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Reflection 2

Reading: Writing the history of the internet by Roy Rosenzweig

In "Writing the history of the internet" Roy Rosenzweig narrates the creation of the popular internet and the democratic and open vision behind it which has led to the basic services we take for granted today like the email. By imagining the internet as a medium for building an interactive community in the 80s, those early netizens have built upon the heritage of their predecessors from the 60s and the 70s and imagined "computing as the most important thing in the world", a "philosophy of sharing, openness, decentralization..." (Rosenzweig). Overall it was very interesting to read about a time before the internet we know today existed.

The 80s weren't very long ago, I was not born yet but I find it extraordinary that people have once lived without the internet and it had to be invented and the vision of the people who have imagined it has ultimately set the tone for it to become what it is. The technology was new but human nature does not change. Human beings are social creatures, they live in communities all around the world. The need to connect to each other is ingrained deeply within this species' instincts. What other directions could the internet have taken other than to become a medium of community building regardless of who financed it?

Human beings learn and dream and those dreams are carried down history through stories and values for the next generations to dream too. At some point a long long time ago, the first human being dreamed of flying. All kinds of winged creatures and mechanisms were imagined and passed down history until we had the technology to do it. I feel like it is the same thing when we talk about the internet. People have dreamed of a free, open, democratic internet. It was not the dream of winning wars or national defense or the corporate capitalism dream which fuelled the vision of the internet. It was the dream of freedom, fairness and community. And forty years later, that vision is still relevant and those values are still discussed because human beings are still human beings but with bigger, more powerful toys. Now we have mega corporations fighting for the dominance of the internet because there is so much money to be made from. Governments still aim to use the internet as a national defense tool taking the form of surveillance, propaganda and censure for example. Another downside of the creation of the internet though is that it was originally shaped by a relatively uniform group of human beings with similar interests and similar priorities : young men from relatively wealthy backgrounds. Rosenzweig's text is about those men. This is a major flaw which would be found later on when it will become so popular that it is impossible to live without it. The internet is not made for everybody. Yet everybody is expected to be able to use it so recent efforts are being undertaken to make the internet more democratic and more fair. Human beings really do not change.

References

Rosenzweig, Roy. "Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors, and Hackers: Writing the History of the Internet." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 5, 1998, pp. 1530–1552.