

ANNNOUNCEMENT Nominate your favorite companies, products, and people for Crunchies!

Like

37

Geeks for Monarchy: The Rise of the Neoreactionaries

Share

Posted 13 hours ago by Klint Finley (@klintron)

Tweet



Many of us yearn for a

return to one golden age or another. But there's a community of bloggers taking the idea to an extreme: they want to turn the dial way back to the days before the French Revolution.

Neoreactionaries believe that while technology and capitalism have advanced humanity over the past couple centuries, democracy has actually done more harm than good. They propose a return to old-fashioned gender roles, social order and monarchy.

You may have seen them crop-up on tech hangouts like Hacker News and Less Wrong, having cryptic conversations about "Moldbug" and "the Cathedral." And though neoreactionaries aren't exactly rampant in the tech industry, PayPal founder Peter Thiel has voiced similar ideas, and Pax Dickinson, the former CTO

CrunchBase

Curtis Yarvin

CURRENT COMPANIES

Tlon

BIO

Founder at Tlon

Full profile for Curtis Yarvin

Related Videos



Gillmor Gang: Dreamforce 2013 Live 23:49



Haxlr8r Demo Day



Techcrunch
Bangalore 2013:
Winner Announcement

More Related Videos

of Business Insider, says he's been influenced by neoreactionary thought. It may be a small, minority world view, but it's one that I think shines some light on the psyche of contemporary tech culture.

Enough has been written on neoreaction already to fill at least a couple of books, so if you prefer to go straight to the source, just pop a Modafinil and skip to the "Neoreaction Reading List" at the end of this post. For everyone else, I'll do my best to summarize neoreactionary thought and why it might matter.

Who Are the Neoreactionaries?

"Reactionary" originally meant someone who opposed the French Revolution, and today the term generally refers to those who would like to return to some pre-existing

state of affairs. Neoreaction — aka "dark enlightenment — begins with computer scientist and entrepreneur Curtis Yarvin, who blogs under the name Mencius Moldbug. Yarvin — the selfdescribed Sith Lord of the movement — got his start as a commenter on sites like 2blowhards before starting his own blog Unqualified Reservations in 2007. Yarvin originally called his ideology "formalism," but in 2010 libertarian blogger Arnold Kling referred to him as a "neo-reactionary." The name stuck as more bloggers such as Anomaly UK (who helped popularize the term), Nick Land (who coined "dark enlightenment") and Michael Anissimov started to self-identify as neoreactionary.

The movement has a few contemporary forerunners, such as Herman Hoppe and Steven Sailer, and of course, neoreaction is heavily influenced by older political

thought — Thomas Carlyle and Julius Evola are particularly popular.

Anti-Democracy

Perhaps the one thing uniting all neoreactionaries is a critique of modernity that centers on opposition to democracy in all its forms. Many are former libertarians who decided that freedom and democracy were incompatible.

"Demotist systems, that is, systems ruled by the 'People,' such as Democracy and Communism, are predictably less financially stable than aristocratic systems," Anissimov writes. "On average, they undergo more recessions and hold more debt. They are more susceptible to market crashes. They waste more resources. Each dollar goes further towards improving standard of living for the

average person in an aristocratic system than in a Democratic one."

Exactly what sort of monarchy they'd prefer varies. Some want something closer to theocracy, while Yarvin proposes turning nation states into corporations with the king as chief executive officer and the aristocracy as shareholders.

For Yarvin, stability and order trump all. But critics like Scott Alexander think neoreactionaries overestimate the stability of monarchies — to put it mildly. Alexander recently published an antireactionary FAQ, a massive document examining and refuting the claims of neoreactionaries.

"To an observer from the medieval or Renaissance world of monarchies and empires, the stability of democracies would seem utterly supernatural," he wrote. "Imagine telling
Queen Elizabeth I – whom
as we saw above suffered
six rebellions just in her
family's two generations of
rule up to that point – that
Britain has been three
hundred years without a
non-colonial-related civil
war. She would think either
that you were putting her
on, or that God Himself had
sent a host of angels to
personally maintain order."

Exit

Yarvin proposes that countries should be small — city states, really — and that all they should compete for citizens. "If residents don't like their government, they can and should move," he writes. "The design is all 'exit,' no 'voice.""

That will probably sound familiar if you heard Balaji Srinivasan's Y Combinator speech. Although several news stories described the talk as a call for Silicon
Valley to secede from the union, Srinivasan told Tim
Carmody that his speech has been misinterpreted.
"I'm not a libertarian, don't believe in secession, am a registered Democrat, etcetera etcetera," he wrote.
"This is really a talk that is more about emigration and exit."

I don't know Srinivasan, but it sounds like he'd find neoreactionary views repulsive. And exit is a concept that appeals to both the right and left. But there are others in the Valley pushing ideas much closer to the neoreaction. Patri Friedman, who cofounded the Seasteading Institute with Peter Thiel, specifically mentioned Yarvin's blog in a reading list at the end of an essay for Cato Unbound, and Yarvin was scheduled to speak at the Seasteading Institute's conference in 2009 before his appearance was

canceled. Thiel, meanwhile, voiced a related opinion in his own article for Cato Unbound: "I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible."

Incidentally, Thiel's Founders Fund is one of the investors in Srinivasan's company Counsyl. The cofounder of Yarvin's startup Tlon was one of the first recipients of the Thiel Fellowship. Anissimov was the media director of the Thiel-backed Machine Intelligence Institute (formerly known as the Singularity Institute). It's enough to make a conspiracy theorist's head spin, but I'm not actually suggesting that there's a conspiracy here. I don't think Peter Thiel is part of some neoreactionary master plot — I don't even necessarily think he's a neoreactionary. But you can see that a certain set of ideas are spreading through out the startup scene.

Neoreactionary ideas overlap heavily with pickup artistry, seasteading and scientific racism (more on that later), and this larger "caveman cult" has an impact on tech culture, from work environments to the social atmosphere at conferences.

To be clear though, pure neoreaction is an extreme minority position that will probably never catch on beyond a tiny cult following. But there has been an explosion of interest since late 2012, despite the fact that Hoppe, Sailer, Yarvin and others have been writing about this stuff for years (and neoreaction's European cousin archeofuturism has been around even longer). And this interest just happens to coincide with growing media attention being paid to the problems of the tech industry, from sexism in video games to "bro culture" in the tech industry to

gentrification in the Bay Area.

And many professionals, rather than admit to their role in gentrification, wealth disparity and job displacement, are casting themselves as victims. This sense of persecution leads us to our next neoreactionary theme.

The Cathedral

Neoreactionaries believe "The Cathedral," is a metainstitution that consists largely of Harvard and other Ivy League schools, *The New* York Times and various civil servants. Anissimov calls it a "self-organizing consensus." Sometimes the term is used synonymously with political correctness. The fundamental idea is that the Cathedral regulates our discussions enforces a set of norms as to what sorts of ideas are acceptable and how we view history — it

controls the Overton window, in other words.

The name comes from Yarvin's idea that progressivism (and in his view, even today's far right Republicans are progressive) is a religion, and that the media-academic-civil service complex punishes "heretical" views.

So what exactly is the Cathedral stopping neoreactionaries from talking about? Well, the merits of monarchy for starters. But mostly, as far as I can tell, they want to be able to say stuff like "Asians, Jews and whites are smarter than blacks and Hispanics because genetics" without being called racist. Or at least be able to express such views without the negative consequences of being labeled racist.

Speaking of which, neoreactionaries are obsessed with a concept called "human biodiversity"
(HBD) — what used to be called "scientific racism."
Specifically, they believe that IQ is one of — if not the — most important personal traits, and that it's predominately genetic.
Neoreactionaries would replace, or supplement, the "divine right" of kings and the aristocracy with the "genetic right" of elites.

To call these claims
"controversial" would be
putting it lightly, but they
underpin much of antiegalitarian and protraditionalist claims
neoreactionaries make.
Delving into the scientific
debate over race, genetics
and IQ is beyond the scope
of this article, but I've
included some links on the
topic in the reading list.

It's not hard to see why this ideology would catch-on with white male geeks. It tells them that they are the natural rulers of the world,

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. And the more the neoreactionaries and techbros act out, the more the media heat they bring.

We don't need more public shamings and firings — what we should want is for neoreactionaries to change their minds, not their jobs. As Jessica Valenti wrote for *The Nation* about the firing of John Derbyshire — a cause célèbre for — neoreaction: "After all, what's more impactful—a singular racist like Derbyshire or Arizona's immigration law? A column or voter suppression?"

I'm not sure what to do about it. It's not like I think the media should ignore the tech industry's misdeeds.
But maybe recognizing that cycle is the first step towards fixing it.

Neoreaction reading list

Foundations of neoreaction:

Michael Anissimov: Neoreactionary Glossary

Michael Anissimov: Empirical Claims of Neoreaction

Nick Land's Dark Enlightenment Sequence

Mencius Moldbug: A formalist manifesto

Mencius Moldbug: Against Political Freedom

Mencius Moldbug: An open letter to an open-minded progressive

Heroes of the Dark Enlightenment

Against Neoreaction:

Scott Alexander's Anti-Reactionary FAQ

Alexander's Response to the "Empirical Claims of Neoreaction"

Popehat: Free Speech Does Not Include The Right to Be Free of Criticism

Alexander on the historical forces that shaped modernity

Alexander on racism, sexism and social justice

Genetic Similarities Within and Between Human Populations by D.J. Witherspoon et al.

Genetics Made Complicated: Is Race Genetic?

Ron Unz on race, IQ and wealth

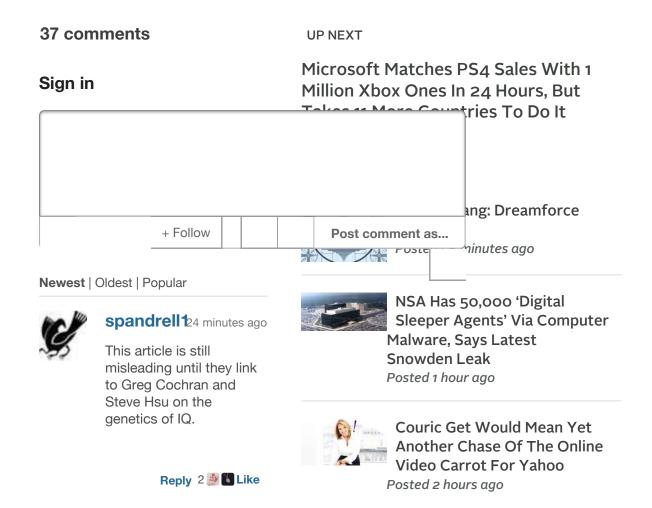
Research on the cognitive effects of poverty

Tim Maly on seasteading and other technocratic exit strategies

Correction An earlier version of this story accidentally misidentified Pax Dickinson as Pax Dickerson.

[Photo: Flickr/epSos .de]







LukeLea 58 minutes ago

Steve Sailer is not antidemocracy.

> Like Reply



Patent Application For Touch ID Shows How Apple Secures Fingerprint Information On iPhone 5s

Posted 4 hours ago



manwhoisthursdayo

This is the secular arm of neo-reaction. There is also the religious side, with figures like James Kalb, Laurence Auster (recently deceased), Bruce Charlton, Laura Wood, Mark "Oz Conservative" Richardson, the blogger "Bonald" at Throne and Altar. Kalb is the heart of that wing and was also associated with 2Blowhards.

Like Reply



Scharlach1 1 hour ago

- 1. "Scientific racism" is like "Cultural Marxism": a signifier that signals political tribe without contributing anything valuable to the discussion. We should do away with both terms.
- 2. I don't know why Unz's article is listed under "Against Neoreaction." He obviously thinks IQ is important and at least partially attributable to genetics; he simply argues that an urban/rural divide could also explain



Let's Kill The Aid Industry
Posted 4 hours ago



Gift Guide: For The Tech-Happy Fashionista Posted 5 hours ago



The AUUG iPhone Grip And App Turns Your Body Into A Musical Instrument Posted 9 hours ago

CrunchBoard

Job Listings

Senior Software Developer (CGR00001251)

DuPont Pioneer

Ad Operations Manager

Motive Interactive

Project Manager Mobile Advertising

Motive Interactive

Sales Engineer

ThingLink

Web Developer, Senior Associate,

average IQ across populations. Unz is frequently cited favorably by many neoreactionaries.

- 3. Alexander's take-down of neoreaction is actually a take-down of a few essays on More Right. The author is completely wrong to suggest that Alexnader refuted all neoreactionary ideas everywhere. Indeed, some of the more intelligent neoreactionary blog posts this year emerged out of responses to Alexander.
- 4. The Witherspoon article seems to present a highly polished reformulation of Lewontin's Fallacy that still ends up making this concession: "Thus it may be possible to infer something about an individual's phenotype from knowledge of his or her ancestry." (I'm sure they could do a similar study regarding dog breeds and call into question the entire concept of breed.)

1 Like Reply



Vimothy 2 hours ago

"I'm not sure what to do about it. It's not like I think the media should ignore the tech industry's misdeeds. But maybe recognizing that cycle is the first step towards fixing it."

Strategic Communications

Opportunity Finance Network

More from CrunchBoard

Mr Finley, you've dropped a few steps! I believe the correct sequence is:

- 1. Recognise the existence of thoughtcrime.
- 2. Create controversy via social and traditional media.
- 3. Whip crowd into frenzy.
- 4. ???
- 5. Profit.

Profit in the present context should be understood to be the tarring and feathering of Mencius Moldbug (aka Curtis Yarvin). Alas, Moldbug (aka Curtis Yarvin, creator of Urbit), a man of independent means, appears to be beyond our powers. Since we can't get Moldbug (aka Curtis Yarvin, creator of Urbit and resident of San Francisco, USA), since no one else in the neoreactionary movement has a proper job now that Pax Dickinson's been sacked, and since a profit's gotta profit, could we not ruin Yukowsky instead?

He's already squirming in the comments box like a man with a guilty conscience. Popular amongst racists and authoritarian reactionaries? It's everything that's wrong with tech at the moment. He knows he's done wrong! Don't mind throwing neoreactionaries under the bus, Mr

Yudkowsky? Not good enough, I'm afraid. We want to see you get under it *yourself*.

1 Like Reply



Scharlach1 2 hours ago

"It's not hard to see why this ideology would catch-on with white male geeks. It tells them that they are the natural rulers of the world . . ."

No, most of us assume that Asians and Jews are the natural rulers of the world.

> Like Reply



Samueller 4 hours ago

Isn't the most fundamental human social order that of small tribes and not states with millions of people living in it? Humans have lived in small groups for thousands of years. In this respect monarchies and democratic countries are both something new. It doesn't sound right to me to consider a monarchy as something that is 'the real thing'. There is also no going back to small tribes because there are way more people on this planet than 20,000 years ago. Experimenting with social order would harm many many people and

after such a change that new system needs to invent lies to justify all that evil. In addition to that technology and capitalism are not the right guides for social norms because they are not really the experts for love, birth, family or spirituality, are they?

> Like Reply



christopher

@Samueller Th eres a new cities movement that seeks to give Mayors more power.

Reply Like



SamoBurja 6 hours ago

Progressive takeover of a community is strongly empowered by a journalists noticing nonprogressive ideas floating there.

Like Reply



julian.bond 7 hours ago

What a very American (USA) view of the world. I applaud the desire to reexamine the social and democratic process in the

USA. Just don't imagine that the solutions and results you find are necessarily applicable anywhere else.

And btw. I applaud the view that there should be complete freedom of travel. But there again, I don't expect it to happen any time soon. I also think there would be a lot of unintended consequences.

Like Reply



Patrick 1 Dago

@julian.bond terrorists applaud your freedom of travel too... welcome them to wherever you live.

Reply Like



kennethtran9 hours ago

My fellow geeks... I love it. I understand where the view is coming from. Yet, at the same time- I would boldly still stand with democracy. I won't debate this here on techcrunch.. because ya'll, the geek elite, are too smart for a comment box battle right here (which I would likely lose coming in unprepared). Thank you for the

interesting read- definitely something worth studying so that at the very least we could rip one or two the finer points out of the body of the behemoth and try in reality.

Our current institution took hundreds of years to fine tune. Are you prepared to wait another few hundred years to build a new nation? How many lives do you plan on living while we are still on this green earth? How long in years will it be, until your vision is a reality? Will the visionaries.. ever even live to see a single day of the geek monarchy? Unlikely sir.

We only have so many years on this Earth, my fellow geeks. Ponder that for a bit...

Reply 3 2 2 Like



jokeocracy:

@kennethtran

one of the ideas behind reaction is that "our current institution" is far from finetuned, and in fact is throwing gears and pistons and looking every day like it's getting closer to seizing up. Technology masks a lot of this decline but it's there for those who look for it.

I suggest reading the primary sources linked above because this summary leaves a lot to be desired.

Reply Like



OladeleAyubanours ago

I don't think the ideas should be dismissed entirely. It is the natural law of the animal state.

In time when floating cities designed to support large populations, become common place, it's not hard to see that they will attract residents based on these so called neoreactionary principles.

Indeed the ratchet of progress does not turn backwards but total meltdowns, even if gradual, are possible and a new order different from democracy could emerge.

1 Like

Reply



yudkowsky 10 hours ago

Eliezer Yudkowsky of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute here. Anissimov no longer works here, and it should be noted that since then we've commissioned several pieces of writing on other subjects from Scott Alexander, who is also a far more popular poster on Less Wrong than Anissimov, in much the same way that Paul Graham is a more popular poster on Hacker News. "More Right" is not any kind of acknowledged offspring of Less Wrong nor is it so much as linked to by the Less Wrong site. We are not part of a neoreactionary conspiracy. We are and have been explicitly pro-Enlightenment, as such, under that name. Should it be the case that any neoreactionary is citing me as a supporter of their ideas, I was never asked and never gave my consent. Some kind of note in the article to this effect seems appropriate. Thanks.

Also to be clear: I try not to dismiss ideas out of hand due to fear of public unpopularity. However I found Scott Alexander's takedown of neoreaction convincing and thus I shrugged and didn't bother to investigate further. Democracy has many known malfunctions and it may be that some better way for human beings to organize themselves will be discovered. That way, however, shall not be aristocracy, any more than the next theory of gravitation after General

Relativity might be Newtonian mechanics. The ratchet of progress turns unpredictably, but it doesn't turn backward.

I'm reasonably sure Patri Friedman (grandson of Milton Friedman) isn't a neoreactionary either, though I can't actually speak for him and you'd have to ask him personally.

Reply 5 Like



NickLandago

@yudkowsky

Assuming, probably safely, that a correction will not be forthcoming from the author, it should be noted that Eliezer Yudkowsky is perfectly correct in pointing out that neither he, nor Less Wrong (nor Patri Friedman), have any doctrinal affiliation with Neoreaction.

This article is probably trying to be fair (?), but it is extremely confused. I recommend that any interested readers follow the links supplied to reach a more accurate understanding.

Reply Like



our**Not**

@Ni ckLa nd @yu dko wsk y Th ere is a subs tanti al soci al over lap bet wee n Less Wro nger S and neor eacti onar ies, thou gh.

Both have the habi

t of que stio ning thin gs that are not polit e to que stio n. I woul d gue SS that 80% of neor eacti onar ies have read Yud kow sky, but 20% of Less Wro nger S have read Mol dbu g.



l ike



ckL and (yud kow sky Wha t nee ds to be corr ecte d? I wrot е that neor eacti onar ies "cro р up" on Less Wro ng, and that Anis simo was past tens e -the med ia dire ctor at the MLI.

Like

leply





SamoBurja_o

@yudkowsky Let me confirm from the other side, More Right (I write there) does not claim to be a spin off from LessWrong or endorsed by it in any way. It does link to and recommend LessWrong because human rationality is an important skill anyone who wishes to do serious thought should master and I find much of your output quite

impressive.

It is best that you made this clarification, but I don't anyone assumes say Hacker News is primarily associated with Neoreaction or that this ideological view is particularly prominent there, beyond it merely existing. However within Neoreaction many people do hang out also on Hacker News or LessWrong.

Hm, I messed this up, me and some others lime publicly saying I like your writing still associates you with low status blackness covering the outer right. Ok so let me say that Eliezer Yudkowsky is completely horrible liberal author you should never ever read. Especially his fanfiction. Better I hope. I'm sure the social justice

warriors who are as common as we are on your site and growing will for several years now fix up any bad image that comes from this. In fact I can't wait for them to do so.

Reply Like



MikeAnissin

@yudkowsky " I try not to dismiss ideas out of hand due to fear of public unpopularity."

Meanwhile, *dismisses idea out of hand due to fear of public unpopularity*.

1 Like
Reply



have а fair amo unt of stre et cree d on owni ng up to unp opul ar idea s at this poin t, e.g. cryo nics, but I hon estly don' t see the poin t of neor eacti onar ianis m and I'm willi ng to thro W *wro ng* idea S und

er the bus as requ ired.

Like leply







gwernQırs ago

@yudkowsky

While we're delineating the relation between Reaction and LessWrong, I would also point out the LW surveys show that it is

a minority position. In the 2012 survey, of the ~1195 responses, 30 (2.5%) selfidentified as Reactionary. (It was not asked in 2011, and the 2013 survey is going on right now and so results are unavailable.)





2 hours lat

@g wer n0 @ yud kow sky Out of 760 resp ons es SO far to this year 's surv еу, onc е agai n 20 peo ple

(2.5)

%) have iden tifie d as "rea ctio nary com pare d to 505 peo ple (66 %) iden tifyin g as "libe ral" or "soc ialist lt's а goo d thin g all the peo ple who will imm edia tely leap to guilt -byasso ciati on us with the Rea ctio

nari es from this artic le will no dou bt both er to read all the way dow n to the com men t secti on and see that we are 30:1 agai nst the m:(

Like leply







fallavollita 10 hours ago

Politics is about defending one's interests, and it so happens that these interests are shared by those who occupy the same "sites of identity" (race, class, gender and the like). This is an obvious and enduring feature of human history, yet it becomes deemed illegitimate by the current regime (dare I say the C word?) when white males band together in their own defense. Well, too bad for the Left since we're obliged to play the cards we're dealt the best we can. Sure. nature and reality have an arbitrary character, but humans are best served when they accept and embrace this rather than seek to pathologize and sanitize it.

> Like Reply



jokeocracy 11 hours ago

This is a good attempt but the article spends most of its words on misstating neoreactionary views and then attacking the strawmen that result.

I'd suggest that anyone seriously interested in neoreaction follow the provided links to the primary sources and skip the judgmental overwrought summary.

Or don't. The author of this article provided more links refuting the ideas mentioned than he did summarizing them so as you can see these ideas are highly dangerous. Read at your own risk.

Reply 2 Like



hadtien 11 hours ago

> It's not hard to see why this ideology would catch-on with white male geeks. It tells them that they are the natural rulers of the world, but that they are simultaneously being oppressed by a secret religious order

So this "secret religious order", the Cathedral is headed by non-white males and that's why the "white geeks" are against it, right? The deans of lvy League schools, the owners of NYTimes, top government bureaucrats - the glorious diversity of color, right there.

Or maybe speculating on the psychological processes of your opponents doesn't make you more persuasive.





Davidthe Duke ours ago

Wouldn't a IQ hierarchy be led by Ashkenazi Jew and East Asians (the elite)? HBDers speak a lot of whites scoring lower than those two.

> Like Reply



christophersjannett

Although skeptical of this political school, the only utility I see in neoreactionary thought is the possibility that if we descend into this system, what emerges after it self immolates will be a highly stable civilization which could last on the orders of several millenia.

Like Reply



NobodyImportantago

For arguments for the existence of human biodiversity (group differences between human populations), then try here or here, but I would be careful about linking to such things on a blog read by hyperrational nerds. People might start to question Cathedral beliefs...

1 & Like Reply



1 Like Reply



klintronrs ago **@pwgen** Than
ks.

Reply Like



Glanton 13 hours ago

The best part of this write up is the note that it ends on: "dey raciss."

Reply 3 1 Like

Powered by Livefyre

About

International

Staff

China

News

TCTV Contact Us Europe

Events Advertise With Us Japan

CrunchBase Send Us A Tip

Follow TechCrunch

TechCrunch Apps Subscribe to CrunchDaily

Latest headlines delivered to you daily

Enter Email SUBSCRIBE

© 2013 AOL Inc. All rights reserved. Aol Tech Privacy Policy Anti Harassment Policy Terms of Service Powered by WordPress.com VIP Fonts by