



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on August 15, 2017

Microchips in the Hand to Conduct Commerce: An Invitation to Totalitarianism?

Noelle Chesley, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, told the *Chicago Tribune* that the implanting of microchips under the skin in a person's hand, in order to conduct commercial transactions, is the wave of the future. "We are going to be combining technology in our bodies," Chesley said.



Chesley was responding to the microchip implant technology unveiled this month by the Wisconsin technology company Three Square Market, also known as 32M. The company threw a "chip party" at its River Falls headquarters, in which 41 of its 85 employees volunteered to have a microchip implanted in their hands. The chips will allow them to open doors and even buy snacks in the company's breakroom, simply by waving their hands in front of a computer scan, using the implanted chip located between the thumb and the forefinger.

This is the first appearance in the United States of such technology, which has already been launched in Europe — where it is often used to purchase train tickets. Patrick McMullan, chief operating officer for Three Square Market, said he and another executive learned of the technology used in Sweden, by Biohax, when the duo took a business trip to Europe.

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McMullan explained what he saw as the benefits to the new technology: "We see this as another payment and identification option that not only can be used in our markets but our other self-checkout/self-service applications that we are now deploying which include convenience stores and fitness centers."

The company envisions the market expanding for their "new" technology. Actually, the technology has been around for over a decade. In 2004, VeriChip was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for chips that could be implanted in arms in order to store medical records. Some doctors argued for the technology's use because it would make it easier to track a patient's medical history, especially if they are unconscious or otherwise unresponsive. The product was unable to generate enough sales, however, and was discontinued.

But it did cause Marlin Schneider, a Wisconsin state representative at the time, to lead the charge for a law that banned mandatory implants. He feared that some employers would make allowing the chip's implantation a condition of employment, or that prisons would impose it on inmates. Schneider thought



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such usages would be just a start, arguing, “Eventually, people will find reasons why everyone should have these chips implanted.”

California, Missouri, North Dakota and Oklahoma also banned mandatory chip implantation.

Although 32M cannot legally force its employees to be “tagged,” yet, the company’s chief executive officer Todd Westby extolled the virtues of the chips, noting that employees can use their chips to make paper copies, to log onto their computers, and to store health information. He also believes that the use of implanted microchips will expand greatly.

“Eventually,” Westby predicted, “this technology will become standardized, allowing you to use this as your passport, public transit, all purchasing opportunities.”

Writing in *Forbes*, Eric Mack expressed some concerns. “Clearly, it’s imperative for any individual who values their privacy and basic agency to own everything that goes into their body. I can imagine a future in which there’s plenty of pressure from employers to have chips like the ones 32M is offering implanted, even if it’s technically voluntary.”

A coal miner in West Virginia was ordered two years ago by his employer to use a hand scanner to clock in, but the miner won a lawsuit, arguing that the scanner was “the mark of the beast” mentioned in the biblical Book of Revelation. Danielle Paquette of the *Washington Post* quoted a man, Cordarrel Lyrek, who traveled from Minneapolis to Wisconsin earlier this month to protest against the microchips of Three Market Square, as warning, “It says in the Bible that’s a sign of the beast. But it’s not only about that. It’s about invading people’s privacy.”

This concern is based on a passage in Revelation (chapter 13, verses 16-17), which reads, “He [the “False Prophet,” working for the Beast, or Antichrist] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one has the mark.” (Emphasis added.)

Christian theologians have offered various and sundry explanations as to what John meant, but this much is clear: any person or oligarchical power able to control all commerce would be antithetical to a free society, creating a totalitarian nightmare. If some power can control your every transaction — they control you. And, if a person’s economic activity is regulated to the point of every transaction, the person or group so regulating can achieve totalitarian control greater than anything dreamed of by Hitler, Stalin, or Mao. It also makes it easy for the government to track every purchase a person makes. A government that tracks all phone calls and monitors all e-mails will certainly want to track all of your economic activity — all in the name of fighting terrorism, drug-dealing, or other crime, of course.

Arguments of convenience can certainly be made (and no doubt will be) for the microchip making the carrying of cash, checks, or credit cards unnecessary. But if the only way that buying and selling can take place is through a microchip in one’s hand (or forehead, presumably if a person does not have a hand), then all it takes for totalitarianism is for the government to have control of those transactions. The technology may very well be morally neutral, but its use by a tyrant intent on controlling the population makes it frightening.

For those concerned about Real ID, which is basically an effort for a national identification card, an identification system tied to a person’s body is the next logical step.

Photo of microchip implant: AP Images



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