Critical Theory, Pragmatism and Philosophy of Technology: Thinking About the Relations Between Technology and Democracy

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Craig Hanks, Associate Professor of Philosophy was awarded a REP award for summer 2004 for *Critical Theory, Pragmatism and Philosophy of Technology: Thinking About the Relations Between Technology and Democracy*. The goal of the project was to ask, "What is relationship between technology and democracy?" and explore three dominant traditional answers to this question:

- There is no relationship; technology is neutral with respect to human activities and values.
- There is a positive relationship; more technology will bring more democracy.
- There is a negative relationship; technology is a cage of our own making.

The project focused on two schools of philosophy that take this question quite seriously, while rejecting all three of the traditional answers: American Pragmatism, and Critical Theory. These intellectual traditions are also interdisciplinary, and explicitly aim at not merely intellectual, but also practical outcomes.

The work proceeded in two stages. First, the founding representatives of Critical Theory of Technology (Benjamin, Adorno, Marcuse) and Pragmatic Philosophy of Technology (Dewey, Peirce) were analyzed and their theories explicated and evaluated. Second, contemporary versions of Critical Theory (Habermas, Feenberg) and Pragmatism (Hickman, Light, Thompson) were analyzed and evaluated.

The results include:
- Critical Theory and Pragmatism have much ground for dialogue, more than even their contemporary adherents admit.
- Together they offer grounds for lines of empirical research into the implications of technological change for individual and collective self-determination (the heart of democracy). The first avenue of empirically informed research the PI will follow is to investigate architecture, planning and democracy through the lens of Critical Theory and Pragmatism.
- Each offers compelling critiques of the existing answers, but the answers might be more complete and compelling in a new philosophy of technology that draws on both traditions.

Publications
<u>**Work Accepted for Publication:**</u>

1. "John Dewey," to appear in *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, edited by Carl Mitcham, [New York: Macmillan, forthcoming 2005].
2. "Critical Social Theory of Science and Technology," to appear in *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, edited by Carl Mitcham, [New York: Macmillan, forthcoming 2005].

3. "Urban Form, Human Identity, and Political Possibilities," *Southwest Philosophical Studies*, (forthcoming).

<u>Submitted for Review</u>:

Reflecting on Technology, book proposal for an edited collection, submitted to Blackwell.
Technological Musings: Reflections on Technology and Value, book manuscript submitted to the Edwin Mellon Press.

Presentations

1. "Politics, Aesthetics, and Cities," to be presented to The Association for Political Theory, St. Louis, MO, October 2006.

2. "Cities, Aesthetics and Human Community: Some Thoughts on the Limits of Design," to be presented to the Bi-annual meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, July 2005.

3. "Urban Form, Human Identity, and Political Possibilities," Presidential Address, The New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society, El Paso, TX, April 2005.

Pending Support

Grants applications to be submitted in 2005-2006 that are, in part, made possible by the REP:

- American Council of Learned Societies
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