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Hu-man Challenges Facing Technological Acceleration

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# Javanese Philosophy of *Empan Papan* in Responding to Human Challenges Facing Technological Acceleration

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## Abstract

The acceleration of technology today is very fast, and its utilisation is very complex. The presence of technology is seen as one of the human efforts to solve life's problems, although technology is not fully capable of completely solving life's problems. New technology, when introduced and applied in a certain society, may create new problems if it is not in accordance with the natural conditions and the quality of humans inhabiting the area. New problems often arise from suboptimal utilisation of technology, which is not matched by the quality of human resources in managing and utilising technology. Reflecting on the Javanese philosophy of *Empan Papan*, humans today need to adjust themselves to improve their quality to adapt to the acceleration of technology in the modern era. This study provides a philosophical interpretation of the importance of adjustments in the application of contemporary technology in Indonesia. The application of technology adjusted to the quality and standards of a society inhabiting a certain area can be beneficial. Improving human quality and standards in applying technology in a particular region is also a factor in supporting regional progress. Essentially, people's quality, when equivalent to the quantity of technology, can work harmoniously if there is compatibility in its application.

## Keywords

acceleration technology, *empan papan*, human and technology, Javanese philosophy

## 1 Introduction

The acceleration of technology in the current era has continually piqued human interest. Technology is integral to human efforts to solve existing problems, making it an essential part of human life. Humans use technology as a tool and method for formulating and solving faced problems. Technology is interpreted as knowledge and the ability to create and do things that are valuable and beneficial (Nanang, p. 276, 2014). A future challenge lies in the utilisation of technology. The advances brought about by technology cannot necessarily be directly applied in a particular area. Humans need to reflect on and study advanced technology to effectively utilise it in their region. There is a disparity between the rapid advancement of technology and the development of the quality of human resources in their wise use. Humans may create and discover technology in one area, but it is not necessarily the case that the technology created can be optimally applied in other areas.

Problems that arise in the utilisation and acceleration of technology also bring other benefits, such as stimulating humans to improve their ability to utilise technology. The acceleration of technology is partly due to the development of human culture and civilisation. This demand manifests as a human learning process regarding technology, illustrating that humans view technology as crucial in their lives due to its usefulness. Simply put, technology can influence human behaviour (Adib, p. 254, 2011). Under certain conditions, technology merges as a result of human action in an effort to solve problems that humans cannot resolve independently. This highlights human limitations in carrying out certain activities and underscores the role of technology in facilitating these activities. Technology plays a role in enhancing and expanding human potential to meet their practical needs (Brooks, p.35, 1981). Therefore, harmony between humans and the proper use of technology in community life is essential. To achieve this usefulness and harmony, humans should continually adjust to technological developments.

Harmony in Javanese culture is a way of coexisting that is nurtured through words, behaviour, and social actions within society. A key Javanese principle for fostering harmony is *empan papan*. This phrase conveys the idea of acting and speaking appropriately according to the situation and context. Its application is

frequently observed in the daily life of Javanese people, serving as an ethical guideline for adapt ability in both action and speech (Santoso, p. 196, 2019). Thus, *empan papan* aptly reflects and responds to the rapid technological advancements in today's era of technological acceleration. Offers a framework for responding to the impact of technology on human decision-making in both action and speech. Thus, the optimisation of technology use can be harmonised with the quality of its human user. Achieving harmony and human welfare can be achieved with the harmony between humans and technology.

A problem that arises in optimising the existence of technology is not only the quality of humans in utilising it. Rather, the method of communication used by experts to convey information to lay communities is often a barrier. Discussing technical and academic concepts in layman's terms can lead to misunderstandings in the application of technology. Therefore, it is important for experts to provide explanations to the community's level of understanding. On the one hand, the community needs to enhance its capacity to grasp the technology presented by experts. In doing so, the improvement in human quality can keep pace with the rapid acceleration of technology today. This approach is based on the concept that the realisation of technology in its practical application is the goal to be achieved in society. By adopting this method, the benefits of using technology can be communicated effectively within a community. The adaptive attitude of humans towards increasingly advanced technological acceleration encourages the achievement of human welfare.

## 2 Issues in Human and Technology Acceleration

The study of the relationship between humans and technology has been an important topic within the framework of continental philosophy since the 19th and 20th centuries. The concerns raised by Heidegger to Ellul and Marcuse sparked a more in-depth study of this relationship (Asmin, p. 68, 1995). Technology is viewed as a form of human activity that has a specific purpose, meaning that human activities are carried out to fulfil needs, solve problems, or overcome certain difficulties, and generally involve addressing certain needs (Lie, p. 24, 1996). On the other hand, humans also experience limitations in knowledge in their daily lives. These limitations refer to the understanding that humans possess natural boundaries in comprehending and knowing the world. However, the limitations of human knowledge should not be excused to cease the search for further knowledge and insight. Acknowledging these limitations can be an impetus for developing deeper and more enduring knowledge. Although technology can help humans overcome certain limitations, it is not a panacea for all human constraints.

The relationship between humans and technology involves considering how technology affects people, culture, and society and how we understand ourselves. In human history, technology addresses, develops, and utilises technology as an expression of human intellect and creativity. The existence of technology is understood as the systematic application of knowledge to facilitate human life, whether in the form of tools or methods (Adib, p. 224, 2011). Therefore, technology can be regarded as a manifestation of human intellect, materialising in the form of creations aimed at improving quality of life. This is in line with the purpose of creating technology to make life easier and provide convenience for various human activities in this world.

Today, technology and humans are inseparable entities. The presence of technology drives the progress of human civilisation. Conversely, through human innovations, technology experiences continuous development. Humans play a crucial role in managing and controlling technology, because they possess the capability to develop it, adapt to it, facilitate life, and survive. This is why humans are often referred to as *homo technologicus* or technological humans. Ranga Kala Mahaswa's article titled *Tentang Homo Technologicus* explains that *homo technologicus* can be interpreted as a technological human or technological user creature. Technology is understood as the knowledge of how to create things. The practical manifestation is that these technological humans use technology and apply it directly (Mahaswa, 2016).

Technological progress today is a continuous necessity, paralleling the development of human quality and knowledge in advancing technology. There are various impacts resulting from technological developments, including both positive and negative impacts. A positive impact is the emergence of various sophisticated tools and techniques that facilitate human work. However, it cannot be denied that technology also has negative impacts on humans. The dependence of humans on technology to solve problems that could be resolved independently is indicative of these negative effects. This reliance can diminish human ability and control in utilising technology, potentially threatening human existence (Swaradesy, p. 18, 2021). Furthermore, evolution of technology significantly influences human identity in

many aspects such as communication, social interaction, work, and self-perception. Overreliance on technology may obscure human identity and degrade the quality of social relationships.

The relationship between humans and technology today renders technology an entity that always pervades every aspect of human life. Technology plays a multidimensional role in influencing human experiences and culture (Asmin, p. 177, 1995). As a result, it can be asserted that technology significantly affects culture and people's lives. The impact of technology on culture can have both positive and negative outcomes. With the rapid development of technology, new problems have emerged in various aspects of life. Each generation of human beings can potentially create new cultures through emerging technologies. For instance, modern technology in industrialised countries has led to the emergence of large cities as industry centres, altering the cultural values of these countries. Problems in these developed countries are inevitable, whether they manifest positively as easy access to new technology or negatively by creating social alienation. It is crucial that technological progress be balanced with the advancement of human culture. This balance can be achieved by developing and reinforcing moral values, acknowledging and differentiating between personal and common interests, prioritising the use of technology in harmony with cultural progress, and minimising social inequality caused by technology. Although technology has contributed to the alienation of modern man within their societies, in the end, it is humanity itself that must assume responsibility for ensuring that the use of technology does not conflict with cultural values or create new problems in society (Lubis, p. 8, 1985).

The acceleration of modern technology has significantly impacted how humans communicate and interact socially, and integrating technology has become a part of society (Finali & Fitriyah, p. 124, 2017). In today's era, the emergence of social media and digital technology has revolutionised communication mediums and social interaction among individuals. People not only project themselves into the physical world but also intensively engage in the virtual world. Social media enables interactions with a diverse global audience, offering different viewpoints, experiences, and rapid information exchange, thereby fostering strong online communities. In addition, digital technologies provide seamless access to information and insights, thereby altering the way people think about worldviews. In this sense, the evolution of communication and engagement through social media and digital technology represents a tangible shift in contemporary society. This shift has transformed the dynamics of social interaction and human self-perception in the digital age.

The acceleration and use of technology today cannot be separated from ethical issues that are temporary in nature (Ferré, p. 87, 1995). These issues manifest in the application of technology and the extent to which it can be integrated into daily life. The seemingly inseparable relationship between humans and technology today raises various issues. These include automation and labour, ethical issues in the development of artificial intelligence, dilemmas of weapons development and use in peace and war, integration of technology in personal life, its role in private and public spheres, unequal access to technology, and the balance between freedom of speech and control of human information. Ethical issues pertain to the appropriate application of technology in a particular society. In addition, the timing and readiness of society to accept the presence of new technology also affects these ethical dilemmas. There are private and public domains upon which technology can or should not intrude, as reflected in access to certain technologies. Thus, technology cannot necessarily be applied to the situation and conditions of a particular society. Human control over technology can affect human freedom and restrict choices.

The current digital era has created a digital identity for individuals through the use of social media and activities in cyberspace. The identity created in the virtual or online world of an individual is closely linked to individual's real world identity. It is not uncommon to find differing personalities each individual in both the real and virtual world. Technology facilitates the emergence of these distinct personalities and entities. Consequently, people may feel anonymous and liberated from the consequences of their behaviour and ethics in cyberspace. Thus, the identity that emerges from within an individual influences their behaviour and ethics when engaging in cyberspace. Subsequent issues revolve around the human rights and obligations of individuals. Discussions about human rights are inseparable from the rights and obligations that individuals must uphold and respect. Issues related to the relationship between humans and technology give rise to concerns about individual rights and the power of technology. This is based on the need for balanced fulfilment of individual rights and obligations, the necessity of human control over technology, and the impact of technological determinism on various contemporary issues that shape human life patterns. These factors underscore the complexity and significance of technology's role in human life and highlight the importance of critical reflection on the established relationship between technology and human beings.

### 3 The Philosophy of *Empan Papan* in Javanese Society

The Javanese, an ethnic group in Indonesia, have values that are integral to various elements of community life. The values of Javanese culture are reflected in their livelihood systems, language, and art. These values manifest in the form of artefacts or physical cultural forms, social activities, and cultural ideals. One way of these cultural values are expressed is through life guides, proverbs, life motto, or a daily expressions of the Javanese people (Koentjaraningrat, p. 322, 1990).

Javanese society adheres to specific guidelines in their daily lives. These guidelines pertain to the standards of good and bad in both individual and social human life. However, not all individuals within Javanese society necessarily follow these guidelines, which stem from the community's habitual ways of living as a means of survival. These guidelines influence how people behave and act in daily life (Cathrin et al., p.175, 2020). Among these guidelines, one prominent aspect is the moral messages conveyed through the Javanese people's behaviour, as seen in their daily expressions. *Empan papan* is one such expression that embodies these guidelines.

The expression *empan papan* is a teaching in the Javanese tradition related to human relations. *Empan papan* is a Javanese expression consisting of two words: *empan* and *papan*. The word *empan* means thought or deliberation, whereas *papan* means place. Collectively, it this phrase signifies the placement of everything in its right and proper place, according to the situation and conditions. In Javanese tradition, the concept of *empan papan* implies that positioning everything correctly is crucial, not only in the context of individual life but also in social life. Self-placement means situating oneself appropriately in accordance with one's place and prevailing life system patterns (Purwadi, p. 248, 2011). This belief stems from the Javanese perspective that every element of the universe has specific roles and responsibilities. As part of the universe, humans must also find an appropriate place.

Furthermore, *empan papan* pertains to a person's behaviour and action in various situations and conditions. This suggests that humans should adjust their behaviour and actions to fit their current circumstances. This aspect of the situation is important for determining the appropriateness of an action. An action that is correct in principle may be inappropriate if performed in the wrong situation. Conversely, an action typically considered wrong can be deemed correct if it occurs in the correct context. This principle also applies to communication or actions in which one must consider the conditions of the place and the people involved. Another interpretation of *empan papan* is that it embodies the correct approach that should be maintained in actions, decisions, and attitudes. The right action is one that preserves the existing and agreed-upon withorder in a society.

From the various interpretations of *empan papan*, it can be formulated that humans must carefully consider the location, condition, and situation when speaking and acting (Tartono, p. 187, 2009). This expression becomes knowledge inherent in humans. In the philosophical anthropology, *empan papan* refers to the consciousness and existence of the "I" that manifest in the way the "I" exists. This consciousness is seen as the origin of human knowledge (Riyanto, p.189, 2018). In this context, Javanese people strive to incorporate this knowledge into their way of being, whether through behaviour, speech, or action. Awareness of the "I" enables individuals to be true to themselves, even without recognition from others. This consciousness encourages Javanese people to act and speak within the limit of self-recognition acknowledging that others may surpass their capabilities (Karyadi, p. 238, 2020). The philosophy of *empan papan* guides individuals to appropriately position themselves in the dimensions of space and time, considering the specific situations and conditions they face. Attitudes and actions are influenced by these circumstances, thus necessitating careful consideration before speaking or acting. This approach ensures respectful social interactions and acknowledges the worth of others in all situations and conditions (Karyadi, p. 237, 2020).

Another interpretation of *empan papan* relates to the pursuit of truth. The truth that a person believes may not be universally accepted. In being a Javanese person, it is important to respect the diversity truths expressed by others, fostering tolerance. This does not necessarily mean that Javanese people passively accept the truth or even remain silent; rather, they seek the most appropriate way to understand the meaning of truth. Thus, the purpose of conveying and selective attitude in filtering the meaning of truth is achieved in the right way. This is done to achieve a harmonious life with others and avoid divisions in society. In essence, a truth that has not found the right mode of expression will reside within oneself rather than imposed on others (Karyadi, p. 238, 2020). Therefore, *empan papan* serves to achieve harmony in social interaction and daily life, A helping to avoid disharmony in the environments. In this case, truth is not absolute and varies among individual.



The application of *Empan Papan* can be realised if there is awareness from each individual. Without internal awareness, its actualisation in a group or community setting is challenging. Recognising one's existence, the existence of others, and the nature of interpersonal relationships is foundational. Hence, understanding the importance of positioning oneself in various dimensions of space and time when speaking and acting is essential for achieving harmony in life.

#### **4 Implementation of *Empan Papan* Philosophy in Facing the Acceleration of Technology**

The concept of *Empan Papan* as moral teaching about the importance of placing oneself in various situations appropriately and correctly according to the situation and conditions. This is Javanese concept is well-suited as a guide for human life. It requires both physical and psychological flexibility to adapt to the situation and conditions of a particular place (Agustini, p. 356, 2022). Therefore, its implementation is not be universally feasible in all contexts. *Empan papan* entails a specific dimension in their application, and contextualising this guideline is crucial for the actualisation of thought and its application in oneself and others.

The implementation of *empan papan* is apt as a guideline in acting and behaving in the midst of technological acceleration. This is because it provides a positive perspective on change and encourages maintaining traditional community values. This consideration underlines how *Empan Papan* can selectively guide humans in managing and utilising technology. The current era's challenges include digitalisation, automation, globalisation, and disruption (Adha et al., p. 269, 2020). The selective attitude developed within humans to respond to technological acceleration also involves the consideration of various binding policies. Political and cultural aspects are also important for formulating and setting policies within a society. The digitalisation era, with its rapidly evolving information, does not rule out the possibility of unreliable or false information. Neil Postman argues that in this era of technological acceleration leading to the Technopoly era, that information has become a form of rubbish, not only unable to answer the most basic human questions, but almost useless in providing coherent direction for a way out of even ordinary problems (Postman, p. 97, 2021). The acceleration of technology challenges humans to discern valuable information from trivial or misleading content, necessitating selectivity to access credible information.

The implementation of *Empan Papan* also faces the challenge of ensuring that technological acceleration benefits society as a whole, including marginalised groups. The sustainability of adaptation, as reflected in *empan papan*, should not override the awareness of other human beings. This concept respects the autonomy and existence of others, including marginalised community groups (Karyadi, pp. 242-243, 2020). However, the distribution of new technology, particularly at the information and insight stage, also cannot be immediately evenly distributed to all layers of the middle to lower class society. The affordability of access and the ability of various elements of society and individuals to access new technology is a challenge in the current era of globalisation. Access to public services that utilise new technology is often not synchronised with placement in the community. This asynchronization can be found in various cases such as the asynchronization between technology and the ability of the community to use and the quantity of technology does not match the quantity of the community, the inaccuracy of technology targets in its distribution evenly in society and the frequent misuse of policies and power so that the fulfilment of technology that should be the right of the community never arrives. In the *empan papan* analysis, this is realized by the lack of connection between the two (Poedjosoedarmo, p. 4, 2017).

The delivery of technology policies from policy makers as interlocutors from the community in the form of responses generated by the utilization of the discussed technology. The benefits provided by the acceleration of technology, namely becoming a more developed society in terms of its quality in utilizing technology that is developing more rapidly, are diminished because there are irregularities in its distribution. So that we often encounter communities or individuals who are not yet literate in new technology. In addition, the tendency of humans to be lazy and dependent on other younger humans in utilizing technology also hinders the good that exists in accelerating technology. Therefore, it is important for each individual to adapt himself to the situation and conditions to level the playing field in technology access.

The acceleration of technology will also face problems regarding the balance of technological progress and environmental preservation. Inappropriate and excessive use of technology, that is not in accordance with the sustainability of nature, leads to natural disasters, ecosystem imbalances, and unstable climate change. Technological innovations encourage efficiency, effectiveness, and large-scale production in the utilization of nature (Hussein & Atiyah, p. 185, 2022). There is a need for integration between the

application of a particular technology and its natural conditions in its use and maintenance, so that the technology used is environmentally friendly. In addition, humans face challenge of minimizing waste generated from technology and being responsible for making repairs after the use of certain environments. Humans often exploit the environment without any improvements made after its utilization. However, in the era of rapid technological advancement, humans began to realize the damage to nature caused by the exploitative use of technology by finding various kinds of environmentally friendly technologies. This response is a form of attitude from humans by showing their sensitivity to the situation and condition of nature which is increasingly damaged due to improper use of technology. However, it is also found that technology is capable of environmentally friendly policies but exploitative nature towards the existence of mankind itself in its application. For example, policymaking towards nature conservation is only based on commercial interest without considering aspects of human welfare in managing it. A strong commitment to environmental conservation is fostered by sensitivity to the condition of the surrounding natural environment that requires the touch of human hands to care for and maintain it. This ethical human attitude through *empan papan* can be realized with individual awareness and commitment to environmental preservation.

*Empan papan* represents the ethical attitude of a human beings in response to technological acceleration. It relates to human decisions in guiding individuals and society related to technological acceleration. As a guideline in dealing with technological acceleration, *empan papan* provides solutions to global and local challenges caused by technology. When the philosophy of *empan papan* is effectively implemented in words and actions, it cultivates individuals who are aware of their limits, humble, introspective, and selective in preserving the values of local wisdom of society (Karyadi, pp. 244-245, 2020). So that humans can maintain local wisdom while still adapting to global trends. This is reflected in the increasing ability of humans to use technology wisely. The use of increasingly advanced technology in terms of publication and storage can be utilized as a tool to introduce local wisdom to be recognized by various countries so as to provide benefits to the community in the form of increased tourism and the medium and micro economy. However, it is also crucial to be selective in the use of these technologies, as some aspects of local wisdom should remain untouched by advanced technology. There are various collaborations of local wisdom with technological advances in the current era as an effort to preserve culture without eliminating the values contained therein. The modernization of culture and local wisdom make traditional values and their existence easier to be accepted by society. Therefore, the contextualization of local wisdom is essential in addressing the trends brought by today's technology, ensuring a harmonious coexistence.

## 5 Conclusion

The acceleration of technology in this modern era is often not balanced with the proper utilization of technology in human life. There is a disparity between the quality of technology and the capability of its users, and even the quantity of technology in comparison to human users is imbalanced, leading to suboptimal technology utilization. The unevenness and inaccuracy of technology targets are also a problem in the era of technological acceleration because technology is only reached and accepted in certain areas. Therefore, it is important to develop the ability of humans to apply and utilize the existence of technology in accordance with the situation, conditions, and location.

The philosophy of *emban papan* in Javanese society can be used as an ethical guideline in dealing with the acceleration of technology that is currently developing. Contextualization and adaptation in the application and utilization of technology are important points in its implementation. This is in accordance with the teachings of *empan papan* that in thinking, acting, and determining decisions in accordance with the situation and conditions humans are in. So that what is sought from *empan papan* is not truth that is binding as whole but accuracy in thinking and acting by adjusting the surrounding natural conditions. The utilization and application of technology can be expected in accordance with the quality and quantity of technology and humans who use it in accordance with the context of their existence.

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