

## Chapter 22

# On the Hazardousness of the Concept 'Technology': Notes on a Conversation Between the History of Science and the History of Technology

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**Abstract** Historians of science and historians of technology have recently turned their attention to the conceptual history of 'applied science' and 'technology' respectively. 'Technology' was a concept introduced in the nineteenth century as concerning both 'applied science' and 'industrial arts.' A developed version of this concept caught on after the first decades of the twentieth century, following the establishment of technological networks and the rise of 'Fordism,' 'Taylorism' and 'technocracy.' Based on interpretations of the nineteenth-century circuit of the steam engine and the twentieth-century network of electric power, this chapter brings together observations from the history of science, the history of technology and the critique of classic political economy to elaborate on the suggestion that 'technology' has been a 'hazardous' concept. Central to the argument of the chapter is the retrieval of a correspondence between the conceptual couples 'technology'-'technics' and 'surplus value'-'value.'

**Keywords** Technology • Applied science • Fordism • Taylorism • Technocracy

### 22.1 Introduction

Historians of technology are no longer obliged to prove that technology has been as noble as science, while historians of science do not have to worry if it turns out that science has been involved in non-noble work. The two fields can now advance by jointly researching the historical differences between science and technology without assuming beforehand what these differences are. This was not always the case. Historians of science initially assumed that technology was 'applied science'. Being nothing more than applied science, technology did not have a right to its own

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