Twitter Thread by Yishan



Yishan
@yishan

The emergence of many new hypocrisies typically heralds an emerging new cultural synthesis.

Are you disturbed that you agree with one of those viewpoints? Or perhaps that other people you respect do?

1/x

> \u2014 HYPOCRISY \u2014
>
> \U0001f4cdFree market conservatives outraged that a private social media company can decide who has access to its service.
>
> \U0001f4cdSo called liberals overjoyed at the prospect of powerful corporations taking control of the content and information we're allowed to see.
>
> — emily (@emnode) January 9, 2021

Let me offer a framework for thinking about things like this, something called an “Omega Event.”

It was first described to me by Erik Martin, one of Reddit's first community managers:

In governance, Omega Events exist due to the fact that no system of beliefs, no worldview, no set of rules, can account for everything that will ever happen.

Eventually someone (or some group) will do something that lies outside the scope of all existing rules, and you will have to make decisions again from first principles.

Sometimes the Omega Event emerges from the confluence of many unrelated factors. When it does, it is wholly different from anything you’ve encountered.

An exception to the rules will ALWAYS eventually occur, no matter how universal or all-encompassing you think your rules or principles are.

Remember that human ideas and systems are fictions we construct, and necessarily finite in the scope of situations we can imagine that they apply to.

Human systems are finite, but the variability of the universe and its events are potentially infinite, so Omega Events are inevitable.

Tech platforms did not ban Trump because they disagree with his politics. If that were the reason, they would have done it already: he's been pretty clear about his politics for years.

They did it because his actions on the platform threaten the integrity of the platform.

We have become so accustomed to the notion of "free speech, except" that we do not realize that free speech is ALWAYS limited, and that every limit arose from an Omega Event.

Platforms always ban spammers, and if you believe in free speech, isn't spam speech? Spam is just talking a lot.

Early on any platform's history, spam is an Omega Event: it will ruin the platform unless it is curtailed. No principle other than survival is relevant.

Then you just say, "free speech, except no spamming." A new system is synthesized out of the old system + Omega Event.

This is why different liberal democratic societies have different limits on free speech: they have all had different Omega Events, e.g. Germany banning Nazi speech.

A stampede out of a crowded theater that kills people because someone yelled "fire" is an Omega Event. No rulemaker predicted it until it occurred.

There is one principle that always overrides free speech (or any belief), and it is survival.

Any platform (or organism) that does not prioritize survival, explicitly or implicitly, will die - and so all living platforms do so.

You cannot survive to create and uphold systems like "free speech" (which is merely a construct, existing only in human minds) unless you are alive to do it.

All human systems and beliefs are cognitive constructs. (Yuval Harari calls them "fictions"). They do not have physical reality; we have collaboratively imagined them into existence.

All belief systems are finite and will eventually meet their limits when confronted with the infinite variability of human behavior and the physical universe.

Reaching this limit is an Omega Event, when those who purport to abide by the belief are forced to violate it or succumb to the consequences of the precipitating event.

The whole point of expanding one's mind is finding Omega Events which break your belief system, finding exceptions to your heretofore consistent worldview.

My unpopular opinion: Banning Trump will lead neither to an era of censorship on tech platforms, nor to better content moderation.

There is no slippery slope, and tech's actions do not reflect "left vs right" or a backlash by "the powers that be" or any such thing.

Rather, the Omega Event is that a user (Trump) used their platforms to do something they never expect a user to be able to do:

Incite an insurrection to stop the lawful and orderly transfer of power in the world's most powerful democracy.

Remember that had he succeeded, it would have been the end of American democracy as we know it.

Tech depends on the continued existence of the United States being, however imperfectly, a democratic nation of laws.

Its system of laws and freedoms is what allows tech, especially social media platforms, to grow and thrive: they were responding to an immediate, existential threat.

It had nothing to do with free speech, or agreeing/disagreeing with your politics, so stop freaking out / don't get too excited.

The fact that they continue to take action against other people who support the insurrection is merely them making SURE that this threat is ended.

Remember that they took no action until the threat was immediate. They had HOPED that the American people would simply vote him out (or in), like every other president.

When a nation is invaded, the peace-loving farmer may take up arms and become a vicious killer. Afterwards, he returns to his peaceful life on the farm, because his Omega Event required him to kill in order to protect it.

This was an Omega Event, where the Constitution was literally about to be violated.

It was act or die. Tech companies don't thrive in countries where the loser of an election can take power through a coup.

There is no need to fret:

Omega Events don't mean your old systems aren't worthwhile or about to be destroyed. It just means it is time to synthesize a new system from first principles.

The past year has revealed many uncomfortable and surprising truths to ALL of us.

The only sustainable new order will be the one that fearlessly confronts all of them and synthesizes a newly coherent

worldview.