

## *Summary of the Doctoral Dissertation*

# The Relationship between Technology and Values

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In the contemporary world, pervasive technology plays an extraordinary role, influences many spheres of human life and the environment, and transforms the experience, values, and even the paradigms of human beings in the most unexpected ways. The philosophical inquiry, which does not ignore this role, critically reflects upon the impacts of technology on being, knowledge, and values. This dissertation, entitled “The Relationship between Technology and Values,”<sup>1</sup> focuses on the complex relations between these two fields, technology and values, by taking into consideration both the classical and contemporary philosophies. Moreover, how the relationship was established in the past and contemporary time, which problems the relationship refers to, and where it may evolve, are the questions examined in this dissertation.

The study has two main objectives. First, it investigates the relation between the values and technology (i.e., the artificial constructions serving to increase human control over the environment) within different frameworks. We have engaged with the question of how this relation differed with the change of the character of these structures in the historical process through philosophical thought, considering the concept of *technê* in ancient thought, *ars*, and *şinā’ah* in classical thought, and *technology* in the modern world. Second, the study addresses the necessity of a framework that overcomes the problems posed by the phenomenon of technology that penetrates every aspect of contemporary life and the necessity of a sense of value that can ensure

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<sup>1</sup> Tuba Nur Umut, “The Relationship between Technology and Values” (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2018).

the results of technology will be “more humane.” In this context, debates on values and perspectives on a value-oriented technology have been presented and evaluated. It is aimed to draw a framework in which values can direct or limit the course of emerging technologies and address the problems encountered in this direction.

In addition to these primary objectives, this study intends to initiate a discourse for future studies that would address these issues in contemporary Islamic thought. Since the philosophical inquiry of modern technology is shaped by the experiences of Western thought, where modern technology is produced and its effects are exposed in the first place, these problems have not been discussed adequately by the Muslim world. In order to raise awareness regarding the problems that we are currently confronting and will continue to face in the forthcoming years, this study draws attention to the ongoing debate and critical thinking in Western philosophy.

The study consists of three chapters and a conclusion: Chapter 1, Historical Process: From Ancient *Technê* to Modern Technology; Chapter 2, Modern Technology as a Philosophical Problem; Chapter 3, Enabling Values in the Age of Technology.

Many of the philosophical problems have their origins in ancient thought, so, ancient wisdom is referred to in almost all the philosophical investigations. Although technology is considered a current philosophical problem, both historical and problem-focused methodologies have been adopted in this study due to its philosophical nature. Particularly, in the chapter one, “productive knowledge” and the “field of value” are looked at in their historical context. The chapter two focuses on the emergence of the *technê-logos* and then technology, and the chapter three includes the main discussions on the relationship between modern technology and values based on the literature of “humanities philosophy of technology.” The dissertation addresses the following issues:

First, *technê*, in mythology, was praised for its divine character as well as its transmission to mankind was portrayed as an element of danger, so it was cautiously approached. With the formation of a specific framework of the mainstream philosophical thought, *technê* acquired an appropriate position within the hierarchy of that paradigm. Though the existing ontology naturally limits *technê*'s operation field, the ambiguous attitudes toward *technê* proceeded, and it was considered a type of knowledge and an activity that should be brought under control. The literature shows that *technê* gives information on how to do things and how to control the environment, but it does not give knowledge for why

something should be done nor can it define the final goals. Therefore, it should be subject to a higher field in that philosophical framework, to the moral and ultimately to the metaphysical. Its control was provided either by moral or religious motivations in accordance with the philosophical tendencies of the time. Especially in classical thought, it has been shown that religious motivations, which determine the moral values to a great extent, provided this control both in medieval and Islamic philosophies. So, until the modern era, both the production and use of tools of human beings and the field of values have been guided by the prevailing and existing reality of them and their relation has been established on this ground.

Second, with the change of traditional philosophical assumptions in modern philosophy, the existing frameworks have disappeared, which affected both *technê/ars* and the field of value. Therefore, it is no longer possible to establish the relationship between these fields in Western thought in the previous manner. In our study, the process that allows for the new situation is discussed concerning three related situations: (a) The scientific revolution reveals a mechanistic worldview that disenchant the universe from active powers and principles (disenchantment). (b) The prioritization of the way of thinking that seeks knowledge for the benefit rather than seeking it for its own sake, which was an important understanding in ancient and classical thought. (c) Socio-economic conditions provide opportunities for continuity of *technê-logos* style production.

In the new situation in which the cosmos is solved, the protections provided by the previous ontology and values are abolished, and technology has rapidly developed. The results of this process have been articulated philosophically. The impact of developing technology on values is discussed through the evaluations of philosophers of technology.

Third, one of the most remarkable features of the contemporary philosophy is that with the decrease of the power of meaning-value provided by metaphysics or religion, there are gaps in the concept of moral life. Today, one of the elements that tend to fill these gaps for the ideals of “good life” is the values motivated by technology. It is emphasized that technology is not a suitable candidate to fill these gaps, because it deals with the existence in a narrower framework and ignores many dimensions of life. Here, the point in ancient wisdom is highlighted and it is reminded that *technê* could not be a model for an ethical virtue, because it does not guarantee that it would be used to achieve *eudomonia* for human beings. While calling for the meaning and

value in the technological age, it should be considered that technology cannot give the ultimate goal and meaning of life.

Fourth, modern technology's mode of production has differed from previous technologies and both the temporal and spatial influences of technology have expanded. As the manipulative power and effects of technology increase, the need for appropriate ethical consideration of this new situation has revealed. This also has raised the problem of how this ethical attitude can be provided. It is emphasized that the development and use of technologies could be wiser and more compatible with the values of culture if a proper value system were enabled. In the light of the discussions on this kind of understanding, we have concluded that it would be appropriate to adopt an attitude that includes the following conceptions: (a) Modern technology is not value-neutral in terms of production, design, and the purpose of use. It also represents a worldview. As technology is value-laden, there is a room for developing it according to the values of culture or religion. (b) Taking a stance between technological determinism and social construction of technology means that we can intervene in the course of technology and prescribe directions for its development with our values. This position also ensures that we should not abandon the precaution against emerging technologies and continue to question them and contribute to their construction. (c) Unlike the notion of "progress" of enlightenment thinkers, twentieth-century technocrats, or today's futurists and transhumanists, we need to emphasize that perfection of technological products or their capacity for exceeding the limits, is not enough to characterize that the technological development is "good in itself" nor does it mean that all of the technological solutions contribute to the "good life." Within this context, we should underline the inadequacy of the perspective, which defends that all problems related to life can be solved by technological fixes. The ultimate aims of human beings and society should be considered and whether new technologies are compatible with them should be evaluated. Evaluations of these issues should not be made independently of the values. (d) It is necessary to prefer the ethical imperative to the technological imperative, which means that technological feasibility imposes its own possibilities without moral questioning. We must draw attention to the inadequacy of technological feasibility for technological decisions and need to ensure that *phronêsis* (practical wisdom) functions as questioning and controlling mechanism in every new situation that we encounter in emerging technologies. Referring to the point emphasized in ancient wisdom, in order to be considered virtuous, technology will have to be

complemented by *phronêsis*, not only in terms of its products but also to ensure the well-being of humanity.

Fifth, it is stated in our study that the approaches and different currents, which take place in the philosophy of technology (phenomenological approach to technology, critical theory of technology, pragmatic technology, virtue ethics of technology, etc.) can provide us with the opportunities to figure out the ethical issues in technology and help us developing and using technologies in a more ethical way. However, the convictions of these approaches regarding the source of the values and their suggestions for enabling moral values in technologies differ. Therefore, instead of presenting an eclectic proposal based on these approaches, it is highlighted that we need to present a perspective proper for us in order to gain an effective place in this discourse.

In light of the discussions in the concluding part of the dissertation, we have pointed out the issues we have to confront and need to deal with in-depth in the search for solutions and suggestions. These are as follows: First, though in contemporary philosophy the ground of morality and fundamentals of values that provide guidance in technology-related discussions have been eroded, the efforts of the philosophers show that the need for moral sense and values has not been lost, and this search continues. In today's philosophical thinking in which there is an endeavour to find a basis for values without referring to transcendental principles, which values (constructive and conventional values or values that we derive from tradition or values based on experience) will be taken as a basis? These issues reveal the problematic side of our reflection. In this context, we are faced with the question of how transcendental values can be brought up and how we can state the function of religious values within these debates. This pursuit leads us to generate a discussion of which values in our quest will be. Second, in our study, the role that technology can play in establishing a new ontology was highlighted. When challenging ideas like transhumanism, which proposes a new conception of human being conflicting with ours, it is necessary to provide a framework for not only our understanding of value but also of human being, to maintain a coherent position. Therefore, it is essential to initiate a discussion about the understanding of being, which forms the basis for our values and understanding of human being. Last, the way we interpret and adapt the values that we accept such as *i'tidāl* (moderation), *khilāfah* (vicegerency), *amānah* (trust), *maṣlahah* (interest), *ḥikmah* (wisdom), etc., in search of alternative technologies for our society or for the global debates of

emerging technologies is a problem that we have to confront as well. In this case, as believers accepting the guidance of religious thinking, we need to consider how we can dialogue with our values and technologies.

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