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# TECHVOLUTION: A NEW PHILOSOPHY

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(sample)

*This book is for the people in the open-source community. For the unspoken philosophy you handed down to me. For caring so unconditionally when updating Wikipedia, writing free software, and building cool new tech for us all. For showing me who the real protagonists are. You gave the best education a political guy can get. I hope I’ve learned enough to pen this book for you.*

*For the antagonists, the self-entitled delegators keeping Blockbuster—and all it stands for—alive, thanks for causing history to repeat itself yet again. I hope you learn something.*

*This is especially dedicated to the extras. Because when it’s time for you to act, I pray you pick the right side.*

“*We are really the revolutionaries in the world today—not the kids with long hair and beards who were wrecking the schools a few years ago.*”

Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, 1973.

# Prologue

I wrote this for the people on GitHub, Wikipedia, Dribbble, Udemy, Stack Overflow, Unsplash, Slack, and wherever else you open-source Jedi like to work and gather. Learning your ecosystem of digital tools was cool. Learning your philosophy was even cooler.

You’ve changed the world, even if the world doesn’t know it yet. Most people still think that retail stores, manufacturing, and education are only industries for governments or big businesses to control. Yet because of you, there are countless tools available for the people to take control of their own products, identities, and lives. It’s truly a new world, one where Cinderella can go to the ball simply because… everyone can. With your “magic” at our fingertips, the people can become their own heroes, their own fairy godmothers; they can be the creators of their own fate.

You’ve become like Jedi knights spreading peace and prosperity to the people. Look around. Note the parents educating their own children on Khan Academy, the moms learning how to repair iPads for extra cash thanks to YouTube videos, the artists selling their own products on their own websites, and the laid off workers using Rails to make their own apps. You’ve empowered regular people—who were used to being extras, hoping for a better life—to finally become protagonists making a better life.

I’m one of them. I’m a lone politics, history, and philosophy geek. Your tools enable me to research, write, and host my own work. Better yet, I can find and collaborate with world-class writers and illustrators to make that work even better. A few decades ago, I’d be in a library scribbling notes on cue cards and dreaming up ways to get a professor, publisher, or newscaster to look my way.

As a kid, I helped my family clean office buildings. My easy role was to pick up the garbage and blue bins. It was very simple. Years later, when working at a big office, the cleaners were short-staffed for a few weeks. Management spent hours meeting about and discussing the “garbage problem” instead of just wrapping it up (pun intended) and moving on.

That’s the Sith way. To be gatekeepers controlling the work and fates of other people. Gatekeepers love to hold tickets and manage who’ll “get access” to things like news services, retail stores, higher education, and legal representation. This is an entire class of middlemen, consultants, managers, and executives whose skill isn’t nursing, teaching, and (definitely not) cleaning, but delegating “down”—all while looking to “rise up” a corporate hierarchy whose power comes from controlling the gates of old technology.

Comparing this world to the open-source ecosystem of GitHub, Slack and so forth is a contrast between night and day. Open-source is a community coming together to make and improve technology. Leaders lead from the front with recognized expertise. Since their products are free for anyone to use however desired, there’s no gate to “keep.” The open-source community’s members are peers who manage each other. There are no products, copyrights, or patents to fight over. In this community, all are welcome; the more the merrier, regardless of whether you’re a genius programmer committing great code or an average user providing thoughtful feedback. Since the final product is shared, everyone has incentive to defer to the better answer. Installing gates and walls around the community contradicts the very future the community is trying to build.

This is not to say that open-source communities are perfect. Some people are very rude, projects die off, politics get involved, and so forth. In *The Innovators*, author Walker Isaacson explains how the trifecta of academia, corporations, and militaries were optimal for creating the digital revolution. Likewise, it was government, enterprise, and open-source organizing structures that worked to keep that revolution going. Open-source is only a piece of the puzzle.

That said, it’s the vital piece.

In fact, the open-source movement is the next step in human. Because nobody owns it, society’s natural problem solvers are safe from natural delegators who love to make gates. With open-source problem solvers can always work to bring new and better tools to the people. Whether a simple rotating list of people to take out the garbage, or advanced software to give people internet streaming, as when a few hackers fought off Darth Blockbuster when he tried to keep us all buying and borrowing his DVDs.

Thus, calling open-source contributors Jedi’s isn’t a fantasy. They are the modern minutemen. The guardians of the people’s interest and betterment, who should be self-sufficient and very well-funded. But you are not. So many of you in the open-source community who write articles, answer forum questions, and make programs do it as a hobby, not a job. Even your leading organizations need donations to stay afloat. Meanwhile, old tools such as universities, television broadcasters, and insurance companies get massive subsidies, tax credits, and bailouts.

This huge difference in how the old and new tools and tool-wielders are treated signifies our society’s great divide. Open-source heroes work against the odds to topple the gates that antagonists are paid to maintain.

Once upon a time, I only wanted to learn about the open-source fight. Now I want to empower its protagonists. Telecommuting, the right to repair, home power generation, and real internet privacy are just the tip of the iceberg; a better world is waiting once the open-source community has the resources to not only make new tools but to replace old tools, too. You must get political and get mad. Learn to be selfish because today’s battle is a tale as old as time, and as classic as the most universally told stories. Good versus Evil. New versus old tool. Protagonists versus antagonists. Jedi versus Sith.

The most dangerous thing right now is ignorance. People don’t know about you or the future you’re fighting for. They’re stuck on “red/blue” politics when we should have left those outdated philosophies far behind us. The leaders tout their horns, and the believers march and yell like it’s Woodstock in 1969, because they never want to leave that time period. That old-school technology of single detached homes, 9-5 jobs, gas cars, and nightly news is their comfort zone. It’s no wonder regular people have suffered with outsourcing, micro-managing, and climate change when the political stage is fighting to keep the past alive. The potential of digital tools is as lost to our politics, as books, guns, and telescopes were to Darth King.

You in the open-source community don’t march for change. Your digital tools force it. Granted, it’s hard to explain why. We don’t yet understand how our “cyborgology” changes us as we pick up a radio, a smartphone, or a ticket to Mars. That’s why I was so fascinated by your unspoken philosophy. You reject the conventional wisdom to become well-paid gatekeepers because you understand better than anyone the “majic” of new digital tools and thus you want to distribute digital tools to the hands of the people feeling the pain of inaction. You know there’s nobody better placed to help humanity evolve past our problems.

I worked hard to turn your glorious mindset into a new political philosophy which I call Techvolution. It’s custom-made for open-source and digital tools. It works like a web framework for political philosophy. It saves people from reading obscure political and economic theories and cuts through political jargon with terms like “Darth Blockbuster,” the “Death Star Rulebook,” and “Jedi vs. Sith” to make it easier for people to relate to their society and to ask themselves the biggest political question of our time.

It’s not the worn-out and drab “Am I for red or blue politics?” Instead, it’s something far more powerful and relevant: “Am I going to step up and use digital tools to transform and vastly improve my society’s way of life?”

The people don’t see this question. They’re too distracted by the “dark majic show” of fantasy football stats, fancy car commercials, and bombastic political rhetoric to realize how empowered they are to change society without waiting for anyone’s approval. Our job is to make the people look up from Main Street and realize their power and their respective responsibility.

Our opportunity comes when a regular person has yet another problem with their tax form, car radiator, asphalt shingles, or the countless other tools the antagonists keep alive. This is when the pain of living on the frontline makes regular people search for a better way to live. And this moment is where I want to contribute back to the open-source community. This is where we can swell our ranks by educating others:

That sucks. You don’t have to live like this. Waiting on hold, getting caught by the fine print, driving through hellish traffic to get to work every day only to be micro-managed by eight different bosses. All that’s bullshit. We can fight back. My friends and I invent new tools so we can live a simpler, fairer, healthier, greener, happier life. And we need your help… because the only thing holding us back is our own ruling philosophy.

And when the regular person asks what the heck you’re talking about, you can tell them to read about Techvolution. Tell them it’s a new political philosophy to help the world realize how you’ve empowered workers, creators, and contributors—basically, the people who are willing to step up, and not be left behind in a world the open-source movement has only begun to change.

## Busting the Gates

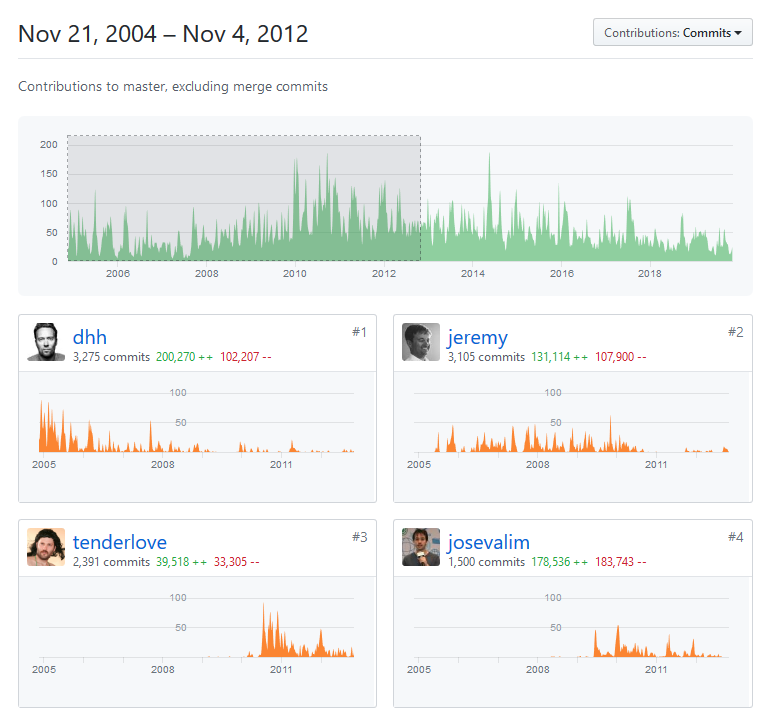
Currently, when you phone a call center, everything is recorded. The company has access to the recording; you don’t. Likewise, when the employee clocks in and out of the office, that, too, is recorded. Management automatically has access to these timesheets; the employee doesn’t.

Access to things like phone recordings and timesheets are barriers or “gates.” They give power to one person over another. Customers can’t confirm what was agreed to during their last phone call, and employees can be grilled for a long lunch, yet unpaid overtime is easily forgotten by the same manager.

A lopsided balance of power allows customers and employees to be taken advantage of.

The greatness of the open-source community is threefold. First, it sets a great example because it entrusts everyone with all information, because why should people working together hold information back from each other. Second, it recognizes every contribution helps, so open-source lets bust open gates to let more people in. And third, since open-source technology is owned by *the people*, we can empower ourselves with tools that we once wrongly thought (or, in most cases, continue to think) only big companies are “allowed” to have, such as phone transcriptions and timesheets.

Busting open these gates is what advances the world. It equalizes the balance of power and fosters collaboration. We have the technology to do this now. We just need the people to participate and demand it.

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[*This a GitHub “repo,”*](https://github.com/rails/rails/graphs/contributors) *where the computer code that helps run apps like Basecamp, Airbnb and Shopify is stored. Programmers, from elite to novice, individually ask questions, find bugs, contribute their work and it comes together via GitHub’s software with minimal supervision. The process works similarly to Wikipedia. It’s very organized; even with over 5,000 contributors over 15 years, you can see who has done what and when. This software is priceless and is yours to use however you want. Get familiar with how open-source works. It’s a tell-tale sign for the openness, responsibility, and immense value of future work cultures because digital tools make worker-to-worker collaboration so easy, effective, and powerful it’s hard to compete with. And the best part, no garbage meetings or delegators are needed.*

# ACT ONE

## The Beginning

It all started with a door in my face. And then, actually, a few more. I was either being too stubborn or too hopeful. Either way, I eventually learned my lesson. I was selling a web app that those in upper management were never going to buy.

Before you wonder, it wasn’t a matter of price, because there was no price. It wasn’t a question of competition. None of that either. And I can promise it worked, because I had spent years in a cubicle doing the frontline job it serviced. After years of working on political and economic theory, I’d written (another) book about some untapped possibilities of new tech like smartphone apps, bio-monitors, and bitcoin. I only made this simple web app (using open-source technologies) to validate some of my ideas.

I was right to. They were good ideas. I figured out how to solve a problem—and save 100 million dollars, 300,000 hours of worker productivity, and even dozens of lives—all for virtually no cost. Why wouldn’t I want to tell people about the theory behind it?

Sadly, I was a fool. I didn’t know it at the time, but I wasn’t even knocking on doors. I was knocking on gates. See, I wasn’t talking to the frontline workers suffering through the problem I’d solved, but to the bureaucrats, lawyers, managers, and executives who were paid to “meet and discuss” about dealing with such garbage. I went against all they stood for; solving their problems was asking them to fire themselves. Worse, I was asking them to invalidate their identity return to being equal workers on the frontline, and no longer be “superiors”. This scenario is why they put up gates to shut out, not promote, innovation.

In fact, they never said *no* to me. *No* needs a reason. Instead, they simply said it was against the rules to say yes. You know—those obscure rules, hidden inside regulations and contracts. They believed in the rules, especially the one against frontline workers taking out their own garbage, so to speak.

Like anyone, I knew bringing new products to market is hard. I knew sales is difficult. I even knew antagonists exist. But I didn’t realize how insulted they felt by me in their self-righteous excuses. They really believed their own fairy tales of being superior.

I don’t want to talk about my experience too much; it’s just one example in a roiling sea of others. All that’s important is this: there was a huge problem costing millions of ordinary consumer dollars, weeks of workers’ time (lots of it unpaid overtime), and maybe even your life—and it was against the rules to solve it. Even if I had won this battle, it would be a tiny victory.

So instead, I’m going to talk about winning the war.

That’s why I decided to contribute back to the open-source community. Despite already having the technology to transform our way of life, gates remain intact all over the place to protect a pre-digital “Woodstock of 1969” way of life. To move past it, the people need a new ruling philosophy… one that says improving their society is the only rule that matters.

## The Power of Stories

Do you love stories? I think it’s a safe bet to say that you do. Who doesn’t? They entertain us after a hard day of work, bring us together to share our joys, and (my favorite) open our minds to the different rules and philosophies of foreign cities, mythical worlds, and galaxies far, far away.

Stories are so powerful because they’re so simple. Protagonists are good because they want to fix a problem. Antagonists are bad because they don’t. Stories aren’t debates. We take the protagonist’s side. Thus, Romeo and Juliet’s love is beautiful and worth dying for, while their families’ feud is ignorant and stupid. Luke Skywalker’s rebellion is righteous and worth fighting for, while Darth Vader’s empire is wicked and should be destroyed.

Our moral clarity about a problem turns the protagonists into our heroes and the antagonists into our villains. We thus follow their story with strong emotions, which burst out at the climax as we discover who wins.

Our hero fights hard to defeat the story’s problem, but his superior morality, justice, and heroism aren’t enough. He’s often too weak or unskilled, and the villain beats him bloody. On the verge of failure, the hero needs to find something that’ll turn the tide in his favor. He seeks, sees, and reaches for his salvation: a tool or a weapon, whether it’s a gun, magic book, or lightsaber.

Will our hero reach it first, or will the enemy? We in the audience, like extras in the story, hold our breath because the story’s society is not controlled by desires, opinions, or rules, but by which character holds the tools. The wielder is the victor. The victor writes the rules. It’s a lesson that we the people need to learn for ourselves.

## A New Empowering Philosophy Called Techvolution

The rules surround us every day. We think they control us. They don’t. I’ll show you why.

Talk to any political junkie, no matter when, and they’ll say there’s a big election coming up. They’ll say something like “if the red team wins this one, then education, healthcare, infrastructure, and everything else will go to shit.” What he means is elections decide the rule makers, and that blue rules are good while red rules are evil.

If you buy it—and most of us have at some point—you watch blue cable news, read blue blogs, listen to blue talk radio. You fill your head with blue’s philosophy. Soon enough, your car has blue bumper stickers, and you’re waving blue bristol boards while screaming blue chants at rallies, marches, and protests. You feel like a hero! You’re fighting against the evil red philosophy! Or, if you got sucked in by a red supporter, evil blue philosophy!

Let me ask you this: if you’re a regular middle-class person and you ignored the election, how much would you bet that you would know who won just by continuing to live your life?

When Team Blue wins, does traffic suddenly disappear? When Team Red wins, does everyone suddenly eat healthy? Do you breathe fresher air or see fitter neighbors? Do your real-life problems get solved when one color’s philosophy writes the rules?

If you think regulations, laws, and marches change the world, and if you’re dead-set on the red vs. blue storyline because you *know* it decides the future of our society, you can stop reading now. There’s lots of blogs, shows, and books waiting to sing to their choir, telling you to fight the enemy until you’re literally blue in the face.

If you don’t like the choir, or you’re starting to realize the “other side” consists of workers like you who are a part of the same struggling middle class, you’d probably like to keep reading. Red and blue philosophies may consider you an extra, who’s only supposed to read the opinions of columnists, listen to pundits, and vote every few years. I wrote this book to empower you and become a force in politics and improve your own life.

The first lesson to realize is whichever color wins an election this year or the next and re-writes the rules, regular people will still pay taxes, have a huge mortgage, waste hours in traffic, pay increasing energy bills, sleep less than they’re supposed to, buy unhealthy food, watch climate change, overpay for questionable education, get confused by their health insurance, endure customer abuse, work unpaid overtime, get micro-managed by an increasing number of managers, be told by ignorant consultants how to do their work, and hope their job (which they likely hate) isn’t downsized or outsourced.

Under blue or red rules, the struggling middle-class lifestyle stays the same, because the tools with which we live our lives—like suburban homes, gas cars, call centers, centralized power stations, paper-based tax forms, mass-produced unhealthy food, movie remakes and sequels, occasional doctor check-ups, television for entertainment, an insatiable education industry, company-controlled work timesheets, and everything else in the pre-digital Woodstock era which built suburban America and Canada—all stay the same.

The rules, no matter the color, don’t control the fate of middle-class people. Our tools determine our way of life. Nothing changes or can change between red and blue, because neither’s philosophy—from conservatism to progressivism, capitalism to Marxism—is about putting new tools into the people’s hands. For the middle class to empower itself, we all must realize what’s really going to change if we don’t add more options to our toolboxes?

It’s not our politicians’ fault. The philosophies they follow were created when we only had a few tools at hand. Red/blue philosophical fathers like Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx never had running water, listened to music on the radio, used the internet, made a phone call, opened a fridge, took penicillin, knew about electricity, started a motor, had GPS, learned about evolution, or typed on a keyboard.

Instead, our red/blue philosophical fathers had mud roads, thatched roofs, and abacus calculators. Doctors of their time prescribed blood-sucking leeches as a medical cure. Being hungry and sick, cold and ignorant was a daily way of life. Red/blue philosophers dreamed of improving this primitive world with better tools. And, truth be told, they did! Our ancestors used their dreamy philosophies to unite and build the first rudimentary steam engines, sanitation systems, science labs, broadcast televisions, and computers the size of rooms.

During this massive industrialization era, the people needed to be extras, regulated and managed inside simplistic color-coded parties; someone needed to be on the factory floors and filling the desk jobs using primitive tools to make much better ones. To their credit, the blue and red philosophies at least gave extras a voice in how our tools’ factories, regulations, and profits were controlled.

Today, however, we live inside the world old philosophies dreamed to make. The world of mud roads, wood housing, lantern night lights, telegraph communications, horse and carriage transportation, is no more. We’ve grown a huge ecosystem of cities, factories, offices, and layers of infrastructure. Mass industrialization is thus over. It’s time to de-industrialize, rethink our society’s priorities, and revamp our rulebook as we free the extras using the digital tools they worked so hard to create.

There are many wonderfully powerful digital tools waiting for our fingertips to grip to transform our way of life. The iPhones, Tesla Solar Roofs, Lyft, WhatsApp, Kickstarter, YouTube, 23 and Me, Snapmaker, Khan Academy, Ruby on Rails, HoloLens, Basecamp, Nano Membrane Toilets, Vimeo, artificial intelligence, SquareSpace, Onnit, Airbnb, and Firefox and so many others are all so incredibly versatile, influential, and easy to make that they liberate individuals because they’re customizable to fit every person’s individual needs, enabling each of us to work far more efficiently and independently at home and at work. Thus, we don’t need to fight to control our tools any longer; instead, the fight must be to spread them. Sharing doesn’t come naturally to us, however, because we’re used to the rules of old philosophies which were based on creating and competing over tools.

I’m not talking about an idealist, imaginary world envisioned from storybooks. This place of sharing tools exists. We’re already living in its midst. Wikipedia, YouTube, Quora, Stack Overflow, VS Code, Firefox, USB Implementers Forum, GitHub, LibreOffice, Linux, and Chrome are only a few examples of the wonderful world of cooperation working today. It’s called the open-source community because software and ideas are “openly shared” to help create new tools. Millions of people—creators and contributors, designers and coders—who don’t care about a person’s title but only how well he or she solves problems, are already working and living inside a fundamentally new story that’s responsible for our awesome online world.

These people have changed our reality. They are strongly bent on solving real-world problems with technology. They hate the “busy work” of aimless marketing meetings, useless PowerPoint presentations about the “garbage problem,” and confinements within outdated technology because “that’s what the boss knows.” My goal is to help rid our society of old philosophies that hold back the vision of these creators and contributors. My mission is to let you protagonists prosper with the mass support and appreciation of the middle-class.

People often say we’re addicted to our phones. We aren’t. Checking news feeds, downloading ping-pong games, and taking endless photos are the acts of regular people learning what their new tools can do. Our ancestors did the same the last time they were extras, learning about printed books, telescopes, and muskets. Those were simply addictive toys until new philosophies turned them into lightsabers. Despite the rules, these new tools empowered people to read unknown history, see the universe for themselves, and revolt against royalty as the new tools and new philosophies opened the gates to the ball.

Just so, we can stop using our tools as toys and start wielding them as lightsabers to fight for a better way of life. We’ve just been waiting for a new philosophy to turn them on. This energy is called Techvolution.

## The Power of Philosophies Is Either to Hold Us Back or Push Us Forward

Why must philosophies be revamped? Let me explain with a little more history. Our philosophies can only be as good as what we can prove. Of course, philosophers can debate and argue all day long about whatever they want; they aren’t on the frontline trying to make a living as a fisherman, seamstress, or welder. The people need a ruling philosophy to organize their daily lives, and for everyone to believe in a philosophy, it must make sense everyone.

Thus, when in ancient Greece Aristarchus of Samos said the Earth moved around a massive Sun nobody believed him. Instead they believed Aristotle who said the Earth stood still. A moving Sun made more sense to people, because for one, it looks like it moves, and two if the Earth moves, why can’t we see the stars move their position in the sky. The answer that they’re extremely far away is impossible to see with the eye, and nearly impossible to imagine. Thus, the average person sided with Aristotle because he made more sense.

Of course, everything changed when Galileo invented the telescope. Although followers of Aristotle didn’t want to look through out, slowly everyone else could see, and therefore believe, the Earth moves. As the telescope got better and cheaper, society’s ruling philosophy switched from the “geo-centrism” of Aristotle, to the “helio-centrism” of Aristarchus.

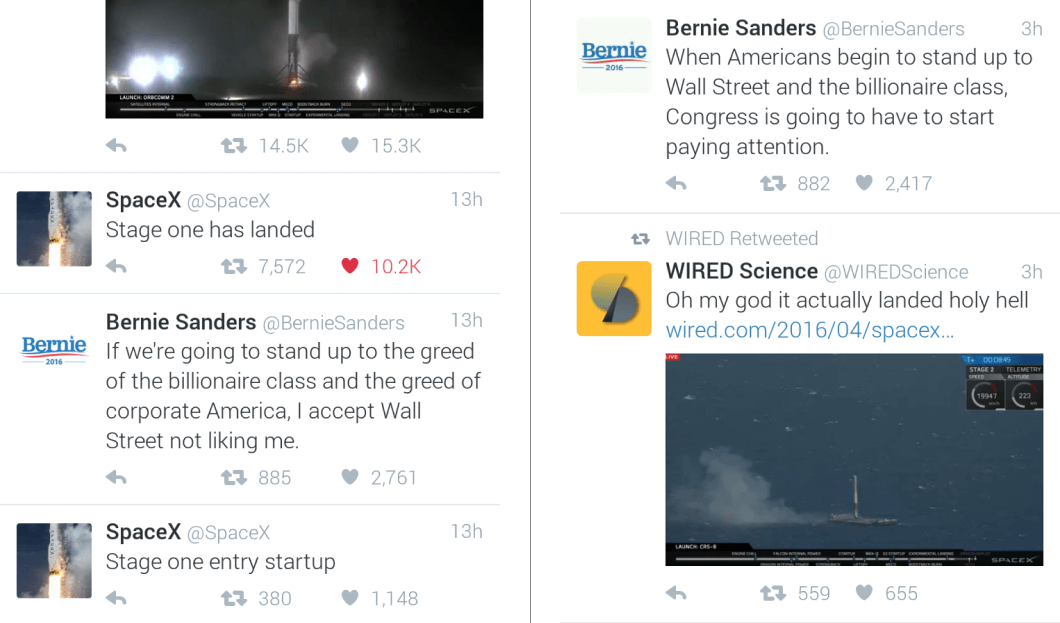
You might scoff at people who refused to accept the Earth moves. But that’s the difference new tools have on our ruling philosophy. Whatever philosophy makes sense to most people gets to be in power. Thus, we must update our philosophy to the capabilities of new tools.

In 2019, we have the same problem. For example, dreaming of space travel isn’t just cool; it’s a vital next step in humanity’s evolution. Reaching for the stars means better satellites, worldwide internet accessibility, and ensuring intelligent life doesn’t put all its eggs in our one earthly basket. Getting off the planet requires an affordable lift-off. Private companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin (funded by a few rich guys) answered the call and constructed some relatively cheap rockets. To make them cheap enough to change the course of human history, these rockets also had to be reusable. This was no small feat, especially for SpaceX; their Falcon 9 rockets were seven stories high and would have to launch into space, land back on Earth, and relaunch all over again.

SpaceX tried several times and kept failing. But on December 22nd, 2015, they did it! They succeeded in the incredible achievement of landing a rocket. This was hailed as one of humanity’s greatest milestones by SpaceX’s fans who realize the importance of advancing technology. But many people, especially politicians, didn’t care.

When you’re obsessed with old philosophies, you’re also confined within its old narratives. Today the red/blue philosophy obsesses over tax cuts, government regulations, and media soundbites because those are the tools their philosophy says to fight over. New and super-powerful technologies like SpaceX are just a novelty act that fall beyond the practitioners of old philosophies comprehension and comfort zones. Like the telescope was to the followers of Aristotle.

That’s the power of a ruling philosophy. It filters out the good and bad for people in everyday life. But we need to update the ruling philosophy when new tools change how everyday people live their live. Today, we need a new philosophy that harnesses our new innovative and powerful digital tools so we can improve life on, and beyond, Earth.



The possibilities of new technology are lost on those obsessed with the old enemies of old philosophies. Here’s one example from a personal Twitter feed from when SpaceX landed its first rocket and a fervent red/blue ideologue Bernie Sanders was ranting about old battles with “Wall St.” which while maybe valid, is a battle about government regulation, and thus an old battle. I happened to be following Sanders so I don’t mean to pick on him. There are endless other example of our political leaders not appreciating how new tools can solve our problems because they’re so busy fighting old battles with old tools instead of solving problems with new tools. The middle-class needs to stop following old philosophies of politicians and instead follow today’s protagonists in open-source who work hard to make the new tools that improve our lives. Like we followed Galileo generations ago.

## Your Place in the Struggle

Fighting to spread the availability of new tools is an archetypal human story. It happened when Galileo fought a religious institution with a telescope, George Washington fought a political establishment with a musket, and Steve Jobs fought an economic establishment with an iPod.

We can learn from this history lesson and empower you, extras and protagonists alike, with new tools and enable each of you to step up to be heroes. Note that this is not a book about how to invent tools. Amazing books like *Rework* and *Zero to One* already do that. Nor is this a book about the history of invention; *The Innovators* does that better than I could dream of doing. If you want brilliant critiques of our society, *The Incerto* and *The Great Degeneration* are waiting for you. Instead, this is a book about how new tools empower society, and how we can distribute the power of those tools to improve the lives of regular people today.

Today’s philosophies don’t mix well with modern technology. Those outdated philosophies and their supporters consider us, the middle class, as extras: people to man—and not to command—the machines of governments and businesses. Even if we watch our problems pile up at home and at work, we’re not supposed to solve them until we pass through the gatekeepers of old tools in government bureaucracies, bloated corporations, high-end lawyer offices, or endless consultant meetings. This is the equivalent of Blockbuster writing rules to keep us renting DVDs instead of saving time and money with YouTube and Netflix; basically, the opposite of evolution.

It all comes down to changing the rules of our society with an updated ruling philosophy. Techvolution is inspired by Nature. Notice that gatekeepers don’t exist in our world’s ecosystems. Evolution doesn’t have anyone telling a cheetah she’s running too fast, that the ants are too cooperative, or that a camel is too water-efficient for his own good. Lifeforms adapt as best they can to their own problems, and the winners survive. There are no middlemen and no gatekeepers, just problem solvers. And the problem solvers live on.

Human biological adaptions take so long, however, that ours have effectively stopped. We’ll never biologically evolve to fly, do advanced calculations, or breathe Martian air. Humanity continues life’s evolution with tools. We’re basically cyborgs who adapt and solve problems by upgrading our tools to the latest problem in transportation, calculation, and breathing. Hold a shovel, pen, calculator, smartphone, plane joystick, or space suit, and you’re a different cyborg each time.

Nonetheless, our problem solving is held back by old philosophies that empower gatekeepers. Middlemen in control of old tools, like garbage managers or Blockbuster, get to decide when—and if—the rest of humanity will upgrade their tools. The creation of each new tool poses a climactic and political question: who controls it? After all, whoever does is most powerful. While civilization is a struggle to overcome problems by upgrading technology and inventing new tools, it’s always been a battle to control them. The people wielding the old tool typically want to retain their power; inventors and innovators instead imagine a new society that shares it. The eternal story of civilization consists of protagonists making new tools, antagonists attacking new tools, and many extras watching the fight. Our politics are an ongoing history of technological change, with inventors and gatekeepers both reaching for the tool to make themselves the winner.

Countless stories echo the battle between using power for personal gain versus for the common good. It’s a war seemingly as old as time. One such story is *Star Wars*, which introduces us to a galaxy where the Force exists as an all-powerful energy field. Luke Skywalker’s Jedi warriors’ harness “the light side” to help others. Darth Vader’s evil Sith lords’ harness “the dark side” to help themselves and hurt all who oppose them.

In our world, we like to call our technological protagonists “trailblazers.” Like Jedi knights, they empower us cyborgs with new tools. But we don’t have a political name for the antagonists. Gatekeepers are often bad, but sometimes gates are good, and often these people are just doing their job. Thus, I collectively call the antagonists to our technological evolution *Darth Blockbuster*: people who actively and knowingly prevent human evolution for the sake of their self-interest.

Since biological adaptions and upgrades are evolution, I have termed human technological evolution *Techvolution*. This book is about inventing Techvolution, the philosophy to rewrite the rules of society and to kill Darth Blockbuster so regular people can solve problems with technological upgrades as smoothly in human society as Nature does with evolution.

To make Techvolution a reality, you, the current middle-class extra, must join the fight. Human evolution depends on you picking the right side between an old ruling philosophy filled with regulations and infotainment to keep your frontline problems alive, and this new one that says you should get involved by using digital tools to solve your own problems and become your own hero.

## Cast of Ideas and Characters

Before we go any further, I want to lay out the philosophy of Techvolution more clearly. To do so, here are a few terms that will put us all on the same page:

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**Philosophy:** The largely unspoken ideals that tell members of society what’s right and wrong, good and bad, in science, art, morals, politics, and economics. Philosophy is a civilization’s collective consciousness used by members to make rules around questions like: What is scientific truth? Who should govern? How should resources be organized?

**Ruling philosophy**: A civilization’s chosen philosophy. One that all factions agree on. Examples include the “Divine Rights of Kings,” derived from Christian theology and used in royalist Europe; “Marxist-Leninism” of the Soviet Union; and the combination of “red/blue” philosophies of the Western world today.

**Rule book**: The written and unwritten social, workplace, and legal rules that govern everyday life. The rule book is interpreted from the ruling philosophy.

**Technology**: A catchall term for things we make tools from, like concrete, lumber, nails, shingles, insulation, and bricks.

**Tool**: A catchall term for things we create with technology to solve a problem, like guns to kill bad guys, books to record and pass on knowledge, and houses to seek shelter in.

**Frontline**: The point of contact between a tool and the problem. Nurses giving vaccines, cleaners cleaning a city bus, and soldiers on the battlefield are all examples of frontline settings. People on the frontline have jobs to solve specific problems with a demonstrable skillset.

**Hierarchy**: A power structure that manages every tool’s use by society. Kings and queens with the keys to the castle, for example. Hierarchy’s grow larger the more important a tool gets. The bigger the hierarchy gets, the more detached it gets from the frontline. People in the hierarchy have titles like *prince* and *executive*, *baron* and *supervisor* to mark their position—and, in a sense, their territory and “rights”—in the power structure.

**The story of civilization**: The invention of new technology and the creation of new tools to overcome frontline problems. As new tools are adopted, they topple the hierarchies huddled around the old tools. We use tools to evolve.

**Protagonists**: People who invent, spread, and use new technology and new tools for the greater good. Usually close to the problems on the frontline, they individually struggle, but their continued self-sacrifice slowly and collectively improves life on Earth. I call them this world’s Jedi knights. We call their leaders trailblazers who often skirt the rules; Galileo, Nikola Tesla, Steve Jobs, Michael S. Hart, Bill Gates, Linus Torvalds, and Elon Musk are among their number.

**Antagonists**: People who selfishly resist new tools in order to defend their wealth, power, and prestige atop a hierarchy. Antagonists usually manage companies or institutions based on dated technologies and think that working on the frontline is beneath them. They work to control the rule book so they can hide behind it. We don’t often individually identify them. I coined the term “Darth Blockbuster” so we can.

**Extras**: Everybody in the middle of a battle between antagonists and protagonists. Because they have no direct loyalty to either side or their tools, extras can pick winners and losers. Usually extras are in the middle class; not so poor as to be desperate, but not so powerful that they want to keep the world the same. Sadly, extras don’t realize their power.

**The Death Star**: The rule book when it’s controlled by Darth Blockbuster. Today it exists inside countless regulations, contracts, laws, and manuals that prevent new tools being used by people.

**Techvolution**: A new philosophy empowering seamless human technological evolution by ridding Darth Blockbuster of his power, by empowering extras to decide when society should upgrade our tools.

**The Life Star**: A rule book based on Techvolution, as governed by human evolution and natural selection, that always serve the greater good. We’ll find out how it works throughout this book.

**Plot**: Getting the extras to step up and replace their ruling philosophy and use digital tools to transform their way of life.

## Nice to Meet You, Stargazer

You might be a quiet protagonist or bored extra, either way I’m calling you Stargazer. It’s a name in honour of a curious person who always looks for the beauty of Nature, whether it’s in the face of an infant taking her first steps, or in the endless sparkle of a clear night sky. Only the people willing to wonder about a better world are the ones willing to work for it, and the only ones I want to work with.

Whoever you are Stargazer, you need to know that the story of the journey to master human technological evolution can only begin with you. You won’t be transported to a foreign city, mythical world, or a galaxy far, far away. Right here and now, wherever you are on Earth—that’s exactly where you need to be. The time has come to change our ruling philosophy to take advantage of digital tools.

Whether you’ve realized it or not, the truth is that you have the power to undertake this job. You have to, because if you don’t, you won’t be leaving the world better than you got it. I’m not being mean to say it, we either step up now, or force our kids to struggle and suffer for our mistakes.

And who am I to tell you all this? I’m nobody special. I haven’t led the country and you haven’t seen me on the news. In my youth, I was a cleaner, drywaller, movie usher/projectionist, and die-hard ideologue. After dropping the latter bad habit, I studied political philosophy and innovation at the University of Toronto, usually while working full-time. I have a strong dislike for garbage meetings and other excuses people make-up to avoid work. I especially hate people with a superiority complex; especially when they’re in positions of authority and suck at their jobs. That’s why I learned far more about innovation by working at the frontline as a line worker, an account manager, and a claims adjuster. Making a new tool and meeting my personal Darth Blockbuster was an education unto itself.

My life’s experience began to teach me Techvolution. Watching my friends struggle with owning, maintaining, and working with the old tools—and knowing that the open-source community was meanwhile showing us a different way, a better and more liberating way—ultimately motivated me to sit at the keyboard and uncover the political philosophy that could connect the people with amazingly empowering digital tools.

But this book is not about me. It’s about you. You are in a position where you wield a diversity of incredible and cutting-edge tools, even if you’re unaware of it right now. From hospital cleaners to internet technical support, from nursing to claims adjusting, the bottom line is that you are at the frontline. Only workers on the frontline know firsthand the exact tools our society needs to keep us healthy and evolving in the story of civilization. The daily pain of work makes you uniquely powerful. Only you know what tools our society needs. A piece of knowledge Darth Blockbuster will never understand.

That’s why you Stargazer, if you want it, you are the hero of Techvolution. Don’t be surprised. Average Joes and Janes are always the heroes. Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Neo, and Cinderella were all regular people. Heroes aren’t born. They’re stargazers, dreamers, believers, and achievers. They became heroes when they step up to defeat the bad guys.

History is calling someone to step up now. Climate change, polluted oceans, individual isolation, traffic jammed roads, massive government debt, domestic terrorism, very low trust in democratic institutions and our society’s other structural problems won’t get solved unless the middle-class steps up. So why not you?

You are not alone. There are many like you, myriads of regular people on the frontlines ready to improve their lives and their society’s health. I’m like Obi-Wan Kenobi, Morpheus, or the fairy godmother; merely a guide who exists to teach you how to defeat the villains. So, the time is now, Stargazer, to leave the farm and join the rebellion.

The rebellion I speak of might be different than what automatically comes to mind. It is not a physical revolt. It does not involve rallies, marches, or protests. It’s a rebellion of the mind. Darth Blockbuster and his Death Star rule book stagnate progress and evolution by retaining old tools and preventing us from using new ones to solve frontline problems efficiently and effectively. We must defy him and destroy it. We must change our ruling philosophy. Only when Darth Blockbuster is gone will the middle class have the breathing space to flourish once again.

## Heroes Reach for the Tools

We’ve come quite a way in the story Stargazer. Let’s take a minute and answer some questions you might be thinking.

First off, a new ruling philosophy doesn’t mean you throw away all the old stuff. For example, Aristotle’s work, even his science stuff, is extremely insightful and valuable to think about. All old philosophies, red/blue among them, will always teach us many lessons that motivate our personal opinions. They just should not be our ruling philosophy because they're not created with digital tools in mind.

Techvolution is and so it helps us make the best use of digital tools. Let me explain how Techvolution can be our ruling political philosophy using martial arts.

Humanity has many martial arts: karate, kickboxing, wrestling, jiu-jitsu, judo, and boxing being among the most popular. Each of these teach specific techniques such as punching or choke-holds. Each martial art also says only their techniques are allowed during their competitions; there’s no kicking in a boxing match for example.

In the early 1990’s the martial arts community asked who would win a real fight. On reflection, it seems funny that this was an original idea, but before the 1990’s people just assumed boxers or wrestlers weren’t allowed to fight outside their rulebook. All fighters were supposed to be ideologically loyal to their techniques, even if getting their ass kicked in a real fight.

The martial art community held many “no rules” tournaments and quickly found the best martial art. The answer was none of them were the best; or all of them were. Meaning the best fighters were ones who trained all techniques and used the ones they thought would defeat their opponent based on the exact moment they were fighting them. A large toolbox of techniques and an open mind to adapt proved to be the best martial art. This realization was the start of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). And while boxers still punch the best, and kickboxers kick the best, evolution in MMA is so potent its practitioners defeat any other kind of fighter in a real fight.

Red/blue ideologies are like non-MMA martial arts. They teach a limited number of techniques and limit themselves to their own rule book. However, in their area of expertise, from monetary policy, to farm regulation, they have a huge reservoir of expertise. This single book can't replace all that knowledge. That would be laughable to suggest.

But the digital revolution broke the rule book. It gave humanity a sudden explosion of new tools. To make use of them, we need the people on the frontline--the people in the ring--to decide which tool is best for what problem. Giving people whose positions and power is based on old tools the power to decide on technological upgrades is a recipe for inaction.

You can think of Techvolution as “mixed philosophical politics”. Digital tools are so versatile and cheap they let every person by an "MMA fighter". When given the freedom to use whatever tool we think will solve your problem at the exact moment we're having it, we'll prosper because a large toolbox and an open mind to adapt is the most potent evolution. Here are some tools waiting to solve our problems today.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently funded TerraPower, a new nuclear reactor fueled by depleted uranium. Among many other reasons, because they could use supercomputers to design it, TerraPower made nuclear power much safer. Bill Gates hopes his reactors will keep the world's lights on for generations but even he can’t fund it all. Should we? I don’t know, I’m no expert. But breathing in smog and ejecting greenhouse gases into the air is hardly a good thing. Maybe we should be pushing for TerraPower. It’s something to think about.

3D printers are like inkjet printers, except they fuse small particles together and thus can print 3D objects; even ones as complicated as a violin. They’re very common in industrial prototyping, but regular people could use them to print lost buttons, toy action figures imagined by kids, or hand tools custom designed for our specific needs. The best part of 3D printers is there's no factories, cargo ships, marketing, or retail stores needed. We can just print whatever we need when needed. Sadly, most people have never even seen a 3D printer never-mind bought one of its printed products. It’s a shame we should fix quickly.

I didn’t draw any of this book’s illustrations. I’ve also never met the artists who did, or even spoken with them. Instead I used paint.net to edit photos and put them together in design software called Figma. Then I found illustrators via online marketplaces and said “please draw me this”. Within days I had the illustrations I needed. Today anyone can work with experts to write computer code, or design a 3D hand tool. All with no job interviews, management oversight, or upfront cost. Online collaboration is that easy; once we think to look for it.

These are just some of the many new digital tools waiting for the middle-class to grab hold of (and of course most of these tools use open-source technologies). Searching for digital tools is the rebellion inside your mind the world needs because real life isn’t a red/blue ideological fight any more than a street fight is a boxing match. And that’s why it should be our ruling philosophy.

In short, Techvolution says be selfish! You’re a lifeform like any other. Your job is to adapt to make your own life better. And humans adapt with tools. So, go find the tools you need to life a better life.

It just so happens controlling tools is the nature of all political battles. Whether in galaxies far far away, street fights in parking lots, wars between nations, or your own life. It’s why antagonists so often make new tools against the rules.

Nobody benefits in the long run when evolution is held back. Not even the antagonists. Yet we’ve all seen antagonists do their thing and disallow telecommuting, waste hours on garbage meetings, or ban electric cars. Until we start to call out Darth Blockbuster middle-class problems will continue to pile-up. The tools we need to prosper are out there Stargazer. To use them we must reach for them. To be sure nobody stands in our way; we must pack our bags, get on the ship, and blow up the Death Star.

# ACT TWO - BLOWING UP THE DEATH STAR

## The Magic of Evolution

Before you face Darth Blockbuster with your questions aimed to blow up his Death Star, Stargazer, you must learn what weapons you have at your disposal. The most formidable? The all-powerful energy field inside every lifeform. No, not the Force. I’m talking about evolution.

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That’s the end of the sample. Would you read the rest? It’s about another 60 pages.