

Every millionaire from Silicon Valley:

- Cheats on their taxes
- Has either a mistress, gay sex rent boys or cheats on their spouse
- Hires hookers on a regular basis
- Lies about who actually created their company
- Bribes politicians
- Has a fake charity to hide from taxes
- Screws their interns and nannies
- Is an alcoholic
- Is addicted to drugs and can't pass a full-pallete drug test
- Is a narcissist
- Is a sociopath
- Has lobbyists, lawyers and staff, who are actual criminals, that do their dirty work
- Hates anyone who is black or brown
- Abuses their staff
- Is a latent homosexual
- Treats women like tools
- Has a sex addiction involving using sex to control others
- Hates Laurene Powell Jobs because she intimidates them
- Wears khaki's because they want to appear "humble"
- Has had weird sex at the Rosewood Hotel or the Palo Alto Four Seasons
- Still buys more stuff than they can afford so that they leverage themselves out
- Is entirely focused on superficial appearances
- Uses fake and exaggerated "mugging" facial expressions and reactions when interacting in public
- Won't do business with anyone outside of the Yale/Stanford frat boy circuit
- Was trained by asshole parents to be an asshole
- Is brainwashed by the media
- Only gets married so their "optics" will superficially fit it to their frat boy social bubble
- Feels compelled to join exclusionary "mens clubs"
- Gets an expensive car to make up for their feelings of sexual inadequacy

Our Silicon Valley Robber Barons

Today's Tech Oligarchs Are Worse Than the Robber Barons

Yes, Jay Gould was a bad guy. But at least he helped build societal wealth. Not so our Silicon Valley overlords. And they have our politicians in their pockets.

[Joel Kotkin](#)

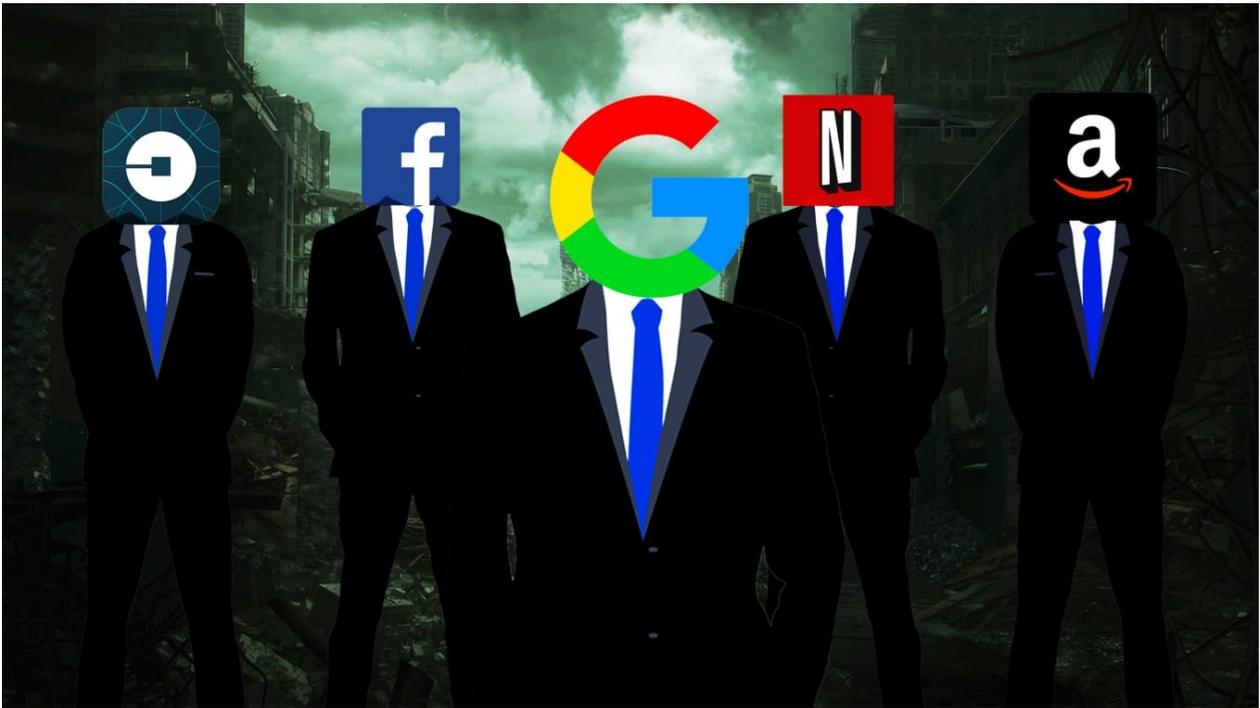


Photo Illustration by Kelly Caminero/ The Daily Beast

A decade ago these guys—and they are mostly guys—were folk heroes, and for many people, [they remain so](#). They represented everything traditional business, from Wall Street and Hollywood to the auto industry, in their pursuit of sure profits and golden parachutes, was not—hip, daring, risk-taking folk seeking to change the world for the better.

Now from San Francisco to Washington and Brussels, the tech oligarchs are something less attractive: a fearsome threat whose ambitions to control our future politics, media, and commerce seem without limits. Amazon, Google, Facebook, Netflix, and Uber may be improving our lives in many ways, but they also are disrupting old industries—and the lives of the many thousands of people employed by them. And as the tech boom has expanded, these individuals and companies have gathered economic resources to match their ambitions.

And as their fortunes have ballooned, so has their hubris. They see themselves as somehow better than the scum of Wall Street or the trolls in Houston or Detroit. It's their intelligence, not just their money, that makes them the proper global rulers. In their contempt for the less cognitively gifted, they are waging what *The Atlantic* recently called [“a war on stupid people.”](#)

I had friends of mine who attended MIT back in the 1970s tell me they used to call themselves “tools,” which told us something about how they regarded themselves and were regarded. Technologists were clearly bright people whom others used to solve problems or make money. Divorced from any mystical value, their technical innovations, in the words of the French sociologist Marcel Mauss, constituted “a traditional action made effective.” Their skills could be applied to agriculture, metallurgy, commerce, and energy.

In recent years, like Skynet in the Terminator, the tools have achieved consciousness, imbuing themselves with something of a society-altering mission. To a large extent, they have created what the sociologist Alvin Gouldner called [“the new class”](#) of highly educated professionals who would remake society. Initially they made life better—making spaceflight possible, creating advanced medical devices and improving communications (the internet); they built machines that were more efficient and created great research tools for both business and individuals. Yet they did not seek to disrupt all industries—such as energy, food, automobiles—that still employed millions of people. They remained “tools” rather than rulers.

With the massive wealth they have now acquired, the tools at the top now aim to dominate those they used to serve. Netflix is gradually undermining Hollywood, just as iTunes essentially murdered the music industry. Uber is wiping out the old order of cabbies, and Google, Facebook, and the social media people are gradually supplanting newspapers. Amazon has already undermined the book industry and is seeking to do the same to apparel, supermarkets, and electronics.

Past economic revolutions—from the steam engine to the jet engine and the internet—created in their wake a productivity revolution. To be sure, as brute force or slower technologies lost out, so did some companies and classes of people. But generally the economy got stronger and more productive. People got places sooner, information flows quickened, and new jobs were created, many of them paying middle- and working-class people a living wage.

This is largely not the case today. As [numerous scholars](#) including [Robert Gordon](#) have pointed out, the new social-media based technologies have had little positive impact on economic productivity, now growing at far lower rates than during past industrial booms, including the 1990s internet revolution.

Much of the problem, notes *MIT Technology Review* editor [David Rotman](#), is that most information investment no longer serves primarily the basic industries that still drive most of the economy, providing a wide array of jobs for middle- and working-class Americans. This slowdown in productivity, notes Chad Syverson, an economist at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, has decreased gross domestic product by \$2.7 trillion in 2015—about \$8,400 for every American. “If you think Silicon Valley is going to fuel growing prosperity, you are likely to be disappointed,” suggests Rotman.

One reason may be the nature of “social media,” which is largely a replacement for technology that already exists, or in many cases, is simply a diversion, even a source of [time-wasting addiction](#) for many. Having millions of millennials spend endless hours on Facebook is no more valuable than binging on television shows, except that TV actually employs people.

At their best, the social media firms have supplanted the old advertising model, essentially undermining the old agencies and archaic forms like newspapers, books, and magazines. But overall information employment has barely increased. It’s up 70,000 jobs since 2010, but this is after [losing 700,000 jobs](#) in the first decade of the 21st century.

Tech firms had once been prodigious employers of American workers. But now, many depend on either workers abroad or imported under H-1B visa program. These are essentially indentured servants whom they can [hire for cheap](#) and prevent from switching jobs. Tens of thousands of jobs in Silicon Valley, and many corporate IT departments elsewhere, rent these “technocoolies,” often replacing longstanding U.S. workers.

Expanding H-1Bs, not surprisingly, has become a priority issue for oligarchs such as Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and a host of tech firms, including Yahoo, Cisco Systems, NetApp, Hewlett-Packard, and Intel, firms that in some cases have been laying off thousands of American workers. Most of the bought-and-paid-for [GOP presidential contenders](#), as well as the [money-grubbing Hillary Clinton](#), embrace the program, with some advocating expansion. The only opposition came from two candidates disdained by the oligarchs, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump.

Now cab drivers, retail clerks, and even food service workers face technology-driven extinction. Some of this may be positive in the long run, certainly in the case of Uber and Lyft, to the benefit of consumers. But losing the single mom waitress at Denny’s to an iPad does not seem to be a major advance toward social justice or a civilized society—nor much of a boost for our society’s economic competitiveness. Wiping out cab drivers, many of them immigrants, for part-time workers driving Ubers provides opportunity for some, but it does threaten what has long been one of the traditional ladders to upward mobility.

Then there is the extraordinary geographical concentration of the new tech wave. Previous waves were much more highly dispersed. But not now. Social media and search, the drivers of the current tech boom, are heavily concentrated in the Bay Area, which has a remarkable [40 percent of all jobs in the software publishing and search field](#). In contrast, previous tech waves created jobs in numerous locales.

This concentration has been two-edged sword, even in its Bay Area heartland. The massive infusions of wealth and new jobs has created enormous tensions in San Francisco and its environs. Many San Franciscans, for example, feel like second class citizens in their own city. Others oppose tax measures in San Francisco that are [favorable to tech companies](#) like Twitter. There is now a movement on to reverse course and apply “tech taxes” on these firms, in part to fund affordable housing and homeless services. Further down in the Valley, there is also widespread opposition to plans to increase the density of the largely suburban areas in order to house the tech workforce. Rather than being happy with the tech boom, many in the Bay Area see their quality of life slipping and [upwards of a third](#) are now considering a move elsewhere.

Once, we hoped that the technology revolution would create ever more dispersion of wealth and power. This dream has been squashed. Rather than an effusion of start-ups we see the [downturn](#) in new businesses. Information Technology, [notes The Economist](#), is now the most heavily concentrated of all large economic sectors, with four firms accounting for close to 50 percent of all revenues. Although the tech boom has created some very good jobs for skilled workers, [half of all jobs](#) being created today are in low-wage services like retail and restaurants—at least until they are replaced by iPads and robots.

What kind of world do these disrupters see for us? One vision, from Singularity University, co-founded by Google’s genius technologist [Ray Kurzweil](#), envisions [robots running everything](#); humans, outside the programmers, would become somewhat irrelevant. I saw this mentality for myself at a *Wall Street Journal* conference on the environment when a prominent venture capitalist did not see any problem with diminishing birthrates among middle-class Americans since the Valley planned to make the *hoi polloi* redundant.

Once somewhat inept about politics, the oligarchs now know how to press their agenda. Much of the Valley’s elite-venture capitalist John Doerr, Kleiner Perkins, Vinod Khosla, and Google—routinely [use the political system](#) to cash in on subsidies, particularly for renewable energy, including such [dodgy projects](#) as California’s Ivanpah solar energy plant. Arguably the most visionary of the oligarchs, Elon Musk, has built his business empire largely through [subsidies and grants](#).

Musk also has [allegedly skirted labor laws](#) to fill out his expanded car factory in Fremont, with \$5-an-hour Eastern European labor; even when blue-collar opportunities do arise, rarely enough, the oligarchs seem ready to fill them with foreigners, either abroad or under dodgy visa schemes. Progressive rhetoric once used to attack oil or agribusiness firms does not seem to work against the tech elite. They can exploit labor laws and engage in monopoly practices with [little threat of investigation](#) by progressive Obama regulators.

In the short term, the oligarchs can expect an even more pliable regime under our likely next president, Hillary Clinton. The fundraiser extraordinaire has been raising money from the oligarchs like [Musk](#) and companies such as [Facebook](#). Each may vie to supplant [Google](#), the company with the best access to the Obama administration, over the past seven years.

What can we expect from the next tech-dominated administration? We can expect moves, backed also by corporate Republicans, to expand H-1B visas, and increased mandates and subsidies for favored sectors like electric cars and renewable energy. Little will be done to protect our privacy—firms like Facebook are determined to [limit restrictions](#) on their profitable “sharing” of personal information. But with regard to efforts to break down encryption systems key to corporate sovereignty, they will defend privacy, as seen in Apple’s [resistance](#) to sharing information on terrorist iPhones. Not cooperating against murderers of Americans is something of fashion now among the entire hoodie-wearing programmer culture.

One can certainly make the case that tech firms are upping the national game; certain cab companies have failed by being less efficient and responsive as well as more costly. Not so, however, the decision of the oligarchs—desperate to appease their progressive constituents—to periodically [censor](#) and curate information flows, as we have seen at [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Much of this has been directed against politically incorrect conservatives, such as the sometimes outrageous gay provocateur [Milo Yiannopoulos](#).

There is a rising tide of concern, including from such progressive icons as former Labor Secretary [Robert](#)

[Reich](#), about the extraordinary market, political, and culture power of the tech oligarchy. But so far, the oligarchs have played a brilliant double game. They have bought off the progressives with contributions and by endorsing their social liberal and environmental agenda. As for the establishment right, they are too accustomed to genuflecting at mammon to push back against anyone with a 10-digit net worth. This has left much of the opposition at the extremes of right and left, greatly weakening it.

Yet over time grassroots Americans may lose their childish awe of the tech establishment. They could recognize that, without some restrictions, they are signing away control of their culture, politics, and economic prospects to the empowered “tools.” They might understand that technology itself is no panacea; it is either a tool to be used to benefit society, increase opportunity, and expand human freedom, or it is nothing more than a new means of oppression.

Can The Scumbag Sexually Addicted Tech Oligarchs Become Good Guys Again?



Two bad days in Congress didn't scare Mark Zuckerberg into a profound spiritual and religious conversion. He has not renounced the material world.

Zuckerberg seems to be the same smugly poised \$64 billionaire that he was before Facebook had its month from hell. Still, although I spend a lot of time fretting about monopolistic technology platforms, I have to admit I was rooting for Zuckerberg during his testimony. Many of the Congressmen were not too bright — I managed to catch the portion of the testimony where one representative was harping on a conspiracy theory fomented by his brother-in-law about how Facebook spies on cell phone calls and hears everything you say.

For much of the Internet era, the tech founders have *seemed* like good guys. Zuckerberg, Bezos, Brin and Page and the other New American Oligarchs somehow don't have the same taint that lingers on other US Oligarchs — Wall Street executives, the Koch Brothers or the sort of businessmen who have taken jobs in the Trump Administration.

Part of it may be generational commonality. I hate to admit that I'm older than the new oligarchs, but there is a cultural connection that derives from the 1960s values that fed into the Silicon Valley sensibility. So I'm going to like someone who wears at-shirts, espouses vaguely countercultural opinions, and who produces cool, society-transformational products that are free of upfront charges.

But proving that it's possible to not wear a tie and to be rich at the same time is not enough to make you a good guy forever. Facebook's Cambridge Analytica scandal sparked a broader rethinking of tech monopoly power.

Now suddenly the tech founders are seen as profit-maximizing mega billionaires, with a not-so-great new image as Robber Barons of the new Gilded Age.

Is it possible that this new round of bad press, this big reputational hit, might induce the billionaire oligarchs of high tech to realize that they have violated their own founding principles? Is it too much to hope that they could commit to an innovative and public-spirited reengineering of the monopolistic tech platforms that they own and run?

Can the billionaire oligarchs turn back into good guys? Can they validate the faith in their coolness and essential righteousness?

A restoration of coolness is not impossible. The Tech Oligarchs are, after all, very smart, and if they were to put their minds to the task of coolness and righteousness restoration, they could likely achieve it.

It's not as if the Carnegies, Rockefellers and Morgans offer nothing as a precedent. They created enduring philanthropic institutions, to the point — I think — where the good they've done is starting to overshadow their depredations.

To follow in the Robber Baron mode, the digital billionaire founders would focus more on philanthropy, and start giving away a lot more money and building up their private foundations. Bill Gates has obviously set a strong example — tech benefactors could also learn from George Soros and Warren Buffet.

But doing good deeds does not address the immediate issues posed by the technoempires. Their hugeness and breadth, and their economic and political power may be squelching competition, reducing innovation and suppressing opportunities for new startups. Similarly, the highly concentrated tech industry may be contributing to slow income growth and rising inequality. And on a deeper cultural level, the arrogant and unfettered accumulation of power has fostered resentment of the elites and stoked populism.

One path that would go beyond traditional philanthropic giveback would be to explore and invent new forms of corporate organization that would embrace values other than pure profit-maximization and "shareholder value." Imagine a Facebook that voluntarily initiates new privacy policies and media guidelines, or that voluntarily refrains from major acquisitions that would limit competition, or that even spins off WhatsApp and Instagram? Similarly, what if Google were to jump ahead of European privacy and antitrust regulators with its own forward-thinking reforms, or by spinning off Android, YouTube and a major part of its digital advertising division? Amazon could also downsize itself significantly by spinning off Amazon Web Services or its streaming and content business — or perhaps contemplate a voluntary move to pay its warehouse workers more and improve their working conditions.

I know very little about corporate governance, so I'm speculating wildly here. Should the tech companies not at least diversify their boards of directors, giving weight to directors who would advocate for public interest over "shareholder value"? I think that's been tried in Europe — with union representation on corporate boards — and is at least pursued to some extent here when do gooders are appointed to boards (which usually seems like tokenism).

Going beyond that, is there any possibility of a shift to a fundamentally different ownership form — public-interest-based ownership wherein the largest block of shareholders would prioritize societal interests over pure profit maximization?

In some firms, large numbers of controlling shares are controlled by philanthropies created by the firm founders, so there is some precedent for it. Another approach was recently proposed in [a paper](#) by economists Luigi Zingales and Oliver Hart, who argued that "shareholder welfare" should take precedence over "shareholder value." They proposed that the best route to "shareholder welfare" would be to give significantly more sway to shareholder voting as a means for determining corporate policies.

Some of the founders are certainly in a strong position to innovate in corporate structure governance. Zuckerberg owns 60% of Facebook and controls 70% of the voting shares. Larry Page, Sergey Brin and Eric Schmidt control over 60 percent of the voting shares of Alphabet/Google. Bezos owns 16% of Amazon (although in his case, he has not retained special shares which endow him with majority voting control).

If a call to the greater good doesn't inspire the Tech Oligarchs to follow a new corporate path, perhaps the threat of regulation will. In the wake of the Facebook hearings, talk of new regulations has proliferated. It's seeped into the evolving Democratic Party platform. Trump would certainly love to deploy antitrust regulation against Amazon as a way to lash out at the Washington Post. With Google controlling almost all search engine traffic, Facebook controlling almost all social network advertising and Amazon gaining bigger shares of ecommerce, they are starting to see like public utilities. So perhaps the fear of becoming another Con Ed will inspire Zuckerberg to make a bold initiative to reinvent the idea of the technology corporation.

While the Tech Oligarchs have that t-shirt cool factor going for them, some are also said to harbor Darwinian, extremist libertarian tendencies that do not quite line up with the more collectivist bent of the

counterculture. Larry Page reportedly said that the world would be better served if he gave his billions to Elon Musk to invest in space exploration, rather than to some run of the mill foundation trying to stamp out a tropical disease. Bezos recently got knocked for expressing the same fondness for his own space missions in preference to charity.

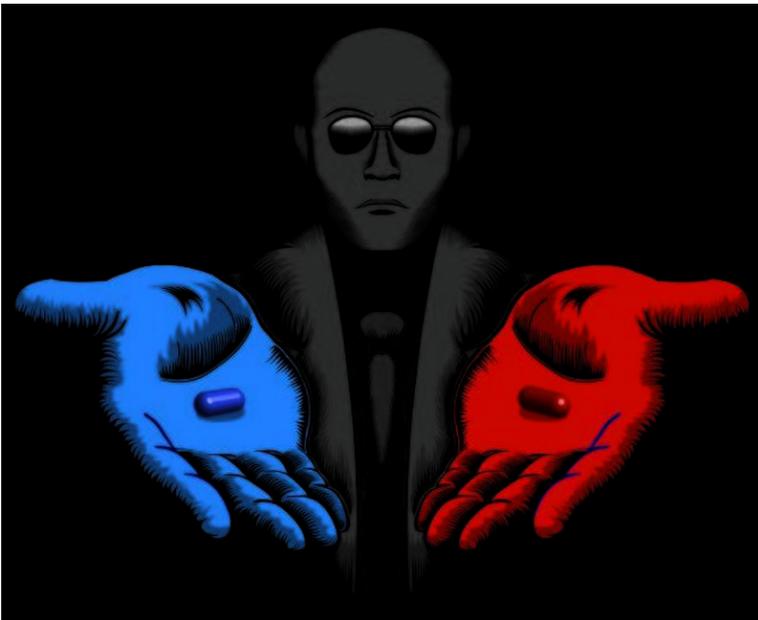
But it's only recently that observers have started to fret about Ayn Rand's influence on Silicon Valley. The past few decades have been an extended, hopeful period of techno-optimism, years where it seemed that the new generation of technology founders would substantially rewrite the Robber Barron narrative — and not simply become rich, gain power and then abandon their initial idealistic goals.

Technotyranny: The Iron-Fisted Authoritarianism Of The Surveillance State

[Authored by John Whitehead via The Rutherford Institute.](#)

“There will come a time when it isn't ‘They're spying on me through my phone’ anymore. Eventually, it will be ‘My phone is spying on me.’” — Philip K. Dick

Red pill or blue pill? You decide.



Twenty years after the Wachowskis' iconic 1999 film, *The Matrix*, introduced us to [a futuristic world in which humans exist in a computer-simulated non-reality powered by authoritarian machines](#) - a world where the choice between existing in a denial-ridden virtual dream-state or facing up to the harsh, difficult realities of life comes down to a red pill or a blue pill - **we stand at the precipice of a technologically-dominated matrix of our own making.**

We are living the prequel to *The Matrix* with each passing day, falling further under the spell of technologically-driven virtual communities, virtual realities and virtual conveniences managed by artificially intelligent machines that are on a fast track to replacing us and eventually dominating every aspect of our lives.

Science fiction has become fact.

In *The Matrix*, [computer programmer Thomas Anderson a.k.a. hacker Neo is wakened from a virtual slumber by Morpheus](#), a freedom fighter seeking to liberate humanity from a lifelong hibernation state

imposed by hyper-advanced artificial intelligence machines that rely on humans as an organic power source. With their minds plugged into a perfectly crafted virtual reality, few humans ever realize they are living in a dream world.

Neo is given a choice: to wake up and join the resistance, or remain asleep and serve as fodder for the powers-that-be. “You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe,” Morpheus says to Neo in *The Matrix*. [“You take the red pill and you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.”](#)

Most people opt for the red pill.

In our case, the red pill—a one-way ticket to a life sentence in an electronic concentration camp—has been honey-coated to hide the bitter aftertaste, sold to us in the name of expediency and delivered by way of blazingly fast Internet, cell phone signals that never drop a call, thermostats that keep us at the perfect temperature without our having to raise a finger, and entertainment that can be simultaneously streamed to our TVs, tablets and cell phones.

Yet we are not merely in thrall with these technologies that were intended to make our lives easier. We have become enslaved by them.

Look around you. Everywhere you turn, people are so addicted to their internet-connected screen devices—smart phones, tablets, computers, televisions—that they can go for hours at a time submerged in a virtual world where human interaction is filtered through the medium of technology.

This is not freedom.

This is not even progress.

This is technological tyranny and iron-fisted control delivered by way of the surveillance state, corporate giants such as Google and Facebook, and government spy agencies such as the National Security Agency.

We are living in a virtual world carefully crafted to resemble a representative government, while in reality we are little more than slaves in thrall to an authoritarian regime, with its constant surveillance, manufactured media spectacles, secret courts, inverted justice, and violent repression of dissent.

So consumed are we with availing ourselves of all the latest technologies that we have spared barely a thought for the ramifications of our heedless, headlong stumble towards a world in which our abject reliance on internet-connected gadgets and gizmos is grooming us for a future in which freedom is an illusion.

It’s not just freedom that hangs in the balance. Humanity itself is on the line.

Indeed, while most people are busily taking selfies, Google has been busily partnering with the [NSA](#), the [Pentagon](#), and other governmental agencies to develop a new “human” species.

Essentially, Google—a neural network that approximates a global brain—is fusing with the human mind in a phenomenon that is called “singularity.” Google will know the answer to your question before you have asked it, said transhumanist scientist Ray Kurzweil. [“It will have read every email you will ever have written, every document, every idle thought you’ve ever tapped into a search-engine box. It will know you better than your intimate partner does. Better, perhaps, than even yourself.”](#)

But here’s the catch: the NSA and all other government agencies will also know you better than yourself. As William Binney, one of the highest-level whistleblowers to ever emerge from the NSA said, [“The ultimate goal of the NSA is total population control.”](#)

Cue the dawning of the Age of the Internet of Things, in which internet-connected “things” will monitor your home, your health and your habits in order to keep your pantry stocked, your utilities regulated and your life under control and relatively worry-free.

The key word here is control.

In the not-too-distant future, [“just about every device you have — and even products like chairs, that you don’t normally expect to see technology in — will be connected and talking to each other.”](#)

By 2020, there will be [152 million cars connected to the Internet](#) and [100 million Internet-connected bulbs and lamps](#). By 2021, it is estimated there will be [240 million wearable devices](#) such as smartwatches, keeping users connected in real time to their phones, emails, text messages and the Internet. By 2022, there will be [1.1 billion smart meters](#) installed in homes, reporting real-time usage to utility companies and other interested parties.

This “connected” industry—estimated to add more than [\\$14 trillion](#) to the economy by 2020—is about to be the next big thing in terms of societal transformations, [right up there with the Industrial Revolution](#), a watershed moment in technology and culture.

Between driverless cars that completely lack a steering wheel, accelerator, or brake pedal and smart pills embedded with computer chips, sensors, cameras and robots, we are poised to outpace the imaginations of science fiction writers such as Philip K. Dick and Isaac Asimov. (By the way, there is no such thing as a driverless car. Someone or something will be driving, but it won’t be you.)

The aim of these internet-connected devices, as Nest proclaims, is to make [“your house a more thoughtful and conscious home.”](#) For example, your car can signal ahead that you’re on your way home, while Hue lights can flash on and off to get your attention if Nest Protect senses something’s wrong. Your coffeemaker, relying on data from fitness and sleep sensors, will [brew a stronger pot of coffee](#) for you if you’ve had a restless night.

Internet-connected techno gadgets as [smart light bulbs](#) can discourage burglars by making your house look occupied, [smart thermostats](#) will regulate the temperature of your home based on your activities, and [smart doorbells](#) will let you see who is at your front door without leaving the comfort of your couch.

Nest, Google’s \$3 billion acquisition, has been at the forefront of the “connected” industry, with such [technologically savvy conveniences](#) as a smart lock that tells your thermostat who is home, what temperatures they like, and when your home is unoccupied; a home phone service system that interacts with your connected devices to “learn when you come and go” and alert you if your kids don’t come home; and a sleep system that will monitor when you fall asleep, when you wake up, and keep the house noises and temperature in a sleep-conducive state.

It’s not just our homes that are being reordered and reimagined in this connected age: it’s our workplaces, our health systems, our government and our very bodies that are being plugged into a matrix over which we have no real control.

Moreover, given the speed and trajectory at which these technologies are developing, it won’t be long before these devices are operating entirely independent of their human creators, which poses a whole new set of worries.

As technology expert Nicholas Carr [notes](#), *“As soon as you allow robots, or software programs, to act freely in the world, they’re going to run up against ethically fraught situations and face hard choices that can’t be resolved through statistical models. That will be true of self-driving cars, self-flying drones, and battlefield robots, just as it’s already true, on a lesser scale, with automated vacuum cleaners and lawnmowers.”*

For instance, just as the robotic vacuum, Roomba, [“makes no distinction between a dust bunny and an insect,”](#) weaponized drones will be incapable of distinguishing between a fleeing criminal and someone merely jogging down a street.

For that matter, how do you defend yourself against a robotic cop—[such as the Atlas android being developed by the Pentagon](#)—that has been programmed to respond to any perceived threat with violence?

Unfortunately, in our race to the future, we have failed to consider what such dependence on

technology might mean for our humanity, not to mention our freedoms.

[Ingestible or implantable chips](#) are a good example of how unprepared we are, morally and otherwise, to navigate this uncharted terrain. Hailed as revolutionary for their ability to access, analyze and manipulate your body from the inside, these smart pills can remind you to take your medication, search for cancer, and even send an alert to your doctor warning of an impending heart attack.

Sure, the technology could save lives, but is that all we need to know? Have we done our due diligence in dealing with the ramifications of giving the government and its cronies access to such intrusive programs? For example, asks reporter Ariana Eunjung Cha, “How will patients be assured that the technology won’t be used to compel them to take medications they don’t really want to take? [Could what started as a voluntary experiment be turned into a compulsory government identification program that could erode civil liberties?](#)”

Let me put it another way.

If you were shocked by [Edward Snowden’s revelations](#) about how NSA agents have used surveillance to spy on Americans’ phone calls, emails and text messages, can you imagine what unscrupulous government agents could do with access to your internet-connected car, home and medications?

All of those internet-connected gadgets we just have to have (*Forbes* refers to them as “[\(data\) pipelines to our intimate bodily processes](#)”)—the smart watches that can monitor our blood pressure and the smart phones that let us [pay for purchases with our fingerprints and iris scans](#)—are setting us up for a brave new world where there is nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

Imagine what a SWAT team could do with the ability to access, monitor and control your internet-connected home: locking you in, turning off the lights, activating alarms, etc.

Thus far, the [public response to concerns about government surveillance has amounted to a collective shrug](#).

After all, who cares if the [government can track your whereabouts on your GPS-enabled device](#) so long as it helps you find the fastest route from Point A to Point B? Who cares if the [NSA is listening in on your phone calls and downloading your emails](#) so long as you can get your phone calls and emails on the go and get lightning fast Internet on the fly? Who cares if the government can monitor your activities in your home by tapping into your internet-connected devices—thermostat, water, lights—so long as you can control those things with the flick of a finger, whether you’re across the house or across the country?

It’s hard to truly appreciate the intangible menace of technology-enabled government surveillance in the face of the all-too-tangible menace of police shootings of unarmed citizens, SWAT team raids, and government violence and corruption.

However, both dangers are just as lethal to our freedoms if left unchecked.

Consider that on any given day, the average American going about his daily business is monitored, surveilled, spied on and tracked in virtually every way by both government and corporate eyes and ears.

Whether you’re walking through a store, driving your car, checking email, or talking to friends and family on the phone, you can be sure that some government agency, whether the NSA or some other entity, will be listening in and tracking your behavior.

This doesn’t even begin to touch on the corporate trackers that monitor your purchases, web browsing, Facebook posts and other activities taking place in the cyber sphere.

In other words, there is no form of digital communication that the government cannot and does not monitor: phone calls, emails, text messages, tweets, Facebook posts, internet video chats, etc., are all *accessible, trackable and downloadable* by federal agents.

The government and its corporate partners-in-crime have been bypassing the Fourth Amendment’s

prohibitions for so long that this constitutional bulwark against warrantless searches and seizures has largely been rendered antiquated and irrelevant.

We are now in the final stage of the transition from a police state to a surveillance state.

Having already transformed local police into extensions of the military, the Department of Homeland Security, the Justice Department and the FBI are in the process of turning the nation's police officers into techno-warriors, complete with iris scanners, body scanners, thermal imaging Doppler radar devices, facial recognition programs, license plate readers, cell phone Stingray devices and so much more.

Add in the fusion centers and real-time crime centers, city-wide surveillance networks, [data clouds conveniently hosted overseas by Amazon and Microsoft](#), drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras, and biometric databases, and you've got the makings of a world in which "privacy" is reserved exclusively for government agencies.

In other words, the surveillance state that came into being with the 9/11 attacks is alive and well and kicking privacy to shreds in America. Having been persuaded to trade freedom for a phantom promise of security, Americans now find themselves imprisoned in a virtual cage of cameras, wiretaps, sensors and watchful government eyes.

Just about every branch of the government—from the Postal Service to the Treasury Department and every agency in between—[now has its own surveillance sector](#), authorized to spy on the American people.

And of course that doesn't even begin to touch on the complicity of the corporate sector, which buys and sells us from cradle to grave, until we have no more data left to mine. Indeed, [Facebook, Amazon and Google are among the government's closest competitors](#) when it comes to carrying out surveillance on Americans, monitoring the content of your emails, tracking your purchases and exploiting your social media posts.

"Few consumers understand what data are being shared, with whom, or how the information is being used," [reports the Los Angeles Times](#). "Most Americans emit a stream of personal digital exhaust — what they search for, what they buy, who they communicate with, where they are — that is captured and exploited in a largely unregulated fashion."

It's not just what we say, where we go and what we buy that is being tracked.

We're being surveilled right down to our genes, thanks to a potent combination of hardware, software and data collection that scans our biometrics—our faces, irises, voices, genetics, even our gait—runs them through computer programs that can break the data down into unique "identifiers," and then offers them up to the government and its corporate allies for their respective uses.

For instance, imagine what the NSA could do (and is likely already doing) with voiceprint technology, which has been likened to a fingerprint. Described as "the next frontline in the battle against overweening public surveillance," the collection of voiceprints is a booming industry for governments and businesses alike. As *The Guardian* reports, "[voice biometrics could be used to pinpoint the location of individuals](#). There is already discussion about placing voice sensors in public spaces, and ... multiple sensors could be triangulated to identify individuals and specify their location within very small areas."

The NSA is merely one small part of a shadowy permanent government comprised of unelected bureaucrats who march in lockstep with profit-driven corporations that actually runs Washington, DC, and works to keep us under surveillance and, thus, under control. For example, [Google openly works with the NSA](#), Amazon has built a massive [\\$600 million intelligence database](#) for CIA, and the [telecommunications industry is making a fat profit by spying on us](#) for the government.

In other words, [Corporate America is making a hefty profit](#) by aiding and abetting the government in its domestic surveillance efforts.

Control is the key here.

Total control over every aspect of our lives, right down to our inner thoughts, is the objective of any totalitarian regime.

[George Orwell understood this.](#) His masterpiece, *1984*, portrays a global society of total control in which people are not allowed to have thoughts that in any way disagree with the corporate state. There is no personal freedom, and advanced technology has become the driving force behind a surveillance-driven society. Snitches and cameras are everywhere. And people are subject to the Thought Police, who deal with anyone guilty of thought crimes. The government, or “Party,” is headed by Big Brother, who appears on posters everywhere with the words: “Big Brother is watching you.”

Make no mistake: the Internet of Things is just Big Brother in a more appealing disguise.

Now there are still those who insist that they have nothing to hide from the surveillance state and nothing to fear from the police state because they have done nothing wrong. To those sanctimonious few, secure in their delusions, let this be a warning: the danger posed by the American police state applies equally to all of us, lawbreaker and law-abider alike.

In an age of too many laws, too many prisons, too many government spies, and too many corporations eager to make a fast buck at the expense of the American taxpayer, there is no safe place and no watertight alibi.

We are *all* guilty of some transgression or other.

Eventually, as I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), **we will all be made to suffer the same consequences in the electronic concentration camp that surrounds us.**