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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 write this book.*

*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 industries only for governments or big businesses to control. Yet because of you, there are countless new 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.

You’ve become like Jedi knights busting down gates so the people can share in our society’s economic prosperity. 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. With your "magic" at our fingertips, you’ve empowered regular people—who are used to being extras, hoping for a better life—to start to 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 control and delegate instead of contribute. They love being gatekeepers who hold tickets and manage who’ll “get access” to things like news services, retail stores, higher education, and especially the higher “positions” of corporate employment. 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 gates to access technology.

Comparing this world to the open-source community is a contrast between night and day. Open-source works together to make, improve, and open up access to technology. Since their products are free for anyone to use however desired, there’s no gate to “keep.” With no positions, copyrights, or patents to fight over, open-source members can manage each other with leaders who lead from the front with recognized expertise. 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 too 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 evolution. Because nobody owns it, gatekeepers can’t stop society’s natural problem solvers from bringing 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 tore down Darth Blockbuster’s gate when he tried to keep us all buying and borrowing his DVDs.

Thus, calling open-source contributors Jedi’s isn’t a fantasy. You 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 between how the old and new tools are treated signifies our society’s great divide. Today 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 for the middle-class once the open-source community has the resources to not only make new tools but to replace old tools, too. You in the open-source community must get political, get mad, and learn to be selfish because today’s battle is a tale as old as time, and as classic as the most universally told stories of Good versus Evil. Open technology vs closed technology. New tool 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. Red/blue leaders tout their horns, and the believers march and yell like it’s Woodstock in 1969, because they idolize that by-gone era. The technology of single detached homes, 9-5 jobs, gas cars, advertisements, scheduled programming, 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 middle-class people feeling the pain of inaction. You know there’s nobody better placed to evolve humanity 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 combines centuries of historical and philosophical lessons, and cuts thru today’s political jargon with terms like “Darth Blockbuster,” the “Death Star Rulebook,” and “Jedi vs. Sith” so the people can 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 Woodstock era tools the gatekeepers maintain for their self-interest. This is when the pain of living on today’s 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:

Old tools suck. You don’t have to take it. You don’t have to be an extra waiting on hold, getting caught by the fine print, commuting through hellish traffic only to be micro-managed by eight different bosses. All that’s bullshit. You can take charge of your life. My friends and I invent new tools so we can live a simpler, fairer, healthier, greener, happier life. But 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 to become protagonists, and not be left behind in a world the open-source movement has only begun to change.

## Busting the Gates

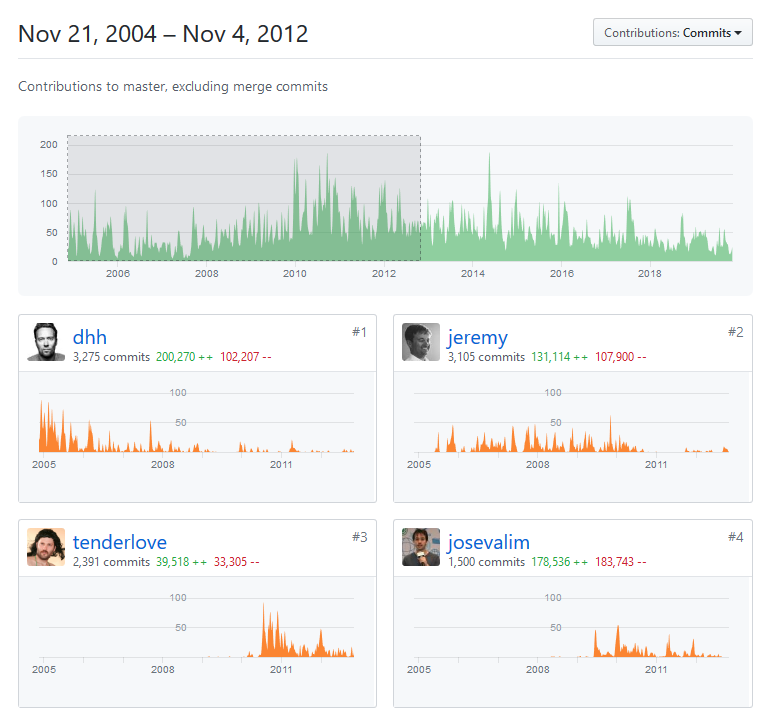
Currently, when you phone a call center, everything is recorded. The company has access to the recording; you don’t. Likewise, when the employee logs in and out of the office, that, too, is recorded. Management automatically has access to these timesheets; the employee doesn’t.

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 and encourages mistrust, bad products, and inefficient workplaces.

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 loves to 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 step up, 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 worked for. After years of thinking about political and economic theory, I’d written (another) book about some untapped possibilities of new tech like smartwatch 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 well paid to “meet, discuss, delegate” about such garbage problems. 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 as being “superiors”. 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, a cheeky “extra”, until hearing their self-righteous excuses.

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 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, antagonists maintain gates all over the place to protect the pre-digital “Woodstock of 1969” way of life because they know—even if subconsciously—they’d lose their status, positions, and identity in a digital economy. To improve our lives then, the people need a new ruling philosophy… one that says improving our 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 find out who wins.

Our hero fights hard to defeat the bad guys, 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, like 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 controlled not by desires, opinions, or rules, but by which character holds the tools. The wielder is the victor. The victor writes the rules. It’s the lesson that *we the people* need to learn for ourselves. It’s the only way we’ll stop being extras, and start being protagonists, in our own stories.

## 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 the other side, 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 exercise? 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 treat you like 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 make you a force in politics; a protagonist who controls his or her own life.

The first thing 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, 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 back then. 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 huge corporations and 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 fired stoves, lantern night lights, telegraph communications, horse and carriage transportation, is no more. We’ve grown a huge ecosystem of cities, factories, offices, telecommunications, 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 to transform our way of life. The iPhones, Tesla Solar Roofs, Lyft, WhatsApp, Kickstarter, YouTube, Snapmaker, Khan Academy, Ruby on Rails, HoloLens, Basecamp, Nano Membrane Toilets, Vimeo, Microsoft AI platform, 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—like open-source shows possible—far more efficiently, independently, collaboratively in our home and work lives.

I’m not talking about an idealist, imaginary world envisioned from storybooks. We’ve already seen how this place of worker-to-worker collaboration already exists. We’re living in its midst. Wikipedia, YouTube, Quora, Stack Overflow, VS Code, Firefox, Wikipedia, Common Voice, USB Implementers Forum, GitHub, LibreOffice, and Linux 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 helps solves the community’s problem, are already working and living inside a fundamentally new story that’s responsible for our awesome online world. There’s no reason many more industries can’t adopt this direct worker-to-worker collaboration mindset.

Once they do, more industries will share the open-source mindset. These workers 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 these protagonists prosper with the mass support, appreciation, and transformation of the middle-class to work like them.

People often say we’re all addicted to our phones. We aren’t. Checking news feeds, downloading augmented reality 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

When you look up at the night sky you see a dazzling show. It can seem to defy explanation. But even with the naked eye you’ll see trends. The stars never move, some “objects” (really planets) look to be wandering, and it looks like both the Moon and Sun revolve around you. With all these trends, our ancestors were so sure Earth was the centre of the Universe it was a pivotal part of the “Divine Rights of Kings” philosophy that ruled Europe, and much of the colonized world, for centuries.

When you look at the night sky with a telescope, like Galileo did, you see it differently. Jupiter has Moons, Venus has phases and it looks like the Earth is just another planet. When Galileo told everyone these facts, the “divine leaders” were threatened. By using a telescope Galileo was basically saying “we don’t know until we test, so let’s use instruments to test what we think we know”. Scientific inquiry questioned the rulers divine leadership. They thus suppressed Galileo, and didn’t facilitate the new truths he was discovering.

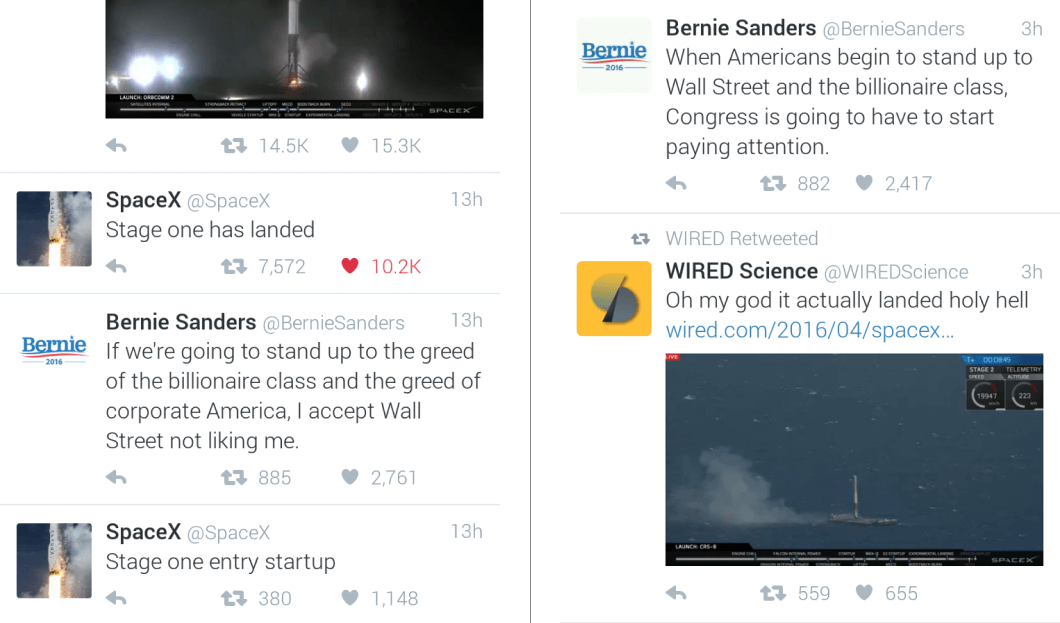
Galileo is just one example of how the people controlling long-established philosophies find it very hard to embrace the capabilities of new tools. The lesson for us is, to make use of new tools, we must embrace a new philosophy.

In 2019, we also have a philosophy behind the times. Look at space travel. It isn’t just cool, but a major step for humanity. It means better satellites, worldwide internet accessibility, and ensuring intelligent life doesn’t put all its eggs in our one earthly basket. But all these tools require an affordable rocket.

It was private companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin (funded by a few rich guys) who answered the call. They even learned to landed rockets so they can be reused, a monumental achievement that makes space travel even more possible. But many people, especially red/blue politicians, still didn’t care.

When you’re dependent on old philosophies, you’re also confined to its old tools and live within its old narratives. Today the red/blue philosophy obsesses over minute tax cuts, pages of government regulations, and endless 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 telescopes once were to political leaders.

That’s the power of a philosophy. It filters the definition of good and bad for its believers. The lesson is to make use of new tools, we need a new ruling philosophy. Otherwise we stagnate. Today, we need a new ruling 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 December 22 2015 when SpaceX landed its first rocket. At the exact same time red/blue ideologue Bernie Sanders was ranting about regulation battles with “Wall St.” instead of taking a minute to appreciate all the new possibilities SpaceX just opened to humanity. I happened to be following Sanders so I don’t mean to pick on him. The middle-class needs to stop putting their faith in old philosophies and instead follow today’s protagonists making digital tools who work hard to improve our lives. Like we followed Galileo generations ago.

## Your Place in the Struggle

Fighting to transform society to the possibilities of new tools is a classic human story. It happened when Galileo fought a religious establishment 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. We will empower you with a new philosophy so you too can step up and transform your society with digital tools. 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 unless the gatekeepers say it’s within the rules. 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 that encourages evolution. Techvolution is thus 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 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. While civilization is a struggle to overcome problems by upgrading technology and inventing new tools, it’s always been a battle to control them. Our politics are an ongoing history of technological change, with extras watching inventors and gatekeepers reaching for the tools to either maintain, or topple, gates.

This classic battle between using new tools to increase personal power, versus empowering the people, is a war seemingly as old as time. One such story is *Star Wars*, which is about a galaxy with an all-powerful energy field called the Force. 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 struggle to 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 individual lifeforms do via adaptation and natural selection in Nature.

To make Techvolution a reality, you, the current middle-class extra, must join the fight raging in our civilization. Right now, open-source inventors are trying to transform society and Woodstock era-delegators are trying to keep it the same. 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 use digital tools to solve your own problems and became your own hero. And I do pray you pick the right side.

## 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 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 the most recent 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, Jay Last, Michael S. Hart, Steve Jobs, 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 giving extras the right to decide when society should upgrade our tools.

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

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

## Nice to Meet You, Stargazer

You might be a protagonist in open-source, or an extra looking for work, either way I’m calling you Stargazer. It’s a name in honor of a person who looks for the beauty of Nature, whether it’s in the face of a person trying to learn a new skill, 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.

Whoever you are Stargazer, you need to know that the story to advance 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.

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, history, 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 superiority complexes; 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 the middle-class struggle to make a living owning, maintaining, and working with outdated Woodstock era 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 that will improve all our lives.

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 real work makes you powerful. A piece of knowledge Darth Blockbuster will never have.

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, exported manufacturing, rampant self-entitlement, massive government debt, domestic terrorism, fractured national identities, low trust in democratic institutions and other structural problems will only get passed on to our kids unless the middle-class steps up now. So why not you?

Always remember you are not alone. There are many like you, bands of regular people on the frontline who need to, and are ready to, improve their lives and their society’s health. I’m like Obi-Wan Kenobi, Morpheus, or the fairy godmother; merely a guide 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 some 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. Old philosophies, red/blue among them, will always teach us lessons, help us do our jobs better, and enlighten our personal opinions. Old philosophies should not be our ruling philosophy simply because they weren’t created with digital tools in mind.

Techvolution is. It’s designed to make the best use of digital tools. Let me explain how Techvolution can be our ruling political philosophy by discussing evolution in martial arts.

Humanity has many martial arts: karate, kickboxing, wrestling, jiu-jitsu, judo, and boxing being among the most popular. Each martial art adapts the human body to do specific technique like punches or choke-holds. Each martial art also makes rules so only their chosen techniques are allowed during competition; there’s no kicking in a boxing match for example.

In the early 1990’s the martial arts community got curious and wondered whose martial art 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 could not fight outside their rulebook. All fighters were supposed to be ideologically loyal and sing to their choirs about their techniques being the best. If a fighter got their ass kicked in a real fight, they’d either blame themselves or say the other guy “broke the rules” or “cheated” to win.

When the martial art community threw away their rule books and held “no rules” tournaments, they were fittingly rewarded with Nature’s officially best martial art. The best martial art was none of them; or all of them. Meaning the best fighters 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. Embracing adaption and natural selection was the start of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), a new sport that cherishes the evolution like mantra “admit defeat and learn”. And while boxers still punch the best, and kickboxers kick the best, evolution powered MMA fighters will almost always beat them in a street fight.

Red/blue ideologies are like non-MMA martial arts. They teach a limited number of techniques, limit themselves to their own rule book, and often think “the other side” is ignorant. However, in their area of expertise, from monetary policy to farm regulation, they have a huge reservoir of know-how. This single book can't replace all that knowledge. It would be laughable to suggest it could.

But we still need a new ruling philosophy. One created from the lessons of evolution old philosophies could never factor into their ideologies. There’s no other way to fully harness digital tools. Which is why this book is about making human technological evolution, Techvolution, the most protected political right (and responsibility) today.

You can think of Techvolution as “mixed philosophical politics”. Under Techvolution, a person is free to study and believe in old philosophies, but no one should think the rule books of old philosophies determine right and wrong when up against a person’s right to evolve on the frontline. Because to evolve humanity, we the people on the frontline—the people in the real fight—need the freedom to decide which tool best solves a problem. The right to evolve must trump all other considerations. Giving old philosophies, or people whose power and prestige is based on old tools, the right to decide human technological upgrades is a recipe for inaction and is basically why the middle-class is getting beat up by relatively simple problems like road traffic, waiting on hold, and confusing contracts.

Importantly, since Techvolution is a vital right, it must also be a responsibility. Here are some tools the middle-class should grab hold of 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 and Melinda hope dozens of their reactors will keep the world's lights on for generations; but even they can’t afford to buy them. Should we tell our governments too? I don’t know, I’m no expert. But nuclear power is clean and continuing to breath in smog and ejecting greenhouse gases into the air is hardly a good thing. Considering that electricity powers all digital tools, and digital tools empower extras to become protagonists, TerraPower is something we should all think about out of pure self-interest.

3D printers are like inkjet printers, except they fuse particles together and thus can print 3D objects; even ones as complicated as a violin. They’re very common in industrial prototyping and regular people could use them to print lost buttons, toy action figures imagined by kids, or custom designed garden tools. The best part of 3D printers is there's no factories, cargo ships, tractor-trailers, marketing campaigns, or retail stores needed. Anyone can print whatever they need when they need it. 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 custom 3D printed construction tool. All with no job interviews, management oversight, or upfront cost. Online collaboration is that easy; once we think to look for it.

As said before, the Woodstock era lifestyle is a dead dream. The old expectation that middle-class people will get one job for life and safely assume “the government” or “the market” will solve all middle-class problems does nothing be give false hope.

Digital tools are our salvation. They empower regular people to educate themselves, lower their own cost of living, and earn their own income. Can we become entirely self-sufficient? Probably not, but we can deal with layoffs, price-gouging, and bad jobs better when empowered by our own digital tools and thus we can better check and balance today’s lopsided balance of power that gives individuals little say in their lives.

Keep in mind, all the examples of digital tools in this book are just a snippet. There are so many out there it’s both overwhelming and exciting. But when regular people search among these digital tools to solve their own problems, that’s the rebellion inside our mind the world needs.

In short, Techvolution says be selfish! Demand your freedom. The freedom to speak our minds made the most of the printing press. The freedom to investigate Nature made the most of scientific instruments. The freedom to question royalty made the most of the gun. The freedom to buy and own any product you wanted made the most of factories. And the freedom to solve your own real-life frontline problems makes the most of digital tools.

Techvolution starts in your head. While you’re watching a political debate, or attending a company meeting, ask yourself “what’s in this for me”. Of course, red/blue politicians won’t talk how your new solar panels, and I don’t want you to tell your boss to go to hell and quit your job. But society first changes in your mind. As you keeping asking “what’s in this for me”, you’ll seek out new digital tools. When you hold new tools, you hold political power. And holding power is how extras become protagonists.

That’s why 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. And why I needed to write a book to remind everyone rules are supposed to serve human evolution; not get in its way. But since today the rules are in our way, we must pack our bags Stargazer, rally our friends, and get ready for a fight. It’s time to blow up a Death Star.

# ACT TWO - BLOWING UP THE DEATH STAR

## The Magic of Evolution

Before you face Darth Blockbuster and 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.