

Silicon Valley's Futile Search for Utopia Via the sick perverted Perfect Algorithm



BY [DAVID SOLWAY](#)

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Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg arrives on Capitol Hill in Washington, Monday, April 9, 2018, to meet with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)



I find myself thinking quite a bit about algorithms these days. The word itself derives from the Latinized name of the Persian scholar [Mohammed ibn-Musa al-Khwarizmi](#), reputedly the inventor of algebra, who flourished during the Abbasid Caliphate in ninth-century Baghdad. 1200 years later with the advent of the computer, the age of programming and machine-learning dawned, refining and applying al-Kwarizmi's [scheme of numeration](#) into conceptual regions he could never have imagined. According to the standard definition, an algorithm is a set of rules determining the nature and order of computer calculations, the major component of search engines that canvass data bases cued by key words.

In [The Master Algorithm](#), Pedro Domingos writes: "A programmer—someone who creates algorithms and codes them up -- is a minor god, creating universes at will. You could even say that the God of Genesis himself is a programmer." The serpent in Algorithm Eden is complexity -- of space, time and human limitation -- creating a world that grows "increasingly fragile." Data is turned into information and information is transformed into knowledge.

But the situation grows increasingly tangled when we realize that algorithms can reflect a programmer's ignorance or prejudice or explicit design, and that algorithms can also learn to rewrite themselves, that is, they can also be self-programming, introducing a degree of uncertainty into the original parameters. Knowledge may be skewed, infected by error, and even prey to delusions -- a tree whose fruit should not be plucked and eaten.

Shock: Facebook Is Tracking You Even If You're Not on Facebook

Similarly, Frank Pasquale in *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Money and Information* alerts us to the troubling fact that algorithms, often opaque to their own programmers, can serve to reinforce social taboos, prejudices and prior assumptions which reflect the unconscious attitudes of the programmers. But these attitudes may also be quite conscious, introducing a propagandistic element into the algorithm. Pasquale writes: "The proprietary algorithms... are immune from scrutiny," rendering us vulnerable to surveillance, censorship, and coercion masking as persuasion, and so "undermining the openness of our society." He points out that mining data from social media in the hunt for potential malefactors "comes with a high risk of false positives." We should be aware, too, that it comes with a growing certainty of false negatives. Indeed, given the monopolistic power of the major social media networks, practically all promoting progressivist memes and left-wing politics, such contamination is inevitable.

The principal social networks -- Facebook, Google, Twitter, YouTube, Patreon, etc. -- all rely on secret algorithms derived from human emotional and ideological input. As Jim Treacher [writes](#) at PJ Media, "Tech companies are notorious for their liberal culture. ... Worse, tech companies like Facebook, Google, Amazon, and Twitter have relied on the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a far-left smear factory that brands Conservative and Christian organizations 'hate groups.'" Clearly, these networks are not simply digital [common carriers](#) but a species of political cabal.

Niall Ferguson's study of network theory in his recently released *The Square and the Tower* shows us how we are often the victims of the

"discrepancy between the ideal and reality," so that in "mak[ing] the world more connected" -- Facebook's mission statement -- these networks may actually have made the world more susceptible to manipulation. As noted, they filter out content deemed "hateful" -- that is, unpalatable to the controllers, who routinely [censor posts and messages](#) of a conservative stripe on the excuse that they "look like spam" or constitute "hate speech" -- and strive to foster "community governance" on a global scale, which is to say, mass control from the top down. In effect, these algorithmic conglomerates have become both the sign and the driver, as Ferguson says, of a world "falling apart."

In my wackier moments, I like to fantasize that the confusion and thought-programming from which we suffer in the contemporary West is the product of a jihadist conspiracy, orchestrated by a Muslim mastermind named Mohammed al-Gorithm, who has convinced us that Islam is a religion of peace and that those who object are guilty of Islamophobia. Or that a nefarious character whose real name is Al-Gorithm has managed to convince us that the globe is incinerating due to exponential carbon buildup. Of course, the databases relied upon here are subject to prior engineering, the information extracted is corrupted, and the knowledge acquired is filled with error about the world we live in.

On a more serious plane, we need to recognize that our beliefs and actions are increasingly predicated on falsehood. Islam is peaceful, the planet is growing warmer, the seas are rising and polar bears are on the verge of extinction. Ultimately, taking such calculations to their logical extreme, we can assert that gender is a social construction -- there are 32 or more sexual morphisms with which we can identify -- or that our universities are places of tolerance and free debate or that masculinity is toxic or that multicultural diversity makes us stronger or that socialism is the solution to all our political and economic problems. We create an alternate reality with no relation to actual social, political and physical reality which, to quote the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in the [Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#), is "*all that is the case*."

Rather, the algorithms currently operating in the social and political spheres have us chiefly believing and promoting *all that is not the case*. They have us behaving in ways that must infallibly lead to our

demise as rational beings as we become human bots seeking an ever more fraudulent epistemology.

The German philosopher Hans Vaihinger, in his book *The Philosophy of 'As If'* (*Die Philosophie des Als Ob*), argued that “fictions” that are functionally serviceable, imaginary constructs that work and are “fruitful,” may be regarded as true. Thus we might say there exists an algorithm unlike any of the others, a super algorithm that is, so to speak, plugged into the historical computer. Those who are programming us toward the abyss are not themselves responsible for the catastrophe that awaits. The progs, the feminists, the SJWs, the fetid creatures of the Swamp and the Deep State, a “liberation theologian” **anti-pope**, media moguls and university officials, billionaire socialists roiling the masses -- they are merely elves and puppets, doing the bidding of the Master Programmer. They are the Great Manipulator’s unwitting retainers, busy processing their culturally inspired subroutines that serve a supervening purpose, unaware they are involved in an eschatological mission.

Naturally, they are preoccupied by their own personal, local and temporal concerns, but it is “as if” they are themselves programmed by the super algorithm to bring the civilization of which they are a part to its terminal moment. They do not provide us with **algorithms to live by**, as Brian Christian and Tom Griffiths suggest in their book of that title, algorithms that “people can borrow for their own lives [to] better understand the errors that we make.” These are algorithms to die by.

Bombshell Report: Wait Until You See How Many Google Employees Donated to Democrats

As for the Master Programmer whose super algorithm is ineluctable, none can say who or what it is, except to posit a quasi-mystical presence, one of whose names is Entropy, and whose algorithm governs the decline and death of civilizations like ours. Barring Divine intervention, there is no way around this algorithm. There is nothing we can do about it. The rules and commands are fixed. The ostensible villains delivering our ruin are merely its little helpers, nothing more.

Just as human beings are unavoidably prone to cellular programming, so civilizations are subject to the gradual silencing and shutting down of their historical trajectories. Their accounts are eventually blocked. I have no antidote to suggest that can frustrate the algorithmic teleology at work. All we can do is struggle episodically against the Master Programmer's baneful deputies, if only to defer the inevitable. It's better to go down tomorrow than today.

26 Comments

PJ Media

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FeralCat • 21 hours ago

Decades ago it was "Seig Heil Hitler!". Now it's "Seig Heil Algorithm!".

Just going to show, "the more things change, the more they stay the same".

BTW, if one calls censorship an "algorithm" or a "banana", it's still censorship.

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Special Guest Star • 21 hours ago

There's no algorithm. It's people sitting at monitors beating on conservatives by hand.

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Стойкий мужик Special Guest Star • 15 hours ago



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Ann Arbor Special Guest Star • 2 hours ago

The perfect algorithm is the "while loop".

- 1) It is simple enough to understand to be maintained by all levels
- 2) the preamble is to define and set of conditions to a known state, which requires understanding, foresight, implementation, and a semblance of validation
- 3) The body is the more extensible to allow iteration, progression, regression, or simply performing work
- 4) The terminating test condition, like the preamble, requires enough foresight to "know what 'finished' looks like", to allow continuing indefinitely, and to allow terminating early when warranted.

Sorry if you were looking for a more complex "perfect algorithm". The world is not very difficult for a programmer. (but end users are!)

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Barefoot Soul • 20 hours ago

They're blaming HAL for taking over.

Not buying it, boys,...

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theBuckWheat • 19 hours ago

'Perfect Algorithm' is just another way of expressing the secular Utopia that many godless (that is to say, "secular") people have sought. This started with Plato and continues today. No matter what the details of the means, the end is always the same: to not only create Utopia, to do so while successfully rejecting God or His Law.

The Gnostic vision is that humans were a multitude of points of light in heaven that were cast down to earth, when humanity is able to achieve sufficient knowledge, it can be restored to their rightful place in heaven. This vision goes back to the Babylonian Mystery Religion of thousands of years ago.

R.T. Allen said that Marx took the Hegel narrative of this vision and made it scientific and secular. but the goal was still the same. To create Utopia.

"The more we come to know about the gnosis of antiquity, the more it becomes certain that modern movements of thought, such as progressivism, positivism, Hegelianism, and Marxism, are variants of gnosticism."

-- Eric Voegelin, Science Politics and Gnosticism, Two Essays, 1968.

See also:

Karl Marx: Communist as Religious Eschatologist by Murray N. Rothbard

<http://mises.org/daily/3769>

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theBuckWheat theBuckWheat • 19 hours ago

The liberal aim is thus clear. In order to transform the human condition, which is his deepest aim, the liberal seeks to make the political order fully dependent upon a transformed people. To achieve the transformation, he seeks the right kind of constitutional institutions to produce the right kind of party to produce the right kind of majority. At the very center of liberalism there is the theory of the truly democratic party—unified and coherent and thus capable of summoning up from the unformed mass the majority acquiescence in the liberal goals that, the liberal believes, is the natural inclination of the true majority. To such a majority, the Constitution with its “auxiliary precautions” does indeed obstruct the way.

-- Martin Diamond

NB: "liberal" => now "progressive"

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generalisimo theBuckWheat • 19 minutes ago

Kuhn and Jordan Peterson agree with you here. Also, I love your citation from Mises/Rothbard. I've become enthralled with the idea that Peterson's psychology has arrived at Mises's Action axiom independently, lending epistemological support to a method chided by empiricists as "mysticism" for the nature of the apriori deduction.

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generalisimo theBuckWheat • 17 minutes ago

followed, anyone who cites Rothbard needs to be followed ;)

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Стойкий мужик • 15 hours ago

Mark apparently has never read Asimov nor understood HAL's conflicted orders in Clarke's **2001 A Space Odyssey**.

There is no perfect algorithm. This is what has the AI people fantasizing about human-emulating robots. God gave us minds and souls to help us make decisions beyond that of the average creatures. But socialists condemn that notion as they condemn practicality over FEELZ®.*

*The irony being that once socialism is fully in-place, FEELZ® drop off the radar and the elites are forced to deal in practicalities when the money is in short supply and they need their villas, porters and fine clothes/meals, etc.

This arrogance has been written about again and again by a great many exemplars of science-fiction. Seeing it in real-time is somewhat nauseating.

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Chris Longski • 2 hours ago

As of yet there is no 'vertical' search engine for the Internet. Let the Algorithmic Gods solve that one first...

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Farley Moab • 2 hours ago

Same algorithm that couldn't distinguish blacks from gorillas.

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GFTW Farley Moab • an hour ago

Such an algorithm could have saved Harambe's life.

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Logic4all • an hour ago

They're trying to find an algorithm that bans non-socialist views but has some sort of logic that doesn't appear to ban non-socialist views? Good luck finding a logical reason socialists' views should be the only ones allowed.

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Tom Graham • an hour ago

Check out this video on algorithms at Google



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GFTW • an hour ago

Liberals live in Make Believe.

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itellu3times • 37 minutes ago

let me say this about that

Great column, with a few quibbles.

I spend a lot of time on this kind of stuff and I have yet to find a concise, sharp way to say it, but here goes. There is an issue here that goes to the start of the computer age, to the start of the modern scientific age, indeed back to the roots of Western civilization. Derrida puts his finger on Plato who found anything written as misleading, as false knowledge, because the reader might think he understands but it's not like the original, real experience portrayed. In this light anything you write, including any algorithm, is "false". HOWEVER it's clear that Plato was a crank in this, because if you do NOT write it out, then your claim to knowledge is unverifiable and you are probably deluding yourself. In that light ONLY what is written is knowledge and NOTHING ELSE is.

If you write it, you can sell copies all over town. That's basically what we know about algorithms, you can sell it in books, on t-shirts, and now in software and as services in the cloud. WRITING sells. Algorithms are

[see more](#)

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generalisimo itellu3times • 30 minutes ago

Have you read Dr. Jordan Peterson psychological theory on how belief functions in cognition (his book "Maps of Meaning")? It seems to parse the question of certainty in knowledge that you are pondering. In short, we are limited and mortal not omniscient, so whatever reality is we cannot know of it completely. Given this we simply must assume to begin reason. Therefore, what is truly meaningful is not to have the "right" assumption per say, but to not become entrenched in them (ideologically possessed) whereby we do not re-examine our first principles when confronted with anomaly. do it no justice, go to the horse's mouth.

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itellu3times generalisimo • 24 minutes ago

generalisimo , while I have not read Peterson, you do it great justice and I only hope Peterson gets it as right as you just did! And let me add this - it is a great achievement to have an opinion! It is an existential quantum jump over having no position at all. Of course we're talking about an opinion that has some validity and some utility. Which it might, even if it's a pure guess, but surely we want to do (a lot) better than that. Because an opinion can be dangerous, too. It can mislead you and create harm to you and others. Those who think their algorithms ARE truth do not see the harm that might be - or is - caused. Sounds like everything at Facebook, Twitter, and Google, doesn't it?

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generalisimo itellu3times • 22 minutes ago

Are you familiar with praxeology (the method of Austrian economics)?

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itellu3times generalisimo • 17 minutes ago

>praxeology

Not as such, just the general idea that economics can be treated as rational behaviors, Herb Simon wrote in that tradition and links it to the roots of modern AI.
(btw, love your Mandelbrot avatar)

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Max42 • 24 minutes ago

Computer models and simulators are also designed with algorithms, which can well contain the same bias and predetermined conclusions as the creators. Those involving man-caused global warming are the most prominent examples.

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casimcea • 18 minutes ago

If you believe that computers can only do what they are programmed to do would be a hard sell to blame the algorithm instead of the programmer for any misdeeds.

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ib1netmon • 16 minutes ago

Bring on the Butlerian Jihad.

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Thomas Gerken • 16 minutes ago

Not sure I understand this article entirely, but it reminds me of a question that has been rumbling around in my head for quite some time.

It has been posited that civilizations all follow the same arc - slavery to freedom, freedom to prosperity, prosperity to apathy, and finally, apathy back to slavery. Western Civilization seems to have mostly completed this cycle. This seems to be a sort of algorithm of its own.

I hear people talking about diverting us from our path to slavery, but I wonder if this is possible. Is the election of President Trump an attempt to pull us out of our society's nosedive into serfdom, or is it just a symptom of the algorithm. I don't know.

It seems to me that, if this cycle of civilization is an algorithm, it must be a divine one, written by God. If so, then it seems to me that only divine intervention can alter it. A massive spiritual revival might be one way.

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MaxWebXperienZ • 11 minutes ago

The personality types that dominate Silicon Valley are introverts. The down side of introversion is self-assessed superiority and a propensity to create an impenetrable culture that gives itself the right to rule over all the lesser members of the species. It's similar to medicine and law, other professions dominated by introverts. Much of life's learning involves overcoming the introvert mafia because they as individuals recognize each other and value each other highly while trampling the rest of us. Want to be healthy? Don't go to your doctor, a veterinarian can tell you more about nutrition. Want to be free? Have to pay attorneys, which there is no shortage of by any means, \$300/hour. How the f%[^]k are attorneys worth that much when they are in huge oversupply?