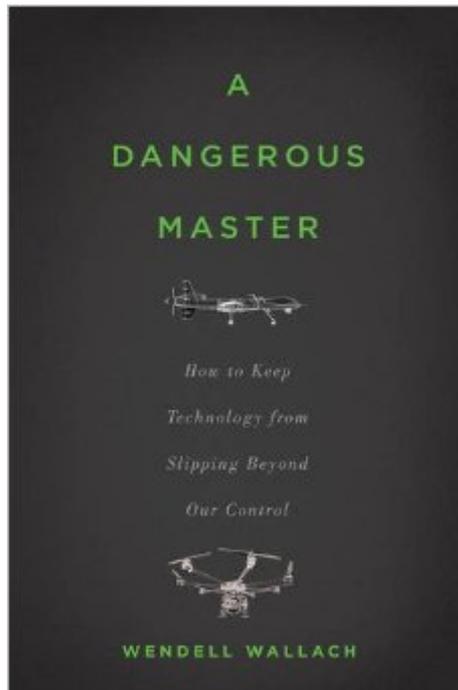# A Dangerous Master: How To Keep Technology From Slipping Beyond Our Control

Synopsis

We live in an age of awesome technological potential. From nanotechnology to synthetic organisms, new technologies stand to revolutionize whole domains of human experience. But with awesome potential comes awesome risk: drones can deliver a bomb as readily as they can a new smartphone; makers and hackers can 3D-print guns as well as tools; and supercomputers can short-circuit Wall Street just as easily as they can manage your portfolio.One thing these technologies canâ ™t do is answer the profound moral issues they raise. Who should be held accountable when they go wrong? What responsibility do we, as creators and users, have for the technologies we build? In A Dangerous Master, ethicist Wendell Wallach tackles such difficult questions with hard-earned authority, imploring both producers and consumers to face the moral ambiguities arising from our rapid technological growth. There is no doubt that scientific research and innovation are a source of promise and productivity, but, as Wallach, argues, technological development is at risk of becoming a juggernaut beyond human control. Examining the players, institutions, and values lobbying against meaningful regulation of everything from autonomous robots to designer drugs, A Dangerous Master proposes solutions for regaining control of our technological destiny.Wallachâ ™s nuanced study offers both stark warnings and hope, navigating both the fears and hype surrounding technological innovations. An engaging, masterful analysis of the elements we must manage in our quest to survive as a species, A Dangerous Master forces us to confront the practical—and moral—purposes of our creations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wendell Wallach is the go-to person for informed and level-headed insights and ideas about the contemporary technological condition of humanity. For the last decade I have had the privilege of sitting in on his working group at Yaleâ ™s Interdisciplinary Bioethics Center and observing his tireless efforts to address every facet of our sociotechnical situation. Scores of experts, recruited by Wallach on his continual travels to conferences in the U.S. and abroad, have introduced us to the marvels and dangers, the dreams and realities, the problems and possible solutions engendered by the ever more rapidly proliferating products of science and engineering. This book represents the full flowering of Wallachâ ™s project.What is distinctive about â œA Dangerous Masterâ • is not only its comprehensive survey of such a vast terrain, but also its critical take on the risks and speculations that surround this topic. On the one hand Wallach does surely want to stress the omnipresent hazards that lurk in every corner of this brave new world. On the other hand he wants to bring our thinking about them down to earth by separating science-fiction-and-film-fueled myth from laboratory fact.By this means Wallach wants to impress upon us that we humans still can be, and should be, in control. We need not, and should not, surrender to a supposed inevitability of machine dominance, not to mention, transformation of our very nature into something machine-like.

Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Baidu, among others, are hiring artificial intelligence researchers at an unprecedented rate - putting hundreds of millions into a race for better algorithms and smarter computers. Some scientific and technology luminaries (eg. Bill Gates, Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk, Steve Wozniak, have expressed considerable concern over where rapid advances in AI will take us. Fear of mass-produced Terminators, genetically-modified human embryos, self-driving cars, killer robots, uncontrollable emerging viruses, allowing humans to live to 150, etc. are becoming public more frequently.Author Wallach's first example is that of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). Prior to its startup, several knowledgeable scientists warned of the possibility it would create a tiny black hole into which Earth would disappear. Previously physicists working on the Manhattan Project worried that atomic bombs could set off a chain reaction in the earth's atmosphere - ending human life. Wallach's point is not that these predictions did not occur (actually, some scientists warn the LHC disaster may yet occur, but that these risks are appearing in more and more areas of endeavor and that it is also becoming increasingly difficult to objectively evaluate them because of their often probabilistic nature, occurring on the frontiers of science where clear answers are not available, and the invariable self-interests of involved individuals and entities. Potential economic and social order disasters may await in a world in which robots do almost all the work. Recent natural disasters (the

Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918 and, a new strain of swine flu in 2009, along with man-made disasters (eg.

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