

The Emperor's New Brain

Many years ago (or not) there was an Emperor so exceedingly fond of his brain that he had his carrot-topped dome removed so that everyone could marvel at its excellence. He cared nothing about reviewing his soldiers, addressing the press, or playing golf except to show off his magnificent brain.

In the great white castle where he lived with all his family, life was always gay (or not, maybe “happy”). But the Emperor was sorely vexed. It seems that as he teetered into his dotage his noggin had begun to shrink and grow soft. His complex cortical folds had flattened and become smooth and his gray matter decidedly black.

Two anarchist scientists got wind of the Emperor's predicament through TMZ and ingratiated themselves into his apprenticeship. The Emperor had heard from somebody who heard it from somebody who had read it somewhere that the scientists were brain regenerators, and they could make the most stunning nanobrain imaginable. Not only were their cerebral cortexes uncommonly fine, they said, but they had a wonderful way of becoming invisible to anyone who was unfit for office, or was unusually stupid.

“That would be just the brain for me,” thought the Emperor. “If I displayed that I would be able to discover which men in my empire are unfit for their posts. And I could tell the wise men from the fools.”

And so he paid the anarchists a large sum of money to start work at once. They set up a lab in the basement of an abandoned hotel although they bought no instruments of mass construction with their bounty. All the funds they demanded went into a Roth IRA and they continued to hit the Emperor up for additional grants every few days so they could perfect their nano technology.

A month later the anxious Emperor longed to know how far along the scientists were in creating his new brain because he could no longer tell his daughter from his wife and his time was rapidly running out. So he tweeted to his Chief of Staff to go take a look because he remembered that those who were unfit for their position would not be able to see the brain. “My Chief will be the best one to tell me how the brain looks, for he is a sensible man and no one does his duty better.”

So the “honest” Chief went to the lab where the two anarchists sat working at their empty station miming away with their non-existent tools. The Chief’s eyes bugged open. “I can’t see anything at all! But I cannot say anything or I’ll be fired.”

The anarchists asked for more money, for the final components of the lobes were exceedingly rare. The Chief texted the Emperor that more money was needed and that the noodle was “beautiful and enchanting.”

Another month went by with no news, and the Emperor began to be suspicious, so he sent his son-in-law to see how the brain was progressing. The same situation greeted him that had perplexed the Chief. The young man looked and looked but could see nothing on the work table.

“I know I’m not stupid. I have a Harvard degree. So it must be that I’m unworthy of my position. I mustn’t let anyone know how stupid I am.” Even though it was 3 a.m., he tweeted the Emperor that his new noodle was “beautiful and enchanting.”

Eventually the Emperor could not allow any more delays or he would become as stupid as his Attorney General, so he informed the two anarchists that he would be arriving the next morning to have his old brain replaced by his magnificent new one. He would then parade down the boulevard accompanied by the Tinfoil Hat Brigade carrying their baskets of deplorables to show off his new dome to the peasants.

Nervously, the two scientists removed the now desiccated brain and made a great show of gently placing the new “brain” in the cranium of the Emperor. When done the scientists exclaimed, “Magnificent! Just look! What a design and a perfect fit.”

The Emperor stared into the mirror, looking this way and that, but to his chagrin he could see nothing resting in his now hollow pate. “What’s this?” thought the Emperor. “I can’t see anything! This is terrible! Am I unfit to be Emperor? Am I a fool?”

Then his Public Relations Minister reminded him that the procession was waiting. The Emperor looked at the mirror again. “It *is* a remarkable fit, isn’t it?” He seemed to regard his invisible brain with a new admiration.

So off went the Emperor in his procession. Everyone in the streets and windows shouted, “Oh, how fine is the Emperor’s new brain. Isn’t it beautiful and enchanting.” And nobody would confess that they couldn’t see anything wrong with the Emperor’s brain, for that would mean they were stupid for supporting him.

Yet, as he passed a small child of ethnic origin she pointed at him and said, “The Emperor has no brain.” And her father, fearful of deportation, tried to silence the girl. But others had heard the child and began to whisper among themselves, “The Emperor has no brain.” Finally, the whole town cried out as one, “The Emperor has no brain. But we don’t care.”

The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he walked on more proudly than ever, followed by a train of his staff. And he ruled without a brain for years and years.