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Reflecting on “Long Live the Web” by Tim Berners-Lee

“Long live the Web” by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web discusses the egalitarian, democratic vision and values behind the creation of the Web as he speculates about the impact differing values could have on it. It was written in 2010 thus 11 years ago. In this article, Berners-Lee discusses the importance of protecting free speech and compares the Web to “a white sheet of paper: ready to be written on, with no control over what is written” (Berners-Lee). I would be curious to know his thoughts now in 2021. Was it idealistic ? Does he still believe the same ? Now that we have the experience of an extra decade on the risks of unchecked freedom on the internet. Did he have too much faith in the goodness of human beings ? Is it really okay to have no control over the content on the Web?

We have heard so many stories of cyberbullying, revenge porn, all the possible shades of misinformation, scams, copyrights infringement etc... Even the ethics of open access to data can become questionable. We are in the 2nd year of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Web had an unprecedented role in humanity’s history with diseases in the management of the virus. The Web has grown so big and ubiquitous, there is so much available information yet human beings remain limited in their capacity to comprehend information. Yes, the open access of data has been an unparalleled tool for the scientific community. But, things have been a lot more complicated for the regular joe, the layman, who became stuck in a circus of sensationalist,

politically-biased newspapers, governmental bodies and eloquent opinionated conspirationist groups to help them navigate the seemingly unlimited amount of information on the infinitely large piece of white paper which is the Web. Is it really okay to have no control over the Web ? If we should exercise control over it, who should be trusted with this titanic responsibility ?

Works Cited

Berners-Lee, Tim. "LONG LIVE THE WEB." *Scientific American*, vol. 303, no. 6, Scientific American, a division of Nature America, Inc., 2010, pp. 80–85.