W03 (version #1): Technology and Society: To App or Not To App

Wendell Wallach, in *A Dangerous Master*, 2015, makes a distinction between two questions – "can we do this?" versus "should we do this?"

Relatedly, Norbert Wiener – a mathematician, a philosopher, and a founder of cybernetics – has written about the difference between "know how" and "know what." Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, Weiner observed that we have great *know how* – today, when it comes to apps, it seems that any app that can be imagined can be built. But, Wiener also observed that the good designer needs *know what*; that is, the designer needs to make a judgment about what to make. He argued that while scientists, technologists, and designers have a great deal of *know how*, they often lack in *know what*.

Your writing prompt. Drawing on any readings from the class, discuss the difference between these two questions: "can we do this?" v. "should we do this?" How might a design team address the second question? How can Value Sensitive Design be used to address this second question?

Format. Your position statement should be about 500-600 words (4–7 paragraphs) and must be formatted as a single-page PDF document. Please include your name in the header or footer. Your writing should be concise and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

References

Wallach, W. (2015). *A Dangerous Master: How to Keep Technology from Slipping Beyond Our Control*. New York: Basic Books.

Wiener, N. (1950). *Human Use of Human Beings*. New York: A Da Capo Paperbook.

W03 (version 2): Technology and Society: To App or Not To App

Please read the first three chapters (pp. 1–56) of a *Dangerous Master*, 2015, by Wendell Wallach. As you read, consider the following questions:

- What aspects of society and technology does Wallach use when he considers the human-technology relationship?

- What are the key questions that Wallach raises?

- What role do scenarios serve in Wallach's writing?

Note the distinction that Wallach makes between two questions – "can we do this?" v. "should we do this?" (p. 14). Relatedly, Norbert Wiener – a mathematician, a philosopher, and a founder of cybernetics – has written about the difference between "know how" and "know what."

Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, Weiner observed that we have great *know how* – today, when it comes to apps, it seems that any app that can be imagined can be built. But, Wiener also observed that the good designer needs *know what*; that is, the designer needs to make a judgment about what to make. He argued that while scientists, technologists, and designers have a great deal of *know how*, they often lack in *know what*.

Your writing prompt. Drawing on the material in chapters 1–3 from Wallach (2015), or anywhere in the book, discuss the difference between these two questions: "can we do this?" v. "should we do this?" How might a design team address the second question? One approach to engaging this question might be to explore the concept of "inflection points." In other words, how might designers use inflection points?

Format. Your position statement should be about <u>500-600 words (4–7 paragraphs)</u> and must be formatted as a single-page PDF document. Please include your name in the header or footer. Your writing should be concise and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

References

Wallach, W. (2015). *A Dangerous Master: How to Keep Technology from Slipping Beyond Our Control*. New York: Basic Books.

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