

role that technology has taken in modern society has to be recognized as being under Christ. Finally, in this section, the author covers the challenges that arise from a safety culture that renders accidents immoral—and therefore requires the taking of any and all actions to prevent them, potentially at great cost in other ways. In general, the discussion is balanced here, but there are a few exaggerations. Most risk management literature focusses on minimizing risk, not eliminating it; this is widely acknowledged as impossible even where desirable. The discussion then turns to the importance of forgiveness as a principle when accidents do happen, and the points at which procedural management of risk becomes idolatrous. Finally, this section examines the role of wisdom in navigating the “pursuit of safety,” using a detailed and useful discussion of Ecclesiastes 10, highlighting again that the problem is not the pursuit itself, but the idolatry of making it total and absolute.

Part Four, the final two chapters of the book, discusses living under the Lordship of Christ. These chapters are pastoral, considering the call to discipleship to understand the role of safety under Christ in the Christian life. This section balances the pursuit of safety with the pursuit of life in Christ, and leads into the final chapter, “Putting Safety in Its Place,” which returns to earlier critiques of how modern safety discourse excludes God and religion. It then discusses the dangers in the denial of the fallen human condition that have sometimes emerged in future-anticipating dialogues and attempts to control risk. Ultimately, the gospel has great explanatory power for the failure of risk management to bring about safety: the world is in need of redemption.

There are some elements that I would add to this discussion; I will outline three. The first concerns the locus of responsibility. Part of the rationale for “tokens of safety,” such as warnings, is that they protect public services—for example, healthcare—from being overwhelmed. Thus, while failing to observe a safety notice may enhance individual freedom in some respects, any harm that results not only affects the individual but has consequences for other people too. Relatedly, some people carry more risk than others because of circumstances not only beyond their control but also imposed upon them. For example, the actions of those in rich countries, in failing to curb carbon emissions, inflict additional threats on those in poorer countries. They also, therefore, critically enable identification of injustice in the distribution of risk and in the protection of the vulnerable—which itself is a biblical activity. There is an irony for me as a geographer that “putting safety in its place” might also be interpreted as pointing to the nuances of (geographical) “place” in the generation or removal of safety for particular groups, with or without their own voices being heard.

Secondly, there is relatively little acknowledgement here of the importance of stewarding knowledge—though there are strong hints of this in the chapter on technology. Indeed, Lundgren accuses Bacon (in a footnote) of putting us on a path to secularization in his call for humanity to increase its knowledge of the universe. That this call was itself driven by an interpretation of Scripture in which we are called to know about God’s world—to better understand God himself through it—is sadly not discussed in detail. Knowing creation and having faith are surely not opposed; indeed, there are instances in Scripture in which God’s people are criticized for failing to heed warnings or knowledge. The focus on safety, rather than risk, allows the author to spend a lot of time arguing against a “zero-risk” culture, but this is a rarity. Most procedural and calculative risk assessments are intended to reduce, not eliminate, risk.

Finally, there is a relative paucity of references to the role of economics in the generation of safety culture—particularly, the extensive role that the insurance industry has played and continues to play in the definition, calculation, and management of risk. Indeed, litigation and selfish accumulation of wealth has driven a considerable industry around risk that is worthy of consideration and evaluation in a book like this.

Overall, this is a rich and detailed discussion, particularly strong when it is closely reading the biblical texts; like the secular “all-inclusive” theories of risk, it struggles to contain the topic effectively where the discussion is more sociological. In part, of course, this is caused by the author writing from a particular place with particular experiences and particular politics. However, it is a compelling, well-researched and scholarly book that will provide non-specialists with an interesting and thorough overview of this important topic.

Reviewed by Amy Donovan, professor of environmental geography, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK CB2 3EN.

TECHNOLOGY

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MORE EVERYTHING FOREVER: AI Overlords, Space Empires, and Silicon Valley’s Crusade to Control the Fate of Humanity by Adam Becker. Basic Books, 2025. 367 pages, index. Hardcover; \$32.00. ISBN: 9781541619593.

As I sit down to write this review using Microsoft tools, a temptation beckons: shall I go to that emergent oracle, Copilot? After all, my editor has stressed the importance of a snappy first sentence—and Clippy-on-steroids promises snappy! Hardly a day goes by when my online news feed does not suggest, alongside the latest adventures of the British royal family and culture war performances of American politicians, the antics

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of Big Tech leaders who, via symbolic praxis, betray a worldview thick with high divine claims for the marvels tech has wrought. (Once, my health insurance provider quite literally sent me an ad referring to its app as “All-Powerful!”) It is to this *zeitgeist* that Becker has penned this fascinating work of recent tech history and cultural critique.

Becker, physicist and scientific philosopher, has an elegantly simple organizing principle. First, he introduces a guru of the sort that makes waves inside the tech sector but is unlikely to be well known outside of it. His opening example is Eliezer Yudkowsky, and he later spills a good amount of ink to explore Ray Kurzweil. Becker next draws out some of the eccentricities of whoever is currently his example, some of which strain acceptance from anyone operating within the more-usual plausibility structures (e.g., Kurzweil’s dream of utilizing AI-based algorithmic necromancy to call up the shade of his late father), only then to offer a defense of their intellectual integrity by pointing out the influence of their thought on the tech giants whose creations undergird our entire global economy. This defense, however, is rhetorical. Becker’s design is to convince his reader to take whatever guru he has introduced seriously *enough* that the next step makes sense: to delve into their philosophy and the influences flowing into it. From there, he turns away from biography to critique of tech culture, showing how philosophical influences blind its partisans both to the limitations of their art and to its real-world ethical implications.

The effect is a cumulative argument against Big Tech’s oft generously entertained, and yet undemonstrated and quite possibly toxic, claims: for example, that the dawn of artificial *general* intelligence (AGI) is upon us, that the need to work will soon be relegated to the past, and that “the Singularity” is about to emerge and will prove either boon or bane to civilization, depending on how we have managed to align its values. It is here where the first strength of the book lies. Who in computer science or tech-sector-adjacent fields has not been affected along the periphery of their consciousness by claims of precisely this sort? These claims are explored in my “Ethical, Social, and Legal Implications of Computing” course. My students—along with a few of my colleagues—are transfixed by some of the claims about what sorts of societal transformations are possible, even likely. Meanwhile, transformations have already happened and are accelerating in pace; the undeniability of these lend credence to the claims of imminently emergent AGI.

These are claims of practically religious significance, a fact not lost on Becker, who spends some of his time tracing current trends back to sectarian Christian interests of an albeit unorthodox and non-mainstream character.

This is the second strength of his presentation. To illustrate by way of contrast: years ago, I attended a pastors’ conference where a major topic was theological anthropology, particularly applied to the discernment of modern-day idols. Over the course of the conversations, some of the presenters submitted that much modern technology has become precisely that—a focus for idolatry. However, this claim was not defended or even explored in depth. Reading Becker, I feel I have now seen just such an explorer in action. He shows that the oft-grandiose claims of tech utopians speak to the heart of human spiritual longings for immortality and actualization, only then to show themselves unable to deliver what they promise. Meanwhile, real human needs are left unmet.

The work has, in my view, one limitation (perhaps as a function of the price that must be paid to attempt its rhetorical strategy). At many points the big picture he paints comes across as so severely negative in its depiction of Silicon Valley that it becomes hard to imagine redemptive engagement with it. The fact remains—the implausibility of so many of Big Tech’s claims aside—that since the Industrial Revolution, tech has utterly transformed society. Much of that transformation is occurring now through the strategies of Silicon Valley. It cannot be doubted that social media has transformed politics, that ubiquitous (and AI-embedded) smart devices change how we work and play and even think, and that now large language models and related tools are transforming research and communication. These changes are not merely negative; intuitively, there is promise as well as peril. A more irenic argument than Becker’s might do more to get at that rubber-meets-the-road reality. However, strident polemics can often effect what irenicism cannot, which, in this case, is to disenchant readers bewitched by many of our time’s empty claims about tech’s power. Becker has opted for that more strident option and, while I note its limitation, I admire his rhetorical decision as well. I will be seriously considering giving his book to my undergraduates for them to engage his arguments and, hopefully, stimulate some important conversations.

Reviewed by Matthew Bell, instructor of computer science, Whitworth University, Spokane, WA 99251.

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THE ARTIFICE OF INTELLIGENCE: Divine and Human Relationship in a Robotic Age by Noreen Herzfeld. Fortress Press, 2023. 208 pages. Paperback; \$34.00. ISBN: 9781506486901.

The Artifice of Intelligence offers a timely theological examination of artificial intelligence (AI) at a moment when rapid technological development often outpaces careful moral reflection. In this volume, Noreen Herzfeld—