



SOUTHEASTERN ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP

HOSTED BY THE VIRGINIA TECH STS PROGRAM AND UNC CHARLOTTE CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS

Schedule:

9-9:30: We gather.
9:30-10:30: Session 1 -- D.E. Wittkower and Joe Pitt
10:45-11:45: Session 2 -- Camilla Cannon and Josh Earle
12:00-1:00 pm: Session 3 -- Jack Leff, Samantha Fried, and Hanna Herdegen
1:00-2:00 pm: LUNCH
2:00-3:00: Session 4 -- Phillip McReynolds and Damien Williams
3:15-4:15: Session 5 -- Robert Rosenberger and Don Ihde
4:30-5:30 Session 6 -- Bono Shih and Andrew Kissel

List of Attendees:

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List of Abstracts:

9:30 - 10:30: Session 1

D.E. Wittkower: For Love and Money, Community and the Ethics of Care in Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding remediates pre-capitalist European patronage models of artistic creation with an altered affective economy—one in which artists create within and for communities that identify with the artist and their vision. This article critiques the ideal of autonomous art and uses the ethics of care in order to advance a model of the affective dynamics of the artist-community relationship in heteronomous art, which is applied to crowdfunding in order to distinguish between artist-fan relations which are harmed by heteronomy and those which are supported and enriched by them.

Joseph C. Pitt: Engineering Epistemologies

Engineering is not a single, unified field. But, across the many sub-disciplines of engineering such as civil, chemical, computer, etc., there are some commonalities, such as a focus on design, concerns about the production process, the use of theoretical principles and knowledge drawn from the sciences, and efficiency, among others. Each of these requires a special kind of knowledge such that it is incorrect to talk about engineering knowledge *simpliciter*

10:45 - 11:45: Session 2

Camilla Cannon: Non-Binary and Genderqueer Identity as Consumptive Self-Creation in Marketing and Advertising Discourse

In recent years, popular discourse--especially mass market magazine such as *Vogue*, *Teen Vogue*, and *USA Today* as well popular blogging sites like Refinery29--has paid increasing attention to the rise of non-binary and genderqueer self-identification among young people. Advertising and marketing discourse has followed suit, with a number of reports and business editorials discussing the potential benefit to companies of including nb/gq spokespeople and language in their advertising campaigns. In this paper, I examine both of these bodies of discourse and argue that they portray nb/gq gender expression as a form of creative self-construction carried out by the consumption of particular products. I think this suggestion that nb/gq identities are best realized and legitimated through particular consumptive patterns is dangerous because it runs the risk of further alienating already marginalized nb/gq youth who either do not have access to the capital necessary to participate in this consumption or live in environments where the kinds of self-expression encouraged by these discourses is not safe. Additionally, the advertising and marketing deployment of nb/gq “authenticity” can lead to a broader “authenticity mandate,” in

which all consumers are encouraged to “resist” binary gender expectations through an ongoing and variable process of consumptive self-creation.

Josh Earle: Agential Realism and a Diffractive Ethic of Inclusion, Completing Barad's Ethico-Onto-Epistemology

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad builds a theoretical model (called Agential Realism) of the world based on *entanglement* and *diffraction*. Entanglement is a physical property of subatomic particles whereby changing one instantly changes all related particles. Diffraction is the physical property of interfering waves. Barad states that what produces phenomena, the base unit of reality, is the diffraction of all of the related and entangled agents (actors, *actant*, pick your neologism) involved. Within Agential Realism she argues that ontology and epistemology cannot be separated from each other, that ways of knowing, theories and knowledge, are *material-semiotic things* that are always part of one's phenomena-producing instrument. She also states that the politics, or ethic, of such arrangements can also not be separated, but only ever goes as far as claiming that ethics needs to be examined when producing new onto-epistemological phenomena. In this talk I hope to *begin* to build what I am calling a diffractive ethic of inclusion, that is more than just an effect of onto-epistemological phenomena, but rather a piece that can be actively, and consciously, built into one's diffractive instrument. I believe this new formation can have wide-ranging benefits for ethics beyond science and technology.

12:00 - 1:00 : Session 3: Works in Progress

Jack Leff: Thinking Atmospherically

What would it mean to think about atmosphere as a political technology rather than, say, an ambient force to be taken for granted? Questions of atmosphere usually revolve around the moment when it disappears or perhaps more accurately, when something is “wrong” with the air around us. This component of thinking atmospherically has manifested a robust literature on environmental violence: be that environmental racism, pollution, the poisoning of vital elemental forces (air, water, etc), and class based discrimination. However, I worry that this focus on environmental consequences misses the core facet of atmosphere as a technology. I.E. its ability to mediate and describe the relations between people as well as between people and the environment. By thinking about atmosphere as a political technology in and of itself, as opposed to an environmental metric, I hope to better understand our relationship with air and with each other. After all, atmosphere is so vitally important to us as both a condition of our survival and a mediation of our movement that to limit ourselves to thinking about it environmentally would fail to read important connections between environmental justice and larger political struggles. It is with that twofold concern in mind that I want to lay out where I am in my thinking about atmosphere as a technology in this talk and to hopefully get help solidifying my understanding.

Sam Fried: work in progress presentation

Hanna Herdegen: work in progress presentation

2:00 - 3:00: Session 4

Phillip McReynolds: Ethical Tools for a Posthumanist Culture, John Dewey's Philosophy of Technology

Despite having many humanist commitments, the classical pragmatists, including James, Peirce and Dewey contributed many philosophical innovations that, today, would count as proto-posthumanism. Chief among these is John Dewey's understanding of technology, based on Larry Hickman's important scholarship in this area. In this paper I explain how Dewey's philosophy of technology positions it as a posthumanism if we understand the latter in terms of Peter Mahon's characterization of [humans] + tools wherein the boundaries between the human and the tool are fluid and negotiable. I then show how Dewey's empirical ethics is tied to this understanding of technology and provides some clues as to how one might think about a posthumanist ethics of technology.

Damien Williams: Constructing Situated and Social Knowledges; Ethical, Sociological, and Phenomenological Factors in Technological Design."

An interdisciplinary investigation of how various sociopolitical constraints and lived experiences intersect with each other. How do our intersectional identities affect our experience of technology in our societies, and what are the implications of bringing wider arrays of lived experience into technosocial contexts, as they currently exist?

3:15 - 4:15: Session 5

Robert Rosenberger: Hostile Logics, A New Classification of Discriminatory Public-Space Design

As the conversation on “hostile” public-space design and architecture continues to grow, it is important to clarify just what is under critique, and how instances of this phenomenon can be identified. Most attempts at categorizing the different kinds of hostile designs have taken the form as simple lists of the different basic types: e.g., there’s benches designed to deter sleeping, spikes set onto ledges to deter loitering, “skatestopper” nubs build into railings and ledges to deter skateboarders, etc. Perhaps the only more abstract classification scheme can be found in Steven Flusty’s polemical pamphlet, *Building Paranoia*, which establishes “flavors” of hostile design such as “crusty,” “slippery,” and “stealth” (1994). Building on Flusty, as well as extending my own critiques of anti-homeless design, I develop an account of what could be

called the various “logics” of hostile design (Rosenberger, 2017). That is, I enumerate the various ways in which particular uses of public space are closed off—and particular groups are pushed out—through the mechanisms of design. The categories I identify include: “physical imposition,” “sensory imposition,” “concealment,” “confederacy,” “self-coercion,” and “absence.”

Don Ihde: The Quantum Leap in Developing Technologies

This presentation holds that all science is technoscience and looks at four "quantum leaps" in instrumental technologies over time: Archeoscience, at least as old as the Ice Age did calendrical natural patterns; early modern science introduced radical optics to change the world; the 19th century discovered the Electromagnetic Spectrum which stimulated new imaging technologies, and finally a focus upon 21st century nano-process technologies which utilize micro processes a million to a trillion times smaller than all previous instruments. The approach will be postphenomenological, which uses an interrelational ontology linking world and human changes related to experienced embodiment.

4:30-5:30: Session 6

Bono Shih: Towards an Engineering Ethics with Non-engineers, How Western Engineering Ethics May Learn from Taiwan

This paper engages with a dominant thought more or less explicit in Western engineering ethics that “without engineers making decisions, there can be no engineering ethics.” (Davis, 2007) The study seeks to extend the scope of Western-based engineering ethics to non-engineers through a study of engineering ethics in Taiwan.

A fundamental difference between the West and the Taiwan on this matter is that the public in Taiwan understand engineers and engineering more inclusively than the West. Through a linguistic philosophical perspective, engineering in the Chinese language, or *gong cheng*, can be shown to have multiple meanings including scheduled tasks, buildings, public works, and a credential-based profession responsible for designing, manufacturing and maintaining modern technologies. In this sense, engineering ethics is also ethics of technological activities and of technology. Responsibilities and commitments in engineering ethics not only apply to professional engineers, but can extend to all personnel involved in engineering work, sometimes without an engineer currently in charge of making decisions. In ethics theory and teaching, the eclectic approach to including non-engineers and technological activities in the engineering ethics proper helps bridge the gap between microethics and macroethics that are often separate in Western engineering ethics discussion. In practice, it also calls for and sustains collective awareness and social support for ethical decisions and practice in engineering that are so needed in any technological society.

Andrew Kissel: Free will, the self, and video game actions

Some recent philosophers have used compatibilist theories of moral responsibility (drawing on Harry Frankfurt's work) to argue that videogame actions are morally assessable only if they *will* the action, where willing involves properly identifying with the action and its justification. So, for example, we can judge a player who kills a child in the context of a videogame only if the player identifies with that action. Since most people do not identify with the act of *actually* killing a child, they should not be morally judged for that action. I argue that this account relies on an overly simplified view of the self. Specifically, it assumes that if you would not be willing to perform the action in reality, then you cannot identify with the action in the context of a videogame. Drawing on more general criticisms of compatibilist theories of moral responsibility, I argue that it could well be the case that a person identifies with certain actions in the context of a videogame, without being appropriate targets of certain kinds of moral judgments. I'm still working out the details, but I thought that SEPOT might be the perfect place to try out an early version of the paper and see what others think.