

CHAPTER 4

Religion and Digital Technology: Future Considerations

By some estimates, humanity is on the verge of a new cognitive revolution that would take human beings to a drastically different existential state from that which took place with the first cognitive revolution about 70,000 years ago.¹ That event in human history allowed Homo Sapiens to drastically change the way they communicated and associated with one another, and in the course of history would lead to great human developments in agriculture, industry, science and presently, digital technology. It is the latter two—science and digital technology—many believe, that will usher humanity into a new reality that will raise many new questions about human’s relationship to technology and even the very nature of what it means to be human. Until the present, the responsibility to interpret and evaluate human developments has usually been taken up by philosophy, religion and deep thinkers from various fields of study such as history, anthropology and psychology. This chapter considers the role of religion in this new milieu and asks the question whether religion can still maintain relevancy in the face of a new scientific and technocentric consciousness that seemingly contradicts traditional religious sensibility. Here, we specifically ask whether religion ought to have a voice in the face of the colossal scientific and social shifts brought about by digital technology. There seems to be a persistent, if not growing opposition against religions inserting their voices into matters of science and technology, maintaining that the religious perspective is not only unnecessary and irrelevant, but also counterproductive in the formation of the digital future.

Technological Shifts to Be Expected

Before delving into the question of the role of religion vis-à-vis scientific and technological developments, it would be important to consider some of significant digital advancements expected for the short-term and long-term future. According to futurist Gerd Leonhard, there are many “megashifts” that are on the verge of taking place in technological development.² Briefly, the most important megashifts include:

¹ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Harpers Collin Publishers, 2016), 260, epub version.

² Gerd Leonhard, *Technology Vs. Humanity: The Coming Clash Between Man and Machine* (UK: Fast Future Publishing Ltd., 2016).

Digitalization: This is different from “digitization,” which is the process of converting something from the analog to the digital form that enables it to be processed by a computer. The most common types of digitization is converting typewritten text, VHS videos, and LP music into the digital formats.³ Rather digitalization refers more to the way many dimensions of modern life are reshaped and adapted to digital communication and media infrastructures.⁴ In terms of business, Gartner defines digitalization as “use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities; it is the process of moving to a digital business.”⁵ This new model affects every sector and old businesses must either transform or go into extinction.

Mobilization: This refers to a reality in which digital technology is with you everywhere you go. Although wired devices will continue to be used in the near future, the amount of internet traffic that goes through them are drastically reduced. Cisco estimates that by 2022, traffic from wireless and mobile devices will account for 71 percent of total IP traffic.⁶ Mobilization means that digital technology is also on our body anywhere, anytime: on our hand (phone, tablet), on our wrist (watch), on our face (glasses, contact lens), and in the future in our brain in the form of brain-computer interfaces (BCI) or implants.

Screenification: A screen replaces everything that used to appear on paper (newspapers, magazines, restaurant menus). Screens with touch buttons will replace what used to be knobs and dials. Screens will replace display boards, billboards, and information boards. They can also serve as replacements for paintings and photographs hung on the wall so that a screen depicting a beautiful natural scenery can be hung on your apartment window that when open has a view of the neighbor’s brick wall. In the future, a screen may also be placed on our eyes to augment our vision to see details in such ways that we may have never been able to with our own 1.0 eyes.

Disintermediation: A prominent trend taking place is the ending of the practice of intermediation by going direct. We can access a musician’s work directly without going through record labels as in the past. Writers can publish their work without having a publisher. People can use the internet to sell things or even rent out their home

³ Jason Bloomberg, “Digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation: confuse them at your peril,” *Forbes* (29 April 2018), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonbloomberg/2018/04/29/digitization-digitalization-and-digital-transformation-confuse-them-at-your-peril/#1b48dc022f2c>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Gartner, <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/digitalization>

⁶ “Cisco Annual Internet Report (2018-2023) White Paper,” <https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/collateral/service-provider/visual-networking-index-vni/white-paper-c11-741490.html>

to tourists without going through an agent. Banks can be bypassed by using various apps such as Papal and Facebook Money.

Transformation: This term assumes something more organic than “change” or “innovation.” It implies turning into a new “creature” that can measure up to the time and condition presented by the new milieu. Transformation takes place both on the personal, social and economic level. For human beings, transformation in the future might mean becoming cyborgs or genetically engineered in such a way that results in greater physical health and longevity.

Intelligization: This shift has to do with the development of artificial intelligence (AI), which is seen as key to the running of society in the present and future. According to *Oxford Reference*, AI is “the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.”⁷ *Quartz* provides a more understandable explanation of AI as follows:

Artificial intelligence is a software, or a computer program, with a mechanism to learn. It then uses that knowledge to make a decision in a new situation, as humans do. The researchers building this software try to write code that can read images, text, video, or audio, and learn something from it. Once a machine has learned, that knowledge can be put to use elsewhere.⁸

This means that machines are created in such way that through algorithms, they have the ability to learn from data provided and are able to employ that knowledge towards decision making in the same way that a human would. Unlike human, however, machines do not need rest and can process a vast amount of data in a very short time. AI is already being used in a widespread manner with such things as facial recognition on Facebook photos and Google Translate. Advanced development of AI will result in the ability of machines to do many tasks once reserved for human, such as driving a vehicle or diagnosing disease.

Automation: This is a process in which human tasks are replaced by machines, and is closely connected with digitalization and the development of artificial intelligence. Automation takes place not only in the blue-collar sector but eventually

⁷ *Oxford Reference*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095426960>.

⁸ Dave Gershgor, “The Quartz guide to artificial intelligence: What is it, why is it important, and should we be afraid?” *Quartz* (10 September 2017.) <https://qz.com/1046350/the-quartz-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-what-is-it-why-is-it-important-and-should-we-be-afraid/>.

will be prevalent in the white-collar sector as well. The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2022, 42 percent of work will be carried out by machines while only 58 percent will be done by human. Even with those jobs still occupied by human, WEF warns that significant training will be required in order for people to stay productive and employable in their work.⁹ During the Covid-19 pandemic, automation was hastened into use in many industries in the effort to reduce the number of people having to congregate in a particular place, and thus increasing the risk of infection.

Anticipation: This development is closely connected with artificial intelligence (AI) in which machines are able to process all the different data available to it in order to anticipate future events. Your personal AI assistant can anticipate changes in your schedule in order to reschedule appointments or rebook airline tickets. Your AI doctor can examine all your bio data and anticipate future health issues such as cancer or diabetes. Computer algorithms used by law enforcement can predict where a crime may soon occur by examining all the various data available to it. This will be greatly enhanced by the internet of things (IoT), in which not only people but also animals and objects are all connected on a network and can share data about themselves or the environment around them.

Robotization: The creation of robots to assist in the daily life of human is expected to be more conspicuous. With the advance of artificial intelligence at exceptional speed, technologists believe that the creation of autonomous hyper-intelligent machines is not far away. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in some restaurants, customers were served by robots instead of human waiters as a measure of safety.¹⁰ Robots were also used by some hospitals to take medicine to patients to decrease human contact between patients and the medical staff.¹¹ Prices for robots will decrease as more people buy them and science makes advances in components such as agility, natural language understanding, image recognition and battery power—things that make robots more aesthetically attractive and useful. In a more sinister prospect, robots will also be created to engage in warfare between nations and states, and could be activated for deadly missions.

⁹ G. Dautovic, "Automation and job loss statistics in 2020—the robots are coming," *Fortunly* (17 November 2019), <https://fortunly.com/statistics/automation-job-loss-statistics#gref>.

¹⁰ Joe Guzskowski, "Covid-19 clears the path for more restaurant robots," *Restaurant Business* (17 July 2020), <https://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com/technology/covid-19-clears-path-more-restaurant-robots>.

¹¹ "Robots to deliver meal, medication to Covid-19 patients in S'pore," *Bangkok Post* (5 March 2020), <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1872349/robot-to-deliver-meals-medication-to-covid-19-patients-in-spore>

Effects of the Shifts on Humanity

William Gibson, a science fiction writer widely credited with creating a subgenre called cyberpunk, said, “Technologies are morally neutral until we apply them.”¹² Much of the consequences that come out will depend on the intent and the actual application of those individuals and organizations who decide to make use of the technological inventions. Despite the many positive effects that technological advances will bring to human life in terms of health, economic and social benefits, negative consequences can also appear, taking humanity towards undesired directions.

Loss of Privacy

Living in a digitally inter-connected world, while there are enormous benefits in being able to share and access information, the risks of loss of privacy is real. In the age of Google search and social media, we are already forced to make Faustian bargains in order to be able to use free and convenient services provided by a few powerful organizations. If one finds disconcerting the lyrics to the song “Every breath you take” by The Police,

*Every breath you take and every move you make
Every bond you break, every step you take,
I'll be watching you
Every single day, every word you say
Every game you play, every night you stay,
I'll be watching you,*

one should know that this is indeed happening on the internet – to everyone. Every search we make, every like we hit, every comment we post, every video we click, every product we seek, information about us is being noted by computer algorithms, which based on all the collected data about us, will provide us with product advertisements and content that will most likely appeal to our interests and sensibility. Loss of privacy is not just about companies trying to make a profit by harvesting personal information about us. Technological developments can lead to a society where we are unceasingly being observed by the authority in the name of maintaining social order. In Thailand, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone is expected to scan a QR code when they enter public places such as shopping centers, supermarkets, government buildings, and beauty salons, etc. According to the government, this will facilitate

¹² William Gibson Interview, <http://josefsson.net/gibson/>

contact tracing in the case there is a community infection.¹³ According to the report “The Global Expansion of AI Surveillance,” the proliferation of AI around the world is taking place at a rapid pace. “A growing number of states are deploying advanced AI surveillance tools to monitor, track, and surveil citizens to accomplish a range of policy objectives—some lawful, others that violate human rights, and many of which fall into a murky middle ground.”¹⁴ It is not surprising that China, an authoritarian state, is the most significant driver of AI surveillance worldwide. Huawei alone provides surveillance technology to at least 50 countries. This compares to the largest Japanese company NEC Corporation with 14 countries, and the largest American company IBM with 11 countries. Because of China’s long experience of building a system of digital surveillance with its own citizens, its know-how is highly sought after by regimes bent on curtailing individual freedom and civil liberties.¹⁵ In the future, the development of AI and Internet of Things (IoT) may lead to the biggest surveillance network humanity has ever experienced. Everyone will be monitored and tracked everywhere, all the time and from every angle.

Loss of Job

The development of AI and automation will no doubt have significant impact on the job market, where job loss will be seen in both the blue as well as the white-collar sectors. In the digital revolution, if robots could do most things that people can do—and a better job at that—the number of jobs left for human will be severely limited. Business owners set their priority at profit making, which makes investment in robots that do not take a salary, break, sick or maternity leave an obvious choice. It is not hard science, however, how many jobs will be lost due to automation. In 2013, Oxford academics Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne co-authored a widely cited paper (over 4,000 times) stating that by the mid-2030s, 47 percent of US jobs are at high risk of AI replacement. The top 5 included telemarketers, insurance underwriters, sports referees, cashiers and chefs.¹⁶ However, recently, the authors published an article emphasizing that the idea that half of the jobs in the US will be automated is a misunderstanding of the paper. The authors wrote:

¹³ “New anti-Covid phone app for use when entering shops,” Bangkok Post (14 May 2020),

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1918092/new-anti-covid-phone-app-for-use-when-entering-shops>

¹⁴ Steven Feldstein, “The Global Expansion of AI Surveillance,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (17 September 2019), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/09/17/global-expansion-of-ai-surveillance-pub-79847>.

¹⁵ Alina Polyakova and Chris Meserole, “Exporting digital authoritarianism: the Russian and Chinese Models,” Brookings Institute, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/FP_20190827_digital_authoritarianism_polyakova_meserole.pdf.

¹⁶ Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, “The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation?” *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 114 (2017): 254-280.

Our study wasn't even a prediction. It was an estimate of how exposed existing jobs are to recent developments in artificial intelligence and mobile robotics. It said nothing about the pace at which jobs will be automated away. What it did suggest is that 47% of jobs are automatable from a technological capabilities point of view... Our estimates have often been taken to imply an employment apocalypse. Yet that is not what we intended or suggested. All we showed is that the potential scope of automation is vast, just as it was at the eve of the Second Industrial Revolution, before electricity and the internal combustion engine rendered many of the jobs that existed in 1900 redundant.¹⁷

In reality, the impact of AI and automation on jobs will vary according to various economies. There are three possible results: eliminating jobs, enhancing existing jobs, and creating new jobs. A study of 11 Asian economies by *MIT Technology Review*, predicts that in the next five years, on average automation will result in elimination of 12 percent of jobs while 8 percent of the jobs will be enhanced by AI capabilities. In all but one economy, the number of jobs eliminated exceed those created. Emerging markets such as Vietnam and Indonesia where the manufacturing sector is large and process-driven, jobs eliminated outnumber jobs enhanced by two to one.¹⁸

Growing Inequality

Even though technological progress has created opportunities for many, there is a worrisome trend towards increasing global inequality. According to Oxfam, in 2018 the 26 richest people in the world owned as much as 50 percent of the bottom half in the world. Between 2017 and 2018, a new person was added to the global billionaire list every two days. Yet, nearly half of humanity was making it on less than 5.50 USD a day.¹⁹ There is concern that technological progress, instead of mitigating this situation, ends up exacerbating it even more because most of the wealth and power is concentrated in global tech or technology related giants such as Microsoft, Apple and Amazon. Development of AI and automation will result in profits skyrocketing for these firms while people are losing jobs and regular income. The irony is that AI will most likely be used by powerful companies to figure out how to selectively address various issues plaguing human society, at the same time maximize productivity and

¹⁷ Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, "Automation and the future of work—understanding the numbers," Oxford Martin School (13 April 2018), <https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/blog/automation-and-the-future-of-work-understanding-the-numbers/>.

¹⁸ "Asia's AI agenda—AI and human capital," *MIT Technology Review* (2019), <https://s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/mitr-intl/AsiaAITalent.pdf>.

¹⁹ Oxfam, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/5-shocking-facts-about-extreme-global-inequality-and-how-even-it>

profit for themselves, but not employed to address the very problem of inequality which the very development of AI is a significant contributing factor.

Some have even envisioned a future in which inequality will be prevalent due to unequal access to certain revolutionary technological developments. The Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari presents a possibility where AI is applied to bioengineering which helps humans to upgrade their physical health, lengthen their life span, and increase their cognitive abilities. In this case, wealthy people will take advantage of these opportunities while the poor are left behind, creating a giant gap between them. Human society might be split into biological castes with real differences between the haves and the have-nots.²⁰ Needless to say, the rich and powerful, or the superhuman elite will constitute a small percentage of the total population; however, they are the ones who control and have access to all the data, the most important asset of the digital era. It is no wonder why tech giants such as Google, Facebook, Baidu and Tencent are racing to amass as much data as they possibly can. Every little bit of data that we are giving (voluntarily or unknowingly) to these companies by using their free email services, chatting and photo sharing apps, and entertainment platforms is contributing to their long term aim at data hegemony. The more personal data are given to governments and corporations, the more risk we have in losing our social, economic and political control to them.

Social Instability

Andrew Yang, former 2020 US Presidential candidate, in his first interview about his campaign taking place at a Thai restaurant in Manhattan addressed the issue of social instability that could result from unwise management of technological development. “All you need is self-driving cars to destabilize society,” Yang said. “That one innovation will be enough to create riots in the street. And we’re about to do the same thing to retail workers, call center workers, fast-food workers, insurance companies, accounting firms.”²¹ The outlook proposed by Yang and others has been characterized as “robot apocalypse,” which warns of a rather extreme and pessimistic economic and social future. Although reports have painted both rosy as well as gloomy job futures as a result of automation, many have become increasingly uneasy with monopolistic behavior exhibited by tech giants who are trying to build ultra-efficient machines and other instruments to augment human life. While benefits brought about by technological progress is undeniable, questions arise as to whether the negative

²⁰ Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2018): Kindle edition.

²¹ Kevin Roose, “His 2020 Campaign Message: The Robots Are Coming,” *New York Times* (10 February 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/10/technology/his-2020-campaign-message-the-robots-are-coming.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Ftechnology&fbclid=IwAROrPXVy5qafyLiJXqKFnKiBgid3mbm45acWoDTailMYSkzJ3J3bNuk9oXc>

impact will result in social instability when new genetic treatments that could extend one's longevity could only be accessed by the wealthy elite. Likewise, will the access to brain-computer interface (BCI) implants help the rich to gain cognitive capability but cause resentment among the underprivileged and lead to civil unrest and terrorism? Social instability in the forms of protests, demonstrations, riots and violent uprisings can result not only from massive number of people's livelihood being severely affected by a sudden influx of robots but also from the resentment towards very real inequality—economically, socially, politically, and even biologically—brought about by technological progress.

World Peace

World organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the Red Cross are placing their hopes on AI's ability to process massive amount of data and analyze complex factors that contribute to humanitarian disasters such as famine, mass migration as well as political and religious conflicts among peoples and nations.²² By predicting where and when these happenings would take place based on available information, efforts could be made in order to thwart the realization of such calamities. There is an optimistic thinking that Big Data and tools to analyze them will ultimately lead to solving many issues plaguing the world.

Although there are researchers such as Timo Honkela who are trying to find ways to build a “peace machine” that can bridge human divides in language, culture and emotions,²³ others are building AI based weapons. According to an article in Forbes magazine,

The rapid development of AI weaponization is evident across the board: navigating and utilizing unmanned naval, aerial, and terrain vehicles, producing collateral-damage estimations, deploying “fire-and-forget” missile systems and using stationary systems to automate everything from personnel systems and equipment maintenance to the deployment of surveillance drones, robots and more are all examples.²⁴

Many individuals, organizations and governments are involved in the debate around ethical issues surrounding AI and autonomous weapon systems. The UN

²² “How AI could unlock world peace,” BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190219-how-artificial-intelligence-could-unlock-world-peace>

²³ Niko Nurminen, “Could artificial intelligence lead to world peace?” Aljazeera (30 May 2017), <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/scientist-race-build-peace-machine-170509112307430.html>

²⁴ Jayshree Pandya, “The weaponization of artificial intelligence,” Forbes (14 January 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cognitiveworld/2019/01/14/the-weaponization-of-artificial-intelligence/#7834fc433686>

Secretary-General António Guterres stated in a Tweet on 26 March 2019, “Autonomous machines with the power and discretion to select targets and take lives without human involvement are politically unacceptable, morally repugnant and should be prohibited by international law.”²⁵ To date, 28 countries have called for prohibition of fully autonomous weapons also known by the ominous title of “killer robots.”²⁶ Notably among them is the Holy See and China. China, however, only calls for banning the use of fully autonomous weapons but not for their development and production. Peter Singer, a specialist in 21st century warfare commented, “They’re simultaneously working on the technology while trying to use international law as a limit against their competitors.”²⁷ It is not surprising considering China is on the list of countries alongside the US, Russia, the UK, Israel, and South Korea who are involved in the rat race in developing these types of weapons.²⁸ The international diplomatic process to set up norms on their development and use has, unfortunately, been much slower than the pace by which the competitors have engaged in their research and development. The commitment of the United States to this race is undoubtedly stemmed by China’s own determination to challenge American place as the world’s superpower. President Xi Jinping has set the goal for China to become the world leader in AI by 2030 with its military innovation an essential part of this agenda.

In summary, as the positive effects of digital technology on human society are many, the negative impact is equally wide ranging. This section highlights these potential negative consequences not because the author adopts an anti-technology worldview, but because there is no denying that scientific and technological development, which generally aims at human advancement, is fraught with peril. Even if scientists and technologists have honorable intentions, the application of their discoveries take place in a political, economic and social construct replete with individuals and institutions vying for power, wealth and control. This is not to mention that scientists and technologists are often employed and supported by such institutions, so that the very basis and motivation for their research from the start are already tainted by selfish goals and purposes. This can easily be seen in the race among the world superpowers as each try to be the first to develop a vaccine for the coronavirus. According to Larry Gostin, professor of Global Health Law at Georgetown University,

²⁵ “Autonomous weapons that kill must be banned, insists UN chief,” UN News (25 March 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035381>

²⁶ “Campaign to stop killer robots,” 22 November 2018, https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KRC_CountryViews22Nov2018.pdf

²⁷ Melissa K. Chan, “China and the US are are fighting a major battle over killer robots and the future of AI,” Time, 13 September 2019, <https://time.com/5673240/china-killer-robots-weapons/>

²⁸ Justin Rohrlich, “Report: Kill the idea of killer robots before they kill us,” Quartz (9 May 2019), <https://qz.com/1614684/killer-robots-must-be-stopped-pax-tells-the-world/>

a successful vaccine will be “the most important human resource in modern history.”²⁹ It can be used strategically to garner political influence, exercise political payback, and as a negotiation tool in a host of international issues. Indeed, the political standing of a country as well as international alliances could drastically change as a result of the outcome of the vaccine Phase III trials. It is within this environment that the role of the religious voice in contributing to the development and formation of the digital future is discussed.

The Role and Relevance of Religion

In this increasingly technocentric social and economic construct, is there a place for traditional religion to contribute its voice and wisdom? In the new context, it seems more plausible for Silicon Valley to be seen as the new Jerusalem and Google and Facebook to be the new megachurches of the 21st century. What is the relevance of religion when Sergey Mikhaylovich Brin, co-founder of Google openly declared that the perfect search engine “would be like the Mind of God”?³⁰ And one would bet that Google is ambitious enough to invest significant resources into creating an entity that is omniscient yet does no evil, at least according to Google’s understanding of “evil”.³¹ Why need deities for answers when there is Google “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful,”³² given out freely not unlike divine graces bestowed upon human beings by their loving Creator? It is not surprising that a Google search using the keywords “God and Google” in July 2020 turned up two billion entries.

In their book *Ethics and Religion in the Age of Social Media*, Kevin Healey and Robert H. Woods Jr. critique the techno-centric worldview propagated by tech giants in Silicon Valley that employs language which seemingly imitates that of religious traditions like Christianity and Buddhism to present “quasi-religious ideological biases” and a tech-based “moral catechism.”³³ They write:

Make no mistake about it, this catechism is as much like any other set of religious rites and rituals that re-define who we are, how we should act, and what kinds of human beings we should be. In the process of

²⁹ Elizabeth Ralph, “What happens if China gets the Covid-19 vaccine first?” Politico (31 August 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/08/31/china-covid-19-vaccine-first-401636>

³⁰ Avani Venkatesh, “Limits of Human Knowledge: How Search Engines Will Never Become the Mind of God,” *The American Bazaar* (29 October 2019), <https://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2019/04/10/can-humans-know-everything-437027/>

³¹ “Don’t be evil” was Google’s unofficial motto from 2000 to 2018.

³² Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Goolization of Everything (And Why We Should Worry)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 2.

³³ Kevin Healey and Robert H. Woods Jr., *Ethics and Religion in the Age of Social Media: Digital Proverbs for Responsible Citizens* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), Kindle version.

setting for certain do's and don'ts for the proper digital living, the catechism falsely equates technological capacities with specific human virtues, for example, equating information with wisdom and transparency with authenticity, to name a few.³⁴

The authors declared that one of their purposes in writing the book was to express their “prophetic rage” in response to “an agitated awareness that something is wrong with a growing technological mindedness that privileges strident individualism over moral responsibility and elevates technical skill and efficiency over non-instrumental virtues such as moderation and humility.”³⁵ The authors believe they are speaking on behalf of all people “who are interested in fostering a humane collaboration between people and machines that does not subvert human dignity to profit and efficiency.”³⁶

Religious Myths Are Incompatible with Modern Society

If the observations made by Healey and Woods are accurate, at the same time that technologists are taking on a quasi-religious façade, there is a growing tendency to discredit and disregard traditional religious voices. One of the oft stated arguments is that the religious worldview is not applicable to the modern scientific understanding of the universe. Religious beliefs simply represent stories and myths that present an outdated view of the world. They may have served their purpose in the past in order to explain various natural phenomena, to make sense out of overwhelming events in human life, to maintain communal and social cohesion, and even to support agricultural success. Harari writes in his book *Homo Deus*, “In ancient agricultural societies, most religions revolved not around metaphysical questions and the afterlife, but around the very mundane issue of increasing agricultural output. Thus the Old Testament God *never* promised any rewards or punishments after death.” Instead, Harari points out, God promised rain and a favorable harvest for those who obeyed him, and famine and hunger for those who turned to idolatry.³⁷ In a debate with Dr. Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury at Cambridge on the topic of the relevance of religion in the 21st century, prominent atheist professor Richard Dawkins asserted, “[Religion] peddles false explanations where real explanations could have been offered, false explanations that get in the way of the enterprise of discovering real explanations.”³⁸ For many, scriptures are irrelevant as a resource for

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Harari, *Homo Deus*, 85 (epub version).

³⁸ Ben Kendall, “Religion is redundant and irrelevant,” Independent (1 February 2013), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/religion-is-redundant-and-irrelevant-richard-dawkins-takes-on-ex-archbishop-of-canterbury-dr-rowan-8476499.html>

resolving issues such as environmental degradation, disease and famine because knowledge and wisdom can come from efficiently analyzing existing data. Kate Crawford, a researcher at Microsoft identifies this thinking as “Big Data Fundamentalism,” which is, “the idea that with larger data sets, we get closer to objective truth.”³⁹ Ancient religious books, therefore, have nothing to offer especially when it comes to technical and policy issues. Harari asks, “Holy Scriptures may have been relevant in the Middle Ages, but how can they guide us in an era of artificial intelligence, bioengineering, global warming, and cyberwarfare?”⁴⁰

Calling out religion and trying to displace the religious voice from modern society for having “myths” seems arbitrary and unduly biased towards religion. In speaking about myths, it would not be erroneous to say that there have been thousands, indeed millions of myths created throughout human history. In addition to religious myths, one may even identify national myths, social myths, cultural myths, political myths, economic myths, and in this new milieu, techno-myths. Notwithstanding how the nature, role and function of these categories of myths might differ from one another, if one accepts the naturalistic model in how the world operates and carries on, as proponents for the exclusion of religion would seem to do, then one must agree that in the social selection processes, certain myths have come into existence then died out while others continue to be promulgated and employed in human life. If certain religious myths (and any kind of myth for that matter) persist until today, may it be in books or in the collective consciousness of people, then perhaps there are certain spiritual, cultural, social and humanistic values that enable them to withstand the competition. If we live in a world of myths, why choose to retain certain myths while discarding others? Who gets to make that choice? Why not let the various myths play their own roles and see how things come out? Isn't this the rule of natural selection? The fact that we can draw up two billion entries with the keywords “Google is God” seems to indicate that there is some myth-making efforts (intentionally or otherwise) taking place. This, despite the fact that there is a vast difference between God and Google, one of which is that God is omniscient in God-self while Google only becomes more powerful and more knowing by mining the personal data of their users. There is nothing inherently powerful or godlike in Google that warrants the mythic status that it is gaining for itself either by conscious self-promotion or being bestowed upon it by people who do not know better. Nevertheless, the denigration of religious myths and not allowing religion to comment on matters of science and technology is not going to stop the creation and propagation of the Google myth, the Amazon myth or any other myth that espouses technological objectivity, neutrality and equality.

³⁹ Christian Madsbjerg and Mikkel B. Rasmussen, “Advertising’s Big Data dilemma,” *Harvard Business Review* (7 August 2013), <https://hbr.org/2013/08/advertisings-big-data-dilemma>

⁴⁰ Harari, *21 Lessons*, Kindle edition.

The reductionist view of religious stories is increasingly becoming the norm in the new milieu, and there seems to be little effort, even among the intellectual elite, to try to understand the nature and role of religious myths as they are conceived, transmitted and applied from within the religious tradition from which a particular myth originates. Scholars of religion have attempted to define religious myths in multiple ways. According to Mircea Eliade, “Every myth shows how a reality came into existence, whether it be the total reality, the cosmos, or only a fragment – an island, a species of plant, a human institution ... [it] becomes the paradigmatic model for all human activities.”⁴¹ Alan Dundes, on the other hand sees myth as “a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form ... The critical adjective sacred distinguishes myth from other forms of narrative such as folktales, which are ordinarily secular and fictional.”⁴² Either way, myths are not meant to be taken literally and fact checked using scientific parameters; rather they present a view and articulate principles about how to understand the world, how to relate to the transcendent and the natural (biotic and abiotic) beings in the universe, and how to conduct one’s life as to achieve self-transformation and ultimate spiritual happiness and well-being, may it be in the present world, the afterlife, or *nirvana*. Despite such attempts to explore the role and function of myth in human life, there is a tendency among opponents of religion to equate the word myth with something “fantastical,” “false,” or “made up,” and therefore, should be dismissed and rejected as useless and inconsequential in the digital milieu. Indeed, in an era where “data” is the new gold, religious myths which employ narratives, symbolic images and abstract spiritual concepts may be seen as not very useful and can be discarded in the process of panning for the desired treasure.

In reality, each religious myth adopted and revered by a particular group or community holds significant ramifications for how that group of people conduct themselves towards one another and enter into relationship with the rest of society. The fact that religious people choose to understand their world and convey this understanding and wisdom through images, symbols, and narratives rather than scientific formulas and mathematical equations do not automatically make them incompatible with the digital milieu, nor does it render them unable to appreciate and adopt perspectives emanating from the realm of scientific inquiries. The fact remains that at an academic seminar or conference, one is just as or more likely to encounter a religious scientist, physician, lawyer, and archaeologist as a non-religious one. The challenge for religion is not to discard its religious myth in the face of scientism, but to maintain the relevance of their religious stories in this new milieu through ways of

⁴¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1957), 97-98.

⁴² Alan Dundes, *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 1.

reinterpretation and articulation that speak to the modern digital context. Myths employ culture and time specific images to communicate transcendent and timeless moral, ethical and spiritual values, which means that myths can be translated into the languages and images of the present context, and thus can maintain their relevance in spite of extraordinary social and technological transformation. The process to explore ways to recontextualize ancient wisdom for modern times continues the overarching goal of every religious system to inspire and move its adherents (as well as those who are willing to listen) to the Ultimate Good. As the Buddhist scholar monk Bhikkhu Bodhi asserts:

If any great religion is to acquire a new relevance it must negotiate some very delicate, very difficult balances. It must strike a happy balance between remaining faithful to the seminal insights of its Founder and ancient masters and acquiring the skill and flexibility to formulate these insights in ways that directly link up with the pressing existential demands of old-age. It is only too easy to veer towards one of these extremes at the expense of the other: either to adhere tenaciously to ancient formulas at the expense of present relevance, or to bend fundamental principles so freely that one drains them of their deep spiritual vitality. Above all, I think any religion today must bear in mind an important lesson impressed on us so painfully by past history: the task of religion is to liberate, not to enslave. Its purpose should be to enable its adherents to move towards the realization of the Ultimate Good and to bring the power of this realization to bear upon life in the world.⁴³

Religions Have Become Reactive Forces Rather Than Creative Forces

A second challenge for religions in the digital age will be the ability to find an authoritative voice to be able to make commentaries on things that are seemingly beyond the religious purview. There is an opinion among certain circles that perhaps in the past, the presence of religion in people's life were more encompassing and beneficial. We again go to Yuval Noah Harari since in recent years, he has been a highly sought after speaker, appearing at high profile events such as the World Economic Forum, TED Talk, and even invited to have a one-on-one conversation with the CEO of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg. In a talk at Google, Harari asserted that the Vatican was the Silicon Valley of the 13th century because of its advanced system of

⁴³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, A Buddhist Response to Contemporary Dilemmas of Human Existence (1994), <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/response.html>.

archiving and information processing and numerous technological inventions.⁴⁴ Harari reiterates this sentiment in his *Homo Deus*,

In addition to social and ethical reforms, Christianity was responsible for important economic and technological innovations. The Catholic Church established medieval Europe's most sophisticated administrative system, and pioneered the use of archives, catalogues, timetables and other techniques of data processing. The Vatican was the closest thing twelfth-century Europe had to Silicon Valley. The Church established Europe's first economic corporations—the monasteries—which for 1,000 years spearheaded agricultural and administrative methods. Monasteries were the first institutions to use clocks, and for centuries they and the cathedral schools were the most important learning centres of Europe, helping to found many of Europe's first universities, such as Bologna, Oxford and Salamanca.⁴⁵

Despite having played such a creative role in human society, Harari says that in the last two hundred years, religions changed from being a creative to reactive forces.

[The Catholic Church] and other theist religions have long since turned from a creative into a reactive force. They are busy with rearguard holding operations more than with pioneering novel technologies, innovative economic methods or groundbreaking social ideas. They now mostly agonize over the technologies, methods and ideas propagated by other movements. Biologists invent the contraceptive pill—and the Pope doesn't know what to do about it. Computer scientists develop the Internet—and rabbis argue whether orthodox Jews should be allowed to surf it.⁴⁶

Harari comments that “Radical Islam is in a far worse position than socialism. It has not yet even come to terms with the Industrial Revolution—no wonder it has little of relevance to say about genetic engineering and artificial intelligence.”⁴⁷ It is unambiguous from the text quoted above that Harari represents a not uncommon perspective which asserts that in the modern scientific milieu, religion has been displaced because it is no longer actively contributing to scientific development. Not

⁴⁴ Yuval Noah Harari, “Techno-Religions and Silicon Prophets,” Youtube (29 January 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6BK5Q_Dblo

⁴⁵ Harari, *Homo Deus*, 459 (epub version).

⁴⁶ Harari, *Homo Deus*, 460 (epub version).

⁴⁷ Harari, *Homo Deus*, 458 (epub version).

only have religious myths been discovered to be grossly incompatible with modern scientific understanding, religions are no longer inventing, creating, discovering, and have essentially fallen off the scientific train heading towards the digital future.

As provocative as Harari's opinion is, the idea that religions have exhausted their creative energy and ability is also a misperception of reality. It is true that nowadays, religions generally do not set out to make scientific discoveries as part of an institutional agenda, but to say that religions lack any creative force is to misunderstand and underestimate the profound impact that religious teachings continue to have on the lives of individuals who carry out scientific research in laboratories all around the world. Even if these individuals use the scientific method as a tool to make their investigations, which is precisely what the scientific method is, the inspiration and conviction that come from their religious beliefs should not be overlooked. It is naïve to assume that people's lives are compartmentalized in such a way that people are religious only when they are in a mosque or temple, and when they are in a laboratory that they have somehow turned atheist or simply adopted a non-religious outlook. Religion as an institution may not invent things per se, but religious systems and teachings can certainly create the framework that encourages and supports scientific discoveries as part of the greater endeavor towards human progress. In many countries around the world, the vast majority of the people adhere to a religion. Not taking into account other religions, nearly 80% of the people in India, the second most populated country in the world, are Hindus.⁴⁸ One could bet that among the hundreds of millions of Hindu Indians, there are many scientists and technologists. Alister E. McGrath observes that the model of science and religion in conflict is outdated and Western centric thinking. In Asia, the relationship between science and religion is seen within scientific communities in a "more collaborative or dialogical" way.⁴⁹ McGrath writes:

"The conflict model is increasingly be seen as a distinctively Western way of thinking, which is grounded in the specific histories and the implicit cultural norms of Western nations, particularly the United States of America. Researchers have noted that the relation of science and religion in non-Western cultures – such as India – is understood in a very different (and much more positive) way.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ "India's religions by the numbers," *The Hindu* (26 August 2015), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/religious-communities-census-2011-what-the-numbers-say/article7582284.ece>

⁴⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Science and Religion: A New Introduction*, Third Edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

In the Catholic tradition, which has 1.2 billion adherents globally, science itself is not perceived as in opposition to religion. Robert Barron, a Catholic Bishop and a well-known religious leader on social media states:

It is a longstanding conviction of the Church that since God is one and since all truth comes from God, there can finally be no conflict between the truths of revelation and the truths discoverable through the exercise of human reason. And so the Church rejoices in whatever the empirical sciences uncover and expects no conflict between those discoveries and its own faith, rightly interpreted.⁵¹

Undoubtedly, the Catholic Church and Christianity do not have a monopoly on scientific contribution, and scientists come in all colors and creeds. A Buddhist medical scientist from Thailand who tries to find ways to cure AIDS may depend on his scientific knowledge to carry out research, but can do so being deeply influenced by the Buddhist teaching of compassion and loving-kindness for the less fortunate and for all sentient beings. The scientific method employed by the faith filled scientist serves merely as a means to achieve his conviction that personal spiritual progress and eventual liberation from suffering and mundane existence can only be achieved through performing acts of mercy and kindness towards others. In a similar manner, a Muslim astrophysicist may use scientific instruments to study objects in space; but her endeavors may be inspired by the desire to glorify God in the discoveries that she will be making. For a Muslim, nothing could be more important than submitting to God, whose power and grandeur will be confirmed through such scientific discoveries.

The assertion that religion, particularly the Catholic Church, has somehow fallen off the scientific train is not supported by reality. As recent as 2014, Jesuit brother and Vatican astronomer Guy Consolmagno was awarded the prestigious Carl Sagan Medal “for outstanding communication by an active planetary scientist to the general public.” Brother Guy follows in a hundreds-year-long tradition of numerous Catholic clergymen who are also scientists, among them Copernicus, who was a priest and founder of what came to be called the Copernican Revolution for its heliocentric understanding of the solar system; Gregor Mendel, a monk and father of genetics, whose discovery would have significant impact on the work of Darwin; and Georges Lemaître, a Belgian cosmologist and priest who was also the father of the Big Bang theory, which is almost universally accepted by modern day astronomers. And we have not mentioned the countless lay men and women of religion in the past and present who have contributed to the development of science. Moreover, the Vatican continues

⁵¹ Robert Barron, *Seeds of the Word: Finding God in the Culture* (Skokie, US: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2015), 23-24.

to sponsor a number of laboratories and actively engage in and support efforts to dialogue with science. Catholic universities around the world continue to be places of active first rate scientific research. Pope Francis' Encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si* in which scientific consultation and facts played an important role in the final text is a clear example of the Church's engagement with science as it presents important teachings that affect Catholics and the entire humanity.

Because people of religion are neither bystanders in the creative process that leads to technological advancement nor outsiders to the various effects brought about by scientific development, religions also have a stake in how technological progress may impact humanity. Although religions may not always play a direct creative role, religions can certainly utilize their inherent reflective capability to discern the possible impact certain scientific discoveries and applications on the social and spiritual well-being of humanity. Religions can encourage individuals to carry out introspection in order to make more prudent choices in terms of utilization of scientific knowledge and technological inventions. To be reflective and introspective is not being reactive, but rather to be thoughtful about our actions and the consequences that they might bring. This is even more necessary in light of the many potential negative consequences that digital technology, when utilized unwisely, may bring.

Loss of Credibility Due to Interreligious Strife

A third charge against religion states that religions cannot contribute to contemporary concerns because religions themselves cannot agree with each other on various issues. Both historically and in the present, religions often engage in conflicts and even outright wars with each other. And religions are not expected to resolve their differences anytime soon. Samuel P. Huntington, in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, perpetuated this notion of large-scale interreligious conflict by proposing that in the new post-Cold War era, local and international conflicts would be the result of "clash of civilizations," where civilizations would be defined by religious and cultural identities.⁵² Huntington posited that the conflicts would take place primarily between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world. In Europe, "The centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent."⁵³ Huntington wrote that conflict between civilizations is deeply rooted in Asia. "The historic clash between Muslim and Hindu in the subcontinent manifests itself now not only in the rivalry between Pakistan and

⁵² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

⁵³ Huntington, *The Clash*, 38.

India but also in intensifying religious strife within India between increasingly militant Hindu groups and India's substantial Muslim minority.”⁵⁴

Although all religious systems set out to help their adherents achieve self-cultivation and transformation, certain aspects about religions make them conducive to conflict. For example, the religious and group identity created by religious texts, rituals, traditions, and dogmas can result in a strong sense of in-group and out-group. This can lead to actions and behaviors that discriminate and exclude those perceived as not belonging within the constructed religious norms. This behavior becomes systematic when it is exercised at a corporate level and endorsed either implicitly or explicitly by religious leaders. Conflicts between religious groups manifest themselves especially when there are social, political, economic and territorial interests at stake. Such conflicts may not necessarily be outright wars, but is observed in the inaction or tacit support of laws and policies that are discriminatory or depowering to people of another religious tradition.

Interreligious conflict, nonetheless, does not have to mean war and violence. The fact that religious systems have differing worldviews already makes it difficult for religions to take a unified stance on a particular issue. Among the various Christian denominations, even though all share the same belief in Jesus Christ and adopt the same set of scriptures, they cannot seem to take a common stance on the ecology. While Pope Francis and the Patriarch Bartholomew join forces to call for an ecological conscience, a number of American evangelical pastors are preaching against environmental regulations that limit human power over nature. The charge, then, is that how can religions expect to have their voices be received and respected when they themselves are constantly in conflict with one another, if not in the form of interreligious wars, then in the form of positional stances regarding any of the many issues concerning humanity?

The proposition that religions cannot comment on matters beyond the religious purview because of interreligious conflicts and disagreement may initially sound convincing, but in reality, is unjustifiable. Empirical experience shows that in human society, differences in perspective among groups and organizations is the norm rather than the exception. Strife, may it be within an entity, or between entities never stopped them from engaging in discussions in matters that they perceive as of interest and relevance to them. Inter-political party bickering in United States politics has never prevented the US government from commenting on events taking place in other countries when it feels that those events hold ramifications for national and international security. Scientists are just as likely to give critique on political, social or religious matters that they perceive to be contrary to scientific logic, and well they

⁵⁴ Huntington, *The Clash*, 39.

should because scientists are ultimately people who live in a concrete social and cultural environment where what other people do and say also impinge on their lives and the lives of the entire community.

Scientists may not have an opinion on the theological methodologies and principles that are employed to arrive at certain religious teachings because such issues are beyond their expertise, but scientists can certainly make observations about particular religious teachings that affect the characteristic and fabric of society in which they live. For example, if a certain religious sect, using certain scriptural and spiritual resources within its tradition, taught that Covid-19 was the result of demonic possession and the only cure needed was exorcism to drive out the bad spirit inhabiting the body; and if this teaching was causing members of the sect to not seek medical treatment, and the coronavirus to spread to other people in the community, one would expect that scientists raise their voices and present scientific facts that would convince those religious adherents to rethink their belief. In fact, such a voice would be greatly welcomed. Now, in this case do we lay out the criteria that scientists must have complete consensus on Covid-19 as well as other global issues, scientific or otherwise, to be able to comment on a behavior resulting from a certain religious belief? While there is a high level of scientific consensus regarding the virus and how it works, one cannot deny that there are different scientific opinions about how dangerous Covid-19 really is and how it could be treated, and whether masks help prevent infection or not. As mentioned previously, many scientists work in an economic and political construct where oftentimes, scientific opinions propagated by certain institutions reflect their institutional agendas. In the media, we see that there are scientists, or at least people who call themselves scientists, peddling very contrasting opinions on the Covid-19 pandemic. This is not so different from what we see with religion, and with people who call themselves representatives of religion. Just because there are religious leaders or groups who deny the existence of climate change, it does not mean that all religions should be stripped of the right to speak out on issues regarding the environment. The reality is we cannot and should not make group consensus a requirement for speaking about matters that impinge upon collective well-being. If such were the expectation, there would be no interdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation because every group would be confined to only speaking about what is within its limited field.

Having said that, the issue of interreligious conflict is worth reflecting upon by religious institutions and people. It is not possible or necessary here to go into details about the nature of so called religious conflicts. It suffices to say that reasons for human conflicts are vastly complex, and to attribute conflicts to any single cause is overly simplistic and inconsistent with historical reality. Nevertheless, religions cannot give a blanket denial towards their role in contributing to disharmony and strife. By recognizing areas of darkness in the past and present, religions present themselves as

authentic participants in the global discourse and facilitate dialogue that aims to enhance interreligious relations and to address issues that are consequential to human well-being and flourishing. If religious traditions desire to exercise their role in the larger global context, religions themselves must be willing to engage in interreligious dialogue in order to promote harmonious and collaborative relationships which will help to strengthen and legitimize the religious voice regarding matters that concern the human future. Although the existence of interreligious conflict does not justify exclusion of religion from global conversations, religious bickering, not to mention religion related wars and violence, does tremendous harm to the trustworthiness of religion in the eyes of the secular members of humanity. By exercising interreligious dialogue, religions set example for the kind of dynamics that need to take place between groups, fields, and disciplines in the endeavor to develop human society as well as the natural ecology in the digital milieu.

Final Remarks

Digital technology is increasingly becoming the means by which human beings conduct our lives. If experts are correct, we are on the verge of multiple technological shifts that could lead to a very different human society than what we have seen in the past until now. In the face of such drastic changes to our individual and collective lives, insisting on a technocentric construct and purely scientific worldview is detrimental to the endeavor to build a well-balanced and flourishing human society. To this extent, the voice of religion is indispensable, not in the least because the majority of the world population still adhere to a religious belief,⁵⁵ or at least consider themselves spiritual. In her book *A Human Algorithm: How Artificial Intelligence Is Redefining Who We Are*, Flynn Coleman writes,

To be inclusive as we stride toward our technological future, we must consider ideas from religion and spiritual beliefs. Like the image of Earth from space, both religion and AI can remind us of our ultimate smallness, our limited time on Earth. Religion, belief, and prayer have a place in the discussion of AI and ethics, because whether you are an atheist, an agnostic, or a believer, religion still matters on some level—whether as a belief system, an ethical framework, or a cultural touchstone—to much of the world’s human population.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Pew Forum, “The Global Religious Landscape,” Retrieved from <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

⁵⁶ Flynn Coleman, *A Human Algorithm: How Artificial Intelligence Is Redefining Who We Are* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2019), 224-225.

The contribution and inclusion of the religious voice to the digital future does not have to be a difficult matter; in fact, it should be very easy as many people in the scientific and technology field are themselves religious people. Those religious scientists can act as the bridge that connect the two fields. As Elaine Howard Ecklund who has spent many years researching the relationship between science and faith comments, “By focusing on values and virtues that Christians and scientists have in common, scientists who are Christians can act as *boundary pioneers*, helping the members of their faith communities better connect, cooperate, and be in dialogue with members of the scientific community and helping the scientific community better connect with faith communities.”⁵⁷ Indeed, if religion, science and technology focus on their common virtues, such as “creativity, awe, joy, and gratitude,”⁵⁸ instead of competition, conflict and exclusion, we can hope for a brighter and more peaceful digital future.

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⁵⁷ Elaine Howard Ecklund, *Why Science and Faith Need Each Other* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020), 33.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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