



BOOK REVIEW

Essays in Post-Critical Philosophy of Technology.
Edited by Mihály Héder and Eszter Nádasí
(Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2019). ISBN:
9781622734573. Pp. 172 + vi. \$42.00 Hardcover.
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Mihály Héder and Eszter Nádasí's collection, *Essays in Post-Critical Philosophy of Technology*, brings together the reflections of a range of authors working at the intersection of the philosophy of technology and post-critical thought. Drawn from the (now First) Budapest Workshop on the Philosophy of Technology (December 1-2, 2017), these essays collectively provide a fascinating and valuable set of insights for anyone considering this space.

Structured in four sections, the fourteen chapters of this book address *The Role of Technology*, *Post-Critical Philosophy of Technology*, *Aesthetic Approaches*, and *Applications of Philosophy on Technology*. The editors provide brief, helpful introductory chapters at the beginning of each section, orienting the reader regarding the theme of the following chapters. Since the editors have done an outstanding job of summarizing each subsequent essay in their introductory chapters, I take a more personal approach here, sharing my engagement with this collection of essays.

As one whose work often lies at the intersection of the philosophy of technology and post-critical (by which I mean Polanyi-influenced) thought, I find this volume timely and uniquely helpful.

Its timeliness is illustrated by just how often the philosophy of technology is, albeit tacitly, the topic of popular media. The classic *Matrix* film series and the more recent *Upload* series are only two examples

of how the public is, in some respects, setting out to consider such matters on their own, without the help of philosophers.

Its unique helpfulness is illustrated by just how often a post-critical philosophy of technology is explicitly the topic of philosophical meetings. Having participated in several outstanding workshops on the philosophy of technology, I find them either dominated by philosophers or segregated into friendly factions of philosophers on the one hand and technologists interested in philosophy on the other. Many of the philosophers address matters of ethics as it relates to technology, often taking the perspective that technology is 'merely' a tool, subordinate to science. And, in each case, I infrequently cross paths with others sharing my interest in post-critical thought. Differently, but none-the-less interestingly, having participated in, and benefitted from, several outstanding meetings of the Polanyi Society, I find a remarkably diverse group of participants present, including humanists, social scientists, theologians, and the stray scientist, engineer, technologist, and business executive. Similarly, I infrequently cross paths with others sharing my specific interests in the philosophy of technology.

While still heavily represented by those possessing a primary, rather than multiple, equally-strong domain expertise, the 2017 Budapest Workshop and, as a result, this collection of essays is unique in my experience in terms of what the organizers sought to unite. Lead editor Mihály Héder brings exceptional strength to this task; he is multiply deep in the two domains addressed here, technology (Masters in software engineering) and post-critical philosophy (a Polanyi expert who earned in Budapest a Ph. D. in the

history and philosophy of science). As an example and reminder for *TAD* readers, Héder's February 2018 *TAD* (volume XLIV, number 1) article on non-human tacit knowledge in animals illustrates this holistic grasp and expertise. His simultaneous indwelling of these two topics carries us all along as we consider the intersection of the philosophy of technology and post-critical thought.

Turning to some of the specifics of this book, I benefitted by personally engaging with it in that it brought visibility to, re-enforced or challenged, and helped me either strengthen or refine some of my previously unarticulated assumptions.

For example, I found László Ropolyi's (who, like Heder, is multiply deep, holding a doctorate in biophysics and a Ph.D. in philosophy) first section work, *Technology as an Aspect of Human Praxis*, relevant in that he considered the nature of the philosophy of technology and did so broadly. In the context of my perspective that business innovation is an authentic human act of discovery, I found Ropolyi's essay compelling in that he suggests that (1) "every human activity has a technological aspect or dimension" and that (2) "technology has primacy over intellectual practices such as doing philosophy or doing science. This is because being a human is prerequisite for being a philosopher or for being a scientist."

Bringing my interest in Polanyi's epistemology as it relates to business innovation to this collection, I found Mihály Héder's "Michael Polanyi and the Epistemology of Engineering," useful in helping me see how others apply Polanyi's insights to problems similar to those I address.

Further, while not directly aligned with my research interests, I found Phil Mullins' "Michael Polanyi on Machines as Comprehensive Entities" a valuable contribution to the literature. At a time when artificial intelligence and machine learning evoke questions about whether or how 'machines' might someday, or in some way, exhibit sentience,

framing such inquiry instead in terms of tacit knowledge seems an appropriate step.

And, as a final example, while also not directly aligned with my research interests, Jacopo Bodini's "The Screen: A Body without Organs" piqued my interest and intrigued me. Flipping the view that screens are prostheses of our bodies, he takes the position that the 'screen' itself might be a body, albeit one without organs, and, as such, requiring human bodies to serve as prostheses. So, while I might have previously seen the human as indwelling the screen or the human and screen as mutually indwelling, Bodini's work challenged me to consider yet another option and its implications.

Although choosing just four examples to illustrate the nature of this collection, I encourage those working at the intersection of the philosophy of technology and post-critical thought to explore this book for how it might guide your thinking as it has mine.

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