



***SPT newsletter***

**Volume 22, Number 3 (Spring 1998)**

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**SPT/99 THE 11TH SPT BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
*IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SOCIETY FOR PHILOSOPHY AND GEOGRAPHY*

*SAN JOSE/SILICON VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, USA*  
*14-17 JULY 1999*

**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
*CONFERENCE THEME: TECHNOLOGICAL SPACES*

PAPERS INVITED ON CONFERENCE THEME AND ON OTHER TOPICS CONCERNING  
PHILOSOPHY AND TECHNOLOGY

*TWO-PAGE ABSTRACTS TO BE SUBMITTED BY 15 OCT 1998 NOTIFICATION OF  
ABSTRACT ACCEPTANCE BY 15 DEC 1998*

SEND ABSTRACTS TO:

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Check the SPT website for conference updates.

As an international centre of high technology research, development and manufacturing, Silicon Valley is an ideal location for SPT/99. The conference theme, "Technological Spaces," is meant to encourage both traditional and innovative investigations of the intersection of technology and space or place, variously conceived - including: high-tech regions (like Silicon Valley); the world wide web as social/cyber space; scientific laboratories as technological workplaces; agricultural technics; identity (gender, culture, etc.) and situated technologies; spatial metaphors in computing, etc. In keeping with the conference theme, SPT/99 is being co-sponsored by the Society for Philosophy and Geography. Special outreach is also to be made to other science and technology studies organizations as well as potential colleagues in the Pacific Rim.

The city of San Jose, California's oldest and now third largest city (after Los Angeles and San Diego) is the physical and civic centre of Silicon Valley. San Jose's newly-renovated and rapidly-developing city centre has many cultural and recreational locations, numerous restaurants, cafes, clubs and bars, The Museum of Technology and Innovation, the headquarters of some major high-tech companies, and San Jose State University - all within walking distance. The cities of San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley, the Pacific coast,

Monterey Bay, wineries and dozens of high-tech firms are within an hour's drive.

San Jose State University, founded in 1857, is the oldest institution of public higher education in California, and will be the primary conference site.

**SPT E-JOURNAL: STATUS REPORT FROM GENERAL EDITOR PAUL DURBIN** I assume that all the readers of this newsletter know about SPT's electronic journal. If not, the official title is, SOCIETY FOR PHILOSOPHY AND TECHNOLOGY QUARTERLY ELECTRONIC JOURNAL. The electronic address on the Internet is: [scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/SPT/spt.html](http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/SPT/spt.html).

Volumes 1 and 2, 1995-6 and 1996-7, are available in both html and a neater, downloadable (Acrobat) format. The neat format is intended for people who might need a copy for promotion-and-tenure or similar purposes. In addition, anyone who wants one can receive - at cost - a hard copy of any article or whole volume.

Full details about the journal, including submission and refereeing guidelines, are available in volume 1.

Volume 3 has encountered some small difficulties with issue number 1 (Fall 1997), but they will be straightened out shortly. That issue contains a collection of papers by Dutch philosophers, edited by Pieter Tijmes.

Other materials in hand or to be received shortly include the balance of the papers (at least those accepted by referees) presented at the SPT meeting in Duesseldorf in September 1997. We also have a full volume, co-edited by Evandro Agazzi (Fribourg) and Hans Lenk (Karlsruhe), that contains a selection of papers from the May 1997 conference, "Advances in Philosophy of Technology," held in Karlsruhe, Germany, under the auspices of the Academie Internationale de Philosophie des Sciences. These two sets of material will fill to capacity volumes 3 (1997-8) and 4 (1998-9).

We have received a few papers independent of conference proceedings. I have had to tell authors that these papers must wait for publication until after the conference proceedings volumes are published. This is unfortunate, since we have always had a policy of on-going acceptance of independent submissions for review. We anticipate that this situation will right itself after Spring 1999.

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### **DON IHDE NAMED DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR**

Congratulations to Don Ihde on being named a distinguished professor at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. This constitutes a promotion above full professor and is conferred on scholars who have achieved a national or international reputation in their field. Don Ihde is one of the first philosophers of technology to receive such a promotion.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

At the SPT business meeting in December held in conjunction with the Eastern Division APA in Philadelphia, the Board made two significant decisions:

(1) The Society for Philosophy and Technology Essay Prize was created. This prize (\$500) is to be awarded to the author of the best essay submitted for the biennial Society conference. This competition is open to all members of the Society. The winner must be a member of SPT. The

selection will be made by the Conference Programme Committee.

(2) Beginning with SPT/99, the Society's 11th Biennial International Conference, an amount of \$1000 will be set aside to underwrite two or three travel grants for graduate students whose papers have been selected for the Conference programme. The winner must be a member of SPT. The Selection Committee will be the Program Committee.

### **IN MEMORIUM: SPT Member, Marx Wartofsky**

We regret to announce the passing of Marx Wartofsky on 4 March 1997. Dr. Wartofsky made many important contributions to the philosophy of science, aesthetics, epistemology, the history of philosophy, and the philosophy of technology. Among other honors, he served as President for the Society for Philosophy and Technology from 1987 to 1989.

In 1974 he introduced the project of "historical epistemology." His work focused on the practices of, among other things, science and art. This allowed him to look at the historical dimensions of these modes of cognition without lapsing into essentialism or relativism. This project led him into many diverse areas, including the philosophy of technology, where he investigated topics like economic production and the "digitalization of the mind." He was the author of several books including *Conceptual Foundations of Scientific Thought*, *Feuerbach*, and *Models* as well as numerous articles.

### **CONFERENCE REPORT: The Empirical Turn in the Philosophy of Technology**

Peter Kroes and Anthonie Meijers of the Delft University of Technology organized a workshop on "The Empirical Turn in the Philosophy of Technology", at the Delft Technical University, Delft, The Netherlands, which took place 16-18 April 1998. The format of the workshop (a presentation followed by a short comment, followed by general discussion) maximized informal discussion and facilitated interaction among the participants, which consisted of a mixture of engineers, sociologists, and philosophers.

The major focus of the discussions was the nature of the design process behind the production of technological artifacts. The topics covered a variety of epistemological, metaphysical and ethical issues. By targeting the design process, and through the insights brought to the table by this varied interdisciplinary group, the complexity of a key component of our technological world was exposed in detail. Questions explored concerned the ontological status of technological artifacts at various stages of their production. In addition a range of epistemological issues were investigated concerning the set of assumptions employed in the design process, the problems of deciding under uncertainty, and the pervasive issue of unintended consequences were seen as contextualized and inseparable from one another, as were issues of responsibility and liability.

After three very intense days, followed by delightful hospitality and good food, the workshop concluded with a general discussion of the extent to which this empirical turn allowed us to make the next step in the development of the philosophy of technology. There was wide spread agreement that the emphasis on the empirical from the inside perspective of engineers involved in the design process made the discussion not only well informed, but incredibly focused. It seems hard to imagine further discussion of similar issues without this kind of focus and without recognition of the complexity of the problems.

The program consisted of (in order of presentation) "Introduction: The Empirical Turn in the Philosophy of Technology" by Peter Kroes (Delft); "Engineering A Mistake: The case of the Hubble Space-based Optical Telescope" by Joseph Pitt (Virginia Tech), commentator: Isabelle M. M. J. Reymen (Eindhoven); "Technological Designing, Object to Artifact" by Louis Bucciarelli (MIT), commentator: Maarten P. M. Franssen (Delft); "The Ontology of Design Protocols" by Anthonie W. M. Meijers (Delft), commentator: Marc de Vries (Eindhoven); A General Public Lecture in the evening "Why Philosophy Matters to Engineering" by Carl Mitcham (Penn State);

"Legal Liability and Technological Design and Development" by Henk Zandvoort (Delft), commentator: Ad Vlot (Delft); "The Thing-y-ness of Things: Materiality and Design, Lessons from Spectrochemical Instrumentation" by Davis Baird (South Carolina), commentator: Wiebe E. Bijker (Maastricht); "The Languages of Engineering Design: Representing Objects and Articulating Processes" by Clive Dym (Harvey Mudd), commentator: Philip A. E. Brey (Twente); "Social and Cultural Constraints in Design" by Hans Achterhuis (Twente), commentator: Peter Adriaans (Syllogic); "Professional Ethics in the Domains of Computer and Biotechnological Engineering: Beyond the Role of Responsibility Paradigm" by Carl Mitcham (Penn State) and Rene von Schomberg (Tilburg); "Defining Design Specifications" by Ger Küpers (Stork Engineers and Contractors), commentator: Ibo van de Poel (Delft); "The Empirical Turn and Traditional Philosophy of Technology" by Arie Rip (Twente)

**BOOK REVIEW: Thinking Through Technology: The Path Between Engineering and Philosophy. Carl Mitcham. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. xi+ 394 pp. Cloth: \$47.50, Paper: \$17.95**

This is a much needed book. Carl Mitcham has given us an up to date overall look at the area of inquiry loosely referred to as the Philosophy of Technology. He begins by locating the topic area in terms of two different approaches, "Engineering Philosophy of Technology" and "Humanities Philosophy of Technology." After describing the history of each, taking us through the work of many of their practitioners, showing that the two approaches have fundamentally different concerns, he attempts a reconciliation of sorts. As In this book, Mitcham has provided us with an invaluable resource. But, as with all such resources, not everyone will be fully satisfied with what they find. In what follows, I will concentrate on three issues which struck me as worth commenting on.

To begin with, I am not convinced by Mitcham's dichotomized view of the history of the philosophy of technology. There has been important and perception forming work done in areas other than engineering and philosophy on the nature and value and consequences of various technologies. In particular, Mitcham leaves out of his discussion (except for some curious references to Albert Speer) any serious attention to the contributions of architects on the role and impact of architecture as a technology. Likewise for the depiction of the impact of machines, tools, institutions, etc. found in literature, in art, in the law, and on religious communities (consider the Mennonites). This is not to ignore Mitcham's excellent discussions of the differences between engineers, designers, and craftsmen. It is simple to point out that the attempt to find the roots of philosophical discussion about technology only among engineers and philosophers (somewhat broadly identified) runs a bit roughshod over the fullness of the awareness of technological impacts on society by its members.

Second, Mitcham pays meager attention to his category of Technology as Knowledge, a mere sixteen pages. This concerns me as someone who has come to the philosophy of technology through the philosophy of science. I wonder what happened to all those discussions about the impact of theoretical assumptions on instrument construction and the effect of that on knowledge production. These issues are not just to be found in the current work of Ian Hacking and Alan Franklin, but also in Gaston Bachelard in the 1930s. Scientific instruments embody accepted knowledge. How this happens and what effect it has both scientific and technological processes needs a full discussion.

Finally, it may be that the lack of fullness in the account of technology as knowledge is due to Mitcham's obvious metaphysical bent. Taking his clue from Heidegger (and his explications of Heidegger on technology are the best I have read), the book's epilogue is entitled "Three Ways of Being with Technology". It contains an historical account of three different views of technology and what they entailed for living with those views. But I can't help but wonder, what that essay would have looked like, if it had been titled "Three Ways of Knowing with Technology". The tension between epistemologists and metaphysicians is of long standing. Both the issues and the methodologies differ depending on which of the two you are. It is very much a matter of taste. I, for example, am not very concerned with the ontological status of my tractor. I do, however, want to know how to use it to mow pastures, to move dirt, to grade a road. But this also reflects my philosophical pragmatism. i.e., my methodology. Mitcham is a

metaphysician at heart and he is very good at clearly articulating metaphysical issues and working with those problems. But if a philosophy of technology is really going to be of interest to engineers, it needs to reflect their more epistemological concerns. And I would like to see more developed discussion of the interplay between these two philosophical domains.

To conclude, this is a very important contribution to the developing literature in the philosophy of technology. It should be on everyone's reading list, for it will both inform and lead to further discussion, together the mark of a fine book.

[An expanded version of this review will appear in a forthcoming issue of The International Journal of Philosophy]

Joseph C. Pitt Virginia Tech

### **EVENTS OF INTEREST**

Thirteenth Annual Conference on Computing and Philosophy. This conference will be held in conjunction with the World Congress of Philosophy in Boston during the week of 10-16 August 1998. This year's conference coordinator is Robert Cavalier, Center for the Advancement of Applied Ethics, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213; tel: 412 268 7643; e-mail: rc2zz@andrew.cmu.edu.

On 18-22 August 1998 the 25th Symposium of the International Committee for the History of Technology (ICOHTEC) will be held in Lisbon, Portugal. Contact: Prof. Carroll Pursell, History Dept., Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland OH 44106; e-mail: cpx7@po.cwru.edu.

The 17th Annual Graduate Student Meeting for the History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science, Technology, Medicine and related fields will be held on 17-20 September 1998 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Mephistos is an annual form for graduate students who wish to present papers, interact with colleagues, and discuss topics of concern across a variety of disciplines. The Programme Committee seeks proposals for individual papers related to the History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science, Technology, and Medicine from the ancient period to the present. Please mail, email or fax a one-page abstract for a 15-20 minute paper and brief C.V. postmarked by 1 July 1998 to: Mark Largent, Program in History of Science and Technology, Tate Laboratory of Physics, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455; tel: 612 676 8722; fax: 612 624 4578; e-mail: larg0007@tc.umn.edu. For more information on transportation or inexpensive lodging, write to the above address or check out the Mephistos web site at: <http://home.att.net/~Olorin/mephistos/meph2.htm/>.

Discipline and Deviance: Genders, Technologies, Machines. A conference at Duke University, 2-4 October 1998. We invite proposals that will critically assess the gendered relations which are produced by and produce technology in a global perspective. Please send 300 word abstracts by 30 May 1998 to: Susan Brooks or Alanna Thain, The Literature Program, Art Museum 104, Box 90670, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708-0670; e-mail: smb7@acpub.duke.edu or athain@acpub.duke.edu. Conference web site: <http://www.duke.edu/~athain/discipline.html>.

The Society for the History of Technology will hold its 1998 annual meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, 15-18 October 1998.

The History of Science Society will hold its 1998 Annual Meeting in Kansas City, 21-25 October 1998.

The American Society for Information Science (ASIS), the Chemical Heritage Foundation, and a number of other organizations are organizing a conference on "The History of the Heritage of Scientific Information Systems." 23-25 October, 1998 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Conference Chair: Robert V. Williams, University of South Carolina, College of Library and Information Science, Columbia, SC 29208; tel: 803 777 232; e-mail:

bobwill@sc.edu.

Science, Technology, and the Rise of Nature. 4S (Society for the Social Studies of Science) and ESAC (Environmental Studies Association of Canada) are jointly sponsoring this conference to be held from 30 October to 1 November 1998 at the Hotel Halifax in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Gendered Landscapes: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Past Place and Space, 31 May to 1 June 1999. The Nittany Lion Inn, State College, PA. The goals of this conference are to learn, explore, and share particular perspectives within a multidisciplinary community and to initiate an ongoing dialog regarding issues of gender and past construction of place and space. A call for papers/panels will be mailed in August 1998 and abstracts will be due 11 December 1998. Please bookmark the program Web site:

<http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/GenderedLandscapes>. For more information, contact: Roberta Moore, Conference Planner, The Pennsylvania State University, 225 The Penn State Conference Center Hotel, University Park, PA 16802-7002; tel: 814 863 5120; fax: 814 863 5190; e-mail: [conferenceInfor1@cde.psu.edu](mailto:conferenceInfor1@cde.psu.edu)

The American Society for Environmental History announces the call for papers for its biennial meeting to be held in Tucson, Arizona, 14-18 April 1999. The theme will be "Environmental History across Boundaries." Proposals should be postmarked by 15 July 1998. For details, contact Edmund Russell (program chair), Technology, Culture, and Communication, SEAS, Thornton Hall A-237, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903; tel: 804 982 2623; e-mail: [epr5@virginia.edu](mailto:epr5@virginia.edu).

## **NEW TITLES**

Compiled by Mechthild Nagel

Technology and Privacy: The New Landscape, Philip E. Agre and Marc Rotenberg (MIT).

Zen and the Brain, James Austin, M.D. (MIT).

Technology and Science in the Industrializing Nations: 1500-1914, Eric Dorn Brose, (Humanities).

Geography and Identity, Dennis Crow (ed.) (Uminn Press).

Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation, Donald J. Deibert (Columbia).

The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America, Kathryn Marie Dudley (Chicago).

The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counter Culture, Thomas Frank (Chicago).

Image & Logic: A material Culture of Microphysics, Peter Galison (Chicago).

On the Home Front: The Cold War Legacy of the Hanford Nuclear Site, Michele Stenehjem Gerber (Nebraska).

Ethics, Computing, and Medicine: Informatics and the Transformation of Health Care, Kenneth W. Goodman (ed) (Cambridge).

The Scientific Revolution: Aspirations and Achievements 1500-1700, James R. Jacob (Humanities).

Consuming Power: A Social History of American Energies, David E. Nye (MIT).

Narratives and Spaces. Technology and the Construction of American Culture, David Nye (Columbia).

Sharing the Earth: The Rhetoric of Sustainable Development, Tarla R. Peterson (S. Carolina).

The Long Path to Nearness: A Contribution to a Corporeal Philosophy of Communication, Ramsey Eric Ramsey (Humanities).

Moths to the Flame: The Seductions of Computer Technology, Gregory J.E. Rawlins (MIT).

On Rims & Ridges: The Los Alamos Area Since 1880, Hal K. Rothman (Nebraska).

Sketches of Landscapes. Philosophy by Example, Avrum Stroll (MIT).

Hiding, Mark C. Taylor (Chicago).

### **DUES ANNOUNCEMENT**

Please make sure your dues payments are up to date.

Dues are normally payable in August for the following academic year. The number to the right of your name on the mailing label that came with this issue of *Techne* indicates the August through which your membership is current. If the number is now "97" or lower, it is time to renew your membership. For the effective operation of the Society, dues need to be kept up to date.

Dues remain \$10US per year. Past due memberships can be brought up to date at the rate of \$10US per year. Members can pay for more than one year in advance, also at the rate of \$10US per year.

Dues should be sent to SPT Treasurer Albert A. Anderson at the address given in the next column. Canadian members may pay by cheque in Canadian dollars in an amount equal to \$10US. (We are not yet able to accept credit cards or Eurocheck numbers for dues payment.)

### **SPT WEBSITE**

The SPT website address is: [www.spt.org](http://www.spt.org). Please check it for information about the Society, its membership and its activities. Updates on SPT/99, the 11th SPT Biennial Internal Conference, will be posted as plans fall into place.

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