

Gilder, George – Life After Google*Regnery Gateway, 2018 [Business] Grade* ★★★★★

The reader of *Life After Google* gets two stories for the price of one. The first is the tale of David vs. Goliath, or rather Cryptocosm vs. Google. The other covers the mistaken views of the AI-priesthood, at least as the author sees it. The stories are connected as AI and the inevitability of the coming singularity is a cornerstone of Google's worldview. The second topic has also been broken out into a separate book by the author called *Gaming AI*, published in 2020, which I will review later on. This text will focus on the first theme. The polymath author George Gilder who published his first book in 1966 is also an investor, economist and technology visionary. Several of his about 20 books have over the years had profound influence on the leading persons of Silicon Valley. Gilder is also very much an advocate for the book's underdog David who works in the form of peer-to-peer technologies such as blockchain.

There has always existed several worldviews among the people in Silicon Valley. Up until the last 15 years one dominating view was libertarian, sprawling, sometimes idealistic but more often capitalistic and often both anti-state and anti-big business. When Silicon Valley got their own corporate giants and industry tycoons, views gravitated towards a more orderly and centralized system well suited for Big Tech. Gilder even claims that Google is the first corporation with a full philosophical belief system. Apart from the deterministic and materialistic theory of mind focusing on AI there are several important parts.

Google views the world as a large database. There are always more data to collect and to analyze. The focus is on big data and cloud computing where a central 'logic machine' combines algorithms with data to know what people wants better than they know themselves. The normatively good is to search the one truth as the logic machine defines it and this can only happen if the machine can collect all data. Data privacy becomes immoral or "*information wants to be free*" as the saying goes. To

maximize its reach the services are free for the users. The cost for search is instead paid through the add-on of advertising costs to other companies' products. As indicated by Tim Cook's quote "*If the service is 'free', you are not the customer but the product*" the users give up their user data. Gilder points to something even more serious; for advertising models it is vital to maximize the time that people are exposed to the chance to see ads, i.e. that users pay with their time, parts of their life.

Enters the savior Cryptocosm that will bring the centralized model to its knees, solve our security problems and revitalize the other decentralized and libertarian Internet. In some sense Gilder portrays a Hegelian dialectic view of historic development where focus on core and edge respectively replace each other. Through blockchain technology communication, commercial transactions and money itself will be decentralized and encrypted - even democratized - which will then make data unreadable for the logic machine. User generated personal data will only be available to the persons who hold the keys to it and it will neither be the state, nor Google. Top down control will give way to human uniqueness and creativity.

From chapter 10 onwards the book is with some exceptions a long parade of heroes. One genius after the other from the Cryptocosm-team is presented and I must admit that my attention starts to wane somewhat. Unfortunately this section is really loooong, more than half the book. This and the fact that the author's two topics get too intermingled hurt the overall impression of the book. The depth, width and originality of thought are what save it. Few would be able to discuss Silicon Valley-epistemology, the functionality of money and the details of various blockchain solutions and get away with it. Gilder pulls it off.

Time will tell if he is proven correct in his views but as so often before Gilder looks far ahead into the technology future, making us all wiser.

Mats Larsson, March 26, 2021