

## **Class 12. Do Artifacts Have Politics? (L. Winner) Worksheet**

### PART I: Introduction and Definitions

1.) “Scarcely a new invention comes along that someone doesn’t proclaim it as the salvation of free society.” What examples can you give? How does this relate to Winner’s assertion that technologies can be political? (Who does this?)

2.) Why, as Winner sees it, does it seem **at first glance** completely mistaken to argue that certain technologies *in themselves* have political properties?

3.) Define the Social Construction (Determination) of Technology (SCOT), as described by Winner. Who is this perspective normally aimed at?

4.) Winner introduces “technological politics.” What does this mean? Is it a replacement or a complement to SCOT?

5.) Winner introduces two ways in which artifacts can contain political properties. What are they? Give their definitions.

a.)

b.)

6.) How does Winner define “politics”?

### PART II: Technical arrangement

7.) How does the mere design of Long Island’s Parkways by Robert Moses in the first half of the the 20<sup>th</sup> century have politics?

8.) How do the other examples of city/building construction (Paris streets, concrete monolithic buildings) have politics?

9.) Can mechanization be used for not purely technical or capitalistic reasons? Give examples and describe how.

10.) What does Winner's example of the mechanical tomato harvester imply about agricultural research and development in the United States? How was the harvester the "embodiment of order", according to Winner? [p. 27]

11.) Winner's point is "that seemingly harmless design features can mask social choices of profound significance." What does this imply about how we should set about building highways, television networks, and other social-technical systems?

### Part III: Inherently Political Technologies

12.) What are the two traditions of technology?

13.) According to Winner, authoritarianism is deeply implanted in the human involvement with science and technology. Give some examples of how industry may necessitate strong authority and why.

14.) What two arguments does Winner list that technologies are inherently political?

a.)

b.)

15.) What's the difference between internal versus external politics of technologies?

16.) Why is the atom bomb inherently political according to Winner? Would nuclear based power necessarily decrease civil liberties?

17.) The argument goes that modern industry requires sizable, hierarchical organizations. But is this a requirement of large systems, or are they merely strongly compatible with centralized hierarchical managerial control?

18.) Why do people resist changing their worldview concerning strong authority structures? (Relative to the practical and the businessman's view of democracy.)