

Preface

In some quarters philosophy seems to be conceived as an activity to be performed as independently as possible of the empirical conditions under which it takes place. The ideal philosopher, one would believe, is one who thinks as if he or she were a brain in a vat, capable of thinking on behalf of all possible, potential beings, independently of who we are. Needless to say there are no good reasons to believe this to be possible.

It is much more constructive to base our philosophical endeavours on the admittedly trivial but nevertheless important insight that philosophy is a human enterprise. It is an attempt to understand ourselves and the world that we live in. Therefore it must take into account the basic facts about how we as human beings interact with each other and with the world we live in. One of these basic facts is that we are tool-making animals. With the help of technology we have radically transformed – and continue to transform – the conditions under which we live and the ways in which we understand ourselves and the world.

In this perspective, technology has an important role to play in all branches of philosophical inquiry. The philosophy of science is one of the best examples. Few if any scientific investigations would be possible without technological devices. Many of our procedures for these investigations, such as experiments and measurements, have a strong technological background, and the same applies to important thought models that we employ in science, such as the notion of a mechanism. This book aims at bringing out the omnipresence of technology in science and showing why it must be closely attended to in philosophical reflections on science.

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