



The Tech Billionaire Plan To Destroy Democracy (formatted YT transcript)

****Sam Cedar:**** Gil Duran, journalist, founder of Nerd Reich, a Substack newsletter about tech extremist politics, author of the forthcoming book **The Nerd Reich: Silicon Valley Fascism and the War on Democracy**. Gil, I have an advance copy. It is sitting on my night table on a stack, and I'm going to get there.

****Gil Duran:**** Oh, no. You took it from the office.

****Sam Cedar:**** I thought you were— Oh, we have another one. I did. We have another one. Look at this prop here. There it is. **The Nerd Reich**. I can't wait to get into it. Yeah. But the book comes out in—is it August?

****Gil Duran:**** August 18th.

****Sam Cedar:**** August 18th. And so we will have you back for that. But we had to—there's so much going on in this tech bro extremist world. We just spoke to Dylan Gouch Lewis who had written a piece in **The American Prospect** about the sort of cousins to the people you write about, and that is other tech elite, by their own definition, who are trying to take the Democratic party through the abundance movement. What is it about these people who work in tech that they believe that (a) they're the elite and (b) that the elite should basically just run everything?

****Gil Duran:**** Well, I think it's the derangement and psychosis that results from too much money. These people have gone totally insane. And now they are on a quest not only to seize all of American political power and establish a monopoly of political power that overthrows our democracy, but a lot of them think they're going to live forever, become transhuman, meld with AI, and travel throughout the universe colonizing other galaxies and harvesting the energy of the other stars. So we have a great outbreak—an existential outbreak of delusional thinking in Silicon Valley. And because of the money they have, it's a danger to all of us because they're trying to buy the entire system, both the Democrats and the Republicans, in order to break the system. And it's not different people, by the way. This is pretty much the same people with some small variations. You know, you got Joe Lonsdale, who's a Palantir guy and a total right-wing bombthrower who said the United States should return to public executions, giving money to Matt Mahan in the gubernatorial race in California, who is supposedly a moderate

Democrat. So this is one of the reasons I wrote my book—witnessing this effort to buy both sides of the political spectrum. Obviously, they'd rather have the Republicans because the Republicans will do anything. The Democrats is a much slower project, but it heads to the same destination.

****Sam Cedar:**** Yeah, I mean, this guy even in this abundance document basically said that in many respects small donors are the bane of their existence because that's the only sort of bulwark against their being able to buy Democratic politicians—is that Democratic politicians have the option, in some circumstances, if they pursue a certain platform, to do very well with smaller donors. It's fascinating that it's coming out of there. I mean, you talk about the money sort of corroding their brains. I can't remember what's the guy's name on the **All-In** podcast that we just covered—Palihapitiya?

****Gil Duran:**** Yes.

****Sam Cedar:**** Where he was saying the outcome of the mayoral election, as a data stats guy, I'm telling you, is one in a trillion. And it was just the most seventh-grade assessment of stats and figures to come up with the idea that it was impossible that Spencer Pratt wouldn't have made it into the top two in a city of 75% Democrats. These are people who nobody around them seems to ever say, "Hey man, you may want to double check that."

****Gil Duran:**** Well, part of it is that they're dumb about politics. They're really dumb about things they don't know about, but nobody tells them that because they're rich. And this is a general affliction of the wealthy that adds to their psychosis and delusion—is that everybody wants to flatter and please them and be sycophantic. So no one ever says, "You know what? That's totally wrong. You're an idiot." You can't say that, right? It's all finding a way to nod along. But the more grim side of this is that this is part of their propaganda game. They know they're lying. They know they're not telling the truth. They're engaged in what some call fifth-generation warfare, the new era of propaganda, where you fight over what is basic reality, what is basic facts itself. So they're playing the old Trump game of just completely fabricating a reality. You know, there's 15% registered Republicans in Los Angeles. Very unlikely you're going to get a Republican mayor in Los Angeles anytime ever again. In fact, anybody who is a Republican becomes a Democrat to run because that's just the way it works now. The Republican party is pretty much dead in California. But so I don't think it's necessarily that they're stupid. I think the other possibility is that they're just lying because this is part of their strategy to create a parallel reality and to operate from that. They've seen with X that you can create these economies of false information that have real-world impacts. You know, Elon Musk got like 50,000 retweets for also making false claims about the LA election. So on a certain level, they know what they are doing and they're doing it on purpose. And that makes it

more nefarious. And I would say that's a hallmark of fascism—is the creation of an unreality where people can no longer distinguish between fact and fiction and you can manipulate them from that position of radicalized ignorance.

****Sam Cedar:**** The age-old debate over stupid and evil, and sometimes it could be both. Let's talk about Peter Thiel, who is sort of one of the godfathers of this movement—or can you call it really a movement? I mean, it seems like literally a dozen or two people. They just have so much money. They're everywhere. Peter Thiel, one of his societies was just exposed. Have you seen much about this Dialogue?

****Gil Duran:**** Yeah. Well, the word that Peter Thiel likes to use is **cult**. And that's also the word I use in my book. Peter Thiel has created a cult of powerful men who think it is their destiny to overthrow democracy in the 21st century using technology and money. And for about 20 years now, Peter Thiel has had this secret cult society called Dialogue where they have these weird off-the-record conversations with wealthy elites. Sort of like a Bilderberg or an **Eyes Wide Shut** for dorky intellectual subjects, as far as we know. And this list was just revealed because apparently they had it in the coding of their website. These tech geniuses have this massive security flaw that allows some activists to figure out who's on the list. Now, it's not clear who's a member versus who's just participating, but there are some pretty stunning names on the list. You know, Ezra Klein, Nicholas Thompson of **The Atlantic**. And, you know, I have to say, I've wondered why certain people with very large platforms have ignored criticizing these tech billionaires in the way that they should. And now I'm wondering if we're getting toward an answer here, but let's let the rest of the story come out. But the point is that Peter Thiel in his book **Zero to One** says, "The way to run your company, the way to run anything, is to create a cult," because that's where you get people who are obsessed and who are dedicated. And the other word he says for cult is a mafia. So you want a cult or a mafia. And that means getting a core group of people to become true radicalized believers and spread the message and carry out the project from there. And he actually names Jim Jones and Charles Manson as examples of people who have done this, saying, "Well, that's kind of bad, you don't want to do that necessarily." At the same time, Manson and Jones killed, you know, under 1,500 people. These guys are already on track to kill millions through the USAID cuts. And if they get their way, they'll kill billions. So we are dealing with a dangerous cult of radicalized venture capitalists who want to destroy democracy. And what I like to say is that trying to explain what's happening to our country without talking about Peter Thiel's anti-democratic cult is like trying to explain 9/11 without talking about al-Qaeda.

****Sam Cedar:**** Well, we should also mention Ellison too as well and their connections with the IDF and Israel's genocide. If we're talking about death toll right now, Peter Thiel and his

technology and a bunch of his buddies that are included in this are literally using their weapons technology to commit genocide right now.

****Gil Duran:**** Definitely. And while they commit genocide in the Holy Land, Peter Thiel's going off talking about the Antichrist everywhere. He's on a total apocalyptic trip right now, right? And it's all connected. This is a network of people. Another word they use for this is the **network state**, which I've written about at length and which is in my book—this idea that the interconnected wealth, influence, and power of these tech moguls is now more powerful than nations and that they can act as their own political entity traveling around the world, what Quinn Slobodian calls a "mobile fortress of capital," to pursue their own foreign policy, to pursue their own political goals, and even to establish at some point their own little nation states that they will control without laws or regulations or any influence from democracy. So it goes way beyond Thiel, but he's sort of like the node of it. He has sort of normalized the thinking—this isn't something to be ashamed of. This is something that is our destiny. This is something we must do. We have a moral imperative to pursue this monopolistic power over the world.

****Sam Cedar:**** I want to get back to the network state, but in terms of Thiel, one thing that is amazing about that is, you know, you say he's on an Antichrist tour, and it sounds like hyperbole, but this is a guy who in the run-up to the 2024 election was going out there on interview shows and saying, "We are like at Weimar—people are sick of democracy." He is out there talking about how the biggest problem was that women getting the vote was problematic because it's ultimately going to lead to socialism. I mean, he is in no way—what's fascinating to me about this guy is that he's not hiding the ball at all. He's just laying it out there. And for whatever reason, this guy's got his hand financially in just about all of the major tech that controls just about everything. He essentially birthed JD Vance. And I'd like you to speak to that, but this is a very, very powerful guy going out there and unabashedly saying we need to have some type of dictator, really, just so that our group has someone, just one person to talk to, and they can execute.

****Gil Duran:**** Definitely. My book is mostly focused on this cult that Peter Thiel has created through people like Curtis Yarvin, who is the main guy behind this idea we should have a CEO and dictator, and has become very popular on the right, including with JD Vance, who quoted him during his Senate campaign, said we need to purge the federal government and install loyalists, which is exactly what they proceeded to do. And you know, Curtis Yarvin's a guy who sits around dropping acid and reading fascist literature while living off of his wife and his mother, creates this fantasy version of fascism, and all these billionaires just eat it up. So that's a big problem that Peter Thiel's been able to do this. And part of the reason—I wondered at the beginning of researching my book, why do they say these things out loud, right? Because

to me, I was in politics for a long time as a comms guy. You don't say the crazy stuff out loud. There's certain stuff you talk about not in front of cameras because it's easily exploitable. But the reason they do it is because it's a form of evangelism. It's how you get other people on board with it, how you get other people talking about it. And there was a speech that Peter Thiel gave in 2010 to a group of libertarians where he basically said government is fundamentally evil. It's so evil that to deny the evil of the government is tantamount to denying the existence of the devil. And this is a guy who started Palantir a few years before with an investment from the CIA and is a major government contractor with law enforcement intelligence agencies. So how are you on the one hand saying that government is fundamentally evil and on the other hand getting wealthy and powerful through the same government? There are these conundrums and hypocrisies, and if you look at Peter Thiel's Antichrist lectures—because he is traveling the globe giving four-day-long lectures on the Antichrist—the Antichrist he describes sounds a lot like Silicon Valley, and I don't think that's an accident. But his main message is we're in an existential battle against democracy. And he's trying to say basically that democracy is the Antichrist, that progressivism is the Antichrist. But the Antichrist he describes—this figure obsessed with using technology to gain power over everyone—clearly describes his own portfolio.

****Sam Cedar:**** I have to say, I don't want to be in a position of defending him, but I'm not sure how hypocritical it is for him to be taking money from the national security state and also creating technology to allow the national security state to be oppressive, because the part about government I think that he finds evil is that there is actually, at least theoretically and sometimes in practice, an opportunity for the plebs to have an impact and to have a need that government fulfills. I think he loves the idea of, "Well, we could—if we just had an army and a police force run by one guy, we would be in great shape." I think that would be his perspective. But what's going on with him moving to Argentina?

****Gil Duran:**** Well, he has temporarily relocated to Argentina for a couple of months now. Peter Thiel's been collecting passports for decades. He's also a citizen of New Zealand. I think he's pursued a passport in Malta. He really feels the need to have multiple passports. And this traces back to a 1997 book called **The Sovereign Individual**, which Thiel regards as prophecy—this sort of conspiracy theory doom book that said that in the 21st century, technology would overthrow nation states and that these "cognitive elites," a term taken from eugenics, would be able to profit from this by using something called cyber currency to evade government power and authority, and by having—basically by shopping for jurisdictions where they could move between different countries that would cater to them by giving them no taxes and no regulations and laws. Specifically, the book recommended New Zealand and Argentina among the handful of countries where one should pursue these passports. So as my book spells out, Peter Thiel is obsessed with **The Sovereign Individual** and it explains a lot of what

he's doing. But people were wondering about the Argentina move. Obviously, they have a president, Javier Milei, who's an anarcho-capitalist totally aligned with these venture capitalist guys, even though his policies have failed and we had to send them \$20 billion to basically bail them out. But what happened two weeks ago that really clarified what Peter Thiel's doing is Milei wrote a piece in the **Financial Times**, an op-ed that said that Argentina was going to introduce a law to ban AI regulation and keep taxes very low for venture capital and tech, and also allow for the creation of non-human corporations—basically AI corporations where no human would be liable for the outcomes of this. So this is some far-out radical experimental stuff. Clearly Peter Thiel had a heads-up on that. And once again, he's trying to model behavior and show people, let's put down roots in Argentina, which just like **The Sovereign Individual** said, is now going to allow a menu of options for us to escape from rules and laws we don't like. You know, in the fantasy, Argentina would now become the trillionaire fortress of AI future and become a powerful country where the oligarchs rule. But the positive part of this is that Peter Thiel seems to be betting against the Trump regime. He's very nervous. And Curtis Yarvin, his little political guru, has been weeping openly in interviews and saying people need to leave the United States because Trump's going to fail and there's going to be retribution for all the stuff we did right now. So in a way, it's always a mix of things with Thiel. He's crazy like a fox. But he seems to be hedging against the Trump administration, but also seeking a place where he can do anything he wants and have total power.

****Sam Cedar:**** How do you think that translates into what's going on with JD Vance? Because that is my sense. And Yarvin's been saying that stuff now, it feels like for almost like a year or maybe nine months, like he said it's failed. And I hope he's right. I hope he's held to account. I hope that there is retribution in some form for what they have done to the government. But how do you read what's going on with JD Vance? Because right now, also, I should say the past two weeks it feels like this is JD Vance pre-launching his 2028 campaign—from sort of like half taking credit for what's going on with the Iran deal, to the extent that he can take full credit if it somehow turns out to work out. There was a story about the Epstein files that came out in the **New York Times** the other day that seems quite clear that JD Vance was one of the key sources for that piece, or at least coming from him. What do you make of all that, and what's your sense of Peter Thiel's hopes when it comes to JD Vance?

****Gil Duran:**** Well, my chapter on JD Vance is called "The Unicorn" because I view him as a bet that these venture capitalists are making on politics. And he's gotten pretty far. He's gotten all the way to the White House. He's a heartbeat away from the presidency. Fortunately, he has a complete lack of charisma. He's highly unpopular and Republicans are starting to turn against him and distrust him. I think the knives are out for JD Vance. And he's in a very tricky position where he needs to start building a distance from Trump, who's failing and low in the polls, but he can't really do that while he's on Trump's ship. And one weird thing—JD Vance

went on **The View** yesterday and said that he was concerned. He wanted to release the Epstein files and he was so concerned how so many wealthy powerful people were close to Epstein, which was an insane thing for JD Vance to say given that he's the vice president to Jeffrey Epstein's best friend, Donald Trump. But not only that, Vance is entirely a creation of Peter Thiel, who was also in deep with Epstein. In fact, Epstein gave \$40 million to one of Peter Thiel's funds, an investment that has now ballooned to \$170 million and, according to the **New York Times**, I believe, is the major chunk of his remaining estate. So here's a guy—JD Vance is a guy who's in an Epstein-Thiel-Trump sandwich here. So it's not clear to me how he's going to be able to thread that needle convincingly when we can just get a real Republican to run who's actually not in the administration that's so unpopular. But they're definitely going to try. You know, they would put as much money as necessary into a Vance campaign. And of course, the bigger threat—you know, it's maybe a small percentage possibility, but if Trump doesn't make it through his term—he is falling asleep a lot. His hands are, you know, the color of grape Kool-Aid. Then he becomes president by default, and JD Vance is a man who will do anything to cling to power. You know, in a recent **New York Times** story he was calling to use the Insurrection Act against protesters. He's a big believer in Carl Schmitt, the Nazi philosopher, who was also important to Peter Thiel, who believes that a dictator rises to power by declaring an emergency and changing the rules, which is what Hitler did. And of course, in JD Vance we have a guy who called Trump "America's Hitler" and is now his vice president.

****Sam Cedar:**** Can people change their minds? I want to—since you brought it up, I'm not sure if we discussed it, but I am curious about your thoughts about this, Gil, given Peter Thiel showing up in the Epstein files. It is interesting to me that around the time that Trump was about to start running—well, it was actually Steve Bannon also that was meeting with Epstein, was revealed in the emails, and Peter Thiel at the time I think was in part of making that connection, or maybe I'm misremembering here. But it's interesting to me that Bannon was meeting with Epstein around this time they were also meeting with the head of 4chan—Epstein was—and that was around the time that the Pizzagate conspiracy came up, which deflected from the Republicans' ties to Epstein and made it more about Bill Clinton and Democrats and Oprah drinking blood in Comet Pizza or whatever. I think it's a decent theory that perhaps some of these tech oligarchs in conjunction with the Trump campaign and Epstein themselves were a part of crafting a bit of a psychological operation that would make sure that people weren't focused on Trump's connection to Epstein at that time. Just wondering if you have any theories yourself.

****Gil Duran:**** I think there's a lot we still don't know about what happened during that period. And hopefully we'll find out at some point, but it definitely sounds like the propaganda tactic known as "argument in the mirror," where basically you accuse your opponent of doing the

thing that you're actually doing, and it confuses people because people don't know what to believe. It's like the Spider-Man meme where they're all pointing at each other, right? So people don't have the cognitive ability to sort it all out. And what I remember about Pizzagate, because I worked at the time for Tommy Steyer the billionaire, working on progressive campaigns in California—he was in some emails. They were talking about a pasta dinner and there was this whole theory that the pasta was code for trafficking and molestation, which is this bonkers theory with no basis in reality. And here we have Trump in the damn Epstein files and we know Epstein was a pedophile. We know he was doing all these things, and his followers don't really believe that that's anything, and Trump denies it. So they were able to create this sort of fictional narrative, and they've done that multiple times. Look at in the past decade how we've had QAnon, Pizzagate, the 2020 election conspiracy theories. You know, again, this goes back to the fascist tactic of unreality. And we're going to see a lot more of that here in the age of AI and oligarch control of the media, where there are people who believe in complete falsehoods as fact and are motivated to action by that. People who raided the Capitol on January 6 and tried to overthrow democracy were animated by a completely false belief. And I think that's just a precursor of what's to come. And I definitely think that all the people you named have been involved in those kinds of strategies, and they're very, very vested in narrative. Most of venture capital is based on creating narratives.

****Sam Cedar:**** Another thing I'm curious about your thoughts on—I noticed this on social media now. For example, because I'm a Knicks fan, I've been seeing all of this footage, and it's all my whole algorithm now is footage from the celebrations in the streets, right? But then you kind of look at the replies and now there's these new videos that come 24 hours later and it's like, "This wasn't fun, it was rioting," and there's footage and video of stuff that's burning, and it's the same kind of footage and an emphasis on the 63 arrests or whatever, which is nothing in comparison to the size of the city. But when we talk about the network, the Silicon Valley folks and all of this crime panic that is pushed on these platforms to really kind of push some of what we're talking about here—that we can't trust democracy, that it's too messy, that people in these cities are just going to lead to chaos, just trust us—the anti-homeless stuff that was being pushed by these tech elites as well. It feels like they are also gaming the algorithms and there's this shadow campaign that is specifically focused on Democratic cities that is a way to maybe get their network state idea a little bit more mainstreamed. Is that a decent theory in your mind?

****Gil Duran:**** That's the reason I got into this stuff in the first place, was covering the politics of San Francisco, which was a beautiful and wonderful city. I lived in Lower Pac Heights—amazingly safe, beautiful, clean place. And I look at the news, the right-wing news especially, and they're describing it as some kind of apocalyptic hellscape. And this just didn't match up at all. Every American city has problems. This is a capitalist society with poverty. Every town you

go into, there's a poor part of town where people are suffering and struggling. There's crime because our system creates crime—not only among the poor but especially among the wealthy, who are currently engaged in a carnival of crime and corruption at an unprecedented scale. But yeah, definitely they're trying to play on the anxiety against crime even though crime has been at historic lows in the recent decade. And part of that again—that's a well-known fascist tactic, to increase anxiety over public safety. When you make people feel fear, it activates the conservative ideas in their brain, makes them more accepting of things like mass incarceration and militarization and surveillance. And that's what we saw in San Francisco. And now we largely see this branching out. And one of the interesting tales here is that they always focus on bad things happening in Democratic cities, but crime rates are actually much higher in Republican states, and you never hear anything about that. So it's this asymmetrical narrative where the Democratic states that are actually richer and better off than the Republican states are Sodom and Gomorrah hellscape, but you never hear the same thing about the red states where crime is off the hook. I think for many years the number one homicide rate is in Jacksonville, Florida, which has a Republican governor and mayor, but you never hear about that. But it's only San Francisco where they had, you know, less than 50 homicides, and any city would be happy to have that. So yeah, that's a part of it. Remember, if you go to Jason Stanley's 10 characteristics of fascism, the Trump administration and the tech bros—you can fit every single one of them into what they're doing every single day of the week.

****Sam Cedar:**** Yeah. And it just shows like this is where the talent pool is. So for all of this freakout—you know, Ken Griffin because Mom Donnie was mean to him is going to move to Miami? No. The reason that they're threatening that they're going to move to Miami is because they're not going to move to Miami. They're not going to move out of Silicon Valley because of all this crime that they're alleging. They just want to control the government there in their favor as opposed to it getting in the hands of the messy democracy that's involved there.

****Gil Duran:**** Well, all the San Francisco guys said they were moving to Miami and they're still here. So we should actually just do the playbook here. You could just put it on one page—all the crap they say, all the crap they do, and what actually happens in the end. Because it's—the media is easily manipulated and they know that. You know, your average political journalist is just not very smart. And I mean what I mean by that is that they don't remember that this trick got played the last time and nothing that they said happened. They just go along with it again like a dog catching a ball. So that's the main problem we have. I think while we have a media, it's way too weak to deal with the fascist onslaught.

****Sam Cedar:**** I want to get to some AI developments in a moment, but just to go back to the network state—you mentioned Quinn Slobodian. We've had him on the program several times

over the past couple of years. But if you go back to Mont Pèlerin, I mean, this is the crystallized version of what Peter Thiel—Peter Thiel adds on some accoutrements and some more explicit desire for autocracy or dictatorship or cult leadership or whatever it is. But this idea of a network state, much of what came out of Mont Pèlerin and developed into genuine libertarian or at least original libertarian thought, as opposed to what it's turned into in America, was this idea of industrialists being unfettered by sovereign nations. And we see this play out, you know, 75 years later in the context of like the TPP or even some provisions in NAFTA which allow for industry to have its own sort of judicial process to determine whether a state has in some way impinged upon their future profits because they decided to regulate—this product is no longer safe, or we're no longer going to use oil, or whatever it is. So much of that network state is embedded in that libertarian philosophy coming out of Mont Pèlerin, which I should just say for people was a society that included Friedman and Hayek and other sort of libertarian economists. But what's your sense of like how much that ideology is also embraced by people like Marc Andreessen? I mean, some of these people really strike me as not that bright. I mean, a guy like Andreessen, I'm sort of shocked at a guy like that, but how much of them have bought into this notion?

****Gil Duran:**** Oh, I think a lot of the most prominent venture capitalists in Silicon Valley and a lot of the tech CEOs as well have become radicalized into these ideas. And I think what began as a libertarian idea has really morphed into its true nature, which is fascism, right? Because what they don't like about government is democracy. They don't mind having the authority themselves, as we can see from all of their contracts with the government, right? And I think it's Slobodian who has said that the dream is of capitalism without democracy. That's the subtitle to his book **Crack-Up Capitalism**. And you know, even before Mont Pèlerin you had technocracy. You have a long tradition. There's never been a time when the fascist idea isn't trying to rise up against this horrific tide of democracy that was sweeping the world, and go all the way back to Joseph de Maistre—these pre- or post-French Revolution thinkers who were already trying to find a way back to monarchy and dictatorship and who hated anything resembling the mob having power, all the way back to the ancient Greeks were debating this stuff, right? So it goes through these iterations, but libertarianism actually doesn't work at all in reality, and that's the kind of realization Thiel came to in the 2010s, which is that there's no hope for the libertarian cause. So libertarian ideas have to find another format, and this is where he starts pursuing the network state. How do we exit democracy? How do we use our wealth and our power and our influence that we're going to gain from our technological investments and creations in the 21st century to innovate past democratic structures? And so that's what you're seeing here. There are some dorky libertarians in Vermont who dream of not paying taxes and think they're somehow governing—or New Hampshire. Yeah. But that doesn't work. These guys are not libertarians. And I think one of the mistakes the press has made is to continue calling them that. But if you look at how they are bundling crypto, AI,

venture capital, surveillance, defense technology, government power, political power, religion, and propaganda into one united bundle, one united campaign—that bundle is fascism. And that's what it has become. This is the final resting place. This is the evolution, the terminal point of the techno-libertarian idea is technofascism.

****Sam Cedar:**** Where does AI fit in this? There was just one of Andreessen's—I don't know if he was a partner, but somebody who worked in that world has basically left and said a lot of what's going on here is bad, and sounding the warning here. When you look at AI, what is the most—aside from like the data centers and what they're doing from an environmental and from just sort of a cost and from a monopolizing-energy perspective—but the potential for the tool as it exists or as they imagine it will exist, how does that play into this, and what is the most dangerous aspect of it from your perspective?

****Gil Duran:**** The primary purpose of AI right now is to amass as much wealth and power in the hands of a small number of men as quickly as possible. And that's what we're seeing. There's a lot of speculation about what AI may be able to do—superintelligence, godlike AI, take all the jobs. Those are some speculative possibilities, but they view it as a way to capture wealth and power. They're already doing that, right? Trillions of dollars being invested in making this thing happen. And now the government itself is dependent on these systems. But when you look at it, I don't worry so much about the longer-term harms because the near-term harms are so pronounced. And I think the number one harm—obviously there's a threat to the environment and the ecology and to jobs at some point—but it's further empowering and enriching this small group of people who are already trying to destroy democracy with the wealth that they have, and AI is rising at the same moment as crypto has risen, right? So these guys are just creating their own versions of money and cashing out. The poor are losing while these wealthy handful of elites win. And if you look at the number one purpose of crypto today, it has been to buy off the Trump family, right? Trump became a crypto billionaire on the day he became president. So while crypto is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into the elections, that's small ball compared to the direct enrichment of the Trump family. You know, Trump is now fully all-in on crypto. He's dependent on it. So to me, the major near-term harm is that this is the amassing of ever more wealth and power in the hands of a small group of people. And even without super-intelligent AI, they are already using the tools that they have to destroy democracy and disempower everyone else. So to me, that's the number one harm. And John O'Farrell, the former Andreessen Horowitz partner you mentioned—you know, it's rare to see someone speak out from that world against this stuff. And he's in a position where he can do that. He's super wealthy. He's been more of an adviser to a16z for the past few years than a day-to-day guy. But it's so rare to see one of these people speak out that it shows that at least the potential for the beginning of a schism for people in Silicon Valley to say this is wrong, because again it's a hedge against the Trump administration. This thing may fail and

people may have to answer for some of the things they did during this time. Although that may be putting too much faith in data-center Democrats like Gavin Newsom.

****Sam Cedar:**** Yeah, well let me just touch on Gavin Newsom briefly actually. That reminds me—here's a guy who actively is campaigning against taxing the elite wealthy in the country. Tell us just a little bit about Gavin Newsom's relationship to these guys, because some of his funding, it seems like a big chunk of it is going to be coming from them.

****Gil Duran:**** It's become very clear that Gavin Newsom is planning to run for president as a Silicon Valley Democrat. You know, he spends all day attacking Trump on Twitter. Never says anything about Peter Thiel. Doesn't really name names. And this is a state where most of these oligarchs live, right? The Trump regime is held up by California tech moguls. They're the main power behind him at this point in time. And one of the most telling aspects in recent months has been that Chris Larsen, who's the founder of Ripple Labs and the executive chairman—this crypto company called Ripple Labs, which has greatly supported Trump, put \$4 million into the inauguration, is funding the Epstein Memorial Ballroom at the White House—Chris Larsen funded Steve Hilton, the Republican who ran for governor, and he also funded Katie Porter, a Democrat who ran for governor. So here's a crypto billionaire funding a Democrat and a Republican. And now he said he'll do anything he can to get Gavin Newsom elected president. I mean, I'm supposing that Larsen will also fund a Republican for president. But Chris Larsen is interesting because it shows you the mentality of these crypto billionaires—they're going to buy both sides. And Newsom is somebody who's fighting against regulations for data centers. He vetoed a bill for AI regulation. And most of the people around Newsom, his political consultants, people I know that most people wouldn't be aware of, they're all working for these guys now. They're all getting paid by venture capital. So be aware of Gavin Newsom. He is going to be the avatar of Silicon Valley with a Democratic face in 2028. And I intend to spend a lot of time calling that out over the next couple of years.

****Sam Cedar:**** Well, we may join you in that endeavor, Gil, and we will be talking to you in a couple months when your book comes out. Can't recommend it enough. **The Nerd Reich: Silicon Valley Fascism and the War on Democracy**. Can people pre-order that right now?

****Gil Duran:**** You can definitely pre-order it anywhere you get your books. I highly recommend Bookshop to support independent bookstores.

****Sam Cedar:**** All right, Gil Duran. And we will link, of course, to your newsletter, **Nerd Reich**, at majority.fm and in the podcast and YouTube description. Thanks so much for your time today. Really appreciate it.

****Gil Duran:**** Thank you guys.

ref: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stPijjCneXM>