Tech Not Neutral #1

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Preacher: Dr. Craig Gay

[0:00] So, I'm just going to say three things. Why are we doing this? This is an exercise in applying the gospel, in gospel application.

We have all the treasures and wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. Now, here, we live in this context. How do we apply the gospel in this context?
How do we do it in a way that's missional, where we think deeply about these things and where we engage with the questions that we all have?
Secondly, why technology? You wouldn't be here, I think, unless you were convinced that technology is both a blessing and a burden, and we want to go more deeply on that.
So, thirdly, why Craig? It's a delight to introduce Craig. Craig is Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Regent College.
[1:00] I've been his student and his pastor and his friend for a long time, and he has thought more deeply about this whole issue of technology than most of the people I know.

His book, many of you will have come across and read. If you haven't, you need to get it. And he is going to spend three nights taking us through just the surface of the material that he goes into at more depth in his book and that he teaches in more depth at Regent College.
Craig's a family man, and he is tech positive and tech negative, depending on which sort of technology it is. Tonight, what we're going to do is we're going to hear Craig teach for about 25 minutes, and then we're going to have exercises...
We're going to have a discussion at a small group in our tables with some of the sheets that are on the table. Then Craig is going to speak again, and then we'll have Q&A.;
And if you have questions, save them for the Q&A;, because I think that's most valuable. So, I'd like to welcome Craig. I wonder if you would welcome him with me as he comes to teach us.
[2:24] Oh, gosh, thank you all for coming. It's a privilege to be here speaking to you tonight. I'm grateful to you. I've got a PowerPoint presentation that...

You won't know this, but you're witnessing the first PowerPoint presentation I've ever actually put together. Yeah, and I thought it came out...
Well, you'll be the judge of this, but I think it came out pretty well. But it needs to be larger. Is there a way to fill the screen with this? Basically, what I have is a number of the quotations, the longer quotations that I'll be reading, and I'd like you to at least stand a chance of being able to follow along with me.
Yes. So, everyone doesn't need one of those. You'll just need to have enough at your table for discussion after his first presentation.
So, they're not notes. They're not notes of his presentation. Can you just put it up and hold the crap out of it? Look at that.
[3:38] It's like clouds and pictures. Is there going to be another break? Yeah. It's larger. It'll just make it easier to read. Thank you to our general.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Okay. Well, we are wanting, over these next three evening sessions, to talk about technology.
Well, let's begin by at least trying to define the word technology. Webster's Dictionary, always a good place to start, defines technology as, quote, a technical method of achieving a practical purpose.
or the totality of means employed to provide objects necessary for human sustenance and comfort.
One online source defines technology as, quote, the creation of products and processes for the purpose of improving human chances for survival, comfort level, and quality of life.

But what about modern technology? What makes it modern? What distinguishes it from traditional or pre-modern technologies? Well, modern technology would seem to entail the application of specifically scientific knowledge to practical purposes.
[5:16] It seems to be the potent synthesis of scientific knowledge with human aspiration that distinguishes modern technology from its pre-modern counterpart.

We'll return to this point in a few minutes. For now, let us just say that technology is something human beings do. It's something that we develop more or less naturally, as it were.
And yet our technologies move us beyond mere nature. All animals labor. Abraham Lincoln is said to have observed. But only human beings improve their workmanship by way of discoveries and innovations.
And our workmanship is not the only thing we improve with our technologies. Our discoveries and innovations have led to improvements, quite literally, in ourselves.
There is evidence, for example, that our cognitive capacities as human beings, so much greater and more flexible than those of our nearest evolutionary ancestors, emerged only in conjunction with technological developments, like language acquisition, cooking, and tool use.
[6:47] It seems that the uniquely human way of being in the world is indissolubly linked with technological making. Perhaps, as technology critic Nicholas Carr recently put it, the human will to technology arises out of that frustrating tension we so often feel between what our minds can envision and what our unaided bodies can accomplish.

Through our tools, Carr writes, we give our dreams form. We bring them into the world. The practicality of technology may distinguish it from art, but both spring from a similar distinctly human yearning.
We'll come back to this point as well. And yet, while the will to technology may be a necessarily self-creative act, from time to time it oversteps its rightful boundaries.
While our technologies can apparently empower us to become more of ourselves, well, they can also permit us to become less, diminishing us, diminishing us even as they purport to deliver more and better and faster and easier.
A large and growing body of evidence suggests that the impact that modern technology, and in particular the impact that automatic machine technology, is having upon us is not altogether good.
[8:27] The trajectory of modern machine development furthermore appears now to be diverging away from, and not toward, the enrichment of ordinary embodied human being.

We could talk about this evidence. I discuss some of it in the book. We could talk about the reasons for the divergence of technology away from ordinary embodied human being.
Many of these reasons stem, I think, largely from economic factors. But what I want to do, I want to do something a little bit different over the course of our three sessions together.
I'd like to take us in a more explicitly theological direction. Because while the divergence of modern technological development away from ordinary embodied human beings is a problem, a more pressing problem is that this divergence seems to flow out of our own distorted understanding of what the world is, as well as our understanding of our place within the world.
We seem somehow to have adopted a standpoint from which we view the world simply as a kind of neutral field of objects that stand ready for use.
[9:58] And we seem also to have become, or we seem to have come to believe that we are, for the most part, free to use the objects that we find standing ready for use, more or less as we see fit.

Am I not loud enough? Now I'm really loud. Well, I don't know for them, but... Okay. Now this peculiar modern outlook, both of the world and of ourselves, I want to argue, and I think it's too loud now, James.
No? Oh, it just sounds... Okay. Okay. This peculiar modern outlook, both of our world and of ourselves, is something I think we need to reconsider.
For it's actually very much at odds with biblical religion. But doing this is hard. It's kind of like asking fish to describe water.
Indeed, a kind of technological mindset is in the air we breathe today. And it's hard for us to imagine any other way of being in the world. But I want to encourage us to try, at least, to begin to think about how unusual our distinctively modern technological outlook is.
[11:32] And I want to do this tonight by talking about where it's come from. And so we're going to delve into what is sometimes called the history of ideas.

And we're going to do this in order to try and gain an appreciation of what I want to call the mechanical world picture. My goal is simply to encourage us to see how thoroughly technology has shaped our imaginations.
And the reason for doing this is because unless we become aware of how thoroughly technology has shaped our imaginations, we stand very little hope of using our technologies wisely and of directing modern technological development toward genuinely humane and fruitful purposes.
Now next week, we'll delve into theology proper by revisiting a biblical theology of creation as well as by recalling a biblical theology of what we, as those creatures who have been created after the image and likeness of God, are called to be and to do within created order.
And then in our final session, I'd like us to discuss some basic strategies for living with modern technology, as well as for speaking prophetically within contemporary culture in respect to modern technological development.
[13:08] So let's begin. We're going to try to figure out where this mechanical world picture has come from. George Grant, the Canadian political philosopher, made the following observations roughly 50 years ago.

We in North America live in the most realized technological society which has yet been. One which is, moreover, the chief imperial center from which technique is spread around the world.
And yet the very substance of our existing, which has made us the leaders in technique, now stands as a barrier to any thinking which might be able to comprehend technique from beyond its own dynamism.
Well, what did Grant mean? What is the, quote, very substance of our existing that now prevents us from being able to comprehend technique from beyond its own dynamism?
Well, again, I'm going to try to convince you that it is a way of seeing the world. A way of imagining human purposes within the world.
[14:37] But again, just as Grant's comments suggest, this is going to be difficult. Precisely because this way of seeing the world and this way of imagining human purposes within the world is the very substance of our existing.

We are, in short, simply in the habit of thinking about our world and thinking about our lives in the world as a series of discrete problems that must be largely, if not entirely, amenable to technical solutions.
As my own doctoral supervisor, Peter Berger, once put it, modernity means, in intention, if not in fact, that people take control over the world and over themselves.
What previously was experienced as fate has now become the arena of choices. In principle, there is the assumption that all human problems can be converted into technical problems, and if the techniques to solve certain problems do not as yet exist, well, then they will just have to be invented.
Now, within this distinctively modern view of the world, nature, including human nature, is very often conceived on the analogy of a vast and elaborate mechanism.
[16:17] One that differs from humanly constructed machine technology in complexity and scale, but not in kind. And from within this world picture, ordinary embodied human existence is very often construed not as something to be nurtured and enhanced, perhaps by technology, but rather as a series of limitations that remain to be overcome with more and better technologies.

Now, the mechanical world picture has a long and interesting history within Western civilization, and it culminated, it's culminated in the distinctively modern scientific outlook.
Let's briefly review just a couple of chapters in this interesting history. So the first, I have labeled Cartesianism.
The French polymath René Descartes, he was born at the end of the 16th century and lives into the middle of the 17th century. René Descartes is often credited with formulating the distinctively modern view of nature as a machine.
Critical of prevailing philosophical and theological descriptions of natural phenomena, Descartes determined to ground his understanding of nature upon a new foundation, and he encouraged his 17th century readers to envision nature as a vast and intricate mechanism.
[17:58] Now, in spite of nature's variety, parent variety, Descartes insisted that the natural world was comprised, was actually comprised, of the same basic material elements, bits of natural stuff that occupy space and that collide with one another to produce variety and pluriformity.

What appear to be the unique qualities, colors, sounds, tastes, textures, and so on, well, these are simply the products of these collisions and are therefore entirely explicable in terms of mass, speed, and other values that are mathematically representable.
Once described mathematically, natural processes can be predicted and potentially controlled.
And the point of Descartes' new philosophy, as it was called, was to render us the masters and possessors of nature.
Well, Descartes is often called the father of modern philosophy, and it's not difficult to see why. His new conceptualization of nature would prove foundational to the development of the modern scientific method, a method that has indeed permitted us to achieve a great deal of power over nature.
[19:31] And a latent Cartesianism is evident in a great many other aspects of modern civilization as well, and not just in philosophy, but in methods of administration, in military organization, in politics, in education, in the modern ideal of the individual agent who is able to remake him or herself by means of methods and techniques, all arising out of scientific insight.

Indeed, modern civilization all but requires us to take what Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor terms an instrumental stance vis-à-vis the natural world, including our own bodies.
We moderns, Taylor observed, tend to believe that our desires, inclinations, tendencies, habits of thought and feeling must be, quote, worked on, unquote, until they conform to our desired specifications.
I'm on a diet right now, and I'm working on this myself. But of course, the problem is that the success of Cartesianism has tended to blind us from other ways of being in the world.
And while life can be understood on the analogy of a mechanism, mechanisms cannot really be said to be alive. C.S. Lewis writes a lot about this in a number of places.
[21:15] I've got one quote I've taken from a little book called The Discarded Image. And unfortunately, it's long, and I just went too far. And I'm sure that, well, you might be able to read it.

I'll read it out. At the outset of the modern project, Lewis writes, the universe appears packed with will, intelligence, life, positive qualities.
Every tree is a nymph, every planet a god. Man himself is akin to the gods. But the advance of scientific knowledge gradually empties this rich and genial universe, first of its gods, then of its colors, smells, sounds, tastes, finally of solidity itself, as solidity was originally imagined.
But the matter does not rest there. The same method, which has emptied the world, now proceeds to empty ourselves. The masters of the method soon announced that we were just as mistaken, and mistaken in much the same way, when we attributed souls, or selves, or minds, to human organisms, as when we attributed dryads to the trees.
We who have personified all other things turn out ourselves to be mere personifications. Man is indeed akin to the gods. That is, he is no less phantasmal than they.
[23:06] And just as the dryad is a ghost, an abbreviated symbol for all the facts that we know about the tree, foolishly mistaken for a mysterious entity over and above the facts, so the man's mind, or consciousness, is an abbreviated symbol for certain verifiable facts about his behavior, a symbol mistaken for a thing.

And just as we've been broken of our bad habit of personifying trees, so we must now be broken of our bad habit of personifying people. Well, we're being a little hard on Descartes, perhaps.
In many ways, he appears only to have made explicit many assumptions that were already implicit in a way of understanding the human task within the world that dates back to the end of the Middle Ages.
Indeed, the distinctively modern drive to master and possess nature, including the human body, appear, at least in part, also to be the legacy of the Protestant Reformation.
So that's our next chapter. In an interesting and important book called Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity, Charles Taylor observes that Protestant Christianity, and in particular Calvinist Protestantism, invested the instrumental stance toward nature with a new important spiritual meaning.
[24:57] The instrumental stance is not the only stance, or is not only the stance which allows us to experiment and thus obtain valid scientific results.

It is not only the stance which gives us rational control over ourselves and our world. In this religious tradition, this Protestant tradition, it is also the way we serve God in creation, and that in

two respects.
First, it is the stance we must assume to work in our callings to preserve ourselves and God's order. But second, it is also what protects us against the absorption in things which would wrench us away from God.
We must constantly remember to treat the things of creation merely as instruments and not as ends valuable in themselves. Richard Sibbes enjoins us to, quote, use the world as a servant all thy days and not as a master, unquote.
And he tells us again, quote, labor, therefore, to have the world in its own place under thy feet, unquote. Instrumentalizing things was spiritually the essential step.
[26:24] Now, this practical conquest of nature would eventually cease to be understood within a Christian theological and ethical framework and as a religious duty.

and in the absence of a Christian framework, a kind of nihilism, which is to say the belief that all values are simply human constructions, would begin to surface within North American culture.
A nihilism that has by now, together with the spirit of late modern capitalism, become a kind of irresistible cultural force. This is the first half of George Grant's provocative thesis in an essay called In Defense of North America and this was where we got the first quote from George Grant.
Now, the other half of Grant's argument is that although the practical conquest of nature is no longer sought for the sake of the kingdom of God, it is still pursued with a kind of quasi-religious intensity.
For it has come to be believed that modern technological development will eventually give rise to a kind of rationalized kingdom of man.
[27:43] It might seem, Grant observes, that Calvinist practicality has devolved simply into the drive to technological development for its own sake.

Yet, Grant writes, what makes the drive to technology so strong is precisely that it is carried out by people who still identify what they are doing with the liberation of mankind.
Now, as we've seen, Grant believed that the technological imperative has all but eliminated any human desiring within North American culture beyond the desire to make the future by means of technological mastery.
the technological imperative has all but closed down any other way of thinking beyond that of practical rational calculation.
it is in this sense, Grant laments, that it has been truthfully said technology is the ontology of the age, the philosophy of the age, the reigning philosophy of the age.
[28:53] Western peoples, and perhaps soon all peoples, take themselves as subjects confronting otherness as object.

objects lying as raw material at the disposal of knowing and making subjects. Okay, fifth chapter and then we'll break.
Our quest for the origins of the mechanical world picture need to be extended back before the Reformation. After all, Protestant willingness to manipulate both nature and culture for the sake of imposing religious purposes on them, from which Protestant enthusiasm for the potential of early modern science and technology appear to have stemmed.
Well, both of these emerged out of a theological environment that had already begun to question the older understanding of the natural world as a divinely ordained hierarchy of perfection and value.
doubts had long since surfaced about the classical assumption that the human task was simply to fit into quote, the nature of things unquote.
[30:14] Indeed, the origins of the distinctively modern world picture may be traced back at least as far as theological innovations that took place in the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe.

Innovations that even at the time were referred to as the via moderna or modern way. Well, time doesn't permit us to delve into these theological innovations except to say that they enabled or entailed the rejection of an earlier natural theology that had referenced Plato and Aristotle as well as the Bible.
and suffice it here simply to say that late medieval theological developments or arguments about the nature of reality may well lie behind the activistic, manipulative, anthropocentric and very largely secular bent of modern technological culture.

Modern science's understanding of nature after all doesn't simply disclose the fact that nature has been disenchanted as per the Lewis quote, but also that nature is theologically mute.
We simply don't expect it to disclose any kind of religious truth beyond perhaps the notion that the agency, if indeed there is such a thing, responsible for natural order is creative and powerful.
[31:49] Well, this narrowing of nature's theological significance appears to have created a great deal of space for new scientific discovery as well as for technological manipulation of natural stuff.

Yet, it also and largely inadvertently seems to have contributed to the sterility, barrenness, and impersonality of modern technological society and culture.
this. What is this? There we go.
Historian Brad Gregory put it this way recently in a book called The Unintended Reformation.
Desacramentalized and denuded of God's presence via metaphysical univocity and Occam's razor, the natural world would cease to be either the Catholic theater of God's grace or the playground of Satan, as in Luther's Princeps Mundi.
Instead, it would become so much raw material awaiting the imprint of human desires. We've got one more chapter to go here, but we'll break now and talk about some of these things.
[33:24] Okay, so we're trying to trace the history of this distinctively modern outlook on the world, which we're calling the mechanical world picture.

And the last, sort of my last episode that I want to take us through comes out of an interesting little essay written by a German philosopher, Martin Heidegger.
This would have been just after the World War II. Essay is called The Question Concerning Technology.
and Heidegger contends that the modern supposition that we are free to impose our will upon the raw stuff of nature, sorry, am I not loud enough, actually antedates Christianity by centuries.
Indeed, it runs right the way through Western philosophy. Now, Heidegger's essay is important, and I want to discuss it at some length.
[34:43] We won't go into too much detail, but I'm going to have us focus on it for a minute. Now, sort of generalized awareness that it might be possible for human beings to, quote, master and possess nature, both for good or ill, has only surfaced within the last 150 years or so.

This, Heidegger believed, is simply because our technologies have become so much more powerful and have now been augmented by modern scientific understanding.
But he was concerned to emphasize that the technological development in the West has been tending toward the mastery and possession of nature for a very long time, indeed, perhaps since the time of Plato and Aristotle.
Human beings, Heidegger argued, are intrinsically and necessarily creative, continually producing and reproducing worlds in which to live and work.
Human world-making, as he called it, is manifest in language as well as in the making and using of tools. Although technology and poetry are typically thought to be very different kinds of activities, Heidegger stressed that both are aspects of human poesis, that is, of the making and of bringing forth.
[36:17] and both activities reveal a human world and disclose suppositions concerning human beings' relation to given nature.

Now, while human beings have, as far as we know, always revealed and shaped their worlds by developing and using various tools, Heidegger believed that modern technological development is essentially different from traditional tool-making.
and the purpose of his relentless questioning in the question concerning technology is to try to uncover this essential difference.
The key, he suspects, lies in modern technology's challenging and setting upon given nature, with the goal of setting things apart for future use.
use. But, one might interject, hasn't this always been true of human making? Haven't people always used nature?
[37:25] Isn't this true, for example, of a windmill? Well, Heidegger says no, because the windmill depends upon the blowing wind.

windmill doesn't extract energy from the air in order to store it for future use. By contrast, modern technology unlocks and isolates forces previously hidden within nature and transforms them into resources that can be stored and then used at will.

whatever is seen in this new modern way, Heidegger suggests, becomes standing reserve. And the crucial characteristic of things that have been thus revealed as standing reserved, of things that have, to use Heidegger's phrasing, been made present as standing reserve, is that they no longer stand over and against us as things having their own integrity apart from our use of them.
Instead, they've just been converted into resources that stand by to be used for whatever purposes we might eventually devise for them.
Now, ironically, human beings are themselves subject to this same conversion process. We have also become standing reserve within the modern purview, as in the expression human resources.
[39:09] Now, Heidegger labels this oddly modern way of world making, or as he puts it, this challenging forth of given nature that reveals things, including people, to be standing reserve.

reserve. He calls it enframing. It is a way of seeing the world and ourselves, and of envisioning human purposes in the world.
And this new way of seeing the world, he believes, is the essence of modern technology. It is not itself a technology, but it has made modern technological development possible by revealing a world in which all things stand ready to be used for purposes that we are free to devise.
The essence of modern technology, Heidegger writes, stands or starts man upon that way of revealing through which the real everywhere, more or less distinctly, becomes standing reserve.
And framing, Heidegger continues, is not simply the essence of technological making, it is also the essence of scientific knowing.
[40:30] For modern science does not enter into a dialogue with nature so much as it interrogates it. Modern science confronts nature from a particular point of view, and with a particular result in mind.

In essence, modern science insists that nature reveal herself in terms of elements and processes that are regular, repeatable, and mathematically representable.
Only when nature represents itself in this way can it be said to be known scientifically. And it must be known scientifically if it is to become available for our use.
years. Heidegger then asks, Has this new modern way of knowing and making become inexorable and irresistible?
Has it become our fate? Well, no, he answers. But it has placed us in a perilous position.
[41:37] For now, it is difficult for us even to imagine, much less to appreciate any other way of knowing and making. Indeed, any other way of being in the world.

And such is our situation at present. And it's evident in two important respects. In the first instance, having now become the masters and possessors of nature, we find that nature, including human nature, has been overwhelmed by human making.
And not only are we increasingly surrounded and often overwhelmed by humanly constructed technological artifacts, but whatever nature remains has now been revealed by modern science to be an environment comprised of natural resources that may either be used or stewarded as we see fit.
nothing appears to have any inherent integrity apart from whatever use we might devise for it. The impression comes to prevail, Heidegger writes, that everything we encounter exists only insofar as it is our construct.
This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion. It seems as though we everywhere and always encounter only ourselves.
[43:12] This, Heidegger contends, is a delusion because in framing actually prevents us from truly knowing ourselves. In truth, he emphasizes precisely nowhere do we today any longer encounter ourselves.

And this is because our knowledge of ourselves is never direct. Rather, it is reflected back to us in the relations that we have with others, which includes our lived environment.
If these relations are stunted and or distorted, then they will reflect back an image of ourselves that is also stunted and distorted.
Now, here we might recall Martin Buber's celebrated analysis of the I-it conjunction, as over and against the I-thou relation.
And a more common term for enframing, after all, is objectification, the reduction of others to mere objects. Now, the occasion of Buber's celebrated little book, I and Thou, was his concern that modern scientific understanding had encouraged us to objectify both the world and one another.

[44:33] Yet the act of objectification, of establishing the I-it conjunction, doesn't involve one's whole self, and neither does it initiate a genuine conversation.

Rather, it discloses only a kind of one-sided relation in which there is really only one active voice. Objectification does not expose the self, therefore, to the possibility of relational mutuality.
It fails to yield genuine self-knowledge and the possibility of personal growth. as Alistair McFadgen noted, intending someone or something as an object is to intend the relation as a monologue.
For an object is intended and perceived as having no independent meaning or existence apart from this relation. It cannot offer a point of moral resistance because it is not perceived as ethically transcendent.
The relation can only be exploitative and manipulative. The I of an I-it relation has an unbounded sense of its proper claims, seeking from the other only that which is a confirmatory repetition of itself.
[46:10] in seeking oneself from the other, one is engaged in a one-way communication, open only to oneself. Now, this one-way communication, open only to oneself, does have certain advantages.

For it augments our ability to control the world in all kinds of ways. Yet, objectification also inhibits our ability to enter into an I-thou relationship with the world, with other people, ultimately with God.
The objective attitude makes it difficult, for example, to apprehend beauty, for anything that is only valued as a resource to be utilized cannot really be acknowledged as beautiful, at least not in the classical sense of beauty.
beauty. And the objective spirit is also obviously destructive in and of interpersonal relationships.
While the objective utilization of others may enable us to get things done, it is not conducive to family, friendship, camaraderie, fellowship, and neither is objectification conducive to genuine worship.
for the living God simply does not allow himself to be known objectively, as an object of human manipulation. And if we seek to know God in this way, he retreats from our view.
[47:51] As Buber noted, it has become necessary to proclaim that God is dead. Well, actually, this proclamation means only that man has become incapable of apprehending a reality absolutely independent of himself and of having a relation with it.

Man's capacity to apprehend the divine is lamed in the same measure as his capacity to experience a reality absolutely independent of himself.
The unbelieving marrow of the capricious man, Buber observed elsewhere, cannot perceive anything but unbelief and caprice, positing ends and devising means.
his world is devoid of sacrifice and grace and counter and presence, but shot through with ends and means.
Now, Buber concluded I and thou by warning his readers not to try to divide their lives between what they imagined to be an actual relationship with God and an inactual or I it relation to the world.
[49:19] Whoever knows the world as something to be utilized, he wrote, knows God in the same way. Now, returning to Heidegger's argument, the modern habit of enframing has revealed a world in which it has become possible for us to take control of our circumstances in any number of respects.

Yet, enframing has also concealed other ways of revealing that might, in the sense of poesis, better let others, including nature, come into presence, truly.
Now, Heidegger went on to contend that the Western habit of enframing, inaugurated already in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, occluded the original innocence and sense of wonder that had characterized pre-Socratic Greek thought.
And that this, finally, is why modern Western thinkers have so often found the world to be sterile and meaningless, apart from their imposition of meanings upon it.
George Grant captured this quite poignantly in his analysis of North American civilization.
[50:48] Pull that up. What is now absent for us, Grant grieved, is the affirmation of a possible apprehension of the world beyond that as a field of objects considered as pragmata, an apprehension present not only in its height as theory, but as the undergirding of our loves and friendships, of our arts and reverences, and indeed as the setting for our dealing with the objects of the human and non-human world.

Perhaps we are lacking the recognition that our response to the whole should not most deeply be that of doing, nor even that of terror and anguish, but rather that of wondering or marveling at what is.
of being amazed or astonished by it, or perhaps best in a discarded English usage, admiring it, and that such a stance, as beyond all bargains and conveniences, is the only source from which purposes may be manifest to us from out of our necessary calculating.
remedy. Okay, so finally, is there any remedy? Well, our befuddlement in the face of modern technological development seems again to stem ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, from a peculiar view of the world, a view that sees nature, including human nature, as a vast and elaborate mechanism that differs from automatic machine technology in complexity and scale, but not in kind. Embodied human existence from within this worldview is, again, most often construed not as something to be nurtured and enhanced, perhaps with technologies, but rather as a series of limitations to be overcome with more and better technology.
[53:08] And as we've now seen, this mechanical world picture has deep and extensive roots within the Western tradition. Modern technological culture is characterized, to use Charles Taylor's term again, by an instrumental stance toward life, a stance that is over-determined in the sense that it has arisen from a number of different sources and is even now buttressed by compelling convictions concerning the meaning and purpose of human life.

And not only is the instrumental stance supported by modern science, but it has also become central within the modern ethical outlook. We continue to place a very high value upon taking rational and efficacious control of all things by way of methods, procedures, techniques, technologies.
And as we've also seen, the mechanical world picture underwrites the legitimacy of ongoing technological development, even as it fosters the plausibility of postmodern nihilism within contemporary culture.
We have managed, it seems, and on the basis of our mechanical world picture, to establish a measure of control over our world. And yet the confidence with which the modern technological project began has seemed increasingly to vanish into postmodern nothingness.
as Buber lamented some years ago, in sick ages it happens that the it world no longer irrigated and fertilized by the living currents of the you world, severed and stagnant, becomes a gigantic swamp phantom, and overpowers man.
[55:20] As he accommodates himself to a world of objects that no longer achieves any presence for him, he succumbs to it. And then common causality grows into an oppressive and crushing doom.

problem. Now this problem must not be understood romantically or sentimentally. The point is not that we have lost a kind of natural simplicity or innocence to which we must now strive somehow to return.
Rather, what has been lost to us is the possibility of encountering something outside of ourselves that might direct and discipline and thus give order to human making and willing.
In the absence of such discipline, modern machine technology appears destined to become ever more automatic, increasingly autonomous, and progressively removed from the needs and requirements of ordinary embodied human persons.
So, what is to be done? Well, the short answer is that we need a change of mind, a change of outlook.
[56:46] We need to discover a new way of seeing the world, or perhaps more to the point of attending to the world, one that doesn't simply enframed the world as stuff to be put to use.

We need to discover, or more to the point to rediscover, an alternative way of being in the world that enables us to know and to make in such a way that created nature, including other people, and indeed, ourselves are enabled to become more and not less of themselves by virtue of our interaction with them.
And this is precisely what we will get from a robust Christian theology of creation. And so that is what we will spend our next session talking about.
Thank you. Japanese parliament one of complicado covering sharing the beginnings of one of hundreds and have anything over andori the■■■