

Christian Ethics in a Technological Age.

By Brian Brock.

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Brian Brock is lecturer in moral and practical theology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and author of *Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2007). *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age* was originally Brock's doctoral thesis at King's College, London.

Brock begins by highlighting and finding wanting the modern practice of "technology assessment" as epitomized in the establishment of the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment in 1972. We live in a world, a milieu, of ever multiplying new technologies and technological artifacts. Technology Assessment attempts to evaluate their impacts as thoroughly as possible through scientific, managerial methods. Costs and benefits, benefits and harms, short-term and long-term, near and distant effects: how can we measure what we know and extrapolate to what we need to know?

In Part I Brock engages, in some detail, the thinking of Martin Heidegger, George Grant, and Michel Foucault on technology. While Heidegger and Foucault in particular are not theologically where Brock intends to end up, these three chapters provide a helpful philosophical critique of the inadequacies of today's narrow managerial technological assessment. The real problems lie much deeper in the ways technology reflects and restructures our whole way of thinking about life, materiality, subject and object, means and ends.

Having used Heidegger, Grant, and Foucault to unmask the complex reality of technology in the modern era, in Part II Brock turns to Augustine, Barth, and Bernd Wannenwetsch to try to build a Christian theological ethics of technology and work that will, in the end, provide a richer texture for our interactions with the questions raised by new technologies. In briefest terms, technology questions and judgments should arise within the church gathered for worship rather than within the management team gathered for measurement of effects. It could be said that in the former it is God who questions technology whereas in the latter technology and its servants constitute an implicit challenge to God and the world external to themselves.

Brock's study will be of particular interest to students of his primary six sources: Heidegger, Grant, Foucault, Augustine, Barth, and Wannenwetsch whose ideas and quotations dominate the pages of this book. Without any doubt *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age* is a significant work that deserves careful consideration in graduate seminars and among specialists in the field. My critical notes are threefold: first, the work would have been much stronger if it demonstrated awareness and understanding of the work of Jacques Ellul, Carl Mitcham, Albert Borgmann, and other leading thinkers in this arena.

Second, Brock's writing style (long complex, Germanic sentence structures, eccentric vocabulary choices such as the recurrent use of "purchase") gets in the way of successful communication --- especially with the very managers and technologists he presumably would like to influence. Third, while sympathizing with his rejection of managerial formulas for analysis, some much more concrete and practical counsel on the implications of his position would have been helpful. How do trust *and trustworthiness* get reestablished? How does a worshipping congregation hear God's guidance about its particular engagements with technologies? We have some eloquent statements of the concepts but little by way of illustration or example.