

THE END OF BABBAGE'S THEOLOGY

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Additional slides provided after the seminar

The End of Babbage's Theology

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Outline

- Sociological Explanation
- Disciplinary Socialization
- Babbage's Theology
- Six Deep Assumptions
- Need for a New Approach
- Mechanics of the Problem
- Necessary Orientations
- How to Sell IT

Sociological Explanation

Collective and individual levels

Collective units of analysis include institutions, professions, cultures, language, . . .

Individuals are only partially aware

Elements tend to reinforce one another

Trying not to do it - not an accusation

Disciplinary Socialization

How to explain a profession?

Historical origins

Institutionalization

The routinization of charisma

Linguistic practices

Critical resources

Ambivalence about institutions

Babbage's Theology

One historical origin story

Long association between engineering and theology

Babbage's image of factory as microcosm

Neglect of workers' views

Secularization

Doesn't replace political economy or technology as explanations

Computing is malleable

Six Deep Assumptions

1. Omniscience
2. Omnipotence
3. Disembedding
4. Discontinuity
5. Transcendence
6. Perfection

Need for a New Approach

Intrinsic evil and folly
Serial disasters
Environment of legacy systems
Non local nature of design
Efficacy of resistance
Need for disciplinary knowledge
Centrality of economic/legal/policy issues
Complexity of mediated relationships

Mechanics of the Problem

Gadget orientation
Reading technology onto society
Linguistic practices
Reward systems
Invidious contrasts

Necessary Orientations

Systemic orientation

- Mapping the social system
- Interorganizational focus
- Multidisciplinary requirements

Process orientation

- User participation
- Designer participation
- Surface the politics
- Life cycle

Empirical orientation

- Case studies and evaluation
- Theories of social shaping

How to Sell IT

- Getting one's systems used
- Entrepreneurialism - business plans
- Morality
- Personal benefits of awareness
- Forestalling regulation
- Team organisation of work
- Make social analysis "hard"
- Recruit different students
- Talk about the Internet

