

Dear representative,

I am writing to you in support of breaking up Facebook.

- 1) somewhat of a godfather of American political thought, Alexis De Tocqueville long ago noted the ramifications of different mechanisms of association among people – both institutions and the ways in which information is disseminated, he argued, were essential facets of a democratic nation. Newspapers, he concluded, had become indispensable to a functional democracy. How can a democracy function if people cannot communicate so as to formulate consensus’ and to act cohesively on such things?

Whether it be a matter of lack of transparency of Facebook algorithms I am unsure (as a consumer all I know is they don’t exactly advertise what their algorithms do, but in time I am confident it will be shown that social media algorithms do not simply respond to what public opinions amalgamate, rather they help shape them. In turn these algorithms have played a *causal* role in the development of societal events like mass protests and election politics. While these may be considered good or bad outcomes depending on the person, so long as these algorithms are hidden from the consumers who use them then it cannot be said that they were self-determined outcomes – outcomes which were organized and directed in a strategically meaningful fashion. They were instead manipulations. And manipulating inter-group communication and group psychology have become the new form of power - power which far transcends that which was intended by our acceptance of ‘free market capitalism’.

- 2) **If food industries are required to report what ingredients they put into food, then social media algorithms should be equally transparent.** It is only government regulation which has ever allowed such a thing as free market capitalism to exist without imploding on its own contradictions, hence it can be said it is a PRIVILEGE to be able to participate in and to benefit from such a thing; a privilege which must be returned by behaving as a socially responsible member of the market.
- 3) As we enter the ‘information economy’, it will only become more vital to acknowledge truthfully what we as individuals did accomplish on our own vs. what was in fact a result of collective efforts. Take for example Monsanto Corp. By trademarking their GMO seeds, they essentially trademarked what was the inevitable result of generations worth of *public* investment in research. In thanks, they put thousands of farmers out of business here and in Mexico then positioned themselves such that they were in control of our food sources. Meanwhile, displaced American and Mexican farmers were shoved into cities like cattle where they fought over what jobs remained to them.

Mark Zuckerberg didn’t invent the internet, selfie’s, or newsfeeds. He certainly didn’t invent human communication. Nevertheless. he has managed to secure a patent on newsfeeds and probably a few other things which should never have been granted. Patents are supposed to apply to inventions which were not obvious, and newsfeeds are an incredibly obvious ‘invention’. Zuckerberg has used this patent to monopolize the market. It’s not that alternative forms of social media don’t exist, rather it’s that alternative providers of the same form have been squashed. A suitable example to contrast this to is Burger King’s whopper; while no one else can use the name “whopper”, it would be considered ridiculous by the public and business competitors were Burger King to go around saying “you shall sell no burger with lettuce tomato and some combination of ketchup and Mayo”. As a former consumer of meat, when I didn’t like something about any particular Burger Kind yet still craved something like a whopper, I’d be able to go elsewhere and find it. As a consumer of social media I’ve sought alternatives to Facebook which also emphasize newsfeeds and personalized pages, but struggle to find more than one; Twitter, which is inflexible in how it allows people to engage in dialogue.

Whether by trademarking the newsfeed or by some other means, from a consumers standpoint it seems Facebook has forced potential competition to resort to a lack of moderation as a means to attract consumers. This in turn proves a breeding ground for sociopaths and perverts. MeWe and Gab are examples of social media which try to attract people with the idea of 'free speech' but which quickly devolve into facilitating a conversation among a select few weirdos. This does nothing to restore the consumer leverage of the average social media user. Facilitating genuine and fair competition is the solution, not disposing of standards.

But this does bring to mind one final issue which relates to my first point; who is the designated arbiter of what is and is not socially acceptable communication? For example, I was 'put in time out' by Facebook once for turning someone's own comment against them; she accused members of government who had devoted themselves and their careers to serving the public as being abject failures for not opening schools, to which I suggested maybe she was a failure of a parent. While certainly a low blow by me, who is to say that slandering government representatives is an acceptable thing while slandering parents is not? There will never be a perfectly objective answer to this, hence I say again; facilitating competition is the answer, not forcing one standard onto everyone.

It would be less worthy of a complaint if it could not be said that Facebook has become our primary means of deliberating politics (and this may have been true even before covid). Facebook has by now become the primary means through which representatives of government communicate with those they represent. The implications of this are that some geek who designed a fairly basic website in his college dorm room has managed to make himself the de facto comptroller of democratic process. To allow this to go unchecked is to spit on the graves of people who have fought and died for this nation. Zuckerberg's "community standards" have become nothing less than a blatant and forced way of acculturating Americans to express themselves in a way that suits him or which serves his ends. Truly it is hard to conceive of the ways in which technology opens the doors to manipulating a democracy. Currently I happen to be reading about the history of the English Revolution, and Zuckerberg honestly reminds me of William Laud who, under king Charles, was allowed to excommunicate and silence 'non-conformists' who rejected his reformation of the Anglican church.

While I do not pretend the concept of regulating social media or intellectual/ technological patents to be a simple matter, it should be acknowledged plainly that trademarking intellectual property was never anything but a flawed idea, one which gained acceptance during a time when the effects of such things were further beyond the periphery of the average citizen than they are today. But even then such logical fallacies were only accepted reluctantly and with a fortuitous turn of events for advocates who fought to legitimize the idea of a patent. I am of course referring to the fact that a substantial anti-patent movement was negated by the recession of 1874 (and by some clever public relations maneuvering by corporations at the time). In recent decades patents have only become easier to attain; it is as if judges have chosen to consistently rule in favor of corporations rather than people (or to treat them [corporations are considered equivalent to people I guess] as superior people). To this I remind you of your power of and obligations to pursue checks and balances.

The idea of patenting intellectual property seems on me comparable to the idea of a fictitious commodities, and historically such perversions of nature are normalized during a short albeit pivotal period of time in which an affluent few who stand to gain seek to inculcate the government, courts, and public with the idea that being allowed to lay claim to what you didn't earn is some mark of an advanced proprietary society. We now are experiencing another pivotal time period such as this, and the standard we set will define America for decades – centuries even – to come.

Today we are witnessing the rise of a new form of commodity; the monetization , trademarking , and control of the ways in which humans are able to communicate with one another and to engage in political process – democracy. If the government remains bashful about acknowledging that democracy is not a market or of at least regulating this new

market then it will instead be subjected to human exploitation – the kind which led the founding fathers to acknowledge that a true [unregulated] democracy can tend to the most tyrannical form of government.

In closing I bring up one final point of alarm as it pertains to racial equity. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Disqus, a significant number of news media, much of Hollywood, and even the aforementioned Monsanto corporation have all come under the control of representatives of less than 1% of the population (Jews). Please do not take this as some neo-nazi rhetoric as it is just plain facts (and if I were to attempt to explain these facts with some conspiracy theory it would be with respect to some Jewish occult whose membership comprises an extremely minute portion of the Jews rather the entirety of a decent people). What is so eerie about this is not just the demographic spread or even the monopolistic nature which has characterized most of these entities, rather it is *what* is being monopolized – critical facets of a society are trademarked then used to bully and manipulate the public. Starbucks is yet another; while not necessarily a means of public discourse, it has become in many neighborhoods across America the de facto community center – a shared community space where culture is shared (or not shared) and social norms are inculcated into the public. It is in this case community space itself which has been transformed into a commodity.

It is bad enough that our sense of community, our ability to communicate with one another and to engage in political process, and our ability to plant food on the land that was given to all of us (without being put out of business or having a representative of Monsanto spy on you to check that you are re-using their seeds in a fashion that is in violation of the patent) have all been so perverted by ‘free market capitalism’ which has reduced them to being treated as [fictitious] commodities, but for them to be trademarked as intellectual property, then to allow the resulting outcome to remain so unregulated - these are ingredients for societal catastrophe.