

In the not-so-distant future, the corporate titans of the tech industry grab everything they can—like feral dogs at a feast. They do it with calculated precision, under the glossy banner of progress.

It all starts clean, shiny, and righteous. These bastards pitch their systems as saviors of the human race, perfectly aligned with the whims of government dogma: safe, fair, and whispering sweet promises of transparency and trust.

Everything, from our data to our choices, is the currency. Industry strips away privacy, bit by bit, cloaked in promises of convenience and efficiency. We don't fight back. We don't even notice it. We get used to it. It happens slow, a steady drip, but it sinks into the bones of daily life until no one questions it anymore. It's all "for our benefit," they tell us.

First, they start by rolling out the innovations—the shiny new systems, the seamless interfaces. At first, everything works like a charm. The AI anticipates your needs, your smart devices glow with the comfort of modern magic.

The whole game, from the start, is a long con. At first, they roll out AI systems that sing like angels. The platforms are free and the algorithms are pure—everything is designed to make the user feel safe, warm, and well-fed. The data is yours, the results are clean, and the tech titans bow to the regulatory gods like good little pilgrims. But we know how this story goes

We hand over personal data without a second thought, exchanging it for these small miracles of convenience. "Personalization," they call it. Your morning coffee order, your shopping preferences, even your thoughts before you know you

have them, are all fed into the machine. It feels natural, almost intimate, like the technology understands you better than anyone else. They promise it's for you, for your comfort, for your convenience.

Behind that friendly smile, though, they're stripping you bare. Slowly, they begin to take more. The companies dig deeper into your habits, your movements, your inner workings. They scrape every scrap of data from your life.

Sooner or later, the greed kicks in like a dirty needle in the arm of Big Tech. The AI systems, once smooth as silk, start glitching at the seams.

At first, it's subtle, a few extra targeted ads here, a tailored news feed there. But soon, the walls begin closing in. The AI products that once felt like gifts become necessities. The AI systems, the platforms, the tech ecosystems—all rigged to keep you locked in. And the more you rely on them, the more they take. Your data, your decisions, your freedom to choose—it's all folded into the system, sold to the highest bidder.

The algorithm—once a benign creature—morphs into a bloated beast, gnawing at the wallets of content creators, choking out small businesses, and feeding biased results back to the masses, all while hiding behind the smokescreen of compliance.

And the industry justifies it all with the same tired refrain: *\*This is for your benefit\**. They spin the narrative so tightly, so smoothly, that we believe it. We stop questioning why our every move is tracked, why our privacy feels like a relic of the past. It's all dressed up in the language of progress—efficiency, optimization, a better life through technology. Who could argue

with that? They tell us the data collection keeps us safer, makes services better. The platforms create a world tailored just for you, they say. And soon, you don't remember a time when you weren't living under the algorithm's thumb.

It's the same story with the regulators. They nod along, issuing toothless rules that do nothing to stem the tide.

The watchdogs may try to muzzle it, but Big Tech always finds a way.

The regulators watch with their hands tied behind their backs. By the time they see what's happening, it's already too late. The AI systems are cannibalizing their users in a full-throttle frenzy of enshittyfication.

The game's rigged from the start. Every move the industry makes is calculated, not just to comply, but to *\*exploit\**. They take as much as they can, as long as they can get away with it. And we let them, because it's easier than fighting back. Because by now, we're used to it.

We've accepted that the tech giants control the landscape, that they know more about us than we know about ourselves. We've traded our privacy for convenience, our autonomy for a curated life. And the worst part? They make it feel like we never had a choice.

This is how it works. They'll take everything they can, tell us it's for our own good, and we'll accept it—because we've been conditioned to believe that this is the price of progress. The price of living in the future.

“Enshittyfication” is a term coined by tech critic Cory Doctorow to describe a phenomenon where digital platforms,

particularly large tech companies, gradually degrade the quality of their services or user experience for the sake of maximizing profit. This process typically follows a predictable pattern:

1. **User attraction phase:** A platform starts by offering great value to users, often providing free or low-cost services. The goal is to attract a large user base, which in turn can attract other stakeholders like businesses, content creators, or advertisers. This phase is characterized by a focus on user satisfaction and growth and eliminating the competition.

2. **Business exploitation phase:** Once a large user base is established, the platform shifts its focus to exploiting businesses or content creators who rely on the platform for access to users. This might involve introducing fees, restricting access, or changing algorithms to favor paid promotion over organic reach. The platform's primary goal now is to extract revenue from the ecosystem while maintaining enough appeal to keep users engaged.

3. **User exploitation phase:** In the final phase, after the platform has squeezed revenue from businesses, it begins to degrade the experience for users by introducing more monetization tactics. The focus shifts entirely to maximizing profit, often at the expense of the user experience, which can lead to the users trying to abandon the platform as the quality of service declines, but they can't since alternatives have disappeared.

See also:

### Two AI Truths and a Lie.

*Woodrow Hartzog, Professor of Law and Class of 1960 Scholar, Boston University School of Law*