Computer-Texts and Globalization: Some Implications for Religious Education in the Academic Classroom
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The April 22, 2001 newspaper article captured a stark contrast: While protesters surrounding the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, Canada, clashed with police, western hemisphere leaders gathering inside a posh hotel conference center debated how to reap the economic fruits of a barrier-free trade zone from Alaska to Argentina, attempting to forge a landmark trade agreement which at least purported to address concerns that globalization would deepen poverty and weaken democracies. Creative comforts of the conference center included two large-screen televisions, a gleaming horseshoe-shaped conference table and decorative, potted green ferns.   Outside the 2.3-mile chain-linked barrier surrounding the hotel, several thousand protesters--only a fraction of the estimated 20,000 demonstrators who participated in two marches--voiced complaints ranging from their exclusion from the summit conference to AIDS treatment in poorer countries. Eventually, protesters tore down the outermost barrier to the summit hotel, but still were unable to enter the building.[1]

The story s contrast of the scenes was so striking that an equally significant contrast may have slipped past the reader: the simple fact of the story s appearance. The relatively-small-town newspaper had picked up the press release from the international news service Associated Press. Furthermore, the same article was accessible through the Internet, with related stories available at the click of a mouse button. Yet, millions of people would take both situations for granted, for the newspaper story was relegated to the end of Section A, and high speed online services bring the Internet to home offices every time the computer is turned on. No matter how people assess the situation, globalization is a reality.

In fact, the term globalization itself is so common it sometimes seems to be a buzz word for which no single, clear definition exists. International Studies scholar Jan Aart Scholte distinguishes four broad definitions of globalization: *internationalization*, cross-boarder relations between countries, particularly in the growth of international exchange and interdependence; *liberalization*, removing government-imposed restrictions on movements among countries in order to create a world economy; *universalization*, the spreading of objects, ideas, and products to people even in the remotest places on earth; and *westernization or modernization*, the spread of social structures of modernization are spread throughout the world, even at the cost of local self-determination.[2] But Scholte stresses a fifth idea, deterritorialization, a distinctive concept of

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[1] Globalization summit: Protesters warn of its perils, air grievances. *Alexandria (LA) Daily Town Talk*, 22 April, 2001.

[2] Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction.* New York: St. Martin s Press, 2000, pp. 15-16. Scholte argues that the fourth definition of globalization is simply colonialization by another name.

globalization which he explains as the growth of supraterritorial relations between people. [3] Most significant about this delineation is that it refers to a reconfiguration of geography so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances, and territorial borders. [4] Such a definition is consistent with sociologist Roland Robertson s description of globalization as a concept that refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. [5]

This paper contends that globalization so defined is largely the result of a technological revolution which signals a paradigm shift potentially as significant as the transformation resulting from the advent of the printing press. The present paradigm shift is affecting virtually every aspect of our lives, from the saturation of the individual self to the proliferation of multi-national corporations, a proliferation which more often than not has ignored issues of international human rights. Furthermore, the paper contends that the technology which encourages globalization is not intrinsically negative, and in fact mediates perception which can be critical to the facilitation of globalization from below.

This contention does not deny the myriad reactions to globalization. On the contrary, positions on globalization policy have been as varied as definitions of the phenomenon have been, but it seems the most prevalent framework to this point has been neoliberalism, which builds on the premise of classical liberalism: Market forces will bring prosperity, liberty, democracy, and peace to the wold of humankind. [6] Thus the neoliberal approach is to meet globalization with a large-scale retreat of official government regulation. Yet while proponents promise a global village in which the destructive antagonisms of the past can be left behind, [7] in reality such has not proven to be the case. Policies such as privatization, deregulation, open markets, and dismantling of welfare have been so imposed on governments throughout the world that the power of individual nations to serve their own people has been significantly reduced. In fact, Brecher contends that neoliberalism, or globalization from above, has restored the global dominance of imperialist powers and has taken away from poorer countries control of their own economic policies, concentrating their assets in the hands of investors from dominant countries.[8] In short, the approach has generally served powerful world interests and dominant classes.

This is not to say, however, that other approaches to globalization do not exist, the most extreme of which is held by radicals who view globalization as intrinsically harmful and who

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[3]Ibid., p. 46.

[4]Ibid., p. 16.

[5]Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture.* London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1992, p. 8.

[6]Scholte, p. 34.

[7]Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization from Below: The Power of Solidarity.* Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000. p. ix.

[8]Ibid, p. 3.

therefore call for de-globalization. But the fact is that we live in a global world, and, as Brecher contends, people can exercise power of globalization from above only by means of solidarity that crosses national boundaries and identities, that is, by globalization from below.[9] In short, we must work from within the global paradigm.

Virtually no one denies that technological advancement has accelerated globalization in the past quarter of a century. Some scholars even suggest that technological advancements have been the single driving force of globalization.[10] Though few analysts agree to that extent, they nevertheless contend that globalization could not have occurred without the proliferation of innovations in transportation, communications, and data processing, and that, in fact, a completely new global information infrastructure has emerged.[11] Predictably, reactions to technological advancements are also mixed. Michael Heim notes that some critics reject the movement of life into electronic environments. In their naive realism, they view computers as intruders into the real world of experience and, as a result, struggle with various fears.[12] Says Heim:

> There is fear of abandoning local community values as we move into a cyberspace of global communities. There is fear of diminishing physical closeness and mutual interdependence as electronic networks mediate more and more activities. There is fear of crushing the spirit by replacing human movement with smart objects and robot machines. There is fear of losing the autonomy of our private bodies as we depend increasingly on chip-based implants. There is fear of compromising integrity of mind as we habitually plug into networks....There is fear of the empty desolation of human absence that comes with increased telepresence. There is fear that it will be the same power elite who moved atoms as they pursued a science without conscience who will now move bits. [13]

At the other end of the spectrum are proponents whom Heim classifies as idealists, in whose world big ideas absorb individuals. Evolutionary gains for the species outweigh personal, individual losses, according to idealists.[14] In short, idealists are optimists who declare, This is the

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[9]Ibid, p. x. Similarly, Scholte suggests that reformism, or global social democracy, presents the strongest challenge to neoliberal policies, contending that capitalism can be a major force for human good if public policies are carefully designed and executed. See Scholte, pp, 35-37.

[10]W. B. Wriston, *The Twilight of Sovereignty: How the Information Revolution is Transforming Our World.* New York: Charles Scribner s Sons, 1992, p.10.

[11] Globalization and Its Impact on Culture. http://www.neda.net/odvvweb/article/globalization.htm, 26 April, 2001, p. 1.

[12]Michael Heim, *Virtual Realism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 37.

[13]Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[14]Ibid., p. 38.

best of all possible worlds, and even the pain is a necessary component. [15]

If, then, as Marshall McLuan insisted, the medium is the message, in the case of technology which facilitates globalization, the message seems to be plural; the communicated message isn t only one message. From the personal, existential standpoint, the self has been saturated. Globalization has led to nonterritorial frameworks of collective identity and solidarities along the lines of gender, class, age, religion and the like. The result often is an overlapping of communities and thus a proliferation of hybrid identities so that a person must negotiate several non-territorial identities within the self.[16] Psychologist Kenneth Gergen astutely attributes this global identity crisis to a rapid increase in technological innovations, an increase which has led to the enormous proliferation of relationships:

> Emerging technologies saturate us with the voices of humankind both harmonious and alien. As we absorb their varied rhymes and reasons, they become part of us and we of them. Social saturation furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self. For everything we know to be true about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision. This fragmentation of self-conceptions corresponds to a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships. These relationships pull us in myriad directions, inviting us to play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an authentic self with knowable characteristics recedes from view. The fully saturated self becomes no self at all.[17]

But neither is the message of this technological medium only personal. The prevalence of neoliberalism and the economic perspective of globalization from above have led to the neglect of human rights. Though proponents of globalization promised that greater interconnectedness would lead to a global village characterized by cooperation and diversity, that promise has largely failed to become reality. As Brecher notes, globalization from above has given us more poor people than the world has ever known and increased threats to the environmental conditions on which human life itself depends. [18] And referring to a 1985 music recording of We are the World, two Princeton Theological Seminary professors assert, Only North American naivete (at best) or arrogance (at worst) would fail to recognize our complicity in global famine, and suggest that a starving Ethiopian could identify with pampered starlets from Beverly Hills. [19]

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[15]Ibid.

[16]Scholte, pp. 160-61.

[17]Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, pp. 6-7.

[18]Brecher, p. ix.

[19]Kenda Creasy Dean and Richard R. Osmer, We Aren t the World: A Review of the Literature on Globalization, Youth and Religion A Point of View from the United States. Unpublished paper, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999, p. 2.

Arguably, technology holds as much responsibility for the neglect of human rights as it does for the saturation of the individual self. However, at this point, the issue of control is paramount. One can quite easily conclude that those who remain in greatest control of globalization are those with the most technology and wealth. One writer contends that the opportunities of individuals to communicate with others may have increased a hundred fold, but the ability of the elite to affect the world has increased a million fold: Few are wealthy enough to go head to head with Ted Turner s Cable News Network. [20]

In his 1969 book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Neil Postman reminded educators that a change in environment is hardly ever additive or linear.[21] Postman further contended:

> In no case is this more certain than when the new elements are technological. Then, in no case will the new environment be more radically different from the old than in political and social forms of life. When you plug something into a wall, someone is getting plugged into you.[22]

Quoting from Jacques Ellul, Postman asserted, Only through concentration of a large number of media in a few hands can one attain a true orchestration, a continuity, and an application of scientific methods of influencing individuals. [23] Postman continued that the results of such concentration might be an almost complete homogenization of thought among people the media reached, claiming, There are many forms of censorship, and one of them is to deny access to loudspeakers to those with dissident ideas, or even *any* ideas. This is easy to do (and not necessarily conspiratorial) when the loudspeakers are owned and operated by mammoth corporations with enormous investments in their proprietorship. [24]

No one can deny that technology has increased even more rapidly since Postman first sounded that alarm. In a world of globalization, the medium (technology) may be the messages (plural), but if the technological medium of the past decade has been the Internet, and in particular the World Wide Web, the message is a much larger one, for it conceivably signals a paradigm shift in our entire way of thinking about ourselves and our relationship to the universe. Postman s words ring even more true twenty years after he first penned them: What you have is a totally new environment requiring a whole new repertoire of survival strategies...new patterns of defense, perception, understanding, evaluation. [25]

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[20] Globalization and Its Impact on Culture, p. 2.

[21] Neil Postman, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Dell Publishers, 1969, p. 7.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid, p. 8.

[24] Ibid., p. 9.

[25] Ibid, p. 7.

The idea of globalization s signaling a paradigm shift admittedly is not unique. Princeton professors Dean and Osmer assert that, defined as the social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede (and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding), globalization is the cultural equivalent of dynamite. [26] More specifically, however, technology, and in particular the Internet, may be the media which ushers in the new paradigm. Arguably, the World Wide Web offers the metaphor which not only conveys the message of the paradigm shift, but it also offers the metaphor by which we understand that censorship and control of technology is not inevitable. However, it can do so only if we work from within the new paradigm. Rabbi Naamah Kelman astutely notes that she does not bemoan globalization. The industrial revolution, the feminist revolution, and now the information revolution, have made the lives of human beings all over the planet profoundly better, she contends. The challenge is not change but sharing fairly and justly....It is the compassionate allocation of resources. [27]

Yet, paradigm shifts can be difficult to grasp when observers are in the midst of them. Therefore, an understanding of the new paradigm--that is, an understanding of the deep philosophical, scientific, and theological changes that arguably have resulted from the advent of cyberspace--is critical.

Basing his conclusion on analyses of critical junctures in history when major advances in language or writing initiated new levels of civilization, Douglas Robertson argues the world is poised for yet another such change. Robertson compares events of the present age to events in history at the time of the invention of language, writing, and the printing press. Society s progress at each of these ages, he asserts, was mainly due to significant increases in the amount of information available. Particularly, Robertson notes the advent of the printing press as the main factor contributing to the scientific revolution and the Protestant Reformation. At that time, books became available to the public in record numbers, and ideas, therefore, reached a more widespread audience than ever before, leading to a flood of information which sparked radically new thought.[28]

Furthermore, Robertson focuses specifically on the Copernican Revolution in the sixteenth century, stressing that the work of Copernicus eventually led to the discovery of the size and scale of the universe and to the development of the scientific method. Robertson suggests that the computer has led to a parallel shift in science and mathematics today, the dismantling of absolute truths of axioms, the dethroning of basic postulates of formal logic, and the development of chaos theory.[29] But since the invention of the printing press also was accompanied by major shifts in other disciplines, including philosophical and religious thought, if society is undergoing a

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[26]Dean and Osmer, p. 2.

[27]Naamah Kelman, Globalization and Religion. http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd33-12.html, 26 April, 2001, p. 1.

[28]Douglas S. Robertson, *The New Renaissance: Computers and the Next Level of Civilization.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 3-35.

[29]Ibid, pp. 37-43.

paradigm shift today, we can expect similar shifts in disciplines.

A complete description of the parallels between the proliferation of the Internet/World Wide Web and significant changes in other disciplines is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief description of these concurrent changes illustrates the deep nature of the present paradigm shift. In addition to the changes in scientific thought Robertson notes, other departures from modern rationalist thought are occurring today in the realm of science. The first of these changes date back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when physicist Werner Heisenberg demonstrated that determining the position and velocity of basic units of matter was theoretically impossible. His demonstration dethroned the long-held notion that objects are defined largely by points in time and space. Gergen accurately concludes that the resulting concern with the observer s perspective continued to mount in a century in which technology ensured a steadily increasing exposure to a multiplicity of other perspectives. [30] In 1962, Thomas Kuhn s landmark publication *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* challenged the modernist notion of the rationality of scientific progress which posited that science tested theories against reality, and those theories that failed were dismissed. Kuhn argued, rather, that mainstream scientists were committed to a certain perspective of the world, a paradigm. These scientists largely dismissed the observations of other scientists who demonstrated anomalies outside of this mainstream paradigm. Over time, though, when enough findings accumulated, the marginal group of scientists gained a following and developed a different view of the world, an alternate paradigm, in which their findings made sense. Neither the old theory nor the new theory, Kuhn concluded, could be verified with respect to absolute, empirical truth; instead, both were simply different ways of viewing the world given a different set of facts. Thus, contrary to prevailing thought, scientific progress did not move increasingly closer to the truth.[31]

Kuhn accurately describes the shift in scientific thought occurring today. The present developing scientific paradigm can be described as a systems paradigm, an organic approach as opposed to the mechanistic, causal, one-way analysis of the modernist scientific method.[32] Whereas the classical scientific disciplines of chemistry, biology, or physics (along with related areas in social science) divided the universe into isolated elements chemical compounds, cells, enzymes, or competing individual human beings and expected to understand the whole system by putting the discrete parts together, in recent history scientists have concluded that an understanding of the elements as well as their interrelations is essential to an understanding of the whole.[33]

Even the century s early shifts in the study of science implied major philosophical changes. As early as 19562, Martin Heidegger hinted at the paradigm shift when he described the

[30]Gergen, pp. 89-90.

[31]Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, pp. 1-70.

[32]Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory.* New York: George Braziller, 1969, p. xxi.

[33]Ibid., p. xix.

compression of space and time.[34] Furthermore, Kuhn s analysis of scientific revolutions drastically altered the concept of knowledge: According to Kuhn, what counted as fact depended on one s perspective. Similarly, today, a systems approach to philosophy changes the understanding of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. In the first place, what is regarded as real is not objects of perception or direct observation but conceptual constructs, whether those objects are ecosystems, social systems, or objects of the everyday world. These objects are not simply given as sense data, but actually are construed by an enormity of mental factors ranging from gestalt dynamics and learning processes to linguistic and cultural factors that determine what we see or perceive.[35] Likewise, knowledge is not an approximation to truth or reality but rather is an interaction between the knower and the known, depending on biological, psychological, cultural, and linguistic factors.[36] Finally, this new understanding of metaphysics and epistemology leads to a the valuing of symbols, social entities, and cultures, all of which contribute to a bridging of the gap between traditionally antithetical disciplines such as science and the humanities.[37]

As can be expected, then, parallel shifts are also occurring in related humanities fields. Of particular note are the expanding areas of theological thought. In addition to the rising interest in spirituality as opposed to rationalism, a proliferation of theologies from below have emerged, including feminist theologies, Latin American liberation theologies, and Black, Asian, and Hispanic theologies. Together with narrative and metaphorical theologies, these voices constitute a turn to experience as a legitimate beginning point for theological thought. Connection of the various parts of the earth, made possible by technology, is a major contributing factor in the rise of these voices from the margins.

But perhaps one of the most noteworthy changes within the humanities is the shift in critical/literary theory, for many of its adherents share the language of the Internet and the World Wide Web: hypertext. Critic Roland Barthes describes a text which matches the computing concept of hypertext: text composed of blocks of words and images linked electronically by multiple paths in an open-ended textuality described as link, node, network, web, and path. Says Barthes, The networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest...it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one. [38] With regard to computers, Theodor Nelson coined the term hypertext to denote non-sequential writing text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen....This is a series of text chunks connected

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[34]Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time.* New York: Harper, 1962.

[35]Bertalanffy, p. xxi.

[36]Ibid., p. xxii.

[37]Ibid., p. xxiii.

[38]Roland Barthes, *S/Z,* Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, pp. 5-6.

by links which offer the reader different pathways. [39] Along these lines, George Landow logically concludes that since the concept of hypermedia extends the idea of text to include sound, animation, and other forms of data, linking verbal discourse to images and sounds is as easy as linking verbal discourse to another verbal passage. Thus, the notion of text extends beyond the solely verbal.[40]

In an open system paradigm, these shifts in these disciplines are linked to technological advancement. Modern technology and society have become so complex, claims systems proponent Bertalanffy, that traditional ways of approaching an understanding of life as we know it are no longer sufficient; rather, holistic, generalist, or interdisciplinary approaches are necessary. Bertalanffy concludes that systems problems were originally the offspring of specific and concrete problems in technology, but models, conceptualization and principles...by far transcended specialist boundaries, were of an interdisciplinary nature, and were found to be independent of their special realizations. [41]

In short, the overall result of the present paradigm shift is an expanding exposure to other perspectives in a virtually shrinking world.[42] What has arguably led to this phenomenon during the past decade is the Internet. Reactions to the emergence of the World Wide Web evidence not only a paradigm shift but the Web s ability as a metaphor to mediate perception for globalization from below. On one hand, the Web can be construed as a net or a trap that ensnares the individual so as to saturate the self. On the other hand, however, the metaphor communicates the image of a web of belief. Asserting that globalization from below is possible, Brecher contends that every movement participant individual or group will have to put the pieces of the puzzle [Web] together for themselves....However limited their own vantage points, people can learn from each other, can adapt to and incorporate each others views. [43]

But from the globally connected world itself comes perhaps the best evidence that the Web, as medium, is the message:

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[39]Theodor H. Nelson, quoted in George P. Landow, *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 3.

[40]Landow, p. 3.

[41]Bertalanffy, p. xx.

[42]It is in the nature of paradigm shifts for proponents of the new paradigm to meet with resistance from those who adhere to the firmly entrenched mainstream paradigm, but the rapid acceleration of technology means changing ideas are appearing so quickly today that often we can t initially grasp all the ramifications of what is happening. Therefore, resistance to the new paradigm, in this case, has sometimes become backlash, as is evidenced by the Unibomber s manifesto, published earlier this decade, alarmingly denouncing technology. In another arena, religious fundamentalism can be understood as a backlash against rising new theologies.

[43]Brecher, p. xii.

The connectedness of the Web is transforming what s inside *and* outside your business your market and your employees....Through the Internet, the people in your markets are discovering and inventing new ways to converse. They re talking about your business. They re telling one another the truth, in very human voices. Intranets are enabling your best people to hyperlink themselves together, outside the org chart. They re incredibly productive and innovative. They re telling one another the truth, in very human voices. There s a new conversation between and among your market and your workers. It s making them smarter and it s enabling them to discover their human voices. You have two choices. You can continue to lock yourself behind facile corporate words and happytalk brochures. Or you can join the conversation.[44]

In a dozen different languages, this Cluetrain Manifesto further declares:

A powerful global conversation has begun. Through the Internet, people are discovering and inventing new ways to share relevant knowledge with blinding speed. As a direct result, markets are getting smarter....If you only have time for one clue this year, this is the one to get...we are not seats or eyeballs or end users or consumers. We are human beings and our reach exceeds your grasp.[45]

Significantly, this group has posted 95 theses to its Website. Among them are the assertions that The Internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media. Hyperlinks subvert hierarchy. [46] While globalization from above has allowed for the concentration of control and the decentralization of production, [47] by its sheer nature, the Web decentralizes control.[48] And, pragmatically, the mobilization of human rights solidarity movements has been fueled by the ease of communication and connection afforded by the Internet.

General Implications for Religious Education in the Academic Classroom

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[44]http://www.cluetrain.com/shortform.html 1 May, 2001.

[45]http://www.cluetrain.com 1 May, 2001.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Brecher, p. 2.

[48]Admittedly, critics contend that the Web is not as empowering as its proponents claim, and their merit attention See, for example, Beth Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman, *Race in Cyberspace.* New York: Routledge, 2000. The authors claim that cyberspace simply provides another place for domination of privileged groups. While no one particular person or group controls the Internet nor the World Wide Web, universal access, especially to poor countries, is still not available, and one of the chief tasks of globalization from below is to work actively for this universal access.

The preceding argument implies that the Internet/World Wide Web can mediate perception toward facilitation of globalization from below, but only if we as educators work from within the new paradigm--and the paradigm is not without its perils. In the words of Michael Heim, Cyberspace is an infoscape containing ecstatic heights as well as abysmal fissures. [49] The self can become a lost soul, or the digitized human being can cease to be living mystery. Yet the potential for liberation also exists, as the idealist proponent of the computer insists. Heim astutely concludes that if we want to live well, we must understand this dual nature of our passion for technology. In his words, We must balance the idealist s enthusiasm for computerized life with the need to ground ourselves more deeply in the felt earth, affirmed by the realist as our primary reality. [50]

Heim terms this balance virtual reality, insisting that the balancing act means walking a path between involvement and critical perception by a process he calls technalysis. [51] His description of technalysis is consistent with the educational approach of praxis, critical reflection and action. The advantage is that, in the arena of technology, such analysis works alongside the human factors, thus placing the human being at the center of technology and remaining careful not to confuse virtual reality with the primary reality of human self-awareness. What is paramount, in short, is to see the world as interconnected and to be part of it. As Kelman notes, we must not be afraid of the other or of the new, for it is now clear that it takes the whole world to guarantee the future.[52]

As mediator of a message, the Web metaphor communicates theological and philosophical implications for the classroom, also, one of the most significant being that religion can no longer be constituted only as rational assent to specific dogmas. No one theology is adequate for the times. Rather, we are engaged in building theologies stemming from our own experiences, and as educators, we are responsible for equipping our students with the tools to build and rebuild their Web of belief in the face of rapid technological, sociological, philosophical, and scientific changes. To do so requires that we pay close attention to the voices from the margins and learn from each others perspectives.

Furthermore, we will take seriously and will communicate an ontological view that understands the basic nature of human beings as relational, thus helping our students find themselves and redefine themselves in terms of their relation to the world. The self in relation is self-differentiated; in other words, it is part of the whole but not subsumed by it. Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall insightfully suggests an ontology of communion whereby being is construed to mean being with. Essential humanity is being-in-relationship; that is, human beings are to be considered with respect to their many relationships.

Hall s suggestion is consistent with the tenets of process theology. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore has reminded us that in process theology, a person is considered to be in

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[49]Heim, p. 43.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid, p. 44-46.

[52]Kelman, p. 1.

relationship with all that is, and each individual dwells in both God and the world.[53] She continues:

> The assumption in process theology that all of reality is internally related would suggest that the web of relationship is much more extensive than the obvious physical encounters among persons. Human beings are connected to other human beings and the earth far beyond their realm of immediate conscious, or even subconscious, knowledge....People are internally related to the world because these other people, events, structures, and ideas actually dwell in them.[54]

The organic view of process theologians, she summarizes, does not regard persons as individuals to be nurtured so they can enter relationships but, rather, regards the human being as fundamentally social. In fact, process theologians see all of reality as an interconnected complex web, and therefore, we must give attention to how all things are affected by their social web.[55]

Similarly, the reality of globalization implies the appropriateness of religious education through interdisciplinary studies. The Web offers a metaphor for a world of shrinking borders and permeable, overlapping boundaries, a world where issues of faith and science are no longer antithetical. Moreover, we as teachers must address the prevalent search for spirituality among our students as well as among others. Says religious educator Cassidy Dale, esoteric seekers understand that they live in a shrinking world. As postmoderns in a globalized world that has made neighbors of faith groups whose doctrines once rubbed uncomfortably against each other, they look for what is beneath absolute truth, finding God within mystical spirituality. Thus, writers, musicians and artists often function as theologians of the day.[56] Basically, when the world becomes too big or too complex to explain through rational means, we can help ourselves and our students make sense of it through the use of stories.[57]

One final observation is that as educators, we must recognize and communicate the importance of globalization ethics of justice, and compassion. As liberation theologian Leonardo Boff insists that instead of globalizing the market for individual and corporate profit, we need to globalize other values such as solidarity, collective compassion for victims, respect for cultures, sharing of good, effective integration with nature, and feelings of humanity and mercy for the

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[53]Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, pp. 108-9.

[54]Ibid., p. 111.

[55]Ibid., p. 113.

[56]Cassidy Dale, A Truth Beyond Telling. http://www.faithworks.com/archives/truth_beyond.htm 3 September, 2001.

[57]Interestingly, Enoch Oglesby suggests that stories and case studies can also facilitate education for globalization ethics. See Enoch H. Oglesby, *Born in the Fire: Case Studies in Christian Ethics and Globalization.* New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990.

humiliated and offended. [58] By throwing light on society s agenda, Boff continues, liberation theology reflects on the problematical power expressed through science and technology. It is not enough, he contends, that we distribute food through technological means. Rather, we should direct technological globalization toward worldwide humanization, equity, human and ecological welfare, respect for cultural differences, and openness to cultural reciprocity.[59]

Religious educators today have an obligation to examine critically the medium which is the message, and in a globalized world, the most far-reaching medium is the Internet. As medium and as metaphor, computer texts via the World Wide Web can mediate perception so as to facilitate globalization from below, but only with our human interaction.

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[58]Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm.* Trans. John Cumming. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, p. 105.

[59]Ibid., p. 128.

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