*Society for Philosophy and Technology*

# SPT Newsletter

## Volume 28, Number 2 – Summer 2004

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## Letter from the President

I am winding down my sabbatical in the Netherlands, and getting ready to head back to Michigan State. I have had a wonderful and productive time working in Wageningen, and also managed a visit to Delft, where I was able to meet with Pieter Vermaas and Peter Kroes concerning the planning for next summer's meeting. I think that this will be a sensational event, and urge everyone to start planning now to attend. There are a lot of exciting things happening in philosophy and/of technology all over the Netherlands, and this will probably be one of the most intellectually stimulating meetings ever.

Regarding other SPT business, I must report that we have yet to close the books on our meeting in Utah in the summer of 2003. It is clear that the SPT suffered financial losses on the meeting, but it is not yet clear how substantial those losses are. The basic problem was that attendance was much less than had been predicted based on the previous meeting in Aberdeen. Our Treasurer Diane Michelfelder is working with the conferences office at Utah State. She reports some progress in working out a final accounting and an arrangement with Utah State. Hopefully be able to report on the current financial state of the society at our next meeting.

This situation makes it all the more important that members take an active role in paying dues (dues notices will be out soon), recruiting new members, and in supporting the 2005 meeting. Many exciting things are happening in our field, and we should be much stronger than we are in terms of membership and participation at our international meetings. Ballots have just gone out for the election of officers, and I hope that everyone will take the time to vote.

One additional topic concerns the electronic newsletter. As members may know, this has been debated for years, and the same issues face all academic organizations of similar size. The problem with a paper edition is that printing and mailing a newsletter is expensive, especially given the international scope of the membership, but against the idea of an electronic newsletter are concerns that electronic documents still do not reach everyone, may tend to be read less faithfully, and do not serve as a vehicle for bringing out activities to the attention of non-members. I predict that this technological issue will be with us for some time to come.

I hope everyone has a pleasant and productive summer.

Paul B. Thompson

## SPT 2005 conference: Call for Papers

# Call for Papers
# 14th meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Technology

*July 20-22, 2005*
*Delft University of Technology,*

*Delft, The Netherlands*

Conference Theme:
"Technology and Designing"

The Society for Philosophy and Technology has sponsored conferences on philosophical aspects of technology since the late 1970s. Current conferences are held every other year, rotating between North America and Europe. The Society welcomes a broad range of papers from various philosophical perspectives and schools. This year, the program committee especially invites submissions on the conference theme of technology and designing, but submissions on all aspects of philosophy and technology are welcome, including work on biotechnology, genetics and philosophy, and information technology. The conference theme may be interpreted broadly, inclusive of:
"Philosophy and engineering design"
"Philosophy and architectural design"
"Methodological and epistemic issues in designing"
"Ethical, anthropological or political issues in designing"

*SUBMISSIONS*:
Submissions to the conference may be made with an abstract of between 200 and 400 words. Proposals for full sessions are also welcome; please include abstracts for all papers to be included in sessions. Electronic submissions are preferred. They may be forwarded as a Word (.doc), Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Portable Document Format (.pdf) attachment to: sptdelft2005@tbm.tudelft.nl

*FINAL PAPERS:*
Most accepted papers will be assigned a commentator, for which a final paper of not more that 12 pages, double-spaced, is required. A period of 20 minutes is planned for the presentation of a paper.

*COMMENTATORS*:
If you would like to serve as a commentator, please contact the organizers at sptdelft2005@tbm.tudelft.nl

*TIME SCHEDULE:*
The final deadline for submissions of abstracts and sessions is November 30, 2004. Notification of acceptance will be made by February 15, 2005. Final papers should be submitted by May 1, 2005, in order to provide commentators with ample time for preparing remarks.

*PUBLICATION*:
Techné, the peer reviewed journal of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, welcomes accepted papers to be submitted for publication.
Also a volume with a selection of accepted papers on the conference theme of technology and designing is envisaged.

The city of Delft has a population of some 100.000 and is located in the West of the Netherlands, in between Rotterdam and The Hague. It has a nice historic city centre with its canals, pubs and restaurants. The vault of the Dutch Royal Family is in Delft. And Delft is of course well-known for its blue earthenware and for the 17th century painter Johannes Vermeer.

The conference site for the 2003 SPT meetings will be at the Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management building located at the campus of Delft University of Technology. The building is within walking distance (15 minutes) of the city centre of Delft and of the Delft railway station. Delft can be reached by train (40 minutes; one change of trains) from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, which offers many direct European and intercontinental connections.

Check the conference website (http://www.sptdelft2005.tbm.tudelft.nl/) for further information and conference updates.
Further inquiries may be made at sptdelft2005@tbm.tudelft.nl

*Programme committee:*
Peter Kroes (chair and SPT vice president)
    Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands
Paul Thompson (SPT president)
    Michigan State University, USA.
Wiebe Bijker
    Universiteit Maastricht, The Netherlands.
Klaus Kornwachs
    Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus, Germany
Andrew Light (SPT immediate past president)
    New York University, USA.
José Antonio López Cerezo
    Universidad de Oviedo, Spain.
Steven Moore
    University of Texas, USA.
Michela Nacci
    University of L'Aquila, Italy
Pieter Vermaas (conference coordinator)
    Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands

This conference is sponsored by the Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management of Delft University of Technology.

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## Calls for papers

# CEPE 2005: Ethics of New Information Technology.

## Sixth International Conference of Computer Ethics: Philosophical Enquiry
*July 17-19, 2005, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands*

The CEPE conference series is recognized as one of the premier international events on computer and information ethics attended by delegates from all over the world. Conferences are held about every 24 months, alternating between Europe and the United States. CEPE 2005 is the sixth conference in the series. Information technology is currently moving well beyond the familiar mainframe, PC and laptop computer

paradigms. We are witnessing the mobile revolution, the ubiquitous computing revolution, as well as revolutionary new uses of IT in biomedicine, education, the fight against crime and terrorism, entertainment and other areas. We are anticipating a nanotechnology revolution, as well as a convergence between information technology, biotechnology and nanotechnology. These new developments require ethical reflection, possibly even before their consequences become visible. The special theme of CEPE2005 is **ethics of new information technology**.

Papers of an ethical or philosophical nature within the following areas are particularly welcomed:
- Virtual and augmented reality and shared virtual environments
- Nanotechnology and nanocomputing
- Ubiquitous computing and ambient intelligence
- Converging technologies (the convergence of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science)
- New surveillance technologies and new technologies for security and privacy
- New uses of information technology in biomedicine and bioengineering
- New military applications of IT
- New uses of information technology in education
- New IT solutions to environmental problems
- New communication technologies and mobile computing devices
- New developments in artificial intelligence, artificial agents, embedded systems and artificial life
- Models for the ethical assessment of new and future information technologies

We particularly welcome papers from applied ethics fields other than computer ethics that focus on any of the above areas, as well as papers from computer science professionals who combine their state-of-the-art knowledge of IT with ethical analysis. As in previous CEPE conferences, original papers on computing and ethics outside the scope of the conference theme will also be considered for acceptance. Papers will be accepted on the basis of a submitted abstract, which will be refereed. An abstract must be between 1200 and 1400 words in length (references included) and submitted via email as embedded plain text or an attachment in RTF or WORD 6 format.

Abstracts must be submitted no later than 1 November 2004 to cepe@utwente.nl. Authors will be informed of the decision of the referees by 15 January 2005. Full papers must be submitted by 1 May 2005. We will also accept proposals for panel discussions, also to be submitted by 1 November 2004.

CEPE 2005 will take place in conjunction with the 14th Biennial International Conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology (SPT), which will be held from July 20-22 at Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands. Further information can be found on the conference website: cepe2005.utwente.nl.

Conference director: Philip Brey, University of Twente, The Netherlands
Conference co-directors: Luciano Floridi, Oxford University, United Kingdom
Frances Grodzinsky, Sacred Heart University, United States
Lucas Introna, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

## Forthcoming Events

*Computing and Philosophy* – 2004 CAP Conference at Carnegie Mellon, August 5th- 7th
Computing and Philosophy (CAP) conferences have become the central meeting place for all aspects of computing and philosophy. CAP now holds both East Coast and West Coast meetings on a bi-annual basis. As with all CAP conferences, speakers and panels will address many aspects of the "computational turn" that is occurring within the discipline of Philosophy. Featured topics include AI and Epistemology, new models of Logic Software, Computer Ethics, Computing and World Cultures, Electronic Resources, and the Impact of Distance Learning on the Profession. *More information: iacap.org.*

*Genetics and Health Care* – Reykjavik, Iceland, August 25-28, 2004
Conference organized by the European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare (ESPMH), the ELSAGEN bioethics project, and the Centre for Ethics at the University of Iceland .The focus of the conference is on philosophical, ethical and legal issues in relation to biomolecular technologies, and genetics in particular. The program of the conference includes plenary sessions as well as parallel sessions. Papers will address the philosophical, ethical and historical dimensions of the conference topic. *More information: http://www.hi.is/~elsagen/espmh/*

*Artefacts in Philosophy - October 3-4, 2004, Delft, The Netherlands*
Technical artefacts – roughly speaking, the material products of our endeavour to attain our practical goals – have a modest presence in philosophy. They play a role in the work of some major philosophers, such as Aristotle, Locke and Heidegger, but they are seldom used as the starting point of philosophical analysis. Art works may be regarded as the centerpieces of aesthetics, but household items and other products of engineering activities have largely met with philosophical indifference. Even in the philosophy of technology, artefacts often play supporting roles in the drama of their societal impact. The conference *Artefacts in Philosophy* intends to show that artefacts are valuable instruments for philosophers. An analysis of artefacts is entangled with major philosophical themes and disciplines in surprising ways, and may profitably be used to cast light in several areas of central philosophical interest. At the conference, we aim to examine several philosophical themes for which artefacts can provide new – in some cases much needed – leverage. To put the motto of the conference more forcibly: an analysis of the nature, use and design of artefacts may serve as a lever to open new entrances into existing domains, or to make headway into new areas of research. The conference covers the following themes:

- Epistemology
Knowledge of artefact functions, which is indispensable in everyday life, seems intrinsically connected to intentional action. It is not strictly about what to think, but also or primarily about what to do. This may make this type of knowledge different from the standard descriptive type, but showing this requires developing the connection to action beyond mere intuitions. Furthermore, engineers and designers act as sources of knowledge of artefacts and their functions, making this a suitable topic for study in social epistemology.

- Normativity
Artefacts are assessed as well as used. We routinely evaluate artefacts as good or flawed specimens of their kind. But we also make apparently deontic statements about how artefacts and their users ought to behave or act. This raises questions such as: Is it indeed possible to make normative statements about objects? Is the 'ought' in the deontic statements apparent only? Does the classic distinction between ought to be and ought to do apply, given the interconnections between assessments of artefacts and of use? How do these evaluative and deontic statements relate?

- Conceptual Coherence
Artefacts can be described both in terms of their function and of their physical structure. Designers often describe their own activity as starting with functional specifications and ending with a structural description. It

makes sense to think that they explain their designs post hoc by describing how the physical object can fulfil the function. This raises a question about how exactly the functional and structural descriptions cohere, and whether their interrelations are different than those of the well-studied, similar physical and mental/intentional descriptions of the human mind.

- Ontology

We see the need to develop an ontology of artefacts that does justice to both their functionality and materiality. Artefacts can be understood as function-bearing physical objects, or physical role-players. Can the relation between function and physical structure be analysed in terms of supervenience? Is the artefact as functional object identical to the physical object, or is there need for a general distinction - like the one between the statue and the clay? What are the individuating conditionals for artefacts? Is there a conceptual distinction between (functional) components and (structural) parts?

*More information:*
*http://www.dualnature.tudelft.nl/main_artefactsinphilosophy.htm*

## Recent publications of interest

### Readings in the Philosophy of Technology
*David M. Kaplan*

The anthology *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology* collects the important works of both the forerunners and contemporary theorists of philosophy of technology, addressing a wide range of topics on technology as it relates to ethics, politics, human nature, computers, science, food, and the environment. Compiled specifically with students and newcomers in mind, this book explores the multiple ways in which humanity shapes and affects technologies and is, in turn, shaped and affected by them. Readers will learn to understand, evaluate, appreciate, and criticize the ways that technology both reflects and changes human life-individually, socially, and culturally. *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology* is an ideal core text for undergraduate courses in Philosophy of Technology, Science, Technology, and Society, and Ethics and Technology.

More information:
http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/isbn/0742514889

## Membership and Dues

### SPT Membership
SPT welcomes as members persons from all countries whose professional interests include philosophically significant considerations of technology. Membership is open to those who have an advanced degree (typically but not necessarily in philosophy), to those who are in a technological field, and to students whose work is in keeping with the interests of the Society. Dues are $20US per year, which includes a subscription to the SPT Newsletter (dues for students are $15US, and gratis for people in developing nations).

### Ways to pay your dues

Payment of SPT dues is being handled by the Philosophy Documentation Center. Dues can be paid by cheque, money order or credit card (VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER). Payments by any of these methods can be sent to the address below. Credit card payments can also be made by fax or over the phone via the numbers below. (For credit card payments include card number and expiration date).

Society for Philosophy and Technology
Philosophy Documentation Center
P.O. Box 7147
Charlottesville, VA 22906-7147 USA
Tel. (toll free from the US & Canada): 800 444 2419
Tel. (from anywhere): 434 220 3300
Fax: 434 220 3301

*Online updating of membership*
For online updating of your SPT membership, please go to the SPT page of the Philosophy Documentation Center website at http://www.pdcnet.org/member-spt.html. Then go to "Current Members" and click on "More Login Options." The order number requested is the one you receive on your renewal notice. Enter your customer number or your name and address and click "Submit". This will bring back your address and membership status and will give you the option of renewing. On the right side of the screen, you may click on "Edit Email/Login" and add an email address to your information.

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## SPT Officers

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