Theological Reflection, Theology and Technology: When Baby Boomer Theologians Teach Generations X & Y

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ABSTRACT: Before assessing contemporary technology for the theological enterprise, it is necessary for theological educators to explore their own presuppositions about technology in order to engage in theological reflection on technology. Teaching across the digital divide we may begin from a perspective of suspicion not shared by our students. How does a phronetic perspective prepare us not only to teach with technology but also to theologize from technology in a more missional and appreciative manner?

Introduction: My technological location

Modesty is a valued commodity in the theological enterprise. When attempting to reflect upon technology, this theological virtue—which Thomas Aquinas thought held a certain pride of place in "the movement of the mind towards some excellence"[1]—becomes requisite. While I do not consider myself digitally challenged, my theological métier is definitely not to be found at the intersection of science and theology. Rather, I am more of a Roman Catholic practical theologian who specializes in worship and the arts. These reflections, therefore, are not those of a technological specialist but more so of a middle aged, academic who is a digital amateur in the original sense of that word, for I do have a certain affinity for, even attachment to, technology.

With two other colleagues, I acquired my first computer in 1983 while writing a dissertation in Paris. There was some irony deciphering medieval manuscripts by day and inputting transcriptions at night on our IBM with dual floppy disk drive and astounding 64K memory. Over the years, I made the usual trek through the computer revolution from monochrome to color monitors to flat screens, accompanied by increasingly larger hard drives, smaller laptops, and the usual array of external drives, hand held devices, and other peripherals.

My personal pilgrimage paralleled an eventual commitment by my institution to digital technology boosted by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment. Because of that combination, I now teach in smart classrooms, am relatively adept at animating PowerPoint presentations, do most of my advis-

ing by email, and have recently converted my aging file of photocopied articles to a PDF library of nearly 1,000 titles. My graduate courses have been posted on two generations of Blackboard and now reside in cyberspace thanks to Moodle.

Like many of my colleagues, I am not a digital dinosaur. I have acquired some fluency, first with word processing, then with digitally enhanced teaching and even Internet research. While not exactly in the technological Stone Age, however, my middle-aged colleagues and I still speak "digital" as a second language. We remember radio B-TV (before television), grew up on pinball rather than video games, and still intuit that a telephone—even a cellular one—is designed for making telephone calls—not a platform for text messaging, weather reports, portable music, or photography.

As a consequence, my technological context—and that of many colleagues—is increasingly different from that of our students and their age cohort. This is true not only of students from dominant culture U.S. but also increasingly true of other domestic and international students. Consequently, rather than attempting some breezy assessment of technology's contribution to or unsuitability for the theological enterprise,[2] it may be more useful to consider how those of us engaged in theological education reflect theologically upon technology. These ruminations are particularly addressed to colleagues like myself who—according to available data[3]—still comprise the bulk of the faculties engaged in theological education in the United States today. Maybe if we can attend to our own theological presuppositions about technology and understand how such preconceptions affect not only how we teach but also what we teach, then perhaps we can enable our students to acquire the habitus for doing the same even more effectively than we do.

Defining technology

A requisite step before launching into any theological reflection upon technology is defining it. While the popular imagination often posits technology as synonymous with *digital*—treating it as though a late twentieth-century invention—technology is an ancient and enduring facet of human civilization. If culture can be considered what we make of creation,[4] technology could certainly be considered *how* we achieve this cultural fashioning. Generally understood as the process by which we produce tools for shaping our environment, technology—along with the arts—can be regarded as one of the enduring marks of civilization.[5] While it is true that nonhumanoid species have employed, even produced, "tools,"[6] there is little evidence that such tool-making advances the species in any dramatic way but rather remains more a repetitive than developmental aspect of such species. With humans, on the other hand, it is the advancement of technology that increasingly shapes our collective history.

It was Aristotle (d. 322 BCE) who offered the West not only an enduring epistemological framework for thinking about "technology" but an ethical one as well. In his *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle distinguished among three domains of knowing, corresponding to three states of knowing. *Theoria* (theory) is concerned with the "what" of existence and the eternal universals that undergird such existence. Its complimentary state of knowing is *episteme*. In its fullness, this type of knowing belongs to the gods but is also the goal of the philosopher. *Theoria* is its own goal and has little to do with the way we are to be in the world.

Radically different from the theoretical are two types of practical knowledge. Rather than concerned with the "what" of existence, these types of knowledge more attend to the "how" of acting in this existence. *Phronesis* (practical wisdom) and its complimentary state of knowing, *praxis* (doing), are concerned with acting in the world and the ethical consequences of those actions. *Praxis* in Aristotle's sense is thus not simple practice but an activity joined with a clear intention for the human good. Aristotle distinguishes this type of knowing and action from *techne* (skill) and its complimentary state of knowing, *poiesis* (poetry), which is concerned with the fabrication and use of things.

Over the past decade there has been a growing emphasis on recovering phronesis, or practical wisdom, as both a model and a goal for higher education. Among theological educators, Bernard Lee has made the case for the priority of *phronesis* over *episteme*, not only in theology but for the broader educational enterprise as well.[7] He has further argued that *phronesis/praxis* should always have a mediating role in theology, disallowing any direct move from theory to practice. Lee opines, "It is never enough to know how to do it and to do it. We need to know whether the kind of life we believe all people should be living will benefit from the doing."[8]

Lee's Aristotelian reconfiguration provides a lens for offering a preliminary definition of technology from a theological perspective. Theologically speaking, technology cannot simply be *techne*, for as Lee remarks, while "*techne* is not wrong, we'd not get far without it . . . without tenacious connections to praxis and *theoria*, *techne* is a loose canon."[9] Thus, from a theological perspective, technology is any process, tool, or other human fabrication that affects people's well being; it is more *praxis* than *techne* requiring *phronesis* rather than simple *poiesis*.

Examining our theological anthropologies

Thinking theologically about technology requires us to examine some of the presuppositions we bring to this reflection. I suspect that a significant number of us bring a hermeneutic of suspicion to bear when pondering contemporary technology. For example, those of us more comfortable with word processing than website construction may approach the Internet with more crinkled brow than hopeful anticipation. A few years ago my faculty

chose technology as the topic of our year-long faculty seminar. Through these monthly gatherings, various colleagues demonstrated how they were using technology—mostly Blackboard, PowerPoint, and the Internet—in their classes. One of the questions that surfaced most frequently was how to enable our students to assess the vast amount of religious material on the Internet. A subtle undertone to that conversation was a distinctive concern about the dangers of the Internet.

While not wanting to downplay the perils of the digital landscape, one wonders what theological anthropology undergirds our various approaches to contemporary technology. Stephen Bevans suggests that we "can work out of a theology that is basically creation-centered, or one can do theology from a fundamentally redemption-centered perspective."[10] Bevans goes on to explain that "a creation-centered orientation to theology is characterized by the conviction that human experience, and so context, is generally good. Its perspective is that grace builds on nature, but only because nature is *capable* of being built on."[11] In contrast, a redemption-centered theology "is characterized by the conviction that culture and human experience are either in need of a radical transformation or in need of total replacement. In this perspective, grace cannot build on or perfect nature because nature is something that is corrupt. In a real sense, therefore, grace replaces nature."[12]

Before launching into any theological reflection upon technology, it might be helpful to locate ourselves on the creation-redemption continuum. It may be that, especially when it comes to digital technologies and the Internet, those of us who are baby-boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) may instinctively approach technology more from a "redemption-" than a "creation-centered" perspective. Most of our seminary and divinity school classrooms, however, are filled with Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1980) and, increasingly, with members of the Y generation (born between 1981 and 1995).[13] The former were brought up on television, Atari, and personal computers.[14] The latter generation made its advent the same year as MTV; its cohort was brought up on Nintendo and Game Boys, and it is sometimes known as the "Internet Generation." That designation was confirmed by a 1999 America Online "Youth Cyberstudy" that polled 500 youth between the ages of 9 and 17. It found that approximately 63 percent of these youth preferred the Web over television, and 55 percent reported that they would rather go online than talk on the phone.[15] While a broad generalization, I think it fair to suggest that X and Y generation students of religion and theology are much more inclined toward a "creation-centered" perpective when it comes to digital technologies and the Internet—more inclined to see it as a grace than as something to be redeemed.

Ours is not the first age to bring different theological anthropologies to bear when confronted by emergent technologies. The famous twelfth-century duel of opinions between Suger of Saint-Denis (d. 1151) and Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) comes to mind. The technology in question was not digital but architec-

tural and decorative. The creation-centered Suger presided over the transformation of his monastic church through crossed vaulting, buttressed walls, and magnificent stained glass windows that resulted in a riot of luminosity that came to define Gothic.[16] From a more redemption-centered perspective, Bernard rejected the vision of Suger as harmful to the soul of a monk, and under his influence, his order's General Chapter of 1134 prohibited the use of stained glass, figurative carvings, and even the use of colors in copying manuscripts.[17]

Today, as well, religious leaders minister out of distinctive and often conflicting theological perspectives and anthropologies. As theological educators committed to shaping thoughtful and effective religious leaders for our own time, we need to develop a particular acuity for these theological deep structures—not only for our students, but first of all for ourselves. Attending is a well recognized first step in theological reflection.[18] The more personal attending we bring to the theological reflection process, the more effective that process will be. Such theological attending is particularly appropriate when confronting the new or unfamiliar, and for many of us that is digital technology.

Boundary crossing and appreciative inquiry

While attending is an important first step in theological reflection, it can be undermined by an unchecked theological anthropology that, for example, could change "attending" to "attending for the unredeemed." James and Evelyn Whitehead insist on a form of attending that requires "suspending judgment."[19] That is a goal more easily envisioned than achieved.

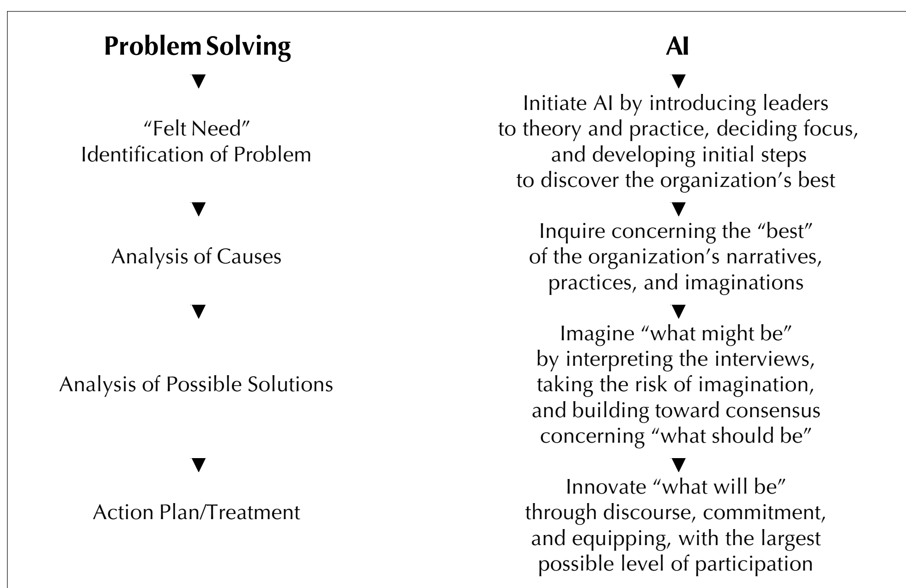
One perspective that may enable the suspension of judgment when attempting theological reflection on technology comes from contemporary missiology. For many religious communities the twentieth century was a time for rethinking mission. One aspect of that rethinking was a growing awareness of a necessary mutuality between mission sending and mission receiving communities. Sometimes dubbed "mission in reverse,"[20] this approach affirms that mission is a partnership in God between peoples and between cultures. From this post-colonial perspective, mission is not a one-way transfer of knowledge, culture, and salvation but a mutually enriching encounter at the personal, spiritual, and cultural levels.

One important basis for this approach to mission is the growing awareness that each culture is to be respected for its potential for mirroring the divine. In my own Roman Catholic tradition, the 1965 *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes)* from the Second Vatican Council demonstrated a new respect for world cultures. It specifically notes the importance and variability of culture (nn. 54–62). The document maintains that, because the Church belongs to no particular culture, it "can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church itself" (n. 58). Each Christian must strive to ensure that each cultural

manifestation is respected, while at the same time it is imbued with a genuinely human and religious spirit (n. 61). Such a perspective puts reverence rather than suspicion at the forefront of the boundary crossing we have traditionally called mission.

Might it not be helpful for theological educators, especially those of us of a certain age, to approach technology in a similar way? While not strictly speaking another "culture," this is certainly "another world" for many and a challenging form of boundary crossing. While many theological educators "speak" digital technology as a shared vernacular, it is not our first language, and there exists a certain "digital divide" not only between us and the experts but also between us and many of our students who grew up speaking digital as a first language. Let's face it: we grew up playing with Tinkertoys, and kindergartners are now being introduced to PDAs.[21] Like more traditional forms of boundary crossing, it is probable that we carry deep-seated "cultural" preferences and prejudices when crossing the digital divide. Maybe a more missional or cross-cultural perspective might provide a frame for us to approach technology with more reverence than suspicion. Despite where we are situated on the "creation-redemption" axis, pondering the digital world as a fresh context for mission in reverse might invite a more respectful predisposition when pondering the technological.

If one accepts the opinion that it could be useful to hold in check our suspicions when approaching modern technology and that theological educators could benefit from a less suspicious theological anthropology when it comes to technology, one aid to a type of "attending" that could nudge us toward the "creation" axis in the creation-redemption continuum is the strategy known as appreciative inquiry (AI). AI is a contribution to organizational



development that arose in the 1980s. Two key figures in AI were David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva[22] who challenged the problem solving approach that dominated the business and organizational consulting landscape of the era. Their contention was that if your beginning point in consulting is problem solving, then you will undoubtedly find problems, and end up with a "problem-focus" in your organization. Conversely, if your goal is to find the generative and hope-filled, you will find that as well, and it will become the focus of your organization. Mark Branson, who specifically explores AI as a ministerial tool, has provided a useful chart comparing the problem solving approach to AI.[23]

AI is based on the common sense wisdom that you will find what you are looking for and, organizationally, you will develop in the direction of your inquiry. The theological orientation of AI is clearly more creation- than redemption-centered. Because of its orientation, AI might make a pedagogical contribution to those of us engaged in intergenerational teaching—baby boomers engaging generations X and Y in the teaching-learning enterprise.

Previously we noted the move among some in theological education to emphasize *phronesis* as both a model and a goal for higher education. We previously noted Bernard Lee's case for the priority of *phronesis* over *episteme*, and the mediating role of *phronesis/praxis* in theology.[24] Other practical theologians have posited not only the importance of praxis for the theological enterprise but also its priority as a starting point both for theologizing and the theological education that prepares folk for the real life theologizing we call ministry.[25]

If there is validity in placing not only praxis at the center of the theological enterprise but also the experience of our students as a privileged starting point for reflection upon praxis, then those of us teaching across the digital divide might want to adopt at least the spirit if not the procedures of AI as a way to honor and not erase the technological experiences of our students. This is not suggesting that such experience is above critique or beyond reproach. On the other hand, it is also a powerful resource for theological reflection. If we allow a redemption-centered perspective to dominate our presuppositions about, reflections upon, and use of contemporary technology, then we might very well implicitly communicate to our students that one of the primordial languages of their generation is at least flawed if not intrinsically problematic.

Theologizing *with* to theologizing *from*

Many theological educators in the twenty-first century seem content to use developing technologies to support their teaching and learning. Reflecting on our theological presuppositions, considering where we are on the creation-redemption axis, exploring various technological divides in more missional frameworks, and employing tools such as AI could foster dispositions that might render us both more open to and effective with emerging technologies.

As theological educators, however, pondering our dispositions about technology as a material aid to our teaching and learning might not be sufficient. A further invitation that awaits us is the transition from theologizing *with* the aid of the technology of the day to theologizing *from* emerging technologies. While maybe not a part of our current religious imagination, the ability to theologize from contemporary technology is richly symbolic of a willingness to theologize not only for the age but from the age, resulting in a particular form of contextual theology. There is a rich theological tradition for employing the new ideas of an era for furthering the theological enterprise. Augustine drew on Neo-Platonism, Aquinas on rediscovered Aristotelian metaphysics, Rahner on Heidegger and so forth. If we agree that the theory-practice paradigm of theologizing is bankrupt and that theology must construct a mutual correlation between contemporary praxis and theology, then it is not just the thinking about technology that needs to be invited into theological discourse but technological *praxis*. Such praxis invites a twenty-first century theology with true phronetic potential.

Stephen Garner offers an intriguing example[26] of this type of engagement. He is prodded by the questions of bioethicist Ronald Cole-Turner, who queries:

> Can theology—that communal process by which the church's faith seeks to understand—can theology aim at understanding technology? Can we put the words *God* and *technology* together in any kind of meaningful sentence? Can theology guess what God is doing in today's technology? Or by our silence do we leave it utterly godless? Can we have a theology of technology that comprehends, gives meaning to, dares to influence the direction and set limits to this explosion of new powers?[27]

In response to these probing questions, Garner suggests that current technological practice might provide new "metaphors of God as a technologist—a hacker—and of human beings made in the image of God being technologists after their creator."[28] Rather than engaging some theoretical aspect of contemporary technology for theologizing, Garner reflects upon a more mundane practice, "hacking." He believes this practice is filled with metaphoric promise for reconsidering who God is and what it means for contemporary human beings to share this *imago Dei*. He writes, "The metaphor of God as hacker incorporates into it the concept of God as creator of new things as well as a certain playfulness. A God who, in this particular imagery, is defined by being creative and enjoying it."[29]

In my own teaching, I have increasingly drawn upon technology for its metaphoric promise for exploring traditional teachings. For example, one of the most challenging concepts to communicate in sacramental theology is the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. The official teaching is that Christ is really, truly, and "substantially"

present. "Substance" in this definition is a concept derived from Aristotle's metaphysics. It is a particular view of "essence" that combines "matter" and "form" existing on its own, without any need of a particular subject or object. Thus, while there are many chairs in the world, they all share the substance of "chairness," which is not confined by any single chair.

This idea of substance, which still undergirds official Catholic teaching, is notoriously difficult to understand, even by those who have studied philosophy. For many theological students and ordinary believers, the metaphysical concept of substance often collapses into physicality. Thus, when the Roman Catholic Church asserts that Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the Eucharist, many wrongly equate that with Christ being physically present, even though that is not the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Negotiating the terrain between "substantial reality" and "physical reality" can be facilitated by a wide range of analogous experiences of "reality" and "presence" mediated by contemporary technology. The telephone, a familiar and nonthreatening form of technology for most age groups and cultures, is particularly helpful here. I begin by inviting students to reflect upon their experiences of using a telephone. In particular they are asked to consider to what extent they experience the person with whom they are conversing by telephone "as really present." In the discussion students can distinguish between someone being physically present to them, and yet that same person being really present to them in a technological way, even if they are at some distance. Further reflection concerns how this digital presence does not reproduce physical presence but an electronic symbol of that presence through electronically translated voice production. The analogy for Roman Catholic sacramental understanding of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is next explored. Just as our conversation partner on the telephone is really present to us, but in an electronic rather than a physical way, so is Christ's presence real but nonphysical; it is a real, sacramental presence.

Substituting electronic technology for Aristotelian metaphysics is not only more understandable for most of my students but also many times a first for them—employing contemporary technology as part of a theological method. Besides the value of accessibility, the exploration of technological analogies rather than Aristotelian metaphysics also strikes me as an important move for Catholic sacramental theologians as well, given that Aristotelian metaphysics does not have much philosophical currency in contemporary thought.

From teaching to sending

In the late 1960s I took my first course in the philosophy of education. A gifted pedagogue spoke often of the etymology of "education," and inspired us to be "leaders of the mind." He trained us to teach, to motivate, to lead; I was convinced that if I did so my students would "follow" me just as my colleagues and I followed him. Some forty years later I am still inspired by the memory but

no longer embrace the goal. With the shift to student-centered or at least subject-centered[30] learning, my teaching-learning has become less about leading and more about mission, less about imparting ideas and more about engaging in theological reflection, less about theory and more about *phronesis*. In the process, my own intellectual life has been transformed, largely by the students and colleagues who inspire me with their dedication and challenge me in their difference.

As I teach and learn, graced and confronted by more and more difference, I recognize that I am helping to prepare ministers who will see a world I will not understand, will minister in places I have never visited, and will confront ecclesial and social issues that are beyond my experience. Simply teaching them what I learned is insufficient for the worlds they do and will confront. My hope is to help equip them for the future with skills and principles, methods and insights that will endure even as knowledge so rapidly increases and changes. From my perspective, the center of theological education is engendering a habitus for disciplined theological reflection for future ministers. Given the dynamic force of technology today, it seems at least a lost opportunity, if not an educational failure, to overlook the theological import and implications of the digital age for the ministerial enterprise and future mission.

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ENDNOTES

1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 160, art. 2.

2. For this see, for example, Ian G. Barbour, *Ethics in an Age of Technology* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); Albert Borgmann, *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003); Ruth Conway, *Choices at the Heart of Technology: A Christian Perspective* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); Mary Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All That We Can't Leave Behind (Communication, Culture & Theology)* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); David H. Hopper, *Technology, Theology, and the Idea of Progress* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); Murray Jardine, *The Making and Unmaking of Technological Society: How Christianity can Save Modernity from Itself* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004); David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999); Paul A. Soukup, "The Influence of Information Technologies on Theology," *Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (2001) 366ff.; William A. Stahl, *God and the Chip: Religion and the Culture of Technology* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999).

3. See, for example, Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller and Katarina Schuth, "Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty," *Auburn Studies* no. 10 (February 2005) at http://www.auburnsem.org/images/publications/pdf_11.pdf (accessed May 8, 2005).

4. William A. Dyrness, *The Earth is God's: A Theology of American Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 58.

5. For a comprehensive overview of the role of technology in human civilization see W. Bernard Carlson, ed., *Technology in World History,* 7 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

6. Chimpanzees are documented to be the most effective tool-users next to humans. On the diversity of tool-using habits of chimpanzees see, for example, William C. McGrew, *Chimpanzee Material Culture: Implications for Human Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

7. See, for example, Bernard Lee's "Practical Theology: Its Character and Possible Implications for Higher Education," *Current Issues in Higher Education* 14, no. 2 (December 1994) 25–36; also, "Practical Theology as Phronetic," *APT Occasional Papers* 1 (1998) 1–19.

8. Lee, "Practical Theology as Phronetic," 14.

9. Lee, "Practical Theology: Its Character and Possible Implications for Higher Education," 34.

10. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology,* rev. ed. (2002; repr., Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 21.

11. Ibid. This is akin to what David Tracy would consider doing theology out of an "analogical" imagination in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), especially 405–421.

12. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology,* 21–22; In Tracy's language, this would mean theologizing out of a dialectical rather than analogical imagination, ibid.

13. Not surprisingly, much of the best demographic information on these cohorts is supplied by marketing companies. See, for example, OnPoint Marketing and Promotions at http://www.onpoint-marketing.com/ (accessed May 9, 2005).

14. See, for example, Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 13–14 passim.

15. http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/research_documents/statistics/internet/popular_web_activities.cfm (accessed May 9, 2005).

16. Suger's own ebullient description of the transformed church reads, in part: *Claret enim claris quod clare concopulatur, Et quod perfundit lux nova, claret opus* (For bright is that which is brightly coupled with the bright, And bright is the noble edifice which is pervaded by the new light), from his *De Administratione* 29, in *Abbot Suger*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Erwin Panofsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 50–51.

17. For an introduction to Bernard's artistic views, see Georges Duby, *Saint Bernard: L'art cistercien* (Paris, Flammarion, 1979) esp. 11–12.

18. Thus the celebrated "attend-assert-pastoral response" of James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, rev. ed. (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 13–14.

19. Ibid., 14.

20. See, for example, Claude Marie Barbour, "Seeking Justice and Shalom in the City," *International Review of Mission* 73, no. 291 (1984): 305.

21. Young Mi Chang, Laurie Mullen, Matthew Stuve, "Are PDAs Pedagogically Feasible for Young Children?" *T.H.E. Journal* 32, no. 8 (March 2005): 40–42.

22. See Cooperrider and Srivastva "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life," *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 1 (1987): 129–169; more recently their Appreciative Management and Leadership, rev. ed. (Euclid, OH: Williams Custom

Publishing, 1999). A good general introduction to AI is Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, 2nd ed. (Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing Co., 1998).

23. Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 22.

24. This view finds resonance in the writings of David Tracy who argues that, while it is possible to do theology from a "theory-practice" perspective (in which the theory is unaffected by practice), and even from a "practice-practice" perspective (which negates the value of theory), neither of these does justice to theory or praxis. Thus, Tracy argues that more appropriate is a mutually critical correlation, in which both theory and practice critique each other and collaboratively contribute to the development of description, normativity and understanding. David Tracy, "The Foundations of Practical Theology," in *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World,* ed. Don S. Browning (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983): 61–82.

25. The Whiteheads in their previously noted work certainly give priority to experience in theological reflection; for a sampling of others see James Fowler, "The Emerging New Shape of Practical Theology," *Pastoraltheologische Informationen* 18 (1996): 206–223; Carol Lakey Hess, "Becoming Midwives to Justice: A Feminist Approach to Practical Theology," *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, eds. Denise M. Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998): 52–73; Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 650–672. For reflections on the role of experience in the enterprise of theological education, two classics are Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Way of Shared Praxis* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) and Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley, eds., *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

26. Stephen Garner, "Hacking the Divine: A Possible Metaphor for Theology-Technology Engagement," *Virtual Theology Colloquium* (February 11-12, 2005) http://www.greenflame.org/docs/Garner-HackingtheDivine.pdf (accessed April 9, 2005).

27. Ronald Cole-Turner, "Science, Technology and Mission," *The Local Church in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century*, eds. Max L. Stackhouse, Tim Dearborn, and Scott Paeth (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 100–112, here 104 as cited by Garner, *Virtual Theology Colloquium,* 1.

28. Garner, "Hacking the Divine," 2.

29. Ibid., 8.

30. Parker J. Palmer's preferred term; his *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998): esp. 115–140.