Editorial

TECHNO-SECULARITY AND TECHNO-SAPIENS: EDITORIAL FOR *ZYGON'S* FIRST REAL VIRTUAL ISSUE

Since its very first editorial in 1966, *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* has been about "values and knowledge . . . for a viable dynamics of human culture." The interplay of religion and science regards not merely ideas, our understanding of the world, but also our existence and actions in the world—a world that is shaped by technology, from the beginning of agriculture to the present. The present time is, at least in the West, one in which religious commitments seem to have become optional. This intellectual and social freedom may be a reason to understand our time as a secular age (Taylor 2007; Peterson 2010). This form of secularity is possible due to our technological abilities, to urbanization, individualization, and globalization that make us less dependent upon a particular community and tradition.

At the beginning of the 40th anniversary year of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, John Caiazza (2005) contributed a provocative article titled "Athens, Jerusalem, and the Arrival of Techno-secularism." As he sees it, technology has not just created a space in which religious commitments are optional. Technology has displaced religious belief: "Athens" dominates "Jerusalem." "The displacement of religion from civic life is more the effect of technological ubiquity and power than the result of direct cultural and intellectual causes, a phenomenon that I call *techno-secularism*" (Caiazza 2005, 18–19). Technology brings with it an ethics, theology and spirituality, but these trivialize true religion, as he sees it.

Also in 2005, *Zygon* published twenty-two invited responses on Caiazza's paper (including Tirosh-Samuelson 2005; Strassberg 2005; Kaufman 2005; King 2005; Drees 2005; Padgett 2005; Szerszynski 2005b; Peters 2005; Jackelén 2005), and the discussion continued on into 2012 (Marangudakis 2012; Caiazza 2012; see also Caiazza 2006). The majority of the respondents offered a far more positive appreciation of technology and the grand transformations that have occured through the centuries. In 2006 *Zygon* published a set of articles on Bronislaw Szerszynski's *Nature, Technology and the Sacred* (2005a; see also Szerszynski 2005b; Kull 2006; Rodriguez da Cruz 2006; DeLashmutt 2006b; Szerszynski 2006). Szerszynski provides an original perspective on the long arc of our dealings with nature, which according to him is not characterized by "disenchantment," to use Max Weber's terminology, but rather by

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transformations of "the sacred." Like Caiazza, Szerszynski explores the religious motives and beliefs implicit in our technological culture, but he does not treat their development as manifestation of a persistent tension between reason and revealed religion, but rather as transformations within the cultural history of the West—a history that includes our dealing with nature, "the environment," which has become a major topic in recent years (e.g., Bauman 2011).

In reflections on religion in a technological culture, we encounter not only cultural changes due to technology and changing attitudes towards our environment, but also changes in our understanding of religion, science, and their interactions. Thus, the historically situated character of any account of the relationships between "religion" and "science" can be studied in the context of technology, as "religion" and "science" themselves are flexible categories and phenomena. The practice of science is culturally and technologically embodied, even though scientific insight transcends cultural embodiment—a fascinating epistemic duality. The previous editor of *Zygon*, Philip Hefner, has discussed the technologically embodied character of science in a contribution published in 2010 (Hefner 2010; Pederson 2010; Haag 2010); see for an example of the embodied nature of "religion and science" also Zainal Abidin Bagir's contribution on Islam and science in Indonesia, in light of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (2012).

Human nature is intertwined with technology as well. Our creative and technological engagement brought Hefner to speak of humans as "created co-creators" (Hefner 1984, 325f.). "Human Meaning in a Technological Age" was the theme of the conference of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) in 2001. Major addresses were published under the same section title in 2002 (Drees 2002a, 2002b; Hefner 2002; LaFleur 2002; Rockwell 2002; Roy 2002; Teske 2002). In another symposium, published in the same year, the anthropological understanding of humans as cyborgs (cybernetic organisms) and the understanding of humans as *techno-sapiens*, but also beings in "the image of God" were discussed (Kull 2002; Jackelén 2002; Herzfeld 2002; Hopkins 2002). The theme of the potential anthropological and religious implications of artificial intelligence has recurred in later issues of *Zygon* (e.g. DeLashmutt 2006a; Coeckelbergh 2010; Tamatea 2010; Geraci 2010). In the last issue of 2012, four substantial articles address "transhumanism," for example ideas about human lives being so transformed by technology as to allow for a lifespan of up to a thousand years (Tirosh-Samuelson 2012; Geraci 2012; Hughes 2012; Cole-Turner 2012).

Technology is not merely the use of tools. It has consequences for our lives, our culture, our hopes and expectations—and hence it is appropriate that the first "virtual issue" with real articles selected from *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* deals with technology and its

impact on religion and human self-understanding, techno-secularity and techno-sapiens. The articles of the virtual issue are accessible at no cost on http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1467–9744.

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