

Searching the Sacred Lecture
Hope college
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**BECOMING A REAL PERSON
IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD**

www.jacohamman.com

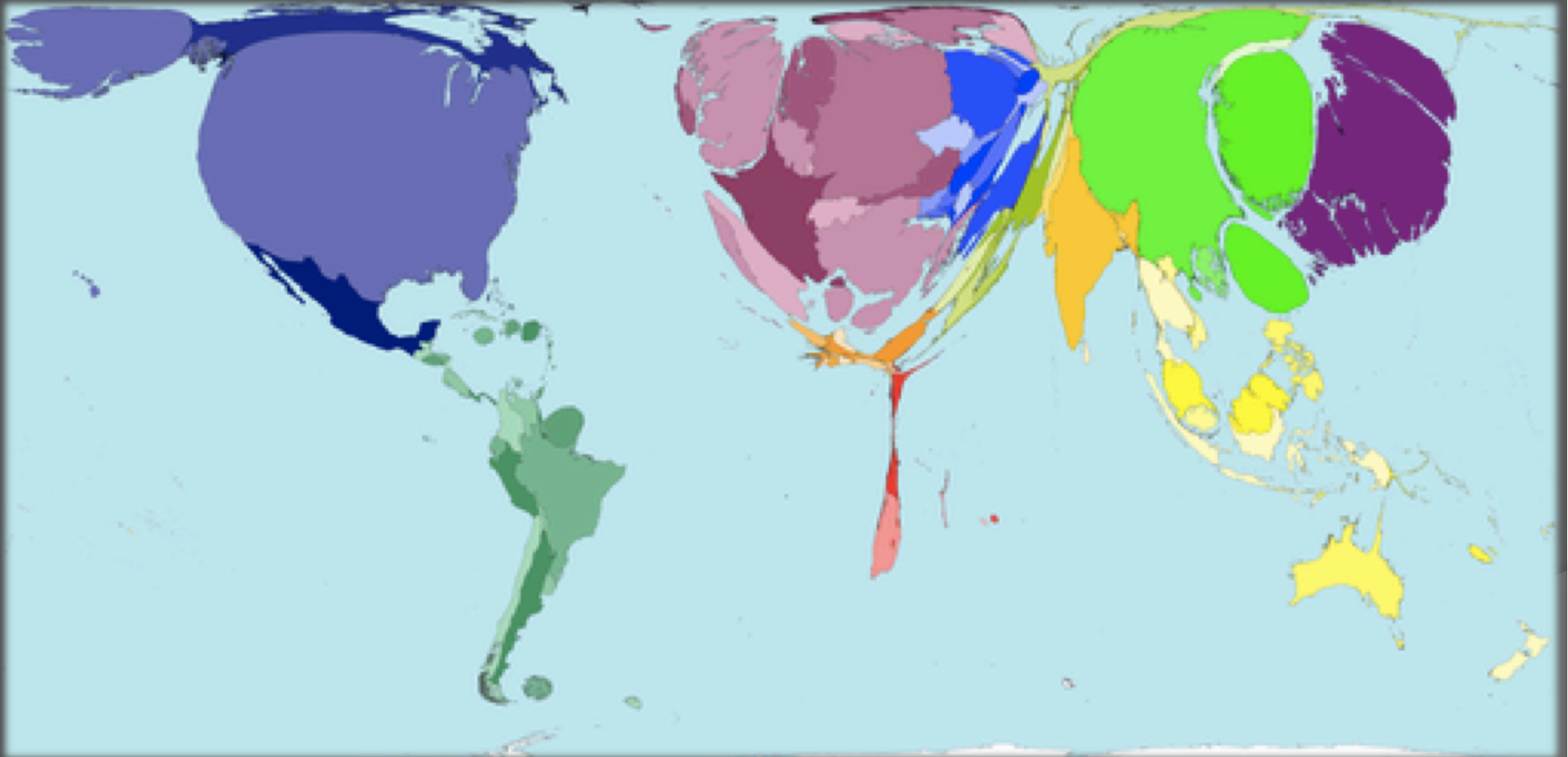
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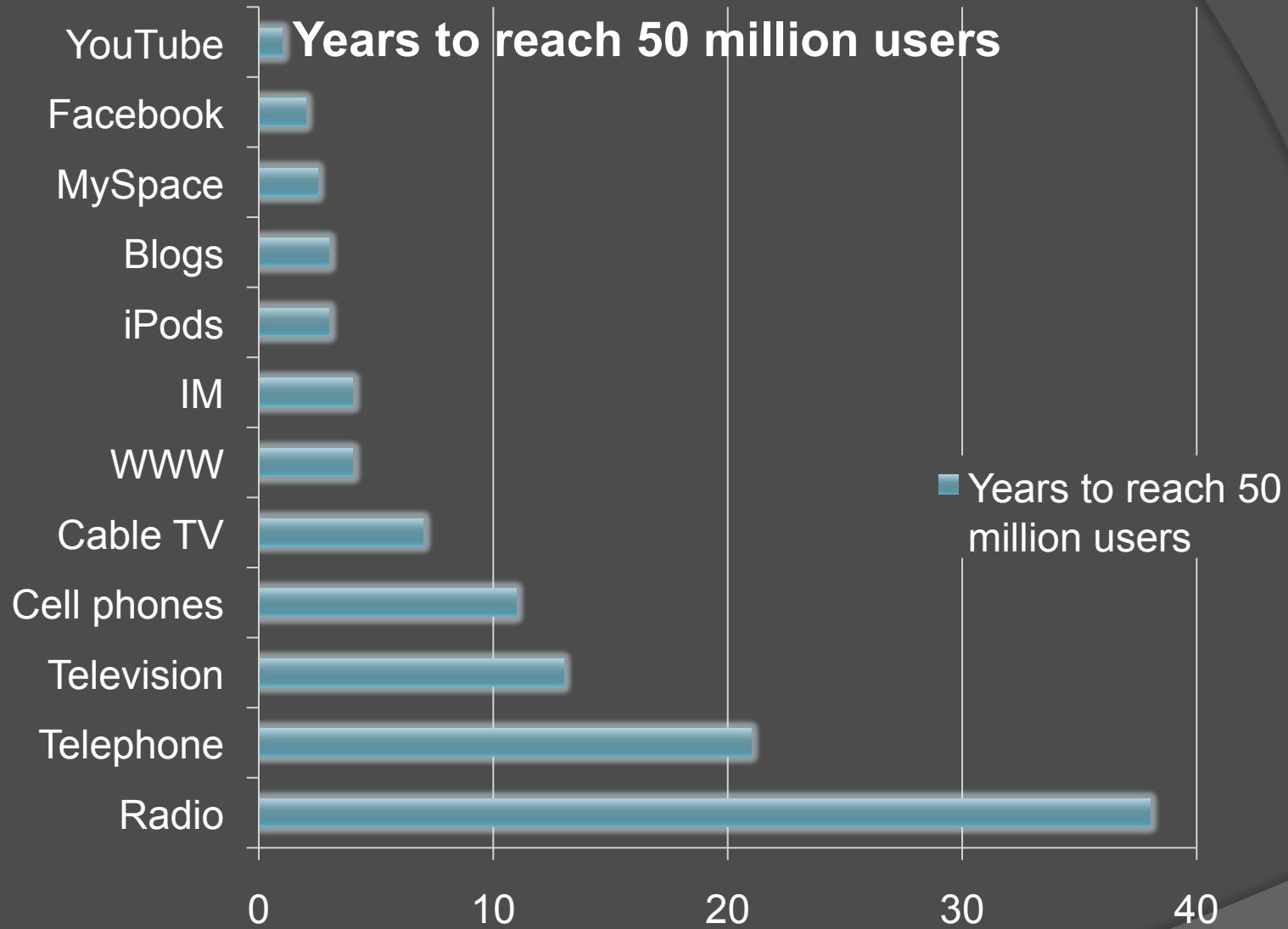
Basic argument

Technology transforms our identities and determines our relationships in mostly positive, but also in some negative ways. An understanding of what it means to be a real person can guide us as we gain friends, establish and deepen relationships, and as we mature before God with technology integral to our lives. The virtual world—as a way of life for especially persons born after 1980—can foster realness in surprising ways.

The virtual world: Internet use

www.worldmapper.org

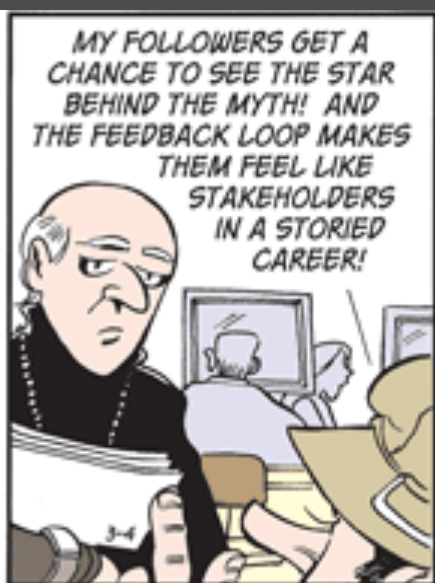
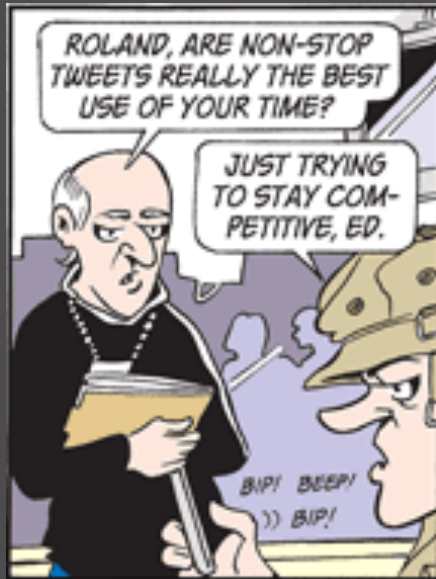




Larry Rosen, *Rewired: Understanding the iGeneration and the way they learn* (2010)

Doonesbury

March 2-3, 2009



Millennials Outpace Older Americans in Technology Use

	Millennial (18-29)	Gen X (30-45)	Boomer (46-64)	Silent (65+)
Internet behaviors	%	%	%	%
Created social networking profile	75	50	30	6
Wireless internet away from home	62	48	35	11
Posted video of themselves online	20	6	2	1
Use Twitter	14	10	6	1
Cell phones and texting				
Use cell to text	88	77	51	9
Texted in past 24 hours	80	63	35	4
Texted while driving	64	46	21	1
Have a cell phone/no landline	41	24	13	5
Median # texts in past 24 hours	20	12	5	--

Note: Median number of texts based on those who texted in past 24 hours.

Time spent in the virtual world

- ◎ Through multi-tasking, persons 16-29y **uses technology** on average **20h20m** a day (Includes: www, computer, IM, texting, video games, TV) (2009)
 - Baby Boomers--9.5h a day; Gen Xers--15h a day
 - Multi-tasking does not lead to more productivity, creativity, or inventiveness
 - Conflicting opinions whether multi-tasking leads to being less deliberate, less able to reason out a problem and more willing to rely on stereotypical solutions
- ◎ Persons 16-29y **communicate electronically 8.5h** a day (email, texting, Facebook, tweets, etc.) (2009)

The twenty-first-century teen, connected and multitasked, autonomous yet peer-mindful, makes no great leap forward in human intelligence, global thinking, or netizen-ship. Young users have learned a thousand new things, no doubt. They upload and download, surf and chat, post and design, but they haven't learned to analyze complex text, store facts in their heads, comprehend a foreign policy decision, take lessons from history, or spell correctly. Never having recognized their responsibility to the past, they have opened a fissure in our civic foundations, and it shows in their halting passage into adulthood and citizenship.

Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes our Future*, 2008

Myths about the impact of the virtual world on the Net Generation

40% of the US population

1. They are dumber than previous generations
2. They are addicted “screenagers”
3. They have no shame posting provocative images etc.
4. They’re afraid to choose a path and make decisions
5. They steal and plagiarizes
6. They bully friends online
7. They’re violent
8. They have no work ethic and will be bad employees
9. The most narcissistic, “me” generation
10. They don’t give a damn

Don Tapscott, *Grown up Digital : How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World* (2009)

What is real?

"What is real?" asked the Rabbit one day . . .
"Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time . . . but once you are real, you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

Marjorie Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*

Object relations theory

Object relations...alludes to the nature and origins of interpersonal relationships. An “object” is the other, that is, a person or a thing in an individual’s external environment which becomes internally or psychologically significant... Object relations theory discusses [the] process of forming intrapsychic structures that are shaped by past experience and that continue to affect present interpersonal relationships [and ways of engaging the world].

Michael St. Clair, *Human relationships and the experience of God: Object relations and religion*, 1994

An eight-object psychology of over-lapping circles of influence

1. Self
2. Self and mother (or primary caregiver)
3. Self and father (or secondary caregiver)
4. Self, family, friends, and intimate relationships
5. Self and society (faith community, neighborhood, city)
6. Self and culture (knowledge, truth, beauty)
7. Self, nature, and infinity (cosmos, death)
8. Self and objects that can move through 1-7 (God, transcendence, mysticism, liminal experiences)

Christopher Bollas: *The Mystery of things*, 1999

Being and feeling real

Being and feeling real belong essentially to health... [T]here is a link between individual emotional health and a sense of feeling real. No doubt the vast majority of people take feeling real for granted, but at what cost? To what extent are they denying the fact, namely, that there could be a danger for them of feeling unreal, of feeling possessed, of feeling they are not themselves, of falling forever, of having no orientation, of being annihilated, of being nothing, nowhere? Health is not associated with denial of anything.

D.W. Winnicott, "The Concept of a Healthy Individual"

Realness defined

"The notion of the real is about being alive, creative, spontaneous, and playful; cherishing one's uniqueness, accepting one's insignificance, tolerating one's destructive impulses, living with one's own insanity; feeling integrated while retaining the capacity for unintegration; being receptive and open and knowing how to make use of the world without needing to react to it; finding and contributing to the inherited cultural tradition; tolerating one's essential isolation without fleeing to false relationships or retreating into deleterious insulation."

Dodi Goldman

In Search of the Real, 1993

Face to face

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, this is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:22-26; NIV).

God spoke to Moses: "Tell Aaron and his sons, This is how you are to bless the People of Israel. Say to them, God bless you and keep you, God smile on you and gift you, God look you full in the face and make you prosper (The Message).

Young adults do not believe that the online world when compared to the off-line world, is a more desirable place. To put this claim into perspective, this does not mean that young people do not enjoy the opportunity to communicate and connect with each other online—they love doing this. What it means is that they do not see computer mediated communication as more satisfying or rewarding than face-to-face time with friends or that the online world is a more desirable place than the off-line world for hanging with friends. You may be surprised to learn, then, that the so-called digital natives thoroughly enjoy being with each other in face-to-face situations.

Craig S. Watkins. *The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social-Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future* (2009)

1.

Be alive, creative,
spontaneous, and playful

Playing as a sign of shalom

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. (Isaiah 11: 6-8)

A Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies: "Old men and old women will come back to Jerusalem, sit on benches on the streets and spin tales, move around safely with their canes—a good city to grow old in. And boys and girls will fill the public parks, laughing and playing—a good city to grow up in." (Zechariah 8:4-5; The Message)

The Net Gen wants entertainment and play in their work, education, and social life. This generation brings a play-full mentality to work. From their experience in the latest video game, they know that there's always more than one way to achieve a goal. This outside-the-box thinking results from 82% of American children aged 2-17 having regular access to video games.

Don Tapscott, *Grown up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World* (2009)

A Facebook page is not, of course, an act of creation on par with the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci. Certainly, not all of the creations posted online—indeed, probably only a very small fraction of them—deserve the label “creative.” It is therefore important to distinguish between “creation” and “creativity.” “Creation” relates to any digital content made by a Digital Native, ranging from an apparently trivial update on Facebook (“Mike is...tired today”) to an artistic video clip. “Creative,” in contrast, is a differentiating term that has qualitative connotation. The word suggests that the respective content created by the user is unique, useful (at least at the margins), and organized.

John Palfrey and Urs Gasser: *Born Digital: Understanding the first generation of Digital Natives* (2008)

2.

**Cherish your uniqueness
while accepting your
insignificance**

Life confessed

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (Rom 12:3).

What Makes Your Generation Unique?

<u>Millennials</u>	<u>Gen X</u>	<u>Boomers</u>	<u>Silent</u>
1. Technology use (24%)	Technology use (12%)	Work ethic (17%)	WW II, Depression (14%)
2. Music/Pop culture (11%)	Work ethic (11%)	Respectful (14%)	Smarter (13%)
3. Liberal/Tolerant (7%)	Conservative/Trad'l (7%)	Values/Morals (8%)	Honest (12%)
4. Smarter (6%)	Smarter (6%)	"Baby Boomers" (6%)	Values/Morals (10%)
5. Clothes (5%)	Respectful (5%)	Smarter (5%)	Work ethic (10%)

Note: Based on respondents who said their generation was unique/distinct. Items represent individual, open-ended responses. Top five responses are shown for each age group. Sample sizes for sub-groups are as follows: Millennials, n=527; Gen X, n=173; Boomers, n=283; Silent, n=205.

3.

**Tolerate your destructive impulses
and live with your insanity**

2 Kings 6: 20-22

When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?" "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master."

The anonymity of the online experience exacerbates the problem [of online aggression]: If a young person cannot see the response of the person he is communicating with, chances are he will be even less empathetic than the schoolyard bully in his interactions and less likely to curb his actions. It becomes easier to rationalize harmful behavior in a digital setting, where actions might not seem “real” and the Digital Native doesn’t see the reactions of the person he has just harmed, or even the reactions of bystanders... Digital Natives, like all human beings, sometimes treat one another badly. Digital technologies can make it easy to hurt someone in ways that are very painful and hard to undo. Aggressive behavior online is not necessarily bad; it can lead to positive social change. But it can also lead to harm.

John Palfrey and Urs Gasser: *Born Digital: Understanding the first generation of Digital Natives* (2008)

4.

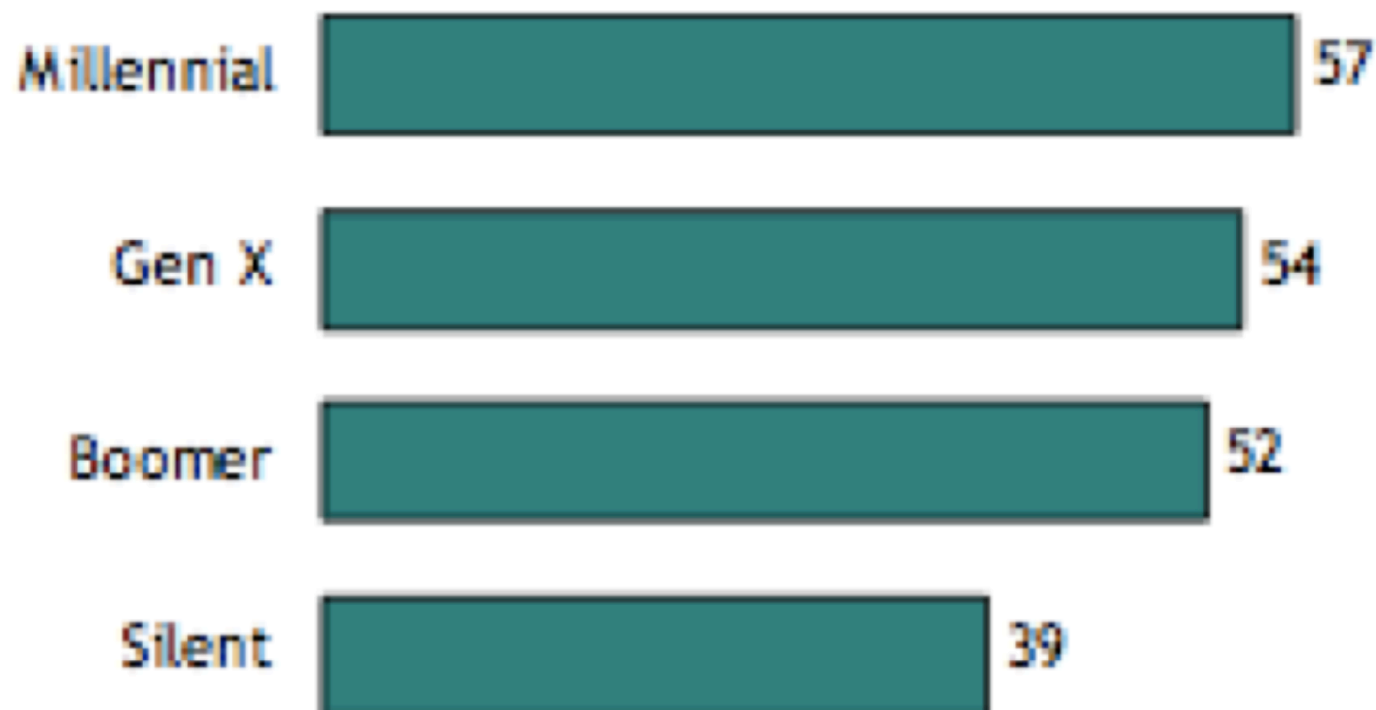
**Be receptive of and
responsive to the world**

Matthew 25:34-40

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Who Volunteers?

% who say they volunteered in the past 12 months



PewResearchCenter

The amount of information available online on the Web is staggering—and potentially debilitating... There are limits, in cognitive terms, how much information people can process... Internet addiction, information fatigue syndrome, and information overload are among the terms being thrown around to describe the new psychological diseases of the digital age. To some, these new threats mark the dark side of the brave new world with an ever-growing amount and diversity of information.

John Palfrey and Urs Gasser: *Born Digital: Understanding the first generation of Digital Natives* (2008)

5.

**Contribute to the inherited
cultural tradition**

I John 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

The Net Generation is driving the democratization of content creation as young people generate online photos, music, and copy, from movie reviews to commentaries on everything from products to politicians. This is leading to a power shift from authorities to ordinary individuals... People can participate in the economy in ways that were previously unthinkable—creating television news clips that rival those seen currently on TV, writing an encyclopedia like Wikipedia, or selling goods in e-markets like Craigslist. As knowledge expands, power is becoming more widely distributed as well.

Don Tapscott, *Grown up Digital : How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World* (2009)

Selected Religious Beliefs and Practices among Ages 18-29 by Decade

	<u>1970s</u>	<u>1980s</u>	<u>1990s</u>	<u>2000s</u>
Religious Affiliation	%	%	%	%
Unaffiliated	12	12	16	23
Affiliated	<u>88</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>77</u>
	100	100	100	100
Frequency of prayer				
Pray daily	NA	41	40	45
Pray less		<u>59</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>55</u>
		100	100	100
Belief in God				
Certain God exists	NA	55	59	53
Less certain/doesn't exist		<u>45</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>47</u>
		100	100	100
Belief in an afterlife				
Believe in afterlife	73	79	80	82
Don't believe	<u>27</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>18</u>
	100	100	100	100
View of the Bible				
Bible literal word of God	NA	33	31	30
Not literal/book of fables		<u>67</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>70</u>
		100	100	100

6.

**Hold your essential isolation
without fleeing to
false relationships**

2 Samuel 11

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

As you might expect, people are drawn to computer-mediated social networks for a variety of reasons. Occasionally, we come across those who feel a certain degree of peer pressure to use social-network sites. The primary motivation in instances like these is the fear of becoming socially alienated. “It seems like everyone uses it [Facebook] to do things now,” says Renee, a twenty-three-year-old college graduate. “What would I be missing if I weren't on it?...

Craig S. Watkins. *The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social-Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future* (2009)

Enemies of realness

1. **Continuous partial attention (CPA):** With one's mind constantly wondering, those you are in relationship with can feel a lack of interest, even disrespect ; Also, mindfulness can be elusive
2. **Compulsion:** Digital destinations are difficult to resist; Technology demands a response; Certain pathways in the brain bring a sense of reward
3. **Control:** Failure to manage time; a loss of sleep; skipped meals; social isolation due to gaming; poor work performance; pornography/virtual sex, who has your CPA?
4. **Competition:** Losing = no friends; not having latest WMD; who presents themselves in the best way, etc.
5. **Conflict:** Wounding others without ever witnessing their reaction or offering reparation
6. **Consumerism:** Attempting to fill the insatiable, hungry self with a materially and virtually oriented life

Making room for eschatological moments

- ◉ We are called to live as eschatological selves (Jürgen Moltmann's *God in Creation*)
 - Future as *futurum*
 - That which comes from past and present; Chronos as our known projection; Our calendar
 - Filling space
 - Wishing as knowing what it wants
 - Present and future as *adventus*
 - That what is coming: Kairos moments of God breaking into our reality
 - Opening space
 - Hoping as what is coming: certainty and uncertainty; present is confronted with something new
- ◉ Living in such a way (*futurum*) that *adventus* moments can occur

More than existing

Feeling real is more than existing, it is finding a way to exist as oneself, and to relate to objects as oneself, and to have a sense into which to retreat for relaxation.

D.W. Winnicott, "Psychotherapy"