

Embellishing Hart's effort is an insightful Foreword by liberation theologian Leonardo Boff and an Afterword by historian of culture Thomas Berry. Berry finds in *Sacramental Commons* "a substantial contribution" to the "Great Work" that he and others have begun in order to restore humans to the consciousness of their interrelatedness to Earth and to orient their activities to living harmoniously with one another, other species, and the planet's functioning. I agree wholeheartedly.

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*From Human to Posthuman: Christian Theology and Technology in a Postmodern World.* By BRENT WATERS. Ashgate Science and Religion Series, ed. Roger Trigg and J. Wentzel van Huyssteen. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2006. 166 pages. \$29.95.

Brent Waters is Associate Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. He received a D.Phil. from the University of Oxford in 2000. As the current director of the Stead Center for Ethics and Values, his "principal interests are in the areas of social and political thought, and the relationship between theology and technology" (seminary faculty Web page, [www.garrett.edu](http://www.garrett.edu)). He has completed several projects focusing on embryonic and reproductive technologies.

This work is a 2006 addition to the Ashgate Science and Religion Series edited by Roger Trigg and J. Wentzel van Huyssteen. Waters's manuscript proceeds in three primary movements. In chapters 1 through 3, Waters investigates the arguments and claims made by posthuman and transhuman researchers and scholars, including N. Katherine Hayes, Ray Kurzweil, Hans Moravec, and John Rawls. In chapter 4, he aims to show why the "postmodern" theologies articulated by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Philip Hefner, Gordon Kaufman, and Arthur Peacocke fail to adequately respond to posthumanism. In chapters 5 and 6, he claims that a robust Christology and eschatology provide a more effective platform for engaging posthumanism.

Chapter 1, "The Late Modern Landscape," traces the import of religion and science for the culture of the time. Waters weaves a narrative on the influence of religion and science on culture and morality from the Enlightenment through Modernity to Postmodernity. He highlights two cultural shifts. The first is the shift from "providence to progress" (p. 2) beginning in the Enlightenment. This shift is marked by a decline in religion's cultural currency and the rise of scientific discourse resulting in a "dichotomy between private belief and public reason" (p. 10). The second shift is the move from progress to process. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, modern progress took center stage by improving technology, living conditions, and health. Religion became the arbiter

of morality. However, modernity's promise of progress fell short, and process rather than progress came into focus. The cultural disillusionment with progress resulted in the elevation of technology as a means to transcend nature, evolution, and human frailty, both moral and physical.

Chapter 2, "A Postmodern World," paints a portrait of the intellectual landscape of the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth century. Leaning on George Grant's analysis of Friedrich Nietzsche, Waters claims that "the pervasive materialism and violence of late modernity stems from its inability to embrace fully a world purged of any purpose and permanence, and therefore any resulting providential or progressive trajectories" (p. 30). Postmodernity's response to the crisis of late modernity is the elevation of *techne*. "*Techne* became *telos* with the recognition that the world's only underlying and universal feature is information. Since information has no inherent meaning it can be recast, conveyed and interpreted in virtually endless arrays" (p. 31). Consequently, post- and transhumanists are free to alter significant human characteristics if those alterations enhance the process of gathering and using information. Alterations are guided by the values of subjectivity, malleability, and mastery. The result envisioned by transhumanists is a highly dualistic, disembodied drive for cognitive immortality.

If modernity sought to master nature and human nature, the postmodern technologies described in chapter 3 delineate a desire and plan to transform nature and human nature according to human desires, imaginations, and goals. "The postmodern turn is to insist that such a restorationist program is too confined. Complete mastery over nature, and derivatively human nature, cannot be achieved until humans perfect themselves by becoming a superior species. If the modern project is to make humans better, then the postmodern goal is to make creatures that are better than human" (p. 50). Waters traces the arguments proposed by Michael Heim and N. Katherine Hayles for proceeding with a transhumanist vision. He then offers Leon Kass's warning of dehumanization and Francis Fukuyama's appeal to dignity in opposition. However, both lines of argument ultimately will fail to dissuade transhumanists.

After discussing the philosophical and moral relationship between the necessary and the good, Waters argues in chapter 4 that postmodern theologians have the greatest potential to speak to post- and transhumanists because theology can appeal to transhumanism's implicit, underlying, and underacknowledged theological presuppositions. He focuses on the work of Teilhard, Peacocke, and Hefner. However, according to Waters, Teilhard's Noosphere, Peacocke's divine creativity, and Hefner's created co-creator provide insufficient bases for critiquing posthumanism because their theological constructs inherently support the open technological *telos* and drive for mastery that fuel posthumanism. He concludes, "the particular strain of postmodern theology they represent can be construed as posthuman discourse with a pronounced Christian dialect" (p. 95).

Chapters 5 and 6 contain the bulk of Waters's constructive offering. The constructive segment of chapter 5 centers on Christology. Waters desires "to offer an alternative theological framework as a basis for a counter discourse regarding the normative ordering of human destiny and conduct" (p. 95). He continues, "Given this absence [of Christology], these postmodern theologians can, at best, blunt the sharp edges of the nihilistic underpinnings of posthuman discourse, but cannot offer an attractive, alternative moral vision. In response, I argue that Jesus

Christ reveals the origin, temporal unfolding and destiny of the world as God's creation" (p. 95). Waters uses the work of Oliver O'Donovan and William Pollard to construct a christological position that seeks to revive the theological categories of providence and anthropology.

Chapter 6 focuses on the ways eschatology is related to providence and anthropology. Waters states that eschatology is connected to providence and anthropology via destiny and limited dominion. Destiny is emergent, in the sense that it flows from the current technoculture, and convergent, in the sense that the emergent destiny then directs future destiny. Christian eschatology relies on an eternal notion of destiny and telos while requiring human beings to exercise limited dominion on the Earth. Waters's emphasis on limited dominion, as well as the freedom of obedience, stems from his desire to retain many of the normative claims of Christian scripture. These normative claims provide Waters with some of the religious mandates he needs to preserve the image of God (*imago dei*). Consequently, he advocates technological advancements as long as technological advances do not eradicate the *imago dei* in humanity.

*From Human to Posthuman* provides a helpful and critical analysis of the post- and transhuman position and vision. Waters paints a stark and somewhat frightening picture of highly dualistic transhuman future where the body is likened to "rancid meat." Although this vision of the future of humanity is highly disturbing to me, I doubt the efficacy of Waters's appeal to a robust Christology and eschatology. If his portrayal of the postmodern cultural, technological, and theological landscape is correct, his theological proposal will likely fall on deaf ears. Nevertheless, I commend his analysis of the potential for a posthuman future and his drive to construct a meaningful theological alternative within a Christian framework.

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