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Keywords
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National Security and the Misology-Misanthropy Paradox of Technology

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Abstract

The evolution of computing did not only result in the disengagement of the populace from its technological complexity, but also their submission to the divine ability of ‘scientists’, who understand the mathematical complexity of information technologies. Socrates argued that both ‘misanthropy’ and ‘misology’ stem from ‘faith’ placed in unreliable people and unsound arguments. Such misplaced faith in surveillance technologies and their proponents, for example, often results in disengagement from debate, which to Socrates was the antithesis to truth and wisdom. This paper explores how society is opting out of debate through the machinations of a neoconservative credo that purports reason. Under the guise of freedom and democracy, such dogma often exploit the public disorientation following massive collective shocks to achieve control, by imposing economic shock therapy to affect change. The resulting profiteering bubble of few private hands appropriating public wealth, are often accompanied by exploding debts. The threat of a disenfranchised populace left outside the ‘profiteering bubble’, prompts the need for aggressive surveillance. This paper concludes that deifying scientific faith and the degeneration of rationality into subservience to commercial interests have resulted in the rise of a

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*Keywords*: Misology, Misanthropy, privacy, surveillance, national security
We've arranged a global civilization in which most crucial elements profoundly depend on science and technology. We have also arranged things so that almost no one understands science and technology. This is a prescription for disaster. We might get away with it for a while, but sooner or later this combustible mixture of ignorance and power is going to blow up in our faces... I worry that, especially as the Millennium edges nearer, pseudoscience and superstition will seem year by year more tempting, the siren song of unreason more sonorous and attractive. Where have we heard it before? Whenever our ethnic or national prejudices are aroused, in times of scarcity, during challenges to national self-esteem or nerve, when we agonize about our diminished cosmic place and purpose, or when fanaticism is bubbling up around us - then, habits of thought familiar from ages past reach for the controls. The candle flame gutters. Its little pool of light trembles. Darkness gathers. The demons begin to stir. (Sagan 1996:32)

1 Introduction

Mathematical logic, which is at the heart of information technology, spread to other disciplines, such as finance and economics, producing a series of esoteric formulae for manipulating algebraic symbols linking premise to conclusion. Whilst the majority of people may not understand such mathematical-based disciplines, they still place much faith in the divine ability of ‘scientists’ and ‘economists’ who understand the mathematical complexity of information technology.

Idolising information technology contributes to what Socrates referred to as ‘misology’ and ‘misanthropy’. Misanthropy comes from having faith in people, such as: politicians, who make decisions to implement a new surveillance technology on false pretences. Misology comes from relying on unsound surveillance information. Eventually, both would make us sceptical to believe that anyone or any information can be trusted. Socrates understood such propensity in people disillusioned with their world, to disengage from debate when it was for him the ultimate road to truth and wisdom (Harris 2008).

This paper draws upon Socrates idea, in how society is opting out of debating issues that threaten its very existence, by the exploitative machinations of the ‘economic shock therapy’ credo that purports reason. The neconservative doctrine espouses such fundamentalist credo with the purported promises of more freedom and democracy. For over three decades, Milton Friedman and his apostles had dictated this dogma globally during many a time of crisis, because they understood very well that the public’s disorientation following massive collective shocks, such as: wars, terrorist attacks or natural disasters, can be used to achieve control by imposing economic shock therapy, to affect real change from the failed social welfare doctrine.

The resulting global profiteering bubbles, due to the huge transfers of public wealth to fewer private hands were not only accompanied by exploding debts, but also with aggressive nationalism that justifies bottomless spending on security. The overshadowing threat of a disenfranchised populace left outside the ‘profiteering bubbles’, prompts the need by the evolving corporatist states for aggressive surveillance, mass incarceration and shrinking civil liberties and often, though not always, torture.

This paper explores three challenges facing our increasingly fearful society: (a) the deifying of scientific faith and the degeneration of rationality, (b) the rise of “mauvais” capitalism and its shock doctrine, and (c) the evolving national security culture. These contestable ideas will be debated to inform our understanding of the corporatisation of national security.
2 Scientific Faith and the Degeneration of Rationality

Aristotle’s old age dilemma, to understand what it is that humans do when they reason, had dejected into confusion due to the competing views of science, pseudo-science and religious belief. Computational technologies yield no understanding when they utilise arcane formulae for processing algebraic symbols that link premise to conclusion. As a matter of fact, very few of us who believe in gravity, or ocean tides or the four seasons as ‘scientific facts’ would be able to explain ‘rationally’ why such beliefs merit credence. The mathematical complexity of ‘proof’ of those facts prohibits most of us from even pondering a ‘scientific’ explanation, but we sure have ‘trust’ for those smart scientists who can provide such an explanation. Fundamentally, then, ‘science’ has become a matter of faith to most of us, in no less a way than belief in the divine.

The evolution of institutions of higher learning and disciplines on such a mass scale over the past fifty years, has only contributed to the degeneration of ‘rational inquiry’ into a much more feeble synonym, for what is considered ‘reasonable’. Harris (2008) argues that “reasonable, in turn was allowed to mean able to give reasons. And the problem with that - as any fool can see - is that any fool can find reasons for foolishness”. Such folly had only downgraded such institutions of higher learning into mere ‘factories’ producing en masse graduates, who can barely give plausible reasons for their own understanding of their discipline, and all in the interests of supposedly serving the market place.

The corporatist devaluation of reason has not only left educational institutions presiding over a chaos of claims that lack any common ‘rational’ ground for devoting resources to their pursuit, but also left ‘scientifically’ illiterate populations. Seventy-five percent of adults in the United States failed a National Science Foundation survey, which had 10 questions, eight of which were simple true-false or multiple choice questions (Scientific News 1996).

It was not a surprise that the lack of a workforce that is capable of understanding the scientific thought processes, as well as general knowledge had left high-tech and biotechnology companies no option but to leave Silicon Valley and California. Indeed scientific illiteracy plagues not only the USA but also the rest of the world. The populace votes and decides about critical scientific issues, such as: global warming or energy resources or water supplies, which affect each and every one of us without any understanding of science. However, those decisions should be scientific, not political or economic ones.

3 “Mauvais” Capitalism and its Shock Doctrine

The unholy alliance between the Agora (economic or market space) and the Pnyx (political space), has seen the rise of a neoconservative doctrine that espouses exploitative machinations of an ‘economic shock therapy’ credo, with the promise of more freedom and democracy (Mickhail 2007:177). Milton Friedman, its chief architect, understood very well that the public’s disorientation following massive collective shocks, such as: wars, terrorist attacks or natural disasters, can be used to achieve control by imposing economic shock therapy, to affect real change from the failed social welfare doctrine.

Naomi Klein (2007:7) argues that it was Milton Friedman who introduced economic shock therapy to Chile when he advised General Augusto Pinochet on economic reforms in 1973 following the aftermath of his violent coup, and when the country was reeling from hyperinflation. The profiteering bubble had an 83% increase in their income, due to the huge 50% cut in public spending, and transferring it over to them. The exploding debts left 45% of the
population in poverty, but that was accompanied with aggressive nationalism that justified Pinochet’s bottomless spending on security.

Friedman believed that “the speed, suddenness and scope of the economic shifts would provoke psychological reactions in the public that facilitate the adjustment” to those necessary reforms. Meanwhile, anyone who did not adjust was met with the full force of the security apparatus, with mass incarcerations (80,000 approximately) and torture (50,000 approximately) – let alone the ones that simply disappeared (70,000 approximately).

In 1980, Ronald Reagan forged ahead with Friedman’s economic shock doctrine in reforming the U.S. government and liberalising the financial markets. At the end of his second term, and according to the Federal Reserve, in 1990 the richest 1% owned 40% of its wealth and the richest 20% owned 80% of America - the greatest level of inequality among all rich nations, and the worst in U.S. history since the roaring 1920s.

In the UK, Thatcher was quick to capitalise on the surge in her popularity following the Falklands war victory in 1982. She privatized gas, steel, airlines, and telecommunications, while declaring an open war on the unions, which resulted in tripling unemployment and a 100% increase in the number of the poor.

In Russia, Yeltsin’s ambitious "shock therapy" privatisation, was too sudden for Russia to adapt, especially when Western-style banking or corporate rules did not exist. Kampfner (2007) argues that, “Yeltsin did it partly because Russia was broke, partly because he was intoxicated by the end of the Cold War and gullible towards many of the Western economic advisers who had invaded the Kremlin ..” In 1993, he sent in the tanks to abolish a parliament that was in defiance of his extreme economic reform. The Parliament burned down with hundreds killed, the opposition arrested, 72 million impoverished and 17 new billionaires created.

The terrorist attacks on the USA in 2001, prompted a privatised war on terror with US spy agencies outsourcing 70% of their budgets to private contractors. But, it was not until 2003, when the Friedman ideology became official U.S. policy in Iraq, thirty years after it was first introduced in Chile – with the largest privatisation of a war in modern history. The common themes of the ideology, were in full enactment when the Iraqi ‘government’ was forced to privatise 200 corporations, the mass incarcerations and the Abou Gharib torture chambers, while hundreds of thousands killed and 4 million people displaced.

The Tsunami disaster in 2004 was one natural disaster that truly galvanised the compassion of the world, but this did not stop the profiteering entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, where 35,000 died and one million people were displaced, to quickly claim the coastline and get the Sri Lankan government to forbid the fishing villages from being rebuilt by the sea.

Unfortunately, there are so many more examples of this fundamentalist model of Capitalism, which had found attentive audiences in the South American continent, the Middle East and some other parts of the world – where the same corrupt scenario is repeated over and over again.

Authoritarian Communism is forever tainted by the real-world laboratories of Stalin’s gulags and Mao’s re-education camps, but how about the socio-economic experimentation of the neconservative crusaders to liberate the global financial market? Klein (2007:20) asks rhetorically why all those violent coups and wars to bring pro-corporate regimes had never been treated as Capitalist crimes?
4 An Evolving National Security Culture

Security has become a central focus of social, economic and political initiatives. The OECD (2008), for example, had launched in 2007 an ‘in-country security system reform consultations’, to ensure that the benefits from development assistance are not reversed by the outbreak of violent conflict. It even encourages the development of a ‘culture of security’ mindset, to respond to the threats and vulnerabilities of information and communication technologies.

The security frenzy clutching our world raises age-old questions regarding dissent, resistance and autonomy – especially, that security per se is not bound by ideology: Communist China, Al-Qaeda and the U.S.A. are all alike in maintaining strict security arrangements. The French theorist Paul Virilio (1977:47) recognised this frenzied obsession with security when he coined the term “Dromology” from “Dromos” the Greek word to race, to describe how speed restructures society in favour of what moves fast to dominate that which is slower;

.. whoever controls the territory possesses it. Possession of territory is not primarily about laws and contracts, but first and foremost a matter of movement and circulation ..

He argues that a dromological state of crisis results in a culture obsessed with security and speed; on who can protect themselves best and fastest, or in other words, a technological arms race. This presented global capital with a new opportunity, namely: investment in technological production of weapons, security tools and security provision.

The composite experiences of security in a modern society are not only institutional, but also a personal subjective experience. The complexity of personal feelings of fear and safety intensifies with anti-terror security warnings, for example, plastered around train stations and billboards, “if you see something, say something”, and breeds anxiety or ontological insecurity (Sennett 2006:161). It is the fear of what will happen even if no disaster looms. It is also referred to as free-floating, to indicate that someone keeps worrying even if s/he has nothing to fear in a specific situation.

Ulrich Beck (1992:129) recognised that ontological insecurity is due to our heightened awareness of risk in society, when he divided modern civilization into pre-industrial, industrial, and a "global risk society" suggesting that today we feel powerless to minimise those risks. Lasch (1984:23) described our mental state of existence to cope with this ‘insecure’ world, as a 'survivalist mentality’. In a world hijacked by fear and impending catastrophe, individual survival requires safety and being risk averse, which ingrains passivity as a desired state of existence, while dissent becomes a security concern.

David Garland (2001:139) predicts a future, where our control - through surveillance - culture will provide an ‘iron cage’ for us all, and a dark age of fear that serves the informational ‘datalords’ controlling the security zones. In the USA, the Global Positioning System (GPS) technology enabled the possibility of ‘virtual prisons’ where there are more than 2 million people in mostly privatised prisons and two executions taking place every week. Europe’s prison population is growing faster than ever, as are the numbers of surveillance cameras on city streets, such as the quarter of a million surveillance cameras in London alone.

Surveillance technology commonly perceived in terms of privacy has a more sinister side, in terms of the socio-economic and political ‘sorting and exclusion’ discrimination. In the past, Orwellian and Foucauldian perspectives provided a largely centralized understanding of
surveillance, but new technologies and the networked social organisation, has given rise to a loose and flowing *rhizomatic* set of processes, rather than a centrally controlled and coordinated system (Deleuze et al. 1980:31). The controlling centre, in this networked decentralized system, has become an Occult, which “is not occupied by a known leader or a clear ideology” (Debord 1997:54).

One must ask if the evolving hegemony of security technology is due to a networked security-industrial complex on a global scale that threatens to polarise the world along a profiteering bubble and a controlled pacified populace, under the guise of an international security threat such as the war on terror. If so, then are we witnessing the rise of a new world order propelled by the polarising effect of militarising information and telecommunication technologies?

5 Conclusion

This paper outlined three challenges facing our ontologically insecure society, when discussing some of the issues associated with surveillance technology and national security. Firstly, the deifying of scientific faith is problematic, because the unintended effect of this misplaced faith in technology, is disengagement from trying to understand the effect of the technology on our lives, and often results in the pacified submission to the divine ability of the scientific faithful.

Secondly, the exploitative machinations of the neoconservative ‘shock economic therapy’ credo, that purports more freedom and democracy. They imposed their dogma globally on a disoriented public, following massive collective shocks, to affect real change from the failed social welfare doctrine. The resulting profiteering bubble, due to the huge transfers of public wealth to few private hands were not only accompanied by exploding debt, but also with aggressive nationalism that justified bottomless spending on security. The threat of a disenfranchised populace left outside the ‘profiteering bubble’, has prompted the need for aggressive surveillance.

Thirdly, an evolving global security culture had intensified our ontological insecurities. To cope with this ‘insecure’ world, we adopt a 'survivalist mentality' seeking safety, which implicitly ingrains passivity. In contrast to this desired state of existence, dissent, resistance and autonomy became security concerns that warranted surveillance and control on an unprecedented scale.

In conclusion, the discussion of those challenges brings two points to the fore: (a) a new economy of fear that fuels an emerging security culture, and (b) an intensified ontological insecurity that fuels the need for more security. The paradox of security technology is that its supply can never satisfy the ‘self-consuming passion’ for its demand. The new global economy (Glyn 2006: 133) with its dynamic change, from fixed geopolitical conflicts, to a constantly changing war on terror, ensures that our demand for security is continually reinvented, where the supply of fear and security are continually changing, so self-perpetuating and inexhaustible.

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