

Thinking through Technology: The Path Between Engineering and Philosophy
by Carl Mitcham

University of Chicago Press, 1994; xi, 397 pp.

Reviewed by David W. Gill www.ethixbiz.com

Carl Mitcham recently moved from Penn State to the Colorado School of Mines where he is professor of the philosophy of technology. His work as an editor, organizer, and writer has been truly awesome in scope and quality over the past twenty years or so. *Thinking Through Technology* is quite simply the best introduction to the philosophy of technology, by the best contemporary practitioner in the field.

In Part One, "Historical Traditions in the Philosophy of Technology," Mitcham first explores the engineering approach, then the humanities approach, and then the multifaceted interaction of the two streams. In Part Two, "Analytical Issues in the Philosophy of Technology," Mitcham reviews four general ways of looking at technology. The first is "technology as object," understanding technology primarily as tools, artifacts, and machines.

"Technology as knowledge" emphasizes practical knowledge and applied science in distinction from pure theory or scientific research. "Technology as activity" stresses the making and using dimensions of technology. The fourth category, "technology as volition" is the least developed historically and the most abstractly philosophical perspective but deserves a place on the map because we often think of the "essence" of technology as a will to control or conquer, or a will to power.

Thinking Through Technology is very well-written and accessible despite the intimidating sound of "philosophy of technology." Any technologist or business leader who carefully studies this book will be highly rewarded.