STS.464 :: The Intellectual History of Technology

Engineering: Mentality, Vocation, Institution
26 April 2005

Discussion of Readings and Papers

Chihyung's Paper

- "The question is: For whom would the engineers work?"
- What do we mean by a "class"? In what sense are engineers a "class"?
    - The way in which they participate in production?
    - For Marx, a class is: a group of people who have a particular relation to the productive system.
- Engineers ⟶ managers
- Mediating the role between laborers and financiers? Not a clear relationship to production.
- Hands or mind as a marker of class! Where does the engineer's paycheck come from?
    - Consciousness
    - For whom do you work?
    - What type of work do you do?
- Time period where professionalization was happening across the board, in all professions.
- Why are Veblen's engineers hostile to commercial value? Efficiency, rationality. Emphasis on method. Mindset inculcated by education.
- Where are the professional boundaries?
- How does Noble see the engineers as, um, not so noble as Veblen does? ⟶ He sees them as the lackeys of capitalism, rather than as the adversaries of capitalism.

Laura's Paper

- Engineering and responsibility
- The aesthetic side
- Architecture vs. engineering
- Elite vs. greater good
- Functionalism
- The sublime
- Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* ⟶ myth as a second-order language ⟶ technology as myth?

Emina's Paper

- "process" and "engineer"
- The thought process of engineering as what defines it $\longrightarrow$ "not what to think, but how to think"
- Cybernetics, Norbert Wiener $\longrightarrow$ processes common to organic and mechanical systems, feedback, control, communication $\longrightarrow$ a vision of human relations with machines
- Veblen $\longrightarrow$ habituation of people to machines changes the way people think
- Education