Cyber or not cyber? That is the question, a question that I heard a long time ago and asked myself ever since. I heard of no satisfactory answers, nor am I sure I got a good answer. I am nonetheless most uncomfortable with the use of the prefix cyber in concepts or phenomena that connote some relationship, directly or indirectly, with the computer. My dilemma attributes to the origin this prefix or its originally intended meaning. Cyber descends from the two Greek words, *kubernetes* and *kubernan*. The first word means “steersman or governor”, and the second word means “to steer”. So “cyber” really refers to something, as I believe it should, that associates with control and, to some extent, communication – thus the term Cybernetics (Weiner, 1984). I am inclined to think we should either avoid using it or explicitly synthesize the term and give it a new meaning. The dilemma I face is that there are the problems either if it is to be avoided or dropped, that the term has been so widely spread and in some quarters indoctrinated that it may be too costly to un-root, or if it is now formally defined as equivalent to computer-related, that on the one hand, it contradicts the original meaning, and on the other hand, it attracts the accusation of abusing the term rather irrationally or twist it brutally for convenience.

I mentioned my dilemma when communicating with Winston Raj, Chief Editor, *Computerworld Hong Kong* in early January 2003. Raj replied under the heading “Axis of IT” evil in the *Computerworld Hong Kong Online* on 8 January 2003:

“That is true. The US mathematician Norbert Wiener, the founder of cybernetics – the theory of control and communication processes – introduced the English word cybernetics in 1940. From there, it transformed into a catchy, pithy word for anything to do with computers, and hence, cybernetics became the cyber prefix and eventually, users forgot its origins. This egregious lapse of historical perspective aside, every computer user also felt obliged to invent fresh neologisms for different aspects of computer use. Once cyber came to be overused with a cybercafe in every neighborhood, many blended words sprang forth--like wriggling earthworms after a rainstorm. So, we have cyberlaws that govern our thoughts in cyberspace. Cyberethics is what cybernauts need to be schooled in. Else you become a CyberPunk. I wonder where that leaves Cyberport”. 

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