# Lingering on Aoki's bridge:

## Reconceptualizing Ted Aoki as curricular techno-theologian

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*When she refuses to be enslaved by technology, it is her spiritual presence that speaks, calling for the right even in pain to live life humanly beyond the technological (Aoki, 1987/2005d, p. 158).*

*An educated person thus not only guards against disembodied forms of knowing, thinking, and doing that reduce self and others to being things, but also strives, guided by the authority of the good in pedagogical situations, for embodied thoughtfulness that makes possible a living as a human being (Aoki, 1987/2005a, p.365).*

**The teacher, scholar, and techno-theologian**

TED TETSUO AOKI (1919-2012) was a Japanese-Canadian education scholar at the forefront of the re-conceptualized movement within curriculum theory. In the late 1970s, Aoki and others at the University of Alberta "launched the phenomenological movement and nearly singlehandedly established it as a major… contemporary discourse" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008, p. 44). In his published works, he sought a multiperspectival approach, using ideas ranging from phenomenology, poststructuralism, critical theory, cultural theory, and praxis. He understood the "scholarly conference as an educational event" (Pinar, 2005b, p. xv), as evidenced by the many articles he published based on conference themes and

proceedings. Aoki spoke compellingly against the technological-instrumental implementation of curriculum found within the business-consumer model of education. His writings often attempted to bridge the disparity between the theoretical and the practical, between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived experience. His lifelong project of describing a phenomenology of teaching was shaped and focused by his own identity and situatedness as a teacher. For instance, his personal experience as a Japanese-Canadian was rich for mining ideas of multiple identities, interculturalism, and pedagogical experiences in the midst of two language/cultural worlds.[1] A most generous scholar, Aoki often cited other teachers, giving thanks to their great impact on his life and his thinking.[2]

In the collected essays found in *Curriculum in a New Key*, Ted Aoki demonstrates a deft hand with his use of language. He takes on words, draws them out, teases, twists, turns the words inside and out for the intellectual work of *understanding* (Aoki, 1992/2005b, p. 197). In his greater mission of understanding curriculum and instruction, Aoki and his colleagues have tried new modes of interpretation, seeing curriculum as currere, praxis, ideology, as plan, as lived. Likewise, instruction would be redefined as teaching, or restored as pedagogy (see Aoki, 1991/2005a, pp. 257-258). The attempt for seeking new modes of understanding, or finding multiple ways in which curriculum and instruction is interpreted, can be understood as discovering new language to reorient the situation. This type of language would not claim certainty over definitions, nor would it falter into narcissistic subjectivity, but rather "such a language would be… one that grows in the middle" (Aoki, 1992/2005a, p. 277). Aoki often dwells in the middle, inviting us into the in-between spaces. He illustrates teaching as dwelling in the middle by recalling the grade 5 teacher, Miss O, who dwells between "the horizon of the curriculum-as-plan as she understands it and the horizon of the curriculum-as-lived experience with her pupils" (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 161). We are asked to linger in this in-between conversation much like delaying our stay on the bridge which is not a bridge. We must begin to discern the "and-ness," a generative space of tensionality allowing new things to emerge. This move towards the middle also implies a decentering of fixed being-ness, in order to open a clearing for possibilities.

One possibility implied in Aoki's work, and which I will attempt to articulate here, is inhabiting the space in-between technology and theology within his educational discourse. This paper, then, will attempt to reconceptualize Aoki as a curricular techno-theologian, in order to discern how he lived and taught in a technicized curricular climate without defaulting into instrumentalization. Curriculum as technology is typically framed as concerning the functions of learning, specifically with finding "efficient means to a set of predefined, nonproblematic ends" to curriculum design (Eisner & Vallance, 1974, p. 7). This approach is supposedly value neutral, process focused, and production driven. Alternatively, curriculum as theological is value centered, growth oriented, and discerning "consummatory experiences for individual learners" (Eisner & Vallance, 1974, p. 9). While these two conceptions of curriculum seem to be widely incommensurate, I assert that they have a stronger inter-relationship as demonstrated within Aoki's oeuvre. As Aoki might ask: how can we linger on the bridge between technology and theology? He was often critical of the technicized implementation of curriculum and instead called forth the inspiriting of curriculum. While these are not binaries, there is a clear preference on Aoki's part towards the ontological and the theological[3] (Pinar, 2005a, p. 13).

Historically, humanity's quest for the transcendent is intertwined with the rise of technology (Noble, 1997). The purpose of using the bridge metaphor, and the 'and-ness' that Aoki speaks about, is to discern how Aoki himself *bridges* technology *and* theology. Are we on

the path towards an electronic spiritualism in the "transepochal state" where "technology actualizes the ephemerality of transcendence itself?" (Ferneding, 2010, p. 181). Or perhaps there is a way in which the techno-theological may speak authentically and fully with each other? What does this look like? It is the middle way of the bridge and and-ness incarnated in the life and writings of Ted Aoki.

**Questioning the technologizing of curriculum**

One of the dominant discourses surrounding Aoki was an ends-means concern for education. The curriculum development and evaluation movement, made popular by the Tyler Rationale, emphasized efficiency, effectiveness, and predictability for so-called better implementation of education. Ernest House (as cited in Aoki, 1983/2005) describes this instrumental approach to curriculum as borrowing a technological metaphor from commerce. This business metaphor in education was intertwined with an efficiency movement resulting in ideals like competency-testing, objective management, and evaluation techniques. For Aoki, "this is akin to a technological understanding of teaching whose logical outcome is the robotization of teaching: schools in the image of Japanese automobile factories" (Aoki, 1992/2005b, p. 189). Within this environment, Aoki draws on the likes of Edmund Husserl, Jürgen Habermas, and Michael Apple to refer to this kind of instrumentalism as a "crisis of Western reason" which is manifested as a contradiction between a commitment to technological progress and the improvement of our personal situated life (Aoki, 1984/2005b, pp. 113-114). Knowledge, then, becomes a false objectivity, possessing supposed value-free neutrality at the cost of reducing humanity into mere subjectivity of the knower. The critique of technology in a curriculum context is further complicated by the never-ending technical developments, especially the recent advent of online technologies. In this light, Aoki wisely asks the questions "how shall I understand computer technology? How shall I understand application?" (Aoki, 1987/2005d, p. 152).

These questions demonstrate Aoki's consistent posture of reflecting on the technologizing of curriculum. Aoki adopted this reflexive posture early on as a teacher. For example, in 1945, he began his teaching career at a Hutterite school near Calgary. He was the only teacher with forty students ranging from grades 1 to 8. As he was teaching the traditional skills of reading and writing techniques, he came upon the following realization:

> I was being caught up unconsciously in a technological ethos which, by overemphasizing 'doing,' tended toward a machine view of children as well as a machine view of the teacher. In such an ethos, he notes, teachers and children become 'things' rather than human beings. He asks: "Is this not 'education' reduced to a half-life of what it could be?" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 62)

This process of self-reflection, a "phenomenological meditativeness" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 12), enabled Aoki to reconceptualize the means-ends instrumentalization of learning skill acquisition. Drawing on Heidegger's (1977) *The Question Concerning Technology*, Aoki is seeking a way of understanding technology not only as a means-ends application for education, but also as a form of revealing, or theologically speaking, of revelation. Heidegger states that the modality of this revealing-revelation is what he calls *enframing*, a "setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 20). The notion of enframing, which combines *techne*, *poiesis*, and *episteme*, is not a technological tool, but rather the condition for the ontological truth to be

revealed, *poetically*, to humankind. The problem, however, is that technology as we typically perceive it, has no sense of "poetic imagination… [nor] the interplay of history, mythology, research, spirituality" (Petrina, 2013, p. 25). Aoki sees the essence of computer technology as revealing "the real as standing reserve, and man, in the midst of it, becomes nothing but the orderer of this standing reserve" (Aoki, 1987/2005d, p. 153). In this way, the essence of computer technology is dangerous because its ordering of reality confines possibilities to its own infrastructuration.

In addition, Aoki senses the danger of a technicized, disembodied way of pedagogical practice. Aoki recalls Huebner (2008), in that temporality structures orality which expresses the subjectivity in pedagogy. Such temporal subjectivity registers the originality and creativity embodied in the temporal, which requires specificity and unique articulation of the lived moment (Pinar, 2011). The challenge in understanding technological application is then also a hermeneutical issue because it seeks to reproduce a pregiven generalization into the particular situation (Aoki, 1987/2005d, p. 155). This hermeneutical turn, having roots in religious textual interpretation, enables Aoki to continue to question the technologization of curriculum and pedagogy through the particularity of the theological.

### Inspiriting the curriculum

In the writings of Aoki, we do not see any mention of theology proper, however, his phenomenological distinctions often incorporated a language of the spiritual. His lived reality as a teacher involved practices of discerning the ethical and moral, which can be seen in his preoccupation with choosing the right language as signifiers for curriculum and instruction. Consider the historical account of his teaching life. He began his teaching career as the sole teacher in a one room Hutterite school. While he was only permitted limited access to this religious community (being an outsider English teacher), Aoki still experienced a life lived among the spirituality of the Hutterites. As his teaching journey continued, he began speaking at conferences, including presenting a paper in 1993, *Humiliating the Cartesian Ego*, at the conference on Values and Technology: High Touch in a Hi-Tech World which was sponsored by the Religious and Moral Education Council in Edmonton. During his tenure at the University of British Columbia, Aoki investigated a program called the Ts'kel Educational Administration program for Native Indian graduate students. Instead of executing strategic implementations, he turned away from the Western "world of whatness," where the world is filled with things and objects to be possessed. Rather, he became attuned to a "world of being and becoming, a world of human beings" (Aoki, 1987/2005b, pp. 352-353). While Western worldviews and ideologies emphasizes objective reality, his work with the Ts'kel program respected Aboriginal perspectives and placed "a premium on the spirit, self, and being, or inner space" (Aoki, 2000/2005, p. 326). These examples are only a glimpse of how Aoki often danced in the creative world of the theological and the spiritual.

Aoki entered this new curricular language[4] through his own unique space, a space between planned and lived curriculum "where newness can come into being… it is an inspirited site of being and becoming" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 73). Much like Huebner (2008), Aoki affirms teaching as a calling, a theological term referring to vocation, a notion of appointment by God to a specific office.[5] Aoki discerned "voices of teaching" and wanted to encourage teachers to become attuned to the spiritual character of this wonderful calling. In another example of adopting theological language, Aoki builds upon the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the eighteenth century theologian and philosopher (Aoki, 1987/2005a, pp. 360-361). Schleiermacher offers an illustration of how an architect, carpenter, and worshipper might relate to a cathedral.

The architect, being a theoretician would frame his experience of the cathedral as conceptual and theoretical understandings, perceiving the infrastructure and architectural style. The carpenter is a practitioner who sees a cathedral in need of fixing using his technical skills. The worshipper, however, "experiences the cathedral existentially and poetically" (Aoki, 1987/2005a, p. 361). For this true worshipper, the cathedral is a site of lived experience, "an embodied spiritual dwelling place wherein the fourfold of mortal self, divinity, earth and heaven gather together and shine through as one" (Aoki, 1987/2005a, p. 361). Now, Aoki adopts Schleiermacher's story, adding a transversal turn, suggesting we "substitute *school* for *cathedral,*" resulting in three views of school: oriented towards rational thinking, giving primacy to doing, or emphasizing and nurturing the becoming of human beings (Aoki, 1987/2005a, p. 361). The last option, to be a true worshipper, is, in Aoki's view, what we are called to be, authentic spiritual selves "being within" the cathedral that is the school.

Aoki cites the scholar Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) who transcended objectivism by means of action and reflection within one's life. Using ontological hermeneutics, Wojtyla proposed "both the communal condition of man and the irreducible transcendence of the human person with respect to the current of social life" (Aoki, 1984/2005a, p. 130). In this way, self-disclosure and self-governance is the site of the spiritual whereupon life is truly worth living. Having an appreciation for critical hermeneutics, a cue Aoki took from Heidegger (1982), he called educators to move beyond the information level and towards true human presence as part of a House of Being. Aoki spoke of different realms within the House of Being, and, more specifically, called us into the immanent realm of where we experience ourselves truly. This happens when through "spiritual dimensions of living" and "authentic being with others is the person's prime concern" (Aoki, 1991/2005b, p. 181). Curriculum, then, is also part of this House of Being, whereupon our spiritual selves are found in authentic being-ness with one another. This is the rediscovery of journeying alongside other worshippers in the cathedral that is also the school. For Aoki, the use of theological language elucidates one possibility in responding to the instrumentalization of curriculum. Thus, the curricular journey of educators is a spiritual one, for we are all pursuing the common calling of teaching.

**Techno-theological metaphors in the language of curriculum**

One of Ted Aoki's significant contributions to the curriculum world was his bridging between the theory and practice divide. He accomplished this bridging by dwelling in the language of conjunction, disjunction, of and/not and (Aoki, 1996/2005b, p. 420) within the space between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. Similarly, I aim to adopt Aoki's fondness for words and metaphors, in order to discern new sites in-between technology and theology in his writings. While Aoki rightfully remains suspicious of the way technology enframes curriculum in an instrumentalized mode of being, he asks us to abandon the false dichotomy of an either/or worldview that situates technology as either good or bad. Instead, Aoki "affirms that, for him, technology is both a blessing and a burden." We are called to venture towards a landscape of "both this and that, and more,… which does not exclude the either/or but regards it as one among may ways of being in the world" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 48). In this way, we will dive into Aoki's language and grammar, where "words like *between* and *and* are no mere joining words, a new language that might allow a transformative resonance of the words *paradigms, practices,* and *possibilities*" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 27). Much like Davis (2004), I am not aiming to create a taxonomy of Aokian curricular terminologies, but rather aspire to understand the interconnections and complexities found within the techno-theological language of Aoki.

**Bridge**

One of the metaphors that Aoki brought to the curriculum field is his reconceptualization of the word "bridge." He introduced this idea in a conference where his concern was for educators who continued to emphasize crossing from one nation or culture to the other. The function of a bridge is to provide such ease in the crossing, however, Aoki was concerned that this cross-cultural conversation would result in tourism, a shallow awareness of culture, or business propagation, the colonization and taking of another culture's resources. Thus, he plays with the bridge as signifier, "to query the prevailing imaginary that allows such language" (Aoki, 1996/2005a, p. 316). While the function of the bridge is to allow for moving of objects and subjects from one point to another, the design of a bridge in an Oriental garden functions quite differently. The bridge is first of all, pleasantly aesthetically designed, calling us to linger visually over the beauty of the bridge. Second, this kind of bridge is itself a meeting and dwelling place for people. According to Aoki, this is "a Heideggerian bridge, a site or clearing in which earth, sky, mortals, and divine, in their longing to be together, belong together." He claims Heidegger's treatment of the word bridge for he is recalling a Heideggerian critique of instrumentalism and technology (Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2002, pp. 167-169). For the bridge is the in-between space, inviting "educators to transcend instrumentalism to understand what it means to dwell together humanly" (Aoki, 1996/2005a, p. 316).[6]

Aoki further situates his bridge metaphor within his own life, calling into question the "identity-centered 'East and West' and into the space between East and West" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 53). Aoki, moving away from the instrumental sense of the bridge wonders how East-West conversations can be authentically dialogical in curriculum. We must start, with a conversation of reciprocity of perspectives, of ideologies, between two deep worldviews. Once again, he calls us to move away from bifurcating interpretation of two others, separated by a bridge. Instead, the bridge between East and West is found in the conjunctive space which Bill Pinar summarizes as follows:

> By focusing on the conjunctive space *between* 'East and West,' and by understanding 'and' as 'both 'and' and 'not-and,' Aoki proposes a bridging space of 'both conjunction and disjunction.' This is, Aoki explains, a space of tension, both 'and/not-and,' a space 'of conjoining and disrupting, indeed, a generative space of possibilities, a space wherein in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges.' (Pinar, 2005a, p. 83)

Perhaps there is a third space that is techno-theological. It could be a place where technological artifacts and processes can meet theological traditions of wisdom and virtue. While this space is ambiguous and ambivalent, Aoki describes it as a generative space of possibilities, allowing newness to emerge. Within this space, we sense a dialectic whereupon the reciprocity between the technological and theological can become meaningful. The technological cannot enframe or usurp the theological, and the theological cannot render the technological into mere tools. Rather, the "bridging" between the two becomes meaningful when one part is illuminated by the tensioned ambiguity, and the space between the two points to a greater context. In this way, we may understand the techno-theological conversation "as a bridging of two worlds by a bridge, which is not a bridge" (Aoki, 1981/2005, p. 228), finding a generative space of possibilities in the techno-theological.

**Multiplicity**

Along with the bridge which is not a bridge, a second "linguistic device" that Aoki brings to the curricular landscape is the idea of multiplicity, particularly framed beyond its noun form.

A noun orientation could imply the positivistic and the instrumental, numeralizing "multiplicity" as multiple identities. Instead, Aoki quotes Gilles Deleuze who states: "in a multiplicity what counts are not… the elements, but what there is between, the between, a site of relations which are not separable from each other" (Aoki, 1993/2005a, p. 205). In curriculum and pedagogy, we can see how a noun-orientedness accompanies different ideologies, e.g. the claims of child-centered versus teacher-centered education. De-centering ourselves from this pre-established metaphysical view allows the discovery of multiplicity which "grows as lines of movement" (Aoki, 1992/2005a, p. 269).

For Aoki, curriculum-as-lived experience is not found merely in the child, or teacher, or subject. Life in the classroom is really lived in the spaces between and among all three. Hence, his agenda for decentering without erasing these unique beings and to "learn to speak a noncentered language" (Aoki, 1993/2005b, p. 282). In Aoki's own unique de-nouned identity as a Japanese Canadian, he spoke about producing a new language which is neither Japanese nor English, but grows within the "uniquely Japanese-Canadian lines of movement" (Aoki, 1992/2005a, p. 270). Similarly, Aoki would possibly suggest that we can decenter ourselves from technological instrumentalism and theological orthodoxy and find new lines of movement in the techno-theological. This idea of directionality, with spatial and temporal distinctions overcomes the common problem of assuming the technological predisposition towards instrumentality (Grimmett & Halvorson, 2010, p. 251). This is not a mere dichotomy or bifurcation (Davis, 2004, p. 8) in which the technological and theological progress towards different directionalities. Instead, there are crossings between the technological and theological, moving towards increasing complexities within Aoki's network of the techno-theological.

**Tensionality**

From the bridge and within the lines of movement of multiplicity, we discover the tensionality that emerges between multiple worlds. For Aoki, he depicts tensionality within the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived using the example of Miss O. Miss O is not a philosopher or curriculum theorist per se, but she is a grade five teacher par excellence. She actively lives in the tensionality of her pedagogical and curricular situation. For one, she see the curriculum-as-plan as promoting a generalized knowing in which her students are not uniquely known but rather viewed as disembodied technical learners. Miss O, on the other hand, knows and cares deeply for her students: for Tom, Andrew, Margaret, and the others. She dwells in the tensionality between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived experience with her students. Both curricular worlds lay claim on her role as a teacher and she knows "the quality of life lived within the tensionality depends much on the quality of the pedagogic being that she *is*" (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 162). As a pedagogue, Miss O demonstrates the tensionality which dwells in her very being. It happens every time she makes "time for meaningful striving and struggling… time for singing, time for crying, time for praying and hoping." Aoki believes that much like Miss O, all teachers should be guided by a sense of the pedagogic good, "be alert to the possibilities of our pedagogic touch, pedagogic tact, pedagogic attunement" (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 164). He cautions the seduction of abstractions; instead, we can find meaningful tensionality in our very being as teachers.

Aoki may likewise ask: what is the meaningful tensionality found in between the technological and the theological? How do teachers truly dwell in this "Zone of Between" which is a unique, hopeful, trustful, and careful place? Aoki describes this place as "somewhat like the place before the hearth at home" (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 164). It is with this example that we begin to discern a true dwelling place of the technological-theological. The hearth supplies warmth, but

also provides "the entire family a regular and bodily engagement with… the threat of cold and the solace of warmth" (Borgmann, 1987, p. 42). By contrast, the central heating units in modern homes are devices that only supply warmth. In the past, the fathers and sons would collect wood for the fire, mothers and daughters would tend to the fire, and the hearth was the center of the family's work and leisure. Yet all these experiences that were once focused around the fireplace are seen as burdensome by modern technological culture. And so we have been disburdened of them by the machinery of heating devices mediated through a commodity culture (Higgs, Light, & Strong, 2000, p. 30). Yet we would be remiss not to remember that the hearth itself was a kind of technological heating device. Unlike modern central heating units which hide the machinery of heating devices, the hearth is linked to the focal things and practices of chopping and gathering wood and tending the fire. Ultimately, the hearth becomes the technological and spiritual center of the family home and demonstrates the "right of the community to restrain [technological] freedom in the name of the common good" (Pinar, 2013, p. 11). It is a site of techno-theological tensionality for the flourishing home. Similarly, in the following section, Aoki may point out other sites of techno-theological tensionality, specifically as examples for the flourishing of pedagogical and curricular practice.

**Bilingualism and hemodialysis technology**

Two specific cases outline the possibilities from Aoki's work indwelling the space in-between technology and theology: bilingualism as curriculum studies, and second, the example of Carol and hemodialysis technology. Aoki suggests that "bilingualism itself offers the opportunity to reconceptualize curriculum studies from a technical instrumentalism to an authentic educational experience of being-in-the-world" (Pinar, 2005a, p. 35). Drawing on Gadamer (2006), he describes this opportunity as a hermeneutic dialectic, participating in the hermeneutic circle which is the key for one's understanding of oneself. Bilingualism as educational practice is a life lived in tension. It is not to live comfortably in our native language, nor to conquer the speech acts of the second language. Aoki would caution constituting and instituting a second-language program which views language as merely a transmission of code. He notes that educators often speak of these programs from a technologized or scientifically oriented perspective. In comparison, immigrant parents in Canada often speak poetically, from their own being about their experiences of bilingualism. The parents speak "from an ontological understanding of what it means to speak two languages, enfolded as their lives are existentially as beings engaged in their own becoming as Canadians" (Aoki, 1987/2005c, p. 241).

A discerning way of bilingualism between the languages of technology and theology requires a proper dialectic between *speaking religiously* and *speaking technologically* (Latour, 2013a; 2013b). Just as bilingualism education is not solely about language acquisition, but a "dialectic between *the language of epistemology* and *the language of ontology*" (Aoki, 1987/2005c, p. 245), finding the epistemological and ontological crossings between technology and theology are a significant way that Aoki the techno-theologian has reconceptualized curriculum. He illustrates that bilingualism as curricular exemplar is a "mode of being-and-becoming in-the-world" (Aoki, 1987/2005c, p. 243), which calls educators to be bilingual in both technology and theology. This kind of bilingualism stems from the person's ontological beingness, enabling a manner of speech that can authentically indwell both the theological and the technological.

The second case study is the example of Carol Olson. As Aoki contemplated the essence of understanding computer application, he realized he was caught in the "it-ness" of the question. Instead, he wanted to dwell in the epistemological and ontological world of understanding the

"is-ness" of technology. He shares the experience of Carol Olson, a doctoral student in his department who receives regular dialysis treatment using hemodialysis technology. Aoki describes Carol as a child of technology, "the first to see beyond technology for they know technology with their lifeblood" (Aoki, 1987/2005d, p. 157). In the case of Carol, we understand this metaphorically and literally as she is authentically able to say "we acknowledge our indebtness to technology; we refuse to be enslaved by technology" (Aoki, 1987/2005d, p. 157). As Carol experiences the technological life-saving treatments at the hospital, she reflects on this technological system in which she has become subsumed, using Heideggerian language, turning into a 'standing reserve' of units of labor. She enters into the complicated conversation of cyborg identity that fractures the boundary of human and machine identity (Haraway, 1991). So she struggles with this narrow determination of her life as just a *fyborg*, the posthuman condition of temporary technological enhancement in the body (Weaver, 2010, p. 193). Even as she is being given life by technology, she refuses to be enslaved by technology, and speaks out from her spiritual being. In this way, Carol teaches us "the significance of that which is beyond the technological" (Aoki, 1987/2005d, pp. 157-158), juxtaposed with the spiritual, can be the techno-theological.

Again, Aoki as techno-theologian brings forth a life example that illuminates the interplay between matter and spirit, the *techne* and *theo*. Carol has a complicated, primal, and spiritual relationship with technology. Her physical body is saved by means of hemodialysis technology. Her very beingness is wrestling with *fyborg* identity, the posthuman understanding of her condition. Yet, Carol's situation is not unique, and instead, is indicative of the common techno-theological challenge for all humanity. Perhaps Aoki is sharing Carol's story in order to understand a way of living within technologization without defaulting into instrumentalism. In this way, even educators can discern curricular and pedagogical possibilities beyond adopting the business-technology model of education. Additionally, the educational emphasis does not have to become one of cynical criticism or subjective pedagogy. Instead, Aoki demonstrates a thoughtful third way as a techno-theologian. It is a life reflecting on authentic beingness in the balanced way of the techno-theological.

**Ending with a lingering note**

This paper was an attempt at reconceptualizing Aoki as a curricular techno-theologian. In following Aoki, I found it possible to dwell in the hyphen, the in-between space of technology and theology, reframing this relationship whereupon the technological cannot appropriate the theological, and the theological cannot cast the technological aside. At times, the default curricular move appeared to transcend technology by turning inward as the only possibility of pedagogical being (Macdonald, 1995, p. 75). This turning inward has often been framed as a kind of "conversion," recovering the sacred in our technological world (Marcel, 1962). Yet, as we linger on Aoki's bridge which is not a bridge, we discern other meaningful connections between technology and theology within the examples of Miss O and Carol Olson. There is a delicate line of movement that is uniquely techno-theological beginning with the hearth as the technological and spiritual center of our curriculum homes. Aoki invites us into his presence, called to be in relation with him and one another in this unique space, speaking the bilingual ontological language of technology and theology. He asks, can we begin to see an inspirited hybrid techno-theology that occurs in this fragile in-between space for new complicated questions and generative possibilities? Understanding Aoki, then, as a curricular techno-theologian, allows us educators to follow his way of living authentically in a technicized world without conceding our curricular possibilities to instrumentalization.

Notes:

[1]  In Aoki's reflection on his Japanese Canadian identity (Aoki, 1991/2005c), he shares his personal conflict in his search for identity. "At one time, [Aoki] objected to the hyphenization of Japanese-Canadians" (p. 381). On another occasion, Aoki dropped his Canadian name 'Ted', choosing to go by his ethnic name 'Tetsuo.'

[2]  Aoki would speak about Miss O, a Grade 5 teacher who would serve as exemplar in living between the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience (Aoki, 1986/2005). Another teacher, Mr. McNab, would imprint the themes of pedagogical watchfulness and pedagogical thoughtfulness onto Aoki (Aoki, 1992/2005b, p. 195)

[3]  In *Understanding Curriculum*, Pinar et al (2008) used the notion of theology as an umbrella term which "includes discussions of morality, ethics, values, hermeneutics, cosmology, and religious beliefs" (p. 606).

[4]  Dwayne Huebner (2008) proposed the project of taking seriously the creation of new curricular language.

[5]  While Aoki never explicitly embraces Christianity in his writing, there is implied a spiritual – even sacred – sense of calling that resonates with Christian traditions. Just as St. Paul was called to be an Apostle (Romans 1:1), the teacher is also called to exercise their gift of teaching (Romans 12:7).

[6]  John Willinsky, another Canadian curriculum theorist, also evokes the bridge metaphor for mapping the diversity of our "technologies of knowing" (Pinar, 2004, p. 156).

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