your analysis, ideally with respect to at least one of these:

> your students
>
> your community/family
>
> you
>
> world at large?

Re: [The Conscience of Silicon Valley](#), GQ

Jaron Lanier is often called the father of virtual reality, but he's a not the stereotypical tech bro, often found barefoot at an age of 60 now. Lanier is still heavily involved in the industry, helping Stephen Colbert and then Microsoft create a Together mode in Teams that places presenters side by side instead of in separate squares (he sometimes plays in Colbert's in-house band and collects musical instruments, like the world's largest flute). However, his passion is upholding the ideals of this country's founding, that people may pursue their own happiness, whatever that is. As well, he wants to identify all the perverse incentives that divert users from their quests.

Lanier recognized early on the dangers of social media. Cigarettes kill, but smokers remain themselves. Algorithms, however, change who people are.[1]

Lanier's parents were Jews who escaped Europe during early days of concentration camps, first to New York City and then ending up in Texas. His stock-trading mother died in a car accident when he was nine, and he and his father ended up in the desert in self-made house. Lanier went to college at 16, paying for tuition by herding goats and selling their dairy, before ending up in California designing video games.[2]

Lanier pointed out that many of the people addicted to social media platforms like Twitter are journalists, the very people who write about them. They can therefore be often willfully blind or defensive.[3]

One good outcome of the pandemic is that many people seem to be more active in figuring out how to actually talk to each other and then go outside, rather than passively receiving a feed.[4]

Many activists, like those in Arab Spring, have tried to use tools to foment change. Yet, Lanier argues those same tools can be used to repress the change. There is a hopeful exception: Black Lives Matter. Also, marketers have joined a boycott against Facebook.[5]

Lanier was struck by the "loneliness" of tech executives during recent congressional hearings. They had no defenders or allies.[6]

Lanier pointed out that the unprecedented surge in unemployment during the pandemic shutdowns closely mirrored predictions about job losses from automation.[7] He is looking into solutions, like

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1 Do our students get changed by social media? Would they even know, having grown up with social media?
2 Good for students to see how other kids grow up. Or maybe they're in similar situations.
3 I've found similar for adults and students alike, when it comes to products they love or that have enriched their lives.
4 Is that anecdotal? Is it true system-wide? Will it last?
5 But again, can't they be turned around by reactionary forces?
6 And yet, has anything been done? Do they even need allies?
7 Most computer-related jobs simply moved out of corporate offices into employees' homes. Some companies are now considering permanently closing their offices, but seemingly without a commensurate rise in pay for workers.

Universal Basic Income[8] and data dignity—the idea that people should own data about themselves. Lanier argues that most Internet systems are set up to exploit people, by harvesting their ideas and data without compensation.[9]

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8   I found Andrew Yang a typical tech bro, whose answer to every problem was UBI. That Lanier took him seriously is just scary to me.

9   Let's explore that. My students are evenly split on whether that's even a problem, as evidenced by their attitudes toward piracy. In many ways, technology makes users think might is right.