

A Good Society in our Contemporary World of Interconnected Technologies and Technological Systems

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Abstract---The extent to which cities are being redesigned in order to meet the robust technological advancements has led to such cities being referred to as 'smart cities' which makes use of complex big data used on a day to day basis. The use of technology has major impacts on our societies today and looking at it from different perspectives, it can be said that technology has a negative or positive impact on society. This knowledge contribution paper gears towards probing into the role technology plays in a society and sketching out criterion to evaluate the level of harmful or useful contribution of technology in our society. Presently, the role technology plays in a society is universally missing in most theoretical findings.

Keywords---Good Society, Technology, Good Life, Ethics, Change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our way of living, communicating, interacting, working and socializing revolves around a diversified term in the field of academics which is known as Technology. Technology as has proven to be both useful and harmful based on the socio-economic class for which it is being used. Technophiles and technophobes will give different views on the usefulness or harmfulness of technology and the role it plays in the society. Technologies pose uncertainties and risks to our society and we must critically evaluate these risks to ascertain whether technological advancements are shaping our societies in a positive or harmful manner. The impact of technology on our society has become a major concern to many scholars who have critically pondered over these two (2)

questions:

- *How to assess the inherent values in the use of technology?*
- *How are these values shaping our society?*

Scholars have compared the relationship between various technologies and psychological well-being of their users. Technological Philosophers can learn from a wide range of disciplines such as social philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology, social work, economics and political philosophy as they offer theoretical resources that creates more awareness and understanding of the social and political nature of technology, good life, and our society. Evaluations on the impact of technology on society could benefit certain political-ideological assumptions by using critical philosophical evaluation of technology. Such a critical view needs to be directed not just towards technology and the society but also to the thinking of ethical behavior and the technology itself. If, for example, it is assumed that a society is just the sum total of individuals within the same perimeter, then our view of technology will always differ. Individualist perceive will emphasize individual approval while communal versions might focus on participatory and collective responsibility. Ontologically, the primary responsibility for technology will be seen as an individual matter giving full responsibility to the designers and users of technology to develop and use technology in a

responsible way. From an individualist perspective, robotic technology is best useful to just the designers as that can contribute to the good life of those individuals. Communal-view considers a collection or the entire society such as the use of robots in health care systems as not just beneficial to just the designers of the technology but also to those who avail the service. Concerning the good life and technology, several questions can be asked to stakeholders in the society with a focus on their relationship with the designers of technology and their every day work and use of such technology. Various technologies impinge upon individuals and groups based on the quality of everyday life and this has raised the wider and no less important issue of the relationship between technology and the Good Society. Lots of people within the core fabric of the general populace are subscribing to the view that a Good Society is shaped by technological changes, evaluating the social and moral impacts of current and forthcoming technologies. Present technologies can provide informed insights into the manner in which technology can impact a society for good or bad.

Since our lives today revolve around technology in such a way that it has become an integral fabric of society and it helps to shape the quality of the society, it becomes important to find an answer to another question: *how can technology actually contribute to the quality of a society?* In order to determine an appropriate and correct answer to this question, a scaffold of three things needs to be considered:

- *Technology and its impact on society.*
- *Critical analysis on how design and use of technology promotes a good society.*
- *Designing and use of technology to better support the quality of a society*

2. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In today's hi-tech society, machines can basically perform most of the jobs that humans can do without compromising quality. Thinking of the high level of intelligence in machines, robots and other electronic devices, one would start thinking of a piece of writing which was printed in 'The Mind magazine'[1] by Alan Turing in the year 1950, which raised a controversial topic 'Can machines think?' The rate at which technology is growing raises skepticism regarding the preservation of sacred traditions and cultures. Alasdair MacIntyre [2] once wrote that philosophy is to engage in a conversation where no one can logically claim the last word spoken. John Dewey [3] also once observed (p.139): that anyone who begins to think would place some fraction of the world in jeopardy. Combining both ideas from these great philosophers, one can clearly state that philosophy is as a way of thinking in a beta-state aiming at the creation of new knowledge, or taking what has been done and reverting it to a work-in progress without offsetting the balance. In this regard, this paper aims to take up the question of how to promote social well-being in the contemporary world of interconnected technologies and technological systems in today's society.

3. TECHNOLOGY AND ITS IMPACTS ON SOCIETY

To be knowledgeable on how technology influences the goodness or badness of a society, it is essential to first understand the social impacts of technology. This is a very controversial on-going debate in every segment of our society, since various theoretical papers have been published on technology and the society which has led to different perceptions of social impacts. By technology, I refer to the various engineering products which are being designed and are in existence but are not limited to electronic devices, systems,

procedures and methods that are developed by engineers which are on a day to day basis used in the society for practical ends. *I would like to propose a picky point of view on this matter which sustains support in scientific proven researches that technology is being shaped by the needs of a society and it actively shapes the society by influencing our way of living, communicating, interacting, working and socializing.* This does not mean that technology is a deterministic fashion whereby its influence is predetermined by social and material contexts or frameworks which govern its use. Nevertheless, it is often possible to identify the role technology plays in the shaping of society. To understand the social impacts of technological products, it is necessary to avoid these views which are of technological neutrality and of technological determinism. The neutrality view believes that technological products themselves are neutral with respect to consequences. Determinism view is that technological products reliably cause certain social consequences, independently of social context or use. Determinism holds that the impacts of technology always depend not only on the technological product that is used but also on the use to which it is put. Technological products sometimes allow for only a few sensible uses and are only used in a few social contexts.

4. ORDINARY ETHICS OF TECHNOLOGY

Michel Puech is a French ethicist who holds firm to the idea of a suitable ethics in this hi-tech age. An ordinary ethics of technology are minor decisions which we undertake on a daily basis. Looking into his techno ethics as a philosophy of the ordinary, one can easily find a connection between Michaels to Jamieson's work on green ethics [4]. Jamieson does not want individuals to despair their habitual decisions as it might not make any

difference when it comes to resisting global warming. Puech views humility to be coldness to the system of vanity that commands consumption in our civilization, driven by flashy desires in order to stand out above the crowd with the latest of technological devices specifically in social media. Michel Puech [5] suggestively puts it (p. 185): *"humility is destined to modify attitudes in the techno sphere."* By this he means buying unnecessary things is a waste of resources and that these resources can be better utilized as it is possible to go to the mall and buy just exactly what one needs. As for Michel Puech and Jamieson, they consider humility as a virtue which aims at embracing equilibrium and balance in one's financial management. Generosity is a virtue that Jamieson's and Michel Puech's highly remind readers to adopt and practice to the point that it becomes the number one value for inter-human relationships. The Buddhist moral philosophy of life [6]: *"every virtuous action is a benevolent action aimed at reducing suffering."* was in order for people not just to think about themselves but of others too, as such an approach would not consist in asserting one's own presence above others but rather treating others as though they were akin to one's own self. With respect to this, one needs to be very cautious about online postings on social media so as not to offend other viewers and users. The internet is the most used research tool today but the mindset that the Internet is not solely as a reservoir but a contributive project needs to be developed, just like I am publishing this paper as a contribution to knowledge and research.

5. CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON HOW DESIGN AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY PROMOTES A SOCIETY

Discussing on technology and the Society, one must not forget about what approaches can best suit study on a Good Society in a hi-tech age considering the

social behaviours and ethical implications with regards to promotion of a Good Society. Cultural and political frameworks are being designed to assess the use of technology as a determinant factor and the extent to which technology affects the procedures needed in establishing a good society. Technology shapes and fosters values such as fairness, harmony, privacy, security, social inclusion, and empowerments which are core values needed to reconfigure or redefine socio-political practices. These values are needed for society to accept technological risk and to minimize the impacts of such risks by using measures such as social responsibility and policy-making processes. A society can be defined as a group of individuals mixed up in particular social event or a group sharing the same geographical territory and subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectation. I can now propose a definition of a good society as *a civilization that has like-minded qualities such as fairness, harmony, privacy, security, social inclusion, and empowerment within a specific geographical land mark*. It is mostly claimed that a good society is just, prosperous and has a well functioning democracy. Below are the satisfactory conditions for a good society:

- a. **Justice:** Socio-economic benefits should be enjoyed by all within the society. Partiality must be avoided during jobs search in a free and fair equality of opportunity to all.
- b. **Informational privacy:** people must have absolute control over what personal information they may give out to the public.
- c. **Autonomy:** people should be able to set out their own goals and values at free will, not by force or grudgingly.
- d. **Sustainability:** socio-economic arrangements should be made to protect the environment from pollution and erosion. Technology has being referred to as a set of

processes used in the invention of goods and the achievement of objectives under proper scientific investigation. The environment should be friendly for life to dwell on in a healthy and decent manner and no one needs to be disturbed about his or her very existence as we all have the right to life.

6. DESIGN AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER SUPPORT THE OVERALL QUALITY OF A SOCIETY

Society itself investigates the ways in which technology can help achieve its aims and objectives in order to make livelihood ideal for everyone. For this to succeed, certain foundational values such wellbeing, justice, freedom, democracy, and sustainability need to be given a high priority by stakeholders in the society. Technology will always be an essential need within the society as long as it supports the promotion of these central values. Technology and a good society can be compatible if it plays a positive role within the society and one such example is that of telecommunication networks and handheld devices which has made communication very easy in our society today. Firstly, the design and development of technology should ensure that it takes into account basic values of a good society. A second way of ensuring a positive role of technology in society is the use and usefulness of the technology. As earlier said, the impacts of technology is not as a result of technological products themselves, but their use and how well the rules and norms that govern their use are being implemented to keep strict watch so as to avoid the misuse of the technology which can create conflict.

7. CONCLUSION

I have scouted for ways to determine an appropriate role technology plays in a good

society and to identify a criterion to evaluate the positive or negative contributions it has made on the quality of a society. At this junction, let me raise an argument that technological products have greatly shaped our society and often have positive identifiable social impacts such as justice, freedom and sustainability. In promoting a good society, one must highly consider humans lives as a priority because we are the designers and users of technology, which itself has little or no control over us. Let me conclude at this juncture with a phrase that a good society with technology is only possible when we, the designers and users of technology are ready to take responsibility for it.

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