Techniktheorien: De Platz der Dinge in der Welt des Menschen.

By Susanne Fohler. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002. Pp. 295. €36.90.

The relationship of mankind and technology is never just a curse or a blessing; it is always both. This sums up Susanne Fohler's analysis in *Techniktheorien*. As she puts it: "Great helplessness reigns about how we should meet the challenges of technological progress. To be able to influence and regulate this development, we need an understanding of the connections between social and technological processes. This study aims to render the arguments used in nuclear, biological, and information technology debates available to other discussions and on the other hand to exhibit a sociology of technology that succeeds in avoiding both apocalyptic fears and technology based blessings" (p. 24).

This understanding, according to Fohler, can be based on the history of ideas about technology starting with the German Ernst Kapp and his *Grundlinien einer Philosophie der Technik* (1877) and ending with the Frenchman Bruno Latour and his *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991). Hence she takes the reader on a tour among mostly German and French thinkers and through an analysis of how their work accords with "types of theory," each with its own view on the relationship between technology and mankind. The first type sees technology as a means of enabling humans to do what they like. The second sees technology as unchained. The third and final type studies the latitude in the relations between humans and technology. Fohler states that this typology facilitates a "systematic analysis" of technological theory. If it does not do exactly that, it certainly affords a convenient way of grouping together diverse authors, and thereby provides a practical guide for the name-weary student of STS.

Beyond this, Fohler's book suffers from the quality it ascribes to technology, ambivalence. Though she claims to be providing an overview of European technological theories, she offers only a comparison of French and German theories. Furthermore, the chapters on the first two types of theory are purely descriptive, and the third type is presented as a solution to the "helplessness" alluded to in the introduction. Here Fohler starts to argue for the dissolution of boundaries between what is human and what is not.

Since Fohler prefers the type of theory that gives equal weight to both failed and successful inventions, one would expect not only an explanation for the emergence of this type but also something similar for the other two. But no such explanation is offered. What is worse, Fohler holds to a deterministic concept of technology. She argues that the idea of a theoretical union of the human and the nonhuman has been *caused* by the emergence of new technologies: "Micro-electronic and medical technology show ever more convincingly that the supposed division of man on the one hand and technology on the other cannot be sustained. Aside from the introduction

of probes, pacemakers, catheters and artificial hearts in the human body, it will be technically possible to build in minicomputers in the human organism. . . . Our relationship with the world, with society, and with ourselves is clearly fundamentally changed by science and technology" (p. 271).

To this one can only respond that philosophers such as Latour would argue that theories too are hybrids, and that technologies alone, however sophisticated, can never sufficiently explain change. In short, Fohler's account fails to provide the insight that she believes we need to attain in order "to control hybrid production and integrate hybrids and their social consequences carefully in society" (p. 277).

LARA TAURITZ BAKKER

Lara Tauritz Bakker is a doctoral candidate at the Center for Studies of Science, Technology, and Society at the University of Twente, the Netherlands. Her research interests lie with the development of everyday technologies such as desk chairs and automated teller machines.

Ganz normale Bilder: Historische Beiträge zur visuellen Herstellung von Selbstverständlichkeit.

Edited by Davie Gugerli and Barbara Orland. Zurich: Chronos, 2002.
Pp. 277. €25.90.

"Ganz normale Bilder bedürfen keiner Begründung. . . . Wenn alle meinen, das gleiche zu sehen und zu verstehen, dann ist es die Wirklichkeit." ("Completely normal pictures have no need of justification. . . . If everyone believes they see and understand the same thing, then it is reality.") With this remark David Gugerli and Barbara Orland introduce their anthology, *Completely Normal Pictures*, whose purpose is to show this "normalität" to be the product of a complicated, cultural, social, and technical construction process and of group-specific cultures of communication.

Thus, the volume stands on the one hand in the tradition of constructivist technical and scientific history, in the mode of Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar: "The result of the construction of a fact is that it appears to be unconstructed by anyone." What also counts for the "ganz normalen Bilder" is, as Gugerli and Orland write, that they "bring about the disappearance of their instrumental prerequisites, their procedures and procedural conditions" (p. 10).

Gugerli had written of a "pictorial turn" in the history of technology in 1999, by which time the long-neglected role and significance of pictures in science and technology was becoming an ever more interesting topic of research. Now we have this anthology, which derives from an international workshop in 2000, whose goal is to illuminate the no-longer-visible production processes and contexts of pictures as well as the visual references they make on already "normalized" visualisation techniques. Both the