

Langdon winner's artifacts ideas and political culture w2

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LANGDON WINNER'S ARTIFACTS/IDEAS AND POLITICAL CULTURE A reflection on Langdon Winner's popular article Artifacts/Ideas and Political Culture in the book Society, Ethics and Technology reveals very interesting and very important concepts with regard to the role of technology in modern society.

Identification of context

The most interesting item selected from Winner's discussion is the argument that there are various contemporary technology that have anti-democratic values in them. These include centralizing power, unequal distribution of goods, including the view that the world is structured in a hierarchical manner as well as the view that men and women have different of divergent competencies. The context of Winner's discussion of this concept was on the present-day evolving political environment. He writes that, for example, " As our political culture has evolved it is important to be aware of the ways in which advancing technology has affected our common experience of freedom, power, authority, community and justice". (P. 83).

Another passage whereby this concept is well elucidated is on the passage of the various deeply embedded effects of technology on society and culture.

Winner offers an illustration of an artifact used in southwestern USA, and writes thus: " For example, if one visits the agricultural fields of the southwestern U. S. A., one finds workers using a hoe, ' el cortito,' a tool with a short handle. There's nothing political about the length of a wooden handle, is there? Well, that depends on the broader social relationships and activities in which it plays a part. To use ' el cortito' you must bend over or get down on your knees. A casual observer might say: If you're digging in the

ground, isn't it sometimes more comfortable to stand up? Why, then, has the handle been shortened? The reason is, in large part, that the foremen who manage the work can look across a field, even at a great distance, and tell who is working and who is not and the foreman can then apply discipline accordingly.... On the broader social relationships and activities in which it plays a part... Even the length of the handle of a hoe expresses a regime, a regime of suppression, power, authority, and control." (p. 86- 87) In this regard, the most important claim made by Winner is that technology has deep effects on society and culture both locally and on an international context.

Evaluation

The clarity of Winner's discussion of this item is uncompromised. He clearly explains issues of technology and how it has influenced political culture. However, in a bid to make his discussion of this concept crystal-clear, an important issue he addresses poorly is the issue of political deliberation. He only addresses how technological engineers should be educated and fails to explore the education of society as a whole, who are the main users and beneficiaries of technology innovations (Pierce, 2007). Certainly, Winner's discussion of these issues allows him to reach the ultimate goal of educating society on the effects of technology. He achieves this purpose by offering three solutions or guiding maxims that can help technology experts and inventors gauge the impact of their technology on political culture.

Reflective Conclusions

Indeed, the discussion by Winner leads to important conclusions as well as calls to action. Inventors of leading technologies in the world are now faced

with the challenge of ensuring that their technologies are not just efficient but meet standards of freedom and social justice. Judy Wajcman's ideas resonate well with the discussion of Winner. In her article Addressing Technological Change: The Challenge to Social Theory, Judy writes of ways through which technology has greatly influenced the social environment, asserting that both technology and society co-evolve and influence each other (Wajcman). Winner's discussion of this issue has practical significance for my relationship to the use of technology. In my use of social networking site Facebook, for example, I find that it has extended the value of freedom, which is also extended in the general use of the Internet.

References

Pierce, C. T. (2007) Democratizing Science and Technology Education: Perspectives from the Philosophy of Education, Proquest.

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