Hans Achterhuis' recently published edited volume, *American Philosophy of Technology*, offers us six thumbnail sketches of the work of just that many American philosophers of technology: Albert Borgmann, Hubert Dreyfus, Andrew Feenberg, Donna Haraway, Don Ihde, and Langdon Winner. These sketches are, accordingly, offered by a half-dozen Dutch authors associated with the University of Twente, including Achterhuis himself.

The basic thesis of the book is that "classical philosophy of technology" has taken, what is termed in the title and introduction, "the empirical turn." Thus, each little sketch aims first to highlight the unique contributions made by the philosopher to this "empirical turn" while, at the same time, noting the individual context within which that philosopher developed his or her thought. The effectiveness of this thesis is further punctuated by the fact that the perspective on the writings of these American philosophers of technology is explicitly a European perspective, that is, it is a perspective from both a cultural and geographical distance; thus, ostensibly offering more objectivity.

According to Achterhuis, the classical philosophy of technology had Heidegger, Hans Jonas, and Jacques Ellul in its first generation; and these philosophers of technology occupied themselves more "with the historical and transcendental conditions that made modern technology possible than with the real changes accompanying the development of a technological culture." (p. 3) It is the being concerned with the "changes accompanying the development of a technological culture" that characterizes what Achterhuis and his colleagues have termed "the empirical turn." Thus, the six philosophers featured in this volume "interpret and analyze philosophically the profound ways in which technology has transformed--and continues to transform--social networks and forms of life, human wants and possibilities, and the experience of our bodies and of nature." (p. 1) Such a juxtaposing provides ample opportunity to contrast the more transcendental attitude of the classic position with the decidedly more pragmatic empirical position; and the "dystopian" tone of the former stands in sharp contrast...
to the more optimistic and positive tone of the latter.

The book opens with Achterhuis' introduction and Borgmann's discussion of technology and the character of everyday life. This is followed by the highlighting of Dreyfus' work on the limits of artificial intelligence, Feenberg's perspectives on the cultural and social possibilities inaugurated by technologies, and Haraway's notion of the cyborg as a metaphor for the blurring of the distinction between human culture and technological culture. Treatments of Ihde and Winner finish out the book; there is Ihde's examination of the role technology plays in the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) and Winner's enchantment with the peculiarly moral and political implications of modern technologies.

Aside from the obvious benefit of having the gift of seeing "oorsel's as ithers see us," the content of this small volume immediately suggests itself for use as an introduction to modern philosophy of technology. Indeed, I know of no other more accessible text for the lower level undergraduate courses. Each portrait gives a clear distillation of the philosopher's main thesis and often includes some biographical material. It is, furthermore, to his credit that Achterhuis wisely included Donna Haraway's and Don Ihde's important contributions to this field and such an inclusion lends an increased air of solid scholarship to his volume. Each sketch has its own bibliography for further research and the volume itself has a short index.

One caveat..."American" in "American Philosophy of Technology" refers to the nation of the philosopher and not to the species of the philosophy. So, if you're looking for what American Philosophy, i.e., the last two letters in SAAP, has to say about technology, this is not the book for you. But I imagine it will dovetail nicely with other texts, handouts, articles, PowerPoint Presentations, etc.

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