

**Preventing
and Combating
Exploitation and
Malpractice by
the Technology
Industry and
the Ill Advised
Attitudes of
People in Tech.**



While doing one of our last projects, I discovered the self believed heightened politics of silicon valley society.

A new kid on the block, raised in California and recently moved to San Francisco, wants to change the world for the better. They want to do this to the best of their abilities and have witnessed how those in power exercise the resources they have at their disposal. They want to pursue a career and gain a following in the same way, listen to experts and develop better modes of living and progress humanity.

This description I have made to apply to someone who'd perhaps pursue politics or other community engagements, the conventional way someone would want to help make good, meaningful change to as many people as possible. But in silicon valley this person would not pursue politics, at least not directly. They have witnessed a different set of people in power, who's power is arguable greater than those in government, can apply their power away from the public eye, and earn their power in a very different way. I'm of course talking about Entrepreneurs, CEOs, dare I say "big tech" without sounding Trumpian whining about Twitter.

There is a generation who have grown up without witnessing the birth of this format of power, then again thus isn't new. It can be argued that modern democracy has almost simply been the enacting force controlling big companies with too much power to make sure they deliver and remain in the best interests of the public(whether or not it's effective). Though, because of poorly general understanding of the mechanisms of technology and contemporary economics, the responsibility and sway that governments had over the activities of companies has faltered and what could have once been considered violating, now, Facebook can sell your current moving location to other companies and individuals(until very recently). This generation has accepted it as a normal and understand that politics plays a much smaller part in the powers that play now that it used to, and social and economic change often comes from decisions made by those who run the big money machines.

In silicon valley, people don't bother with politics, they are neither republicans nor democrats and they don't vote. Tim Cook cannot align himself as it would damage the position that Apple had as the most used phone company among most of America. Steve Jobs once living in a "hippie commune", genuinely thought his tech would help the world and heighten living. Silicon valley perpetuates the idea of technological heightened living of the future, and reads sci-fi, watches Black Mirror innocently without considering it prophetically.

Elon Musk earns his authority via the market. Yes, he has a lot of money, but his power comes from his belief, and people who give him money's belief in what he does and will do. Turner describes Musk's vision, and how he can make things happen. this power comes from his market sway and not from his money per se. The idea of the free market rules the economic arguments of the people who run silicon valley, as far as to invent crypto-currencies that are designed to not possibly be regulated. I question the moral authority that Bezos and Musk have. Lot's of people buy their product yes, but that does not equal democracy. I don't necessarily believe that having an iPhone means you align with the ethics of Apples practice's in child labour in China. The free market in this instance replaces democracy. Your vote is your purchase, and your voice is your position in the company, the money you have and the capital backers you can convince to invest.

dependence on this technologies that are unregulated leaves us open to exploitation, widening the wealth gap and poverty, AI profiling and targeted marketing violate our independence and discriminate, greenwashing product marketing wipes away real problems that persist and cannot be settled under the agenda perpetuated by technology companies.

What it means for people who buy in.



To want to impact the world in this new world arrangement of technology services, you must first buy into this anti-democratic, capitalist agenda of selling your self and product, bending truths. The new kid can only envision change within the system and with a viable product that sits comfortably with the status quo. All they know would be different if social systems changed to slow the pace of development and better understand the moral and societal effects of new technology services, democracy would ruin technological development and the face of "the advancement of science". You can only change the world with a product that people buy.

"Technology is an alternative to politics." Peter Theil

Greenwashing is the principle of putting a sustainable spin on the marketing of a product. Tesla electric cars are in principle a good idea, developing electric alternatives to petrol cars, but in reality, the manufacturing emissions plus the battery waste once the cells have diminished couple to what can be argued to be a greater impact than conventional combustion engine powered cars. These are problems that society has recognised collectively as being important, being undermined by those in power of the economy, who subvert and blind the general public and direct the spotlight away from their own misdeeds, going unnoticed and unregulated by a government with no pressure to act.

Google acts as the gatekeeper to the internet. No business can move through the virtual world without a Google cut, when setting up my website my domain name was purchased through an alternative website to Google domains but the small print shows that Ionos employs Google to ping addresses out. My server is hosted another company that uses IBM server farms, which are maintained by Google. Whether you see this as monopolising is debatable, but the general misunderstanding is to not recognise the infrastructure of the internet now depending on Google. Does consensus lies with the acceptance of the google big brother? Depending on your opinion, you may agree or disagree with the regulatory control of personal data. You agree to terms of use which means its on your head that Facebook know your every step and you probably think security services shouldn't have the right to seize your profile. Or you could believe that we have strayed too far and society now depends on these private services, and therefore they should be under more public control or in public ownership. Edward Snowden spoke of the unspoken agreement between intelligence agencies and technology companies, how the trend the line softly to prevent the public catching wind on new developments, the government will actually understand these developments, but because of the advantage of their use, will not blow the whistle of moral judgement for the publics sake. If there was more discussion along this vein, there would be better understanding and a better ethos of development, those in charge of these services would be more whipped into socially acceptable methods and mechanisms.

Automation and unemployment is a topic that I feel is worth briefly mentioning. Automation of manual labour and other jobs could cause unemployment, at least in the short term, but also ruins communities of workers. The consideration of this effect is not one that fits with the ideology of technology capitalism. Firstly, the argument that it is deniable that it is bad due to the creation of new jobs with better "job satisfaction". Secondly, unions do not exist in the technology world, there is the example of Musk and Tesla, Bezos and Amazon, where every possibly way to prevent unionising was employed, but also, technology workers often have the shared ideology of the entrepreneur and do not believe loyalty to a workforce or community. Fred Turner quotes theories about how decentralized power through a truly free-market will prevent the exploitation of workers. Turner theorizes a nomadic selling of labour to the highest bidder, uprooting tradition. "People are too comfortable if they don't think they can do something to change the world". My dad, an ardent socialist and computer programmer for 30 years, tells me how he once joined a technology union, but realised, after a number of years, its minimal power and size and how it was caused by clashing technology ethos'. If the idea of unionising was reintroduced into this sphere of profession, I think it could have a very positive impact to the morals standards of technological



development.

A similar thread of thought to this comes from the open source movement. Originally, Berners-Lee and others in the 70s and 80s, the open source movement was a libertarian like idea of legally usable free source code for different software, it allowed for easy hacking together of new programs but also meant all the code was visible and easily understood by the educated public rather than behind a wall. This meant that the development of the code would be a larger more diverse collective of individuals and therefore generally more secure and reliable. Jaron Lanier says the technology sector has lost this in recent decades as large companies such as Oracle and Microsoft control the development of a lot of source code, leaving potential insecurities in their products and denying access to smaller companies and individuals. The protection of IP has become more intense, which hypocritically contrasts to Turner's belief of a collective interest in the advancement of better technology. There is still a strong Open Source movement, but it is ill neglected by the powerful corps who produce most of the software we all use. I want an Open Source renaissance.

Isabelle Stengers describes the impact of the pace of science with the example of GMOs and the post-implementation discovery of the impact GMOs have on ecosystems and potential negative public health effects (bear with me). This problem with pace, of which can be recognised not just in the hard sciences, can be also be seen in real world technological developments. It can easily be applied to the blue light effect, and countless effects discovered after the mass uptake in using social media.

today, a technological utopian-idealist perspective is tempting, but waiting for social salvation from some revolutionary scientific advancement only plays into the hands of those who pedal the technology markets. Musk is not leading us into a brighter future, he is just making money.

Stengers, in her argument about the pace of science, quotes Whitehead in talking about the change in university research and pursuance.

Alfred Whitehead "the task of a university is the creation of the future, so far as rational thought, and civilized modes of appreciation, can affect the issue. The future is big with every possibility of the achievement of tragedy."

Stengers explains scientist claim to refuse the pressures of society on grounds of bias and the natural progress of science, but that they fail in this and simply make excuses. She claims they must be exposed to an understanding public scrutiny because even the hardest of sciences will have biases, and that the pursuance of a field must follow in the best interests of the people.

"Whitehead associates the future neither with the advance of knowledge nor with progress, but with rather radical uncertainty. We do not know what our future will be, and nor do we know if, or to what extent, what he calls rational thought and civilised modes of appreciation can affect the issue.

who specialise in particular regions of thought and thereby progressively add to the sum of knowledge within their respective limitations of subject. Whitehead avoids being blindly led by his abstractions. Each profession makes progress, but it is progress in its own groove.... the groove prevents straying across country, and the abstraction abstracts from something to which no further attention is given. the remainder of life is treated superficially, with the imperfect categories of thought derived from one profession. professionalism has been mated with progress. the world is now faced with a self evolving system, which cannot stop. "

Technological development is stuck in this same groove, silicon valley and its “progress” to heighten living and advance humanity using its technologies does not have the ability to see or pursue alternative lanes of development because of its pace and capitalist nature.

So what can I do about all this stuff? There are plenty of things I would change in the world that I think would remedy our intruding doom. I think many of the above points can be described in terms of their negative effects on our democracy. Stengers wants a more informed and involved public as part of her solution to the decline of quality scientific progress. If society could more easily leverage technology into an acceptable position in our lives, it would be through more people being more involved in our democracy such as through holding our leaders more accountable for neglecting regulatory control over tech companies and taxing them properly, having more popular assemblies to recognise public consensus on new issues that arise around the role of technology in our lives, Swiss style referendums, modern technology unions etc. I could go on.

In my practice I want to involve people in the creation of new ways of collaborating. I propose we all be entrepreneurs. And everyone involves their interests and everyday life into everything they do. I don't mean bring work home, but bring home to work and approach their productive life with an interdisciplinary approach.

From projects I have been involved with and projects I have done myself, I know the effectiveness and the results of collective making and workshops. I want to re-instigate a collaborative-community into the technology world. The basis of my approach is the Open Source renaissance, I want more people working together to create things that benefit everyone, and involve anyone who wants to be part of the creation. I want less NEED for production to gain a result or product or profit, and more WANT to be making, collaborating and innovating. More public funding for start up technology would re-flame the original idea of domestic technical innovation as it was in the 70s. It would allow for these technologies to develop with people rather than manipulate them.

To describe the consequences of this would be plain, I want to disrupt the capitalist system and what I want to do would only co-exist on a very minimal level, and be effective with total overhaul. I am less conscious of the consequences and more aware of the un-likelihood of such a proposal.

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