In this concluding chapter we will elaborate on our proposal for a pragmatist approach with regard to the moral problems and conflicts that are typical of a (dynamic and pluralist) technological culture. In the first section we will review the most important issues that came up during the workshop and that are present in the various contributions. In the second section we will further discuss the usefulness of pragmatism to ethics in a more concrete fashion, by assessing the possible and desirable roles or tasks of pragmatist ethics. In the third section we will further elaborate and adapt the “instruments” we introduced in the prologue.

As we will argue further on, we will understand pragmatism as a self-reflective enterprise, which means that we will feel free to interpret and adapt pragmatist theses and philosophies. We will work in a pragmatist spirit rather than follow a pragmatist canon.

1. THEMES: THE CENTRAL ISSUES OF THE WORKSHOP

In this section we will discuss the following issues: technology and ethics, the status of pragmatism, the concept of practice, and democracy and public deliberation. We will give a brief summary of the different views held on these issues, but we will mainly be concerned with the elaboration of our own view.

1.1 Technology and ethics

We are living in a thoroughly technological culture - that is a point we have brought forward already in our prologue to this volume. What we wanted to make clear was that ethics has taken too little account of the insights developed in modern science and technology studies. Contra Light, we do not wish to argue that ethics has failed to take account of technology as such, but that ethics fails to appreciate the specific operative character of technology and its implicit normativity. One of the main messages of science and technology studies is that technological artifacts and

Keulartz, Korthals, Schermer and Swierstra (eds.), Pragmatist Ethics for a Technological Culture, 247-264.
systems bear with them a script or scenario: they create certain social roles and power relations and lay down a specific "geography of responsibilities". An adequate applied ethics should therefore - following science and technology studies - open up the black box of technological development.

In Rorty’s neo-pragmatism as well, the specific character of technology is not sufficiently taken into account. Although Rorty does not consider the notion of technological culture to be an oxymoron, as did the classical philosophy of technology, he does presume a specific division of labor between technology and culture that can be considered obsolete from the point of view of science and technology studies.

For Rorty, technology and culture stand to one another as the cognitive and rational stand to the creative and romantic. These two domains represent two different sides of pragmatism, which can be understood to reflect the so-called split personality of pragmatism (Westbrook, 1998: 128). Rorty (1998) relates this split personality to his well-known private/public split. The two faces of pragmatism correspond to two different vocabularies that should not be mixed: on the one hand the private vocabulary of art and religion in which the notion of creative self-transformation is central, and on the other hand the public vocabulary of science and law in which the solution of practical problems is the main issue.

On the other end of the neo-pragmatic spectrum, Habermas distinguishes two linguistic functions that show similarity to Rorty’s private and public vocabularies. According to Habermas, language has a creative or poetic capacity to disclose new worlds, but it also has the cognitive or prosaic capacity to solve practical problems. Habermas shares Rorty’s view that it is mainly art, possibly complemented by religion or philosophy, which provides the creative impulses that can open up new perspectives on reality, while the role of science and technology is restricted to solving theoretical puzzles and practical problems.

However, considering the results of modern science and technology studies, this division of labor is not at all self-evident. Scientific discoveries and technological artifacts can also open up new perspectives on reality and create room for new interpretations and meanings. They profoundly influence our ways of being in the world, our conceptions of ourselves, and our relations to each other. For instance, modernity is not simply the result of developments within the domain of ideas. It is equally the result of new transportation systems, new communication systems, new medical technologies, and so forth.

Classic pragmatism, and especially Dewey, had a keen eye for the creative, world-disclosing and world-shaping force of modern science and technology. According to Dewey technology and culture are inextricably bound up with each other. The idea that technology is responsible for providing means while culture

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1 James Bohman also resists the view that it is mainly art which provides the creative impulses that open up new perspectives on reality. He has developed a "pragmatic concept of world disclosure" in which an important role is assigned to social critics and social movements. Furthermore, it is interesting that Bohman elaborates this concept in the context of a "logic of discovery" for public deliberation (Bohman, 1996: 213-229).