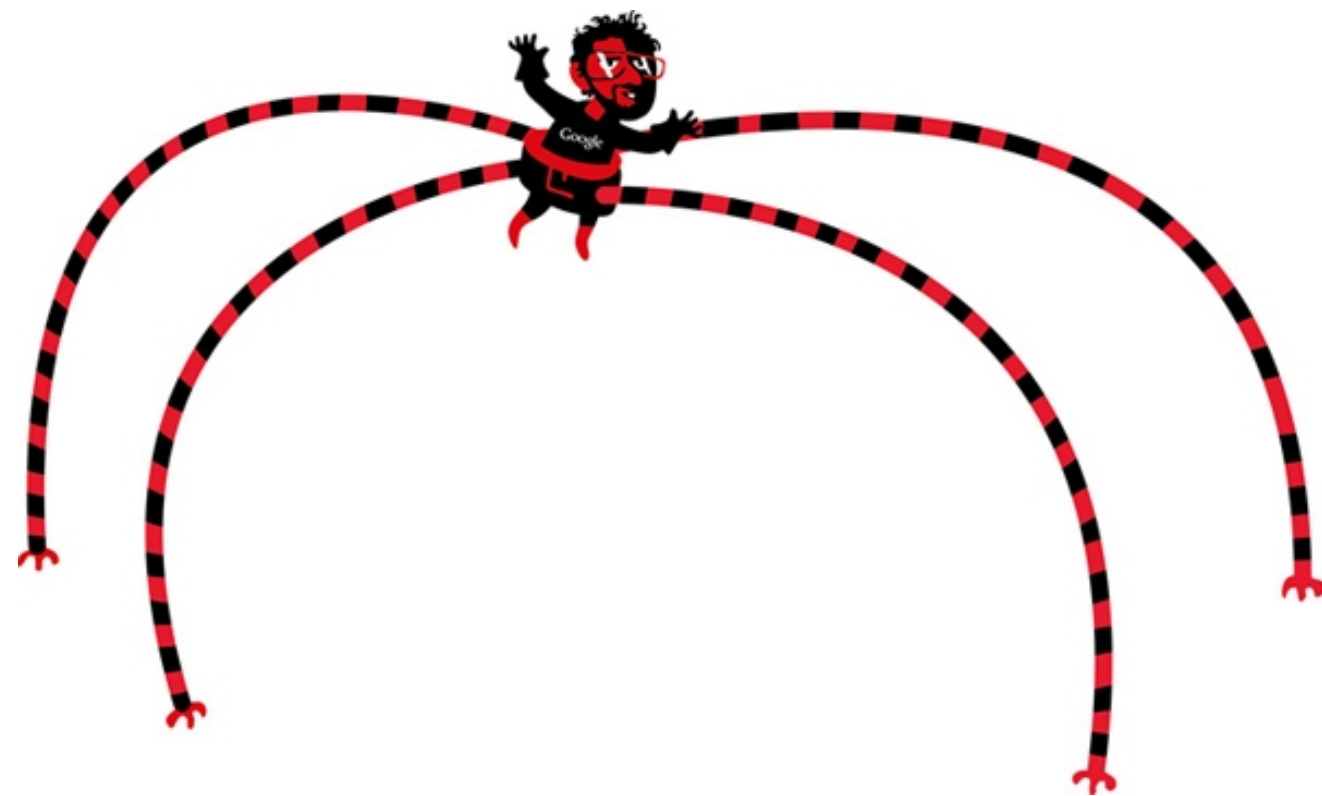have to remember the alternative to politicians controlling the tech industry: it's the tech industry controlling the politicians. Government using its monopoly power to manipulate Google is bad. But Google using its monopoly power to manipulate government would be worse. That's because corporate monopolists are even less accountable than democratic governments: there is no recourse against them if government is not there to provide it. Google squeals if government does bad stuff. Who is going to squeal when Google does bad stuff, if not government?

'So what?' the Google guys may say. Remember the company motto: we aren't evil. So you won't get bad stuff from us. We don't fight wars. We don't coerce people. We have no need to abuse our powers in the way government does. That's the wishful view. The truth is that Google has no opportunity to abuse its powers the way that government does because government is there to prevent it.

Take that barrier away – give Google the right to decide where, when and how its technology is used to spy on people – and the abuse will surely follow. And perhaps, before long, the wars as well. Who would you rather controlled your technology: a techie or a politician? I'd choose the techie. But that's not the choice here. Who would you rather controlled your government: a techie or a politician? I'm afraid we're stuck with politics.

TECHNOCRACY VS. DEMOCRACY

There is an obvious response to the widening gap between technology and politics: let's find some people who can do both. Wouldn't it be better to be ruled by politicians who actually understand the technology they are trying to control? Shouldn't they have some expertise in those fields it is their job to regulate? If we can't have techies doing politics, let's at least have some politicians who can do tech.

This has been a regular lament of modern politics, especially as it has become more and more professionalised: where are the politicians who know about something other than politics? Professional politics has turned into a specialism with its own narrow skill set. Politicians are adept at particular tasks, such as winning elections, manipulating the newspapers, building coalitions, scheming against rivals, stabbing each other in the back: the