



Editorial: Celebrating our past, imagining our future

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As described elsewhere on this journal's website, *The Journal of Evolution and Technology* (henceforth "JET") was founded in 1998 as *The Journal of Transhumanism*, and was originally published by the World Transhumanist Association. In November 2004, JET moved under the umbrella of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies ("IEET"), an organization that seeks to contribute to our understanding of the impact of emerging technologies on individuals and societies.

Prior to my appointment, in January 2008, as JET's editor-in-chief, I'd had four distinguished predecessors – Nick Bostrom, Robin Hanson, Mark Walker, and James Hughes – who had established the journal as a leading forum for discussion of the future of the human species and whatever might come after it. Articles that they'd published in JET were – and are – frequently cited in discussions of the human or posthuman future. With a decade of history behind the journal as I commenced my watch this year, and with JET's fifth year with IEET now underway, we have much to celebrate. I'm personally delighted to have taken up my position with a journal of ideas that has such a rich history and so much promise.

JET is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal. The material that it publishes may or may not be submitted by scholars and scientists currently working within the academy, but it must certainly meet the standards of well-established academic journals. Most submissions received are rejected because they don't reach the required standard, but we are always looking for appropriate articles and reviews. We require only that they be (more-or-less directly) relevant to the human or posthuman future and that they meet our high standards of scholarship, originality, and intellectual rigor. We welcome submissions on a wide range of relevant topics and from almost any academic discipline or interdisciplinary standpoint.

Central to our thinking at JET is the idea – increasingly familiar and plausible – that the human species is about to commence, or has already commenced, a new form of evolution. This is something quite different from the slow Darwinian processes of survival, reproduction, and adaptation. It is powered, rather, by new technologies that increasingly work their way *inwards*, transforming human bodies and minds. According to this idea, technology can do more than merely giving us tools to manipulate the world around us; it can alter *us* far more comprehensively than by shaping our neurological pathways when we learn to handle new tools. This idea of a technologically-mediated process of evolution remains controversial, of course, and even if we grant it broad acceptance there is still much to debate. Just how the process might be manifested in the years to come, and just where it might take us or our successors, are both unclear. Nonetheless, the idea merits careful study from many viewpoints, whether scientific, philosophical, historical, sociological, anthropological, legal, artistic ... or even theological.

Among writers and thinkers who take the idea of a new form of evolution seriously, there are bound to be disagreements. To what extent is technologically-mediated evolution already happening, bearing in mind

the considerable extent to which we are currently using technology to alter our bodies? If the process accelerates or continues over a vast span of time, will this be a good thing or a bad thing – or is it a phenomenon that resists moral evaluation? How dramatic a vision of technologically-mediated evolution is really plausible? Reasonable answers to such questions range from radical transhumanist visions of sweeping, rapid, entirely desirable change to various kinds of skepticism, caution, or concern. JET welcomes a spectrum of views on all this, as long as they meet its standards, though we will never cater for the same audience as a technophobic journal such as *The New Atlantis*. Though we welcome many viewpoints, we are unusual in providing a forum for radical proponents of new technology to develop their visions in detail, and with a rigor seldom found elsewhere. Their ideas are then available in their strongest form for scrutiny from admirers and critics alike.

In that spirit, we are leading off this new volume (Volume 20) of the journal with Eric Steinhart's detailed analysis, from a radical transhumanist perspective, of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's theology and its relevance to contemporary transhumanism. Steinhart argues that there are many reasons for transhumanists to study Teilhard's thought, and he raises questions about how transhumanism should respond to the massive political influence (at least in the United States) of conservative Christianity. Steinhart is surely correct that these questions deserve further and deeper consideration from transhumanists and other advocates of transformational technologies. While conservative Christianity may lose some of its influence as a result of the most recent US election, there are many signs that it is not about to recede as a cultural and political force. How should we respond?

JET is now moving to a publication schedule that assigns one volume to each year, though Volume 20 will cover the last part of 2008 as well as the entirety of 2009. After that, it will be a simple regime of one volume equals one year. Within volumes, we will put together coherent issues, each containing a mix of articles, reviews, and sometimes other forms such as symposia, commentaries, and so on. We will publish both regular issues – based on submissions received from time to time – and special issues (these may, for example, be in the form of edited conference proceedings). Generally speaking, we will publish individual articles as they are received, peer-reviewed, and edited, which implies a relatively quick turnaround from submission to publication. At least with our regular issues, we need not wait to publish a complete issue in one hit.

I apologise, however, that we do have a backlog ... which we are clearing as quickly as we can. Thus we've not been as timely in publishing some pieces as we'd like. That will change very soon, because we're clearing the backlog successfully. I thank the authors of recently-published articles (and of articles that we've accepted and will be publishing in the next few weeks or months) for their patience.

This is a good time to celebrate JET's past, now it's turned ten. I salute all the fine contributors and editorial staff who have worked on the journal over the past decade-and-a-little-bit, and have made it what it is today. Take a bow, people. There is also no time like *right now* to consider the future, not just of this unique journal but of humanity itself.

Let's get on with it.