

## **Curtis Yarvin: The Red-Pill Prince**

By: Jacob Siegel

In his first public appearance after five years of semiofficial banishment, Curtis Yarvin began to cry. It was late February 2020 and Yarvin was the special guest at a live podcast in Los Angeles. A graphic promoting the event shows the computer engineer turned political philosopher, then 46 years old, wearing his black leather motorcycle jacket and wire-framed glasses and staring out with practiced intensity. Over Yarvin's left shoulder [floats](#) a bust of the deceased rapper Lil Peep.

The moody digital aesthetic is called vaporwave. Ma, Pa, have you heard of vaporwave? It is a very of-the-moment style that uses retro computer graphics to evoke the feeling of haunting nostalgia for a vanishing human presence.

The metaphor was apt. In 2014, Yarvin—who had spent seven years blogging about politics and society under the name Mencius Moldbug—went silent, shifting his attention back to his grand project of building a functional software stack called Urbit that promised to revolutionize computing. But his political pronouncements soon caught up to him. In 2016, after the second planned talk at a computer programming conference was canceled on account of his political views, Yarvin found himself writing lines like: “I am not an ‘outspoken advocate for slavery,’ a racist, a sexist or a fascist.” As anyone who’s been on the internet lately can tell you, a person who must publicly deny that they are a fascist has already lost. When the invitations stopped coming, Yarvin didn’t protest.

“When I invited him to be a guest at that event, he was truly radioactive,” the podcast’s organizer, a young intellectual entrepreneur named Justin Murphy, told me recently. The scene brought out LA art hipsters, connoisseurs of civilizational decline, and PayPal founder Peter Thiel. The billionaire, who was one of the first investors in Facebook and has been a longtime patron of Yarvin’s, drank Pabst Blue Ribbon and ate pizza. Thiel’s car idled outside the club, engine on, driver behind the wheel, ready in case the need arose for a sudden exit. Rumor has it that Thiel takes this precaution wherever he goes, but it was not out of place that evening. Murphy, who spent several years in his 20s participating in militant “black bloc” anarchist protests, was worried antifa might show up to protest the event.

The night went off without a hitch. Yarvin had chosen an ideal venue to reemerge, with podcasts providing one of the only channels left to reach the public now that the glossy magazines, publishing houses, and other arteries for circulating new ideas had been choked off by the narrowing band of acceptable opinions.

Depending on what circles you run in, it can seem like everyone now has an opinion about Curtis Yarvin—and that includes me. We were introduced in 2017 when I received a short, unsolicited email from him calling me a “fake writer” working in a “fake century.” The email arrived after I’d published an essay that mentioned Yarvin a handful of times and referred to him as “an architect of antidemocratic, Neoreactionary politics.” The brashness, it turned out, was just Yarvin’s way of getting my attention. Thus began

an occasional correspondence that has included a handful of interactions over the last five years. And so, without giving it a great deal of thought, I added myself to the extended network of people being courted, outraged, and shaped by the man and his work.

Like Niccolò Machiavelli, to whom he is sometimes compared, Yarvin defines himself as an amoral realist who invented a new theory of government that upends established doctrines of political morality. Starting in the late 2000s, his name—not his real name, he was still known then by his blogging pseudonym—began to be whispered among some of the most powerful people in the country, a secret society made up of disaffected members of the American elite.

Shortly after Donald Trump entered the White House, reports started to circulate that Yarvin was secretly advising Trump strategist Steve Bannon. His writing, according to [one article](#), had established the “theoretical groundwork for Trumpism.”

Yarvin denied the rumors, sometimes playfully and at other times strenuously. But he was consistent in his criticisms of the Trumpian approach to politics. Mass populist rallies and red MAGA hats struck him as merely a weak imitation of democratic energies that had already died out. “Trump is a throwback from the past, not an omen of the future,” he wrote in 2016. “The future is grey anonymous bureaucrats, more Brezhnev every year.”

What Yarvin is, if one wants to be accurate, is the founder of neoreaction, an ideological school that emerged on the internet in the late 2000s marrying the classic anti-modern, anti-democratic worldview of 18th-century reactionaries to a post-libertarian ethos that embraced technological capitalism as the proper means for administering society. Against democracy. Against equality. Against the liberal faith in an arc of history that bends toward justice.

Instead, neoreactionaries subscribe to the classical idea that history moves in cycles. In an era when the iconic Shepard Fairey portrait of Barack Obama captured the HOPE of the nation, Yarvin and his followers were busy explaining why liberal democracy was already doomed.

Unlike some of the other neoreactionary writers that emerged in the last 20 years, Yarvin possessed a style that, even when discoursing at great length on the gold standard or obscure historical matters, never suggested powdered wigs. He wrote like what he was: a hyperintellectual Ivy League autodidact and wiseass tech geek masking his childhood insecurities with an aura of infallibility, who shared the same set of subcultural and sitcom references found in anyone else his age. At its best, this approach made difficult ideas accessible—not to mention viral. In one of his earliest blog posts, Yarvin birthed the now-ubiquitous meme of “the red pill,” a metaphor he borrowed from *The Matrix* movies and turned into a worldwide catchphrase describing the revelation of a suppressed truth that shatters progressive illusions and exposes a harsh underlying reality.

In Yarvin’s worldview, what keeps American democracy running today is not elections but illusions projected by a set of institutions, including the press and universities, that

work in tandem with the federal bureaucracy in a complex he calls the Cathedral. “The mystery of the Cathedral,” Yarvin writes, “is that all the modern world’s legitimate and prestigious intellectual institutions, even though they have no central organizational connection, behave in many ways as if they were a single organizational structure.”

Living Americans might be able to glean a sense of the phenomenon Yarvin describes in the current public discourse. It has often seemed in recent years that every few weeks has brought a new instance in which journalists and experts instantaneously, almost magically converged on shared talking points related to the hysteria du jour—cycling through moral crusades to free children from cages at the U.S. border, save the post office from a fascist coup, label the filibuster a tool of white supremacy, and so on. The power of the Cathedral is that it cannot be seen because it is located everywhere and nowhere, baked into the architecture of how we live, communicate, and think.

The night that Yarvin reemerged onto the scene at the LA event, the story that moved him to tears concerned the life of the English writer Freda Uteley, who became a communist in 1928—an era, he observed archly, when “anyone who was smart or cool was a communist.” Uteley moved to the Soviet Union and a few years later her husband was arrested and shipped to the gulag never to be seen again. She fled to the United States with her infant son and tried to warn her friends that their imagined utopia was really a police state. “Of course, her friends are like, ‘Do I know you?’ Who is this anti-Soviet person knocking at the door? They’re like, ‘Fuck you.’” Yarvin arrived at the moral of his story: “You really shouldn’t expect the material rewards of success to come along with the spiritual rewards of telling the truth.” He swallowed a sob. “You really shouldn’t,” he said, and wiped a tear from his eye.

In Yarvin’s parable, he is both the betrayed figure of Uteley, martyred for telling the truth, and the above-it-all narrator explaining how the world really works. To his readers, his immense, fortresslike body of work offers one of the only redoubts where they can glimpse the realities of power behind the political circus. To his skeptics, he is a minor fraud whose claims to be a truth-telling iconoclast belie a fundamental affinity with the status quo. Yarvin’s calls to do away with democracy and turn, say, Elon Musk into America’s new CEO king—that’s just the liberal technocratic system we already have on speed, an acceleration into the most dystopian aspects of the endless neoliberal present. To his critics, he is, as noted, a fascist. They point to a handful of his statements from a decade ago, including one in which he argued that certain races were better suited to slavery than others, and to the fact that the central pillar of his outlook is an avid opposition to the principles of democracy and equality. Yarvin, they say, is not a victim but the sender-off to the gulags; behind his tears, he plots to oppress minorities and tear down whatever remains of liberal democracy.

The essence of Yarvin as a historical figure begins not with his politics but his talents as a computer engineer, or programmer, the latter of which is his preferred label since he sees himself as a builder of things that work, not simply a manipulator of symbols. To separate his roots in technology from the politics he developed is to miss what is most powerful about him—his understanding of the hidden designs behind the systems of knowledge

and power that keep both computers and societies running. The universal rule that he deduced is almost mystical in its simplicity: Order is good, not merely in an instrumental sense because it leads to virtuous outcomes; it is good in itself. Whatever leads to more of it is also good, while anything that produces disorder is bad.

While conservatives who have come to embrace Yarvin speak of restoring natural rights and using state power to direct the common good, for him, “it is impossible to go directly from hypocrisy to morality. A cleansing bath of amoral realism must intervene.” Yarvin is not a nationalist or a populist, nor even a conservative. Rather, he is the signature example of a political theorist born after the death of 20th-century mass political movements, on the unsettled terrain of the internet. Whether you like it or not, Yarvin is the philosopher of, at the very least, our near future.

The father of neoreaction was raised in the bosom of the American state. His paternal grandparents were Jewish American communists. Yarvin’s father worked for the U.S. government as a foreign service officer, which took his family overseas to Portugal, Cyprus, and the Dominican Republic. His mother was a Protestant from Westchester County who eventually also joined the civil service, as did Yarvin’s stepfather. The progeny of this Jewish-WASP-Stalinist, civil service, Cold War liberal American heritage was a child math prodigy and computer whiz who liked to write poetry. It didn’t make social life easy, especially when his family returned to the United States just as he began high school.

“I had already skipped one grade back in Fairfax County and they did an admission test, so I skipped two more and then I’m 11 in ninth grade,” he told me. “Then we come back to the States and I go to an American public high school in Columbia, Maryland, and I’m a 12-year-old sophomore, which is definitely wack.”

At 15, Yarvin entered college as part of Johns Hopkins’ longitudinal Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth. A year later, he transferred to Brown University in Rhode Island as a legacy admission to the Ivy League liberal arts college, where his parents had met in the mid-’60s. After graduating, it was on to a computer science Ph.D. program at Berkeley. He dropped out after a year and a half to take a tech job at the height of the go-go ’90s dot-com era.

In late adolescence, Yarvin had a formative experience on an early internet message board called Usenet. “It was a decentralized system, and more importantly it had this amazing form of admission control because everyone on it was an engineering student or worked at a tech company or something,” Yarvin told me. He participated on forums like talk.bizarre, absorbing the inside jokes and new iterative patterns of thinking that were being developed on the outpost of a still-innovative and experimental digital culture. Occasionally he posted a poem or short piece of fiction to the board.

The end came in 1993 when America Online, the first mass internet provider, offered Usenet access to its subscribers—resulting in a flood of uninitiated, unwashed provincials

overrunning the community. “You had this sort of de facto aristocracy that didn’t know it was an aristocracy, and then it fell apart.”

“After the dot-com crash, I was left with a newly acquired girlfriend (who would become my wife), a few hundred thousand dollars, and a place in San Francisco,” Yarvin told me of his early career. The buyout came from his job at a mobile software company that was founded in 1996 as Libris before changing its name to Unwired Planet, and then Phone.com. The settlement was “considerably less than ‘fuck you’ money,” Yarvin said, but enough to finance an extended self-education in history and political theory that was attained by searching through Google’s ‘library of everything, ever,’ which was brand new at the time.

“My ideas really came from reading the Austrian School—Mises and Rothbard—and then Hoppe. Hoppe opened a kind of door to the pre-revolutionary world for me,” Yarvin [has said](#). A German-born political theorist and leading proponent of Austrian School economics, Hans-Hermann Hoppe has called himself an anarcho-capitalist, a title borrowed from his mentor Murray Rothbard. Hoppe theorized a distinction between monarchy, which he defined as “privately owned government,” and democracy, classified as “publicly owned government.” In the introduction to his 2001 book, [Democracy: The God That Failed](#), Hoppe called “the transition from monarchy to democracy” a source of “civilizational decline.”

From Hoppe, Yarvin took the idea that “all organizations, big or small, public or private, military or civilian, are managed best when managed by a single executive.”

If democracy is so decrepit and ineffective, one might ask how it is that America became the world’s great superpower and maintained that position for the last century. Yarvin’s answer contains two parts: first, that nothing lasts forever. Second, while American supremacy may once have rested on innovation and growth, the country, now a bloated empire, has been surviving for decades on the power of myth-making and mass illusions.

Whether or not he can be compared to Machiavelli the man, it is correct to describe Yarvin as a Machiavellian, in the meaning given to that term by the American political writer [James Burnham](#), a one-time follower of Leon Trotsky who later became a committed anti-communist. Like the historical figures chronicled in Burnham’s book [The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom](#), Yarvin believes that one of the worst aspects of democracy is the fact that it rarely exists. Because democracy is the rule of the many, and the rule of the many is inherently unstable, democracies rarely last long.

Burnham argues that all complex societies are in effect oligarchies ruled by a small number of elites. To hide this fact and legitimize their rule in the eyes of the masses, oligarchies employ the powers of mystification and propaganda. Indeed, Yarvin believes that America stopped being a democracy sometime after the end of World War II and became instead a “bureaucratic oligarchy”—meaning that political power is concentrated within a small group of people who are selected not on the basis of hereditary title or pure merit but through their entry into the bureaucratic organs of the state. What remains of

American democracy is pageantry and symbolism, which has about as much connection to the real thing as the city of Orlando has to Disney World.

In place of a functional democratic system, Yarvin came to believe, there now exists an industrial-scale symbolic apparatus that generates the illusion of political agency necessary for society's real rulers to carry out their business undisturbed. American voters still go to the polls to pick their leader, but the president is a ceremonial figure beholden to the permanent bureaucracy.

"The structure of democratic societies creates two tiers of power," observed the French sociologist and eminent defender of liberalism, Raymond Aron, in his appraisal of Burnham's book. While one tier of power is made up of industrialists, military generals, and other decision-makers operating in the shadows, in public their interests are represented by the second tier made up of "those who know how to talk." The problem identified by the Machiavellians, says Aron, is that while the talkers are not necessarily competent leaders, they nevertheless gain power because "debating regimes oil the wheels for those who know how to use words." There you have the two paths to power in a democracy: secrecy for the plutocratic persons of action, or, for those in the public political class, skill at deceit.

While Yarvin's vision has as much or more in common with left critiques of the state dating back to the 1960s, his solutions are openly reactionary—looking back to the 17th century rather than forward to a promised socialist-utopian future.

In 2007, Yarvin, writing as Mencius Moldbug, started his blog *Unqualified Reservations*. His themes, now clearly established, were reflected in his earliest published work: "Democracy as an Adaptive Fiction," "Why, When, and How to Abolish the United States," and "Against Political Freedom." At the time, Yarvin's paid work was still with the San Francisco-based Urbit where, with funding from Thiel, he was immersed in a yearslong project to write a new programming language from scratch and decentralize the ownership of data. Even in the Olympian culture of Silicon Valley, where the microdosing transhumanists all had startups promising to engineer a brave new humanity, Urbit's project was considered wildly ambitious, if not a bit mad.

The initial Moldbug audience was made up of fellow Silicon Valley misfits and disaffected amateur intellectuals with high-speed internet connections, the kind of people interested in his sardonic style and unconventional approach to history and political thought.

Everywhere one looked in the Moldbuggian scheme, things were not what they seemed. Beneath the surface of modern progressivism, for instance, Yarvin found that the sacraments and dogmas of America's founding Protestant religion had been preserved. The now common criticism that the liberal activist culture of wokeness is a kind of secular religion picks up on arguments Yarvin was making in 2007 about mainstream liberal universalism, which he dubbed "CryptoCalvinism."

This new techno-monarchist ideology of neoreaction developed in connection with other post-millennial intellectual movements in Silicon Valley like “post-rationalism.” By the late-2000s, while the U.S. culture and economy appeared stagnant, if not in outright decline, the technology sector was expanding its power and reach as apparently the only industry left in America still capable of innovation. The ideas coming out of the valley reflected that disparity and a growing feeling there that American liberal democracy was an obsolete operating system, impeding the tech sector’s growth and with it the march of progress.

Other key figures to emerge in neoreaction included the writer Michael Anissimov, and the British philosopher Nick Land, a former Marxist and devotee of French critical theory who gave the title *Dark Enlightenment* to his extended study of Yarvin’s oeuvre. Adjacent to neoreaction was the digital fascism of the “alternative right,” which emerged a few years later. The alt-right, as it was also known, was another internet-based ideological movement but one that emphasized anarchic nihilism, rabid racism, and demonization of Jews. Neoreactionaries, by contrast, while comfortable expressing their own racial and ethnic bigotries, tended to downplay their political importance and eschewed the online Nazi role-playing of the alt-right as dim-witted and self-destructive. In a series of early essays, “Why I am not a White Nationalist” and “Why I am not an Anti-Semite,” Yarvin offered an analysis of those ideologies that was not entirely unsympathetic before ultimately rejecting them.

How could he be a fascist, Yarvin protested, when he so clearly detested “the masses” and “the people”—two of fascism’s most celebrated subjects?

Perhaps the best known of the Silicon Valley democracy skeptics was Thiel. “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible,” Thiel wrote in 2009. “The great task for libertarians,” he declared, “is to find an escape from politics in all its forms—from the totalitarian and fundamentalist catastrophes to the unthinking demos that guides so-called ‘social democracy.’”

Yet for Yarvin, even though libertarianism may be right about the best way to organize society, it fails because it is unserious about power. An all-powerful state is necessary, a sovereign Leviathan of the kind envisioned by Thomas Hobbes, to impose order by force on a level of such absolute authority that it can then disappear from day-to-day life.

Having concluded that democracy is a failed and dying form of governance, one that increasingly produces more disorder than order, Yarvin provided a vision for what could come next: an enlightened corporate monarchy that would only arrive after a hard reboot of the political system. It was a vision of total regime change, but one achieved without any violence or even activism since those efforts were doomed to fail and would therefore only strengthen the system they sought to overthrow. For those who believed in it, the next step was to generate the ideas that a future elite would use to run the country once it seized power.

And who should the rulers be, exactly? Rather than a hereditary dynasty, Yarvin proposed the Elizabethan structure of the joint-stock company used by the British East India Company as the best means for selecting and overseeing the monarch. The state, rather than tyrannizing its subjects or being controlled by citizens who endowed its authority, “should be operated as a profitable corporation governed proportionally by its beneficiaries.” Elsewhere, he puts it differently: “I favor absolute monarchy in the abstract sense: unconditional personal authority, subject to some responsibility mechanism.”

Some readers may dwell on the weight that the rather vague “some responsibility mechanism” bears in this program for the enlightened monarchies of the future. For Yarvin, the answer is always more power.

While Peter Thiel has since disavowed his rejection of democracy—in public at least—and is now financing the U.S. Senate campaigns of a new breed of MAGA 2.0 populists like J.D. Vance and Blake Masters, Yarvin has not wavered.

Power, according to Yarvin, is like computer code, binary. It is either on or off; final and absolute, or merely a glorified form of servitude. Even the tech giants, which he considers the only efficient organizations left in the United States, are powerless. Facebook may be able to ban anyone it wants while controlling the flow of critical information to billions of people across the globe, but Mark Zuckerberg still has to answer to midlevel government functionaries—a relationship demonstrated by the Facebook CEO’s reluctant embrace of a Democratic Party approved [fact-checking apparatus](#). Even if Zuckerberg wanted to raise an army to stage a coup, it’s not clear what target he could strike. “[F]or all practical revolutionary purposes,” Yarvin wrote in May of 2020. “the ‘deep state’ is as decentralized as Bitcoin, and as invulnerable—to ballots and bullets alike.”

Because the goal for Yarvin is to force power out of the bureaucratic shadows and make it visible, he sees the brute force approach of China’s government as a positive example. After all, what is the opposite of the U.S. deep state with its esoteric CryptoCalvinist dogmas, if not the overtly state-worshiping ideology of the Chinese Communist Party where the government’s capacity for violence is never far from the surface? It’s an analysis that for Yarvin and others of his ilk approaches its own dogma. As recently as last December, Yarvin maintained that China’s “zero-COVID” surveillance state approach to the pandemic, in which millions of people have been confined to their homes in citywide quarantines, entails “fewer covid restrictions than citizens of the reddest American red state.”

What is bizarre about the reaction to the neoreactionaries is not the perfectly understandable revulsion at this adoration of China, or at their racial and ethnic bigotries, but the outrage over their attack on democracy. Philosophers and politicians like Alexis de Tocqueville, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, to name only three among countless figures, including many on the left, have been outspoken in their warnings about democracy’s perils. That is to say nothing of the current American ruling class, which



treats ordinary people with aristocratic contempt, openly conspires to [suppress](#) reporting that might get the “wrong” candidate elected, and organizes [“shadow campaigns”](#) to undermine popular elections—all in the name of democracy. If Yarvin’s political musings are a danger to the future of American democracy, as they may well be, one can only ask what that means for the actions and statements of the people who are currently in power.

The temptation to squeeze Yarvin into the premade villain costume of a contemporary morality play may be temporarily satisfying, but if its aim was to shut him down or curb his influence, it has failed. He’s back in the public sphere now with more time than ever after departing Urbit in 2019, and he has a busy schedule of podcast appearances. It seems likely, in fact, that ignoring Yarvin’s incisive diagnosis of the American political system, or reducing it to cartoonish villainy, will only benefit him and other opponents of democracy who are more than happy to see the American system continue its slow breakdown.

It also misses the fatal weakness of Yarvin’s ideology: For all of its power as a systemic analysis, it contains no place for human beings. The classic question in philosophy—what is the good life?—never intrudes on Yarvin’s pursuit of designing beautiful machines.

I once asked Yarvin whether he saw his computer programming and writing as drawing on different parts of his brain. “My love of computer science has always been in systems because it’s essentially architecture, you’re building something that has to have a very large component of aesthetics in it,” he told me. “You’re in a situation where maybe even more than in architecture, you know this works because it’s beautiful.”

Later in the conversation, he expanded on this point. “When you’re building system software, you’re in this position of this demiurge,” he said using the term from gnostic theology for a minor, and typically false, god. The matter of the individual, not as a political subject but as a sentient, feeling agent possessing intrinsic needs and desires, seems not so much a matter Yarvin avoids as one that almost never occurs to him in his political writing. Even where his designs are most immaculate, they are somehow bereft—like a beautiful but empty city.

Even where Yarvin’s designs are most immaculate, they are somehow bereft—like a beautiful but empty city.

On Feb. 1, 2020, before any COVID cases were reported in the United States and a few weeks before his comeback podcast appearance, Yarvin published an essay warning that the novel coronavirus could become a devastating global pandemic. He also predicted that it wouldn’t matter. He pronounced America a failed state, unable to envision, let alone muster the capacity to take the kind of decisive action that, according to Yarvin, was being modeled by China’s “zero-COVID” approach to the virus. “The hard truth,” he wrote a few months later, “is that the virus is not just a test of our government. It is a test of our form of government.”

The following summer, the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan while barely firing a shot. America's trillion-dollar investment in the Afghan Security Forces was exposed as a Ponzi scheme and collapsed overnight. In the final chaotic days of the war, U.S. forces struck a deal with the Taliban, their sworn enemy of the past two decades, to provide security at the airfield where final evacuations were taking place. Shortly after that, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the airport killing 13 American service members and some 170 Afghan civilians.

No general or political leader was blamed for America's longest war ending in humiliating defeat. No one was fired or resigned. Moreover, the total lack of accountability for a catastrophic systemwide failure is, according to Yarvin, not a problem that could be solved by electing better leaders or applying more political will, because it is an essential feature of the system's design. "Why did this happen?" Yarvin asked. "Very simply: because no one is in charge of the government."

Not the wrong people; *no one*.

Is that possible? If things were really that bad, wouldn't we be able to tell?

Maybe not. Without losing your balance, try to work back through the many sharp reversals of public policy and elite opinion since the beginning of the pandemic. In February 2020, when Yarvin first issued his warning, it was considered a sign of right-wing racial paranoia to be worried at all about the virus in China. "The actual danger of coronavirus: fear may fuel racism and xenophobia that threaten human rights," intoned *The Washington Post*. A few months later, the Great and Good changed their minds and declared the pandemic an unprecedented emergency demanding a nationwide shutdown. Schools and playgrounds were locked. Children were masked. The police were called out to break up weddings and prayer services held by religious communities that insisted on endangering the rest of the country by carrying on with their primitive rituals. Then the Black Lives Matter protests began that summer, and the switch was flipped again. Now, national leaders and public health officials donned the [kente cloths of their own religious rituals](#) and joined the throngs. A dazzling new form of Jesuitical argumentation was invented in which the crowding of tens of thousands of people together in the streets was not merely justified in spite of the risks, but redefined as a public health measure to combat the chronic threat of white supremacy and thus not in conflict with "the science."

Witnessing this spectacle, I have found it easy to picture myself as the member of a captive audience watching a parade of soldiers march by in crisp uniforms, executing their synchronized movements to form images of hammers, surface-to-air missiles, and other icons of the glorious people's republic. Only here it was not North Korean conscripts marching but the best fed and most thoroughly educated Americans—university professors, journalists, scientists, surgeons general—who clicked their heels and pivoted in unison. How, one had to wonder in amazement, did they always stay on message even as the messaging changed so often and abruptly?

Yarvin's answer, of course, is the Cathedral. At one and the same time, the Cathedral is simply a name for the uncanny degree of agreement between the media, universities, and other organs of elite culture, and a theory explaining how the aggregate effect of that agreement is a system of Orwellian mind-control that projects an illusion of freedom so powerful it blinds people to reality.

The question many people have, of course, is whether such a structure actually exists. After two years of COVID, following the disintegration of the liberal state, and the emergence of evermore eccentric ideological impositions, coordinated on what seems like an hourly basis by an invisible yet apparently all-powerful hand, which has no need to account for its nakedly visible contradictions and failures, the answer seems obvious: Either you see it, or you don't.

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### **The Cathedral or the Bizarre**

By: Curtis Yarvin

In 1999, the year of the Linux desktop, Eric S. Raymond wrote an influential essay called "[The Cathedral and the Bazaar](#)."

Raymond, a stereotypical [programmer-libertarian](#), saw two architectural archetypes of software-development organization: the *cathedral*, a closed, corporate, centralized project planned for profit, and the *bazaar*, an open, volunteer, centerless organic community of patches crafted from love.

Nothing binds these labels to the land of Linux. Any centralized organization is a *cathedral*. Any decentralized movement is a *bazaar*. The cathedral is a single coherent building with a single purpose; the bazaar is a chaotic covered souk of alleys and stalls.

Close your eyes; the *cathedral* is one soaring, enclosed hymn with one clear message; the *bazaar* is a medley of hot, buzzing auctions for silk, opium, and broiled kid-goat.

The *bazaar*: Linux. The *cathedral*: Microsoft. We know which *feels* better to the modern, sophisticated soul. Yet SpaceX, too, is a *cathedral*. Yet SpaceX runs tons of Linux.

Cathedrals and bazaars are different tools. They solve different problems. Neither replaces the other (or has, in software development, replaced it). Either may prove itself fair or foul, useless or essential, elegant or messy.

In 1899, the final year of the century of yesterday, Gaetano Mosca wrote a much-forgotten book called [Elements of Political Science](#).

Mosca, founder of the "[Italian elitist](#)" school, arguably the Darwin of his field, today known only even to specialists as a precursor of fascism, saw that within every governed society, all human beings can be divided into three clear sets.

One is the *officials*, people “in the loop” who have the power to control or affect government decisions. Anyone who isn’t an official is a *subject*. The set of all officials is the *regime*. The set of all nonofficials is the *public*.

Subjects are divided into two sets by a simple accounting: *clients*, who are economically dependent on the regime; *commoners*, on whom the regime is economically dependent. Clients naturally admire the regime; commoners naturally resent it.

Individual human opinion is never deterministic. But these three human perspectives—*regime*, *commons*, and *clientele*—nourish three kinds of political cultures, classes, or traditions. And while there may be many distinct *common* and *client* cultures, there is almost never more than one *official* culture: the people who govern, plus the people who think like them. Every objective political theory is a theory of this official class.

Sovereignty, the absolute power of all *officials* over all *subjects*, is conserved. All government is unconditional. All “freedoms” are conditional privileges granted by the regime—what are “judges” but officials?

While functional *democracy*—in which the subjects are the ruling officials, and even the permanent full-time employees of the government are their obedient public servants—is possible, functional democracy is historically rare. Most so-called democracies are only ceremonially so—and the few historical exceptions actually worked quite badly. One test for this condition is whether the so-called masters could *replace* their so-called servants. If this is unthinkable, the servants may be in charge of the masters.

While there is no *limited* government, there is *incomplete* government; incomplete government means a vacuum made of anarchy; true anarchy is not even nothing, it is the billion tiny bubbles of local power we call *crime*; you don’t want to be anywhere near it; so, counting anarchy as governance, government power is absolute. A regime that tolerates crime has just chosen to share its absolute power with crime.

Who wanted to hear this message? Dear reader: Do *you* want to hear it?

It followed, saw Mosca, that sovereignty is not just physical but also psychological. Every regime is an autocracy. Every regime, outnumbered by its public, must obtain its psychological consent. While in theory the best way to obtain consent is to do a good job and tell the truth, in practice this strategy is not always available—or even optimal.

Organic consent is never guaranteed, even if genuinely deserved. And as regime quality declines, organic consent disappears. Therefore every regime, good or bad, must engineer its own consent. Every regime controls its subjects’ minds by managing the stories told to those minds.

An incomplete regime that neglected this task would be ceding sovereignty to any power that picked it up. Regardless of the truth, this power could paint the rest of the regime as

despicable, and dominate or destroy it to become the next regime. So even the best regimes must arm themselves with psychological weapons.

In the long run, saw Mosca, there is not even *any such thing* as freedom of speech. Nobody believes this. *I* don't even want to hear it. Dear reader: Was Mosca wrong? When was the last time you read a prestigious editorial telling you—in effect—that Mosca was right? Was it yesterday, or just last week? Some editorials are right, too.

The psychological sword of the state is the *political formula*. A political formula is any thought—good or bad, true or false, crazy or sane—that convinces the subject to love, serve, and obey the officials.

For instance, the slogan “Black Lives Matter” is a political formula. It exhorts us to support those forces, persons, and institutions that promote, or are purported to promote, “Black Lives.”

Since such forces have power (otherwise, how could they promote anything?), they must be official. Indeed, we wake up every day with these good messages buzzing in every dental filling—a weird condition, especially if purely spontaneous.

The slogan asks you to support a power—which need not be good or bad, true or false, crazy or sane. It does *not* ask you to think about how well this regime works for *you*; indeed, it asks you *not* to think about that—unless, of course, you are “Black.”

The ideal formula has a message for each culture. For the *regime*, the best formula is *self-affirming*; it convinces the official class that it is doing the right thing. For the *clientele*, the best formula is *self-interested*; it convinces the clients that the regime is working for them. For the *commons*, the best formula is *self-deprecating*; it convinces the commoners to stay humble and pay their taxes.

It is easy to see how “Black Lives Matter” solves all three problems at once—a kind of sinister masterpiece. But not an *unprecedented* masterpiece.

Most people know that the 20th century was characterized by universal [psychological warfare](#)—a slightly dramatic label, worth using only because it is our team's term and we won the war.

But most people expect only one kind of psychological warfare. They expect Orwell's stereotypical 20th-century dictatorship: centralized, cynical, and coercive. The evil Ministry of Truth knows the truth, but publishes only sinister and mendacious political formulas, punishing or censoring anyone who contradicts authorized Ministry personnel.

They expect a literal *cathedral*. They see no such regimented organization. They can buy all the ideas they want at any stall in the *bazaar*. Therefore—despite the evidence of their eyes—they conclude that their minds are *free*.

Some do believe their eyes—which show them a new climate of coercive repression. While these observers are right, they are wrong. The repression is the icing on the cake—the latest stage of a pathology older than anyone alive. (Also, by any historical standard, it remains quite mild.)

The fundamental historical problem of the current period is why, though we can buy our ideas from any stall in a huge open-air *bazaar*, they all seem to come from the same manufacturer—exactly as if made in some *cathedral*. Yet there is no such conspiracy—and certainly no such agency. No person or institution is coordinating the party line.

What is the source of this anomalous unanimity? What makes a nominal bazaar behave like a functional cathedral? It must be some type of what economists call *spontaneous coordination*: a Darwinian arrow. Like genes, the *formulas themselves* become in a sense the power.

In 1940, the year on the edge of the waterfall, [James Burnham](#) wrote a brilliant book called [The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom](#), which summarized and extended Mosca and three other Italian School writers.

Burnham, an ex-Trotskyite who would later help found the *National Review*—an organization whose name is still being used—saw that political formulas can infect all public narratives, disguising the meaning of every word and concept, and rendering the structure of the regime effectively unrecognizable—and practically invulnerable.

Because of political formulas, saw Burnham, in all public narratives we should expect not one meaning but two: the *functional meaning* and the *formal meaning*.

The *functional, objective, actual, or real* meaning is the perspective of some disinterested historian centuries in the future. The *formal, nominal, ceremonial, or official* meaning is the current public narrative of the official class, optimized as a political formula.

Sometimes the two match—sometimes the truth is the best propaganda. Otherwise, we are looking at a *political illusion*. Whenever we think about our world by taking a political illusion at its face value, we might as well not be thinking at all.

Elizabeth II is *ceremonially* Queen of England, as was Elizabeth I. If we thought about U.K. politics as if Elizabeth II *functionally* controlled the government, like Elizabeth I—the Queen did *this*, the Queen decided *that*—any possible analysis would be useless.

No one today falls for this charade. But England has had a more or less ceremonial monarchy since 1688: old for an illusion. Arguably, functional monarchy in England has been declining monotonically since Henry VII.

Yet for half a millennium, the royal ceremony has not decayed at all. For most of that period, the monarch has been treated ceremonially as an autocrat, but functionally as a mere celebrity—a hereditary Kardashian, with a unique airline honorific.

And for most of that period, Englishmen have taken their mostly ceremonial monarchy with almost complete seriousness. Most seem convinced by the illusion. In 1914 they died in droves for their show-pony King—in a war set up by their invisible Foreign Office.

Perhaps a comparable reality-appearance disparity is affecting our marketplace of ideas, a nominal bazaar, which appears more and more to function as a cathedral? Burnham would want us to ask. And is anything else what it seems to be?

In **2022**, the *current* year, let's try these abstract theories out on a concrete problem. What is—*wokeness*? Where did it come from? Where is it going? What does it mean?

Start with the label itself. “Wokeness” is less than 10 years old, and if the idea is the age of the word, Occam's razor is dead—since I heard all this stuff 30 years ago at Brown. We called it “PC” then.

Power hates to be named. Power has to stay ahead of its enemies. These labels evolve as private, informal codewords among cool insiders; are discovered by their enemies; and are abandoned by the insiders, who change their codes—then start to insist that they never used those codes in the first place. Power does not exist.

But its memory can be hard to delete. In **1934**, the critic [Walter Benjamin](#) wrote an important essay called “[The Author as Producer](#)” (emphases added):

**... you are all more or less familiar with it as the question of the poet's autonomy: his freedom to write whatever he may please. You are not inclined to accord him this autonomy. You believe that the current social situation forces the poet to choose whom his activity will serve. The bourgeois writer of popular stories does not acknowledge this alternative. So you show him that even without admitting it, he works in the interests of a particular class. ...**

**An advanced type of writer acknowledges this alternative. His decision is determined on the basis of the class struggle when he places himself on the side of the proletariat. But then his autonomy is done for. He directs his energies toward what is useful for the proletariat in the class struggle. We say that he espouses a *tendency*.**

**... On the one hand we should demand that the poet's work conform to the correct political tendency, on the other hand, we have the right to expect that his work be of high quality. ... I want to show you that the political tendency of a work can only be *politically correct* if it is also literarily correct. That means that the correct political tendency includes a literary tendency.**



So art can't be truly *woke* unless it's actually *good*. A laudable sentiment!

Or just a coincidence? It would be quite a coincidence—not only does the label match, so does the idea. Many still insist that “politically correct” was never used seriously.

Google has the [receipts](#): Until the '80s, “politically correct” meant what it meant in 1934—“conforming to the correct political tendency.” Campus conservatives cracked the code; “advanced” critics abandoned it; and the graph needed a new scale: While “SJW” has gone the same way and “woke” is not far behind, some labels are so perfect that no enemy's mud can stick to them.

This is a *new* phenomenon? Or multiple things, sharing one label, and adding up to a single, rising, centurylong curve? If we are not looking at one structural attribute of the American political system and its official class, Occam's razor is a butter knife.

One objective historical event that fits this timeline is a transition in the nature of the American official class, an event [Vilfredo Pareto](#) called a *circulation of the elites*. There is always an official class, but not always the same official class.

At the start of the 20th century, the official class combined wealth, status, and politics. At its end, the official class combined wealth, status, and intellect. Perhaps the reversal in the relative authority of politicians and intellectuals has caused a change in the types of ideas that succeed among intellectuals.

This *cathedral hypothesis* suggests that the marketplace of ideas becomes a monoculture when it becomes official. *Power itself* poisons the bazaar—selecting not for true ideas, but for *important* ideas—for political formulas.

The hypothesis asks three questions. First: How can a bazaar be official? Second: How does the introduction of power distort the market for ideas? Third: Once a bazaar has turned into a cathedral, how can it be fixed?

Sovereignty equals unaccountability, and our Reality Department is accountable to no one.

We first ask whether our marketplace of ideas—journalism plus academia—is *official*. Not as activities, but as institutions—*mainstream* journalism and *prestigious* academia.

*Nominally*, the answer is clear. Harvard is a weird 17th-century nonprofit. *The New York Times* is a private, Nasdaq-listed company. There is no difference in *formal* status between a *Times* reporter, a Harvard professor, and a Subway prep cook. *Nominally*, all three have a *job*, like you—not a *rank*, like the Queen.

But if a regime can hide one of its agencies in the private sector, that agency can act with public authority but private immunity—especially if the agency comes with its own *super-private* immunity written into law.



*Objectively*, an agency is official if it controls government decisions, or the government controls its decisions. A classic Orwellian state-controlled press is easy to recognize, even if the control path is informal—such as a financial subsidy. What about the other direction: a *press-controlled state*?

In the modern regime, government literally leaks power into journalism, by tolerating *leaks*: nominally unauthorized, but objectively permitted, disclosures of confidential information to the legitimate press. Leaking is both subsidy and control.

An objectively private newspaper, without objective permission to steal government secrets and sell them, could not compete with the legitimate press. On Wall Street, selective disclosure of [material nonpublic information](#) is a crime: A public company must release all information to the whole world at the same time. If the government enforced this standard on its own employees, journalism as we know it could not exist.

Yet leaking gives the press power over government as well. The source of a leak has a bureaucratic objective; the journalist who is the conduit must share that objective. Any journalist today will admit that their personal satisfaction and their professional success is a function of “impact”—a track record of “changing the world.” These are not even subtle euphemisms for power.

Once we rename legitimate journalism as a government agency, turning all its outlets into branches of the Department of Information, all these informal anomalies start to make formal sense. Of course an Information Officer has free access to official secrets. Indeed it is obvious that the Information Department is the most powerful agency in the government.

The exercise is even easier with our prestigious universities. Not only do they receive copious subsidies, they receive a direct flow of power. Since the official government employs no experts of its own to make technical decisions, these decisions must be based on “the science.” Objectively, “the science” is whatever the Truth Officers say. This Truth Department might even be stronger than the Information Department.

Putting these camouflaged agencies together, we see a Department of Reality which is unquestionably the center of power in our regime. No other agency can withstand it—certainly, no elected politician can withstand it. Sovereignty equals unaccountability, and our Reality Department is accountable to no one.

Yet it is completely decentralized—not at all like a classic Orwellian Ministry of Truth. Our Truth Department is not just a bazaar of independent institutions—it is a bazaar of bazaars, for each institution is made up of academically free professors. There is no central nervous system anywhere—no bishop and no pulpit.

Yet all the stalls in all these souks all sell the same product. Without any organization to coordinate it, the Truth Department is *synoptic*. It sees everything through the same eyes.

Not a single animal breaks from the herd; as Harvard becomes more “woke,” Yale does not become more “based.”

Once we know we are looking for a spontaneous order, the answer is easy. Consider an alternate Reality Department that is completely unofficial and powerless—whose narratives and conclusions have no effect on the world. The writers and scholars in this alternate reality could only be attracted by truth and beauty, not relevance and impact. No political formula could offer any power; none would have any selective advantage. How could anyone convince its poets that “poetic autonomy” is dangerous and bad?

This unpoisoned marketplace of ideas was the agency that our great-grandparents, fed up with their corrupt plutocrats and uncouth politicians, made into a new regime. Yet putting the bazaar in power destroyed the decentralized wisdom of crowds that made it worthy of power. The independent crowd of writers and scholars coordinated itself into a baying herd. The bazaar evolved into a cathedral.

Our cathedral looks nothing like an Orwellian dystopia. Instead of being centralized, cynical, and coercive, it is decentralized, sincere, and seductive. Yet its power to weave a narrative of universal illusion may be no less—and the illusion, not the coercion, is the heart of the dystopia. What would be wrong with a Ministry of Truth that always told the truth? Error has no rights.

The cathedral hypothesis tells us something important: Our disease of ideas cannot be cured by ideas. The problem is structural. Truth will never beat power on this tilted playing field. The winning ideas will always be the most potent and exciting political formulas, just as vitamin C will never outsell cocaine. So how do we get out of this?

Around **350 BCE**, the year of the twilight of Athens, Aristotle wrote a timeless book called *Politics*.

Aristotle saw three forms of government: rule of one, rule of the few, rule of the many. He called them *monarchy*, *oligarchy*, and *democracy*. Our Reality Department calls them: *dictatorship*, *democracy*, and *populism*.

The form of government in which intellectual institutions make the final decisions is not new. It was practiced in ancient Egypt by the scribes of Amun, in ancient China by the Confucian mandarins, in ancient Massachusetts by the Puritan preachers. Whether its doctrine teaches one god, many, or none, it is best described as *theocracy*—a branch of the broader form which is *oligarchy*, rule by an organized minority.

Since we have neither any alternate *oligarchy* to replace these institutions, nor any legitimate procedure by which it could do so, our only possible cure for “wokeness” is a change in the structural *form* of government—to one of Aristotle’s two other forms, *democracy* or *monarchy*.

Or as you know them, dear reader: *populism* or *dictatorship*. Both choices seem bizarre. These are our only objective options from here: the cathedral or the bizarre.

Populism and dictatorship can be hard to distinguish. Since no monarch is a superhero, no monarchy can invent itself. Since our republic is representative, no democracy can govern itself. So both paths involve electing politicians who take functional control of the government—electing Elizabeth I, not Elizabeth II.

The difference is in the voter's mind. The populist voter elects the politician as a servant: the follower of the popular will. The monarchist voter elects the politician as a master: the replacement for the popular will. The democratic voter *takes* power. The monarchist voter *gives* power.

The *populares* of Rome chose both Marius and Caesar: Marius as a democrat, Caesar as a monarch. Which worked better? As [one scholar](#) writes:

**The modern desire to look to Athens for lessons or encouragement for modern thought, government, or society must confront this strange paradox: the people that gave rise to and practiced ancient democracy left us almost nothing but criticism of this form of regime (on a philosophical or theoretical level). ... And what is more, the actual history of Athens in the period of its democratic government is marked by numerous failures, mistakes, and misdeeds—most infamously, the execution of Socrates—that would seem to discredit the ubiquitous modern idea that democracy leads to good government.**

2020 tested both oligarchy and democracy—or if we prefer euphemisms, liberalism and populism. Did either work well? The definition of insanity is repeating a mistake. Bizarre as it seems, human history's most common form of government by far is still out there—waiting for us to get tired of living the way we live now.

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**The alt-right is more than warmed-over white supremacy. It's that, but way way weirder.**

By: Dylan Matthews

Later today in Nevada, Hillary Clinton is scheduled to deliver a speech on the subject of "Donald Trump and his advisors' embrace of the disturbing 'alt-right' political philosophy" that she characterizes as "embracing extremism and presenting a divisive and dystopian view of America which should concern all Americans, regardless of party."

That's a striking level of prominence for a movement that until recently was extremely obscure. A movement lurking in Reddit and 4chan threads and in community blogs and forums, a movement of right-wingers who openly argue that democracy is a joke. That it's weak, it's corrupt, and it caters to the whims of a fickle electorate rather than the needs

of the citizenry. That Congress and the president must be replaced with a CEO-like figure to run the country as it truly should be, without the confused input of the masses.

For some in the movement, Donald Trump really is that figure. For the hardcore, even the most authoritarian-styled presidential candidate in decades isn't good enough.

Welcome to the alt-right.

The label blends together straight-up white supremacists, nationalists who think conservatives have sold out to globalization, and nativists who fear immigration will spur civil disarray. But at its core are the ideas of a movement known as neoreaction, and neoreaction (NRx for short) is a rejection of democracy.

Thus, within the world of neoreaction, Trump's seemingly [authoritarian](#) impulses are a feature, not a bug. The only real problem is he may not go far enough. NRxer [Michael Perilloux](#), for example, complained that Trump wouldn't pull off the kind of power grab that many of his critics fear him capable of:

Is Trump likely to cancel the constitution, declare martial law, declare himself emperor to be succeeded by his children, nationalize the banks and media, hang some of the worst criminal bankers, send the Israelis back to Israel, call the National Guard to roll tanks into Harvard Yard, place all communists and other anti-American elements under house arrest, retire all government employees, replace the USG with the Trump Organization, and begin actually rebuilding America and western civilization?

Short of that, he is simply another phenomenon within the arcane workings of the system, as worthy of support as the ebb and flow of the tides. Surely, the unprecedented nature of his campaign warrants excited interest as a historical case-study and promising fore-shock of a true restoration, but he is not the king, and we have a ways to go yet.

Others on the alt-right hew closer to Trump, though. The alt-right has become a major base of Trump's online support, causing Trump observers from [BuzzFeed](#) to [National Review](#) to take notice. They're striking fear into the hearts of the mainstream rightists.

"They are the vehicles by which anti-liberal and dehumanizing sentiments become legitimized in conservative circles," Washington Free Beacon editor [Matthew Continetti](#) explained in an essay for Commentary. In an essay for the Federalist called ["You Can't Whitewash the Alt-Right's Bigotry."](#) Cathy Young assails the movement as, "a mix of old bigotries and new identity and victimhood politics adapted for the straight white male."

The alt-right is often dismissed as white supremacist Trump supporters with Twitter accounts, and they are certainly that. But spend some time talking to key players and reading the movement's central texts, as I did, and you'll find it's more than a simple rebranding of the white nationalist movement. It's the product of the intersection of a longstanding, long-marginalized part of the conservative movement with both the most high-minded and the basest elements of internet culture. It's a mutated revival of a

monster William F. Buckley thought he killed in the early 1990s, given new energy by the web.

And it's making its impact felt in a big way this election. In the past, when mainstream conservatives have gone up against racist, conspiratorial elements on the right, they have emerged the victors. Buckley successively marginalized the John Birch Society in the 1950s, and then Pat Buchanan and his followers in the 1990s. People like Continetti and Young are trying to do the same thing to the alt-right. But with huge amounts of online energy behind the movement, and Trump this year's GOP nominee, it's not clear that the mainstream will win.

### **Elon Musk for king**

Let's start with the most theoretically minded, and probably most interesting, branch of the alt-right: the neoreactionaries.

In 2007, a writer with the pen name Mencius Moldbug (née Curtis Yarvin) started a blog called [Unqualified Reservations](#). He proceeded to write essays that would inspire a whole movement of online political writers. The neoreactionaries drew inspiration from earlier paleoconservatives like Pat Buchanan and Joseph Sobran but with a tech-y twist. Moldbug, for one, is a veteran Bay Area programmer currently working on a startup he cofounded called [Urbit](#).

And the core contention of Moldbug and the other NRx thinkers is one that's been common in technolibertarian circles for a long time: Democracy is a failure.

"Democracy is — as most writers before the 19th century agreed — an ineffective and destructive system of government," [Moldbug writes](#). Moldbug doesn't actually like the term "democracy." He prefers "demotism," or rule of the people, a label under which he sweeps modern-day developed democracies like the US or Western Europe but also the former Soviet bloc, Nazism, and fascism. "Universalist lawful democracy is the least demotist of demotisms, Demotism Lite if you will," [he writes](#). "Compared to Communism and Nazism, there's much to be said for it. But this is a rather low bar."

The purpose of government, in the view of neoreactionaries, isn't to represent the will of the people. It's to *govern well*, full stop. "From the perspective of its subjects, what counts is not who runs the government but what the government does," Moldbug explains. "Good government is effective, lawful government. Bad government is ineffective, lawless government. How anyone reasonable could disagree with these statements is quite beyond me. And yet clearly almost everyone does."

And democratic government, the neoreactionaries insist, is not effective, lawful government. Because the will of the people is arbitrary and varying, it cannot have the consistency of real, durable law, and it creates incentives for wasteful and, worse still, left-wing government. Moldbug started as an Austrian-school libertarian, and most neoreactionaries have general small-government sympathies and express a fear that

democracy inevitably leads to ever greater taxation and redistribution, and otherwise encroaches on individual liberty.

"Democracy and 'progressive democracy' are synonymous, and indistinguishable from the expansion of the state," [Nick Land](#), the next most influential neoreactionary thinker after Moldbug, writes. "Since winning elections is overwhelmingly a matter of vote buying, and society's informational organs (education and media) are no more resistant to bribery than the electorate, a thrifty politician is simply an incompetent politician, and the democratic variant of Darwinism quickly eliminates such misfits from the gene pool." The result is a government that grows larger and larger.

Moldbug is even [blunter](#): "Cthulhu may swim slowly. But he only swims left."

This is a strain of thinking that more mainstream libertarians have expressed in greater and greater numbers of late. In 2007, George Mason economist Bryan Caplan argued in [The Myth of the Rational Voter](#) that democracy will inevitably lead to suboptimal economic policy because the general public is systematically biased against markets, increased productivity, and trade with foreigners. Peter Thiel, the libertarian billionaire who co-founded PayPal and Palantir and was the first outsider to invest in Facebook, [declared in 2009](#), "I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible."

But while mainstream libertarians are outspoken about democracy's deficiencies, they rarely propose an alternative. The neoreactionaries do: monarchy. Well, not monarchy specifically, but some kind of nondemocratic system with rule-driven succession. Moldbug likes to use the term ["formalism."](#) or ["neocameralism."](#) a reference to "cameralism," the philosophy of government embraced by Frederick the Great of Prussia. Moldbug's vision is corporatist, where instead of a nation belonging to a royal family, it belongs to corporation with shareholders to whom it is accountable. "To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country," he writes.

When asked who should lead it, Moldbug's tech roots come through. "It's easy to say 'put Elon [Musk] in charge, he'll figure it out,' and he might well," he tells me via email.

Libertarians also tend to be big fans of modernity, and despite its affinities to the tech world, neoreaction really, really is not. Neoreactionaries believe that for a long time — maybe since the French Revolution — things have been going to shit. Moldbug likes to trot out anecdotes about crime in the Victorian era to make his point. Here's a description of 1876 London [he cites](#):

There are, of course, in most great cities, some quarters of evil repute in which assault and robbery are now and again committed. ... But any man of average stature and strength may wander about on foot and alone, at any hour of the day or the night, through the greatest of all cities and its suburbs, along the high roads, and through unfrequented country lanes, and never have so much as the thought of danger thrust upon him, unless he goes out of his way to court it.

The point is clear: Do *you* feel that safe in 21st-century America? If not, could it be the case that we're regressing as time wears on, and not progressing?

"The present system has every incentive to portray itself as superior to all past systems," the neoreactionary [Michael Anissimov writes](#). "Reactionaries point out this is not the case, and actually see present society in a state of severe decline, pointing to historically [high levels of crime](#), [suicide](#), [government](#) and [household debt](#), [increasing time preference](#), and low levels of [civic participation](#) and [self-reported happiness](#) as a few examples of a current cultural and historical crisis. The [demographic crisis in First World countries](#) is cited as another example of decline."

This countering of the narrative of constant progress also makes it easier for the neoreactionaries to defend actually existing monarchy in the past. Most people living today think of contemporary democratic regimes as *clearly* better than, say, England as ruled by Elizabeth I. [Moldbug believes no such thing](#):

Hitler and Stalin are abortions of the democratic era - cases of what [Jacob Talmon](#) called totalitarian democracy. This is easily seen in their unprecedented efforts to control public opinion, through both propaganda and violence. Elizabeth's legitimacy was a function of her identity - it could be removed only by killing her. Her regime was certainly not the stablest government in history, and nor was it entirely free from propaganda, but she had no need to terrorize her subjects into supporting her.

If governments really have gotten less free, and life really has gotten worse in recent centuries, then it's a short leap from those conclusions to thinking that democracy is a lie and absolute monarchy has a lot going for it. (Note that these empirical claims are, well, not true. Scott Alexander [explains well here](#); his [devil's advocate account of reactionary beliefs](#) is also well worth your time.)

## **Neoreaction, race, and the Cathedral**

The other distinguishing conflict between the neoreactionaries and the libertarians is that neoreaction places huge value on group membership and group loyalty. Most modern libertarians are individualists, motivated by a desire to prevent the masses from oppressing the individual through the mechanism of democratic government.

Neoreactionaries are not individualists. They think in terms of social structure and order, and view social classes or races as the units determining the future of society, much as Marxists speak not of individual workers and capitalists but of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as a whole. They are tribalists, and for the most part — let's not mince words — they are racists.

Moldbug in particular views American society as a kind of [Indian-style caste system](#). He views the Democratic Party as a coalition of Brahmins (liberal intellectual types who went to fancy schools), Dalits (poor, mostly black or Latino people), and Helots (Mexican immigrant workers). "What the Dalit alliance gives progressives is more than



just a vote bank," [he writes](#). "What the Dalits are is muscle, a militia, a mob. ... Basically, the Brahmins have every possible Machiavellian interest in encouraging an invasion of Third World barbarians. The more, the nastier, the better. Their real hereditary enemy is the native barbarian — the half-civilized Vaisya, the ignorant megachurched Okie redneck, the Huckabee voter, the Bircher and McCarthyite, America Firster and Coolidge voter."

Moldbug has [rejected white nationalism](#) by name ([his father is Jewish](#), for one thing) but only in the course of praising many aspects of it: "Although I am not a white nationalist, I am not exactly allergic to the stuff ... I believe white nationalism is a very ineffective political device for solving the very real problems about which it complains."

He is sympathetic to arguments for black racial inferiority. "Ever since Mill wrote his response to Carlyle on [The Negro Question](#) and probably well before, writers in the English Protestant tradition have been defending the blatantly theological proposition that 'all men are created equal,'" he [snidely commented](#) on a 2008 blog post. "In the absence of any evidence for this proposition, one can always assert that evidence for the contrary is unconvincing. Note that exactly the same rhetorical strategy can prove the existence of God, or the Flying Spaghetti Monster for that matter."

Just as importantly, he and other neoreactionaries insist that contrary perspectives — support for racist governments, opposition to black liberation movements, etc. — are being viciously suppressed by liberal elites in the US: "even just suggest it," Moldbug writes, "and you'll see what it means to have enemies."

Neoreactionaries are obsessed with taking down what Moldbug refers to as "the Cathedral": a complex of Ivy League universities, the New York Times and other elite media institutions, Hollywood, and more that function to craft and mold public opinion so as to silence opposing viewpoints.

Park MacDougald, in an [excellent piece on Nick Land's brand of neoreaction](#), describes the Cathedral as a "media-academic mind-control apparatus." I actually think the best analogy is to the role the patriarchy plays in radical feminist epistemology, or the role of "ideology" in Marxism. Neo-reaction demands a total rethinking of the way the world works, and such attempts generally only succeed if they can attack the sources of knowledge in society and offer a theory for why they're systematically fallible.

That's how feminist scholars have (I think correctly) undermined pseudoscientific attempts to paint female servility as natural, or male aggression and violence as inevitable and ultimately acceptable. Yes, the argument goes, these ideas have had elite supporters in the past, but those elites were tainted by institutional sexism. Similarly, Marxists are always alert to how media produced by big corporations can be tilted to serve those corporations' class interests. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur once helpfully dubbed this kind of argument the ["hermeneutics of suspicion."](#)



Neoreaction takes this approach and flips it on its head. No, it's not institutional sexism or bourgeois class interest that's perverting our knowledge base. It's institutional progressivism, and fear of the revival of monarchism, tribalism, and prejudice.

That makes it a lot easier for neoreactionaries to defend their narrative of Western decline and democratic failure. If you look at the numbers, the Whig theory of history — with some faults and starts, [everything's getting better](#) — appears to be basically right. Extreme poverty is at historic lows, hunger and infant mortality are plummeting, life expectancy is going up, war is on the decline, education is more available, homicide rates are down, etc.

But what if those numbers are *all lies* produced by biased Cathedral sources in academia and propagated by Cathedral tools in the media like Vox? *What then?*

### **Before the neoreactionaries, there were the paleocons**

The neoreactionaries are a distinctly '00s and '10s phenomenon, but they draw on the racist and traditionalist arguments of a much older movement: paleoconservatism.

The term "paleoconservatism" is a retronym coined in the 1980s to characterize a brand of conservatism that was by then going extinct, a brand exemplified by Robert Taft, the Ohio senator and legendary isolationist who lost the 1952 Republican nomination to Dwight Eisenhower, and by Pat Buchanan in his 1992, 1996, and 2000 presidential runs.

Paleocons agree with mainstream conservatism on social issues — they tend to be stridently anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ rights, pro-school prayer, and disproportionately traditionalist Catholic — and on the evils of the welfare state, but part ways on international affairs, including immigration, trade, and warfare.

Paleocons are largely isolationist, warning America against foreign entanglements and dismissing neocon attempts at democracy promotion as hubristic and doomed to failure. They were overwhelmingly against the Iraq War, and tend to be heavily critical of Israel. They're also more fervently nationalist than mainstream Republicans. That translates into a *very* negative view of immigration, both due to its perceived economic harm to Americans and because of the "damage" it does to American culture, and into more support for tariffs and trade protection.

But since Buchanan, the movement hasn't had a loud national voice. After 9/11, paleocon isolationism became anathema among conservative intellectuals and politicians. Mainstream conservatives like George W. Bush and Marco Rubio embraced immigration reform that offered unauthorized immigrants citizenship. Free trade opposition within the GOP went extinct.

There are a number of reasons the paleocons lost ground, but a big one was that the movement had a huge racism problem. In particular, skepticism of foreign entanglements

and of the alliance with Israel specifically would occasionally bleed into overt anti-Semitism.

The saga of Joseph Sobran is a case in point. A longtime columnist at National Review, he was fired by William F. Buckley in 1993 following years of open clashes about his attitude toward Israel and Jewish people in general. In 1991, Buckley had dedicated an entire issue of the magazine to a 40,000-word essay he wrote, ["In Search of Anti-Semitism."](#) in which he condemned Buchanan (then challenging President George H.W. Bush in the GOP primaries) and his employee Sobran for anti-Jewish prejudice. Buckley had a point. Sobran really was a world-class anti-Semite, writing in one National Review column, "If Christians were sometimes hostile to Jews, that worked two ways. Some rabbinical authorities held that it was permissible to cheat and even kill Gentiles."

After leaving NR, Sobran's writing, in the words of fellow paleocon and [American Conservative editor Scott McConnell](#), "deteriorated into the indefensible." He started speaking at conferences organized by famed Holocaust denier David Irving and the denial group [Institute for Historical Review](#), asking at the latter, "Why on earth is it 'anti-Jewish' to conclude from the evidence that the standard numbers of Jews murdered are inaccurate, or that the Hitler regime, bad as it was in many ways, was not, in fact, intent on racial extermination?"

He wasn't alone. John Derbyshire, perhaps the last real paleocon left at National Review, was [canned](#) in 2012 after [writing a piece](#) addressed to children full of advice like, "Avoid concentrations of blacks not all known to you personally," "Stay out of heavily black neighborhoods," and, "If planning a trip to a beach or amusement park at some date, find out whether it is likely to be swamped with blacks on that date."

After that, Derbyshire started writing at VDARE, an anti-immigration white nationalist site named after Virginia Dare, the first white Christian born in British North America. The article that got him fired wasn't actually posted at National Review but at Taki's Magazine, an outlet run by millionaire paleocon Taki Theodoracopulos that was formerly edited by outspoken white supremacist Richard B. Spencer and has run articles by Theodoracopulos [in support of the Greek neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn](#).

This has been the trend for paleoconservative writing in the past decade or two. It's largely turned from mainstream conservative outfits to openly racist venues like VDARE, Taki's, [American Renaissance](#), and the [Occidental Observer](#). Admirably, the American Conservative has held the line and resisted crossing over into open white nationalism, but they're basically alone in that.

Meanwhile, Pat Buchanan, the paleocons' great political hope, has more or less always been this openly bigoted. In 1990 he [infamously insisted](#) that 850,000 Jews couldn't have died at Treblinka from diesel fumes. In 2007 he [declared](#), "If you want to know ethnicity and power in the United States Senate, 13 members of the Senate are Jewish folks who are from 2 percent of the population. That is where real power is at." In 2008, he wrote an entire book arguing that the [Second World War was basically Britain's fault and Hitler](#)

[was largely blameless](#). So it's no surprise that he, too, has been increasingly marginalized, [losing his MSNBC position](#) in 2012.

The neoreactionaries are not simply heirs to the paleoconservatives. The paleocons are ultimately more religious, and more loyal to the US Constitution and basic small-r republican ideals. But the neoreactionaries share with the paleocons a belief in tribalism and racial difference, and a deep sense that the mainstream is trying to crush them. Joseph Sobran didn't use the term "Cathedral," but he'd surely think it to blame for his marginalization.

### **And then there are the channers**

The leading actual neoreactionaries are not fans of Donald Trump. "Trump appears to have no ideology at all and very little historical/intellectual awareness of his context," Moldbug — who now just goes by his birth name, Curtis Yarvin — writes in an email.

"I would love to see a CEO with a real track record of strategic execution in a large enterprise — an Elon Musk or Jeff Bezos — running against Trump. I don't even think the ideology matters that much; once someone competent got in that office, and felt a real sense of both authority and responsibility, ideology would start to matter a lot less."

Instead, the alt-right's affiliation with Trump comes from another group that blended paleocon-ish ideas with internet culture. I speak, of course, of [4chan](#).

4chan is mostly still a forum for trolling and random nonsense. It was started to discuss anime, and insofar as it's been political it's been in a not strictly left-right way, and usually through the avenue of Anonymous, the activist group that split off from 4chan to do direct action. Protesting Scientology and [leaking information on the Steubenville rapists](#) are definitely political acts, but they're not identifiably left-wing or right-wing.

But in recent years, a vocal right-wing contingent has popped up. As [New York magazine's Brian Feldman](#) explains, part of this is an artifact of 4chan gaining popularity and its popular catchall board — /b/ — losing ground to alternatives, notably /pol/, or the "Politically Incorrect" chat board. "To the extent that there is a shared political ideology across /pol/, it's a heavily ironic mix of garden-variety white supremacy and neo-reactionary movements," Feldman writes.

"Most days," the [Daily Beast's Jacob Siegel](#) writes, "/pol/ resembles nothing so much as [white supremacist blog] The Daily Stormer with the signal to noise dial turned only slightly." The Southern Poverty Law Center has taken notice, with fellow Keegan Hanks telling Siegel, "You can't understate 4chan's role. I constantly see 4chan being mentioned by the more Internet- and tech-savvy guys in the white nationalist movement. They're getting their content from 4chan."

Hankes has noticed this trend on Reddit as well, noting in a [Gawker essay](#) that "Reddit increasingly is providing a home for anti-black racists — and some of the most virulent and violent propaganda around."

This has channeled into the Trump movement. [Milo Yiannopoulos](#), the Breitbart writer and major Trump defender who's perhaps the most vocal exponent of alt-rightism online, famously employs an army of interns, a lot of whom he says are "[young 4chan guys](#)." In [their own alt-right explainer](#), Yiannopoulos and co-author Allum Bokhari argue that /pol/'s alt-righters have embraced racism purely for shock value:

**Just as the kids of the 60s shocked their parents with promiscuity, long hair and rock'n'roll, so too do the alt-right's young meme brigades shock older generations with outrageous caricatures, from the Jewish "Shlomo Shekelburg" to "Remove Kebab," an internet in-joke about the Bosnian genocide. Are they actually bigots? No more than death metal devotees in the 80s were actually Satanists. For them, it's simply a means to fluster their grandparents ... Young people perhaps aren't primarily attracted to the alt-right because they're instinctively drawn to its ideology: they're drawn to it because it seems fresh, daring and funny, while the doctrines of their parents and grandparents seem unexciting, overly-controlling and overly-serious.**

For good measure, they quote Moldbug/Yarvin: "If you spend 75 years building a pseudo-religion around anything – an ethnic group, a plaster saint, sexual chastity or the Flying Spaghetti Monster – don't be surprised when clever 19-year-olds discover that insulting it is now the funniest fucking thing in the world. Because it is."

This branch of the alt-right has also played an important role in the [Gamergate movement](#), an ongoing effort to harass women in the video game industry until they shut up about equality and representation. Yiannopoulos, who before the controversy [called gamers](#) "pungent beta male bollock-scratchers and twelve-year-olds," jumped on it as a cause with reactionary potential. "GamerGate is remarkable — and attracts the interest of people like me — because it represents perhaps the first time in the last decade or more that a significant incursion has been made in the culture wars against guilt-mongerers, nannies, authoritarians and far-Left agitators," [he wrote](#) in late 2014.

The affinity between gamers and right politics makes sense. "It's not hard to see why this ideology would catch-on with white male geeks," [Klint Finley](#) writes in his excellent explainer on neoreaction. "It tells them that they are the natural rulers of the world, but that they are simultaneously being oppressed by a secret religious order. And the more media attention is paid to workplace inequality, gentrification and the wealth gap, the more their bias is confirmed."

"While GamerGate started off as a very diverse, vocal opponent to what they saw was unethical journalism (before it was debunked), many of the anonymous /pol/ rightists would take advantage of its anti-left character by creating sock-puppets," an [anonymous](#)

[4chan](#) and [ex-Gamergater](#) wrote last year. "Today it is hard to find a 4chan user that doesn't have an attachment to far right politics."

And this enthusiasm for far-right politics has bled into Trumpism. JaredTSwift, an alt-righter who got his start on 4chan, gushed to [Motherboard's Oliver Lee](#), "Trump was meme-able and entertaining, and something like a ban on Muslim immigration would never have been considered before him."

r/The\_Donald — the alt-right dominated home of Trump supporters on Reddit — [racked up 52 million pageviews in March](#), way more than the 35 million at r/SandersForPresident. The driving force behind the subreddit is CisWhiteMaelstrom, a user whose very name includes the kind of purposefully offensive trolling that defines the Channer alt-right. "Clicking through r/The\_Donald is like walking into a rowdy clubhouse for (mostly) men who feel under siege from 'political correctness,'" [MSNBC's Benjy Sarlin reports](#). Scrolling through the Reddit page, one sees reference after reference to ["cuckservatives"](#), an alt-right term of art which analogizes mainstream conservatives to cuckolded husbands.

### **Does the alt-right matter for Donald Trump?**

While the alt-right constitutes a big share of Trump's online support — if you've ever criticized Trump on Twitter, you've probably dealt with alt-rightists — the internet is not the real world. They're not a necessary part of Trump's electoral coalition. They're not organized enough to make policy demands of a policy administration, and too disillusioned by mainstream politics to make such demands in any case.

Insofar as the alt-right's role in the Trump movement matters, it matters because it suggests a route for Trumpism to survive past Trump. If the polls are right, Trump is set to go down in fiery defeat in November, crushed by Hillary Clinton.

But win or lose, Trump has shown that overt contempt for racial equality, naked tribalistic appeals to white racial solidarity, and vaguely authoritarian rhetoric can add up to a *very successful* campaign, at least within the Republican Party. That gives the alt-right new relevance, and helps convince its members that America might be ready for their ideas.

It also opens the door for a more sophisticated future candidate, one reared on alt-right arguments rather than stumbling into them the way Trump has. Such a candidate could effectively whip up an alt-right base of support, but potentially use it more intelligently and effectively than Trump. If this sounds fantastical, it's worth remembering that open white supremacists like Strom Thurmond and James Eastland were serving in the US Senate 40, 30, even 20 years ago. Our current period without avowed white nationalists in power, backed by an organized constituency of the same, is the exception, not the norm.

"Trump is a flashlight. Trump shines a light on forgotten truths," the [neoreactionary Ryan Landry writes](#). "Trump shines a light on the fact that we truly have reached a point where a candidate who implicitly advocates for whites is considered dangerous and a cause for protest. ... Those on the edge have known this anti-white mania is out there, but the protest-riot made it real for millions more."

That's exactly it. Neoreaction is on the edge, as is the alt-right as a whole, but Trump is not. Trump is decidedly mainstream. He's scaring mainstream conservative outlets like National Review and Commentary. And like Gamergate before him, he suggests that the ideas of neoreaction and alt-rightism could break through, and that candidates supported by alt-right elements have a bright future ahead of them.

*From Vox, August 26, 2016*

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### **The Anti-Democracy Movement Influencing the Right**

By: Rosie Gray

White House chief strategist Steve Bannon has been in contact via intermediaries with Curtis Yarvin, [Politico Magazine](#) reported this week. Yarvin, a software engineer and blogger, writes under the name Mencius Moldbug. His anti-egalitarian arguments have formed the basis for a movement called "neoreaction."

The main thrust of Yarvin's thinking is that democracy is a bust; rule by the people doesn't work, and doesn't lead to good governance. He has described it as an "ineffective and destructive" form of government, which he associates with "war, tyranny, destruction and poverty." Yarvin's ideas, along with those of the English philosopher Nick Land, have provided a structure of political theory for parts of the white-nationalist movement calling itself the alt-right. The alt-right can be seen as a political movement; neoreaction, which adherents refer to as NRx, is a philosophy. At the core of that philosophy is a rejection of democracy and an embrace of autocratic rule.

The fact that Bannon reportedly reads and has been in contact with Yarvin is another sign of the extent to which the Trump era has brought previously fringe right-wing ideologies into the spotlight. It has brought new energy into a right that is questioning and actively trying to dismantle existing orthodoxies—even ones as foundational as democracy. The alt-right, at this point, is well-known, while NRx has remained obscure. But with one of the top people in the White House paying attention, it seems unlikely to remain obscure for long.

Yarvin's posts on history, race, and governance are written in a style that is detached and edgy, to say the least. "What's so bad about the Nazis?" he asked in a blog post in 2008, writing, "we are taught that the Nazis were bad because they committed mass murder, to wit, the Holocaust. On the other hand... (a): none of the parties fighting against the Nazis, including us, seems to have given much of a damn about the Jews or the Holocaust. (b): one of the parties on our side was the Soviet Union, whose record of mass murder was known at the time and was at least as awful as the Nazis'."



“It should be obvious that, although I am not a white nationalist, I am not exactly allergic to the stuff,” Yarvin wrote in 2007. In a [2009 post](#) about the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle’s defense of slavery, he argued that some races are more suited to slavery than others.

Yarvin’s blog has been mostly inactive since 2014. He now is focusing on a startup, Urbit, whose investors [reportedly](#) include Paypal co-founder and Trump backer Peter Thiel. (Thiel has himself questioned some of the fundamentals of American politics, [writing](#) in 2009, “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.”)

For a group of people whose writings tend towards the verbose, neoreactionaries don’t show much interest in talking to reporters. Yarvin declined to cooperate when I reached out to ask about his alleged contact with Bannon, instead choosing to try to troll me into believing a Twitter user called @BronzeAgePerv is his contact with the White House.

“Think you should speak directly to my WH cutout / cell leader,” Yarvin said in an email. “I’ve never met him and don’t know his identity, we just DM on Twitter. He’s said to be ‘very close’ to Bannon. There are several levels, but most people just start out with his public persona.” @BronzeAgePerv’s avatar is of a muscular, shirtless man and his account’s biography reads: “Steppe barbarian. Nationalist, Fascist, Nudist Bodybuilder! Purification of world. Revolt of the damned. Destruction of the cities!”

“I know nothing about BAP personally, except that he lifts. DM him. He may not give you any info but he always responds,” Yarvin said. “Apparently there’s a big underground movement of right-wing bodybuilders -- thousands. Their plan is to surface spectacularly this April, in a choreographed flash demo on the Mall. They’ll be totally nude, but wearing MAGA hats. Goal is to intimidate Congress with pure masculine show of youth, energy. Trump is said to know, will coordinate with powerful EOs...” Yarvin [denied to Vox](#) that he has been in any contact with Bannon.

“Appreciate the message,” came the response from the Hestia Society, which is one of the newer NRx hubs. “Unfortunately, we prefer not to do interviews. Neoreaction.net might have more of what you’re looking for.”

“Thanks for the email,” wrote Hadley Bishop, the editor of Social Matter, another node of NRx online thinking. “Social Matter does not give interviews. We’ve said everything we would like to say at [neoreaction.net](#).”

“No,” said Nick Steves, the pseudonym used by one NRxer well-known within the movement. “It will only lend false credence to the misleading facts and outright errors you will inevitably print irrespective of my involvement.”

Asked what he thought I would print, Steves explained that “115 IQ people are not generally well equipped to summarize 160 IQ people” and that only one journalist, Vox’s Dylan Matthews, had “come close to permitting NRx to speak for itself.”

“You DO understand that, by the NRx view, journos occupy a major seat of power, viz. manufacturers of consent, in the current structure,” Steves said. “Thus you see why you are the enemy. No hard feelings of course. I’m sure you’re a very nice person. But politics is war by other means, and war is, by definition, existential.” (Steves has written a [“code of conduct”](#) for neoreactionaries that includes the rule, “Don’t talk to the press about Neoreaction.”)

So, on to neoreaction.net, which states up front that “Neoreaction is a political worldview and intellectual movement based largely on the ideas of Mencius Moldbug.”

The worldview espouses an explicitly authoritarian idea, a rejection of the post-Enlightenment vision of a world that is continually improving as it becomes more democratic. Per the website’s authors:

The core of our problem is that there is no one with the secure authority to fix things. The core of our solution is to find a man, and put him in charge, with a real chain of command, and a clear ownership structure.

Real leadership would undertake a proper corporate restructuring of USG: Pardon and retire all employees of the old regime; formalize obligations as simple financial instruments; nationalize and restructure the banks, media, and universities; and begin the long slow process of organic cultural recovery from centuries of dysfunction.

Who will be the leaders? Well:

The only viable path to restoration of competent government is the simple and hard way:

1. Become worthy.
2. Accept power.
3. Rule.

Neoreaction’s touchstones include the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle, a key progenitor of the “Great Man” theory of history; the Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek, a central influence on the American libertarian movement; and Bertrand de Jouvenel, a 1930s-era French political theorist.

Neoreaction is an ideology obsessed with both the mechanics of power and autocratic governance, and with aesthetics. Some neoreactionaries have a Tumblr devoted to their aesthetic vision, called [Post-Anathema](#). The images tend to be futurist and hyper-masculine; soldiers with guns, tanks, spaceships, Greek gods. Cathedrals, too, a seeming reference to the Catholic traditionalist strain of the movement (“CRx”) and which, intentionally or not, calls to mind Moldbug’s use of “the Cathedral” to denote the elite academic and media establishment.

If it’s a little in the weeds compared to the by-now-familiar alt-right aesthetic—Pepe the frog, flashy haircuts, and the like—that’s on purpose. Neoreaction is explicitly and



purposefully opaque, and has no interest in appealing to a wider audience. This puts it at odds with some of the alt-right or “new right” leaders who seek to take their ideas mainstream.

“NRx was a prophetic warning about the rise of the Alt-Right,” said Nick Land, the English philosopher whose Dark Enlightenment series is considered a foundational neoreactionary text. “As a populist, and in significant ways anti-capitalist movement, the Alt-Right is a very different beast to NRx.”

“The Alt-Right, I guess, is a 'movement'—NRx isn't,” Land said in an email when asked about how influential NRx is at this point. “As far as influence is concerned, it's still probably a little early to tell. I think it's fair to say that early signs are surprisingly NRx-positive. That's to say, the libertarian themes of the administration (de-regulation, appointments that “question the very existence of their own departments ...) are far stronger than might have been expected from the Trump election platform. Also, Steven [sic] Bannon is looking far less of an Alt-Right sympathizer than had been suggested (‘Judeo-Christian’ is a term that gives them the hives, even if his defense of Capitalism is far more hedged than NRx ex-libertarian types would see as ideal).”

Land says Bannon has never reached out to him. “I have no reason to think he is familiar with my work.”

Bannon, the former chairman of Breitbart News, a site which under his tenure [wrote indignantly](#) about Yarvin being barred from a programming conference, didn't respond to requests for comment. Of course, his reported contact with Moldbug isn't the only sign of his radical vision; in public statements over the years, he has described a view of a world undergoing nothing less than a clash of civilizations, featuring a struggle between globalism and a downtrodden working class as well as between the Islamic and Western worlds.

The hiring of Michael Anton, a former George W. Bush speechwriter, to serve on the National Security Council staff is another indicator of this White House's openness to decidedly non-traditional ideas on the right. Anton was [recently revealed](#) by *The Weekly Standard* as the writer behind Publius Decius Mus, the pseudonym Anton used for a widely circulated [essay](#) in September titled “The Flight 93 Election.”

In “The Flight 93 Election,” Anton compared the American voter's choice in November 2016 to that of the passengers on Flight 93 on September 11. “2016 is the Flight 93 election: charge the cockpit or you die,” Anton began. “You may die anyway. You—or the leader of your party—may make it into the cockpit and not know how to fly or land the plane. There are no guarantees.” The essay is a bracing middle finger to conservatism, written with verve, and it inspired a critique on the NRx site Social Matter by the pseudonymous writer PT Carlo, who liked the essay except for one thing. “The only problem with Decius' radical and brilliant analysis isn't that its assessment of the situation is incorrect, but that its prescriptions aren't nearly radical enough,” Carlo wrote. (The reaction among movement conservatives was much less enthusiastic. “Grotesquely

irresponsible,” [wrote](#) *National Review*’s Jonah Goldberg. “A shoddy straw man,” [offered](#) Ben Shapiro.)

Anton, before his unmasking, was identified by [The New Yorker](#) as one of the intellectual architects of Trumpism; [The Huffington Post](#) on Wednesday highlighted some of his more controversial writings, such as a defense of Charles Lindbergh’s America First Committee as “unfairly maligned” and an assertion that “Islam and the modern West are incompatible.” Anton has also argued that diversity is “a source of weakness, tension and disunion.”

In a way, it is Moldbug who presaged Trump more than anyone else, in his writings defining his “neo-cameralist” philosophy based on Frederick the Great of Prussia’s “cameralist” administrative model. In 2007, Moldbug [outlined](#) a kind of corporation-state being run as a business: “To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country. A state should be managed, like any other large business, by dividing logical ownership into negotiable shares, each of which yields a precise fraction of the state’s profit. (A well-run state is very profitable.) Each share has one vote, and the shareholders elect a board, which hires and fires managers.” Moldbug even envisioned a kind of CEO at the top: “The personality cult of dictatorship is quite misleading - a totalitarian dictator has little in common with a neocameralist CEO, or even a cameralist monarch.”

In Moldbug’s absence, new NRx nodes have sprung up: Hestia, Social Matter, and Thermidor. The post-Moldbug neoreactionaries still draw on his foundational writings, but the movement is morphing and splintering, and characterized by a conflict between nationalists and “techno-commercialists.” There is, as well, a history of mutual distrust between some alt-right and NRx figures.

“NRx doesn’t think the Alt-Right (in America) is very serious. It’s an essentially Anti-Anglo-American philosophy, in its (Duginist) core, which puts a firm ceiling on its potential,” Land said. “But then, the NRx analysis is that the age of the masses is virtually over. Riled-up populist movements are part of what is passing, rather than of what is slouching toward Bethlehem to be born.” (By “Duginist,” Land was referring to the ideas of the controversial Russian political scientist Aleksandr Dugin.)

Through a friend, I connected with @kantbot2000, a NRx-connected tweeter who was willing to talk over Twitter direct message. (Kant as in Immanuel.)

Kantbot complained that NRx is dead. “Visit the social matter forums, its an inactive scene,” he said.

“The European New Right stuff that [Alt-Right leader Richard] Spencer peddles is secondary to the impulse given to the altright by Moldbug and the other [techno-commercialists],” Kantbot wrote. “That impulse stresses good governance over ideological consideration. Good governance perhaps consisting of the dismantling of progressive institutions.”

“Moldbug is still very active,” Kantbot said. “More so than he lets on.” Kantbot said Moldbug is “reading comments, lurking.”

Under his real name, Yarvin did a [Reddit AMA](#) last year about his start-up Urbit, and addressed his Moldbug writings.

“It's actually quite possible to recognize that human population genetics has a lot of impact on politics and history, and also recognize that human population genetics has nothing at all to do with your individual, personal and professional human relationships. Nor does politics,” Yarvin wrote. He added that he has lots of progressive friends.

“Would anyone care about the 2016 election if Trump weren't running?” Yarvin wrote. “And Trump is a throwback from the past, not an omen of the future. The future is grey anonymous bureaucrats, more Brezhnev every year.”

Kantbot began as an atheist Democrat, he said, but grew disillusioned.

“The only thing outside of that space is conservatism and right-wing movements,” he said. “People like moldbug are going beyond that though, opening up possibilities of new cultural spaces that break out of that stagnant pattern, that can synthesize both progressive and conservative views in new ways.”

Kantbot warned that I might also be tempted by “the forbidden fruit” of these ideas. “Be careful or you too may be tempted to walk down the dark path of the altright,” he wrote. “This is what thousands of people are taking to the streets to protest. This is the dark intellectual center.”

*From The Atlantic, February 10, 2017*

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### **Curtis Yarvin schools Tucker in 'neoreaction'**

By: Ben Sixsmith

Among the shouty pundits and greasy politicians who litter cable news like rubbish in a landfill, Curtis Yarvin was an unlikely fit. Looking like Silicon Valley's biggest Grateful Dead fan, one of the founding thinkers behind “neoreaction” appeared on *Tucker Carlson Today* to discuss his theories of power.

Yarvin's opinions were once sufficiently esoteric and unspeakable that he wrote under a pseudonym, “Mencius Moldbug”, on his now defunct blog *Unqualified Reservations*, where he wrote hundreds of thousands of words of political theory in dense, allusive, and occasionally playful prose.

There, on the murky fringes of the blogosphere, he assailed egalitarian and democratic ideas, and promoted quasi-monarchic corporate governance. Western institutions, Yarvin theorised, had been subverted on all levels by a progressive oligarchy he nicknamed “The Cathedral”, and their restoration depended on a “hard reset” of power, such as a coup.

This, he claimed, would make government strong and lean rather than expansive and inefficient.

His ideas, along with those from the likes of “accelerationist” philosopher Nick Land, fuelled the baggy subculture of anti-egalitarian would-be philosophers whose movement was quickly overshadowed by the more populist, angry and simplistic politics of the “Alt-Right”. The neoreaction movement seemed to be over before it had ever really got started.

Of course, this was not to be the case, with Yarvin re-booting his image by beginning to write a Substack under his own name and publishing his (highly abridged) writings in more mainstream conservative publications. His relevance to a mainstream Right-wing commentator such as Carlson is clear — among a crowded field of anti-Trump Republicans and intellectually vacuous MAGA-bros, Yarvin is one of the few people capable of explaining why former President Donald Trump was unable to achieve lasting political change in the United States.

Yarvin explained to Carlson that “people think when they vote for Donald Trump, that they’re voting for the same job that FDR had. They’re actually voting for like 0.01% of that job.”

Power, in other words, has been decentralised and spread through government, the courts, the media and higher education — in the words of the neoreactionaries, given over to “The Cathedral”. So, for example, Trump’s border restrictions were [swiftly overturned](#) by district judges. To achieve success, the Right has to expand its understanding of power.

Being a Jewish, culturally liberal man, it helps that Yarvin is no one’s idea of the stereotypical far-Right demagogue. In fact, his ideal state is looks more like Singapore than Nazi Germany. Unlike others on the “dissident Right” he argues that progressive power is not reducible to an elite race or class. This is by no means to claim that his ideas are not radical and controversial — only that they are *in unexpected ways*.

It would take a book to analyse all of Yarvin’s ideas. Certainly, his faith in Singapore-style corporate power as a means of exerting Right-wing governance seems naive in an age of woke capital. Even his friend, the billionaire entrepreneur Peter Thiel, who might be as close to Yarvin’s ideal head of state as anyone, is funding the self-consciously populist senatorial campaign of J.D. Vance.

Still, Yarvin’s appearance with Mr Carlson demonstrates the scale of the ideological upheaval that American conservatives have been thrust into by the loss of Trump. Thinking in structural terms, rather than pinning their hopes on a personality, might lead to a more focused and holistic Right-wing agenda. The least that one can say is that it should be more interesting than stuffy talk about top-rate tax-cuts and bombing Iran.

*From UnHerd, September 9, 2021*

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## **Curtis Yarvin Wikipedia Page**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curtis\\_Yarvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curtis_Yarvin)

**Curtis Guy Yarvin** (born 1973), also known by the pen name **Mencius Moldbug**, is an American political theorist, [blogger](#),<sup>[4]</sup> and software developer.<sup>[5]</sup> Yarvin has been described as a [neoreactionary](#)<sup>[6]</sup> and "neo-[monarchist](#)".<sup>[7][8]</sup> In his blog *Unqualified Reservations*, which he wrote from 2007 to 2014, and on his more recent [Substack](#) page called *Gray Mirror*,<sup>[9]</sup> which he started in 2020, he argues that American democracy is a failed experiment<sup>[10]</sup> which should be replaced by [monarchy](#) or corporate governance.<sup>[11]</sup> He is known, along with fellow theorist [Nick Land](#), for influencing the [anti-egalitarian](#) and [anti-democratic](#) movement known as the [Dark Enlightenment](#).

In 2002, Yarvin founded the [Urbit](#) computer platform.<sup>[8]</sup> In 2013, he co-founded Tlon to manage and develop Urbit, and helped lead it until 2019.<sup>[5]</sup>

### ***Biography***[\[edit\]](#)

#### **Early life and education**[\[edit\]](#)

Curtis Yarvin was born in 1973 to a highly educated, liberal, secular family.<sup>[12][13]</sup> He has two children with his late wife, Jennifer Kollmer (1971–2021), who died in [San Francisco](#) in April 2021 as a result of complications caused by hereditary [cardiomyopathy](#).<sup>[14]</sup> Yarvin spent part of his childhood abroad, mainly on the island of [Cyprus](#). In 1985, he returned to the US and entered [Johns Hopkins'](#) longitudinal [Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth](#). He graduated from [Brown University](#) in 1992, then was a graduate student of Computer Science at [UC Berkeley](#), where he conducted research on operating system network primitives and compiler optimization.<sup>[15]</sup><sup>*[non-primary source needed]*</sup> Yarvin left graduate school without graduating.<sup>[1]</sup>

In the 1980–1990s, Yarvin was influenced by the [libertarian](#) tech culture of the [Silicon Valley](#).<sup>[1]</sup> Yarvin read right-wing and [American conservative](#) works. The libertarian [University of Tennessee](#) law professor [Glenn Reynolds](#) introduced him to libertarianism, especially [Ludwig von Mises](#) and [Murray Rothbard](#). The rejection of [empiricism](#) by Mises and the [Austrian School](#), who favored instead deduction from first principles, influenced Yarvin's mind-set.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### **Urbit**[\[edit\]](#)

In 2013 he co-founded Tlon to build out [Urbit](#) further and released the code under an [open source](#) license.<sup>[17]</sup>

In 2015, Yarvin's invitation to speak about Urbit at the Strange Loop programming conference was rescinded after other attendees complained due to his political writing and views.<sup>[18][19]</sup> In 2016, he was invited to present on the [functional programming](#) aspects

of Urbit at LambdaConf 2016,<sup>[17]</sup> which resulted in the withdrawal of five speakers, two sub-conferences, and several sponsors.<sup>[20][21]</sup>

Yarvin worked with and helped lead Urbit development at Tlon before stepping down in January 2019.<sup>[5]</sup>

### Neo-reactionary blogging<sup>[edit]</sup>

Yarvin's reading of [Thomas Carlyle](#) convinced him that libertarianism was a doomed project without the inclusion of [authoritarianism](#), and [Hans-Hermann Hoppe](#)'s 2001 book *[Democracy: The God That Failed](#)* marked Yarvin's first break with democracy. Another influence was [James Burnham](#), who asserted that real politics occurred through the actions of elites, beneath what he called apparent democratic or socialist rhetoric.<sup>[22]</sup> In the 2000s, the failures of US-led nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan strengthened Yarvin's anti-democratic views, the federal response to the [2008 financial crisis](#) strengthened his libertarian convictions, and [Barack Obama](#)'s election as US president reinforced his belief that history inevitably progresses toward left-leaning societies.<sup>[23]</sup>

In 2007, Yarvin began the [blog](#) *Unqualified Reservations* to promote his political vision.<sup>[24]</sup> He largely stopped updating his blog in 2013, when he began to focus on [Urbit](#), and in April 2016 he announced that *Unqualified Reservations* had "completed its mission".<sup>[25]</sup>

Yarvin currently blogs about his political views on Substack under the page name *Gray Mirror*.<sup>[26]</sup>

### Views<sup>[edit]</sup>

#### Dark Enlightenment<sup>[edit]</sup>

Yarvin says that real political power in the United States is held by something he calls "the Cathedral", an amalgam of universities and the mainstream press.<sup>[27]</sup> According to him, a so-called "Brahmin" social class dominates American society, preaching progressive values to the masses. Yarvin and the [Dark Enlightenment](#) movement assert that the cathedral's commitment to equality and justice erodes social order.<sup>[28]</sup> Yarvin's ideas have been influential among [right-libertarians](#) and [paleolibertarians](#), and the public discourses of prominent investors like [Peter Thiel](#) have echoed Yarvin's project of seceding from the US to establish tech-CEO dictatorships.<sup>[29][30]</sup> Political strategist [Steve Bannon](#) has read and admired his work.<sup>[31]</sup>

Yarvin argues for a "neo-cameralist" philosophy based on [Frederick the Great](#) of Prussia's [cameralism](#).<sup>[32]</sup> In Yarvin's view, democratic governments are inefficient and wasteful and should be replaced with sovereign [joint-stock corporations](#) whose "shareholders" (large owners) elect an executive with total power, but who must serve at their pleasure.<sup>[33]</sup> The executive, unencumbered by liberal-democratic procedures, could rule efficiently much like a CEO-monarch.<sup>[33]</sup> Yarvin admires Chinese leader [Deng Xiaoping](#) for his pragmatic



and market-oriented authoritarianism, and the city-state of [Singapore](#) as an example of a successful authoritarian regime. He sees the US as soft on crime, dominated by economic and democratic delusions.<sup>[28]</sup>

Yarvin supports [authoritarianism](#) on [right-libertarian](#) grounds, claiming that the division of political sovereignty expands the scope of the state, whereas strong governments with clear hierarchies remain minimal and narrowly focused.<sup>[28]</sup> According to scholar Joshua Tait, "Moldbug imagines a radical libertarian utopia with maximum freedom in all things *except politics*."<sup>[34]</sup> He has favored [same-sex marriage](#), [freedom of religion](#), private use of drugs, and written against race- or gender-based discriminatory laws, although, according to Tait, "he self-consciously proposed private welfare and prison reforms that resembled slavery".<sup>[33]</sup> Tait describes Yarvin's writing as contradictory, saying "He advocates hierarchy, yet deeply resents cultural elites. His political vision is futuristic and libertarian, yet expressed in the language of monarchy and reaction. He is irreligious and socially liberal on many issues but angrily anti-progressive. He presents himself as a thinker in search of truth but admits to lying to his readers, saturating his arguments with jokes and irony. These tensions indicate broader fissures among the online Right."<sup>[1]</sup>

Drawing on computer metaphors, Yarvin contends that society needs a "hard reset" or a "rebooting", not a series of gradual political reforms.<sup>[33]</sup> Instead of activism, he advocates passivism, claiming that progressivism would fail without right-wing opposition.<sup>[35]</sup> Yarvin originally called his concept of aligning property rights with political power "formalism", the formal recognition of realities of power,<sup>[34]</sup>. The label "neo-reactionary" was applied to Yarvin's ideas by [Arnold Kling](#) in 2010 and adopted by Yarvin's followers;<sup>[36]</sup> His ideas have also been described by Dylan Matthews of [Vox](#) as "neo-monarchist".<sup>[7]</sup>

Under his Moldbug pseudonym, Yarvin gave a talk about "rebooting" the American government at the 2012 [BIL Conference](#). He used it to advocate the acronym "RAGE", which he defined as "Retire All Government Employees". Acting as a provocateur, he described what he felt were flaws in the accepted "World War II mythology" alluding to the idea that [Hitler](#)'s invasions were acts of self-defense. He argued these discrepancies were pushed by America's "ruling communists", who invented [political correctness](#) as an "extremely elaborate mechanism for persecuting racists and fascists". "If Americans want to change their government," he said, "they're going to have to get over their dictator phobia."<sup>[37]</sup>

## Alt-right<sup>[edit]</sup>

Yarvin has been described as part of the [alt-right](#) by journalists and commentators.<sup>[32][38][8]</sup> Journalist [Mike Wendling](#) has called Yarvin "the alt-right's favorite philosophy instructor".<sup>[39][32]</sup> Tait describes *Unqualified Reservations* as a "'highbrow' predecessor and later companion to the transgressive anti-'politically correct' metapolitics of nebulous online communities like [4chan](#) and [/pol/](#)."<sup>[29]</sup> Yarvin has publicly distanced himself from the [alt-right](#). In a private message, Yarvin counseled [Milo Yiannopoulos](#), then a reporter at [Breitbart News](#), to deal with neo-Nazis "the way some perfectly tailored

high-communist [NYT](#) reporter handles a herd of greasy anarchist hippies. Patronizing contempt. Your heart is in the right place, young lady, now get a shower and shave those pits."<sup>[38]</sup>

Yarvin came to public attention in February 2017 when [Politico](#) magazine reported that [Steve Bannon](#), who served as [White House Chief Strategist](#) under U.S. [President Donald Trump](#), read Yarvin's blog and that Yarvin "has reportedly opened up a line to the White House, communicating with Bannon and his aides through an intermediary."<sup>[40]</sup> The story was picked up by other magazines and newspapers, including [The Atlantic](#), [The Independent](#), and [Mother Jones](#).<sup>[32][41][42]</sup> Yarvin denied to [Vox](#) that he was in contact with Bannon in any way,<sup>[7]</sup> though he jokingly told [The Atlantic](#) that his White House contact was the [Twitter](#) user [Bronze Age Pervert](#).<sup>[32]</sup> Yarvin later gave a copy of Bronze Age Pervert's book *Bronze Age Mindset* to [Michael Anton](#), a former senior [national security](#) official in the [Trump administration](#).<sup>[43][44]</sup>

### Views on race<sup>[edit]</sup>

Yarvin has endorsed the belief that whites have higher IQs than blacks for genetic reasons, and has been described as a modern-day supporter of slavery.<sup>[19][20]</sup> He has claimed that some races are more suited to [slavery](#) than others.<sup>[20]</sup> In a post that linked approvingly to [Steve Sailer](#), [Jared Taylor](#), and other [scientific racists](#), he wrote "[i]t should be obvious that, although I am not a white nationalist, I am not exactly allergic to the stuff."<sup>[32][45]</sup> In 2009, he wrote that since US civil rights programs were "applied to populations with recent hunter-gatherer ancestry and no great reputation for sturdy moral fiber", the result was "absolute human garbage."<sup>[46]</sup>

Yarvin believes in the existence of racial hierarchies but disputes that he is racist. He has described the use of IQ tests to determine superiority as "creepy".<sup>[20]</sup> He also disputes being an "advocate for slavery".<sup>[19]</sup> Per Tait, "Moldbug's racial comments suggest a broader trend: the anonymity of the internet allows him and others who have followed in his wake to revel in taboo language, ideas, and activities. Violating social norms is a kind of liberation for Moldbug: entertaining these ideas is to break from the Cathedral."<sup>[47]</sup>

### Right libertarianism<sup>[edit]</sup>

According to Tait, "Moldbug's relationship with the investor-entrepreneur Thiel is his most important connection." [Peter Thiel](#) was an investor in Yarvin's startup Tlon and gave \$100,000 to Tlon's co-founder John Burnham in 2011.<sup>[29][30]</sup> In 2016, Yarvin privately asserted that he had been "coaching Thiel."<sup>[29]</sup>

Thiel and investor [Balaji Srinivasan](#) have echoed Yarvin's ideas of techno-corporate cameralism. Thiel wrote in a 2009 essay that he "no longer believe[d] that freedom and democracy are compatible... Since 1920, the vast increase in welfare beneficiaries and the extension of the franchise to women—two constituencies that are notoriously tough for libertarians—have rendered the notion of '[capitalist democracy](#)' into an oxymoron," and



Srinivasan advocated in a 2013 speech a "society run by [Silicon Valley](#) (...) an opt-in society, ultimately outside the US, run by technology."<sup>[48]</sup>

*See also*[\[edit\]](#)

- [Alt-lite](#)
- [Authoritarian capitalism](#)
- [Chauvinism](#)
- [Criticism of democracy](#)
- [Criticism of libertarianism](#)
- [Cultural conservatism](#)
- [Dark Enlightenment](#)
- [Despotism](#)
- [Far-right politics](#)
- [Fusionism](#)
- [Hans-Hermann Hoppe](#)
- [Natural order](#)
- [Neo-feudalism](#)
- [Neo-nationalism](#)
- [Neotribalism](#)
- [Opposition to immigration](#)
- [Paleoconservatism](#)
- [Paleolibertarianism](#)
- [Radical right](#)
- [Reactionary](#)
- [Reactionary modernism](#)
- [Right-wing populism](#)
- [Strongman \(politics\)](#)
- [Traditionalist conservatism](#)

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19. ^ [Jump up to:](#) <sup>a b c</sup> [Byars, Mitchell](#) (April 6, 2016). ["Speaker Curtis Yarvin's racial views bring controversy to Boulder conference"](#). *Daily Camera: Boulder News*. [Archived from the original on April 10, 2016](#). Retrieved June 30, 2016. A programming conference in Boulder this May has become surrounded by controversy after organizers decided to let Curtis Yarvin — a programmer who has blogged under the pseudonym Mencius Moldbug about his views that white people are genetically smarter than black people — remain a speaker at the event. ... But Yarvin's views, which some have alleged are racist and endorse the institution of slavery, already have led to him being kicked out of a conference in 2015, and there has been pressure on LambdaConf to do the same. ... 'I am not an "outspoken advocate for slavery," a racist, a sexist or a fascist,' he wrote. 'I don't

- equate anatomical traits (whether sprinting speed or problem-solving efficiency) with moral superiority. ... '{{cite web}}': CS1 maint: unfit URL ([link](#))
20. ^ [Jump up to: <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup>](#) Townsend, Tess (March 31, 2016). ["Controversy Rages Over 'Pro-Slavery' Tech Speaker Curtis Yarvin"](#). Inc.com. [Archived](#) from the original on April 1, 2016. Retrieved March 31, 2016. Yarvin's online writings, many under his pseudonym Mencius Moldbug, convey blatantly racist views. He expresses the belief that white people are genetically endowed with higher IQs than black people. He has suggested race may determine whether individuals are better suited for slavery, and his writing has been interpreted as supportive of the institution of slavery. ... Yarvin disputes that he agrees with the institution of slavery, but many interpret his writings as screeds supportive of bondage of black people. He writes in an email to Inc., 'I don't know if we can say \*biologically\* that part of the genius of the African-American people is the talent they showed in enduring slavery. But this is certainly true in a cultural and literary sense. In any case, it is easiest to admire a talent when one lacks it, as I do.' ... In Yarvin's Medium blog post, he wrote that while he disagrees with the concept that 'all races are equally smart,' he is not racist because he rejects what he refers to as 'IQism.'
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## External links[[edit](#)]

- [Unqualified Reservations](#) - Mencius Moldbug's blog
  - [Gray Mirror](#) - Yarvin's [Substack](#) blog
-