words, we have tended to look to metaphysical supports for hope, rather than toward historical and contextual understandings. Farley's appropriate post-modern emphasis is that we do not negate or deny the ontological, but rather emphasize what he calls the "interhuman", the matrix of life where deep symbols such as hope are sustained and nourished by the life and history of persons and their communities. What then shall ground hoping?

A first basis for hope rests upon our understanding of the future. If we gravitate toward deterministic theologies or mechanistic views of nature, then our hoping will be seriously compromised. If we imagine that the future is fixed, that reality just grinds on inexorably, then we relate to the future as if it were the past. On the other hand, if we meet the universe as open and changing, then the future is a future of possibility. Experience tells us that reality is fluid and moving, with all that is finite being subject to change. Every system, every empire, every condition of life, every state in which I find myself is not fixed or immutable but shares the open dynamism of the universe.

A second basis for hope is memory, or what Farley calls the "power of the past." [23; 104] This particular basis for hope has come under intense assault from post-modernity which tends to dismiss the past as irrelevant at best or oppressive at worst. But the appeal to memory and tradition can cut bothways. The ownership of the past, the narratives of persons and peoples, can be high-jacked and manipulated by contemporary power systems to justify their own exploitations. On the other hand, the liberating symbols of prophetic traditions, of revolutionary movements, and narratives of transcendence are all available to us from the past, and these narratives are a necessary resource for hope to flourish. The narratives of prior liberations and transformations give impetus to our current struggle to embrace hope.

A third basis for hope is the mutuality of co-journeyers. Hope is an act of community[24]. When we hope we enter into a solidarity with fellow-sufferers who themselves have been touched by a vision of a transformed future. Even when we are driven by our suffering or entrapment into an isolation, we hope in the embrace of a spiritual community, a cloud of witnesses, that reaches from the past into the present. All hoping is carried by this spiritual community which anticipates its fuller future.

The fourth basis for hope is the transcendent itself. This is not to be understood in an otherworldly sense where some external agent such as God, or nature, or fate/karma takes care of it. This deepest resource of hope is the creative power of the universe itself which infuses all that is with its innate potentialities. This centering, balancing wholeness-bringing force in the universe is the agency by which justice, peace, and love, is accomplished. This transcending, wholeness-bringing energy infuses the finite and the particular, in other words, is immanently available, and at hand. This is the true basis of hope and it is on this basis that we can meet our postmodern world with openness, clear-sightedness, and in trust.

The Cultural Challenge to Hope

If the predominant features of post-modernity are the rapidity of life and societal change, the erosion of a sense of time and space, and the de-centering of a sense of self and our place in the universe, then what does it mean for hope to engage this de-centering and flattening force?

Throughout human history in times of great change there have been movements to deal with this anxiety-producing reality. What they essentially have in common, however, is a certain world-withdrawal. This stance of world-denial has two essential forms, the one reflected in the figure of Augustine, whose City of God of harmony and truth is ultimately constructed outside of history. The other model in our attempt to come to terms with change and trauma has been apocalyptic, in which we either take to the hills as numerous groups have attempted over the centuries, or we sit and wait for a second coming with dreams of a divine utopia awaiting us.

Neither approach seems particularly hopeful, primarily because both are world-denying and world-rejecting. The belief represented in these views is that ultimately the world does not matter. Catherine Keller calls this approach one in which we don't mind if the earth is destroyed, because "Daddy will give us a new one." [25; 134] Keller goes on to call for what she calls a "counter-apocalyptic" stance. What she means thereby is that we

engage more directly the fiery visions of our apocalyptic texts and allow them to impact us for today. Apocalypse should not be a deferral of hope or its displacement into the beyond but an invitation to historicize and embody hope in the here and now. This is the truest actualization of spiritual hope. There is a powerful strand to this effect in our spiritual traditions which we call the prophetic. It is from this point of view that one must allow hope to encounter our actual dilemma.

We make a commitment to the horizon of transcendence when we cultivate a prophetic imagination[26; 39-58]. A prophetic imagination is an imagination which has been awakened to the reality of contemporary life, and it encounters that reality with discernment. Within the lives of persons and communities there lives a Spirit which we could call a Spirit of Truth or a Spirit of Wisdom. This Spirit moves and stirs within us and our communities sometimes very faintly as a still small voice, and sometimes it screams from the rooftops its lament or its truth. Even, or perhaps especially, in environments where darkness, fragmentation or alienation reigns, there Spirit moves. For the one able to listen and discern its voice, a hope will be born and the prevailing order will be challenged. For some the voice will register very personally and emerge out of one's personal conditions of deadness, un-freedom, and emptiness. For others, the voice of Spirit will emerge out of communal disintegration, fragmentation and alienation. Out of this distress and the personal and cultural bankruptcy that it reveals, a horizon of transcendence presents itself, that both indicts the here and now, even as it prompts a quest for the new and the transformed. Hope is a "force field" of the Spirit and generates in us an awakening to our condition and towards pathways of transformation[27; 245].

As is true in every era, there is a prevailing cultural vision that we could equate with flatland, with exploitative, dignity-denying, freedom-robbing ways of being. The children of Israel in Babylon experienced it, the exploited peoples of all ages experienced this flattening of their being; now in our era we must contend with the flatland of a rampant consumerism, and performance-driven, identity-robbing sameness, and meaning-emptying ideologies. Spirit awakens us to our own personal entrapment by these ideologies of consumption, ideologies of constant availability, or ideologies of success-driven, relationship-denying life-styles.

Into this entrapment comes the force field of spirit we call hope, giving rise to a different vision of life. A first form of this vision, this hope, may be

resistance to the prevailing powers. The powerful call of Isaiah in Is 55 puts the challenge as follows:

“Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;
though you have no money, come!
Buy corn without money, and eat,
and at no cost wine and milk.
Why spend money on what is not bread,
your wages on what fails to satisfy?”

Feminist theologian Mary Grey suggests that Isaiah is calling for resistance to Babylon[28, 24]. Isaiah is crying out: “don’t eat the food of Babylon, don’t drink the wine, refuse the excesses and don’t be seduced by the culture. The God of Israel offers you a different food and drink, in opposition to the excesses of Babylon.”

What might resistance to a post-modern Babylon look like? A first form of resistance is to restore the connections between natural rhythms and human lifestyles. It means finding a greater congruence between the biological patterns of our lives and the demands we place upon ourselves. The objectification and instrumentalization of the body is a Babylon pattern. We must resist treating our bodies as objects, subject to manipulation for aesthetic, experimental, or economic reasons. In modern Babylon bodies are exploitable to enhance their looks or their performance, and Spirit invites us to resist this exploitation. Whenever our bodies become commodities which find their worth only by virtue of how well they look, how well they work, how richly they consume, then we are trapped in a Babylon mode.

Wherever and whenever we experience the flattening of our being, our spirit, something in us resists. But far too often we ignore this initial resistance, either until our own suffering cries out to us and awakens us, or we are awakened by the suffering or prophetic utterance of another. The witness of the prophetic imagination is that we are called to enter into subversive practice and to nourish cultures of resistance. To practice resistance means to live from a different vision. The horizon of transcendence is the name we give that vision and it presents itself to us in all conditions of bondage and of the flattening of our being.

In addition to the commitment to the establishment of natural rhythms in which the limits and patterns of our bodies are honored, I would like to offer a very specific way of committing ourselves to a horizon of transcendence, and this is to develop a Sabbath consciousness. Our Sabbath

understandings have traditionally been focused upon a specific day which may have certain activities and rituals such as worship, rest, and relating. But its central mandate for the Hebrews was holiness. This call to holiness is a call to enter into a different relation to time and space.

To have a Sabbath consciousness means to be committed to the presence and domain of the sacred in the movements and flow of our lives, where transcendence is given room, and where space is made available for it. Perhaps every day needs its Sabbath consciousness, its rhythm of not just rest or soul quietude, but a recognition of one's place in creation, an awareness of one's being held by a deeper and encompassing Spirit. This awareness, cultivated daily, by creating the time and space for it, brings the horizon of transcendence into the immediacy of one's flesh and blood existence in the here and now.

Many methods have been and continue to be used in its service. We call these methods prayer, ritual, worship, cultivation of sacred spaces, meditation, cultivating relationships, reflection, devotion, journaling, quietude, silence, retreat, environmental and /or social activism, etc. What they have in common is a recognition that spirit must be held, evoked, stirred, and named, for it to flourish and ultimately to guide one and engender hope. If every day we cultivate a holding of holiness in our heart and mind and body, then this horizon of transcendence will live within us in the midst of all circumstances. Even if we are facing a seemingly insurmountable limit, our hope will be born as the limit is held within the space of the sacred in our lives.

The subversive possibilities are endless. The cultivation of holiness, the seeking of Sabbath, may prompt us to change our relationship to the technological principalities and powers of our lives. Perhaps one might choose to daily at some point turn off cell phones, lap tops, and twitter feeds etc., as a form of reminding oneself of sacred time. Perhaps a sabbath ritual will include an intentional turning off the computer or the T.V. to engage one's immediate companions in a dialog one would otherwise not have had. Perhaps one will gain the freedom to claim rest, renewal, or reflection time. Perhaps one will find subversion in saying no to the latest, hottest, fanciest gadget that the temples of consumption have served up for us.

Perhaps subversion will take the form of becoming gatherers of stories: human stories, faith stories, animal stories, ethnic stories, mythic stories, rock stories, family stories. Even if the so-called grand narrative no longer holds

sway, the multiplicity of stories of our world form a grand mosaic, a tapestry which is itself a part of the horizon of transcendence. When we commit ourselves to salvaging, holding, and honoring of this narrative tapestry, then transcendence breaks into the story currently being written and this story gains a depth and a continuity with other emerging stories. Our stories are then no longer disjointed islands of experience, but gain a meaning, a worth, and a dignity. Such a narrative becomes a journey sustained by hope, guided by hope, and fulfilled in hope.

Notes:

1. Farley, Edward, *Deep Symbols*, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1996.
2. Wallace, Mark I., *Fragments of the Spirit*, NY: Continuum Publishing Company, 1996, pp. 22-35.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
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У даній статті мова йде про формування самопізнання й ідентичності людини як нестабільного процесу, на який здійснюють значний вплив контекстуальні реалії. Поточні контекстні реалії включають філософські припущення про постмодернізм, які в корені міняють допустиму основу людського самопізнання. Серед особливостей постмодернізму виділяють наступні: 1. Знеособлення індивідуальності; 2. Руйнування класичної метафізики; 3. Розділення на частини мета-нарративів; 4. Уявлення про Природу як більш значущий феномен, ніж історія; 5. Відмова від Теодіцеї. Ці постмодерністські точки зору не тільки кидають виклик нашому розумінню часу, простору і порядку, вони кидають багатозначний виклик нашому розумінню людської ідентичності.

Раніше цілісне і стабільне Я, яке розуміли як ядро особистості, дане їй Богом, або як створене соціумом его, відносно стабільне протягом довгого часу, зруйнувалося. На його місце прийшло розуміння особистості як нестабільної, порогової і такої, яка зазнає постійних змін у взаєминах людини з іншими людьми. Ці зміни викликані новими технологіями відтворення, теле-присутності і електронної інтенсифікації, які набули поширення в суспільстві. Насиченість життя сучасних людей цими електронними і цифровими технологіями в корені змінила наше соціальне і психологічне відношення до часу і простору, реального і модельованого, серйозного і розважального. У даній статті автором зроблена спроба провести дослідження певного впливу технологій на розвиток особистості в епоху постмодернізму з точки зору духовності.

У статті розкривається зсередини потенційні можливості технологій з метою децентрування і повторного зосередження уваги на людському досвіді і людській ідентичності. Автор статті припускає, що за допомогою переходу від онтології до практики, від проведення повторного дослідження природи пам'яті і також демонстрації можливостей нової форми взаємної залежності, у технологічному постмодерністському світі, в якому ми живемо, можна буде зміцнити надію і віру в людські можливості.

Ключові слова: технологія, постмодернізм, особа, ідентичність, духовність, надія.

В данной статье речь идет о формировании самопознания и идентичности человека как нестабильного процесса, на который оказывают значительное влияние контекстуальные реалии. Текущие контекстные реалии включают в себя философские предположения о постмодернизме, которые в корне меняют допустимую основу человеческого самопознания. Среди особенностей постмодернизма выделяют следующие: 1. Обезличивание индивидуальности; 2. Разрушение классической метафизики; 3. Разделение на части мета-рассказов; 4. Представления о Природе как более значимом феномене, чем история; 5. Отказ от Теодицеи. Эти постмодернистские точки зрения не только бросают вызов нашему пониманию времени, пространства и порядка, они многозначительно бросают вызов нашему пониманию человеческой идентичности.

Прежде цельное и стабильное Я, которое понималось как ядро личности, данное ей Богом, или как созданное социумом эго, относительно стабильное в течение долгого времени, разрушилось. На его месте мы теперь рассматриваем личность как нестабильное, пороговое и претерпевающее постоянные изменения в ходе взаимоотношений человека с другими людьми. Эти изменения вызваны новыми, получившими распространение технологиями воспроизведения, теле-присутствия и электронной интенсификации. Насыщенность жизни современных людей этими электронными и цифровыми технологиями в корне изменила наше социальное и психологическое отношение ко времени и пространству, реальному и моделируемому, серьезному и развлекательному. В данной статье автором предпринята попытка провести исследование определенного влияния технологии на развитие личности в эпоху постмодернизма с точки зрения духовности.

В статье раскрываются изнутри потенциальные возможности технологий с целью децентрализации и повторного сосредоточения внимания на человеческом опыте и человеческой идентичности. Автор статьи предполагает, что посредством перехода от онтологии к практике, от проведения повторного исследования природы памяти и так же демонстрации возможности новых форм взаимной зависимости, В технологическом постмодернистском мире, в котором мы живем, можно укрепить надежду и веру в человеческие возможности.

Ключевые слова: технология, постмодернизм, личность, идентичность, духовность, надежда.

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