Gerd Leonhard (2020). Technology vs Humanity: The Coming Clash Between Man and Machine[1]

Abdullah Zübeyr AKMAN

Asst. Prof. Dr., Necmettin Erbakan University, Ereğli Kemal Akman Vocational School of Higher Education, Department of Finance, Banking and Insurance, Konya, Türkiye, azakman@erbakan.edu.tr

*Corresponding Author: Abdullah Zübeyr Akman, azakman@erbakan.edu.tr

Technological developments have emerged because of significant historical advancements, with a philosophical dimension of thought consistently present in the background. The rapid and exponential progression of these developments poses challenges in keeping track of them. In this context, Gerd Leonhard's "Technology vs Humanity: The coming clash between man and machine" addresses the issue of the relationship between humanity and technology. The book is divided into 12 chapters, with the first addressing the future, the second discussing humanity's position in relation to technological development, the third discussing the age of mega-transformations, and the fourth addressing the automation society. The subsequent chapters explore the unmanned internet (chapter five), digitalization as a fascinating and maddening development (chapter six), digital obesity (chapter seven), a proactive approach to precaution (chapter eight), the removal of coincidences from happiness (chapter nine), and digital ethics (chapter ten). The final chapter, twelve, concludes the book by addressing the concept of decision-making time.

The author states that the primary purpose of writing the book is to contribute to the advancement of human welfare and to reconsider how scientific and technological developments can once again be directed toward this progress. Lastly, the author emphasizes the importance of controlling technological advancements to determine how they can be beneficial. In this context, the author assumes that technological developments will provide absolute benefits nor adopt a dystopian perspective that leads to pessimism.

In the first chapter, the author provides a preamble on the future, in which they establish their primary argument. The first point made here is the assertion that "the change of humanity in the next 20 years will be greater than in the last 300 years". This is since technological changes move exponentially, in accordance with Moore's Law, which states that changes will be twice as much as the previous

---

[1] Teknolojiye Karşı İnsanlık: İnsan ile Makinenin Yaklaşan Çatışması. Çev. Cihan Akkartal, Siyah Kitap Yayınları: İstanbul.

situation. Within this paradigm, information technologies (IT) are evolving at a rate that is twice that of their development costs.

In the second chapter, titled Humanity Against Technology, the author considers the development of humanity. Fundamentally, humanity exists within a society structured upon ethics, social norms, and beliefs; however, information technology (IT) does not recognize these constructs. IT rejects human beliefs and fundamental values, adopting a nihilistic perspective toward all values. In this regard, William Gibson states that "technologies are morally neutral until we apply them." Lastly, what we offer to technological platforms that are used free of charge is, in fact, our personal data and thoughts. This situation reveals that IT advancements are not as innocent as they may seem.

The third section highlights the conflict between man and machine. It is assumed that these conflicts will be called mega-transformations and that digitalization will come to the fore. These mega-transformations are digitalization, mobilization, screenization, disintermediation, transformation, intelligentization, automation, virtualization, sensing and robotization. The author states that mega-transformations are "*complex challenges that require immediate response*" and that some individuals and companies will benefit from them.

The fourth chapter of this study sets out to discuss the automation of societies. The chapter begins by exploring the relationship between technological advancement and the automation of processes and production. It goes on to analyze how this has increased efficiency while simultaneously reducing employment. However, the chapter also explores how this has created numerous new job opportunities. It examines how the emergence of the knowledge economy has profoundly influenced many processes. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of a study conducted in 2013 that projected that nearly half of all jobs would be subject to automation within the next 20 years.

In the fifth chapter of the book, a prediction is made regarding the future of the unmanned internet. The chapter introduces the concepts of the Internet of Things, the Internet of Everything, and the Industrial Internet. It is posited that, in the absence of human interaction, machine-to-machine interaction, particularly between machines, is set to become a process that is largely independent of and often disregards human involvement. Furthermore, the Internet of Things has the potential to generate significant cost savings and efficiencies.

The sixth chapter discusses technological advancements through a metaphor, describing them as enchanting, maddening, and toxic. It references Arthur C. Clarke's 1961 quote about sufficiently advanced technology being indistinguishable from magic. The text then explains how in the 90s, tech felt like magic to people, touching areas from smart agriculture to smart cities. It mentions that the cost of these technologies and mobile services is decreasing, making them accessible even to younger ages. Additionally, tech has bridged long distances, impacting people in various ways.

The seventh chapter of the book refers to digital obesity and provides some information about the latest pandemic. With the advancement of the latest technologies, information is growing at an extraordinary pace, leading to an excessive information overload for individuals. Just as obesity is harmful to physical health, digital obesity similarly poses a threat to human well-being. The author compares digital obesity to a "data tsunami" and defines this phenomenon as both a mental and technological condition.

In the eighth chapter, the necessity of proactivity in conjunction with caution is discussed. While a cautious approach toward technological advancements remains critical, an equally vital stance lies in being proactive in responding to innovations and effectively implementing them. Here, "caution" specifically pertains to mitigating potential harm to human health. In other words, any technological advancement must be accompanied by precautionary measures to address such risks. Conversely, one

must also avoid excessive proactivity. Striking a deliberate equilibrium between these two concepts is imperative.

The ninth chapter is entitled 'Removing coincidences from happiness'. At the beginning of this chapter, the author stated that the main purpose of technological progress is to ensure the happiness of people at the highest level. In other words, he mentioned that technological developments should be used for the benefit of humanity. In this context, the author emphasized that technological developments should be used for the welfare of humanity.

In the tenth part of the work, the concept of digital ethics is mentioned, which is one of the important issues of the present day. The text goes on to discuss the ethical violations that arise with digitalization and how to deal with these violations. It is mentioned that technological developments have no ethics, but that humanity is in dire need of ethics. The text highlights the questions of what will happen if technologies such as autonomous vehicles are involved in an accident or make a choice that results in an ethical violation.

The eleventh chapter of the study discusses an era based on the year 2030. It particularly addresses the addiction brought by digitalization and the state of being constantly online. In a world where virtual robots take center stage, the dangers of detachment from reality and transitioning to another level are emphasized. Within this context, it is predicted that privacy will disappear, giving rise to an anonymous way of living. Notably, advancements in the healthcare sector are expected to reduce the biological age of individuals in their 90s to that of those in their 60s. However, the fundamental question remains: To what extent is this transformation truly beneficial for humanity.

In conclusion, the concepts of digitalization and digital transformation can be evaluated through a dual-dimensional lens. The first dimension encompasses the positive facets of digitalization, while the second dimension involves its adverse implications. The question of which dimension will dominate in the future lies in the hands of individuals and corporations. As Douglas Rushkoff aptly observes, the choice of whether to align with the "human team" or the opposing side constitutes a defining juncture-one that will indelibly shape the trajectory of the coming century.