

Humanity, Religion and Willpower in the Future of Technology: A Critical Approach

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Abstract

Technological advancements have profoundly influenced individual and societal life, marking a transformative period akin to the agricultural and industrial revolutions. Today, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, the metaverse, and transhumanism challenge human cognitive and biological boundaries, potentially reshaping social structures and belief systems. Religion, which has historically been central to social life and human meaning-making, now faces new discussions regarding how digitalization will affect religious beliefs and practices. The primary aim of this study is to examine the impact of digitalization-driven technologies on the social aspects of religion and to systematically categorize the perspectives of religious individuals' perspectives on these developments. A review of the existing literature reveals that while numerous studies address the effects of technology on personal belief systems, social structures, and cultural practices, research specifically focusing on how religious communities respond to these technological advancements remains limited. Generally, two dominant perspectives emerge in the literature: the utopian approach, which views technological progress as a beneficial tool for positive transformation, and the dystopian approach, which perceives technology as a fundamental threat to human nature and ethical values. However, this study goes beyond this binary framework to explore a third perspective, which neither wholly rejects nor unconditionally accepts technology but instead advocates for its conscious regulation. This perspective is termed the "willpower" approach, as it seeks to direct technology in alignment with ethical and religious principles. This research seeks to answer the following key question: How do digitalization-driven technologies impact the social dimension of religion, and how can religious individuals' responses be categorized? To address this question, the study employs a descriptive analysis method, systematically evaluating data obtained through a comprehensive literature review. The findings suggest that religious individuals and groups potentially have three main approaches to technology: (1) The Accepting/Utopian Approach argues that technology can facilitate religious practices and help faith reach broader audiences in the digital realm. Online worship, virtual temples, and digital religious platforms are examples that reinforce this positive outlook on technology. (2) The Rejecting/Dystopian Approach contends that technological advancements serve capitalist interests, undermine human autonomy, and threaten personal authenticity. Those in this group argue that transhumanist projects manipulate human nature through artificial interventions, raising significant ethical concerns. (3) The Willpower Approach advocates for a middle ground, emphasizing the need for ethical and faith-based governance of technology rather than its outright rejection or unconditional acceptance. Religious communities, particularly, are sensitive to ensuring that technological developments do not compromise human dignity, privacy, or family values. In conclusion, the study finds that religious individuals' responses to technology are diverse, shaped by varying concerns and expectations. The growing power of global corporations and techno-authoritarian structures raises significant concerns among religious groups. However, rejecting technology entirely is not seen as a viable option. Instead, the study highlights the importance of maintaining a balance that preserves human dignity and ethical values while engaging with technological advancements. Future research could explore the deeper interactions between

technology and religion, the societal acceptance of AI-driven religious applications, and the evolving role of faith in the digital age.

Keywords

Sociology of Religion, Philosophy of Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Techno-Power, Faith, Willpower

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Teknolojinin Geleceğinde İnsanlık, Din ve İrade: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım

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Öz

Teknolojik gelişmeler, tarım ve sanayi devrimleri gibi insanlığın tarih boyunca yaşadığı büyük dönüşümlerdendir ve hem bireysel hem toplumsal yaşamı derinden etkileyebilmektedir. Günümüzde yapay zekâ, metaverse ve transhümanizm gibi yenilikçi teknolojiler; insanın bilişsel ve biyolojik sınırlarını aşma iddiasında olup toplumsal yapıları ve inanç sistemlerini dönüştürme potansiyeline sahiptir. Özellikle din, tarih boyunca sosyal yaşamın merkezinde yer almış ve bireyin anlam arayışına yön vermiştir. Ancak hızla gelişen dijitalleşme süreçleri, dinî inanışların ve pratiklerin nasıl değişeceğine dair yeni tartışmaları beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, dijitalleşme temelli teknolojilerin dinin toplumsallığı üzerindeki etkilerini incelemek ve dindar bireylerin bu süreçte yönelik yaklaşımlarını sistematik bir şekilde sınıflandırmaktır. Mevcut literatürde, teknolojinin bireyin anlam dünyası, sosyal yapıları ve inanç sistemleri üzerindeki etkisini ele alan birçok çalışma bulunmasına rağmen dindar bireylerin yeni teknolojilere karşı geliştirdiği tutumların derinlemesine incelendiği araştırmalarda eksiklik bulunmaktadır. Literatürde genellikle iki ana yaklaşım ön plana çıkmaktadır: Teknolojik gelişmeleri olumlu bir değişim aracı olarak gören ütopyacı yaklaşım ve teknolojiyi insan doğasına ve etik değerlere yönelik bir tehdit olarak değerlendiren distopyacı yaklaşım. Ancak bu çalışmada, bu iki zıt kutbun dışında bir üçüncü yaklaşımın varlığı tartışılmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, teknolojiyi ne tamamen reddeden ne de sorgusuz kabul eden, aksine onu bilinçli bir şekilde yönlendirmeyi amaçlayan “iradeci” bakış açısıdır. Araştırma şu temel soruya odaklanmaktadır: Dijitalleşme temelli teknolojiler, dinin toplumsallığını nasıl etkilemektedir ve dindar bireylerin bu süreçte yönelik yaklaşımları nasıl kategorize edilebilir? Bu soruya yanıt bulabilmek için çalışma, betimsel analiz yöntemi ile yürütülmüş, literatür taraması yoluyla elde edilen veriler sistematik olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma bulguları, dindar birey ve grupların teknoloji karşısında üç temel yaklaşım geliştirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. (1) Kabullenici/Ütopyacı yaklaşım, teknolojinin dinî pratikleri kolaylaştırabileceğini ve inancın dijital dünyada daha geniş kitlelere ulaşmasını sağlayabileceğini savunmaktadır. Özellikle çevrimiçi ibadetler, sanal mabetler ve dijital platformlar, bu grubun teknolojiye dair olumlu bakış açısını destekleyen gelişmeler arasında yer almaktadır. (2) Reddedici/Distopyacı yaklaşım, teknolojik ilerlemelerin kapitalist çıkarlar doğrultusunda insan iradesini ve özgürlüğünü tehdit ettiğini, bireyin otantikliğini zedelediğini öne sürmektedir. Bu gruptaki bireyler, transhümanist projelerin insanın doğasını yapay müdahalelerle değiştirdiğini ve bu durumun etik açıdan büyük riskler taşıdığını savunmaktadır. (3) İradeci yaklaşım ise teknolojinin tamamen reddedilmesi veya sorgusuz kabul edilmesi yerine, etik ve inanç merkezli bir denetim süreciyle kontrol altına alınması gerektiğini ileri sürmektedir. Özellikle Müslüman düşünce geleneğine yaslanıldığında teknolojik gelişmelerin insan onuru, mahremiyet ve aile gibi temel değerlere zarar vermeyecek şekilde yönlendirilmesi gerektiğine dair bir hassasiyet olduğu görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, dindar bireylerin teknolojiye yaklaşımlarının homojen olmadığı, aksine çeşitli kaygı ve beklentiler doğrultusunda şekillendiği belirlenmiştir. Özellikle küresel şirketlerin ve tekno-iktidarın hegemonik gücü, dinî topluluklar açısından endişe kaynağı olmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, teknolojinin tamamen reddedilmesi de gerçekçi bir seçenek olarak görülmemektedir. Çalışmanın temel çıkarımı, insan onurunu ve etik değerleri koruyacak bir dengenin sağlanması gerektiğidir. Gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalar, teknoloji ve din arasındaki etkileşimin daha derinlemesine incelenmesi, yapay zekâ

tabanlı dinî uygulamaların toplumsal kabulü ve dijital çağda inanç sistemlerinin nasıl yeniden şekilleneceği gibi konulara odaklanabilir.

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Introduction

Humans have become “homo faber” due to the functional use of the opposable thumb. Through the development of tools that serve as extensions of the body, they have gained the capacity to abstract themselves from their simple state in nature and construct a subjective cosmos or world, thus ontologically distinguishing themselves from other living beings. We can understand the reflection of this complexity in the “zoon politikon”, in other words, a naturally political being, and the construction of cities. In the Neolithic Age, collective settlement reached a significant stage in Çatalhöyük, located in central Anatolia. This development advanced even further with the construction of metropolitan cities such as New York, Istanbul, Dubai, etc. Human beings owe this civilised humanity to their ability to objectify their mental abilities - in modern language - to develop techniques. We call the informatic accumulation of technique, technology. In this text, the place of religion in the world of the future will be discussed based on the basic question “Where does technology, about which something new is talked about every day, take human sociality?”. In addition, it is intended to classify people's approaches to new technologies such as artificial intelligence and metaverse.

The phenomenon of religion, which is coexistent with humanity, still exists despite all the advances and explanations of science, since it is related to the cosmos, which cannot be known through sensory means and cannot be comprehended with the infinity of space. In this way, the resistance of religion leads to new secularisation paradigms.¹ As a matter of fact, despite modern predictions that confine religion to the private sphere of the individual, a large number of people who have not lost their interest in the transcendent perform collective actions. In this form, religion seems to continue to exist in the digital society. But can human beings lose their interest and sensitivity/feeling towards death, love and eternity? In recent years, technology-based discussions such as transhumanism, artificial intelligence, metaverse have brought a different dimension to the quality of human beings to establish civilisation, bringing along a new set of facts, impressions and doubts. Technique, which was functional in separating nature from its simple state and creating culture, has today brought it to the stage of abstracting even from the culture it has created. Rapidly increasing and closed-circuit technological developments have attracted the attention of many social scientists and prompted them to think more deeply about the process. The techno age literature, which has increased quantitatively both at home and abroad in recent years, is mostly similar to each other, but they are intellectual documents of the importance attributed to the subject.

The study is based on a theoretical discussion of the issues of value defence and technology-based social change, which is based on the discipline of sociology of religion. It should also be stated that the possibilities of social philosophy are utilised, as a third way is described that evaluates the issue of will from the perspective of religious sociality. The information obtained through literature review technique was categorised by descriptive analysis. This qualitative analysis follows a structured approach, beginning with the development of a conceptual

¹ Karel Dobbelaere, “Sekülerleşme Kavramı: Bütüncül Bir Perspektife Doğru / Towards an Integrated Perspective of the Processes Related to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization,” trans. Cemal Özel, *Journal of Islamic Research* 29 (3) (January 1, 2018), 667–682.

framework. Data are systematically processed, classified, summarized, and interpreted within a thematic structure. Cause-effect relationships are identified, and comparative analyzes are conducted when necessary.² The study emphasizes the internal consistency of categorized social perspectives on religion in the context of technological futures. Beyond utopian and dystopian approaches, a third perspective is introduced through a critical evaluation of technological developments based on Topçu's theory of will. Additionally, Heidegger's critique of technique, Foucault's concept of biopower, and Baudrillard's theory of simulation are employed to examine how technological advancements, power structures, and hyperreal representations shape contemporary techno-political and cultural dynamics. The study critically assesses societal responses to technology-driven transformations within the frameworks of sociology and philosophy, adopting a confrontational perspective to analyze their broader implications.

1. Technological Construction of Society

It is possible to call the technology-orientated transformation experienced with the following of the industrial revolution as the “post-industrial age”³ with reference to Touraine. Since the speed of mass dissemination of information attracts attention in the social change experienced, the concept of “information age”⁴ is also commonly used. In reference to the pluralisation of truth claims, the notions of “postmodern age and post-truth age”⁵ are also used. When the process is considered in the focus of the nature of the tool affecting human existence, it will be necessary to discuss the digitalisation underlying new technologies. The dominant role of digitalisation in storing information, processing it through the will to power and transforming society necessitates the conceptualisation of the “Digital Age”. This is because new technologies are based on digitalisation. Computer technology has been achieved by operating the logic of transcribing, storing and transmitting information into digital data through chips, which are an improved version of transistors. The course that culminated in the creation of a social networks by the Internet is today crowned with artificial intelligence technologies. The society affected by this process is the “digital society” where traditional structures have changed dramatically. With the sharpening of the management capabilities of artificial intelligence, society will perhaps evolve into an “artificial intelligence society” in the future.

It is known that the culture produced by society gains a certain dynamism and acquires a tradition and a distinct structuring that transcends generations. It is stated that with the internalisation of new technologies by society, a new cultural transmission will arise, and thus the speed of cultural diffusion will increase in proportion to the technology used.⁶ However, what is in question here is the culture specific to “modern times”, which has gained certain constants and whose weight is felt on socialisation. However, in the digital age, we witness a

² Ali Yıldırım - Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2008), 224.

³ Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society; Tomorrow's Social History: Classes, Conflicts and Culture in the Programmed Society* (New York: Random House, 1971).

⁴ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2003); Gopal Krishna Sharma, “The Post-Truth Era: An Analysis With Reference To Contemporary Politics,” *Dehradun Law Review* 11/1 (2019), 1–6.

⁶ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy - The Making of Typographic Man* (USA: University of Toronto Press / Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1968).

dramatic shift that does not allow for the internalisation of society and the rapid erosion of tradition. Each of the above-mentioned concepts, each of which refers to a period, is dragging the world into a position that requires urgent measures to be taken when we think problem-oriented.⁷ On the other hand, the process needs to be well analysed in order to take advantage of the opportunities that will arise in this rupture on behalf of the society and to manage them rationally.

About half a century has passed since the publication of Baudrillard's book "Simulacrum and Simulation".⁸ The "hyperreality" mentioned by the philosopher is clearly felt in all social areas today. Our representations that exist in the cyber universe, where copies do not need the original, have started to be used with such intensity and prevalence that they constitute an alternative to the physical world. In this respect, virtual geographies intertwined with transformations that challenge our perception of time-space have started to emerge. Apart from the physical and concrete geography we live in, today we are also in an abstract geography that corresponds to Foucault's concept of "heterotopia"; we make our economic, social and cultural needs exist here. The borders, which are said to have disappeared, are in fact only evaporating and reappearing in a condensed and fluid form in another form.⁹ The people of the age contribute massively to this transformation by consuming the technological devices offered to them. In this way, an alternative to nature-human interaction emerges in the form of "technology-human". Although the emergence of virtuality by information technologies has been realised with the human mind, today it seems that a different social plane will emerge with the guidance of artificial intelligence. Simulated spaces far from natural reality are an open intervention to sociality in the traditional sense. Considering the ability of AI to manipulate the human mind with a focus on consumption, It can be argued that uncertainty about the future of society has increased. Digital systems, which have not yet reached sufficient prevalence, can be considered to be beyond collective human control due to their inherent potential for self-sustaining and autonomous functionality. Yeşilmen claims that as a result of these transformations, which he bases on "closed consistency", "the technological hinterland will result in the triumph of secularism".¹⁰

Modernity, which was also a philosophical movement, brought with it a new epistemological paradigm. Many of the philosophers of the Enlightenment were opposed to religion, which they saw as the source of traditional knowledge. As a result of secularisation, one of the process components of modernity, humanity would be equipped with scientific knowledge far removed from religious knowledge.¹¹ The origins of artificial intelligence and the metaverse based on scientific evolution can be sought here. Transhumanism can also be seen as a modern expression of ancient and intercultural aspirations to radically transform human existence, both socially

⁷ Faruk Karaarslan, "Ahlak ve Din Anlayışı Bağlamında Emile Durkheim'ı Yeniden Düşünmek," *Bilimname* 52 (October 31, 2024), 174.

⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (University of Michigan Press, 1994).

⁹ Semra Ağaç Sucu - Uğur Gündüz, "Kitlelerin Yeni Göç Mekânları Olarak Sosyal Medya ve Sanal Göç İlişkisi," *Uluslararası Kültürel ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 5/2 (December 27, 2019), 470.

¹⁰ Halit Yeşilmen, *Teknolojik Hinterland ve Din - Sekülerizmin Dijital Zaferi* (Çizgi Kitabevi, 2022).

¹¹ Volkan Ertit, "Evrenselleştirilmiş Klasik Sekülerleşme Teorisi," *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 11, (27), 103-120., (October 22, 2014), 110.

and physically.¹² On the other hand, despite being exposed to postmodern loneliness, people's need for socialisation has never diminished, and some experiences of transcendence have emerged from this sociability. Moreover, life practices such as religion are being reconstructed in the technological universe. Pragmatic, progressive, capital-oriented people, who approach this need with marketing intelligence, want to turn the situation into an opportunity and a new world vision/view emerges. Cybernetic environments render our emotional aspects artificial and open to manipulation.

2. Is Technology Continuity or Rupture in Terms of the Sociality of Religion?

There is data indicating that the traditional way of communication between people has changed radically. Reading the data in a sociological sense, a new cultural language based on technology is emerging. Social changes throughout history can be read through language changes. There have been differences in the nature of language and the way it is communicated over time. The digital effects of the media language associated with the meaning of “medium” also affect social interaction. Digital media seems to have turned into an arena where different thoughts and lifestyles are voiced. Even religion, with its substructure based on language, cannot be considered independent of such social changes. In this case, it will be necessary to talk about differentiations in the understanding of religion/forms of religiosity that progress within the framework of the media's own rules. On the other hand, throughout history, religion, as an indispensable phenomenon, has always been able to build a sand (discourse) pool where it can live. Religion, which mostly expresses itself by leaning on tradition, has also spread to media such as books, magazines, radio and television, and as society changes, it has been able to fortify its field by establishing the constants that society needs and provide continuity in new forms. Therefore, it can be expected that religion will find a place in internet-based systems, albeit in different forms.

Digital churches, temples, and congregations are now a reality thanks to the adaptability of religion, which can take on new forms in new environments. Online prayer and worship is a prime example of this transformation. Digital dhikr devices(dhikrmatics), religious chats, electronic pens that read scripture, prayer rugs with sound and compass, digitally shared prayers and congratulations, creatively designed obituaries and condolence notices, and youtuber preachers are all indicators of religious digitalization and new religious language. The term “digital religion” is also used for this internet-mediated phenomenon. This is a sociologically defined religious phenomenon, not religion with essentialist claims about the sacred in a theological sense. In such a framework, Campbell defines this phenomenon as “a new religion created through digital media and culture” as a way of living and practicing.¹³ This phenomenon can exist within a social network with its own law in religious terms.

¹² Talip Demir, “Kutsal Olan Her Şey Buharlaşıyor mu? Z Kuşağının Değer Yöneliminde Transhümanist İzler,” *Marifetname* 9/1 (June 30, 2022), 121.

¹³ Heidi Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Routledge, 2013), 3.

In Janmohamed's words, the world connected by the Internet is becoming a “dârü'l Internet”, where the distinction between time and space disappears.¹⁴ Religious discourses will undoubtedly “add their own colour” to these unfamiliar, even incomprehensible spaces. The change in religious socialisation is clearly visible in the digital society. Moreover, when new technologies are integrated with religious practices, it is clear that those who design this technological infrastructure can significantly influence religious beliefs. When we consider religion as a process theology, it becomes clear that new technologies create a unique cultural environment that analog devices simply do not offer. On the other hand, the “society of the spectacle”¹⁵ Debord speaks about is at odds with the calm, soul-nourishing logic of religion. The emphasis on the eyes, seeing, and being seen marks a significant departure from traditional religious practices. Ancient religious cultures, based on the fundamental principle that “the eyes cannot see the truth”, may find their willpower significantly diminished as they adapt to these new rules.

The atmosphere of unpredictability and skepticism about the sociality of religion in the context of digital society has led to the emergence of two approaches to the subject, one accepting and one rejecting. These two approaches, which also manifest themselves in works of art, give rise to opposing views. For some, cyberspace is a paradise that we fit into our earthly life. There are those who claim that replicas that have gained consciousness transfer will evolve into posthumans (posthuman species), thus opening the door to eternal life in “earthly paradise”. Others see new technologies as the end of human freedom, as a giant prison — the panopticon. They believe we may be the last thinking generations. From a religious perspective, warnings about the hereafter and the afterlife are intended to regulate our behavior in this world.¹⁶ The weakening of the awareness of death and the hereafter through technology endangers the social existence of human beings. For without creating ideals, society will neither be able to create itself, nor will it be able to repeat this creation when necessary.¹⁷

Whether we call it utopia or dystopia, the claims that we are at the dawn of a new age cannot be ignored. Even if they have the same intention, the person who counts stones, says the rosary or uses a dhikrmatic will not be the same person. As a matter of fact, the consciousness that will build digital temples and worship there will not be the religious consciousness of today. Even if very few of the predicted changes materialize, we can think that living religions will be caught in a vortex and will have to make concessions from tradition.¹⁸

Even when technology is seen as an abstract concept, it becomes a social agenda. Everyone, young and old, feels its impact on their lives. Technological tools are followed from production to consumption, and pages and pages of reviews are written about new products, dozens of videos are shot. New technologies, unknown in traditional life, are now visible in almost every

¹⁴ Shelina Janmohamed, *M Nesli: Yeni Müslüman Gençlik*, trans. Seda Darcan Çiftçi - Esin Kızılcıma (İstanbul: Kaktüs yayınları, 2018), 107.

¹⁵ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ron Adams (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unredacted Word, 2021).

¹⁶ Abdulvahid Sezen, “Bireyin Ölümsüzlük Arayışı Bağlamında Transhümanizmi Düşünmek,” *Transhümanizm & Posthümanizm, Disiplinler Arası Bir Yaklaşım* (Ankara: Eski Yeni Yayınları, 2021), 134.

¹⁷ Emile Durkheim, *Dini Hayatın İlk Biçimleri* (İstanbul: Eski Yeni Yayınları, 2011), 568.

¹⁸ Hasan Sarı, “Manevi Arayışta Teknolojik Yönelim,” *İslam ve Medya* (January 20, 2022).

neighbourhood. It is possible to divide people's view of technologies with digital infrastructure into two on a functional basis. In addition, a third approach can be added to this classification, which can be derived from the tradition of Muslim thought. For those who belong to a religion such as Islam, which sees the willpower as the basis of responsibility, can be expected to develop actions in this area.

2.1. The Accepting View: The Possibility of Religion as Technology Evolves into Transhumanance

The novel and cinema are two arts that effectively reflect possible future events. Authors, screenwriters and directors have blended their sociological insights with real-world experiences to create works visions that are either optimistic or pessimistic of the future. Here are some well-known novels relevant to our topic: *Brave New World* (Huxley), *Utopia* (More), 1984 (Orwell), *Neuromancia* (Gibson), and *Dune* (Herbert). As for movies, *The Matrix* (Wachowski), *Ready Player One* (Spielberg), *The Island* (Bay), *Terminator* (Cameron), etc. These texts provide us with valuable clues about the new lifestyles that society can adopt with technology. Utopian works depict human life and the environment as ideal worlds characterised by luxury, comfort, harmony and practical convenience. Those that depict monstrosity and dehumanisation through chaos, mechanisation and technological singularity are dystopian.¹⁹

It is noteworthy that artworks expressing optimism have received relatively comparatively less attention. This can be considered one of the factors contributing to concerns regarding the role of technology in social life. However, the fluidity and dynamism of technology excite certain groups who seek to transcend the present and explore new possibilities for the future. For instance, the transhuman is perceived as more advanced than the ordinary human due to their utilization of genetic engineering, psychopharmacology, anti-aging therapies, neural interfaces, advanced information-management systems, memory-enhancing drugs, wearable computers, and cognitive techniques.²⁰ Lewandowski, a former Google engineer, has also suggested that artificial intelligence could take on a divine dimension, potentially enhancing societal well-being.²¹

The term “utopia” means “non-existent place”, as it originates from the negation of the Greek word *topos*, meaning “place”. It represents an imagined ideal society, reflecting both dissatisfaction with the present and a desire to surpass it. Technology, driven by human imagination and reason, continually pushes boundaries, reshaping how we perceive time and space. In parallel to the physical world, a new, multidimensional reality is being constructed for those seeking alternative experiences. When comparing these two realms, it is important to recognize that the physical world has certain limitations compared to the cyberspace. One of these is that reality cannot always match the boundless nature of human imagination. Sensory elements such as visuals, scents, tastes, pleasure, and sound cannot always be experienced exactly as desired, in the right place, time, or form. The human pursuit of art, which sets us apart from nature, likely stems from this very need. Before the technological advancements of the 21st

¹⁹ Ahmet Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya Transhümanizm* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2020), 170.

²⁰ Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya Transhümanizm*, 26.

²¹ Mark Harris, “God Is a Bot, and Anthony Levandowski Is His Messenger,” *Wired* (September 27, 2017).

century, people sought emotional and sensory fulfillment in various ways. However, the cyberspace, with its vast possibilities and customizable structure, now offers new ways to achieve these experiences, particularly in terms of sound and imagery.

Virtuality offers another significant advantage: ecological sustainability. In the modern world, human activity has increasingly disrupted natural ecosystems, often likened to a virus consuming its host. Experiencing natural beauty requires great effort in our modern urban lives. Humans leave behind huge wastes and cause irreversible problems with the industrial revolution in pursuit of their desires. In contrast, the appeal of virtuality is amplified by the ability to enhance images with elements not present in reality. The content created in cyberspace is sterile and environmentally protective. When this digital world surpasses the physical world, people develop psychological reactions such as escaping from the social environment. Humans seek to fill the gaps in their nature with technology. The conveniences that AI brings/will bring to our lives will alleviate many of the tasks we have to do today and perhaps make us forget them for the next generations. Digital technologies in vocational education environments eliminate the inherent risks and difficulties encountered in experimentation. Just as virtual rooms are designed for users, every data containing experimental processes can be designed. This allows for the efficient and cost-free repetition of difficult or dangerous training processes.²²

Elon Musk's neurotechnology company, Neuralink, has successfully implanted a brain chip in a paralyzed patient, enabling him to play chess using only the power of thought. Arbaugh, 29, paralyzed from the shoulder down in a diving accident, played chess on his laptop and moved the cursor using the Neuralink device. Neuralink is presented as a system that aims to treat conditions such as paralysis and blindness and improve the quality of life of people with disabilities thanks to microchips.²³ Ear implant surgeries are already being performed for the hearing impaired, and congenital deafness has been reduced to a manageable health problem, especially in the last three decades.

Technology offers clear solutions to make life easier for religious practitioners facing obstacles. For instance, new technologies will allow individuals to learn sacred texts in their original languages in individualized environments. Likewise, the experience of holy places can be simulated for religious people who want to perform pilgrimage, regardless of their religion. The digitization of sacrifice is already a reality. Individuals can slaughter the sacrifice they watch on the screen or have never seen by proxy through digital channels. Zakat and charity can also be performed in the same way. Some religious communities organize their daily, weekly, or monthly meetings on digital media. To boost motivation, religious texts are read in the same way to address in-groups and out-groups simultaneously. Even the sermons of artificial intelligence robots have started to be utilized. An example of this happened in Nuremberg, Germany. The German Evangelical Church Congress organized an event that attracted great interest. The church service was presented on screen by four different avatars. Under the slogan

²² Hamit Kamer - Adnan Algül, "Dijitalleşmenin Dini Hükümlere Etkisi: Metaverse Örneği," *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 30 (June 15, 2023), 41.

²³ Mariko Oi, "Neuralink: Musk's Firm Says First Brain-Chip Patient Plays Online Chess," *Bbc.Com* (Accessed January 20, 2025).

“Now is the time”, the event's main theme was reported to be “moving forward, overcoming the fear of death, and keeping faith alive”.²⁴

Thanks to the phenomenon of digital religion, the image of Jesus today has a Facebook page where he can explain himself, the Cosmic Buddha can tweet, Muslims can easily locate the Qibla with many Android applications, and a Catholic cardinal can remotely attend church council meeting with the Pope using the Zoom app.²⁵ In 1992, godweb.org, a website founded by Presbyterians, became the first technological temple with its digital infrastructure.²⁶ Again, there are religious groups that view and support transhumanism from the perspective of improving the human condition. The Mormons, who say their mission combines science, technology, and religion, founded their first transhumanist society in 2006, according to the website “transfigurism.org”.²⁷ The Catholic Church is also known to have a positive attitude toward digitalization. In a high-investment collaboration with Microsoft, the Church brought St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican online using artificial intelligence technology.²⁸ It has also been observed that the online activities of priests affiliated with the Church have been negotiated with various aspects in terms of religious authority.²⁹

There are those in the Islamic world who have a positive attitude toward the digital world for the sake of the faithful. As a matter of fact, the religious authorities in Türkiye are making plans to continue their mission and are putting it into action with a clearly observable desire. For this purpose, the number of online communities, which have acquired the character of “online religion”³⁰, is increasing every day. These groups consider technology, which reinforces their existence, as a sine qua non of their religious life. In addition to religious organizations with different views and opinions and of different sizes, the online activities of the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı can be evaluated for the purposes of guidance and notification in this context.

While the relationship of the religious to technology is encouraged, there is optimism that religious discourse can somehow be spread through the use of technology. In this approach, technology and religion can create a new atmosphere of spirituality. The most notable argument in this regard is the transformation of sacred texts into stones, tablets, then scrolls, then books in subsequent centuries, and now digital interfaces. If religious practices are popular in social media environments, this can certainly be seen as a positive development for religion. According to accepting approach to technology, it is very important, even obligatory, to be there to prevent the degeneration of generations on the Internet. Institutions and organizations representing

²⁴ Birrell, “Hundreds Attend German Church Service Led by Avatars - Premier Christian News | Headlines, Breaking News, Comment & Analysis,” *Premierchristian.News* (Accessed January 20, 2025).

²⁵ Mustafa Alıcı, “Metafizik Kutsallıktan Sanal Gerçekliğe: Dijital Din,” *AKRA Kültür Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 10/27 (May 16, 2022), 258.

²⁶ Godweb, “About GodWeb,” *GodWeb* (2024).

²⁷ Mormon Transhumanist Association, “Humanity Transfigured” (2024).

²⁸ vaticannews.va, “AI Offers Pilgrims and Visitors Enhanced Experience of St. Peter's Basilica,” *Vatican News* (2024).

²⁹ Heidi Campbell, *Digital Creatives and The Rethinking of Religious Authority* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2020).

³⁰ Christopher Helland, “Online Religion as Lived Religion. Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet,” *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*. 1/1 (2005).

religion should not leave this channel unattended in order to protect their followers.³¹ Techniques or technology are not bad in themselves. The way they are used and their purpose will also determine their religious implications.

2.2. The Rejectionist View: “The Last Thinking Generations and Savage Machines”

Claims about the transhuman evolution of human beings through technology bring a completely different form of existence onto our discussion agenda. Even if technological machines connected to AI datasets could create and manage companies on their own, they currently lack human consciousness, will, awareness and related characteristics such as fear, love and empathy.³² A digital singularity without human willpower and consciousness inevitably turns the religious into “concerned conservatives” and leads to dystopian interpretations.

Western societies, which began the information revolution after the modern era, now build their lives largely around technology. It is believed that social institutions, from art to health care, from architecture to security, cannot function without technology. Moreover, the use of technology is perceived as a level of development, and societies that cannot reach it are considered “backward”. For those with a dystopian approach to technology, on the other hand, this is a sign of poisoning. As is well known, dystopia is the social expression of individual fears and anxieties about the future. Already in antiquity, Plato, while evaluating a myth about the invention of writing as a technique, presented technology in general as a poison/medicine: “A pharmacon, the measure of which is antidote, the excess of which is poison.”³³ In the bioconservative view, technology is an effective tool, but also a deadly weapon in the wrong hands or used uncontrollably.³⁴ It may be useful to recall that Pokemon, one of the most popular cartoons with children in the 90s, was taken off the air after a four-year-old boy jumped from the 7th floor saying “I am Pikachu”.³⁵ It is possible that technology that can be effective in the world of children can also cause problems for adults by breaking the link between the real and the virtual through addictions such as gambling and gaming.

While the technologies promoted by transhumanists appear to be aimed at improving health and well-being, a closer look reveals serious ambiguities. This mystery, this ambiguity behind the fog, inevitably leads to speculation: Will technological devices condemn human beings to themselves with their characteristics, capable of mortgaging human willpower? Will a system that has formed its own legal personality function independently of human beings? How will power relations be determined in the future of technology? These questions lead to the production of prophecies about the power of machines. This is because scientific developments in human biology seem to have moved beyond the goal of “knowing” human beings to the goal

³¹ Mustafa Yiğitoğlu, “Religious Virtual Living and Metaverse on the Real World,” *Afro Eurasian Studies* 10/1 (April 20, 2022), 11.

³² Yıldray Sipahi, “Algoritmik Perspektiflerin Kesişim Noktalarında Din ve Hukuk: Dijital Dönüşümde İradenin Değişen Yüzü,” (August 26, 2023), 1021.

³³ Şevki Işıklı - Mert Küçükvardar, *Bilişim Devrimi, Teknolojinin Felsefi ve Sosyolojik Analizi* (İstanbul: Kedidedi Yayıncılık, 2024), 190.

³⁴ Enfal Erkan, “Transhumanist Elements in ‘Understand,’” *Current Perspectives in Social Sciences* 28/2 (June 22, 2024), 205.

³⁵ Webtekno, “Pokemon’u Yayından Kaldırtan Çocuğun Günümüzdeki Halil,” *Webtekno* (April 18, 2018).

of controlling them.³⁶ Bio-power, which Foucault describes as a form of disciplinary power by approaching the human body as a machine, can also be considered in this context. The aim of this form of power, called the anatomy-politics of the body, is to discipline the human body, develop its abilities, make it more efficient and docile, and integrate it with economic control systems.³⁷ Another related concept is “singularity”. The technological singularity refers to a period when artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies will surpass human intelligence, leading to irreversible and unpredictable changes.³⁸ The ability of artificially intelligent machines to act and make decisions on their own by combining their capabilities is the nightmare of dystopians. In this case, the point of contention is what kind of evils such a technology with such potentials will cause with the changes it makes in the field of human life. So much so that the manipulation of the human mind by artificial intelligence has given rise to rhetorics such as “we are the last thinking generations” and “wild machines will destroy us”. Undoubtedly, such debates are considered “popular debates” due to the influence of Hollywood films on the social imagination, but the horrors of the Second World War, which are still fresh in people's minds, increase pessimism about the future.

Consumption is now the triangulation point of societies dominated by the sophisticated techniques of capital. The consumption cycle dominated by AI may undesirably increase the control of certain circles over the population. People no longer seek peace in the physical world, which has lost its appeal. Instead, they turn to the “dârû'l Internet” (cyberspace), a digital realm that has transformed into a vast marketplace, captivating users with its immersive visuals. Search engines can offer users thousands of options with the help of “big data”. The mind is overstimulated and even numbed by the informatic bombardment. Content based on emotion rather than reason can be brought to the fore. In this way, it can be argued that new technologies use a kind of distraction tactic, diverting people from their intended goals or rendering the subject purposeless. Is the society run by algorithms deliberately being turned into a society that cannot be itself and is therefore likely to have identity problems? And while humans are making the virtual world mentally and physically acceptable, are robots and avatars becoming human? It is likely that in cyberspace it will not be possible to understand who are avatars of real personalities and who are robot avatars. If we accept that our wills have been distorted, the result will be a non-value based society where authentic identity is lacking.

It is clear that the use of technological powers by egocentric individuals who have lost their values is another situation that critics of transhumanism fear and its proponents must avoid.³⁹ The digital transformation promised to those who take a utopian approach to technology has the potential to radically change the constants of religion. Furthermore, the actions of multinational corporations regarding the future are likely to evolve into a rigid imperialism as digitalisation accelerates. Investments in the metaverse, AI and transhuman exceed even the national product of many developing countries, and media networks and the economic sphere

³⁶ Mustafa Tekin, “Transhümanizm ve Posthümanizm Bağlamında Din ve Toplum,” *Transhümanizm & Posthümanizm, Disiplinler Arası Bir Çalışma* (Ankara: Eski Yeni Yayınları, 2021), 154.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, *Özne ve İktidar*, trans. Işık Ergüden - Osman Akinhay (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2021), 16.

³⁸ Necmi Karslı, *Yapay Zekâ ve Din* (Ankara: İlahiyat Yayınları, 2024), 73.

³⁹ Erkan, “Transhumanist Elements in ‘Understand,’” 207.

are increasingly coming under the control of global capital. The crisis caused by the imperialism of digitalisation is particularly focused on the economy, and the use of cryptocurrencies can be added as a specific example. Cryptocurrencies, despite not being controlled by a centralised state system, will enable the rich to control cyber circulation.⁴⁰ This will further distance us from the ideal of “fair distribution”. The result will be a growing perception of deprivation in peripheral countries, unmanageable economic crises, continental migrations and social and environmental crises, all of which will lower living standards.

New technologies presents information to people in the desired way and speed through “big data”. It uses the historical accumulation of human beings, but there is a fear that this accumulation will now be touched by a non-human initiative, which would be an extraordinary articulation to existence. We may have come to the end of the accumulation of civilisation. Technology, which rapidly delivers information and facilitates transportation and information services, is now loudly proclaiming that our material and spiritual assets are rapidly disappearing, consumed and commodified. We must consider the role of religious communities and religious entrepreneurs in producing commodity universes, as “every supply creates its own demand”. Baudrillard's theory is clear: the media, long since having ceased to be a signifier and having become its own signifier, is the dynamo of all these transformations. The media preacher who claims to explain religion actually shows himself and his belonging as the main concern. The possible religious identities in the meta-universe -even if they claim authenticity- will probably take on a different structure from the original.⁴¹ In this case, a religious identity detached from its nature and context will not survive.

The media logic and the attractiveness of opposites quickly expose religious sinners. Claims of unlimited sexuality find a wide area of acceptance. Mobile applications such as OnlyFans, Tinder and Azar, which have negative connotations for the religious, are perceived as a serious attack on the institution of family, which is the centre of religion. The widespread use of technology, which is claimed to cause moral decay, has also left the religious with a moral challenge. Indeed, a murder case in Istanbul in October 2024 contains evidence to justify suspicions. The evidence against the murderer included Satanic symbols and rituals, as well as the manner of the murders themselves.⁴² Tragically, the murderer and the victims were children of Muslim families with varying levels of religiosity. It is clear that the killer has acquired deviant beliefs through digital technologies. The Discord application, which has been linked to other violent incidents among young people, was banned in Türkiye after some of the images that appeared in the national press. These incidents undoubtedly reinforce the discourse among religious families that “a youth is lost in the dark depths of digital media”. Similar incidents are said to occur frequently abroad. It is clear that some religious people who are sensitive about their own religion will feel the need to take precautions against this trend. Take the Amish in Pennsylvania, for example. They emerged as a group focused on identity sensitivity and live

⁴⁰ Nihat Oyman, “Dijital Gelişmeler Kapsamında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yaşam ve Din: Kripto Para Örneği,” *ATEBE* 7 (June 30, 2022), 75.

⁴¹ Sarı, “Manevi Arayışta Teknolojik Yönelim.”

⁴² Selin Hacıaliağlu, “Turkish Criminal Law Faces Scrutiny as a Man Brutally Kills Two Women - Türkiye Today,” *News, Türkiye Today* (July 10, 2024).

without technology. Another example is the struggle of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community leader in Israel with mobile phones.⁴³ In the Muslim world, there are also religious people and religious groups who abstain from technological recording.

We are witnessing the struggle of the alienated subject with an environment that does not exist in reality.⁴⁴ If refined technologies without side effects cannot be produced, it can be thought that this process will lead us to a technological singularity that will cause the highest level of poisoning. Many people now agree that alternatives should be developed as soon as possible. The debate is moving beyond the question of technology's role in life and exploring alternatives. It is also possible to consider whether technology is no longer the only solution to sustain our lives and whether a freer religious life is possible with “technological detox”. The coming years will see a rise in discussions about religious conservatism and its role in combating the negative effects of the virtual environment.

2.3. A Perspective on Techno-Power from the Tradition of Muslim Thought: Willpower Approach

According to Islamic belief, the human body, which has been “created in the best form”, is regarded as a divine trust from Allah. It is viewed as a means of trial, as death (ajal) is an inevitable reality. Until that moment arrives, the body is expected to be nurtured with spiritual and moral virtues, as it serves as a vessel for the soul. In the afterlife, bodily resurrection will occur, and the soul will once again be embodied. The promised reward of paradise and the punishment of hell, resulting from rebellion against Allah, will be experienced physically. Based on this doctrinal understanding, it can be concluded that Islam envisions an inseparable unity between the soul and the body. Consequently, a purely transhumanist approach is unlikely to find a place within Islamic thought.

On the other hand, transhumanism can also be analyzed as a digi-modern phenomenon that contributes to the re-enchantment of the emerging digital world.⁴⁵ Ontologically, the concepts of virtuality and digital existence resemble an enigma. While physical activity is absent in the metaverse, mental faculties remain active, allowing for the transcendence of imagination at the level of consciousness. A connection can be drawn between the “alam al-mithal” (the Imaginal Realm), acknowledged by thinkers such as Suhrawardi, Ibn al-‘Arabi, and Mulla Sadra, and the metaverse.⁴⁶ This realm is considered a bridge between the world of intellect and the material world. Following this line of thought, virtual reality, albeit in a different dimension, could be considered a form of reality. Similarly, Al-Ghazali's concept of “perceptual existence” bears resemblance to this notion. Perceptual existence, as described by Al-Ghazali, appears as a representation in the consciousness of the perceiver but lacks independent existence in the external world. For example, the circular motion of a stick with fire at its tip creates the illusion

⁴³ Hananel Rosenberg - Tsurriel Rashi, “Pashkevlim in Campaigns against New Media,” *Digital Judaism: Jewish Negotiations with Digital Media and Culture*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2015), 161.

⁴⁴ Işıklı - Küçükvardar, *Bilişim Devrimi, Teknolojinin Felsefi ve Sosyolojik Analizi*, 23,251.

⁴⁵ Ekber Şah Ahmedi, “Dijitalizm Bağlamında Transhümanizm ve Din: Sosyolojik Bir İnceleme,” *Kocatepe İslami İlimler Dergisi* 7/2 (2024), 402.

⁴⁶ Elif Yıldız, “İslam Felsefesi Perspektifinden Metaverse ve Misâl Âlemi Karşılaştırması,” *Tetik* 3 (2023), 126.

of an unbroken line; however, this is merely an optical illusion. Thus, a similarity can be established between perceptual existence and augmented reality utilized in the metaverse.⁴⁷

The intervention of new technologies on perception raises the following fundamental questions: Will humanity become enslaved by the very technologies it has created? Or will it exercise agency and volition to usher in a new phase of human existence? More succinctly, will it advance an ethical civilization, or will it destroy it?

Heidegger's perspective, which asserts that man is not the owner of being but rather the "shepherd of being"⁴⁸, appearing on the stage of existence within his predetermined fate, finds an equivalent in Islamic thought, where human beings are considered khalifah (stewards) on Earth. However, the will to power backed by technology is altering this religiously grounded perception of humanity. In this framework, control and governance are no longer vested in humans but rather in technology itself. Consequently, attempts to manage technology may paradoxically serve only to strengthen it.⁴⁹ This gives rise to a contradiction between modern technology and human autonomy. Humans are no longer living in an authentic reality or their own natural world; instead, they are compelled to exist in an artificial, fabricated universe, often unknowingly. Heidegger, who strikingly distinguishes between technique and the essence of technique, states: "The human being, emerging from the essence of technology, can no longer hear the voice of being."⁵⁰

Digital-based new technologies contain elements that will preoccupy humans and disrupt their fundamental duty of servitude to Allah. Some scholars argue that when technology becomes autonomous, human autonomy ceases to exist.⁵¹ If artificial intelligence algorithms become the sole source from which people derive religious knowledge, the authority of traditional religious institutions may be significantly impacted. Should technological singularity evolve to the point where it assumes the role of a deity, this would undoubtedly be identified as kufr (disbelief) within Islamic thought. Thus, an alternative perspective that upholds human autonomy against machine domination can be considered a necessary new approach. This is because it is ultimately up to the strength and patience of Allah's servant to perform physical acts of worship, such as ablution, prayer and fasting, and mental acts, such as being honest and just.

Free will, which Islam regards as the hallmark of human accountability before Allah, must be examined in this context. According to Nurettin Topçu, religion is "an event of will, transcending both intellect and emotion. It is an action that binds human will to divine will. Although intellect and emotions contribute to this process, the primary axis is will itself."⁵²

⁴⁷ Mustafa Yıldız, "Metaverse ve Metafizik," *Türkiye İlahiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7/4 (December 31, 2023), 658.

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Teknik ve Dönüş & Özdeşlik ve Ayrım*, trans. Necati Aça (Ankara: Pharmakon Yayınevi, 2015), 58.

⁴⁹ Aysun Gür, "Heidegger'de Varolanlar ile Dünyanın İlişkisi Üzerine," *Kaygı. Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Felsefe Dergisi* 28 (April 30, 2017), 136.

⁵⁰ Didem Delice, "Heidegger'in Tekniğin Kökenine İlişkin Soruşturması," *FLSF Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 23 (May 1, 2017), 324.

⁵¹ Tuba Nur Dönmez, "Teknoloji ve Dinî Değerler İlişkisi: Değer Merkezli Bir Değerlendirme" (I. Türkiye Lisansüstü Çalışmaları Kongresi, İstanbul: İlmi Etüdlar Derneği, 2013), 86.

⁵² Nurettin Topçu, *İradenin Davası/Devlet ve Demokrasi* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2018), 69.

Topçu's "case for will" challenges the materialist-positivist foundations of technological thought, urging humanity to discover an alternative dimension of volitional reality. Furthermore, he calls for rebellion against forces that seek to alienate humans from their true essence. Willpower is an inherently human trait, originating in the body but extending to higher levels of existence, such as nationhood and religion. These two entities, which cannot be viewed independently of each other, can only engage in a struggle for survival against technology through the exercise of will. Within this framework, Topçu refers to "ethics of rebellion" and states: "The deepest goal of human will is to immerse itself in a moral world and establish an ethical order."⁵³ He does not refer to any arbitrary act of will but rather to a moral will that pertains to the core essence of humanity. Today, in the face of power-driven technology that allegedly has the potential to alter the very essence of humanity, there is a pressing need for an ethics of rebellion. It is also a call to preach, which is also seen as a form of worship. In this regard, Mehmet Akif's statement, "We have to make the realisation of the century the singing of Islam." can only be realized through a willpower approach.

The consolidation of worldly power within a technological elite through techno-authoritarianism raises concerns about the potential emergence of a new form of servitude that undermines human dignity. The commodification of religious needs by profit-driven capitalist entities may lead to a new world order that prioritizes material gain over spiritual fulfillment. The Islamic ideal of social justice, which has been upheld for centuries, could be reduced to mere nostalgia or an unattainable utopian aspiration. If the increasing wealth disparity is exacerbated by technopoly, the consequences may disproportionately affect Muslim populations already struggling with economic hardship. The cybernetic environments where human interaction is minimal risk artificializing emotions and making individuals susceptible to manipulation. However, most Muslim societies have not yet developed a comprehensive ethical framework to address the moral implications of Western-driven capitalist technological advancements. Additionally, the number of scholars producing intellectual discourse on these matters within the Islamic world remains quite limited.

If transhumanist predictions partially materialize through technological advancements, ensuring that these developments align with human dignity and ethical values will be crucial from an Islamic philosophical perspective. Naturally, there is an emerging expectation that new technological lifestyles should be presented to Muslims in ways that do not conflict with Islamic values. Furthermore, new jurisprudential rulings regarding these developments must be established, particularly within Islamic fiqh.

While Islam promises a world without death and suffering in the afterlife, transhumanist technologies suggest that such an ideal can be realized within this world. As technological singularity relies solely on data-based analysis of existing cultures, it may disregard theistic religions, including Islam, and develop its own belief system. In this regard, transhumanist ideals conflict with Islamic idealism. The technology that claims to be able to do this, and create a simulation that can replace God, can only be overcome by the willpower of people of true faith controlling new technologies. In the 2020 pandemic, we can evaluate the scepticism and

⁵³ Topçu, *İrâdenin Davası/Devlet ve Demokrasi*, 156.

objections rising from religious circles against mRNA vaccines, the safety of which has not yet been proven. Whether emerging developments can be regulated and whether fundamental institutions such as family and education can be shielded from technological threats remain critical concerns today. If new technologies are to be utilized positively, it is essential to determine how they should be employed.

Unregulated, limitless, and unpredictable interactions in digital spaces raise the necessity for religious authority to oversee and interpret religious manifestations in the digital realm.⁵⁴ In response to both acceptance-based and rejectionist approaches, a third path—one rooted in faith-driven volitional ethics—can serve as an alternative solution for harmonizing technological progress with Islamic values.

Conclusion

The rapid advances in digital technologies, shaped by recent developments in science, have created new problem areas, especially for philosophical and social paradigms. New technological tools not only expand human capabilities but also create new uncertainties. The transition to the metaverse, augmented reality, and the emergence of general artificial intelligence, driven largely by capitalism, a product of modernity, are evidence of a profound transformation in human experience. Just as modern rationality gave rise to capitalism, capitalist utilitarianism now results in a form of technologism that threatens to redefine the very meaning of being human. Moreover, individuals born in the digital age find themselves in a world marked by deep socio-economic inequalities and an increasing dependence on cybernetic systems devoid of ethical consciousness.

Responses to these technological changes vary significantly across segments of society. Some argue that AI and digital transformation are inevitable and that societies must adapt or risk being left behind. Others are skeptical of these developments and fear their impact on social and religious structures. Rather than rejecting technology altogether, religious movements are increasingly seeking to use digital platforms to maintain their influence and reach wider audiences. For example, the metaverse offers new spaces where religious discourse can evolve and maintain its relevance. Conversely, concerns persist that AI-driven transformations, particularly within the framework of transhumanist and posthumanist ideologies, could undermine religious beliefs and alter traditional understandings of faith.

From a religious perspective, a complete rejection of technological advances is neither practical nor sensible. But this does not mean that humanity should surrender to a structured digital world. Instead, a critical and controlled approach is required; one that supports human agency and ensures that technology remains a tool rather than a force dictating human existence. In Islamic thought, the emphasis on collective will and ethical considerations offers a potential framework for managing technological advances without compromising religious principles and in this study, inspired by Topçu, it is called the “willpower approach”.

⁵⁴ Muhammed Yamaç, “Metaverse’te Dinî Ve Toplumsal Tezahürler,” *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 23/1 (March 31, 2023), 51–53.

Given the sweeping societal transformations brought about by new technologies, neither blind acceptance nor outright rejection is a sustainable response. Social science, particularly research on digital sociality, offers important insights into the evolving nature of human interaction in a technology-driven world. Policymakers and legal experts must engage with ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to mitigate the risks associated with digital technologies. While preserving religious and cultural authenticity is a respectable choice in a rapidly changing world, it is also necessary to envision a balanced approach where technology serves humanity rather than subjugates it.

In this context, it becomes imperative to set ethical limits against the dominance of digital technologies – especially against the interests of global information corporations. Religious traditions that have emphasized moral values and social harmony for centuries can provide a basis for such an approach. The principles of divine justice and moral responsibility embedded in religious heritage can serve as a starting point for a philosophy of technology that prioritizes human dignity and ethical integrity. Indeed, in Muslim societies facing the moral dilemmas of digital consumption driven by the logic of the capitalist market, the necessity of a Quranic philosophy of technology is becoming increasingly evident. In this vein, faith and willpower can serve as guiding principles in resisting the hegemony of techno-power. These moral faculties can even ensure that digital transformation is compatible with ethical values rather than undermining them. The Muslim intellectual tradition, based on a value-centered worldview, can evolve in response to digitalization while maintaining its ethical stance. Renewal is not just an option, but a necessity in meeting the challenges posed by technological advances. For example, value-based digital practices can be developed to align with societal and ethical demands, and educational institutions can integrate AI responsibly while preserving foundational religious and moral teachings.

In conclusion, if technology cannot be completely controlled, it must at least be managed to prevent its negative consequences. Protecting the religious consciousness of future generations in the digital age requires proactive measures that strike a balance between innovation and ethical responsibility. Only with such a thoughtful and critical approach can humanity navigate the intersection of technology, religion and social identity in the 21st century.

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