

Assignment - Ethics in Technology

Read and think about the issues presented in the following paragraphs.

Talk with a small group and make a group answer.

There are no right or wrong answers, but do give careful thought to your responses.

1. A cell phone small enough for ants to use is obviously not a practical application of the newest nanotechnology (at least not until they learn to talk!), so what is? Think along the lines of medical applications, communications, entertainment, etc., and describe practical purposes for tiny, yet complex, circuitry.
Let your imagination run wild.
2. Just because we **can** build a nanotechnology probe capable of human cell repair at the molecular level, **should** we be messing with human cells?
What are the possible consequences?
Can our ethics keep up with the incredibly fast pace of technological progress?
3. A lot of R&D (research and development) in technology is government funded, which is controversial (as government has a lot of things to spend money on).
Should a country's government spend billions of dollars on expanding the technology required for space exploration or new weapons?
How should government balance this with the need for citizens to have medical care or education or affordable housing?

4. Forty years ago, Gene Roddenberry, the writer/creator of the original Star Trek TV series, dreamed up many ahead-of-his-time devices, such as laser weapons and the flip-open communicator (think "Beam me up, Scotty") that looks remarkably similar to the cell phones we use today. Do writers of science fiction foretell the future of technology, or do they help to shape it? Would the cell phone look like it does today if we hadn't first seen Captain Kirk's communicator on TV all those years ago?

5. Most of the new cell phones in use today are equipped with GPS (Global Positioning System), which means that any time you use your cell phone, it is possible for someone to tell exactly where you are on the face of the planet. This is very useful if you are lost or hurt, for example, and need emergency services to respond to your distress call. GPS technology is also used in wrist bands for persons at high risk for being lost (Alzheimer's patients and children, for example) and can even be implanted into the body in microchips.
This technology makes it is possible to never have another lost person or pet; but what about personal freedoms and privacy?
Do you want to be traceable at all times?
Do the benefits outweigh the possible loss of freedom?