

SPT newsletter

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1. President's column

Dear SPT members!

A few weeks ago I searched through my bookshelf and my files for papers on the philosophy of technology that would be suitable for a course for PhD students. That reminded me of doing the same thing eleven years ago for the first postgraduate course that I gave on the subject. Then I had a hard time covering all the major themes in the philosophy of technology with the type of high-quality papers that I was looking for. In particular, I did not find enough papers that combined philosophical depth with close attention to the actual workings of technology in a social context. Now I found a lot of papers answering to that description, in all the areas of philosophy of technology where I was looking for literature. So now my difficulty was that there were way too many texts that I would have liked to have as required readings.

The difference probably depends in part on my acquaintance with the literature, which has hopefully improved. But I believe that it also depends to a large part on developments in our discipline. It has grown, and perhaps even to some extent matured. But that is no reason to be complacent. There is so much more that needs to be done. The papers that I have selected for our PhD students point out a large number of open questions, quite a few of which had not even been asked eleven years ago.

Sven Ove Hansson, President of the SPT

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2. New editors for *Techné* are needed

Joe Pitt, who has served very successfully as editor in chief of our journal *Techné* since 2007, has decided to step down. The same applies to Thomas Staley, the journal's book review editor. This means that the Board of SPT has to appoint new editors. If you are interested in becoming a member of the editorial board, please send a message to the SPT president Sven Ove Hansson (soh@kth.se), preferably before March 20. Editing a journal is a very useful experience for a scholar, so it is strongly recommended!

3. *Techné*: cfp

Techné: Research in Philosophy & Technology, the official journal of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, continues to welcome submissions from all SPT members. All philosophical perspectives and styles are welcome. The editorial stance of *Techné* is ideologically neutral. There is, however, a unifying theme: a focus on technology, particular technologies, modern or traditional, worldwide, or on social and ethical problems associated with particular technologies. *Techné* aims at being the platform for presenting novel developments and results in academic research on this theme. We therefore seek rigorous, seminal, interesting, creative work and eagerly solicit work from those in fields outside philosophy as long as they offer philosophical perspective.

Submissions will be blind refereed by at least two readers. It is our expectation that authors will be provided with critiques, where in the judgment of the editors they are deemed helpful. We also seek to have a turn-around time of three months, although this is subject to the cooperation of our referees. We construe philosophy of technology broadly, and we are dedicated to fostering the highest standards in what is becoming a diverse field of study. We welcome proposals for special issues as well as manuscripts for regular publication.

We hope you will consider submitting your work to *Techné*. Submissions and questions can be directed by email to technejournal@gmail.com.

Our publication is accessible to all SPT members and subscribers through the Philosophy Documentation Center at:

<http://secure.pdcnet.org/techné>

4. SPT biennial conference

18th Biennial International Conference of the SPT, 4-6 July, 2013, University of Lisbon (ICS-UL) and Technical University of Lisbon

The SPT 2013 theme is Technology in the Age of Information. A main aim of the conference is to encourage debate on the cultural, social, economic, political and ethical implications of advances in information and media technology. Digital networks and computerized technological systems have enlarged the domain of human technological action and responsibility, which raises new questions about the impacts of globalization and of the expanding information economy on the public and cultural spheres. A challenge facing the philosophy of technology and STS disciplines is to reflect upon our changed human condition and propose new ways to think through the quandaries technologies generate.

For more information about the conference, please visit the conference website, <http://www.spt2013.com>

5. Organize the SPT conference in 2015!

Traditionally, SPT's biennial conference alternate between the American and the European continent. Who will host the 2015 conference? If your department is interested in doing this, please take contact with the SPT president, Sven Ove Hansson (soh@kth.se), so that we can start a dialogue. The decision will of course be taken by the SPT board.

6. Elections for the SPT board

A couple of positions on the SPT board will have to be filled. A call for nominations will soon be sent out, to be followed by an election. It may be a good idea to start thinking about nominations.

7. SPT philosophy of technology portal

The new SPT Philosophy of technology portal is now available at the SPT website (www.spt.org). The portal has been established and sponsored by the 3TEP project of the University of Twente, Colorado School of Mines, and the University of North Texas. The three refers to the three universities and TEP refers to Technology and Environmental Philosophy. The 3TEP project has been financed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

8. SPT Facebook group

There is an SPT Facebook group at:
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/205835046119933/>

Come and join us!

9. Membership and dues

The Society for Philosophy and Technology is an independent international organization that encourages, supports and facilitates philosophically significant considerations of technology. Founded in 1976, the Society is dedicated to the pluralistic exploration of technology, and welcomes a variety of philosophical and other disciplinary approaches in both its conferences and its publications.

The Society publishes *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* (a scholarly journal), the proceedings of its international conferences, and the quarterly SPT Newsletter.

Membership in the Society for Philosophy and Technology is open to individuals whose work is in keeping with the interests of the Society – including those who have an advanced degree (typically but not necessarily in philosophy), those who work in a technical field, and students whose work includes philosophically significant considerations of technology.

More information about SPT and its activities is available at the Society for Philosophy and Technology website, www.spt.org.

All membership levels include online access to available issues of *Techné*.

Individual – Regular membership

Online (Single user licence)	\$65.00
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Student or Independent Scholar

Online (Single user licence)	\$45.00
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Members in Developing Nations

Online (Single user licence)	\$0.00
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Payment of SPT dues is handled by the Philosophy Documentation Center. Dues can be paid online at: <http://secure.pdcnet.org/sptech>

Dues can also 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 telephone via the numbers below. (For credit card payments, include card number and expiration date). All payments should be made to “Society for Philosophy and Technology.”

Please do not forget to mention your name, affiliation, address, country and email.

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10. Summer school

Sustainable Technologies and Trans-disciplinary Futures: From Collaborative Design to Digital Fabrication, STTF2013 Summer School, July 8-12, ISCTE-IUL University Institute of Lisbon.

STTF2013 invites you to apply for a one week intensive programme of social and technical methods, in a transdisciplinary environment that will engage participants in both conceptual and

practical activities with all four pillars of sustainability as background.

STTF2013 is intended for Master and PhD students, researchers, and professionals from STS, Product and Service Design, Social Sciences and Humanities, Architecture and Engineering, Communication and Media, Environmental Studies, Economics and Management, Computer Sciences, and others.

Regardless of individual experience, everyone will have the opportunity to work in socio-technical processes of design, construction and discussion of concrete objects, through Introductory Sessions, Masterclasses and Hands On Workshops.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Jerry Ravetz (University of Oxford UK)

Liz Sanders (MakeTools US)

Tomas Diez (FabLab Barcelona ES)

Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent (Université Panthéon-Sorbonne FR)

Alex Schaub (FabLab Amsterdam NL)

IMPORTANT DATES

Application Deadline: April 1

Notification of Selected Participants: April 15

Early Registration and Payment Deadline: May 1

Late Registration and Payment Deadline: June 1

For more information on how to apply, fees, programme, speakers, or venue, please visit our website <http://sttf2013.iscte-iul.pt> or contact us at sttf2013@iscte.pt or call CIES-IUL Front Desk +351 210 464 018. See also facebook.com/sttf2013 and twitter.com/sttf2013.

STTF2013 is a joint initiative of VitruviusFabLab-IUL (Digital Fabrication Laboratory) and CIES-IUL (Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology), research units of ISCTE-IUL (University Institute of Lisbon).

11. Society for the Philosophy of Information

Following a 10-year period of formal and informal collaboration between several researchers, the establishment of the Society for the Philosophy of Information (SPI, <http://socphilinfo.org>) inaugurates the next phase in the development of the philosophy of information as an independent and self-sustained philosophical field.

The Society was founded during the fourth workshop on the philosophy of information held at the University of Hertfordshire in May 2012, and is now ready to open its membership to anyone interested in the philosophy of information while promoting its scientific and educational activities.

Prior collaborations, including part of the work done at the Oxford-based IEG research-group, several editorial projects, and a highly successful workshop-series, will find a new home in this society. In addition to this legacy, several new activities will be launched and led by some of the current members of the society.

Concretely, the SPI:

- brings together scholars in the area harnessing the multidisciplinary and international nature of the Philosophy of Information;
- organises workshops, seminars, conferences and other similar activities to explore the philosophical issues concerning the concept of information and its cognate notions;
- publishes teaching material for undergraduate and graduate courses on the Philosophy of Information;
- maintains a state-of-the-art collection of bibliographic resources;
- fosters editorial projects and funding proposals.

In this way, the SPI offers learning and research instruments to undergraduate and graduate students, while promoting the academic network and activities of junior and senior academics whose work focuses on the Philosophy of Information.

The website of the SPI (<http://socphilinfo.org>) is the main centre of activity where we present the aim and focus of the philosophy of information, the mission of its society, and, most importantly, provide information about the current and soon to be launched activities of the SPI. The current activities include:

- a regularly updated PI-related news feed;
- an overview of previous workshops in the philosophy of information, and an announcement of the fifth workshop;
- a brand new textbook on the philosophy of information that forms the cornerstone of our teaching resources;

While the soon to be launched activities include:

- a sustained presence of SPI-sponsored sessions at international conferences;
- a repository of teaching resources, including an overview of courses in the philosophy of information that are currently taught;
- bibliographic resources on the philosophy of information, including an annotated bibliography;
- an overview of the many edited volumes and monographs on the philosophy of information that were published during the last ten years;
- book-reviews and book-symposia on notable publications that fit within or are relevant to the philosophy of information.

Interested researchers and students are encouraged to support this enterprise by becoming a member and by taking part in the activities of the society.

12. Recent publications of interest

Oosterlaken, I. and J. van den Hoven (Eds.) (2012) *The Capability Approach, Technology and Design. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 5. Springer.

The capability approach of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen places human capabilities at the centre stage of discussions about justice,

equality, development and the quality of life. It rejects too much emphasis on mere preference satisfaction or resource provision and highlights the importance of human agency and freedom. This approach has already significantly influenced different fields of application, like economics and development studies. Only recently have scholars started to explore its relevance for and application to the area of technology and design, which can be crucial factors in the expansion of human capabilities. How does technology influence human capabilities? What difference could a capability approach make to policies and practices of applying ICT in development processes in the South? How can we criticize and improve the design of technology from the perspective of the capability approach? The authors of this volume explore the implications of the capability approach for technology & design and together create the first volume on this emerging topic.

Kroes, P. (2012) *Technical Artefacts: Creations of Mind and Matter: A Philosophy of Engineering Design. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 6. Springer.

This book presents an attempt to understand the nature of technical artefacts and the way they come into being. Its primary focus is the kind of technical artefacts designed and produced by modern engineering. In spite of their pervasive influence on human thinking and doing, and therefore on the modern human condition, a philosophical analysis of technical artefacts and engineering design is lacking. Among the questions addressed are: How do technical artefacts fit into the furniture of the universe? In what sense are they different from objects from the natural world, or from the social world? What kind of activity is engineering design and what does it mean to say that technical artefacts are the embodiment of a design? Does it make sense to consider technical artefacts to be morally good or bad by themselves because of the way they influence human life? The book advances the thesis that technical artefacts, conceived of as physical constructions with a technical function, have a dual nature; they are hybrid objects combining physical and intentional features. It proposes a theory of

technical functions and technical artefact kinds that does justice to this dual nature, analyses engineering design from the dual nature point of view, and argues that technical artefacts, because of their dual nature, have inherent moral significance.

Demir, H. (Ed.) (2012) *Luciano Floridi's Philosophy of Technology: Critical Reflections. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 8. Springer.

Information and communication technologies of the 20th century have had a significant impact on our daily lives. They have brought new opportunities as well as new challenges for human development. The Philosopher: Luciano Floridi claims that these new technologies have led to a revolutionary shift in our understanding of humanity's nature and its role in the universe. Floridi's philosophical analysis of new technologies leads to a novel metaphysical framework in which our understanding of the ultimate nature of reality shifts from a materialist one to an informational one. In this world, all entities, be they natural or artificial, are analyzed as informational entities. This book provides critical reflection to this idea, in four different areas:

Information Ethics and The Method of Levels of Abstraction
 The Information Revolution and Alternative Categorizations of Technological Advancements
 Applications: Education, Internet and Information Science
 Epistemic and Ontic Aspects of the Philosophy of Information
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Sageng, J. R., H. Fossheim and T. M. Larsen (Eds.) (2012) *The Philosophy of Computer Games. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 7. Springer.

Computer games have become a major cultural and economic force, and the last decade has seen the emergence of extensive academic study of such games. Up until now there has been little attention from philosophy to investigate the philosophical problems that arise from the phenomenon of computer games. This book fills this lacuna by bringing philosophers and media researchers together in discussions of the basic concepts needed to understand computer games. The essays address central issues such as the reality status of the game environment, gameplay, and the moral evaluation of player or avatar actions. The anthology is required reading for anyone with an academic or professional interest in computer games, and will also be valuable to any reader curious about the philosophical issues that are raised by modern-day digital culture.

De Vries, M., S. O. Hansson and A. W. M. Meijers (Eds.) (2013) *Norms in Technology. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 9. Springer.

This book is a distinctive fusion of philosophy and technology, delineating the normative landscape that informs today's technologies and tomorrow's inventions. The authors examine what we deem to be the internal norms that govern our ever-expanding technical universe. Recognizing that developments in technology and engineering literally create our human future, transforming existing knowledge into tomorrow's tools and infrastructure, they chart the normative criteria we use to evaluate novel technological artifacts: how, for example, do we judge a 'good' from a 'bad' expert system or nuclear power plant? As well as these 'functional' norms, and the norms that guide technological knowledge and reasoning, the book examines commonly agreed benchmarks in safety and risk reduction, which play a pivotal role in engineering practice. Informed by the

core insight that, in technology and engineering, factual knowledge relating, for example, to the properties of materials or the load-bearing characteristics of differing construction designs is not enough, this analysis follows the often unseen foundations upon which technologies rest—the norms that guide the creative forces shaping the technical landscape to come. The book, a comprehensive survey of these emerging topics in the philosophy of technology, clarifies the role these norms (epistemological, functional, and risk-assessing) play in technological innovation, and the consequences they have for our understanding of technological knowledge.

Christensen, S. H., C. Mitcham, B. Li and Y. An (Eds.) (2012) *Engineering, Development and Philosophy: American, Chinese and European Perspectives*. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology, Vol. 11. Springer.

This inclusive, cross-cultural study rethinks the nexus between engineering, development, and culture. It offers diverse commentary from a range of disciplinary perspectives on how the philosophies of today's cultural triumvirate—American, European and Chinese—are shaped and given nuance by the cross-fertilization of

engineering and development. Scholars from the humanities and social sciences as well as engineers themselves reflect on key questions that arise in this relational context, such as how international development work affects the professional views, identities, practice and ethics of engineers. The first volume to offer a systematic and collaborative study that cuts across continental boundaries, the book delineates the kinds of skills and competences that tomorrow's engineering success stories will require, and analyzes fascinating aspects of the interplay between engineering and philosophy, such as how traditionally Chinese ways of thinking can influence modern engineering practice in the world's most populous country. China's problematic mix of engineering woes and wonders, from the high profile crash on its high-profile rail network to its 'bird's nest' Olympic stadium, adds to the urgency for reform, while Europe's Enlightenment-informed legal frameworks are contrasted with Chinese mechanisms in their governance of the field of nanotechnology, a crucial element of future technical evolution. Fascinating and compelling in equal measure, this volume addresses one of the topics at the leading edge of humanity's quest to survive, and to thrive.