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FITTING THE PARTICULAR AND THE GENERAL

Human-Technology Relations in the Context of Technological Systems and Global Events

Olya Kudina o.kudina@tudelft.nl
Department of Values, Technology & Innovation, Section on Ethics and Philosophy of Technology, Delft University of Technology, ORCiD 0000-0001-5374-1687

Peter-Paul Verbeek p.p.c.c.verbeek@uva.nl
University of Amsterdam,ORCiD 0000-0001-9861-4091

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Corresponding author: Olya Kudina

In this editorial, we will traditionally reflect on the contributions to the second issue of the Journal of Human-Technology Relations (JHTR), but will first comment on several events in 2024 that were significant to the further development of the Journal: the changes in the editorial team, the introduction of 'Topical Collections', the piloting of several Generative AI initiatives in our publication process, and the presence of the JHTR team at the Dutch National Open Science Festival. Notably, we will also say a few words about the passing of Don Ihde, a founding father of postphenomenology and a close friend and mentor of the Journal.

The *editorial team* of JHTR went through a few changes in 2024. Thomasin Coggins and Jordi Viader Guerrero left the position of managing editors for the Journal, Esther Keymolen stopped as an associate editor in the focus area of Ethics and Technology, and Laetitia Guérin is about to finish her role as our copy editor. We would like to express our immense gratitude for their dedicated volunteer work for JHTR, especially in the early period, by helping to establish and promote the Journal. At the same time, we are very happy with the recent additions to our team. Anthony Longo took on the role of JHTR's managing editor in September 2024 and quickly became much more than the go-to person for all journal-related inquiries, also helping us to fine-tune the day-to-day operations within JHTR. Dmytro Mykhailov will join our associate editor's team as of 2025, augmenting it with his expertise in technology ethics, AI, and postphenomenology. Last but not least, thanks to the generous support of TU Delft OPEN Publishing, Irene Aldabaldetrecu Alberdi recently joined us as an editorial assistant to help with the daily operations of the Journal and its publication process. We are confident that the newly expanded JHTR team will make our joint work even better.

As an expansion to the standard types of contributions featured in JHTR, this year, we introduced *Topical Collections* as thematized bundles of research articles, curated by a dedicated (team of) guest editor(s). Topical Collections are meant to provide a deep dive into a specific topic of interest, often, but not necessarily, as a result of conference panels, workshops, or project-related activities. In the Diamond Open Access publishing world, of which JHTR is a part, Topical Collections are meant to replace the Special Issue format, probably familiar to our readers from the traditional academic publishing venues. The main difference between the two is that the articles featured in a Topical Collection are published as they are ready, not waiting to be assigned to a specific issue. This continuous publication model also means that the articles belonging to the same Topical Collection may appear in different journal issues. However, they will always be bundled and prominently displayed on a designated Topical Collection page on JHTR's website, showing the general information about and ambition behind the given Topical Collection, contact details of the guest editor(s), as well as all the featured articles. Because the publication in the Topical Collections is continuous, it, in principle, means that article submissions are not restricted to a certain deadline and may be ongoing – however, this decision lies in the hands of the guest editor(s) and will be always made explicitly on the designated webpage of the Topical Collection.

Currently, JHTR accepts submissions to three Topical Collections: (1) Postphenomenology in the Age of AI, edited by Dmytro Mykhailov, the first contributions to which will already appear in this issue; (2) Ethics and Normativity of Explainable AI: Explainability as a Social Practice, edited by Tobias Matzner, Suzana Alpsancar, Martina Philippi, and Wessel Reijers; and (3) Ethics In/Of/For Design, edited by Michael Nagenborg and Değer Özkaramanlı. If you are interested in submitting a proposal for a Topical Collection, please contact us or Anthony Longo for more information.

In our last year's editorial, we remarked on the anticipated transformative impact of Generative AI on the publication industry and process (Kudina and Verbeek, 2023). More specifically, we said that at JHTR, we would not shy away from AI by default but, considering its potential merits, could use it both as an object of reflection and implement it in the writing and publication process where appropriate under clear and stringent guidelines that we had piloted

last year. As a part of this commitment, in 2024, JHTR joined a pilot experiment of TU Delft OPEN Publishing, whereby the publisher provided several authors a chance to trial the use of several Generative AI applications in the post-processing of their work. Specifically, we considered the use of two Generative AI-related services, provided by Cactus Communications on behalf of our publisher: (1) Plain Language Summaries, generating an abstract of a manuscript accessible to broad audiences in an attempt to increase the impact and visibility of the publications; and (2) Paperpal, a manuscript-processing tool that helps the authors with the language aspects of the article, and with checking it for adherence to academic standards and publisher criteria. If the authors use these services, they are always asked to check the results and remain the ultimate accountable person for the quality of the manuscript.

We discussed the possibility of this pilot at length during several editorial meetings, comprising not just us as the co-editors-in-chief but also a team of sixteen dedicated associate editors. The ultimate decision to participate in the pilot was not unanimous, as some of the editors cited privacy and creativity-related concerns, next to a worry of corporate domination of knowledge in the nascent open-access research scene that may arise with the use of Generative AI for research and publication. Once the privacy-related concerns were addressed (i.e. Cactus Communications as the company providing Generative AI services uses paid subscriptions for their use of Large Language Models, notably OpenAI's GPT ones, and hence does not use the author's work and information to train the corporate AI models), we agreed to participate in the pilot and to invite a small pool of three authors to consider trialing the AI service in their work. As all of them agreed, this issue features three research papers that participated in the Generative AI pilot at JHTR, those of Welner (2024), Hongladarom and van der Vaeren (2024) and Matei (2024). We also agreed to assess the experiences and results of the editors and authors in 2025, which we will reflect on in a separate joint contribution of the editorial team in the next issue of the Journal.

Also related to the open-access publishing domain, this year, JHTR's team, invited by our publisher, organized a panel on the experience of Diamond Open Access publishing and setting up a journal in the context of the Dutch National Open Science Festival that took place in Maastricht on October 22, 2024. With Anthony Longo and Olya Kudina representing JHTR, a discussion took place with two other recently-established Diamond Open Access journals in the domain of philosophy, namely with Ryan Wittingslow on behalf of The Philosophy of the City Journal (University of Groningen Press, co-edited with Sanna Lehtinen) and with Guido Löhr from the Philosophy of AI Journal (USB OPEN PUBLICATIONS, co-edited with Vincent Müller). By examining the experiences of these three journals, we also want to provide guidance for similar emerging initiatives and to advocate for systemic support toward sustainable open-access publishing globally. The insights and recommendations from this discussion will be synthesized into a joint publication in 2025, aiming to highlight the benefits and feasibility of Diamond Open Access models in contributing to a more open and inclusive scholarly landscape.

Next to these journal-related affairs, 2024 has been marked by several disruptive global events, such as ongoing wars and military conflicts, as well as a wave of elections, which receive attention in this issue's current affairs pieces with a lens of human-technology relations in mind. Perhaps the most disruptive event to the field of human-technology relations specifically was the *passing of Don Ihde* (1934-2024), the founding father of postphenomenology, who philosophically inspired the founding of JHTR. In his work, Don Ihde has not only provided a conceptual foundation for analyzing the structure of human-technology relations, but also developed an empirical-philosophical approach to technology as a mediator of human practices, perceptions, and interpretations. His work opened new directions in the phenomenological approach to technology, moving beyond the romanticism of classical phenomenology and replacing the focus on technological alienation with an approach of mediation. His work made it possible to connect the philosophy of technology to Science and Technology Studies, design

research, cultural anthropology, archeology, and many other fields. This issue features an obituary (Rosenberger and Verbeek, 2024) that provides a personal look at Don Ihde's life and a reflection on his legacy.

Overall, this issue features 15 publications, out of which 10 research papers, among which 5 contributions to our first Topical Collection on Postphenomenology in the Age of AI, 3 current affairs contributions, 1 book review, and 1 student essay.

In the category of *general research papers*, JHTR published the following contributions. In "Cyborg-technology relations," Joshua Earle and Ashley Shew (2024) argue for developing a distinct philosophy of cyborg-technology relations. They do so by explaining the epistemological limitations, the universalizing implications, and the artificial smoothing of relations that result from the postphenomenological framing of the "human/technology > world" cyborg relations. They propose developing a new way of looking at cyborg-technology relations by drawing on the agential realism (Barad, 2007) and the care ethics approach (e.g. de la Bellacasa, 2017) that jointly would allow to nuance the cyborg-technology relations in their ethico-onto-epistemological complexity and to acknowledge that "[t]o be cyborg is to be forced to recognize the radical interdependence of your life, to take care as a matter of survival" (p.13).

In "Garbage in/Garbage out: The hermeneutics of visualisation reading in humanitarian mapping and interventions," Isaac Oluoch, Isabel Gerritsen, Nicera Wanjiru and Eric Rovoga (2024) explore the role of geographic information and visualizations in waste management decision-making within Nairobi's informal settlements. The authors assess how design elements of these visualizations influence awareness of waste accumulation issues among stakeholders, while also addressing the ethical and political implications of representing marginalized communities. As the authors remark upon their empirical-philosophic analysis of this issue, having conducted several focus group investigations, "while the technical aspects of designing visualisations are important (e.g. symbology, colour, using certain metrics or scales), there should also be equal attention given to the broader impacts that stem from the design and use of the visualisations" (p. 22).

Mads Lund Andersen in "Observing the Telepresent: The school absent child and mediating technologies" (2024) takes on a challenge of exploring the emerging use of telepresence avatars as stand-ins for absent students in schools. The author uses a theoretical blend of poststructural, new materialist, and postphenomenological frameworks to reveal and study the intricate, dynamic relationships between students, the avatars as technological mediators, and the educational and broader social context. Here, Andersen not only illuminates the complex ways technology transforms educational experiences but he also provides a methodological blueprint for more nuanced and ethically informed investigations of technological mediation in learning contexts: "[C]ombining a view of the entanglements of pupils in intra-action with [...] a poststructuralist perspective enables empirical examples involving the voices and views of the pupils. Furthermore, adding the postphenomenological [lens] enables us to enhance the "voices" of the technologies and clearly present the consequences of these technologies for the fields we study" (p. 16).

In "The Ethics of Developing, Implementing, and Using Advanced Warehouse Technologies: Top-Down Principles versus The Guidance Ethics Approach," Ziagul Hosseini, Sven Nyholm, and Pascale M. Le Blanc (2024) investigate how to best approach and apply ethics as a practice in technological development. The authors apply the guidance ethics approach (Verbeek and Tijink,) as a bottom-up way to investigate the ethical implications of advanced technologies in logistics warehouses. The study is empirically supported by interviews with key stakeholders to reveal multiple conceptual and practical shortcomings of this method, such as minimal ethical reflection, differences in viewing ethical implications of technologies, and the frequent inability to assemble the stakeholders in a workshop setting. This led the author to propose combining

bottom-up ethical engagement with top-down ethical guidelines in the spirit of " a wide reflective equilibrium [whereby] both top-down and bottom-up values are iteratively adjusted until a coherent and mutually supportive set of guidelines is achieved" (p. 21). The authors suggest that such a framework would be more comprehensive for evaluating and guiding the ethical development, implementation, and use of technologies.

Andrej Dameski, Andreas Spahn, Caspar A.S. Pouw, Rabia Kodapanakkal, Antal Haans, Alessandro Corbetta, Frederico Toschi, Jaap Ham, and Gunter Bombaerts (2024) argue that postphenomenology needs to be expanded to be able to account for technologies not just as individual artifacts but as complex systems with political dimensions, at the meso-level of social collectives. In their paper "System-phenomenology: the empirical case for collectives in mediation theory," the authors argue for expanding the framework along these lines to account for the impact specific crowds and groups of people have on technology design and use. Inspired by systems theory, they propose a new conceptual apparatus, a mediation triangle, that could offer a pathway to study how technologies mediate relations between individuals, meso- and macro-collectives, and the objects (world). With a quantitative empirical study of on/deboarding at the train stations, the authors show how the material setting of the platform and the train affects not only the individual experiences of travellers but also the formation of specific crowds, reflecting here on the expansion of the postphenomenological framework from only the object-individual to also the object-collective dimension.

In addition to these five research papers, this second issue of JHTR contains a Topical Collection on *Postphenomenology in the Age of AI*, edited by Dmytro Mykhailov. Five research papers develop a postphenomenological perspective on human-AI relations, focusing on a variety of topics that range from algorithmic performativity and AI breakdowns to machinic embodiment and AI regulation. In their article "ChatGPT, Postphenomenology, and the Human-Technology-Reality Relations", Soraj Hongladarom and Auriane van der Vaeren (2024) investigate how Large Language Models like ChatGPT should be seen as a new kind of hermeneutic mediators which they call hermeneutic agents. By comparing generative AI systems to non-generative technologies like thermometers, they argue that generative AI challenges the traditional instrumentalist view of technology in radically new ways. Stefania Matei investigates the relation between generative AI and memory in her article "Generative artificial intelligence and collective remembering: The technological mediation of mnemotechnic values" (2024). She analyzes the impact of generative AI on the notions of remembering and forgetting, by its transformation of history from an object of quasi-passive 'representation' into an object of quasi-active algorithmic 'performativity'. Luca Possati's article "Mediation and Anti-Mediation: Re-Evaluating the Role of AI Breakdowns and Anomalies in Postphenomenology" (2024) develops the thesis that postphenomenology so far has not been able to deal adequately with the phenomenon of breakdowns and anomalies in technology. He proposes to enrich the concept of technological mediation with the biological concept of 'immunization' to show how breakdowns may help to prevent what he calls 'over-mediation'. Galit Wellner's article "A Postphenomenological Guide to AI Regulation" (2024) applies postphenomenology to the regulation of AI, claiming that AI systems have an intentionality of their own, which implies that regulations should guide the collaboration between human beings and AI systems rather than focusing only on avoiding their unwanted dominance. To conclude, Marco Pavanini's contribution to the Topical Collection focuses on AI and human self-understanding. His article "Postphenomenology and Human Constitutive Technicity: How Advances in AI Challenge Our Self-Understanding" (2024) argues that the fear that artificial intelligence will surpass human intelligence is rooted in a reductionist understanding of intelligence, and that a cyborg perspective offers a more adequate approach to human-AI relations, which can help overcome this anxiety.

As for this volume's *current affairs* contributions, we have already introduced the obituary to Don Ihde above. The other two papers in this category feature Stacey Irwin's "A New Side to Participation" (2024), where she provides a historical perspective on the role of technologies in elections and zooms in on the apparatus of social media technologies that helped to shape electoral experiences and results this year across the globe; and Olya Kudina's "Daily life in times of war: a technological mediation perspective" (2024), giving an intimate look at how technologies help to support and give shape to mundane activities in the wartime, illustrated by examples from her recent trip to Ukraine and spotlighting the cases of dealing with air raid alerts, electricity shutdowns, and navigating the military drafting practices. A *student essay* featured in this volume by Luc van der Gun and Olivia Guest, "Artificial Intelligence: Panacea or Non-Intentional Dehumanisation?" (2024), introduces the concept of "non-intentional dehumanisation" to explore how AI systems, despite their benefits, can inadvertently produce detrimental effects on both users and those affected by AI applications. By examining naive AI usage as a paradigmatic case, the authors highlight how the pursuit of efficiency through AI can lead to unintended consequences, challenging the common assumption that improving AI models alone can eliminate ethical concerns and offering a new perspective on the complexities of human-AI interactions. Finally, to wrap up the second issue of JHTR, have a look at Robert Rosenberger's *book review* paper "The Problem of Technology and Disability" (2024), reflecting on the recent monograph of Ashley Shew "Against Technoableism: Rethinking Who Needs Improvement" (2024).

We hope that reading the second issue of the Journal of Human-Technology Relations will bring you moments of reflection and inspiration, so much so that you might consider submitting your own work in the future.

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