Franklin Ford Collection ed. by Dominique Trudel and Juliette De Maeyer (review)

Will Mari

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commitments, the omission is noticeable, particularly given the question of scientific authority: as Alison Winter ("'Compasses all Awry,'" 1994) has shown, the problem of compass error raised alarming questions over the credibility of elite scientific specialists like George Biddell Airy.

For all this, Jackson's book successfully unpacks the constraints faced in the relationship between nineteenth-century British government and scientific advice. He draws very clearly from parliamentary papers, notably the wealth of select committees and royal commissions that have left rich documentary evidence to sustain such an investigation. The attention Jackson draws in chapter 2 to the overlapping places and institutions of science and politics is extremely insightful. As Jackson argues, there were significant social connections between Parliament and the Royal Society, including at least 149 MPs who secured fellowship of this learned institution. Very often, the interests of Britain's political and scientific elites were united, and the familiarity of these communities was undoubtedly influential over the nature of nineteenth-century state-science relations. Jackson's monograph is a timely and effective guide to the historical development of specialist knowledge in the business of governance.

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Franklin Ford Collection

Edited by Dominique Trudel and Juliette De Maeyer. Bethlehem: Mediastudies.press, 2023. Pp. 297.

In this unique assembly of the key writings of American polymath and philosopher Franklin Ford (1849–1918), Dominique Trudel (Audencia Business School) and Juliette De Maeyer (University of Montreal) have provided scholars with an invaluable resource. Namely, they have curated and placed into critical context, via an open-access publisher, Ford's most important, surviving work on communication technology, as expressed via journalism, markets, transportation, and government. Furthermore, this work is from a formative moment in the creation of the modern field of sociology—specifically, media sociology—and the broader study of technology itself.

Ford was a brilliant, if eccentric and mysterious, figure—with part of the mystery enhanced by the loss of many of his personal papers and

correspondence in a fire at Columbia University in October 1914 (pp. viii, xxviii). Best known for his ill-fated *Thought News* project with John Dewey at the University of Michigan in the early 1890s, Ford's contributions to the development of pragmatist philosophy and, perhaps more indirectly, the Chicago School tradition (associated with one of his friends, Robert Park) are less well known. Scholars as varied as Daniel J. Czitrom, James Carey, and Norman Sims, along with Andrej Pinter, John Durham Peters, Jeff Pooley, and Zena Beth McGlashan, have worked to reconnect Ford to his contemporaries.

While Ford had a falling out with Dewey, the former influenced the latter's ideas, especially the central concept of scientific inquiry. Trudel and De Maeyer review the relevant historiography surrounding Ford, and introduce the primary texts themselves, in an introduction that builds on their previous research into this enigmatic figure. They then discuss the three main themes of Ford's often intellectually itinerant life (ranging from Detroit to New York City and everywhere in between), including "the specific problems of the press and the many remedies he envisioned . . . the interconnected flows of money, transportation, and communication central to modern industrial societies . . . and the political and social theory that lay behind Ford's projects" (p. ix). Ford was interested in ideas that still impact our information economy, including how to sustain journalism and how technology could help markets govern themselves.

Of interest to historians of technology is how Ford conceived of "electric communication" in the form of early telephone and telegraph networks, as well as transportation systems (pp. 195, 236). Ford was fascinated with such tools and how they promised to reinvigorate government, journalism, and industry by encouraging two-way data flows in ways that evoke the internet itself, as well as a holistic, more information-driven approach to societal ills. The physical exchange of currency and mail and the ways that "information" (i.e., data) could send that same kind of value—foreshadowing the internet—will also be of interest to science and technology studies (STS) scholars (pp. 151–53).

After their succinct, smart introduction, Trudel and De Maeyer's selections (nineteen essays or pamphlets, ranging from "Draft of Action" to "Better Credit Reporting"—Ford's journalistic background was in financial journalism—to "News is the Master Element of Social Control") include explanatory notes that help contextualize a diverse collection. A particularly special part of this project is the availability of the book for free online on the publisher's website.

Many of the texts in the collection have yet to be digitized or preserved and have lain undiscovered in archives across the United States. The editors have brought them together and out of obscurity. They believe that doing so—and presenting Ford's work in this format, as part of a "coherent deep dive" (p. xlvii)—can encourage more scholarship on Ford and his circle and their collective influence and contributions to the birth of sociology and

STS. It also honors Ford's belief in the interconnectedness of ideas and the importance of omnivorous interest in data infrastructures, long before that concept came into vogue.

To that end, Trudel and De Maeyer's carefully presented collection of Ford's thought will be of interest to historians of science and technology, sociologists, media historians, and philosophers. It will be of use to graduate students and scholars more generally doing research on the history of technology, pragmatism, and fin de siècle intellectual movements.

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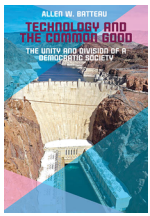
Technology and the Common Good: The Unity and Division of a Democratic Society

By Allen W. Batteau. New York: Berghahn Books, 2022. Pp. 205.



Technology and the Common Good provides an ambitious but sometimes loosely argued synthesis that combines critical perspectives on technology with Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize–winning analyses of the political economy of shared resources. In her 1990 book *Governing the Commons* and subsequent research, Ostrom examines how, despite the "tragedy of the commons" predicted by rational choice theory, communities have in fact found ways to manage shared goods, whether natural resources, shared spaces, or more metaphorical commons such as knowledge. Batteau aims to build on Ostrom's work by highlighting the critical role modern technology has played in both creating and governing the physical and metaphorical commons of contemporary life. In Batteau's eyes, as in much of this literature, common goods are both the source and site for struggles to identify and shape *the* common good.

The strongest parts of Batteau's book explore how modern technology has created new common goods and thus the need for new governance strategies (e.g., chs. 4 and 5). For example, airflight opened a new common physical space, airspace, but likewise created the need to regulate and control movement through that space, eventually instantiated in elaborate national and international policies governing air travel. More metaphorically, we can think about the common "spaces" of the radio frequency spectrum (allocated by