

Technology, Morality & Spirituality

The Technological Capabilities of Humans

After the fall of mankind in Adam, there are a few places where Scripture brings up the ability of mankind to press the physical, technological and moral limits, including:

Genesis 11:6 (NASU)

The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now ***nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.***

Romans 1:28-32 (NASU)

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, ***inventors of evil***, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

While Paul wrote that one of the capabilities of humans in the moral realm was that they could be and had been “inventors of evil”, the sin nature remained and remains unchanged. So the increasing technological capabilities of mankind do not increase the evil ***capacity*** within each human being, but do increase the potential range and modes of expression of that sinful nature. The sinful nature remains unchanged, because it is simply and totally absent and excluded from the life of God (Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:18), in which there is no “gray scale” nor variation.

The “leading edge” of technology

Technological advancement allows for the development and implementation of technology to increase exponentially. In recent years, mankind has grown the capacity to generate, store, transmit and process data at an ever increasing rate. Moore’s Law, for instance, says that computing capacity doubles approximately every 18 months.¹ Alongside the skyrocketing information capabilities are those in a broad spectrum of technological areas, including input devices, sensors and output devices. Increasingly, the size of these devices is limited by the requirements of the human interface, as the required electronic and other technological components rapidly shrink in size.

The precipitous edge of morality, ethics & spirituality

While technology advances at an ever increasing rate, the ability to discern right and wrong – or even the ability to establish ***any*** firm basis for right and wrong – is declining precipitously. Even among those who claim to be Christians in the US, more than half

¹ There are more detailed and complex ways of expressing Moore’s Law. For a brief introduction, one may examine http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore's_law.

deny absolute truth. Among those in church youth groups in the US, less than 10% believe in absolute truth.² In prior generations in the western world, a Judeo-Christian worldview provided a basis for a significant portion of the population to address moral and ethical questions. Morality and ethics of believing Jews and Christians were based upon the absolute moral character of the holy God:

Leviticus 11:45 (NASU)

For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus **you shall be holy, for I am holy.**"

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NASU)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "**you shall be holy, for I am holy.**"

Secularism, humanism, post-modernism, non-Judeo-Christian religious views, and even the supposed "separation of church and state" have increasingly diminished or eliminated the ability of people and governments in modern culture to establish moral and ethical standards.

Leading edge meets precipice

So what's the problem? There is a great variety of domains where human technological abilities raise moral, ethical and spiritual questions, such as:

- Is it moral to produce a human clone (or clones)?
- What is the legal status of a human clone? Human or property? If property, whose? If not property, then what rights does a clone have – when? Should the spiritual "needs" of those clones be met, and if so, how?
- What substances may a human ingest or breathe or take in through skin contact? Are there different morals for human clones? Who decides?
- May we make grades of genetic variation and intermixture between humans and other species? What legal standing do such "creatures" have?
- May we install multiple sensors into humans, clones or variant human-animal hybrid beings, and also install monitoring, inventory, control, and life termination devices in those beings? Which ones or how many any of those?
- Who is qualified and authorized to make decisions about what is optimum for any of these technologies?
- Once the statistically probable life outcome is determined for each individual human or human-animal-hybrid, is it permissible to pre-establish life termination points or set life termination criteria based on allowable investments versus economic output? This would be done, of course, to assure that each advanced "biounit" is economically cost-effective.
- May we bring about human beings and/or human-animal hybrids in a laboratory and managed environment, outside of the typical "home" and "family" context?

² <http://afajournal.org/2004/october/1004worldview.asp>; source Barna Research Group.

- Once having determined the optimal diet and exercise level for each advanced “biounit”, should we regulate the intake and exercise of each so as to assure uniform and acceptable “biounit” quality?
- If we have the capacity to substantially extend the life of each “biounit” by optimal management techniques, is there some age level or other parameter at which further life extension is denied? Who decides?
- If it could be determined that blood levels of certain substances served as indicators of an inclination to one or more prohibited behaviors, should those levels be remotely monitored and reported to authorities?
- If we were able to define a distributed set of genetically desirable characteristics, should the genetic parameters of the “biounit” population be managed to conform to that definition? How should that take place?
- “Plastic surgery” can help to restore function and appearance to those who have been injured or born with physical problems. And it can and has been used more recently to effectuate the external features of a change of gender, restoration to female virginity, and multiple successive changes in appearance and physical features.

Present forms of entertainment allow for the presentation of any of the above issues in video format to be presented in homes throughout the entire culture. People can experience the hypothetical outcome of any of these questions, and many more, in their own home.

Decision, decisions

The above list of questions and issues could easily be extended much further. Based on human governmental structures (representative government, dictatorship, majority vote, etc.), any or many of these technically feasible options could be established based upon purely human forms of authority. Based on what has been revealed in Scripture we have a number of principles and insights to guide us in dealing with these technically feasible options.

What is revealed is first of all personal for those in the church

As we read of the encounters of Paul and his companions with the pagan cultures, there is a distinct pattern that emerges from both the historical accounts in Acts, and the teachings in the epistles:

1) The priority of application of the morality of the Christian faith was always to the believers first. Since the believer’s morality was founded upon the believer’s position in Christ, the moral imperatives were the logical outcome of the believer’s position in Christ (Ephesians being a prime example). The operating power of that translation from the believers’ eternal position to daily condition was intended to be by God’s energizing – the life of Christ (Ephesians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:28-29; 3:1-4). Believers, then have an eternal spiritual basis for morality in the absolute character of God Himself and what He has done, impacting every area of their lives.

2) While we see the position in Christ as the basis for morality for Christians, and the energizing of God and the life of Christ as the means of conveyance of that morality from

position to condition, the morality conveyed in the New Testament was always communicated to the believers in the church. The apostles did not urge the believers to try to change the world to fit Christian morals as if this were a God-ordained priority. This would seem to leave Christians free to express their values and morals in the political realm, to the extent that they have the freedom to do so, but without placing a mandate or priority upon Christians to do so.³

What is revealed tells us what God intended

From the very first chapters of Genesis, Scripture makes clear what was God's intent regarding human beings versus animals, the establishment of gender distinctions, marriage relationships, etc. It is clear from what God has revealed that:

- Blurring of distinctions or cross-over of fundamental biology between man and animal was and is not God's intent.
- Blurring of distinctions or cross-over of fundamental biology between male and female human beings was and is not God's intent.
- Technologies which diminish the value and uniqueness of human life - failing to recognize the spiritual aspect of human beings as created by God - are not God's intent.
- External "improvements" to the bodies of human beings that ignore or place a higher priority upon the basic spiritual need of each human to place his or her faith in God's provision of salvation are not God's intent.
- No technological "improvement" will displace the basic dependence of human beings upon who God is and what He has provided and what He has done.

The bottom line in these matters is that God remains who He is, regardless of human technology. Nothing in any of human technology changes the fundamental spiritual realities nor the future that God has revealed will take place. Human beings can live by God's revelations and provisions and life, by faith, or they can place their faith in anything else. Either of these choices will have the temporal and eternal consequences that God describes in His word.

Romans 6:20-23 (NASU)

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ This view stands in opposition to those within Christendom who see it as their Christian duty to take control of political systems and influence legal decisions, so as to impose Christian morality upon the rest of the world, and to therefore "advance Christ's kingdom on the earth", as they see it. Related to this view are those Christians who feel compelled to see others "adopt Christian values".