

Monopolies That Must Be Broken Apart

While living in America, to which we pledge our allegiance, we simultaneously live in a number of fiefdoms, without realizing so. No, they don't occupy any part of the physical landscape here. Yet, they are there, right next to us.

They have sprung up over the last few decades. In many ways, their lords are more powerful than the federal government of the United States. They have the power to tell us what to buy and to read; who to believe, how to vote. These powers alone decide what the future is going to look like. Some of them even try to change the past. Now and then, they erase our memories of events, small and large. By themselves, they define what is newsworthy and what is not. Through the means at their disposal, they know what we think most of the time, using it to their advantage. All our habits and vices are known to them, ditto for the lists of people in our orbits. Their relationships with societies, politicians, businesses and ordinary folks are complex and convoluted.

Why can they do all of that? Well, because we let them.

We willingly give them the keys to our homes and the passcodes to our minds.

No, they are not all that bad. They give us pleasure of the quick ownership of something we buy online and the thrill of discovery while we are comfortably sitting in our living rooms. Through them we imbibe the world and share our lives with others. We, the faithful subjects, are showered with conveniences not known to men only 50 or so years ago. The rulers of these empires know how to make the devotees happy. And they do, perhaps most of the time. None of them are nefarious by nature. As money is their primary goal, they are fantastically, phenomenally rich.

When a man gets rich beyond anything he can possibly spend in his lifetime, he begins to crave power. The fiefdoms are these huge corporations and they are no different. They must have power to exist. In reality they are monopolists, each in their domain or domains. The dictionary defines 'monopoly' as "the exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service." These corporations fit that description to a T.

Did you recognize them yet? Sure you did. Google/Alphabet, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter. We took the liberty of adding Twitter to reflect the sheer influence it has over our lives. Their vile censorship of the free online thinking is totally outrageous. No single private company should ever have this

much leverage over our minds.

At the time of this writing:

- Alphabet owns 400 companies
- Apple acquires a company every two to three weeks on average. Owns over 120 companies
- Amazon has over 40 subsidiaries, owns over a 100 firms and has stakes in another 20. Every second dollar spent online goes to this firm
- Facebook has acquired 82 other companies

This is huge. The parent companies are in every kind of business imaginable, if not directly themselves, then through their subsidiaries and existing business relationships. The impact on domestic and world economies and politics is hard to fathom.

Some of you may argue that having these companies in its present form provides huge advantages to the US economy. They employ thousands of people everywhere. Being highly visible and competitive, they are the face of America today – advanced, strong, future-shaping, forward-looking firms. The pure envy of the entire world.

They do a lot of good. Carry all sorts of social responsibilities, spread the knowledge, fund research, promote worthy causes, make our lives simpler (or more complex, depending on who is looking), relieve us of mundane tasks, save us time (to be wasted elsewhere), save us money, warn us, bring the news home; deliver words and images from the loved ones. And earn big money in the process.

Yet there is a flip side (ain't there always a flip side?). Monster-sized firms are in everything. Naturally, they must protect their turf. That turf is EVERYWHERE you look. Anything you eat and drink, wear, live in, listen to, talk on, drive, buy and watch. The money you spend or invest. They shape up what you think. They censor what they think you should not see or hear. Often they betray our society and its values, by agreeing to kow-tow to foreign powers. So they can make money from the oppressive regimes, they yield to outrageous political demands. We don't always hear about it.

Collectively, they make us less of a free society. Yet few people notice or care.

When a new technology is fledging and they hear about it, they buy it, to use to their advantage. Or kill it, to the same company's advantage. Sometimes they

steal what they cannot or would not acquire. To learn what people are doing with their businesses, they offer them slots on their own trading platforms. Later they begin to compete with the former partners. The world is full of stories and court cases. Competing with monopolies is simply impossible – too big and too much money at hand. Like flowers in an arid zone, new endeavors don't blossom. Creativity is stifled. 'My way or highway' is very much a philosophy of these monopolies, even when they never openly profess it. An alternate reality of the future can never emerge when monopolies are around.

They shape the world and it's a huge responsibility. So far they manage. The fiefdoms are the quasi-governments. They don't answer to anyone except the management and stockholders. The latter are mostly happy with the bottom lines and rarely call for changes when the monies are rolling in.

They control your lives in ways you cannot imagine. There isn't anyone out there to stop them.

Those of you who have been around long enough may remember an old TV commercial for the Hanes[®] Underwear. In it a QC lady was telling someone "They don't say Hanes until I say they say Hanes". What a befitting description for today's reality. It all comes down to mind control. That subconscious whisper in your ear is what compels you make the choices. To vote for or against. To condemn or glorify. To say only the right things online. All because you already know what to say, so words are not censored by an invisible someone. Someone who has a different mindset. Plus a set of internal (and often secret) corporate guidelines in front of him, while he deletes your thoughts. They can do it, they are the monopolies. We, the people, let them do it to us.

We strongly believe they need to be broken up into the independent 'subset companies'. And the questions is: why?

So the landscape can be opened to others. To stake claims and get the footholds. The mammals would have never emerged to fill the Earth until after the dinosaurs were gone. Otherwise we would not be here today.

So that the 'subset companies' can compete against each other and others in a different environment. Competition is good, well, most of the time. The new rules and regulations can be applied. Lords get to be slightly meeker, a bit further down to earth and less manipulative. They could no longer engage in total thought control, maybe. And the disappearing First Amendment right re-acquires its original meaning again; both online and in real life.

The US Federal government is slowly looking into various business aspects of these corporations. Anti-monopoly laws are on the books and can be used to sue

and break the bad guys into much smaller chunks. But so far nothing had happened. Breaking these Goliaths would be expensive, difficult and complex. It is also highly political. Losing competitive advantages to foreign tech powers would be hard to swallow. Our government is advancing their anti-monopoly investigations at a glacial pace. They are surely looking into bringing the monopolies to court. In the next 10 or 20 or 30 years. Maybe.

We say break them up, so we all can be freer from bonds the modern tech lords have attached to everyone and his brother. Their business models would readjust. Maybe along with the politics they are playing in our lives.