Lecture: 38

Course Title: Science, Technology and Society

The gap between rich and poor nations and between rich and poor citizens of a nation is already disturbingly wide. The dividing line between information rich and information poor is affecting education and employment opportunities, medical services and other areas of life. Besides, the growing uncertainty about exactly in what direction this particular technology will be employed poses threat to certain basic social norms as the dividing line between public and the private becomes blurred and almost non –existent.

Mindful of the dangers of this idea of inevitability, we need to be alert to the implications of the convergence of two powerful forces, the market and mechanization, leading to the dominance of the culture of reduction and commodification. In this world of convergence, everything can be commodified, measured and calculated and can be put in the competitive market for sale, detached from its roots and purpose. Could it be that the forces of commodification and detachment are already shifting the role of the university from scholarship and learning environment, to a courseware production factory and ultimately to a ''clearinghouse of best practices''.

From the complicated nature of new technology we can now focus on the ethical aspect of technology and the claim that the traditional ethics is inadequate in this regard. Turning now to "new ethics" claims, the leading anthologies on computer ethics; and editors Deborah Johnson and Helen Nissenbaum (1995; see also Johnson, 1994) introduce it this way: "Some have argued that the ethical issues surrounding computers are unique in the sense that computers . . . make traditional ethical concepts and theories inappropriate" .[1]

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[1] . Deborah G. Johnson, *Computers, Ethics and Social Values*, University of Virginia Helen Nissenbaum, Princeton University .,p.2.

 What follows is a continuation of some such concerns related to some new technologies of our time like Information and Communication Technology, Bio and Genetic transformations in terms of new technologies, technological impact on war, weapon,

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We have already discussed about new problematic nature of some new technologies like computers their impact on value dimensions.

This fundamental openness to progress applies also to technology of ultrafast communication. One should, however, also consider the inherent threats of the new technology. One finds, for example, possibly of new forms of intimidation and criminal behavior such as identity theft and voyeurism. The efficient control and manipulation of individuals and groups can become easier. Considering the single person in front of the new possibilities, one discovers new forms of addiction and, in consequence, new forms of exploitation of persons.

Similar change in other areas of life world, technolisation of communication, environment to war and peace and our usual ways of experiencing birth and death , are now undergoing tremendous change due to these worlds being intervened by new and emergent technologies . With human genome project at our door step when we can be the proud creators of designer babies and the rest, what it is to talk about a moral dimension of life ? Is traditional ethics a viable means to address such complicated issues ? As humans unravel the biochemical foundations of their nature and as they come to a clearer understanding of both their own origins and the very origins of the universe itself, it has become possible to ask whether ethics is really a subject apart from science and, if it is, to query whether it is capable of resolving the moral dilemmas that arise as people consider the products of modern science and the uses to

which they might be put.This is the background of this lecture : need for new ethics at the face of new technology.

military, etc., our possible environmental and ethical concerns for peace ,human welfare and positive aspect of technology for promoting good life and other related concerns.

The new phase of globalization with M -commerce, with mobile phone and the changing mode of communication, interpreting it as a change or a deviation from the earlier mode of communications that once characterized the interpersonal conversations between real persons, either face to face conversation or voice to voice using that old telephonic mode of conversation. From Hegel to Heidegger and to Habermas, or Gadamer, philosophers remained explorers of a dimension of truth that could be a fusion of horizons, the way the isolated, disembodied cogito is fused in that melting pot with its equally significant but embodied and context dependent 'others'.

In this transition from I to we, it still retained something of the modernist's dream. That was not the death of the subject, nor the death of meaning, it was a transformation of the subjectivity to intersubjectivity, a fusion of horizons and of languages, cultures, of regions, nations inter-nations, in that melting pot called the humanized world.

Myerson finds one postmodern paradox in the mobile phone: that the act of communication becomes solitary, individual, that the person communicating is, according to the advertisement blurbs, involved in a one person communications center. While sending textons you don't have to know whether the person you are communicating with is available.

Otherwise the telephone communication is quite ordinary: you are talking to somebody. Only when the mobile phone gets new capabilities, such as sending textons, faxes (already completely out) or connection to the internet (WAP is a flop but the Nokia Communicator works!) can we speak of individuals communicating separately, and communication centers. It gives a dramatically new feeling of privacy. This private device is often used at places where a large number of people may listen to the discussion. The mobile telephone allows for almost complete mobility with simultaneous availability. i.e. ,the person is in actual reality highly mobile and virtually fixed.

This allows for the simultaneous existence in the same person both modern, dynamic being-on-the-move person and a very traditional, fixed, non-dynamic open communication which used to be completely incompatible. When this is combined with constant connectedness to the internet (until now, mainly e-mail, and slow internet) one can really talk of being in the center of a web, operating a communications center wherever one is. In the mobile scenario communication is good when the intelligent response delivers the desired outcome as swiftly as possible. Here communication means making a connection, entering into a network.[2]

If m-communication overcomes this communicative rationality, it will be the end of the 'life world', of my world, your world, and our world, endowed with my and our meanings. It may lead us to that global village which is trans national where to communicate will mean the same thing as to exchange money. If the m-is the future of this m commerce then the activities of money exchange and of communication will simply merge, we will simply be consumers of this global market for whom conversation will be indistinguishable from credit card transaction. Myerson finds one (only one!) postmodern paradox in the mobile phone: that the act of communication becomes solitary, individual, that the person communicating is, according to the advertisement blurbs, involved in a one person communications center. While sending textons you don't have to know whether the person you are communicating with is available.

Such cases are pointers to the need for new ethics to meet the requirements of new technology.

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[2] George Myerson, *Heidegger, Habermas and the mobile phone*, 2001