

**African Enterprise  
Leadership Training Centre**

# **A Christian Response to Technology**

**Matthew C. Clarke**

**June 2010**



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# Introduction

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## Purpose

The objective of this seminar is to interpret the value of technology through the eyes of faith.

Over three days, we will critique the role of technology in society from a Christian standpoint. What is technology and how should we respond to it? We will review the history of technology, including attitudes towards technology in the Bible. We'll look at many examples of technology in today's world and peer into the future. One particular example will be the possibility of artificial intelligence and how it might change our understanding of what it means to be human. In group discussions, we will consider some of the ethical challenges posed by modern technology. Demonstrations of Internet tools will highlight practical applications for current technology in Christian ministry.

## Presenter

Matthew Clarke has worked in information technology as researcher, educator, computer programmer, user interface designer, technical writer and business leader for 25 years. He has been a Christian for even longer and has a long-standing commitment to the integrity of faith in a modern, technologically-driven business world. Matthew has a Masters degree in Cognitive Science and a second in Science Education. He was Senior Lecturer in Computer Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal during the 1990's and then Vice President of Information Architecture a global software company.

Matthew is currently acting Chief Knowledge Officer with Coffey International ([www.coffey.com](http://www.coffey.com)), an engineering consultancy that seeks to improve the lives of communities around the world. He lives in Sydney with a wife and two children, and worships at the Berowra Uniting Church.

## Course Material

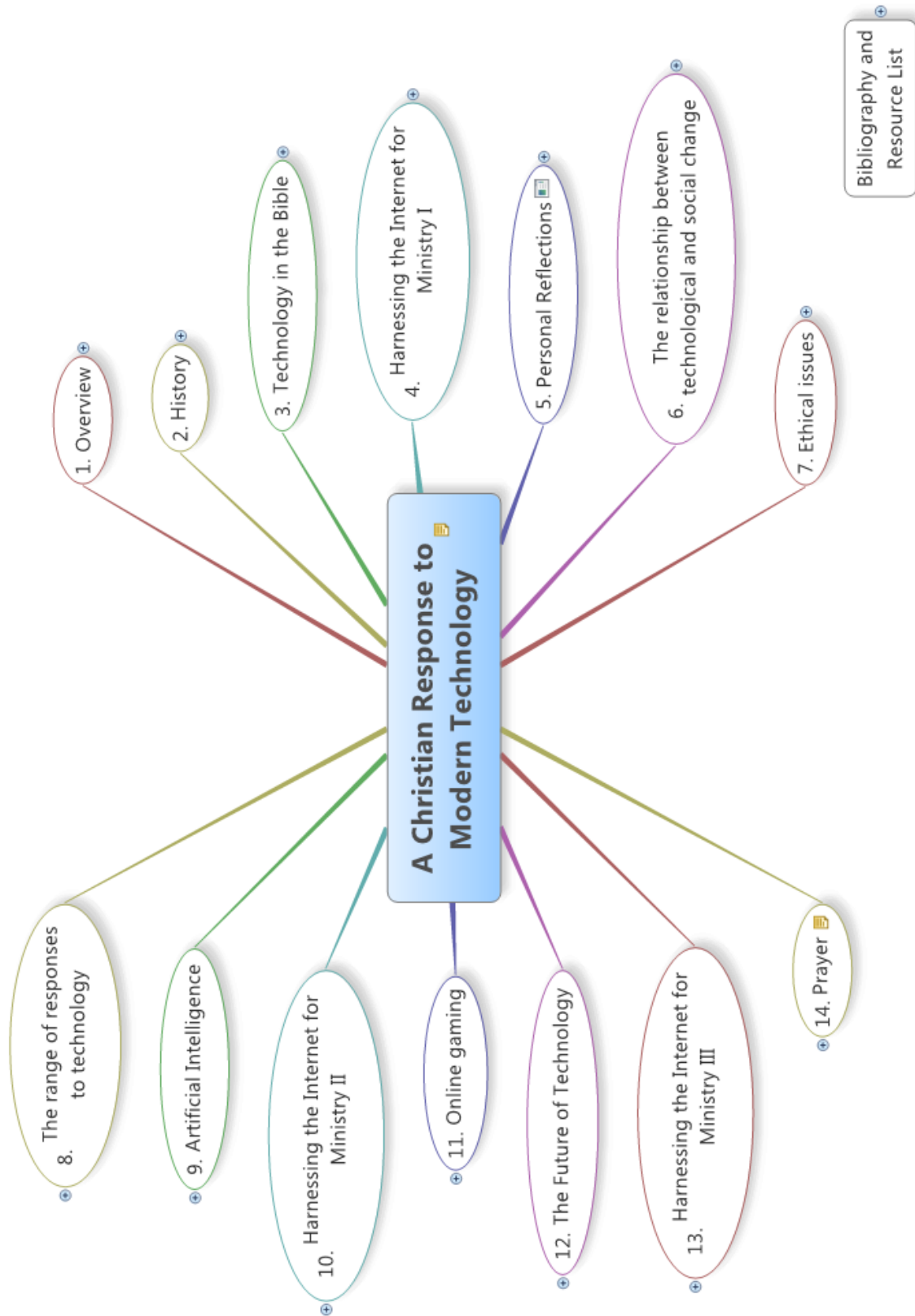
An electronic copy of all course material is available from <http://sites.google.com/site/mattsopus>. The diagrams in this course book were created using Xmind, which is freely available from [www.xmind.net](http://www.xmind.net).



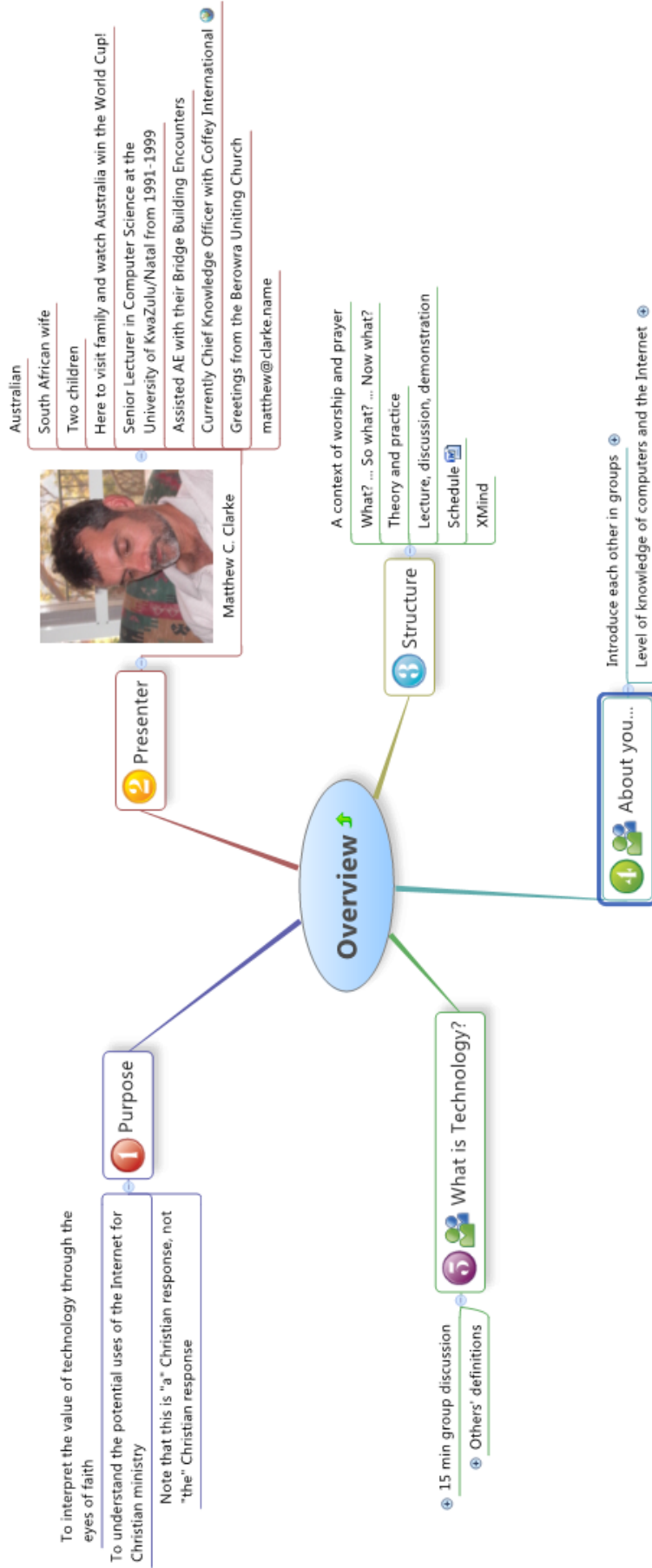
## Schedule

	<b>Tuesday 29 June</b>	<b>Wednesday 30 June</b>	<b>Thursday 1 July</b>
7:00		Breakfast	Breakfast
7:30			
8:00		Devotions and Prayer	Devotions and Prayer
8:30			
9:00	Registration	The relationship between social and technological change	History of technology – Future
9:30	Devotions and Prayer		
10:00		Tea	Tea
10:30	Overview		
11:00	What is Technology?	Questions of ethics	Harnessing the Internet for ministry (III)
11:30	History of technology – Past and Present		
12:00		The range of responses to technology	Pray for each other, the church and the world
12:30			
13:00	Lunch		Lunch
13:30		Lunch	
14:00			
14:30	Technology in the Bible	Artificial intelligence and what it means to be human	
15:00			
15:30	Tea		
16:00		Tea	
16:30	Harnessing the Internet for ministry (I)		
17:00		Harnessing the Internet for ministry (II)	
17:30			
18:00	Supper	Supper	
18:30			
19:00	Reflections on each others' experience of technology		
19:30		Online gaming	
20:00			
20:30	Goodnight	Goodnight	

# Overview

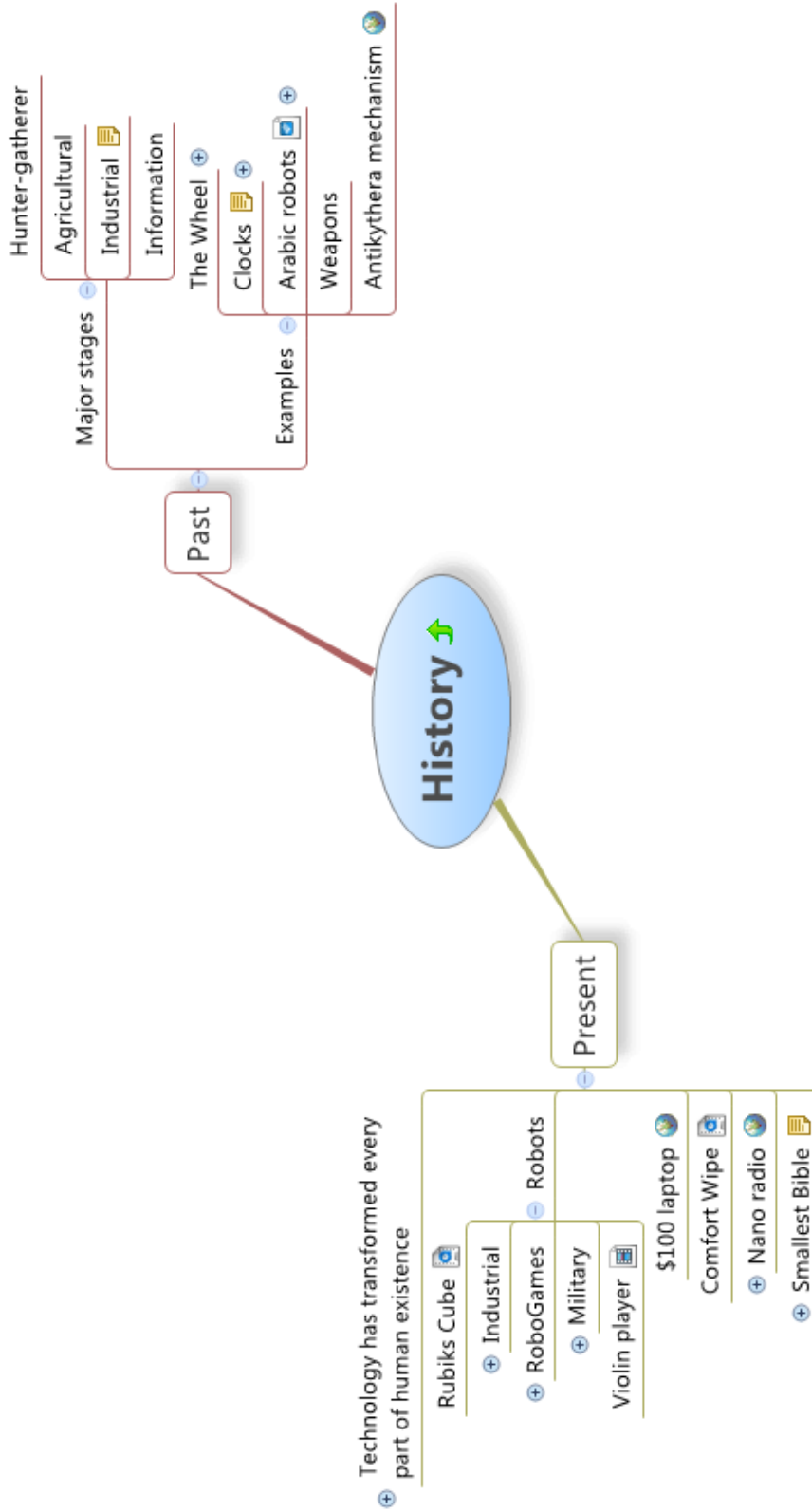








# History of Technology – Past and Present





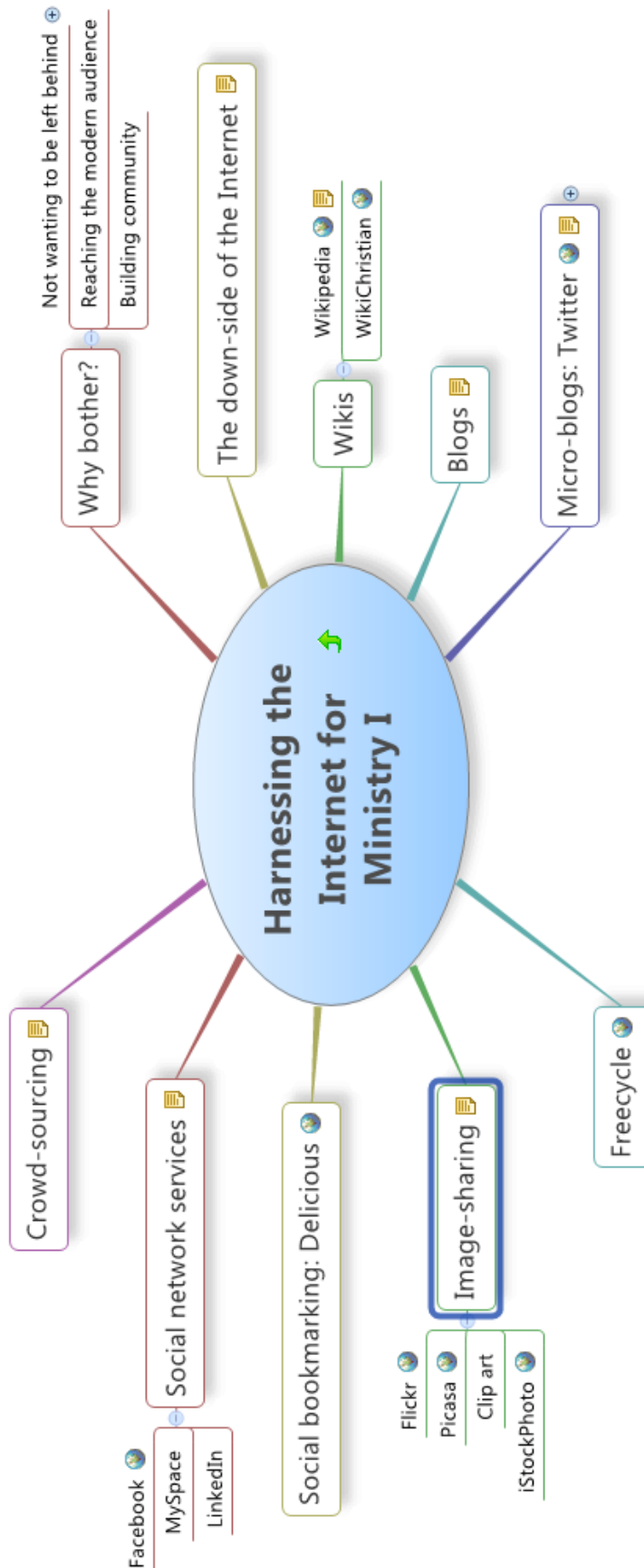
# Technology in the Bible





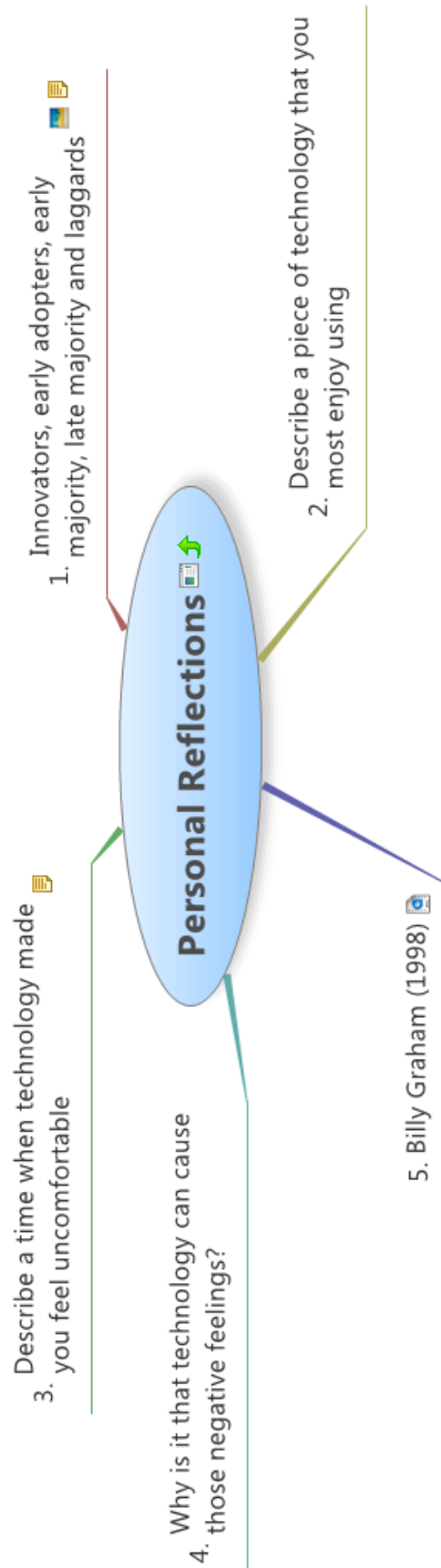


# Harnessing the Internet for Ministry I



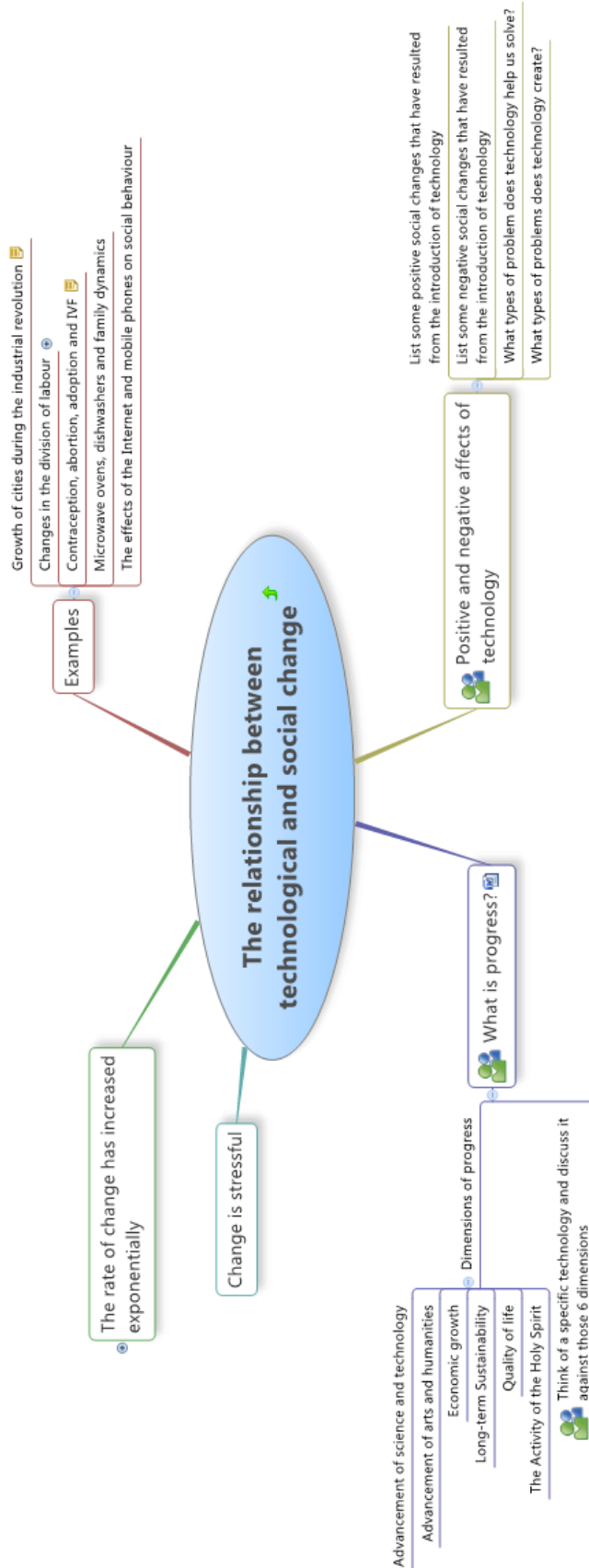


# Personal Reflections



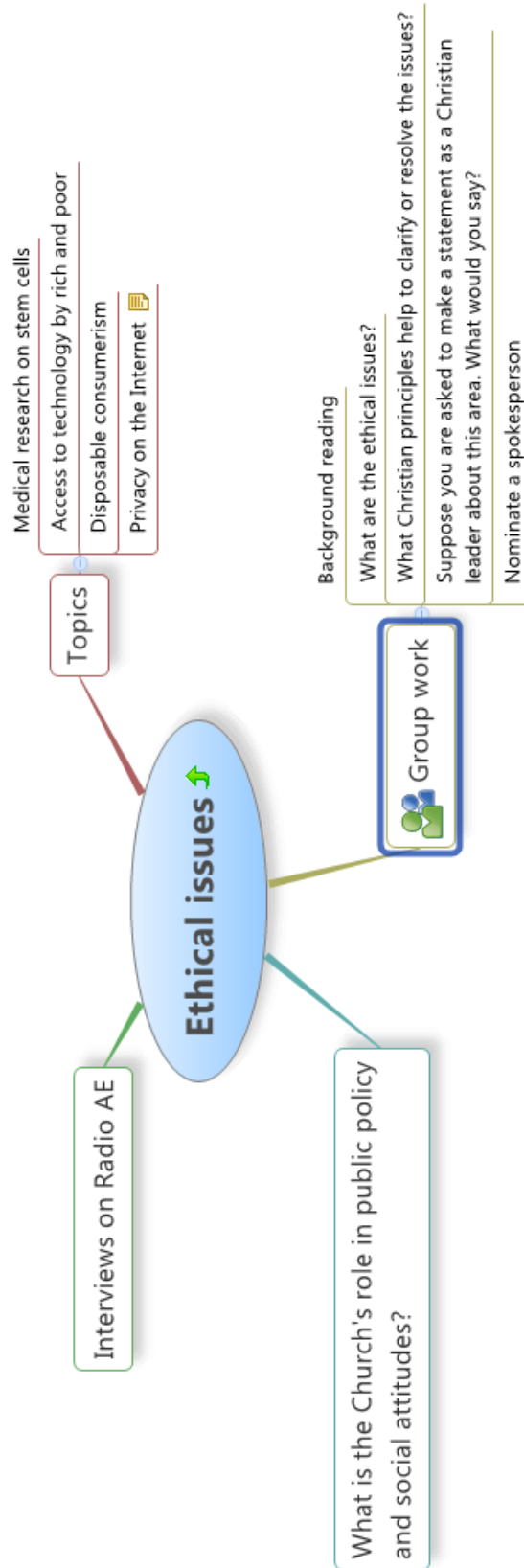


# Relationship Between Technological and Social Change





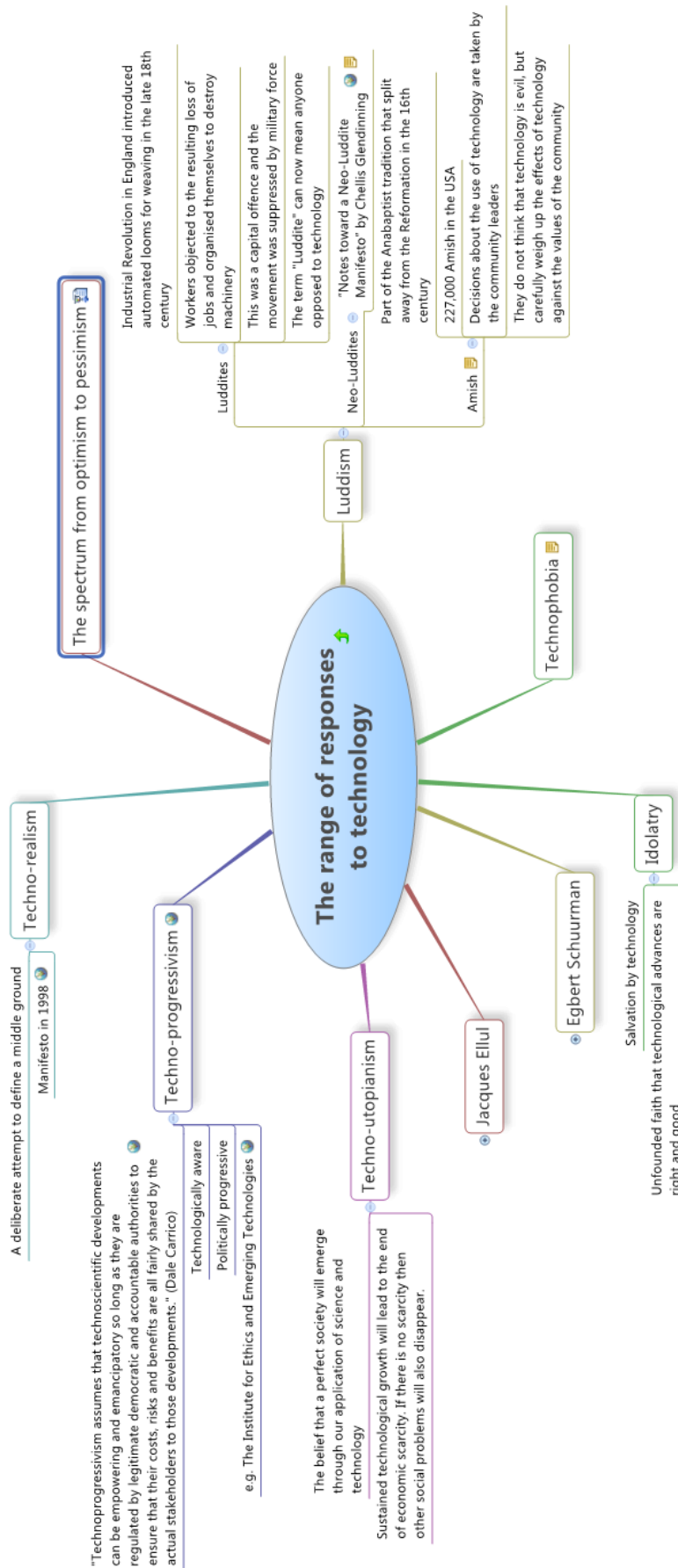
# Questions of Ethics



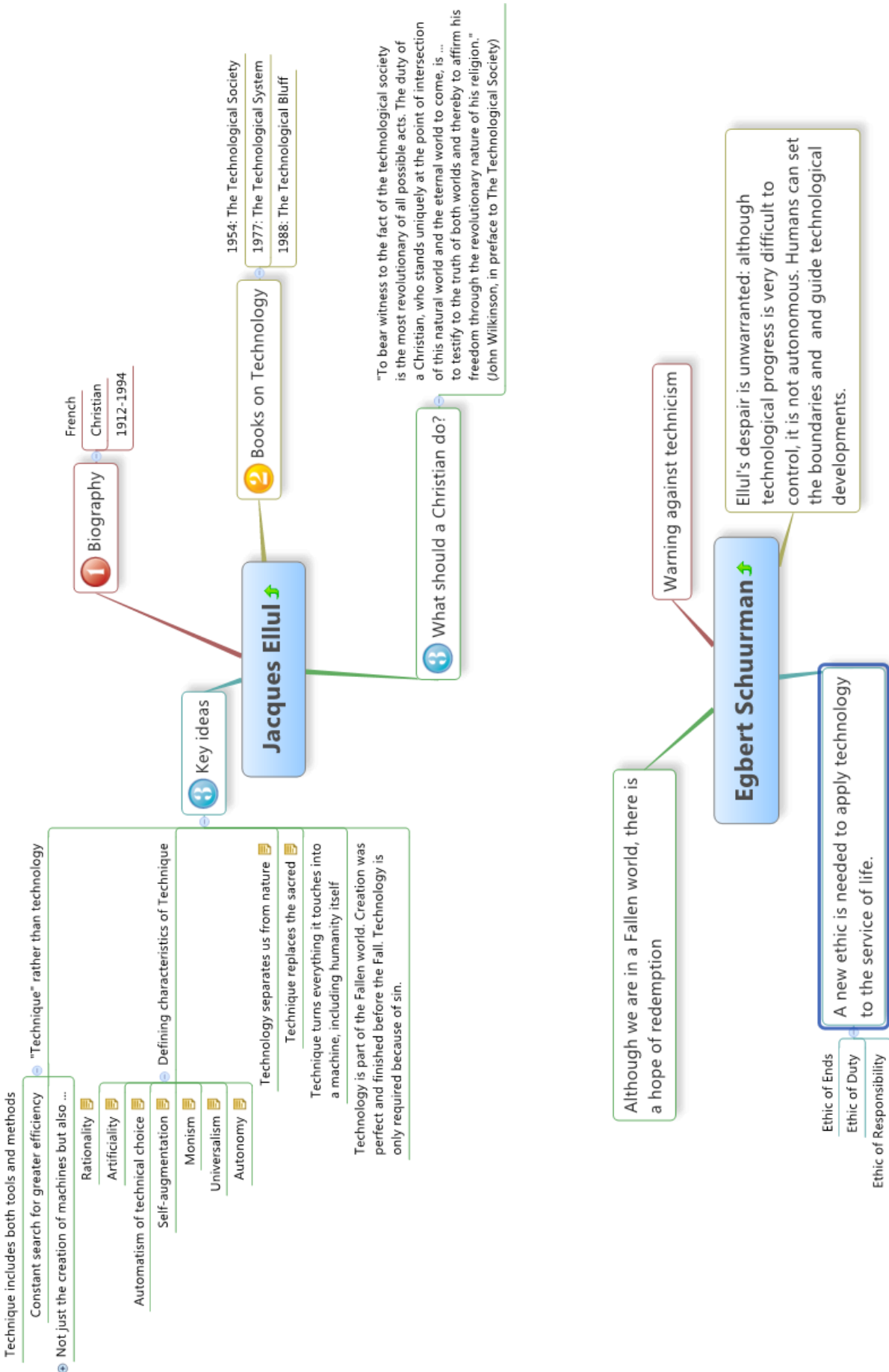




# The Range of Responses to Technology

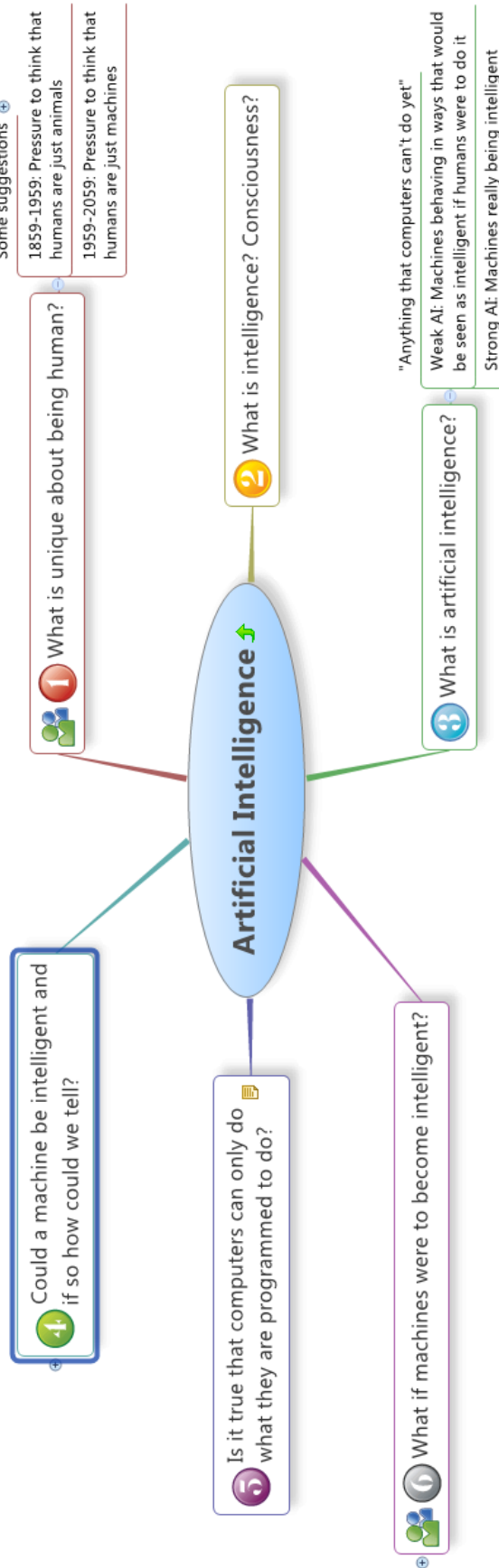




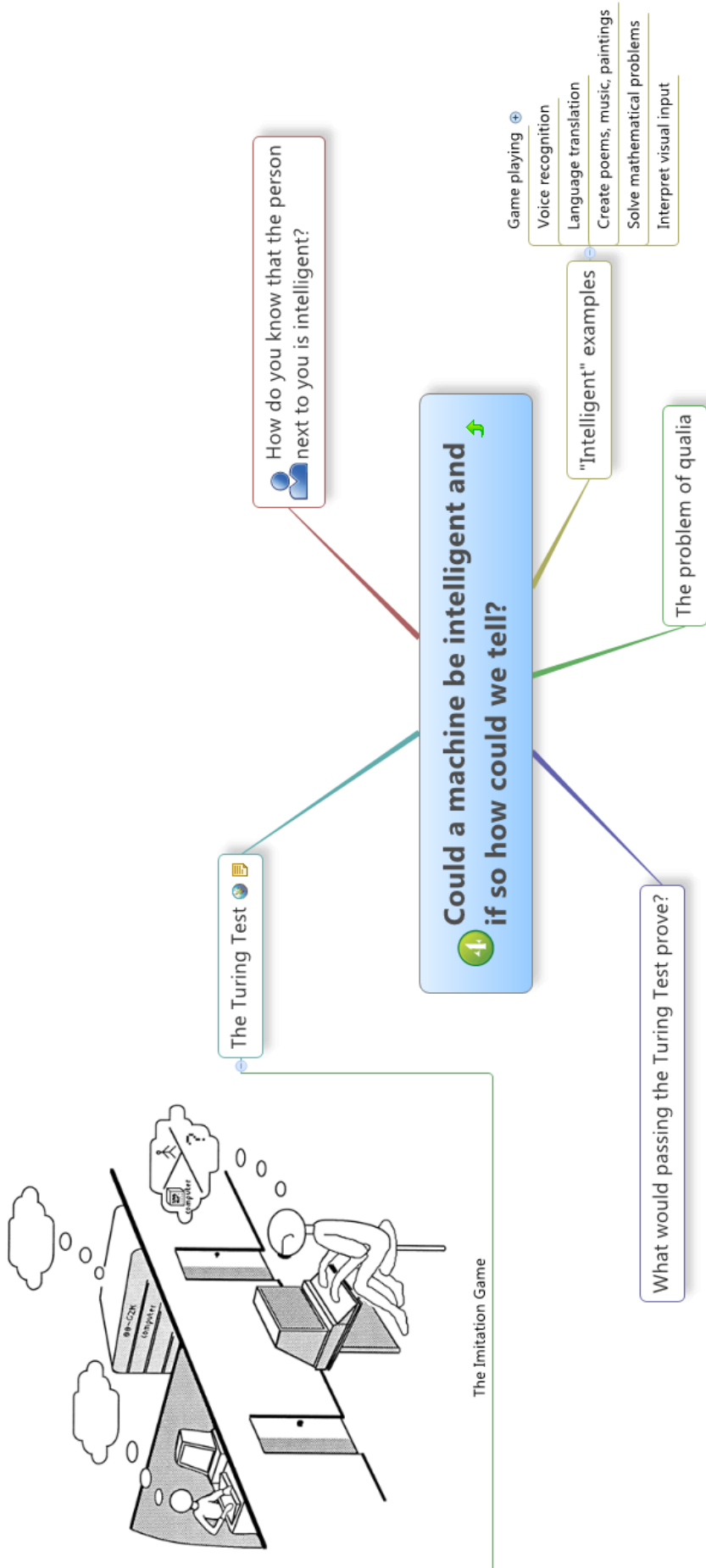




# Artificial Intelligence





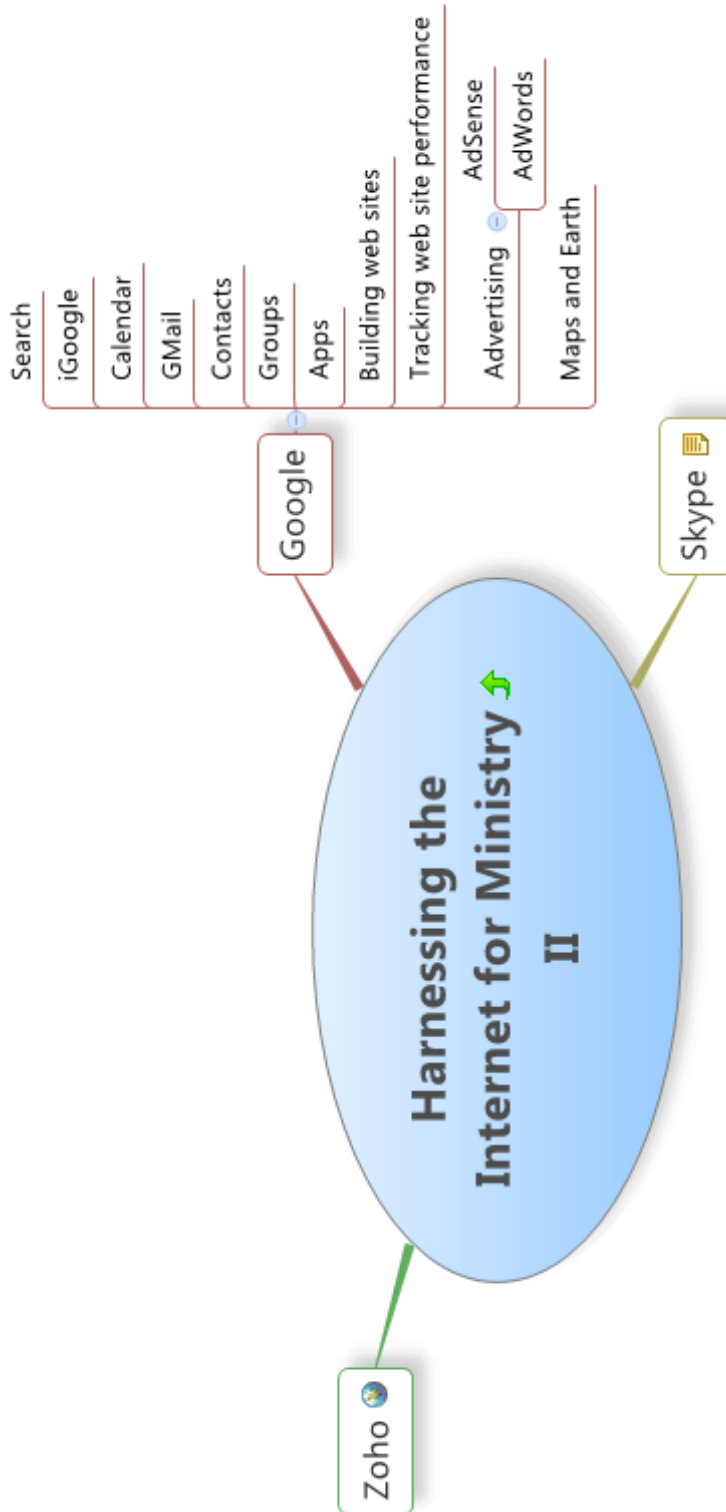






# Harnessing the Internet for Ministry II

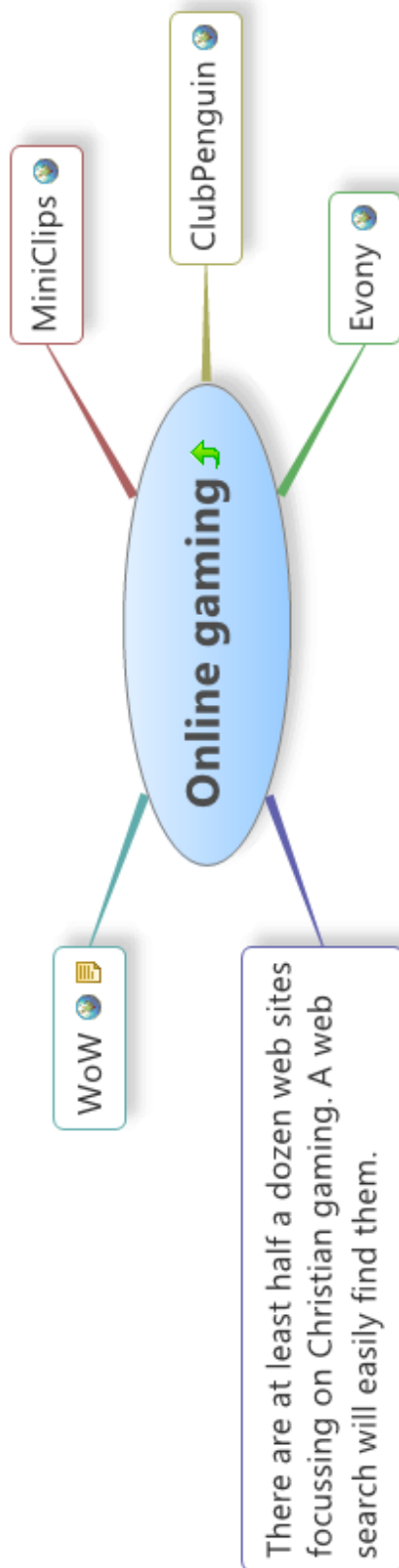
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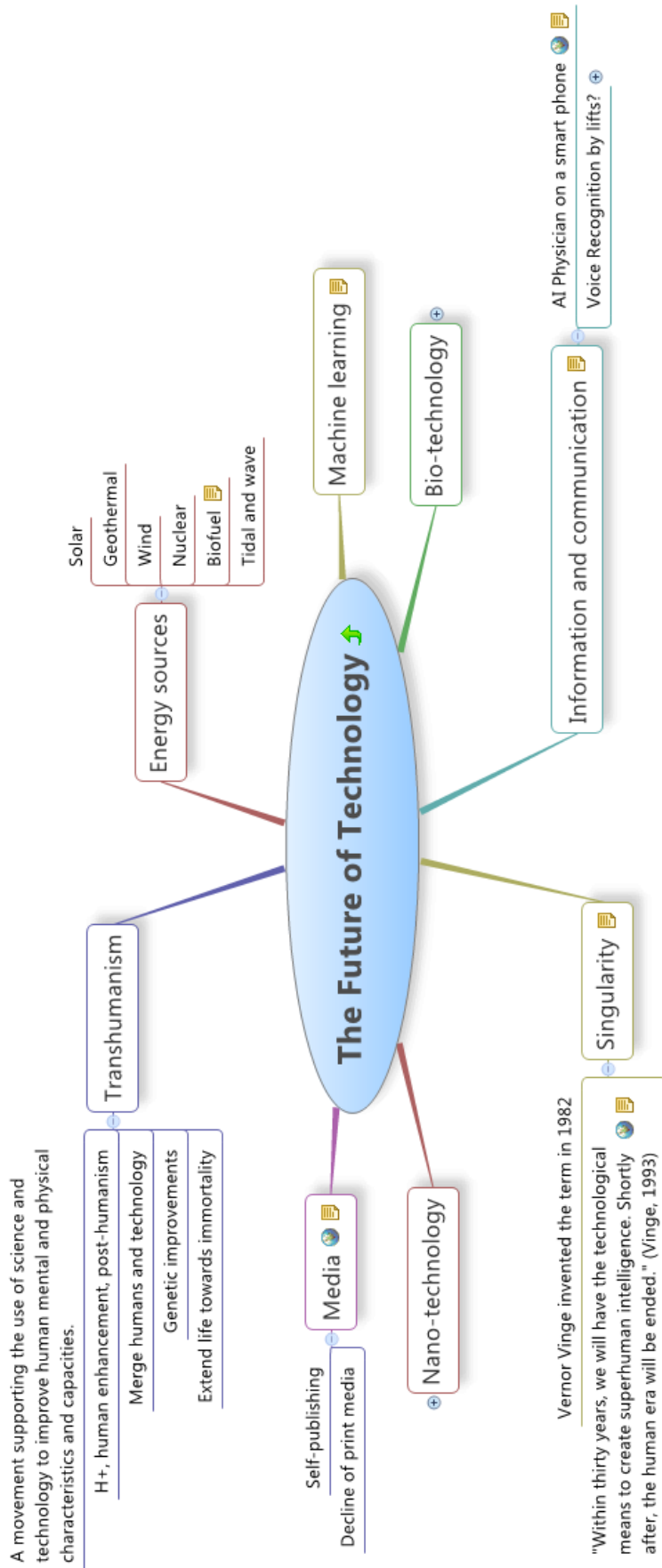
# Online Gaming

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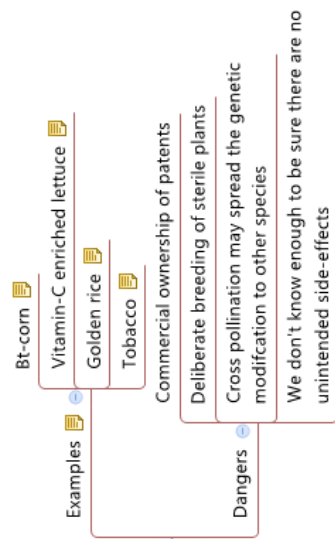




# The Future of Technology

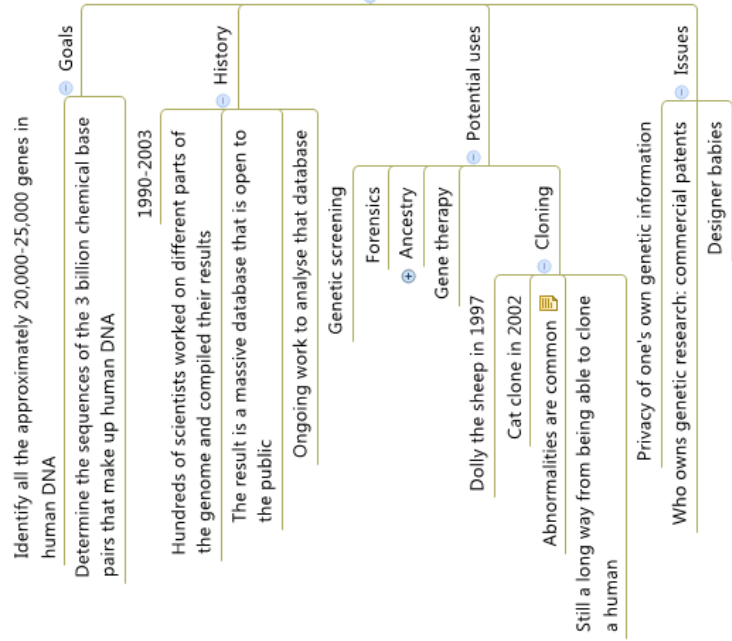






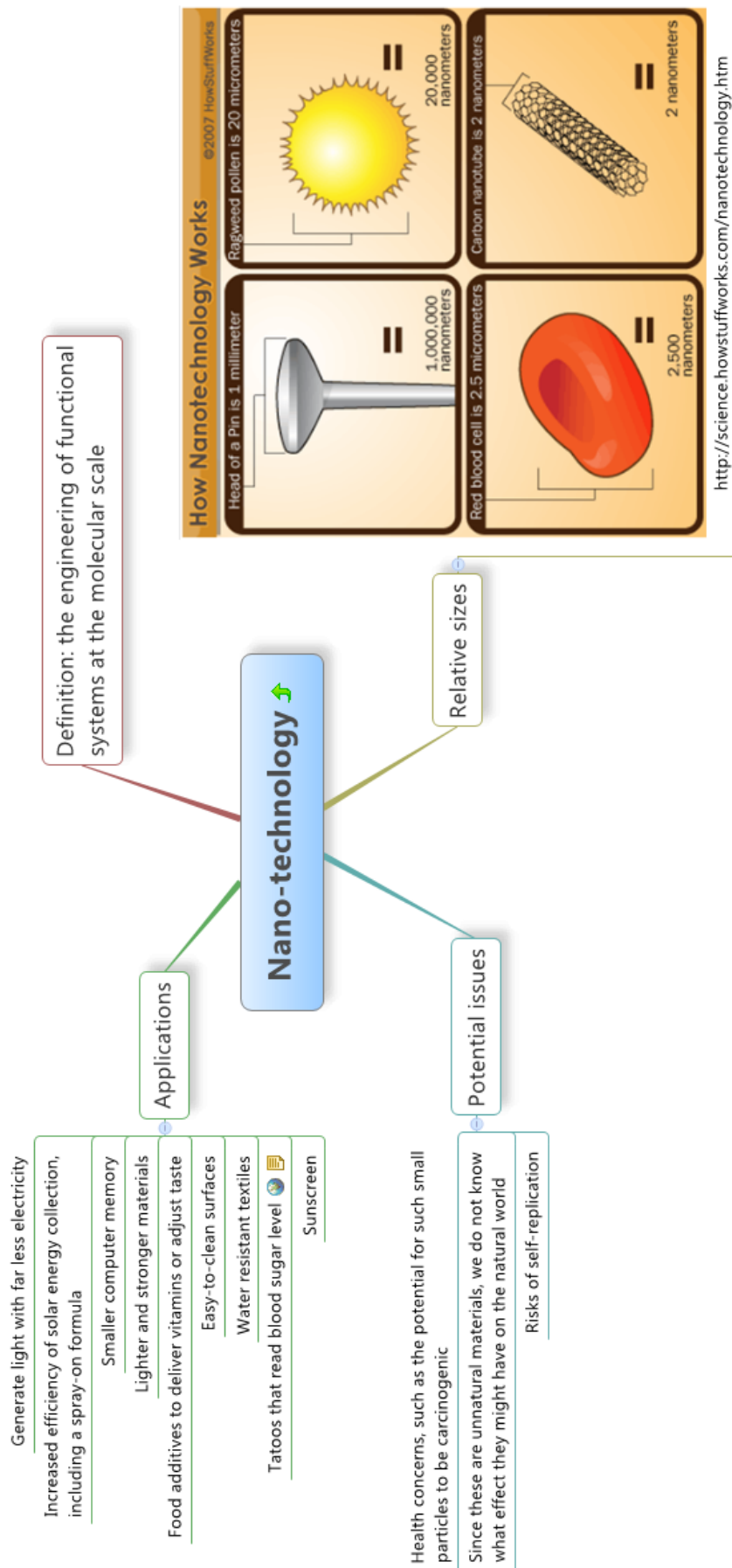
**Bio-technology**

**Human Genome Project**



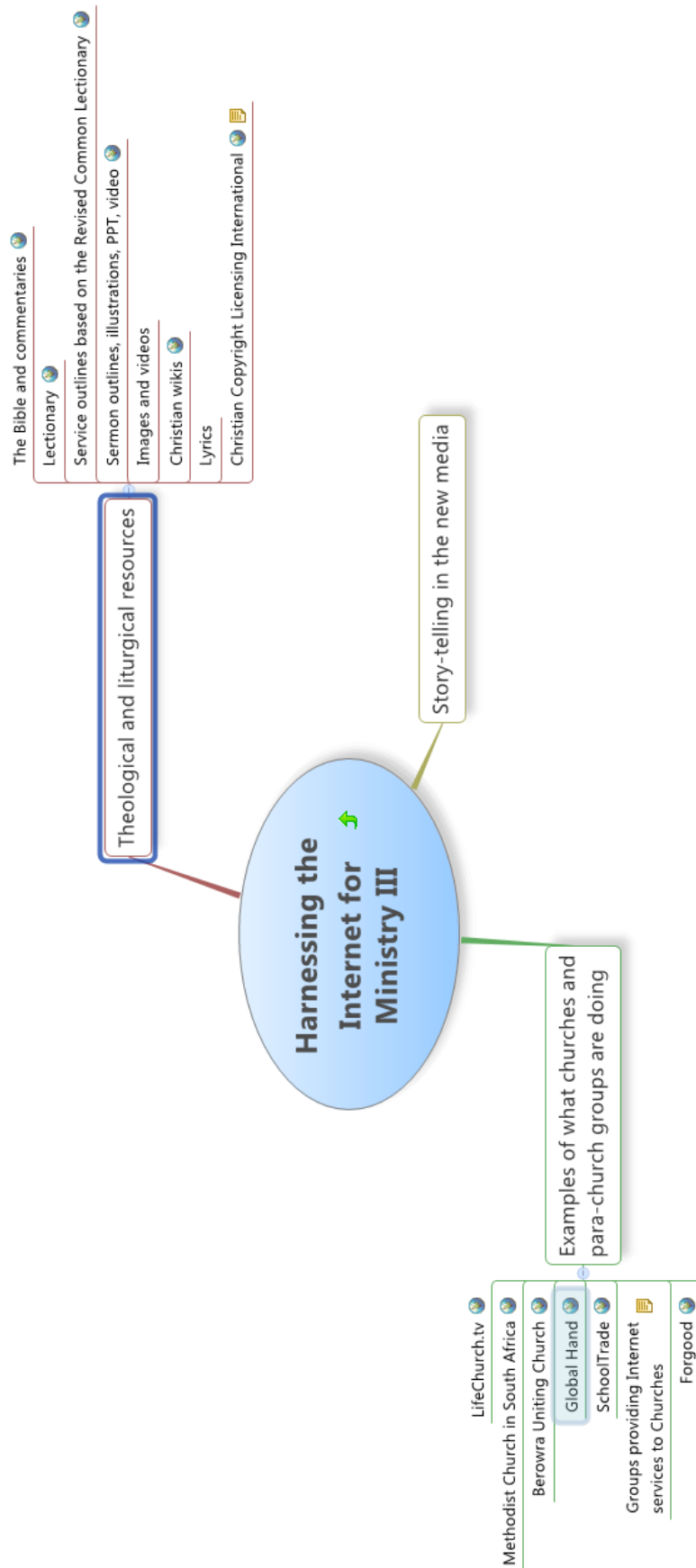






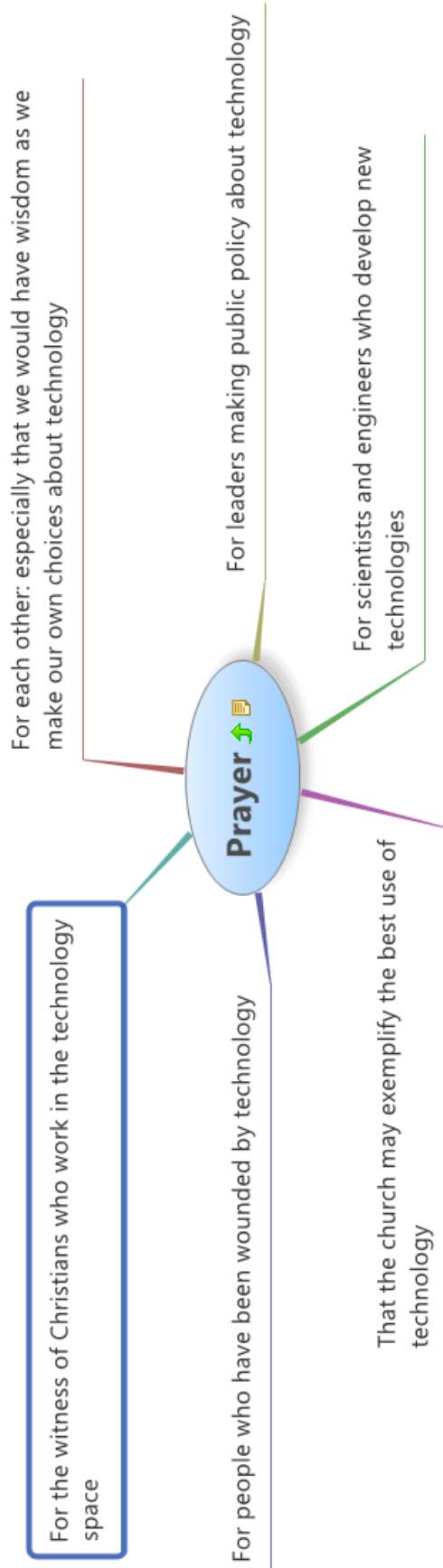


# Harnessing the Internet for Ministry III



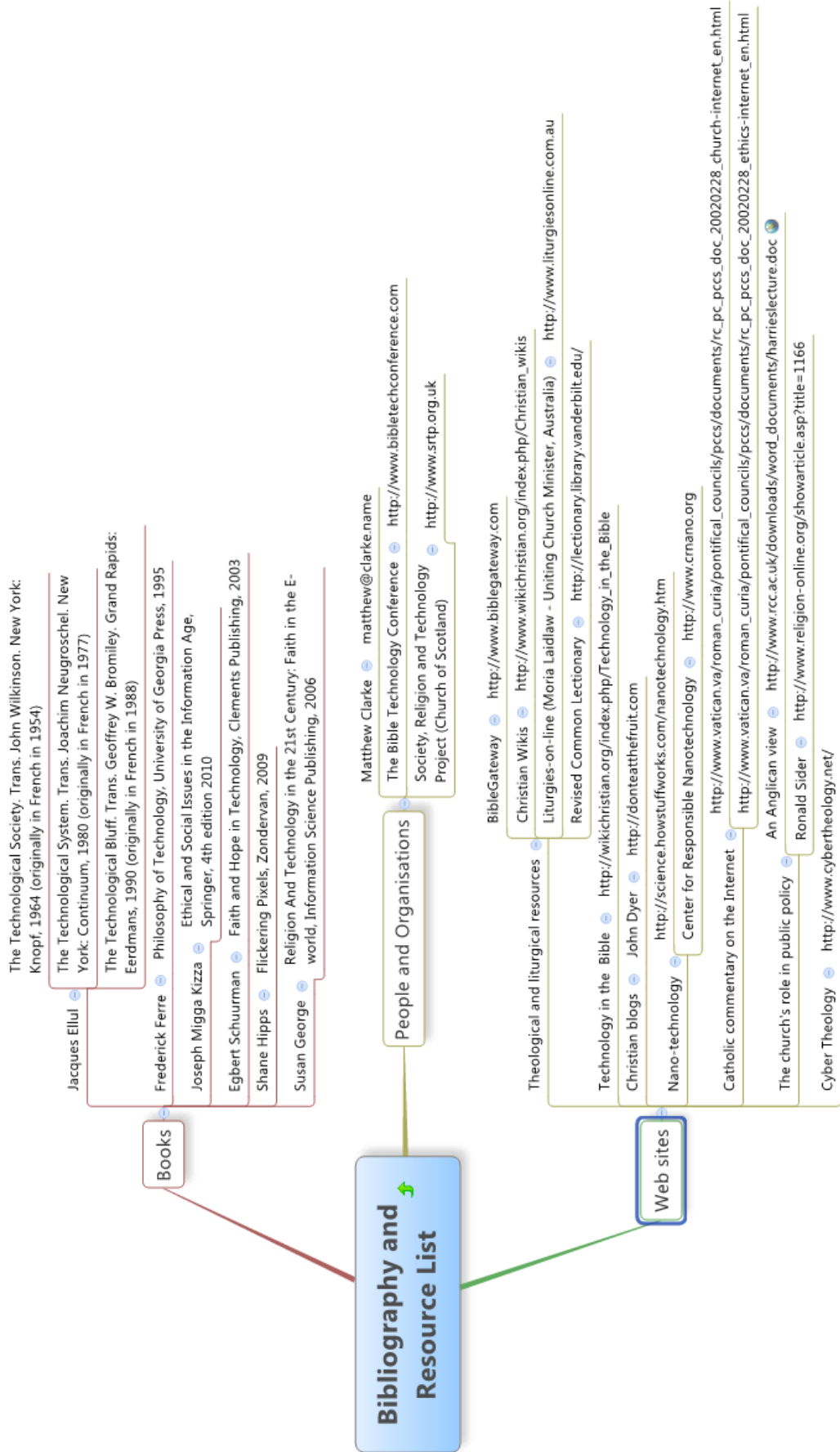


# Prayer





# Bibliography







## Questions of Ethics

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### Access to technology by rich and poor

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#### Resources

- ◆ Food & Fertilizer Technology Center: <http://www.agnet.org/library/nc/127d/>
- ◆ Report by The World Bank: “Technology Diffusion in the Developing World 2008” <http://www.worldbank.org/gep2008>. There is a summary page, but the full 224 page report can also be downloaded for free.
- ◆ Philip Emeagwali: <http://emeagwali.com/speeches/technology/technology-widens-rich-poor-gap.pdf>
- ◆ Although high-speed access to the Internet is very unevenly distributed, mobile phone usage is much more widely available (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32942>)
- ◆ Maybe lack of access to electronic technology is a new form of poverty. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_divide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_divide) and <http://www.digitaldivide.org>.

#### Possible Questions

What’s the relationship between financial and technological poverty?

Is the imbalance between those who have access to technology and those who don’t an ethical issue or merely an economic one? Is there an issue of justice here?

How could the imbalance be addressed by either individuals or the church?

### Disposable consumerism

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#### Resources

- ◆ Printers cheaper than the ink: <http://anecdoteconomics.blogspot.com/2008/07/disposable-consumerism.html>
- ◆ Planned obsolescence
  - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planned\\_obsolescence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planned_obsolescence)
  - [http://green.yahoo.com/blog/daily\\_green\\_news/315/five-products-designed-to-fail-early.html](http://green.yahoo.com/blog/daily_green_news/315/five-products-designed-to-fail-early.html)
  - [https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/blackspot\\_blog/consumer\\_society\\_made\\_break.html](https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/blackspot_blog/consumer_society_made_break.html)

#### Questions

Are the economic reasons for planned obsolescence of any value? Is economic growth a reasonable goal when compared to side-effects such as environmental damage?

Should we as Christians try to do anything about it? If so, what could we do?

## Privacy on the Internet

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### Resources

- ◆ Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_privacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_privacy)
- ◆ Google Street View
  - Taking photos of their house violated their privacy: <http://www.thetechherald.com/article.php/200815/640/US-couple-sues-Google-over-Street-View-privacy-violation>
  - [http://www.computerworld.com.au/article/346600/privacy\\_groups\\_target\\_google\\_street\\_view/](http://www.computerworld.com.au/article/346600/privacy_groups_target_google_street_view/)
  - Eavesdropping on wireless networks: <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/please-explain-why-google-wants-your-wifi-data-20100513-uyyh.html>

### Questions

Is the Internet a private or a public space. If it's the latter, is there any reason to expect privacy? A useful way to conceive of privacy is to split it into these four components:

- ◆ Solitude: the right to be alone without disturbances
- ◆ Anonymity: the right to have no public personal identity
- ◆ Intimacy: the right not to be monitored
- ◆ Reserve: the right to control one's personal information

Does the communal benefit of public information outweigh any private right to withhold information?

I've got nothing to hide, so why should I bother about protecting other people's privacy?

## Medical research on stem cells

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### Resources

- ◆ Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stem\\_cell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stem_cell) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stem\\_cell\\_controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stem_cell_controversy)
- ◆ The National Institutes of Health: <http://stemcells.nih.gov/info/ethics.asp>
- ◆ International Society for Stem Cell Research: <http://www.isscr.org/public/ethics.htm>
- ◆ Stem Cell Research and Applications: Monitoring the Frontiers of Biomedical Research: <http://www.aaas.org/spp/sfrl/projects/stem/report.pdf> (the Preface and Recommendations sections are sufficient)

### Questions

Do we have any moral obligation to embryos prior to implantation?

Do the potential benefits of stem cell research justify the use of human embryos?

What's the alternative?

What avenues do we have to oppose such research?

## Appendix: Notes on a Neo-Luddite Manifesto

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In 1990, Chellis Glendinning published an essay titled “Notes towards a Neo-Luddite manifesto”. The following ideas come from that work.

Technology, because it consists of machines, techniques, and social organizations that make a machine workable, is a worldview that supports a mechanistic way of life where humanity is replaced with efficiency, ownership, supremacy. In order to stop technology and its destructive ways, we must create a new worldview.

There are three principles of Neo-Luddism:

1. Neo-Luddites are opposed to any kind of technology “that emanate from a worldview that sees rationality as the key to human potential, material acquisition as the key to human fulfilment, and technological development as the key to social progress.”
2. “All technologies are political.” The technologies created by mass technological society inevitably perpetuate that society and its goals of efficiency, production, marketing and profits.
3. We have to examine technologies through their “sociological context, economic ramifications, and political meanings”. It’s not just about how we gain from technology but also how we lose, and how the technology will affect our overall life, along with other living beings and the natural environment.

Glendinning illustrates a program for the future that entails:

1. The dismantling of destructive devices, including nuclear and chemical technologies, genetic engineering technologies, television, electromagnetic and computer technologies.
2. The search for new technological forms created by the people who use and are affected by them.
3. Such technologies should be community-based, decentralised, organic and co-operative. They should promote political freedom, economic justice, ecological balance.
4. “Foster the creation of machines, techniques and social organisations that respect both human dignity and nature’s wholeness.”

Collated from <http://shonintcr.wordpress.com/2009/09/28/50-glendinning/> by Shon Bacon and *Rebels Against the Future* by Kirkpatrick Sale