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DART 449 – the language of the Web
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Philip Smith's '*Virtual Revolution: The great Leveling?*' (2010)

The documentary *Virtual Revolution* was originally aired in 2011, when about a quarter of the world was using the web. Its goal was to reflect on the web as well as internet, and how it came to evolve through its decades of increased mass use. A decade after first airing, even more can be said about the web, but also on the content of the limited series documentary. The first episode focusses on Tim Berners-Lee, creator of the HTML markup language, which allowed universal sharing and reading of files for the first time since the web's invention. Berners, a fierce believer that his invention should be accessed freely and universally, forever changed how society came to evaluate authority. Indeed, the documentary explains how the idea we have of authority evolved from a vertical to horizontal alignment, suddenly making everyone part of the discussion. By allowing people to connect with each other without middlemen, the internet created a libertarian and anti-establishment space that could not exist within 'real-life' political climates.

However, while Berners saw the internet as a space to build outside of the status quo, others understood it to be a great financial opportunity. Although open to all in theory, the internet quickly became a monopoly of only a handful of extremely powerful corporations. As *Virtual Revolution* mentions, "the internet is pure manifestation of how power works, [...] and how the elite work". Indeed, as the internet was decentralized and put in the hands of American private corporations, the online realm became just another space to privatize and capitalize over; a space where humans and their attention span would become commodified.

In this essence, the role of a new media artist is to subvert these mechanisms that have layered over the true meaning and goal of the web, which Lee stood by.