A RESPONSE TO DYSON'S ARTICLE
"CAN SCIENCE BE ETHICAL"

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Assignment Presented for the Course:
Ethics in Science and Technology
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In the Fall Semester, 2000

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In his article *Can Science be Ethical*, Freeman Dyson describes the relationship between the different brands of science and their inherent ability to improve the well being of humanity. He describes how in times of great discovery, great men like Henry Ford can go against the entrepreneurial tradition and develop mass produced consumer goods designed specifically to improve the quality of life of both the rich and the poor alike. Unfortunately, our current generation seems to lack men possessing both the ability to aid the masses and the desire to do so. While greed may be to strong a word, self-importance seems to drive the scientists of today. They all seem to be asking what the consumer will pay them for their services, not what they can provide for the majority of the population. The result of this attitude is the large gap between the lifestyles of the rich and the poor, which is now greater then at any other point in history.

Dyson gave a number of examples of technologies that he described as simply being toys for the rich. This category included such notable members as the laptop, the cell phone and nuclear fission. These technologies are inherently "evil" as they serve little purpose other than to make the rich richer and widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Unfortunately, only nuclear energy has been recognized as the evil it truly is and, while research continues, it's use in weapons and power production has been greatly reduced. While we are fortunate that the truth about nuclear fission has been accepted, it is a tragedy that its compatriots may never be recognized as the villains they are. So long as the lower classes of society are denied their use due to inflated prices, devices such as the laptop or the internet will never become the agents of human improvement that they are advertised to be.

Fortunately, another branch of technology exists which lessens the gap between the classes. These devices bring nothing but joy to their users while not denying access to any portion of the population. Dyson's primary example is the introduction of the motorcycle in Europe during the first decade of the twentieth century. Dyson describes how the motorcycle allowed the poor men of the working class to travel Europe as only the aristocracy had previously done. Any workingman could purchase and maintain a motorcycle with minimal effort, while the joy derived from touring the beautiful pre-war European countryside equaled that derived by any lord or lady touring in their private car. The importance of the

motorcycle was not derived from its price, but from its ability to close the gap between the factory worker and the factory owner.

As we enter the twenty-first century, we stand at a crossroads. Advances in computing and biotechnology offer humanity a chance to reach immeasurable heights, but they also threaten to destroy what little hope remains for the lower classes if not properly tempered by individuals of strong character in positions of influence. Dyson ends his article with words of hope for the future, describing his hope that humanity will eventually do what is right. However, the current path on which we travel seems to lead toward further separation between the most and least fortunate factions of our species. Hopefully, we can change course before our differences become irreconcilable and violence erupts as a result. Blaise Pascal described the relationship between science and humanity best over three hundred years ago when he wrote "Knowledge of physical science will not console me for ignorance of morality in time of affliction, but knowledge of morality will always console me for ignorance of physical science." [1]

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