

The Seduction of Science and Technology and the Concomitant Corruption of the Intellect and the Soul

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At least some of us often lament after the fact, like all hypocrite scientists the world over, of our short-sighted pursuits in discovering sciences and inventing technologies which end up having detrimental long term impact on society.

Please watch this one hour talk by Dr. Eric Fossum, Professor of Engineering in Dartmouth's Thayer School, at Yale University:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkBh71zZKrM>

Eric Fossum is the inventor of the active CMOS imaging chip, the "camera-on-a-chip" technology which *"is used in nearly all camera phones and webcams, digital-still cameras, high-speed motion capture cameras, automotive cameras, dental x-ray cameras, and swallowable pill cameras."* according to the Yale University blurb for the talk. Dr. Eric Fossum's Bio is revealing of his intense passion for his chosen profession and the applause he has accumulated for his achievements, all of which can be gleaned from his websites <http://ericfossum.com/> and <http://engineering.dartmouth.edu/people/faculty/eric-fossum/>.

I am going to write this great inventor of sliced cake a letter and send him a link to my own high-tech career and why I left it:

<http://zahirebrahim.wordpress.com/2009/05/29/ieee-spectrums-special-report-25-microchips-that-shook-the-world-may-09-2009/>

In addition, the following letter I had previously written a Harvard computer scientist who was excitedly moving to Google Labs thinking he is going to make a big societal difference, may be revealing to the brilliant designers of world's weapon systems and other misanthropic and enslaving technologies who still to this day think they have created sliced cake in a world in which the vast majority are unable to afford dry bread for one square meal a day:

<http://bloghumanbeingsfirst.wordpress.com/2010/11/19/response-to-why-im-leaving-harvard-by-zahir-ebrahim/>

I had concluded that letter to the Harvard computer scientist with the observation:

“the brilliant professors at Harvard and elsewhere equally know which side their bread is buttered in just as much measure, if not more, than any ordinary ‘Good American’ slaving in this system of governance and production whose entire outlook for the past century has been conditioned not by morality (except in Newspeak), but by primacy, hegemony, and by their own admission, by their quest for “full spectrum dominance”. That requires riding the full monte of the ‘Technetronic Era’ of which both of you computer science professors speciously arguing which side of the fence is greener, are equally a part.

May I dare to hope in conclusion that with your prominent voice and brilliant credentials, that you might perhaps be motivated by this humble letter to explore this topic objectively while you are still at Harvard – as the fiscal burden to be ‘acceptable’ is now presumably less for you – and leave a legacy which to my mind can have far reaching and very existential consequences for all Americans. You will surely not have this opportunity at Google where, by your own admission and statement of blind aspiration: “I get to hack all day.” After you have built your nth system, as one of the generations caught “Between Two Ages”, you may be left wondering why you did it at all when you wake up in a full-blown “1984” one day soon and still have some commonsense left to recognize it as such.

Your children and grandchildren however, will mercifully be spared that recognition as they will habitually count, from the very day of their birth, two plus two equal five. Some Americans, perhaps the majority, are already there today. The simple question I often ask of smart peoples who might dare to escape that fate, and I leave you with that little question, how can one know that one can add correctly?” --- Zahir Ebrahim's letter to Matt Welsh, recently tenured full professor of Computer Science at Harvard University who announced his intent to move to Google Labs for better actualization of his technological passions, November 24, 2010

Please watch the aforementioned one hour technical talk by Dr. Eric Fossum which makes much ado about societal responsibility of great inventors – the first one that I have encountered which is as candid and honest as it is! What I had hoped to achieve in Matt Welsh and failed, he did not even bother to acknowledge that letter and MIT Technology Review turned it down as a worthy discussion topic to seed at MIT, I already see Dr. Eric Fossum doing. Few men of science, technology, and industry ever grapple with any of these issues or dare to go there when they are in the prime of their careers heartily pursuing it. Usually, a handful only venture there after the fact, ex post facto, after the genie is out of the bottle and cannot be put back in. Their much noted pangs of belated conscience evidently make zero impact on the dystopian forces which they unleashed in their heyday, or, as one often wonders, upon their own decrypt soul as they *“died holily in their beds.”* (Macbeth 5:1:47-49 - *“Yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds.”*)

Here, I have finally discovered one lonely high-tech scientist at Dartmouth College, with the notable pedigree of Yale, Caltech, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and Columbia University, grappling with these weighty matters as the key inventor of a technology right at the very peak of his invention which he laments has accelerated the comeuppance of Big Brother like no other single invention in the Post World War II era. That show of moral awareness and greater societal concern is of course both timely and good.

But what does our man of superlative conscience Dr. Eric Fossum do after the great show of moral gravitas and intellectual tour de force?

Does he stop and desist, let alone attempt to rectify the forces he has helped unleash?

No! Of course not.

Dr. Eric Fossum simply dumps the problem onto the dumb onlookers cheering him on, and moves on with inventing/heralding more of the same dystopian world order!

Dr. Eric Fossum is now a technical consultant for Samsung Electronics, and even more diligently pursuing newer more imaginative ways to usher in Big Brother surveillance gadgetry in the serene new academic setting of New Hampshire. He blithely claims ***“I don't really like this application of my technology. There is nothing I can do about it, I have now unloaded that on you, so thank you.”***

Of course, who does not like the sound of applause, medals clanking, and all the high honors which accompany pious high-mindedness, not to mention induction into the National Inventors Hall of Fame, 2011? That veritable show of societal concern for humanity in his talk may now even beget Dr. Eric Fossum the Nobel Peace Prize – or, at least a nomination. When Global Warming scholarship can win the vice president of the United States, Dr. Al Gore such magnificent accolades, surely Dr. Eric Fossum is far ahead in his moral exercise of the scholarship of conscience he so dignifiedly proffered in his talk.

Below are some pertinent fragments captured from Dr. Eric Fossum's superfluity of societal concerns from his aforementioned talk at Yale University, titled *Photons to Bits and Beyond: The Science & Technology of Digital Imaging*:

"Societal issues questions baggage I have been carrying around with me for a few years and I am going to unload on you" (time 0:05:38)

"There is another set of issues which is loss of privacy from all this networking. When I first invented this CMOS image sensor technology we got a little bit of publicity and a reporter for the BBC radio came and talked to me, interviewed me, and he said:

'so tell me how you feel about the fact that now Big Brother is gonna be able so spy on us a lot better with all these cameras'.

And I said:

'oh it's not really a problem because there is not enough people to watch all the video screens and all cameras that are out there and we don't have to worry.'

But to my surprise, and chagrin a little bit, you know now computers can analyze images, and computer systems can track you based on facial recognition software from camera to camera to camera, as you might move around in a highly surveilled city for example.

And, so that means that you will be tracked and all your activity completely logged. It's on your permanent record now, whatever you did, or something you really don't want people to know about.

You know, is that a good thing? I don't think so. I feel like it's an invasion of my privacy." (time 0:15:40)

"I don't really like this application of my technology. There is nothing I can do about it, I have now unloaded that on you, so thank you.

We'll get back to the science and technology now, but I hope you also worry about these things and I especially hope you figure out what we are gonna do about this in the future." (time 0:20:30)

The above lamentable hypocrisy was aptly captured by a young man reading an initial version of this missive sent to high tech scholars and scientists:

"Of course I am always reminded of Oppenheimer the day after Trinity <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8w3Y-dskeg> by things like this. Now he knew what was to come <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuX7mx-PIY4> (much better than *"I really don't like this application of my technology but there is nothing I can do about it. I have now unloaded it on you so thank you".*) Oppenheimer also realized it, and feeling the way he did, never did stop. And Fossum of course continues soldiering ahead despite his "anxiety closet"...a "comforting" construct :)

[These Technetronic Era usherettes] can always take comfort in:

http://www.roadkilltshirts.com/Assets/ProductImages/PS_0887_KILL_PEOPLE_DR.jpg

So let's keep building...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iX6YvWxtrxw> ”

As my own more limited contribution to this Big Brother menace indicates (see link to my response to IEEE 25 microchips that changed the world noted above), this dystopia of global servitude was already predicted, and indeed eagerly anticipated, inter alia by Zbigniew Brzezinski in 1970 in his **"Between Two Ages – America's Role in the Technetronic Era"**; by Bertrand Russell in 1951 in his **"The Impact of Science on Society"**; by H. G. Wells in 1940 in his **"The New World Order"**; etceteras, going all the way back to the turn of the 20th

century, all portending the inevitability of, and the beneficial desirability of, global scientific dictatorship!

Who and what enables this inevitability which has been so eagerly anticipated by the elites who own the vast military-industrial complexes which fund the sciences and technologies, and who wish to enslave mankind in their own web of controlled hegemony?

Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former American president Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor (1976-198), even began his next most influential book of 1996, "The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives", with the sweeping rationalization statement for the title and content of his book: "*Hegemony is as old as mankind.*"

Well, the answer is not so un-obvious to those with even a modicum of commonsense. It is guys like Eric Fossum, and the million engineers and scientists in Silicon Valleys across the world. Everyone of them most passionately laboring in the military-industrial complex of their nation without reflection under various civilizational burdens that span the full gamut of intellectual rigor, from '*la mission civilisatrice*' to national defense to passionate self-interests! Just ordinary people who are narrowly so seduced by their own chosen professions and self-interests, never mind the patriotism drilled into them, that the corruption of their own soul which begets the corruption of their intellect, remains invisible to them! Just as it is to Eric Fossum.

Should I excitedly applaud Dr. Eric Fossum for his hypocrisy and his skin deep conscience? Or, should I endeavor to unravel it?

How did we get to this stage of modernity that we make such wonderful useful idiots, often self-servingly harboring a clarity and cleanliness of sweet smelling conscience which evidently surpasses even Macbeth's proclamation to his guilt-ridden wife to just feign it: "*Be innocent of knowledge*"? (Macbeth 3:2:45)

But first, indeed I am in fact going to thank Dr. Eric Fossum, for whatever he has stated only helps me make my case even more compellingly. Fossum is not alone in this state of passionate moral decay which I too once occupied. In fact, among all those occupying that state today in Silicon Valley and elsewhere, Dr. Eric Fossum is a bit ahead in the game because he evidently at least recognizes the obvious. He can still pay a tad more effective attention to his own moral gravitas than just high-minded lip service: "***I don't really like this application of my technology. There is nothing I can do about it, I have now unloaded***

that on you, so thank you.” Matters are not yet wholly fait accompli. While our war-mongering modernity still infected by the stone-Age virus of primacy, is premeditatively hurtling headlong into something grotesquely abhorrent which the entire history of mankind has never witnessed before this Technetronic Era – a global scientific dictatorship which has been self-realizingly predicted for close to a century – we aren’t there yet!

Below is just a cursory roadmap of how we got to this modernity that I have been able to piece together as an amateur historian, amateur social scientist, and former professional technologist who walked away from the same highly applauded passions in the same engineering profession as Eric Fossum, now thanklessly applying the same rational skills in a new passionate hobby. A hobby that is of utmost existential import and of immediate pertinence to mankind's survival as an independent, sentient, and thoughtful moral beings, but for which there is no applause. No medals. No prizes. Only hemlock. Influential scholarly scientists like Dr. Eric Fossum can and do make substantial difference to this calculus, in any direction. So why not in the direction their own inner moral voice uncannily whispers to them – rather than continuing in the suicidal direction of their baser instincts, passions and self-interests?

In order to be most succinct in this outline and still make sense to brilliant people unlearned in their own nation's literature of primacy, I must begin by quoting Edward Bernays:

“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.” --- Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*, 1928, pg. 1

The necessity of maintaining and manipulating a public's ignorance and perceptions through self-indulgences, through deliberately dumbing them down with bread and circuses, though wholly self-evident today, was already well thought out at the very dawn of the industrial age in the early eighteenth century. Bernard de Mandeville in his famous classic *The Fable of the Bees*, observed:

“The economic well-being of the nation depends on the presence of a large number of men who are content to labor hard all day long. Because men are naturally lazy they will not work unless forced by necessity to do so.” --- Bernard

de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, 1705

The philosophy espoused in *The Fable of the Bees* inspired Adam Smith to propose the pursuit of selfish industriousness for the overall common good – of course primarily of the ruling class with trickle-down economics, but that's just buried in the definition of common good. Patterned upon the bees collectively making that marvelous tasting honey, by each bee myopically and narrowly staying busy in its own specialized micro-task, lies the entire edifice of modern civilization.

This philosophy of selfish myopic industriousness for common good has been very sagaciously adapted to the high-tech age of the Technetronic Era. Modernity requires rather high-tech specialized worker-bees, with the commensurate twist of creating educated morons with advanced university degrees who can very patriotically “*United We Stand*” for the common good while staying productively engaged in narrow specializations in the military-industrial economy!

Kept perpetually too busy to either think independently, morally, holistically, and outside their parameters of narrow-gauge specializations by the sheer demands of having to pay their endless debt-bills in pursuit of their endless “American Dreams”, and conversely, by ensuring that a handful of the more successful and most intellectual ones are so generously rewarded and applauded for their narrow-gauge specializations that they become vested in their own successes continuing, statecraft today relies on inflicting *The Fable of the Bees* upon man for its own dystopian functioning. It is therefore no surprise that possession of technological information and technical skills to manipulate matter, has been recast as profound human knowledge, and parrots and fools have been turned into learned savants.

A state of modern affairs which infects modern man quite democratically. We are, despite all the vast data on our fingertips in this Information Age, and despite all the sophistication of modern gadgetry, still living in the age of Jahiliya (ignorance)! This ignorance is by artful design in the industrious West, especially in the sole superpower, United States of America – as already examined by this scribe in his maiden 2003 book *Prisoners of the Cave* which analyzed the condition of mass ignorance among the people of the United States keyed off from the blueprint for “*imperial mobilization*” outlined by Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski in his 1996 ode to American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives, *The Grand Chessboard*.

This state of affairs is not just due to the happenstance of knowledge explosion in modernity

as Zbigniew Brzezinski would have the gullible thoughtlessly believe. Brzezinski speciously observes in his earlier 1970 book that *“the threat of intellectual fragmentation, posed by the gap between the pace in the expansion of knowledge and the rate of its assimilation”*, is what causes general myopia in the Technetronic Era. Well, such perception molding is very convenient to promulgate. It justifies, nay dignifies, the ignorance of the people living in industrialized societies under great self-obsessions and unbridled self-indulgences.

That state of being enables keeping the public, even the most educated of the lot, quite ignorant of what really matters to statecraft: the absence of awareness among the worker-bees while they slave in their own narrow-gauge specializations for one reason or another. Here is Zbigniew Brzezinski's sophistry which attempts to pseudo-philosophize the information explosion conversely impacting individual awareness and intellectual cohesion:

“The science explosion – the most rapidly expanding aspect of our entire reality, growing more rapidly than population, industry, and cities – intensifies, rather than reduces, these feelings of insecurity. It is simply impossible for the average citizen and even for men of intellect to assimilate and meaningfully organize the flow of knowledge for themselves. In every scientific field complaints are mounting that the torrential outpouring of published reports, scientific papers, and scholarly articles and the proliferation of professional journals make it impossible for individuals to avoid becoming either narrow gauged specialists or superficial generalists. ... The threat of intellectual fragmentation, posed by the gap between the pace in the expansion of knowledge and the rate of its assimilation, raises a perplexing question concerning the prospects for mankind's intellectual unity.” (Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, pg. 15)

Staying morally and intellectually awake in an ecosystem which by definition is threatening to *“mankind's intellectual unity”*, and which puts everyone greedily participating in that mal-constructed ecosystem into a zombie-like sleep-state in order to get them to incessantly endeavor as narrow-gauge specialized worker-bees in a positive feedback loop which only accelerates the same dystopian conditions generation after generation, one has to effectively sever that positive feedback path.

As most competent engineers and physicists already know, a positive feedback path only culminates in an eventual cataclysmic explosion.

That is the path which puts science and technology in the service of empire – just like the one Eric Fossum and millions like him have thoughtlessly been on for their own self-gratification.

Planned and engineered into practice as *The Fable of the Bees*.

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The author, an ordinary researcher and writer on contemporary geopolitics, a minor justice activist, grew up in Pakistan, studied EECS at MIT, engineered for a while in high-tech Silicon Valley (<http://tinyurl.com/zahir-patents>), and retired early to pursue other responsible interests. His maiden 2003 book was rejected by numerous publishers and can be read on the web at <http://PrisonersoftheCave.org>. He may be reached at <http://Humanbeingsfirst.org>. Verbatim reproduction license at <http://humanbeingsfirst.org#Copyright>.

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