Reading Questions for *The Human Motor*, and Helmholtz’s “On the Conservation of Force”

STS.038 Class Discussion: Wednesday, October 4, 2006

1) What does Helmholtz mean by “force?”

2) For whom is Helmholtz writing this paper? What is his argument?

3) Are scientific texts like other historical sources? How are they a particular kind of literary style? How are they different? How can we use them to study history?

4) Why does Helmholtz include appendices at the end of his article?

5) How does Helmholtz’s conservation resemble that worked out by William Thompson and James Joule? How is it different?

6) What is the human motor?

7) What is labor power?

8) How did European thinkers connect natural science to social questions?

9) Why did thinkers shift from describing the “human machine” to the “human motor?”

10) How does Helmholtz appear in Marx? And why?