When we liberate ourselves we start from the bottom. Introduction to an upcoming report on
coreboot, Libreboot and Panfrost.

Camille Akmut

1 Introduction : Standing on the shoulders of giants.

If we do not know, or control, our tools, it is them who control and dominate us!

This is perhaps the principal lesson of the history of science – the history of *all* of our sciences.

“*If we do not define computer science, it will define us*” we wrote. In doing so we stood not alone, but drew courage and wisdom from our elders :

The great tradition of the philosophy and history of science of Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem and Jean Cavailles, as well as that of Thomas Kuhn – a tradition continued and furthered in the important epistemological writings of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and those of historian, philosopher Michel Foucault. Antigone : worthy of one’s parents.

These great, important thinkers wrote variously of the “unconscious” and “un-thought” of scientists, that were unknown parts of them and “*lived lives of their own*” as Bachelard had so strikingly put; They changed our perceptions – and simultaneously our lives – by redefining held-for-granted notions of “normal and pathological”, they highlighted the role of language...

Language : this primary tool of ours, that is truly everywhere, and thus also nowhere; forgotten but constantly at work in spite of ourselves. As soon as we forget this / it, it dominates us so.

Who am I? Am I real? Normal? Abnormal? Michel Foucault, drawing on the work of Canguilhem, gave us new dignity – by “us” we mean both the so-called normal and abnormals of our societies – by changing our understanding of folly : neither exterior to us, nor different from us, but “*a different turn of reason*” : an uneasy and uncomfortable reflection, mirror of ours – and us.

But, this knowledge was not knowledge for itself, or fruitless : it contributed much to the progress of these same sciences. And, helped save lives.

The telescopes of the 17th century... the hygiene rules of the 19th century... the microscopes of the early 20th century... The very distant and very small. And, finally : the digital computers of the 21st.

They are everywhere : and, if we do not understand them, it is them that dominate us. In truth, they already do, they do not know. But, worse, much worse : it is *them who fashion them* that will dominate us : they who create them in their images, but never, never ours...

In the 24th century imagined by science-fiction authors, there will be no humans pains and needs left; but, in other visions, our computers will have left our desks and pockets, and become a part of ourselves in the most literal sense : body, mind, emotion, vision. Even love, this most sacred and intimate of places.

“People love machines in 2029 A.D.” writes one of them.

The adoration of our new machines – that are our new, for now selfless gods – is already very advanced in this year, and nowhere more than in some technological circles. But, they are not us. And, do not represent us. Be warned : If you do us violence, we will return it a thousandfold.

If we do not define computer science, it will define us – and perhaps destroy us too.

When we liberate ourselves we start from the bottom.

In the following paper, the reader will read about women and men, *and those in-between* that are so often forgotten and erased, who have achieved a true mastery of their field.

Their mastery was so big and such that : they had not only achieved a mastery of their subject, but had moved beyond it, independently from the wishes, doctrines and tenets of its original creators.

This, of course, is the very definition of a scientist and researcher :

“The systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.” says the Oxford Dictionary.

Such a mastery is seldom achieved, and rarely so, and so early on.

Many of these computer scientists were in their twenties or thirties when they started.

These computer scientists have paid all of their dues, understood all of their masters, and surpassed some of them : so much so that they now find themselves *lonely, but not alone*, with no maps to go back, and no wish either.

And, so, in the future, whenever we write, speak or read, or hear of “*hackers*”, we will simultaneously read and hear : computer scientist. And, for some, social computer scientist.

[report]

Conclusion

We leave now the realm of the technical : for, it is not enough.

Technical innovations and happenings can be and are always subdivided into two : 1. the technical, and 2. the sociological-historical.

It is for instance a fact that many of the creators and founders of these projects are transgender people : she/her, they/them...

It is also a fact that many of the most courageous people in our society belong and have belonged historically to these same minority groups.

They do not know our secret, and so let us spell it out for them :

We have nothing to lose, only to gain.

By liberating others, we liberate ourselves.

They could have worked anywhere else : they could have been employed at Google – the modern-day equivalent of Wolfram and Hart or Evil Corp, choose your popular culture – or any of the many other such places of this world. (They almost certainly have, will receive offers from them.)

Instead, they chose to use their energies, and their lives, and their smarts – that are so immense – to help many others. They help others to help themselves *simultaneously* – these acts are inseparable. We understand them to be so. For, *Them are us too.*

We praise them : but, only those who showed so much courage in their lives, in their intellectual lives. They are our heroes.

When we liberate ourselves we start from the bottom :

We start with our own people, who share the same causes, and some if not all of the same struggles, and organize ourselves.

This is almost certainly the only way such liberations have ever occurred.

“Our lives are not our own, and with every act (of kindness) (...) we contribute to change our world.”

By liberating others, we liberate ourselves.

Epilog : “*In Antigone, we remember Antigone...*”

In *Antigone*, we remember Antigone, but none of her judges. We rooted for Antigone, but none of her judges.

This is a lesson that they have not learned, and perhaps cannot learn :

Google, Facebook, Amazon, Palantir, Apple, Microsoft, Netflix, Two Sigma...

The computer scientists that can be found in abundance at these companies, let us be clear about what they are : the slaves and lackeys of their masters. They will never have a place in our heart.

No one remembers them, no one will remember, and if we do only so with some pity or uneasiness.

Their smarts were immense, but their senses so little they deserve a kick.

They do us violence? They rob us of our dreams? Our memories? Our data? *Ourselves?*

They tell us what altruism is, or what diversity is... They who are not us?

We respond to their violence a thousand, thousand times.

A thousandfold? No, a google! Their heads will be ringing.

And, perhaps, one day, if they push their violence onto us too far, their heads will be hanging – “*by the innards*”, as a certain 18th century philosopher had written about the ideologues and the rulers of his times...

Bibliography

—. “We praise our heroes : Notes, translation of “The School of Vienna at Prague” by Jean Cavailles. – and the limits of our world.”

—. “What is Computer Science? Outline for a project.”

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Science of Science and Reflexivity*.

Canguilhem, Georges. *The Normal and the Pathological*.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*.

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to all the “abnormals” and freaks of this world. They are the best to have come out of this world. And, the most normal.