

All.Net Analyst Report and Newsletter

Welcome to our Analyst Report and Newsletter

A year of living well

The Internet is increasingly achieving true anarchy. The “nobody in charge” folks seem to be winning, but the empires are increasingly forcing the issue to maintain control. The problem is that they have let it go too far. The rebel alliance has distributed itself across the globe, while the nationalist forces of the ex-evil empire and the Pax Americana crowd are increasingly at odds. The rebel alliance distributed non-leadership is meeting through an encrypted live audio/video feed on the IRC channel Urkiscrap in a last desperate attempt to defeat the evil forces of count Putin before the perception management weapon gets fully recharged for its next shot at breaking up the colonial alliance.

OK – it’s written as science fiction – but...

A basic problem we face as a global society is that we are not a global society. But we have a global network. And the global network, driven by the desire for freedom of expression, has claimed the name of “democratization” when it’s really about anarchy. And the misled people who live in this global anarchist environment are not yet clear on the nature of anarchy or that almost nobody actually wants to live in such a world. So we develop fiefdoms under the control of the powerful wealthy corporations or other entities, thinking that we can be safe from the global information conflict that embraces humankind as a global composite. The fiefdoms of Apple, Google, your bank, Gotomeeting, my personal “darkweb” network, etc. each offers some level of protection against the anarchist hordes roaming the Internet.

Like the walled states and cities of the distant past, staying in the walled garden helps, but the nature of the Internet breaks down those walls, and so we all have our walled gardens fed by the same global water system – the Internet. We share the fresh water and the waste water and while some of us may have filters for our intake, we all live with the sewage created by billions of people sharing the system.

The recursive nature of things

Genes and memes and computing machines share the same weaknesses. They are susceptible to diseases. Viruses spread within and between these domains, to the transitive closure of flow. While early computer viruses spread only in computers, human viruses produce diseases that also affect the mind. And the mentally corrupted spread ideas between people as memes, the sickness of irrational hatred, xenophobia, and so forth driven by the mental and physiological phenomena of biological systems. Yes, the mental diseases affect the physical world, and the physical diseases affect the mental world. Add in the computer viruses which break down the security mechanisms of systems and the memes spread through the communications channels of the Internet, and we have the new global illness.

No way out?

How do we extricate ourselves and our global society from this sickness? Is there a way out? Do we want out? Why do you and I have any right to control others through our views? How do we deal with such change and the integration of the nature of people with the power of transitivity?

Not out but through

I don't mean to imply that I know the answers to these questions, but I am fairly certain of one thing. There is no way out. The only way is through to the next phase of human existence.

Some people want to get back to where they once belonged. But that place no longer exists, it wasn't all that good for most folks anyway, and if you went back, you would no longer belong there because you are not the you you used to be.

Some people want helter skelter. But that means death and destruction on a scale as high as global thermonuclear war, but more likely simply anarchy for a period of time until something better comes along. And the better then will likely be worse than the as-is now.

Some people are confused. They think Google can stop the fake news but also think that the Chinese approach to limiting free speech is abhorrent. The thing is, free speech means being able to lie, cheat, and steal, and convince the masses that you are telling the real truth, being honest, and giving to the poor. Killing off free speech means autocratic government where only a few can authorize their friends to lie, cheat, and steal. The notion of something in between implies something unstable by nature.

The world as I see it increasingly lacks social mores that limit personal behavior based on social pressure and personal restraint. There is no forceful way to get people to behave without giving people power over other people. The governed must agree to the governance. Otherwise it's going to be the very autocratic government that we claim not to want.

A path forward?

We need to build the social norms of the information age. We need to decide what is allowable behavior and what is not. We need to create the shunning or divide the society so people can pick how they want to live and live there with government enforced social norms.

For those that want to live in the helter skelter world, they should be able to do so, but not at the expense of those of us that want to live another way. Those that want to live in the hypothetical Victorian age that never really existed before, they should be able to do so, but not force the rest of the world to their view. Those who violate the barriers between societies should be subject to punishment, perhaps by shunning, perhaps by something else depending on the nature of the crime in the context of the social norm they violate.

The path forward, and I think it is technically achievable, is one of identifying the rules for different places and enforcing those rules socially as well as technically. In societies wishing to have individual responsibility to the society, this starts with attribution of actions to actors. And that means transparency for all and ultimately privacy for none – when things go badly – in that context. But it also means strong encryption and authentication in transit, a structure for warrants and searches that follows legal guidelines and has no secret courts or secret evidence, and a confidence built on transparency rather than “trust me”.

Enter the age of propaganda

The play book is not new. We are entering the age of propaganda. More accurately, we are leaving the stage of propaganda preparation. “This is not the end, or even beginning of the end, it is the end of the beginning.” At this point, because credibility is about saying things the audience believes or expects, and not about your history of telling the truth or being right on the facts, I won't bother to check the likely misquote or attribute it.

But propaganda is not an end game. It is a means to an end. It is about taking control of hearts and minds. So what do you do once you get them? Almost always a strong-arm leader with a dedicated small group around them, rich, powerful, taking advantage of the masses, lying about the reality, the destruction of science except the science the state wants for its control, and the sorts of governments you see in the early days of the Mission Impossible television series. That's where we seem to be going in Western society.

If Germany in WW2 had the technology we have today, they could have far better suppressed the resistance and likely defeated it, perhaps prolonging the war till they had nuclear weapons, and perhaps leading to a far different outcome. That has been a mantra of mine for a long time. Now we have high tech capabilities but the same human frailties. It appears we are on the verge of entering the new dark ages.

The high-tech version of the dark ages

What made the dark ages dark? From my perspective it is the exploitation of information to oppress population, deprecate science averse to the ruling powers, and kill off stubborn opposition that characterizes the darkness. The use and perversion of religion to this end is a well-known information exploitation, and regardless of how the memes are passed (word of mouth or Internet), the effect is the same.

In simple terms, this is the grade-school model of life. The bill to deprive poor children of shoes in winter is called the "getting shoes to poor people in winter" bill. If you are a liar, the first thing you do is accuse the other guy of lying so when they call you a liar you say they can't even come up with original ideas. If they call you a thief, you have everyone you can name accuse them of being a thief. Nothing sticks but what we want to hear. Nobody believes any of it.

Whichever side of the political discourse you think I am talking about, you're wrong. I am not talking about sides. I am talking about the dark ages, and that is where we appear to be headed. All of us. The darkness of complete uncertainty because of complete lack in trust about anything that might be called fact or ground truth. Science to serve power and money and not truth or justice. The dark ages.

Plenty of blame to go around

I read a story today – fake or not – about a professor teaching a sexuality class who was recorded by a student, against school policy, telling students, in answer to a student question, that the election of Trump was an act of terrorism. The student released the recording, the young republicans on campus shared the links, the Internet memes took over, and the professor was harassed from all quarters of the right wing. Eventually, she was threatened, the police said they could do nothing about it, her address and other details were posted online, she made Fox News, and she is in fear for her life. Let's try to find the obvious blames:

- In a class on sexuality, addressing politics in this way appears to be off topic.
 - Professors shouldn't opine on subjects they are not experts on from the bully pulpit.
- The student violated the school rules on recording what goes on in class.
 - Students shouldn't violate school rules.
- The student released the video to the Internet.
 - Releasing such things has the obvious intent of harassment and is inappropriate.

- The young republicans fanned the flames of hatred.
 - Spewing and encouraging hate speech it is like crying fire in a non-burning theater.
- The school did not act quickly to address the problem.
 - Failure to act allowed the problem to grow and expand.
- The bad actors of the Internet spewed forth hate speech using the Internet to gang up.
 - The lack of social self-constraint and community shunning damages civil society.
- The professor and her allies ran and hid instead of standing up for themselves.
 - Cower in front of bullies and get bullied. The home of the brave demands bravery.
- The police failed to act to find and arrest the people threatening the life of another.
 - They have every reason and duty to investigate and arrest persons threatening life.
- The “right” media and action groups exaggerated the problem by fanning the flames.
 - If it bleeds it leads – but leading things that bleed is not news – it is civil destruction.
- The “left” media and action groups failed to coordinate a response.
 - A rabble against an organized army will always lose. Stand together or fall alone.

Every party involved so far as I can tell should be ashamed of themselves, and as a society, we should not let any of it happen. But we do in the false name of “free speech”. Baloney.

China and Russia have acted to defend themselves

Free speech? No. Government control of the media? Yes.

We fear it in Western societies because it could allow the very thing that we are seeing take place today. Not by government control, but by power and influence over the media, and the deprecation of the belief of the people in the 4th estate. This is the natural side effect of media changes that have taken place for scores of years – starting when news was made a profit center – moving toward the 24x7 news cycle and requirement to fill empty space with something – followed by the big money taking over more and more of the news and media as monopolies – and so forth. But don’t blame the media. We as a society bought it and still do.

It is too late for the government to step in, and it will not regardless, because free speech is sacrosanct. So we are going to travel rapidly down the path to destruction of civil society by listening to the haters who treat us like the children we apparently are in order to win the game at the expense of all of the rest of us. Stand up for yourself or fall by the wayside.

Conclusion

As a political independent, I view the left as pathetic and the right as dangerous. The center has yet to appear. I hate propaganda as it has caused such waste and destroyed so many lives. I like science because it seeks and rewards testable truth, and I like engineering when it does useful things with the truths of science.

But people believe hyperbole and propaganda. The path through the dark ages is lit and darkened by social norms and their enforcement. Ground truth is irrelevant when the truth is ground in the grist mill of propaganda. Sticks and stones can brake my bones, but words can never hurt me.

The land of the free is the home of the brave because the brave are the people that make it free. Stand up and be free, or cower and be slaves. Choose.