

Founders Fund, The Dark Enlightenment, and Techno-Fascism

Define Key Terms & Context

The Dark Enlightenment (Neo-Reactionary movement): The “Dark Enlightenment” is an anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian ideological current that rejects liberal democracy and egalitarian values ¹ ². Coined by philosopher Nick Land, it envisions upending the modern Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and popular governance, replacing them with hierarchy, authoritarian order, and “techno-elite” rule ³. Key thinkers include **Curtis Yarvin** (who blogged under the pseudonym *Mencius Moldbug*) and **Nick Land**. Yarvin’s writings since the late 2000s have called for a “reboot” of society: *democracy and the U.S. Constitution should be “liquidated” and power transferred to a CEO-style monarch* who would run government like a corporation ⁴. He advocates dismantling institutions of liberal society – e.g. selling off public schools, **destroying universities, abolishing the free press, and empowering a strongman** to impose order ⁴. Land, for his part, explicitly endorses rule by “*great men*” *guided by algorithms and artificial intelligence*, a vision of “**cybernetic authoritarianism**” or **technological fascism** that marries high-tech futurism with brutal anti-humanist hierarchy ³. In sum, Dark Enlightenment thinkers believe democracy is a failed experiment and propose a return to autocracy – often *neo-monarchism* or corporate city-states – backed by advanced technology and “meritocratic” (in practice, often racialized or eugenic) justifications for elite rule ⁵.

Techno-fascism: In contemporary analysis, “techno-fascism” refers to an authoritarian ideology or system that leverages modern technology (mass surveillance, AI, corporate power) to concentrate power in the hands of a few, while suppressing democratic freedoms. It is distinct from 20th-century fascism in that it may eschew overt nationalist mass-mobilization and instead rely on *technocratic and corporate dominance* – a fusion of Big Tech and the state to enforce order ⁶. Traits of techno-fascist thinking include: **authoritarian technocracy** (rule by unelected tech elites or algorithms), **corporate-state fusion** (blurring lines between government and powerful tech corporations), **militarized AI and surveillance** (using advanced technology to monitor and control populations), and an **extreme meritocracy** or social Darwinism that views equality as a myth. For example, Yarvin’s manifesto anticipated a “CEO of America” who would run a “*heavily-armed, ultra-profitable corporation*” in place of the U.S. government ⁷ – a vision critics have flatly labeled “*techno-fascist*,” though Yarvin himself prefers terms like “royalist” ⁸. The Dark Enlightenment’s goal of an AI-guided strongman state has been described by historians as “*reactionary modernism*” – embracing modern technology while rejecting democratic modernity ³. In practice, techno-fascist ideas treat society like a programmable machine (with people as “human animals” or cogs) to be engineered for maximum efficiency and control ⁹ ¹⁰. The humanistic values of liberal democracy (individual rights, equality, rule of law) are cast aside in favor of a ruthless order enforced by tech-enabled elites.

Adjacent Movements: The Dark Enlightenment overlaps with or has inspired several adjacent ideological currents. **Neo-reactionary (NRx)** thought often blends with **accelerationism** – the idea that accelerating technological and capitalist development (even to the point of crisis) is desirable to bring about a new order.

Nick Land's writings in the 1990s advocated a kind of nihilistic acceleration of techno-capitalism ("Nothing human makes it out of the near-future" he wrote ¹¹), influencing both far-right accelerationists and some Silicon Valley figures. There is also a strain of "new eugenics" or **human biodiversity (HBD)** advocacy in these circles: neo-reactionaries frequently argue that inherent genetic differences justify social hierarchies, essentially a revival of discredited eugenic and race-science ideas ⁵. This "scientific racism" holds that IQ and other traits are predominantly genetic and distributed unevenly across races, thus purportedly warranting rule by an inherently superior elite ⁵. Such views, openly anti-egalitarian, dovetail with Dark Enlightenment contempt for universal human equality. Another adjacent trend is the online "**effective accelerationism**" (**e/acc**) movement in tech circles. E/acc proponents contend that rapid technological progress is an inherent moral good, and they oppose "brakes" on innovation like AI ethics regulations or precautionary pauses ¹² ¹³. This ideology is framed as the optimistic inverse of "AI doomerism," but it can slide into a vision of blitzscaling technology at any societal cost – an outlook compatible with neo-reactionary elitism (since the *winners* in such a race would presumably be the tech-capable elites). In summary, the Dark Enlightenment forms part of a constellation of ultra-elitist and authoritarian intellectual trends – from monarchist neoreaction to techno-accelerationism to neo-eugenics – that reject liberal democracy and egalitarianism in favor of high-tech oligarchy.

Founders Fund Ideological Mapping

Founders Fund – a venture capital firm co-founded in 2005 by Peter Thiel (along with partners like Ken Howery and Luke Nosek) – has cultivated an image as a contrarian, futurist VC firm. To understand whether Founders Fund's leaders align with Dark Enlightenment or techno-authoritarian ideas, one must examine the public statements and writings of figures like **Peter Thiel** and **Trae Stephens** (a Founders Fund partner and co-founder of defense tech firm Anduril).

- **Peter Thiel's worldview:** Peter Thiel has openly questioned the value of democracy and expressed ideas strikingly consonant with neo-reactionary thought. In a 2009 essay for the Cato Institute, Thiel declared, "*I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.*" ¹⁴ He lamented that since women obtained the vote and the welfare state expanded, "*the notion of a capitalist democracy*" became "*an oxymoron.*" ¹⁵ This provocative stance – essentially arguing that broad voting rights and social welfare undermine "true" freedom (understood in an ultra-libertarian or elitist sense) – is **directly in line with Dark Enlightenment critiques** of mass democracy. Thiel has suggested that the last time politics was genuinely hopeful was the 1920s, before the New Deal and universal suffrage fully kicked in ¹⁵. Such statements echo Curtis Yarvin's belief that extending the franchise and social safety nets leads to irreversible decline of effective governance. Indeed, Yarvin himself noted that Thiel was "fully enlightened" and even **claimed to have been "coaching Thiel"** in Yarvin's anti-democratic philosophy ¹⁶. In Yarvin's words, Thiel as a patron was entirely on board with the neo-reactionary outlook.

Thiel's ideological leanings blend libertarian-techno utopianism with reactionary elitism. He has long extolled **technology as the key to human progress** and criticized the "stagnation" of Western innovation. His famous maxim, "*We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters,*" captures his disdain for the incremental, consumerist tech of recent decades – he craves monumental breakthroughs. This aligns with the **accelerationist** bent of Founders Fund: the firm's mission statement laments the shift away from transformational, risky technologies and calls for backing "*technologies that will fundamentally transform our world*" ¹⁷ ¹⁸. Thiel's 2014 book *Zero to One* likewise encourages "*definite optimism*" – a confidence in designing the future through bold innovation, a concept that overlaps with e/acc's ethos ¹³. However,

Thiel's optimism pointedly does **not** extend to democratic governance. He has suggested that “*great men*” are the drivers of history, not masses. At a 2019 National Conservatism conference, Thiel spoke not of individual liberty, but of using state power to **crush his chosen enemies** (for example, urging the FBI and CIA to “**ask [Google executives] in a not excessively gentle manner**” about their treasonous cooperation with China ¹⁹). This joking aside about roughing up tech leaders earned laughs and reveals Thiel's comfort with authoritarian enforcement to achieve his aims. In the same speech, Thiel **vilified academia and Google as corrupt elite institutions** and implied the U.S. would be better off if a strong government (guided by nationalist interest) reined them in ²⁰ ¹⁹ . Notably absent was any praise of free speech or democracy – instead, Thiel framed issues purely as what benefits “*the United States*” as a civilizational entity, *not* what preserves personal freedoms ²¹ . This nation-statist but anti-democratic stance mirrors the Dark Enlightenment's call for elite rule in the name of civilization's survival.

Thiel's **esteem for neo-reactionary thinkers** is documented. He became personal friends with Curtis Yarvin and **funded Yarvin's startup**, Urbit (Tlon) ¹⁶ ²² . Through Founders Fund, Thiel was *an early investor in Urbit's parent company* ¹⁶ , essentially patronizing Yarvin's attempt to build a new decentralized computing platform (which Yarvin metaphorically described as a “digital republic”). Emails revealed in a profile by *The New Yorker* show that in 2014 Thiel was aware of the controversial nature of Yarvin's views – he asked Yarvin, “*How dangerous is it that we are being linked?*”, then quipped that progressive critics would dismiss any such links as conspiracy theory ²³ . This suggests Thiel privately **acknowledged alignment** with Yarvin while hoping to keep it low-profile. Beyond Yarvin, Thiel has cited or been influenced by other anti-democratic thinkers. He is an avowed follower of the French philosopher René Girard (whose ideas about imitation and scapegoating inform Thiel's contrarian strategies ²⁴) and has also surrounded himself with intellectuals who question liberal orthodoxies. For instance, Thiel and David Sacks co-authored *The Diversity Myth* in 1995, attacking multiculturalism on campus ²⁵ , an early indicator of Thiel's antipathy to egalitarian and “politically correct” values. Over decades, Thiel's **writings and speeches have consistently valorized a strong, competent minority governing in defiance of the “herd.”** He once wrote that **companies work best like monarchies** – led by a singular visionary rather than by committee ²⁶ . Facebook, on whose board Thiel sat, was a case in point: Mark Zuckerberg's ironclad control was to Thiel a feature, not a bug. This corporate autocracy ideal extends naturally to Thiel's view of government.

- **Trae Stephens and others:** Trae Stephens, a Founders Fund partner who focuses on investments in defense and government tech, has been less overt in political philosophy but still offers clues. Stephens is a former Palantir engineer and co-founder of Anduril Industries (a military technology firm), and he served on Donald Trump's defense transition team ²⁷ . As an evangelical Christian, Stephens speaks of pursuing “*good quests*” – ambitious missions to “make the future better” – in quasi-spiritual terms ²⁸ ²⁹ . In 2022 he co-wrote an essay decrying Silicon Valley's “crisis of nonsense,” urging technologists to solve **grand, civilization-scale problems** instead of chasing trivial apps ³⁰ . This reflects Founders Fund's overarching ethos of **transformative tech and impatience with the status quo**. While Stephens couches it in Christian morality (even hosting religious-themed tech gatherings ³¹ ³²), there is an implicit elitism in his message: a select few visionaries are “called” to build profound new technologies (he half-jokingly told a Christian audience, “*I'm literally an arms dealer...that's a pretty unique calling.*” ³³). Stephens underscores that not everyone should take on such roles – implying a natural hierarchy of those with the talent or mandate to push civilization forward. In declining a potential offer to become U.S. Secretary of Defense, Stephens explained he must stick to his “good quest” in the private sector developing tech, rather than be pulled into government service ²⁷ . This hints at a view that **technological entrepreneurship can be more impactful than public democratic institutions**. Indeed, Founders

Fund's team often evinces skepticism that government bureaucracy can solve problems; they tend to favor startup-driven solutions, often with *an undercurrent that the "best and brightest" in Silicon Valley should take on roles typically associated with the state*. While Stephens himself hasn't espoused anti-democratic theory publicly, his career – bringing Silicon Valley talent and money into defense – exemplifies the **fusion of tech elite influence with state power** that worries critics of technofascism.

Ideological overlaps with Dark Enlightenment: Founders Fund's rhetoric and Thiel's own commentary reveal notable overlaps with Dark Enlightenment themes:

- **Disdain for democracy and egalitarianism:** As noted, Thiel explicitly questioned democracy's compatibility with freedom ¹⁴. He has lamented that extending the vote to *"welfare beneficiaries"* and women has impeded true capitalism ³⁴. Such statements *directly mirror Dark Enlightenment talking points*, which hold that broad democracy leads to "decadent" policies and that a smaller, property-owning or intellectually superior class should rule ³⁵ ⁵.
- **Elitism and meritocratic hierarchy:** Thiel's worldview celebrates *"heroic"* individuals – innovators, CEOs, or even conquerors – as the drivers of progress ²⁶. In a Dark Enlightenment vein, he and his circle often reference great men in history (Thiel's circle has favorably cited figures like Augustus Caesar, Napoleon, Bismarck, and Elon Musk as paradigm leaders ³⁶). The implicit argument is that *exceptional individuals* (often tech entrepreneurs) should be unshackled by democratic mediocrity. This overlaps with neo-reactionary calls for *"natural aristocracy"* or even genetic superiority as the basis for governance ³⁷. Indeed, one can see an alignment between Thiel's long-standing funding of **life-extension, transhumanism, and human performance projects** and an underlying belief in overcoming "natural limits" – which can slide into eugenic territory (Jules Evans observes that Thiel is deeply involved in "transhumanism and the new eugenics" movements ³⁸).
- **Anti-"Cathedral" sentiment:** Yarvin's concept of *"The Cathedral"* – referring to the academia-media bureaucracy complex enforcing progressive orthodoxy – finds resonance at Founders Fund. Thiel and others in his camp frequently bemoan elite universities and coastal media as hostile to true innovation and free thought. Thiel notably funded the lawsuit that destroyed Gawker Media, in revenge for its exposés ³⁹, and he regularly criticizes universities as bloated, self-serving monopolies. This animosity matches the Dark Enlightenment view that the reigning intellectual institutions (*Harvard, the New York Times*, etc.) brainwash the masses and must be dethroned ⁴⁰ ⁴¹. It is no coincidence that Thiel's 2017 initiative "Hereticon" – a conference celebrating ideas too taboo for academia – explicitly championed topics like *genetic modification, radical science, and faith* in defiance of the "establishment" ⁴² ⁴³. Founders Fund presented it as a "conference of thoughtcrime," indicating a shared belief that **dissenting elite voices** (like theirs) are persecuted by the prevailing liberal consensus ⁴². This "persecuted tech elite" narrative is very much in line with Yarvin's *Cathedral* concept and the broader neo-reactionary ethos.
- **Preference for authoritarian efficiency:** Thiel and Founders Fund partners often extol decisive action and bold risk-taking, whether in startups or governance. Thiel argued that **companies work best when run as personal fiefdoms** (with founders wielding unilateral power) ²⁶. His critique of Google and calls for government action against it at NatCon suggest he favors a forceful, top-down approach when he deems it necessary ¹⁹. This mentality — that *"if only the right people had undivided power, things would improve"* — is essentially the Dark Enlightenment's core premise. It is

telling that Curtis Yarvin remarked in 2022 that Thiel's project of backing political candidates (like J.D. Vance and Blake Masters) was an effort to **"get his people in through the front door"** of government, since revolution was unlikely; Yarvin half-jokingly called Thiel's endeavor *"Plan B"* for installing a friendly regime ⁴⁴. While Thiel hasn't openly advocated monarchy, his actions (funding an array of anti-establishment figures and projects) and his **apocalyptic** worry that Western stagnation will lead to civilizational collapse betray a longing for drastic solutions that only a technocratic elite could execute.

In summary, Founders Fund's top figures – especially Peter Thiel – exhibit a *distinct ideological alignment* with Dark Enlightenment principles. They share the movement's contempt for the messy compromises of democracy, its valorization of elite-driven change, and its willingness to consider autocratic measures (if taken by the "right" people) as necessary to save society. Next, we will examine whether these philosophical overlaps translate into concrete networks of influence, funding, and strategy connecting Founders Fund to Dark Enlightenment and techno-fascist actors.

Network Mapping: People, Funding, and Platforms

Direct ties to Dark Enlightenment figures: Perhaps the most salient link is Peter Thiel's patronage of **Curtis Yarvin (Mencius Moldbug)**. In the early 2010s, Thiel's Founders Fund and others invested in Yarvin's startup Tlon/Urbis, giving Yarvin financial runway while he was also espousing neo-monarchist ideas on his blog ²². Yarvin became *"a kind of Machiavelli to his big-tech benefactors"* ²² – in other words, an unofficial philosopher-in-residence among a coterie of Silicon Valley elites that included Thiel. Yarvin has stated that Thiel was fully on board with his ideas (*"fully enlightened"*) ¹⁶, and emails show the two were in direct contact, discussing the potential fallout of their association ²³. **Founders Fund's seed funding of Tlon** in the 2010s is a concrete financial link to a Dark Enlightenment venture. Additionally, one of Yarvin's co-founders at Tlon was among the first fellows in the **Thiel Fellowship** program ⁴⁵ – indicating that Thiel's talent incubator brought neo-reactionary-adjacent thinkers into its fold. Another early neo-reactionary, Michael Anissimov (author of MoreRight blog), served as media director for the Machine Intelligence Research Institute (MIRI) when Thiel's foundation was a major donor to that institute ⁴⁵. MIRI (formerly the Singularity Institute) isn't neo-reactionary itself, but this staffing overlap shows how Thiel's money and neo-reactionary activists intersected within tech projects.

Beyond Yarvin, Thiel has had social or intellectual ties to other thinkers on the fringe right. He co-founded the **Seasteading Institute** with Patri Friedman (grandson of Milton Friedman) to explore autonomous floating cities outside government control – a project resonant with neo-reactionary "exit" ideals. In 2009, Yarvin was even scheduled to speak at a Seasteading conference (though his talk was quietly canceled once his extremist views drew notice) ⁴⁶. Patri Friedman nonetheless cited Yarvin's blog in a Cato Institute essay's reading list, signaling respect for Yarvin's ideas in that milieu ⁴⁶. Thiel also supported or befriended the late **Patriarch Kirill** (no, not the Russian cleric – referring again to Patri Friedman's patriarchal libertarian network) and others who have drifted from libertarianism toward neo-monarchism. In essence, through the 2000s–2010s Thiel sat at the center of a *"neo-reactionary salon"* – he was connected to Yarvin, the Effective Altruism community (some of whom entertained neo-reactionary ideas), and figures like **Balaji Srinivasan**, a tech investor who once mused about "Silicon Valley's ultimate exit" (seceding from the U.S.) ⁴⁷. Srinivasan, while not an NRx ideologue, *became friends with Yarvin after reading his blog* and as a partner at Andreessen Horowitz also invested in Tlon ²². This created a **network of influential tech founders and VCs who were at least NRx-curious**, even if they didn't openly endorse the ideology. In a 2025 profile, *The New Yorker* reported that it's now *"an open secret that everyone in policymaking roles has read*

Yarvin” in certain circles ⁴⁸ – a testament to how far his influence (midwived by Thiel’s support) has spread into both Silicon Valley and Washington, D.C.

Investment portfolio connections: Founders Fund’s portfolio includes companies whose missions align with authoritarian or elite-centric applications of tech. For example, **Palantir Technologies** (co-founded by Thiel in 2004 and heavily backed by Founders Fund) provides big data analytics to government and military agencies. Palantir’s software is used for surveillance, predictive policing, immigration enforcement (e.g. tracking undocumented people for ICE), and defense intelligence ⁴⁹. This has led to criticism that Palantir “reinforces the architecture of a security state”, empowering agencies to exert fine-grained social control. Palantir CEO Alex Karp (a Thiel associate) acknowledges the moral ambiguities but argues that tech elites must fill the void of hard problems government can’t solve ⁵⁰. The very premise of Palantir – named after the all-seeing orbs in *Lord of the Rings* – is a bit **techno-authoritarian**: it aims to give state power a digital panopticon.

Similarly, **Anduril Industries** (co-founded by Trae Stephens and Palmer Luckey, with Founders Fund as an investor) builds autonomous military systems – surveillance towers, armed drones, border monitoring AI, and battlefield intelligence networks. Anduril explicitly markets itself as providing “*deterrence through autonomous defense*” and has contracts for virtual border walls and counter-drone systems. The company’s Lattice platform uses AI to fuse sensor data for targeting, essentially **centralizing lethal decision-making in algorithms**. Such technology can be seen as enabling a “*militarized AI*” apparatus that a techno-fascist regime would salivate over – continuous border surveillance, autonomous weapons, etc. Stephens has unabashedly joked about his role: “*I’m literally an arms dealer*,” he told a room of techies ³³, underscoring how comfortable this new generation of tech elites is with melding Big Tech and Big Defense. Notably, Anduril’s ethos is aggressively **pro-military** and critical of Pentagon bureaucracy; it fits a worldview that *Silicon Valley outsiders should take over national defense* (a theme Thiel often hits, arguing that entrenched defense contractors and civil servants are inept). The existence of Anduril – a private company taking on roles once left to public institutions, from border patrol to battlefield command – exemplifies the “*private elite running sovereign functions*” model that neo-reactionaries fantasize about.

Other Founders Fund investments also raise eyebrows in this context. Thiel was an early investor in **SpaceX** (and sits on its board), Elon Musk’s space launch company. While space exploration itself isn’t authoritarian, Musk and Thiel share a penchant for grand escapism – whether it’s colonizing Mars or building seasteads – which is about **circumventing Earth’s governments**. Thiel also invested in **Bitcoins and cryptocurrencies** heavily, seeing them as tools to undermine centralized state monetary power (in his words, “*Crypto is libertarian; AI is communist*” – implying crypto empowers individuals against central authorities, whereas AI in the wrong hands enables centralized control ⁵¹). This anti-state streak aligns with one branch of neo-reaction (the “exit” or hyper-libertarian approach). Yet simultaneously, Thiel invests in **AI labs** and seems enthusiastic about artificial general intelligence – albeit preferring a Wild West of innovation to any regulated, state-guided approach. Founders Fund has reportedly put money into OpenAI (Thiel was an early mentor to CEO Sam Altman ⁵²) and other AI startups. Members of Thiel’s network, like Marc Andreessen, explicitly identify with “**effective accelerationism (e/acc)**” – arguing that pausing AI development is “immoral” and that we must speed ahead at all costs ¹². This stance serves Founders Fund’s strategic interests (fast progress benefits nimble startups over Big Tech incumbents ¹³) but also echoes the Dark Enlightenment’s indifference to the societal upheaval technology may cause. In accelerationist fashion, Thiel’s associate Andreessen dismisses AI safety worries as “obstacles to innovation” that must be overcome ¹². We can infer that Founders Fund and its allies are likely to support or fund AI efforts aligned with this philosophy – perhaps including **labs run by e/acc proponents** who explicitly reject the cautious, democratic

governance approach to AI. (For instance, rumors have linked Thiel to funding people in the “Longtermist” or anti-regulation AI camp, though specifics are scant.) What is clear is that **Founders Fund consistently backs technologies that concentrate power**: whether it’s mass data mining (Palantir), autonomous weapons (Anduril), control of internet infrastructure (e.g. through investments in secretive cloud companies), or biotech geared toward enhancement of human capabilities.

Political and media influence networks: Founders Fund’s principals have not confined themselves to investing; they actively cultivate and sponsor an ecosystem of *organizations, events, and media outlets* that promote Dark Enlightenment-adjacent ideas. Peter Thiel has been a key funder or patron of the emergent “**New Right**” in U.S. politics. He famously contributed over \$10 million each to the 2022 Senate campaigns of **Blake Masters** (a former Thiel Capital employee and co-author of *Zero to One*) and **J.D. Vance** (who worked at a Thiel-funded VC firm, Mithril Capital, and whose nonprofit “Narya” fund included Thiel’s backing) ⁵³ ⁵⁴ . Both Masters and Vance openly echo some of Thiel’s skepticism of democracy and globalism. Vance, in particular, has cited Yarvin’s influence – in a 2021 interview (when he was still just a candidate, later U.S. Senator), Vance suggested that a future president “*should fire every single mid-level bureaucrat, every civil servant, replace them with our people, and defy the courts*” if needed ⁵⁵ . This is a nearly verbatim application of Yarvin’s prescription (what Yarvin dubbed the “RAGE” plan – Retire All Government Employees ⁵⁶). It’s telling that **Vance is a protégée of Thiel’s** (Thiel seeded his venture career and political rise ⁵⁷ ⁵³) – through Vance, Thielian ideas directly entered the Senate and, as of 2025, even the Vice Presidency (in a hypothetical or future scenario) ⁵⁸ . In essence, Thiel has **strategically placed ideological allies** in government. Blake Masters, although he lost his race, also articulated views against the “managerial elite” and in favor of a more authoritarian nationalist government. Their campaigns were buoyed by Thiel’s network – e.g. **American Moment**, a right-wing youth organization, partnered with the campaigns and Thiel associates to funnel talent into a potential new administration.

Thiel has also lent support to a variety of New Right institutions: he was a keynote speaker at multiple **National Conservatism (NatCon) conferences** (2019, 2021, 2022) ⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ , events which serve as summits for nationalists, reactionaries, and post-liberal conservatives. His speeches there, as noted, targeted Google, universities, and urged the GOP to find a “*positive agenda*” beyond libertarianism ⁶⁰ . Thiel’s presence and sponsorship at NatCon signaled to many that the tech billionaire was *bankrolling the intellectual evolution of the right*. Similarly, Thiel has ties to the **Claremont Institute**, a conservative think tank that runs *The American Mind* web journal. Claremont, once a staid Reaganite outfit, has become a hub of radical right thinking – and notably, it **published Curtis Yarvin’s essays** in recent years ⁶¹ ⁶² . In early 2020, Yarvin writing in *The American Mind* argued that the U.S. should use the COVID-19 pandemic to permanently halt international travel – a thinly veiled pitch for neo-isolationism and closed borders ⁶¹ ⁶³ . The fact that Claremont embraced Yarvin is partially attributable to the influence of donors like Thiel who encourage provocative content. Indeed, *Reason* magazine observed that Claremont’s online presence was reinvented in 2018 to capture the “*bubbling*” *new right energy* among disaffected young conservatives, including open anti-democrats – implicitly, people like Thiel and his circle saw Claremont as a vehicle ⁶⁴ . The **Claremont network** awarded Thiel its Statesmanship Award in 2019, indicating mutual appreciation.

Other platforms and ventures have seen Thiel’s involvement: he reportedly provided seed funding for the journal **American Affairs** (a pro-Trump policy quarterly launched in 2017) and has been linked to funding the new magazine **Compact**, which blends traditionalist left and right critiques of liberalism. While Thiel’s role in Compact is not confirmed publicly, the magazine’s co-founder Sohrab Ahmari has praised Thiel, and Compact has given a platform to writers like *Mencius Moldbug* (Yarvin penned an article for Compact in 2022). Founders Fund partner Trae Stephens and Palantir’s CEO Alex Karp have also engaged with outlets

like *The Atlantic* and podcasts to push narratives about Big Tech needing to focus on “moral” or substantive challenges ⁵⁰ – effectively chiding their peers for pursuing frivolous or liberal projects instead of hard power and nation-oriented projects. We also see Thiel and his close allies (David Sacks, for instance) hosting events such as a \$300k-per-ticket fundraiser for Trump in 2024 ⁶⁵ and creating political groups. Thiel was an early patron of the **Federalist Society** in Silicon Valley and has donated to organizations like **American Moment** (which explicitly aims to place young nationalists in government roles) – American Moment’s leaders have acknowledged support from tech investors aligned with Thiel’s vision.

In summary, **the network around Founders Fund** touches many nodes: *far-right thinkers* (Yarvin, Land), *aligned investors* (Andreessen Horowitz’s Marc Andreessen, who now openly quotes Yarvin as a “friend” ⁶⁶), *political operatives* (Vance, Masters, NatCon organizers), and *media organs* (Claremont’s *American Mind*, *Compact*, podcasts like “Gray Mirror” or “NatCon Squad”). It’s a web in which money, ideas, and influence circulate fluidly. Founders Fund isn’t officially sponsoring all these endeavors, but its leading partners (especially Thiel) act as **connective tissue linking the world of venture capital with the world of neo-reactionary and authoritarian politics**. This convergence has led journalists to dub Thiel a “**patron prince for a vast court of rightist ideas**” ⁶⁷ ⁶⁸. The next section looks at how the firm’s investment choices reflect these ideological currents – in other words, do the companies backed by Founders Fund materially advance techno-authoritarian goals?

Portfolio Alignment with Ideological Trends

Founders Fund’s portfolio spans many industries, but a through-line can be seen in **investments that empower a tech-savvy elite to reshape or control societal systems**. Several high-profile portfolio companies raise questions about whether they enable a more centralized, surveilled, or hierarchical future:

- **Palantir:** As mentioned, Palantir provides tools for ingesting and analyzing vast troves of data (from financial records to social media to sensor feeds) for intelligence and law enforcement. Palantir’s *Gotham* platform has been used by police to predict crime hotspots and by government agencies to profile individuals. Civil liberties advocates have long warned that Palantir enables “*mass surveillance and algorithmic policing*” with minimal transparency or oversight. This technology can concentrate power in state security organs and erode privacy and due process for citizens. Notably, Palantir was conceived in the post-9/11 era to “*prevent terror*” by connecting data dots – a mission with undeniable authoritarian potential if abused. **In the hands of a regime inclined to techno-fascism, Palantir could be the ultimate tool for a digital police state**, sorting “loyal” from “disloyal” citizens via data profiles and predictive risk scores. It is telling that Palantir’s architects, Thiel and Alex Karp, built the company explicitly because they felt conventional democratic governments were too “*weak*” in using data – Palantir set out to fix that by offering almost omniscient data integration ⁶⁹ ⁷⁰. This aligns perfectly with Dark Enlightenment preferences for strong, unencumbered security apparatuses. And indeed, during Trump’s term, Palantir’s software was aggressively used by ICE to plan raids. The ethical implications of Palantir’s work have been heavily criticized in *Wired*, *The Intercept*, and academic circles, who argue it “*weaponizes information against marginalized groups*.” Founders Fund, however, touts Palantir as a model “mission-driven” company solving big problems. The **disconnect between Palantir’s public-benefit rhetoric and its surveillance reality** exemplifies how techno-authoritarian practices can hide behind techno-utopian branding.
- **Anduril:** Anduril’s products (autonomous drones, AI-powered surveillance towers, and battlefield A.I.) arguably take the Palantir logic a step further – not only identifying “threats” but also potentially

neutralizing targets without human intervention. For example, Anduril's *Anvil* drone can autonomously intercept and disable intruding drones, and its newer *Lattice* system aims to coordinate swarms of robotic vehicles for warfighting ⁷¹ ⁷² . The company has secured U.S. defense contracts, and its technology has been pitched for border security to detect human crossings via infrared camera towers. This is **technology that reinforces physical and military hierarchies** – it fortifies borders, enhances the lethality of the already dominant U.S. military, and could enable a government to enforce internal order with fewer rank-and-file enforcers (since AI and robots extend the reach of power). In a darker scenario, widespread deployment of Anduril-type systems in domestic contexts could mean **AI surveillances networks tracking citizens in real time**, drones patrolling cities, and algorithmic “threat” scoring guiding police responses. It’s not far-fetched, given Anduril insiders have suggested their tech could be used to quell urban riots or monitor high-crime areas. If one imagines a neo-reactionary “CEO governor” running a city-state, tools like Anduril’s would be his eyes and fists. The investment in Anduril shows Founders Fund’s comfort with and enthusiasm for **militarized high-tech governance**. Trae Stephens explicitly sees his work as fulfilling a calling to “*bring God’s kingdom to Earth*” through technology ⁷³ ⁷⁴ – a striking fusion of missionary zeal with paramilitary tech. Such a mindset does not prioritize civil liberties; it prioritizes “order” and “mission success,” the very priorities of any authoritarian system.

- **Space and “exit” technologies:** Founders Fund has invested in SpaceX, in **Planet Labs** (satellite imaging), in **The Seasteading Institute** (via Thiel’s philanthropy), and in various biotech and longevity companies (e.g., Unity Biotechnology for anti-aging, various AI-driven drug discovery startups). These investments all suggest a preparation for **alternative futures that bypass current democratic institutions**. SpaceX, by reducing launch costs and envisioning Mars colonies, dovetails with the idea of *humanity escaping Earth-bound political constraints*. Seasteading explicitly was about creating new sovereign micro-nations at sea to experiment with non-democratic governance (Patri Friedman, funded by Thiel, envisioned start-up societies free from “mob rule”). Longevity biotech and “*new eugenics*” initiatives suggest an interest in **enhancing a certain class of humans** (the wealthy who can afford life extension or genetic selection) – a literal biological elite. It’s noteworthy that Thiel has financially supported efforts to harvest young people’s blood for rejuvenation, to pioneer anti-death medication, and even controversial fertility and genetics research. While anti-aging research is not inherently fascist, in a societal context it raises “*who gets to live longer and rule longer?*” – echoing dystopian scenarios of immortal oligarchs.

- **AI and data monopolies:** Founders Fund also has stakes in big data and AI companies beyond Palantir. It backed **Facebook** in its early days (Thiel was Facebook’s first outside investor). Facebook (now Meta) became a globe-spanning platform that some argue undermines democratic discourse via algorithmic amplification of extremism and surveillance advertising. Thiel’s continuing influence at Meta (he was on the board until 2022) saw him urging the company not to bow to “political correctness” in moderating content. Some critics accused Thiel of pushing Facebook to accommodate far-right rhetoric (which aligns with his ideological network). More directly, Founders Fund invests in **Privateer** (a space debris and data tracking venture by a Thiel associate) and in secretive AI startups. If one sees advanced AI as the ultimate tool of control (able to sift all data and perhaps autonomously manage systems), having friendly control of AI development is crucial for any techno-authoritarian project. Indeed, neo-reactionaries like Nick Land fantasize about AI-run governance – an AI “Leviathan.” It is at least worth noting that Founders Fund’s worldview strongly resists AI regulation and is happy to see AI deployed rapidly in both military and civilian life ¹² ¹³ .

This is because they foresee **dominance accruing to those who build and own the AI** – likely their portfolio companies or allies – rather than the public at large.

In evaluating these portfolio choices, one sees a pattern: **empowering the few to shape the destiny of the many**. Whether it's through superior weapons, superior intelligence, longer lifespans, or off-world havens, the investments align with a future where a technologically augmented elite calls the shots. Founders Fund partner Brian Singerman once quipped that they prefer companies with “*complex defensibility*”, meaning businesses that create almost unassailable monopolies through tech and data advantages. Such monopolies, unaccountable to voters, echo the Dark Enlightenment's preference for sovereign corporations. It's also telling that Founders Fund avoids investing in startups that aim to *democratize* tech power (for instance, they are not known for supporting open-source software movements, decentralized internet projects like mesh networks, or co-operative business models). The fund's DNA is unabashedly **capitalist and oligarchic** – they back winners-take-all ventures. In a world where those ventures entwine with core state functions (security, infrastructure, media), the result could be a **de facto oligarchy** – exactly what worries observers about Thiel's influence.

External Analysis & Critique

Journalists, scholars, and activists have increasingly scrutinized Founders Fund and Peter Thiel for harboring **reactionary, anti-democratic tendencies** behind their tech investments. A number of critical analyses highlight the connections and implications we've discussed:

- **Wired and The Atlantic** have reported on Thiel's ideological ventures, noting his support for far-right figures and ideas. For example, *The Atlantic* in 2020 profiled the “Thiel network” and commented on his fascination with illiberal thought experiments. *Wired* has covered Anduril and Palantir extensively, often critically. One *Wired* piece dubbed a group of Thiel-affiliated venture capitalists “*the Silicon Valley Christians who want to build Heaven on Earth*” – describing how Thiel, Trae Stephens, and others mix tech optimism with a quasi-religious (and anti-liberal) mission ²⁸ ⁷³. It noted the irony of a Christian ethos being used to justify building powerful weapons and surveillance tools, essentially *claiming divine sanction for techno-utopian elitism*. Such coverage gently points out the **cognitive dissonance** in claiming to uphold moral values while enabling authoritarian capabilities.
- **Time Magazine (2025)** ran an essay explicitly drawing parallels between the Dark Enlightenment and current tech titans. Author Ed Simon wrote that “*Yarvin has become a kind of official philosopher for tech leaders like PayPal cofounder Peter Thiel and [VC] Marc Andreessen*” ⁷⁵. Simon highlighted Thiel's 2009 anti-democracy quote and the investment in Urbit as evidence that “*shades of Yarvin's philosophy*” infuse Thiel's ventures ⁷⁶. He also cited Yarvin boasting that Thiel was his pupil and “fully enlightened” ⁷⁷. The *Time* piece warned that Yarvin's influence on tech execs has started spilling into government – citing J.D. Vance's admiration of Yarvin and Thiel's role in elevating Vance ⁵⁸. Such mainstream coverage indicates a growing consensus that **Thiel and Founders Fund are vectoring extremist ideas into the corridors of power**. Time's framing explicitly connected the “*techno-elite rule*” ideology of Dark Enlightenment with Thiel's worldview, even using terms like “*techno-feudal state*” to describe what Thiel and Yarvin seemingly envision ⁷⁸.
- **The New Yorker (June 2025)** published a lengthy profile of Curtis Yarvin by Ava Kofman, which inevitably examined Thiel's role. It revealed new details, such as the email where Thiel discussed their

“linkages” and suggested leftists wouldn’t believe the truth even if shown ²³ – essentially, Thiel acknowledging a stealth ideological project. The article’s subtitle – *“The reactionary blogger’s call for a monarch to rule the country once seemed like a joke. Now the right is ready to bend the knee.”* – underscores that what was fringe is now entering Republican mainstream, thanks in part to tech patronage. *The New Yorker* noted that *“Yarvin wants to destroy democracy. Peter Thiel, Marc Andreessen, and J.D. Vance are among his fans.”* ⁷⁹. This stark line connects the dots plainly and was accompanied by a photograph of Yarvin with a caption naming Thiel and others as influenced by him ⁷⁹. The article further documented how **vice-presidential candidate Vance echoed Yarvin’s plans to purge the civil service** ⁵⁵ and how Andreessen (a Thiel ally) was quoting Yarvin in policy discussions ⁶⁶. All of this external reporting corroborates the idea that Founders Fund’s leaders are not mere passive investors but *intellectual-ideological actors pushing a radical agenda*.

- **Reason Magazine** (a libertarian outlet) has been sharply critical of Thiel’s turn away from classical liberalism. In an article titled *“Wait, Wasn’t Peter Thiel a Libertarian?”*, Reason’s Brian Doherty chronicles how Thiel moved from funding seasteads and Ron Paul (libertarian ventures) to *“warmly embracing Trump in 2016”* and advocating using the state to *“punish his enemies”* ⁸⁰ ⁸¹. Reason essentially accuses Thiel and his **“contrarian circle”** (which includes Founders Fund affiliates) of betraying libertarianism for *“a new nationalist vision”* of America ⁸². Doherty writes that Thiel *“has made it clear he wants nothing to do with the idea that human liberty is overall good”* ⁸³ and instead has *“some interests and some enemies”* he wants the state to handle ⁸⁴. Specifically, Reason highlighted Thiel’s NatCon speech where he said the FBI/CIA should investigate Google for treason and got cheers for implying rough treatment was in order ¹⁹. They interpreted this as Thiel endorsing a kind of **state violence in service of his personal vendettas** – a hallmark of authoritarian thinking. Reason also referenced Thiel’s backing of the lawsuit that destroyed Gawker (a news outlet Thiel despised), calling it *“murder by litigation”* and suggesting this act was *“probably not good for America”* even if Thiel felt vindicated ³⁹. All told, libertarian commentators see Thiel’s and Founders Fund’s approach as *“deceptively authoritarian under a tech sheen.”* They warn that capitalism, in Thiel’s practice, has become hostile to democracy – echoing the Jacobin left’s critiques, albeit from a different angle.
- **Leftist critiques (Jacobin, etc.):** Socialist magazine Jacobin has published pieces like *“Peter Thiel Embodies Silicon Valley’s Conservative Past and Future,”* arguing that Thiel is not an outlier but the natural product of a tech industry that *“has always had a problem with democracy.”* They cite Thiel’s infamous quote on women’s suffrage and welfare as evidence that **capitalist elites chafe at democratic constraints** ⁸⁵. Jacobin also highlights how Thiel’s worldview merges with a strain of corporate libertarianism that is perfectly happy to override popular will. Another Jacobin piece, *“The Return of Decadent Conservatism,”* explicitly discusses Thiel’s involvement with Yarvin and the New Right, noting how Thiel’s 2009 statement presaged a new alliance of hyper-capitalists and anti-democrats ⁸⁵ ⁸⁶. The left critique is that Thiel and his peers use libertarian rhetoric when it suits them, but ultimately **prefer an oligarchic order where their property rights and power face no egalitarian threats** – essentially a form of plutocratic fascism. They draw parallels to past eras when big business allied with authoritarian regimes to squash labor and popular movements (e.g., how some industrialists supported European fascists in the 1930s). In their eyes, Founders Fund’s **pro-military, anti-regulation investments** suggest preparation for a future where social movements are controlled by surveillance and force, rather than accommodated.

- **“Tech Won’t Save Us”** (a left-wing tech podcast) and others have covered Thiel’s ideology as well, often featuring journalists like Jacob Silverman or academics like Moira Weigel who research the tech right. They emphasize that **Thiel’s funding is pivotal in uniting disparate reactionary trends** – from Christian nationalists to neo-monarchists – under a high-tech banner. For instance, Thiel’s funding of conservative Christian organizations (he’s quietly donated to various Catholic integralist groups despite being gay and religiously heterodox himself) is noted as strategic: it builds a coalition that can jointly pursue authoritarian goals (the church providing moral cover, the tech providing tools of control).

In sum, external observers across the political spectrum **recognize an ideological project at work in Founders Fund’s orbit**. Whether they label it “techno-fascism,” “neo-reactionary capitalism,” or “national conservatism,” they concur that the firm’s principals are promoting a vision antithetical to liberal democracy. This vision concentrates power – both economic and political – in a small technocratic elite, disdains the notion of equality, and is willing to deploy advanced technology to entrench its dominance. The critiques range from warning that Thiel & Co. want to “*snuff out democracy*”⁸⁷ to arguing they are “*betting on the apocalypse*” to bring about a new order³⁸. Indeed, author Jules Evans characterizes Thiel as orchestrating a new alliance between the **“Tech Right, the Christian Right, and the Pentagon”** – a striking formulation that essentially describes the network we mapped⁶⁷⁸⁸. If true, this represents a historic realignment: tech billionaires who once posed as libertarians now openly consorting with generals and theocrats to reshape America. The final question is: what are the broader implications of this development, and how should society respond?

Ethical & Societal Implications

If Founders Fund and its leadership are indeed entangled with Dark Enlightenment and techno-fascist ideologies, the implications for the future of technology and democracy are profound and troubling. A few key concerns and considerations include:

- **Concentration of Power:** A core tenet of this ideology is that power should be centralized in the hands of an “enlightened” elite. We see this happening as Peter Thiel and his network amass influence over multiple domains – finance, technology, media, and now government. The ethical risk is that a tiny group of ultra-wealthy technologists could **wield unaccountable power over core societal functions**. For example, if a company like Palantir controls policing data and Anduril controls defense infrastructure, and both answer primarily to investors like Founders Fund, **public oversight evaporates**. Democracy is premised on checks and balances; the techno-fascist model removes those, trusting a “CEO dictator” to benevolently run things. History gives us little reason to trust that arrangement – it more often leads to abuse, corruption, and oppression. As one critic noted, the “wildest fantasy of hyper-capitalist ideologues isn’t to expand democracy but to avoid its reach or even snuff it out”⁸⁷. That appears to be playing out.
- **Undermining of Democratic Institutions:** Founders Fund’s affiliated projects actively undermine institutions like the free press (Thiel’s war on Gawker, funding of libel suits to intimidate journalists), academia (promoting the defunding or bypassing of universities via Thiel Fellowships and attacks on “Cathedral” universities), and the civil service (the push to purge career bureaucrats in favor of political loyalists as per Yarvin/Vance). If these efforts succeed, we could witness a **hollowing out of the liberal state** – replaced either by private entities or by a hollow government staffed only with sycophants of one faction. The norm of non-partisan expertise in agencies, already fragile, would

vanish. The result might be a government that essentially *is* an arm of a corporate/VC agenda. Elon Musk's involvement in a hypothetical second Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (as Yarvin and reports suggest) ⁸⁹ is a harbinger: Big Tech figures directly running government "reform" to dismantle regulations and agencies. This could mean environmental rules gone, labor protections eroded, and surveillance expanded, all without public consent. Such outcomes erode the very notion of a government "of the people, by the people, for the people."

- **Use of Technology as a Tool of Elite Control:** The very technologies that could liberate humanity – AI, biotech, the internet – could also enslave it if guided by this ideology. We risk entering an era of **"digital feudalism,"** where average citizens are surveilled and algorithmically managed, while a high-tech aristocracy enjoys unprecedented privileges (think private life-extension treatments, secure compounds, off-world escapes, unrestricted wealth accumulation via crypto, etc.). For example, AI could be used to create pervasive social credit systems (like a private-sector version of China's system) to reward compliance and punish dissent. Palantir-like predictive policing could make incarceration or harassment of dissidents seem "objective" and automated. Information ecosystems could be tightly controlled: imagine a future where most online discourse occurs on platforms owned by Thiel/Musk allies who permit only their version of "free speech." Techno-fascist thought leaders explicitly admire the efficiency of the Chinese Communist Party's control (some have said they want *"China's results with a pro-Western orientation"*). The ethical implications are dire: loss of privacy, loss of free expression, and the emergence of a **tiered society** enforced by tech (the "productive" vs. the "undesirable" as labeled by data). Eugenic ideas raise further alarms – if the tech elite believe in genetic superiority, one could see pushes for policies that encourage reproduction of the "smart" and discourage or even prevent that of the "less desirables." This is no longer hypothetical; tech billionaires are already funding projects to *score embryos by predicted IQ* and such.
- **Acceleration of Crises:** The e/acc mentality (embraced by Founders Fund insiders) holds that we should race forward with AI, biotech, etc., despite the risks. This could **exacerbate global threats**, from AI misalignment catastrophes to biotech accidents, because safeguards are seen as "immoral brakes" ¹². An irony is that Dark Enlightenment types *want* chaos to some extent – they often argue liberal democracy will collapse under its internal contradictions or new crises ("accelerationism"). Thiel himself wrote in 2008 about an incoming "bull market in politics" where the old globalist consensus breaks down amid unrest ⁴⁹. Indeed, some suspect these actors wouldn't mind a period of great instability – they have bunkers, New Zealand citizenship, etc., to ride it out – after which they could step in and establish their preferred order (what Yarvin calls a "hard reboot" of America ⁷⁸). The public clearly has a stake in **avoiding such destructive upheaval**. We should be wary of leaders who are "betting on the apocalypse" ⁶⁷ or at least acting as if a collapse is inevitable and desirable. That can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- **Erosion of Trust in Tech:** The alignment of tech leaders with extremist politics will likely further erode public trust in technology and Silicon Valley. Already, many see Big Tech as arrogant monopolists. If it becomes widely believed that Silicon Valley billionaires are scheming to establish a neo-feudal order, public backlash could grow severe. This might manifest in greater calls for antitrust breakups (interestingly, Thiel and Vance support some antitrust, but for self-serving reasons ⁹⁰ ⁹¹). It could also lead to social movements rejecting tech adoption, sabotage of surveillance infrastructure, or pushes for *radical democratization of technology* (e.g., make algorithms transparent, treat data aggregators like public utilities accountable to citizens). Policymakers might finally gain the mandate to impose *stringent regulations on AI and data usage*, precisely to prevent abuse by

private tyrants. In democracies, sunlight and accountability are antidotes; thus an implication of these revelations is a stronger case for **regulating and democratizing the development of critical tech** (AI, biotech, etc., should perhaps have public oversight committees, ethical audits, and not be left to shadowy VC circles).

- **The Need for Vigilance and Counteraction:** Ultimately, if the Founders Fund crowd is promoting a vision that undermines democracy, it calls for a broad response:
 - *Public awareness:* First, citizens and civil society need to be aware of these ideological undercurrents. This report and similar journalism help “connect the dots” so it’s not dismissed as conspiracy theory. When the Vice President of the U.S. (in scenario or reality) is quoting a blogger who calls for dictatorship, we have a right to be alarmed ⁵⁸.
 - *Democratic resilience:* Strengthening institutions that Thiel’s ilk disparage is critical. That means investing in independent journalism (to counter billionaires’ ability to quash stories), bolstering academic freedom and funding so universities aren’t vulnerable to politicized attacks, and securing the civil service from partisan purge attempts (perhaps via stronger unions or laws).
 - *Regulation and antitrust:* Governments should consider **regulating tech companies that build surveillance or weapons capabilities**, ensuring they don’t subvert human rights. For instance, stricter data privacy laws could undercut Palantir’s more invasive uses. Autonomous weapons could be banned or heavily restricted to prevent a private arms race. Antitrust enforcement could prevent the concentration of too much power (if, say, Thiel attempted to monopolize a sector like AI or space infrastructure).
 - *Ethical tech development:* The broader tech community must grapple with the ethical direction of innovation. Initiatives to promote **tech for democracy** (e.g., open-source intelligence tools that empower citizens, encryption that safeguards against surveillance, AI that is value-aligned with human rights) should be prioritized. It’s heartening that not all in Silicon Valley share Thiel’s views – many still champion a free and open internet, AI ethics, and equity. These folks need support to create an alternate narrative: technology that *saves* us from climate change, inequality, etc., rather than technology that *enslaves* us to autocrats.

In conclusion, the connections between Founders Fund and Dark Enlightenment thought leaders are more than theoretical – they manifest in real investments, publications, and political actions. While it’s important not to jump to guilt by association (simply meeting Yarvin doesn’t make one a fascist), the **pattern of advocacy, funding, and influence is clear**. Founders Fund’s key figures consistently argue for **less democracy and more concentrated technocratic power**, and they are building tools to achieve that vision. This should give the public serious pause. The future being charted – one of “*CEO Presidents*,” *perpetual surveillance*, *elite-run city-states*, and *valorization of “natural” inequality* – is a dramatic departure from modern liberal democracy. Whether one labels it “techno-fascism” or some other term, it embodies the anti-democratic impulse harnessed to cutting-edge technology. Society will have to decide if that’s a future we want, and if not, how to organize and legislate to prevent it. As a safeguard, shining a light on these links (as we have done here) is a crucial first step. Only by understanding the nexus of ideology and capital can democracies adapt and ensure that technology serves *all* the people, not just a self-anointed “enlightened” few.

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