The contemporary political sensibility must be informed by the nuclear—now also environmental—age, from which we learn the threat to survival contained in the very nature of our civilization. A society that can destroy life on earth by the careless application of fluorocarbon deodorant sprays is indeed beyond the pale of any rational calculation of any survival chances. History is over in principle in the sense that the old conflicts and ambitions must give way to a radically new type of human adventure, or else the species will surely die. (Feenberg, 1999, p. 69)

Freedom and peace are in our imaginations. Imagination is what lays the tracks on which realities run. Stimulating imagination and directing it towards endeavors based on caring is central to manifesting peace. Learning that there are possibilities that transcend what we believe to be true may open the door to rooms that express peace. Individual expressions make the world. “People are programmed to accept so little but the possibilities are so great” (Cronenberg, 1999). This quote from David Cronenberg’s film eXistenZ illustrates these ideas. There is enormous potential for peace through our expressions of consciousness, but cultural or educational programming squelch imagination. This training can lead us into an acceptance of mediocre or destructive ways of being. At the heart of this ill manifested cultural programme is the tyranny of exclusionary thinking that is expressed in forms such as anthropocentrism, ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism.

Donna Haraway (2004) envisions the cyborg, with all of its contradictions, as one way of acknowledging hybridity and interdependence:

From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star War apocalypse waged in the name of defense, about the final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist orgy of war. From another perspective a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. (p. 13)
The image of the cyborg then becomes a symbol of altered patterns of thinking. It exemplifies the dismantling of boundaries that have persisted in enabling dysfunction, violence, and unnecessary suffering in the world. That is, the construction of boundaries that facilitate exclusionary thinking. Through finding this “joint kinship with animals and machines,” and I would extend this further to everything including rivers, tin cans, buildings, and weapons for example, we may get behind and transcend a technological determinism whose powerful grip holds us in forms of tyrannical structures of being.

Introduction: Technology (Room #4)

The companion media production, which I call Spirituality, Consciousness, Technology and Peace, challenges participants to engage on multiple levels with reality-construction. This is a personal exploration as much as it is a consideration of academic themes and researchers. In building a perception of reality, I am enacting a type of Dr. Frankenstein role. I am driven by a need to understand why we as a species have botched the world and our existence so intensely and whether there is a way to see hope for a change in the trajectory we seem committed to sustain as the human project.

The perspective of reality I wish to create involves a complete breakdown of boundaries and popular distinctions that protect territories built around the ideas of spirituality, consciousness, and technology. These, I propose, are inseparable and are each infused with the others. It is necessary to visualize these elements collapsing into one another so they may become a unified perception. In seeing these realms as infused, new perceptions and imaginings may arise that shift a sense of relationships in the world and how being is enacted. Ultimately, an ontological awareness and involvement that perceives these elements as inseparable may lead to a desire for and condition of peace.

If an awareness is developed that acknowledges individuality and agency as affecting and creating the world, but also each individual’s unity and kinship with everything in the universe, it may be more difficult to mistreat, take for granted, alienate, and dismiss other entities as invaluable or hierarchically inferior. Every entity would appear as a reflection of oneself. Obviously, this does not guarantee that humans would treat the existence of themselves and other entities with care.

Deep Ecology is one approach that addresses environmental ethics and that is pertinent to this topic. Two main themes in deep ecology are biocentric egalitarianism and self-realization. Biocentric egalitarianism is the claim that all entities, human and non-human, sentient and non-sentient, are equal in intrinsic worth. Bill Devall and George Sessions state that, “For deep ecology, the study of

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1 http://www.cust.educ.ubc.ca/wstudents/TSED/ETEC531-66a/LaurenH/mediapart2.htm
our place in the Earth household includes the study of ourselves as part of the organic whole... the spiritual and material aspects of reality fuse together” (1998, p. 222). This approach also confronts behaviours of dominance as “erroneous and dangerous illusions” that are practiced in society, such as humans over nature, males over females, and rich over poor (p. 221). These harmful ways of being involve a practice of exclusionary thinking.

Self-realization addresses this condition. By moving beyond the narrow sense of self that Western cultures have perpetuated and imposed through various programming, we may reveal our unique self more fully. Devall and Sessions (1998) propose:

Spiritual growth, or unfolding, begins when we cease to understand or see ourselves as isolated and narrow competing egos and begin to identify with other humans from our family and friends to, eventually, our species. But the deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, an identification which grows beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world. We must see beyond our narrow contemporary cultural assumptions and values, and the conventional wisdom of our time and place, and this is best achieved by the meditative deep questioning process. (p. 222)

This element in the project of shifting perceptions is fundamental, but several other adjustments contribute to the outcome I am proposing.

Consciousness (Room #2)

Murphie and Potts (2003) in Culture and Technology point out that, “For some theorists [consciousness] is simply the state of being aware; for others it entails self-awareness. At even the simple level there is much disagreement. Are animals conscious in the same way we are? Are there different levels of consciousness that could accommodate differences between humans and animals” (p. 143)? A redefining of “consciousness” is necessary to support this project of hybridity and interdependence.

An expanded definition acknowledges consciousness as everywhere and everything. In other words, consciousness is the energy that we attempt to describe through various philosophies such as Quantum Physics, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, First Nations views, Judaism, and Buddhism. In this way, consciousness may be thought of as energy, fields, God or Gods, pure existence or awareness—that everything has consciousness, including everything we construct.

Technologies may be thought of as having double consciousness in that they are firstly expressions of our unique human manifestation of consciousness (this is not restricted to human technologies), but secondly, they express their own unique energy or force and therefore their own consciousness. Generally, if embodiments
of consciousness are entities capable of influencing or affecting their surroundings, then everything is conscious.

For example, Ayurveda is an Indian medical system that acknowledges qualities of energy and their influences to shape outcomes. This approach “focuses on the subtle energies in all things— not only in living and inorganic things, but also in our thoughts, emotions, and actions” (Morrison, 1995, p. 8). From this view, the act of affecting becomes an act of consciousness, but also, this statement points out that our production of thought, emotion, and action, produces effects in the same way. Andrew Feenberg (1999) points out that, “How we do things determines who and what we are. Technological development transforms what it is to be human” (p. 2). We are influenced by the world around us and that world also involves our own expressions and manifestations of consciousness. The act of being, for all entities, is imbued with consciousness.

This approach breaks down some fundamental human-made hierarchies that hinge on anthropocentrism. Perceiving the tin cans, birds, trees, rivers, computers, cars, and guns for example, as thinking and conscious entities requires one to release the notion that humans are exclusively unique and valuable. Instead, each entity is unique and emits effects and qualifications on the world.

All entities are firstly expressions of consciousness in whatever form they take. But entities that are doubly conscious are mediated by force, agency, or action. While, for example, a bird is a unique expression of consciousness, the nests that they build are an expression of their existence. They must have technologies to survive, but these are contingent on the bird’s qualities, movements, decisions, and actions. The nests are doubly conscious in that the construction of that technology was mediated with agency, force, or action. Doubly conscious entities require intention, care, and work for them to become conscious. The conscious entity is entangled with the doubly conscious entity, there is no escaping this fusion of being. It is the denial of responsibility for the outcomes of our human double consciousness that becomes the most powerfully ill expression of agency.

Spirituality (Room #3)

Spirituality is not removed from existing and being. Every act, involvement, and interaction with the world is spiritual. To exist is to be spiritual. It is not necessarily reserved for special times or locations, but infuses every moment of existence.

Each Room in Spirituality, Consciousness, Technology and Peace is a space where thought, consciousness, or energy is manifested as an ontological reflection. The construction of “rooms” suggests the physicality of our expressions. For example, these may be in the form of houses, rooms, texts, cars, weapons, gardens, systems, any form of technology.

These rooms are silent and noisy in that they arose from silence and became noise in their conception and ability to produce effects. The point is to emphasize
that they may very well have remained concealed. But noise, actions and agency executed by their maker awakened them, to say nothing of the long prehistory and history that preceded these actions to make them possible in the first place. Any manifestation makes noise by virtue of its existence. But silence is as potent when it is recognized as an action not executed intentionally, such as a refusal to enliven or build destructive weaponry, engage in warfare, or alternatively, a refusal to enliven peace. This project, similar to Frankenstein’s monster, is an expression of consciousness, released into the world as a conscious being in its own right, holding power to produce effects.

In The Human Condition (1958) Hannah Arendt proposes that we reconsider the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears. This, obviously, is a matter of thought, and thoughtlessness— the heedless recklessness of hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of “truths” which have become trivial and empty— seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time. What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing. (p. 5)

For Arendt, the increasing abilities that humans manifest to do harm is running amuck to the point that we are unable to control the outcomes of our impulses. Haraway complements Arendt in recommending the breakup of these “truths” to move into reformulated perceptions of the world. This, in my view, would include the collapse of spirituality, consciousness, and technology into manifestations of peace.

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