Adham Rishmawi Data-303 Book Report

4/10/2023 Technology and Virtue

**Intro to author**

Shannon Vallor is a professor at Santa Clara University in addition to being the Baillie Gifford Chair in the Ethics of Data and Artificial Intelligence at a different university. She is an insightful and intellectual individual who has invested a large amount of their career examining the intersection of technology and ethics. Her work as the chair of ethics at the University of Edinburgh highlights a lot of her ethical examination of technology. She evaluates how artificial intelligence and technology as a whole influence our life and how much we can accurately blame technology. The structures and designs of these technological advancement must have aspects that promote human flourishing and most importantly, have virtues intertwined in them. Many of her publications tackle these issues including her book *Technology and Virtue* which acts as the center of her whole work. With all of this in mind, we can examine this particular book and see how she would like to see emerging technologies and what necessary transformation she needs from them.

**Summary**

The book is divided into two main sections; one section takes the more philosophical end of the book where the virtues are made known to the author. The other half is more of the critique end which aims at evaluating these new technological trends. Vallor begins by elaborating on the importance of virtues outside the context of technology to show the reader the importance of it. The author continually throughout the first half of the book demonstrates all different types of virtues and how we should be beacons of these very concepts. Later throughout the book she begins to dwell on our technological creations and shows how they lack the very same virtues that we humans lack too. She scrutinizes the present landscape of technology as she states that it has no intention of being ethical or virtuous but rather just an advancement. These unthoughtful advancements cause a shake in our societal structures and influence our daily lives for the worse. For example, with the wider availability of health care and necessary care technologies, life durations have extended beyond what was the norm a century ago and put an enormous toll on the healthcare system. These advancements lack virtues and so do humans and that is exactly what Shannon Vallor is trying to get at. All Artificial intelligence and technological advancements reflect our creation and not anything else. We as humans must understand the potential effects of automation and AI that enables non-virtuous processes and must take authority in changing that. However, a large portion of why this is the case is because of the inequality of responsibility for managing technology (since most of the new technological advancements are under the control of the privileged who have ready access to the newest technologies). Now after acknowledging that most technologies are often driven by profit motives, we can begin to look at real-life examples! Social media platforms are a prime example of technology without virtue. These unchecked technological advancements lack a reflection of creators who want virtuous outcomes from their products. They are platforms of hate speech, racism, and have been used as vehicles for unintended purposes. This defies the very outlook that Shannon Vallor desires to see from technology. She wants to see intentionality and a reflection of developers who harbor the same virtues as their products do. The kind of future we desire should define our current technological decisions since these decisions will influence generations beyond our present. The significance of technology reaches far beyond being merely an instrument. It possesses the transformative power to determine our collective destiny and steer us toward a progressive future full of opportunities or full of doom.

**My Input as a Reader:**

Most of Vallor’s arguments are crucial in concept and I am most definitely on board with most of what she works on. However, one major flaw in the book is the lack of a practical trajectory of how to achieve all of this. Although there is not one correct method of creating a virtuous technological advancement, Vallor barely dwells on how to formulate an approach to making such advancements. Most of her book focuses on elaborating on the wrong ways advancements in technology have been made and mentioning very few examples of good advancements. There are many complex ethical frameworks that I can think of that I could not reasonably reason within her logical framework. She also speaks in the theoretical abundantly which bothered me as a reader. When examining the framework of the book in comparison to our class material, it becomes clear to me that a lot of it relates to many of our beginning lessons from this semester. The concept that our creations must adhere to a Christian ethical framework is something echoed abundantly in Shannon’s book. A class session that I think about most relevant to this book is when we examined the misleading/false graphs. I was assigned to look at a graph of the poll results from one state during the Hilary V Trump 2016 elections and noticed an abundance of issues. It showed me intentional neglections from the creator of this graph which echoes the vital message from Shannon that all technological creations are mirrors of their creators or founders. This highlights how vital it is to prioritize demonstrating care and empathy when designing and executing new technologies. Overall, I saw many correlations between our class and the book and the issues that cannot be ignored in our increasingly digitalized world.

**Conclusion**

This book provides and offers a thought-provoking outlook on technological advancements that must be acknowledged by those developers and whoever funds such ambitious technological creations. All of the ethical ramifications are examined thoroughly in the book and would suggest this to anyone to read the book if they are interested in philosophical aspects of technology. This subject matter is particularly applicable to the curriculum in Data-303 as it elaborates the demand for responsible technological development mindful of its potential effects on society (which was something we dwelled on early in the course). Though practical recommendations for implementing these comprehensive resolutions to ethical dilemmas resulting from technology are not provided thoroughly in this text, it is an indispensable resource for those interested.

Annotated Bibliography

* Vallor, S. (2018). *Technology and the virtues: A philosophical guide to a future worth wanting*. Oxford University Press.
* Pruim, R. (n.d.). 2&nbsp; ethics for Data Science. Notes for Data 303 - 2&nbsp; Ethics for Data Science. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://calvin-ds303-notes.netlify.app/ethics/ethical-issues.html#ethical-issues-in-data-science>
* Shannon Vallor. (n.d.). Retrieved April 11, 2023, from https://www.shannonvallor.net/