Messianic freedom and the secular academy: educating the affections in a technological culture

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In a recent article on religion and secularity in American culture, *Communio* editor David Schindler elaborates the following credo: "I believe with the 'left' that American religiosity typically harbors an inadequate sense of and appreciation for the secular; and I believe with the 'right' that American secularity has wrongly emancipated itself from religion."[1] Schindler's thesis is that a defective American religiosity has largely set the terms for America's defective secularity (or secularism) and that the relation between these is mutual. The defective religiosity is the conceptual division of the Creator from the creation, leading to an untenable and reductive dualism – an extrinsic relation between God and the *saeculum* that warrants the abstraction of the religious realm of individual piety (the human will) from the secular realm of nature and a purely scientistic reason.

This is, of course, not only an American malady. Schindler cites the work of George Grant to further show how the secular liberalism of the English-speaking world has become increasingly aligned with the development of technology as the site where the value-generating human will finds the value-neutral means for establishing control over an indifferent nature. In his essay, "Thinking about Technology," Grant argues that "technology has become the unthought ontology of our age" and that, far from being instrumentally "neutral," technological mastery imposes upon us a structure of choices and public "goods" that threatens the very freedom it supposedly serves and undermines the disciplined cultural practices that sustain justice as a shared good.[2] For Grant the computer serves as a symbol of this often hidden determining power of technology in our culture, which belies its supposed neutrality:

> The phrase 'the computer does not impose [on us the ways it should be used]' misleads, because it abstracts the computer from the

destiny that was required for its making. Common sense may tell us that the computer is an instrument, but it is an instrument from within the destiny which *does* 'impose' itself upon us, and therefore the computer *does* impose.[3]

What it imposes, among other things, are forms of community that accommodate themselves to computer technologies and their "progress." Such a socially mediated conception of human destiny, furthermore, hastens the global movement toward cultural homogeneity and the gradual loss of a genuine pluralistic public life. On this point Grant's analysis is confirmed and deepened by the work of Albert Borgmann: "Liberal democracy is enacted as technology. It does not leave the question of the good life open but answers it along technological lines."[4] As the responses to Wendell Berry's controversial *Harper's* article, "Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer," indicate, even gently calling into critical question the central icon of technological civilization will generate intensely emotional moralistic responses (after all, the article is not entitled "Why You Should Not Buy a Computer" or "Why the Computer is Evil"). This leads Berry to tweak *Harpers'* liberal-minded, cosmopolitan readers: "I can only conclude that I have scratched the skin of a technological fundamentalism that, like other fundamentalisms, wishes to monopolize a whole society and, therefore, cannot tolerate the smallest difference of opinion."[5]

George Grant, in *Technology and Empire*, considers the implications of this for "The University Curriculum"– a curriculum increasingly focused upon the technological vision of rational mastery. The unity of the sciences, he suggests, is increasingly realized around this ideal of mastery – a subordination of the motive of wonder to the motive of power. Augustine, in his famous manual for the Christian liberal arts, *De doctrina Christiana*, has taught us to attend above all to the question of motive in education. His rule for interpreting ambiguous signs is to pay attention to "The motive in using them and the way in which they are desired."[6] And to subordinate the power of love to the love of power is for Augustine the clearest indication of Faustian idolatry; it imitates the motives modelled by the father of lies.

To this bleak vision of the secular academy I wish to counterpose another vision, a vision not based upon any current slogan for university reform. I wish rather to consider a messianic paradigm

rooted in the humility of Jesus, as it was for Augustine. Only such a radical spiritual revisioning of the meaning of human life as made to desire God's life itself as its end will enable us again to reconceive (as Grant intended) our judgements about the essence of the university – its curriculum. This I will try to begin to do in the second part of my paper on "messianic freedom" in the academy, the mission of which is to educate the human affections according to another model of the human than technological mastery, namely, an ontology of mystery. This model of the human will be guided by an understanding "messianic faith" as expressed in the following two definitions:

1. A modern Augustinian definition, Simone Weil: "We know by means of our intelligence that what intelligence does not comprehend is more real than what it does comprehend. Faith is the experience that intelligence is enlightened by love."[7]

2. A biblical definition, in Hebrews 11: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." Hebrews goes on to talk about people of faith as sojourners, strangers and exiles on the way toward a homeland that is hoped for but not seen. The pathway to that homeland, says Augustine in *de Doctrina*, is the purification of understanding by love or *caritas* that travels along the "road of the affections."[8] Only those whose intelligence is enlightened by love will be capable of exercising good judgement in understanding and using well the things of the created world in which we live.

Learning has to do with the mind and the heart as well as the body, and therefore with the shape that human lives, communities and cultures will take. We dare not take this on as a process of narrowing down, but rather as a liberating, expanding and integrative process according to what Augustine calls the "divinely instituted rule of *caritas*":

> "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," He said, and "thou shalt love God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." Thus all your thoughts and all your life and all your understanding should be turned toward Him from whom you receive these powers … [i.e.] that love of God which suffers no stream to be led away from it by which it might be diminished.[9]

What is required for this is a process of purgation of the eye of the mind/heart so that its motives will be guided not by pride, fear and error, but by humility, wisdom and truth. Only so will souls and societies be able to dwell in peace and wellbeing.[10]

The University of Secular Cybernetics

What happens educationally when the basic metaphors of nature, including human nature, are reduced to mechanistic process and technical information? I begin with a quotation from the well-known biologist, Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene:* "We are survival machines – robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a truth which still fills me with astonishment," he gushes.[11] In case there were any doubt that this is no Socratic philosophical wonder, Dawkins clarifies his remark in his philosophical apologia: "But that was no metaphor. I believe it is the literal truth, provided key words are defined in the particular way favored by biologists."[12] This of course makes a humanist curious about the favored linguistic preferences of biologists – as it stands it is an astonishing reductionism. Not only does it attribute a single moral intentionality (selfishness) to the whole of life, when it could equally be defined in terms of mutuality or reciprocity. It also uncritically names us "survival machines" or "robot vehicles," which one should have thought would be strange metaphors for a biologist to choose. And yet it is not uncommon. For biologists human nature has become revealed as techno-genetic standing reserves.

Machines, of course, are humanly made, artificial, engineered, usually not as a display of beauty or spiritual identity, but as instruments – usually of control or procurement. Is it surprising that our culture is increasingly taking on machine-like attributes when our primary metaphors are mechanistic and instrumental? Increasingly not only our industrial economy, but our politics and our aesthetics take on the features of our primary linguistic metaphors. Why else would people spend all that time and energy to make themselves look like the very muscle-building machinery they use to get them there? Why else are our lucrative fashion industries successfully marketing the hairless, well-oiled body except that we literally are coming to see ourselves not as animal creatures but increasingly as bio-mechanical machines? And of course who wouldn't be willing to become a machine if it means avoiding a human death? The future markets in

the cosmetic, therapeutic and functional enhancement of the human machine (indeed the "nature machine") are vast indeed – and a great deal of research is being funded to exploit these opportunities as central values in our public culture. To what extent is our techno-science guided by a morally-laden metaphysic of nature that denies its own moral judgements and assumptions as such (by assuming the mechanistic metaphor is objective rational description)? Of course, machines are not moral agents; hence if we are machines, are we moral agents? Is the effort to enhance our machine-like efficiency a moral enterprise and, if so, what is the good it seeks and how will we speak about it?

In order to explore these questions, the good of technological research and development, we do well to examine the cultural-linguistic history of modern science and its intimate connections with technology and the mechanistic paradigm. The modern vision of science has been closely tied to certain Baconian moral assumptions, most notably the commitment to relieve and benefit the human condition by liberating human beings from the constraints of nature, and delivering control of nature, including human nature, into human hands. "Knowledge is power," said Bacon, and by this he meant the power to *generate*, a power closely linking scientific research and technical development. "Nature shall be put to the rack to compel her to answer our questions," the rack being humanly fashioned scientific instruments that will crack the code of nature so as better to exploit its natural resources for technological advancement. Bacon scoffed at the wisdom of the classical moral traditions and their language of the good, comparing it to pre-pubescent boyhood: "it can talk, but it cannot generate."[13] It is worth paying some attention to this language of "generating," since etymologically it is linked to an important family of words in our public culture: *genius, engine/engineer, gene/genetic* – all linked to the Latin, *gigno/gignere*, to beget, and the Greek, *gignomai*, to be born/come into being, language closely linked to motives in our current academy (though we cannot explore this in detail here).

Rather than focus here on particular ethical issues that are raised by this language and the action it generates – patenting of genetic information as intellectual property, various forms of genetic testing, cloning, and the new benevolent eugenics entailed in the biotech revolution – I want to consider the moral consequences of the shifts

in language toward technological begetting. What happens when basic biological nature comes to be seen as information, and organisms as information processing machines whose capacities can be progressively upgraded into increasingly efficient cybernetic survival systems? If nature is merely an information code to be cracked so that its various data might be reconfigured in endless different patterns, how might we distinguish true from false, benevolent from malevolent, healthy from harmful experiments, innovations, and developments? If there is no "good" in nature, including no moral goodness that can be commonly discerned, why even bother with ethics in scientific research and technological innovation?

Let us briefly consider a recent "posthuman" vision of technological empire that has in effect eliminated ethics, Ray Kurzweil's *The Age of Spiritual Machines*.[14] Ray Kurzweil is no flake; his work in artificial intelligence and pattern recognition technologies has led to the successful establishment of four high-tech companies (devoted, among other things, to pattern recognition technologies that aid the blind and the deaf), a number of influential books, and a host of academic and other awards. He is in many ways an icon of our culture's commercial and research aspirations. What is Kurzweil's vision? In a nutshell it is this: "Computation is the essence of order".[15] The evolutionary process that has begotten human intelligence is effectively generating an increasingly efficient information processing machine. Kurzweil is convinced that human beings are the intermediate organic stage toward a new, cybernetic stage of evolutionary development in which machine technology will eventually "take full control of its own progression".[16] This is indeed what human intelligence and consciousness really is once we get past "hard-to-define questions such as human dignity".[17] While the Human Genome Project is important as a scanning operation of DNA codes, it will ultimately be superseded by machine intelligence, according to what Kurzweil calls the "Law of Accelerating Returns" which interprets all reality on the model of increasingly complex information processing. For intelligent organisms to adapt themselves to a changing natural – read "machine"– environment, in order to keep up with and maintain their evolutionary advantage, human beings will of necessity turn themselves into machines, gradually at first through genetic therapies, bio-enhancement and

porting our brains to computer intelligence. But eventually we will have to realize that "DNA-based evolution will eventually have to be abandoned" because "organisms created through DNA-based evolution are stuck with an extremely plodding type of circuitry".[18] Kurzweil's vision ends with the claim that "extremely little of the stuff on Earth is devoted to useful computation. This is even more true when we consider all of the dumb matter in the Earth's midst".[19] The aim of all life is to exploit nature for its computational intelligence (Kurzweil's "spirituality"), which will transform life into a shared machine consciousness, a posthuman virtual reality.

Kurzweil's book is filled with examples of what may be achieved through this bio-technological revolution, this "road paved with gold … full of benefits that we're never going to resist".[20] He is fond of speculating on the sexual possibilities that will open up when freed from the constraints of biological generation and conventional social norms. Sexual and spiritual activities can be reduced to information processing, not complex personal relations sustained through time or in nature, not educated through disciplined commitments between persons. Sex is merely the episodic manipulation of electronic data. Kurzweil finds it in him to celebrate the technological possibilities of virtual sex of every kind, which will no longer require moral censure because now safely detached from embodied nature. He imagines his fourth grade son's ability to undress his fourth grade teacher – and manipulate her in any way he desires – without affecting *her*; he imagines the ability to indulge many lovers at once, pleasuring himself by clicking on innumerable sites and partners at the same time (though I suppose no real clicking will eventually be required). So too the spiritual arts (music, poetry, painting) can easily be replicated by computer technology, and unfortunately Kurzweil cannot restrain himself from giving examples of his own design. The commodities on offer are at about the same level of moral wisdom and emotional intelligence as the fourth grade sexual fantasies. We are now literally generating sex for pre-pubescent boys, who no longer need either to talk or to generate.

How is it that our human quest for liberation and happiness ends up in such a tawdry and dehumanizing vision of disembodiment – that is nevertheless celebrated as the benevolent salvation of the future? I suggest it has something to do with the idea that we will magically crack the code of life through the collection of data. This

is a Faustian bargain. Data lacks sanctity and goodness; to be sure, it takes attention away from our moral and spiritual sensibilities which are developed and communicated through a different sort of language – the language of symbol, narrative and the ordering of love, justice, beauty, and goodness. This classical moral language is attuned to a different kind of knowing than is the instrumental procurement and processing of data, and it is important to recognise this philosophically if we are to preserve any moral notion of secular education as a shared rational language that discloses to us spiritually and culturally who we are.

What we need in the first place, then, is an account of spiritual causality rooted in the language of poetic, dramatic experience. This too is an academic and public science that considers generation, as Plato envisioned it more than two millennia ago, but not so much a biological or technological begetting as spiritual generation, an account of why things come into being and exist as they do. In his dialogue, the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates give an account of why one must move beyond physical, mechanical, and formal causality in order to account for human motivation and judgement.[21] In order to do this it is necessary to consider the ordering power of the good, "which must embrace and hold together all things."[22] And the good, as Socrates puts it in the *Republic*, is "beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power," a transcendent measure that cannot be humanly manipulated, that can be discerned only by the properly ordered *organon* of the soul.[23] An account of that proper ordering is what ethics is. For this we need another kind of generative language and education, one that examines moral character and spiritual meaning in a non-instrumentalist but nevertheless rational manner. The science of spiritual generation will be different from the science of biological generation or technological begetting, though not unrelated to it.

However, which moral language, tradition, and symbolism will we use in a secular pluralistic society by which to adjudicate the disputes? As in the other rational sciences, there is no shortcut that gets around the particularity and diversity of what we encounter. Spiritual and moral symbols are not private or individual constructions but nor are they universal abstractions – they are found in particular texts and traditions that can be studied seriously as representations of shared cultural and human experiences. When we

examine them closely we will find some striking points of communication within the diversity. Without the resources and insights provided by such disciplined inquiry and serious public conversation, we will be ill-equipped to answer the Ray Kurzweils of the world, who tar any opposition with the same brush: anti-scientific, anti-technological *Luddism*. Of course, on the classical moral principle that it is better to suffer harm than to cause it, I am quite ready to champion the Luddites over Kurzweil. But it is a sign of the dangerously uncritical totalitarianism of Kurzweil and his ilk that *any* resistance is considered intolerant and intolerable, and dismissed with an epithet.[24]

It is clear to me that our public conversation about ethics, both in the university and in the wider society, is not adequate and this leaves us ill-equipped to understand, never mind address, the moral quandaries that are raised by our growing technological capacities and their commercial applications (which are being pursued at full speed). This represents an opportunity in our culture and within the academy in particular, not for the imposition of new religious or moral orthodoxies in place of prevailing secularist and technicist ones, but for the serious conversation between the cultural sciences and religious moral traditions about the range of assumptions concerning nature and human nature that orient our thought and action. At its liberal best, secular has not meant the anti-religious privatization of religious and moral discourse, but rather that no one religious tradition or moral position will be uncritically privileged as the only one (just as in natural science neither theoretical nor commercial agendas should be so privileged). The assumption at its best of secular pluralism is precisely that open, critical discussion of the variety of spiritual symbols and traditions can enhance the understanding and experience of all. This is indeed what the liberal secular academy needs to relearn from its own founding "faith" traditions.

Why? Not least because openness and plurality, respect for difference and the shared exploration of the meaning of reality, are themselves particular spiritual qualities and disciplines that can be lost when they are no longer understood and cultivated. These qualities, rooted in a sense of the spiritual and moral dignity not only of human beings but of the natural world in general, embody the trust that truth about our shared reality can be discovered through humble

exploration that will also respect the limits of our different forms of knowing. Such disciplined exploration and shared dialogue, not commercial utility or self-interested intellectual conquest, is the moral heart of the university as a public institution. Moral meaning is best discovered and communicated not in generic abstractions or formal codes that avoid discussion of the particular spiritual and moral commitments of real human beings, but that calls these commitments and symbols to public account in terms of their theoretical and applied implications.

Messianic Freedom and the Affections

In the remainder of this paper I shall explore briefly the possibility of a messianic paradigm that addresses the question of education in the secular pluralist academy quite differently from the approach displayed in technological globalization. By calling the paradigm "messianic" I am of course being deliberately provocative, as it is precisely the messianic forms of religion that have been judged to be dangerously apocalyptic by modern liberal theories. No doubt so some have been.[25] However it is also the case that the first theory of the *saeculum* in Western political thought was developed precisely within an apocalyptic messianic understanding of history and politics, Augustine's *City of God*.[26] I have also suggested that the notions of neutral technology and rational mastery that underlie current conceptions and embodiments of the secular are themselves dangerously totalitarian, exclusivist and violent even while hidden beneath the veneer of progressivist liberal assumptions. The challenge is how messianic faith might engage a secular public realm of technological empire in constructively critical terms without accommodating itself to its colonizing and monolithic moral ontology.

We may begin by recalling some of the biblical images related to the "people of faith": strangers, exiles, sojourners – a people in "diaspora." These images help envision how messianic faith faces the challenges of a pluralistic, multi-cultural world – not as established or privileged rulers of the domain, but as itinerant servants on pilgrimage who need certain portable skills that enable them to "seek the shalom of the people to whom you are being sent, for in its shalom you will find your shalom" (Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah's advice to the people being exiled to the enemy empire, Babylon). Such a

way of life requires the building up of certain virtues: humility above all, as exemplified in Jesus whom Hebrews 12 calls the "pioneer and perfecter of faith." It will also require openness to new and different experiences and paradigms, welcoming strangers, seeing leadership as servanthood, being willing to engage the difficult, polyglot disciplines of interpreting one's identity and story in new cultural forms and contexts. This is true not only in faith communities; it is also true in the university, as a "diaspora institution" devoted to practices not to be identified with any particular earthly political regime. The academy too was the creation of a diaspora movement from the Greek polis prompted by the revelation of something new in Socrates, who emphasized the importance of educating our desires theologically so as to be liberated from the lie in the soul about the things that are.

In terms of an understanding of education in our own time, this means first of all a liberation from the idolatry of literalism entailed in the "unthought ontology" of technological culture. John Henry Newman, following Augustine and Plato, states: "University Teaching without Theology is simply unphilosophical."[27] At issue here is the question of truth in its relatedness, where wholeness is more than the sum of its factual parts. A truly philosophical habit of mind that gets us beyond the "viewiness" of undisciplined opining and the passive reception of images[28] must bring human agency and judgement back into the scientific process. Otherwise we will end up in the superstitious literalism that now threatens to overwhelm the modern university (as Newman already anticipated) where only external causes are allowed to count in rational explanation. Newman points out that in such a university it would not be the sciences which were untrue, but the so-called knowledges literally "unreal"– deciding on facts by means of narrow methods and theories. Such a university is no longer teaching liberal knowledge but only a narrow-minded bigotry (50). A true university will require at its center a science that seeks a true account of the soul and its principles of motion in a spiritually ordered cosmos. It is not accidental that Plato coined the term "theology" in Book II of the *Republic* in considering why education is required to liberate enslaved citizens from civic lies that bind them in ugly, violent caves. The theological question is entailed in the central question of a liberal, philosophical education: How should we speak the truth about the good so as to distinguish

between a good life and a bad one (and to avoid the lie in the soul about the things that are)?

Such a process of liberation is articulated in Augustine's *de doctrina*, where interpretation is most properly founded upon the rule of faith, none other than the principle of *caritas* that spiritually orients the human understanding to the "good beyond being". Here is what Augustine says about the state of enslavement: "There is a miserable servitude of the soul in this habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal and created to drink in eternal light."[29] The process of being liberated from such a servitude is no easy thing, but it is a process, a "turning" or "conversion" motivating every university worthy of the name: *universitas*, literally *turned* toward wholeness. It is ultimately, as Augustine put it, a return to the wisdom that one loves in the love of any particular thing that one therefore tries to understand, to know. But it is also a process characterised by imitation – we humans are creatures of imitation, we learn by imitating examples that move us. This of course is the whole meaning and power of "authority." We humans do not invent ourselves *de novo* – we are born into the world only to enter through speech "more deeply into the stormy society of human life" and in this society we learn our motives, we have our desires shaped.[30] (*Confessions* I, viii, 13).

Augustine has some telling things to say about his teachers as models of imitation in the academic game: above all they focused on the appearance of loquacity and the glory of winning in verbal competition. In this regard, they were experts in the cultivation of affectation and style, not nurturing the affections on truth and substantive wisdom. Indeed they were masters of hypocrisy, attuned only to the visible and external, punishing the boys for their vanity and pleasure-seeking even while their disciplines and adult conventions were dedicated to the very same ends. Not only were these educational authorities corrupt, but so also the literary examples they taught – the Greek and Latin classics whose heroes displayed deception, violence and fornication as models of success. While Scripture carries a much different authority than do Homer and Virgil, Augustine does not dismiss the study of literary classics but submits them to the scrutiny of a higher authority – divine wisdom. So also, then, does the messianic teaching authority of Jesus present us with a challenging model that turns the techniques and methods of

rhetoric and intellectual inquiry to fundamentally different purposes. Augustine characterises the distinctiveness of this authority in terms of what was lacking in the pagan philosophers: humility and tears of confession. For Augustine to profess means to confess before others and thus to offer a model of imitation founded on humility.

Mark's gospel clearly ties Jesus' messianic authority – a public and political as well as religious and moral authority – to John the Baptist. The first word of this earliest of the four gospels is *arche*, "the beginning" of the good news of Jesus the Messiah, a new beginning signalled as a new creation tied to the appearance of the Messiah, but Mark immediately sets another tone ringing from the prophet Isaiah. Like Isaiah, Mark sees the new beginning as taking place not in the political center in Jerusalem but rather in the wilderness, where the people learn to walk the unconventional ways of justice and mercy. Hence the prophetic importance of John the Baptist. John has no school, no sophisticated organization, no institutional location or authorization or credentials – yet he will prepare the messianic way. To begin to prepare this way means letting go, "repenting" of closed conventional markers about insiders and outsiders, the elite and the rabble, the respectable and the vulgar. John preaches renunciation of all closed claims and his rite of baptism is intended to open up the possibility of a completely new beginning. This baptism is not a special ritual code related to a creed and an insider community; it is a radical leveling and calls only for a complete turnaround of one's life.

Like Elijah, the prophetic judge of king and court who was continually viewed as a political danger, John the Baptist is no lapdog to power. Despite the fact that "all the people of Jerusalem" go out to see him and be baptized in the river Jordan, he remains a threat especially to the religious and political establishment and is eventually arrested by King Herod (Mark 6). Clearly, then, when John says "After me comes one who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie," he does not mean Herod, though Herod would no doubt think so. Rather he is referring to an unknown man from hinterland Nazareth whose career will be very like his own and with whom he will intersect at strategic moments in Mark's gospel. That John and Jesus are no power rivals, however, is made evident when, far from requiring John to stoop before him, Jesus invites John to baptize him in the river Jordan.

Does the Messiah need to be baptized? Perhaps it is best to reason not the need, but the answer appears to be yes – this paradigm entails the complete dispossession of privilege. After this Jesus too is "driven out into the wilderness" by the Spirit and wrestles with temptations concerning power and authority.

It is here that the parallels and intersections between Jesus and the Baptist begin. Jesus' public ministry begins, Mark tells us, when John is arrested by Herod, and he begins to preach the same message as John: "the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the good news." Later (Mark 11) when Jesus goes to Jerusalem and is questioned about his authority by the religious leaders he ties his authority to John's baptism, which traps these leaders. Jesus asks them, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or of human origin? And they argued with one another, "If we say 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But shall we say 'Of human origin?' – they were afraid of the people, for all held that John was a real prophet." By responding in this way these leaders prove themselves characteristic of all conventional authority, which takes its cues from human beings, whose desires are shaped by the power games that accord status and respect through rivalry and domination. This is not the power that authorizes and motivates either John or Jesus, and this is at the heart of the good news which reshapes desire and establishes a very different line of authority, the way of the Messiah.

The messianic religious community displayed in the New Testament establishes this pattern of authority and of rebuilding the secular not through control of the dominant centers of social and intellectual power but by modeling a different path of community building as cultural service from below. The faith identity borne by the messianic community is not a new noetic universalism that somehow transcends or escapes particularity and difference. Indeed it is not to be related to a form of universal "knowing" of any sort ("if anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know"). It is rather an identity "in Messiah" that seeks the perfection of love, not in the domination or possession of any part, but in the apocalyptic transformation of all partial things to their mutual completion in divine love. This transformation occurs in the messianic body conformed through baptism to the messianic mind that willingly empties itself in order to serve the other, a pattern of

radical humility. It is a pattern that can only be spiritually discerned, even though it is being enacted in the bodily realm that is "passing away," and therefore may appear as failure – as Paul emphatically insists in I Corinthians 1, scandalously relating the messianic calling to the foolish power of the cross that is mysteriously related to divine power and wisdom depicted not as ontological plenitude but as emptiness: "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not (ta me onta) in order to bring to nothing ta onta (the things that are)." It is, finally, a pattern that can be described as sacramental or parabolic in which the excess of the whole may be discerned within the particular part that is selflessly and in loving use of the world bearing witness to its hidden and sustaining divine life. To live in this way would be to restore secularity, including the secular university, to its truest ontological meaning – its full but not self-sufficient significance as the site where God is becoming "in Messiah" *ta panta en pasin* ("all in all").

Notes

1   David L. Schindler, "Religion and Secularity in a Culture of Abstraction: On the Integrity of Space, Time, Matter and Motion," *Pro Ecclesia* XI/1 (2003): 76-94.

2   See George Grant, "Thinking about Technology," in *Technology and Justice* (Toronto, ON: Anansi Press, 1986).

3   Grant, "Thinking about Technology," 23.

4   Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 92.

5   Wendell Berry, *What Are People For?* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 175.

6   Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* III, xii, 19.

7   Simon Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 116.

8   *De doctrina christiana* I, xvii, 16.

9   Ibid., I, xxii, 21.

10   Ibid., II, vii, 9-11.

11   Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (London: Granada, 1978), ix.

12   Dawkins, "In Defence of Selfish Genes," *Philosophy* 56 (1981): 572.

13   Roger Bacon, *Magna Instauratio*, Preface.

14   Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (New York: Penguin, 1999). Further references appear by page number in brackets.

15   Ibid., p. 33.

16   Ibid., p. 32.

17   Ibid., p. 57

18   Ibid., p. 101.

19   Ibid., p. 259.

20   Ibid., p. 130.

21   Plato, *Phaedo*, 95-102.

22   Ibid., 99c.

23   Plato, *Republic*, 509b, 518.

24   Few people who use the epithet "Luddite" know or care about its historical derivation – those wool-workers in early nineteenth century England, as Wendell Berry tells it, "who dared to assert that there were needs and values that justly took precedence over industrialization; they were people who rejected the determinism of technological innovation and economic exploitation." While they destroyed machinery that had replaced them, they did not engage in violence against living beings until a band of them was shot down by soldiers in 1812 – at which time their movement was obliterated. Berry comments: "The victory of industrialism over Luddism was ... overwhelming and unconditional; it was undoubtedly the most complete, significant, and lasting victory of modern times. And so one must wonder at the intensity with which any suggestion of Luddism still is feared and hated." For Berry it is a sign of the triumphalistic technological determinism of the times that cannot tolerate any resistance to the inevitable, progressivist "destiny" of technological development. See the title essay in *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 130f.

25   Norman Cohn discusses numerous examples in his book *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

26   The classical study remains R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

27   John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Yale University Press, 1996), 40.

28   Newman gives us an exquisite portrait of such uninquiring curiosity-seekers (reminiscent of those described also by Augustine in

Confessions X, viii, 15 & X, xxxv, 55 – "in themselves they are uninterested" but they are fascinated by spectacles, the more outrageous the better) that now depict not only "seafaring men" but university researchers at every level: "Perhaps they have been much in foreign countries, and they receive, in a passive, otiose, unfruitful way, the various facts which are forced upon them there. Seafaring men, for example, range from one end of the earth to the other; but the multiplicity of external objects, which they have encountered, forms no symmetrical and consistent picture upon their imagination; they see the tapestry of human life, as it were on the wrong side, and it tells no story. They sleep, and they rise up, and they find themselves, now in Europe, now in Asia; they see visions of great cities and wild regions; they are in the marts of commerce, or amid the islands of the South; they gaze on Pompey's Pillar, or on the Andes; and nothing which meets them carries them forward or backward, to any idea beyond itself. Nothing has a drift or relation; nothing has a history or a promise. Every thing stands by itself, and comes and goes in its turn, like the shifting scenes of a show, which leave the spectator where he was. Perhaps you are near such a man on a particular occasion, and expect him to be shocked or perplexed at something which occurs; but one thing is much the same to him as another, or, if he is perplexed, it is as not knowing what to say, whether it is right to admire, or to ridicule, or to disapprove, while conscious that some expression of opinion is expected from him; for in fact he has no standard of judgement at all, and no landmarks to guide him to a conclusion. Such is mere acquisition, and, I repeat, no one would dream of calling it philosophy" (Newman, 99).

29   Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* III, v, 9.

30   Augustine, *Confessions* I, viii, 13.