Abstracts

Andrew Feenberg (Simon Fraser University)
Critical Theory of Technology & STS

I will argue that Science and Technology Studies can play a role in the renewal of Critical Theory. STS is based on a critique of the very same technocratic assumptions against which Critical Theory had previously argued. Its critique of positivism and determinism has political implications. But at its origins STS took what Wiebe Bijker called the "detour into the academy" in order to institutionalize itself as a social science. It adopted empirical methods, developed case histories, and limited its scope, avoiding politically controversial issues. Its latent political critique has become explicit in recent years as STS has responded to the rise of technical politics by broadening its concerns and reaching a wider audience both within and outside the academy. Its wide scope justifies my continuing interest in the equally encompassing Critical Theory of the early Frankfurt school.

Pieter Vermaas (Delft University of Technology)
Introducing Design for Values: Re-introducing some old Problems

In this presentation I discuss *design for values*, the approach to incorporate moral, societal and legal values in engineering design. This approach is part of the research at the philosophy department of the Delft University of Technology and shares elements with critical theory of technology. I argue by means of cases that design for values leads to a number of problems that are already well-known in philosophy of technology.

Hans Radder (VU University Amsterdam)
Technological systems and genuine public interests

In response to the strongly increased commodification of academic science, several authors argue for the continued significance of public-interest science. To substantiate such arguments one needs, first, a convincing conception of what is a public interest; second, one needs to explain how science can support public interests. In this paper, I will address the first requirement. My basic claim is that the best argument for the existence of genuine public interests derives from the nature and role of large technological systems. Affirming the significance of science in the public interest presupposes that there are genuine public interests. In contrast, quite a few social and moral theorists subscribe to the view that, basically, there are only individual interests, that is, the interests of actual, individual people. The doctrine that all interests are (aggregated) individual interests can be, and has been, criticized from different perspectives. Some of these criticisms simply posit the existence of supra-individual or public interests and proceed from there to develop an alternative view of the relation between individuals and society. I think, however, that a stronger kind of critique is desirable and possible. This specific critique derives from the nature and role of large technological systems, in particular the systems that constitute a society's socio-material infrastructures. A crucial characteristic of such systems is that, once realized on a large scale, they possess a

substantial inertia. Therefore, such systems cannot be changed overnight and, for almost all of their time, individual members of society will be stuck with the systems available to them. Technological systems at once enable and constrain particular types of action of individual people. As such, they *form social resources and hence constitute certain interests*. These constituted interests, however, are supra-individual, in this specific sense: they do not coincide with and cannot be reduced to (a fixed aggregate of) the possessed interests of (the majority of) the *current* members of society.

Mithun Bantwal Rao (Wageningen University)
Philosophy of Technology Beyond the Empirical Turn

Of the various developments in the emerging, inchoate field of philosophy of technology *the empirical turn* (Achterhuis 2001) stands out as having left its most enduring mark on the trajectory contemporary research takes. From a historical point of view, the empirical turn can best be understood as a corrective to the overly "transcendentalizing" tendencies of "classical" philosophers of technology, such as Heidegger or Marcuse. Empirically oriented philosophy of technology places the emphasis on actual technologies by case study research into the formation of technical objects and systems (constructivist studies), and how they, for example, transform our perceptions and conceptions (as the phenomenological tradition is inclined to do), or pass on and propagate relations of power (as critical theorist emphasize). This paper explores the point of convergence of "classical" and contemporary approaches by means of the notion of the "example". It starts with a discussion of the most classical of classical philosophers of technology, Martin Heidegger, and his thinking about technology in terms of the *ontological difference*. His framing of technology in terms of this difference places the weight of intelligibility entirely on the side of being, to such an extent that his examples become indifferent. The second part of the paper discusses the notion of the "example" and the form of intelligibility it affords. By drawing upon the work of Agamben, Foucault, and Wittgenstein it is argued that the example is situated at the crossroads of the empirical and the transcendental without being reducible to one or the other. Its result is a "technoparadigmatic" approach to studying technical artifacts, devices, and machines.

Tamar Sharon (Maastricht University)
The Googlization of Medical Research: Ethics, Privacy, Power

Digital technologies like wearables and mobile apps are increasingly seen as powerful new tools in the move towards personalized and data-driven health and medicine. Not just as the producers of "small data" that individuals can use to optimize their health, but, more recently, as enabling new methods for acquiring and managing the "big data" required for biomedical research. As a result, we are seeing an aggressive expansion of major consumer tech companies, like Apple, Google and IBM, into the space of medical research. This raises a host of ethical issues, that I attempt to map out here in terms of research ethics, privacy, and most importantly, new power asymmetries that will affect the future of research agendas.

Robert Prey (Groningen University)
The Datafication of Listening: Rationalizing Music, Reifying Taste

The crisis experienced by the recorded music industry over the past 15 years has been much discussed. But for music fans, the marriage of digital music with the internet has produced another crisis of sorts: a crisis of abundance - of information overload. One solution to the problem of seemingly infinite music choice has been the emergence of a wide range of recommendation engines, designed to produce the perfect individual playlist. In this talk I will focus on the Music Genome Project. The Music Genome Project is Pandora Internet Radio's attempt to 'rationalize' music prediction by 'genetically' dissecting music and drawing correlations between musical attributes and taste profiles. Building off of this example, I will examine the relationship between form and content on contemporary music streaming platforms, and the tensions that emerge in the attempt to reify taste.