Category: Publication

Title: Science, Technology and Social Imagination and Pragmatism

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The pragmatist tradition has always been an important source and inspiration of Science & Technology Studies (STS).

However, the rich and fertile output of STS scholarship has received less attention than it deserved from pragmatist philosophers, albeit with a growing number exceptions.

This special issue has two aims. The first is to trace multifarious points of connection and overlap between the disciplines of STS and philosophical pragmatism. The second is to make the pragmatist audience in various fields of American Philosophy more aware of family resemblances between their own projects and work done in STS.

The scope of this special issue is left purposefully open to create room for the discovery of new directions and connections. As an inspiration, a few points may be hinted at where pragmatism and STS approaches converge naturally:

- Agency: Dewey's *transaction*-perspective sees agency as an emergent property, a product of environmental and instrumental conditions. Actions are always the co-authored products of agents and their natural, social (and technological) contexts. This perspective finds many correspondents in STS, e.g. in Latour's actor network theory.
- Knowledge: for both pragmatists and STS scholars, knowledge is a process that involves aspects of technological production and social negotiation. Knowledge is never a representation of independent facts, but always a product or artefact. Facts and observations are manufactured and designed to the same extent, as experiments and technological equipment are necessary for their production and mediation. Pragmatists go so far as to include our biological constitution (hands, brains and eyes) among these instrumental conditions.
- Metaphysics: most pragmatists share a broadly naturalistic metaphysical platform, yet pragmatist naturalism includes constructivist elements: reality is at least co-produced by human technological interventions. STS asks whether technology remakes reality in a way controllable by planning human agents or

whether technology creates dynamics and spin-offs are as ungovernable as brute natural forces. The metaphysical implications of these questions interface with pragmatist thinking about the co-authorship of agents and instrument users in producing reality.

- Value: both traditions grapple with the sources and determinants of value and have developed a great sensitivity for the mutual dependence of values and instrumental/technological environments. The profound insight that technology does not only offer solutions to problems but also shapes the contexts in which we formulate purposes and a conception of the good life is central to pragmatists and STS thinking alike. How the coevolution of values and technological conditions affects individual conceptions of the good, social norms and cultural ways of life is a field of shared interest.

- Imagination: assessing risks and opportunities and mediating dangers and hopes in the rise of rapid developments in techno-science are strands where STS employs imaginative techniques. Recently a new research spectrum opened, focussing on techno-moral transformations and developing new interpretative resources for addressing changing situations. Imagination, defined as seeing the actual in the light of its rich possibilities, and as uncovering empirical and moral tendencies inherent present conditions, are recurring tenets in the pragmatist tradition, where an exchange with STS seems promising.

Invited are contributions both from mainlands of Philosophy and STS scholarship. Encouraged are empirical and theoretical studies elucidating the relevance of pragmatist and STS concepts in practice.

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