READING NOTES: What is Theory?

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1 Summary

1.1 Technology and Social Theory

Chapter 1 talk about "what technology is, what technology does and how technology has been theorized and what we as social theoriests should be mindful of when studying it."[**?**] To define technology, the author demonstrates from three views: objects, activities and knowledge.

Technology is slippery(difficulty of defining technology): why: 1.Keeping transition and multiple uses and meanings. 2.What we understand by the world has changed across time.

1.2 What technology is?

Technology was seen as:

1. Physical things:objects, artifacts, tools, machines and so on;

2. Human activities;

3. Knowledge.

4. A mode of social organization.

5. Sociotechnical systems.

"For example, you are currently reading this chapter. To do so requires an object (this book), an activity (reading) and knowledge (of the English language)."[**?**]

1.3 What technology does?

1. help us adapt to or control environments

2. solve problems (and create new ones)

3. extend human forces and senses

4. mediate between the physical world and the cultural one

5. are modes of being and knowing, revealing and enframing

6. are agents.

1.4 What has technology been theorized?

1. by privileging technology

2. by privileging society

3. by thinking about the mutual entanglement of technology, society and other things besides.

   path dependency Our decisions about technologies was influence by the decisions in history.

1.5 Technology, Systems and Social Interests

1. think beyond the lone genius inventor

2. include considerations of power, capital and the ability to persuade – they are all important factors in technological success

3. look to the positively reinforcing interactions that sustain sociotechnical systems

4. appreciate previous events (that past informs the present) and their potentially reinforcing nature (positive or negative feedback).

1.6 Our Times: Technology, Complexity and Risk

The development of technology make it harder and harder for people to comprehend the very technologies that constitute our environment.

1. modern technologies are extensive and open-textured, even experts may struggle to master them

2. the intended outcomes for technology might not work out in realityTheorizing Technology

3. technologies are real-time experiments, they have revenge effects, they are accidents waiting to happen

4. ours is a world of technologically-induced global risk.

1.7 What theory is not

Not theory: references, data, variables, diagrams, and hypotheses.
   A good theory explains, predicts, and delights.

2 Critique