Anyone who slows down AI is committing ‘murder’

Behind the dangers of superintelligence lies a totalitarian ideology

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By Roland Peters and Hannes Vogel

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One of the most influential tech billionaires: Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal and Palantir, pictured here in 2022 during a speech in Miami. (Photo: AP)

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Despite warnings of an apocalypse, AI companies are saying no to government regulation. Not just to protect their profits. Some tech billionaires believe in unconditional progress and the coming superintelligence. No matter what it costs humanity.

Donald Trump isn’t afraid of the end of the world. “I’m telling you, it’s all a hoax,” the US President complained in mid-September at the All-In conference in Los Angeles during a phone call with Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, whilst he was sitting on stage. “Data centres are brilliant. They make people rich. They’re the oil of the next 20 to 25 years. They’re more important than the internet. Robots won’t take over and AI won’t conquer the rest of the world.”

Faced with AI agents running amok, an overwhelming majority of the US population wants to set limits on the technology and place it under state control. Yet Trump and the tech billionaires, who since

who areset to share power during his second term in the White House, are ignoring these demands. Their approach is self-regulation: under the slogan ‘Trust us’, they alone want to have the final say on what risks are acceptable in AI development.

This is due to more than just the self-interest of the tech giants, who are thus protecting their profits. Some of them want precisely the dystopian future that Trump dismissed as a pipe dream during a telephone call in Los Angeles. A future in which an all-powerful superintelligence and humanoid robots dictate everyday life. At the very least, they are prepared to accept the risks – regardless of the potential cost to the human species. Their value system bears the hallmarks of a potentially totalitarian ideology that, when in doubt, prioritises unconditional technological progress over the well-being of all.

“THE ATTACK OF THE TECH BILLIONAIRES”

This content is based on extracts from the book “The Tech Billionaires’ Assault”, published by Galiani. Our US correspondent Roland Peters and author Hannes Vogel spent almost two years investigating the alliance between the MAGA right in the US and the country’s tech billionaires. They have documented how and why the United States is shifting towards an autocracy during Donald Trump’s second term in office, what objectives the heads of tech conglomerates are pursuing as they help govern from the White House, and how Germany and Europe could defend themselves against this attack on our democracies.

Slowing down AI is a form of ‘murder’

Just a few weeks ago, the tech philosopher Jaron Lanier explained the mindset within tech corporations. There, he says, people believe with quasi-religious conviction in an impending superintelligence. Nothing else is really important in their work: “There is this pseudo-religion – and perhaps it is even a full-fledged religion – that we are creating this successor species, this digital god, this super-being that may be better than humans themselves.” It is only on this premise that differing opinions on the consequences of technological progress are discussed.

The central mantra of many tech billionaires is that nothing must be allowed to slow down technological progress. This so-called accelerationism – the unconditional acceleration of technological development without social or democratic control – is present at the very highest levels in Washington. Marc Andreessen, for example – the highly influential investor who advised Trump on the selection of his cabinet and sits on the so-called scientific advisory board PCAST, through which the tech titans effectively co-govern – has been championing this idea for some time. “We believe in accelerationism,” Andreessen wrote in 2023 in his ‘Tech-Optimist Manifesto’ about what he described as the prevailing view among many tech oligarchs in Silicon Valley. “We believe that artificial intelligence is our alchemy, our philosopher’s stone – we are literally making sand think.” Andreessen is one of many.

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The Tech Billionaires’ Assault, Roland Peters and Hannes Vogel

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OpenAI CEO Sam Altman was already raving back in 2017 that humanity would be “the first species to create its own offspring.” Either it could “become the biological ignition key for digital superintelligence” and then “fade into a side branch of evolution” – or merge with it. Peter

Thiel, who has shaped tech ideology like no other, holds the core belief “that technological progress should be pursued ruthlessly – with little or no regard for the potential costs or dangers to society”, writes his biographer Max Chafkin. Progress, progress above all else: driven by this conviction, some of the tech billionaires who advise the White House directly and influence Trump have distanced themselves from democratic values or even abandoned them entirely.

According to his manifesto, Andreessen considers slowing down the development of AI to be a “form of murder”: “Any delay will cost human lives.” As the standard-bearer for accelerationism in the industry, the tech billionaire cites not only heroes of Austrian-libertarian economic thought such as Friedrich August von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, or the tech futurist Ray Kurzweil. He also cites the philosopher James Burnham, who predicted in 1941 that capitalism would lead to a society of talented managers ruling over a populace of semi-slaves, thereby supplanting liberal democracy. Burnham therefore anticipated the victory of Nazi Germany in the Second World War.

“An obsessive urge to rush”

There is something potentially totalitarian in this radicalism. It elevates the abstract principle of maximum rapid progress to the status of an absolute ideology and a historical law of nature, placing it above the well-being of millions – as Hannah Arendt, for example, defined it as an essential characteristic of totalitarianism: “Ideologies are never interested in the miracle of existence”. Instead, they subordinated everything to the single idea with which they sought to explain the entire course of world history. The ultimate goal, they argued, was “not the happiness of human beings or the interests of any individual”. Rather, it was the “fabrication of humanity”, the realisation of an abstract conception of history. To this end, “the ‘parts’ would be sacrificed in the service of the ‘whole’.”



Trump’s anti-democratic alliance
How the tech billionaires rule from the White House with

By Roland Peters and Hannes Vogel

In his essay, Andreessen presented himself and his like-minded colleagues as the linchpin of civilisation: without us, nothing works; without us, you are doomed. Technological developments must be consciously driven forward; they are becoming ever faster and more profitable, he wrote. Speed takes precedence over flawlessness; failure is an option – that is the essence of the motto. The tech billionaires prefer to try out new things quickly, even if something breaks in the process, rather than holding back an innovation for safety reasons or even scrapping it altogether.

Elon Musk, for example, has taken such a radical approach across all his companies, from PayPal to Tesla, SpaceX and Twitter. When in doubt, he cuts costs too much at first; repairs can be made later if necessary. Even at the risk of the system breaking down in the process. “If you don’t add something back in afterwards in at least ten per cent of cases, you clearly haven’t cut back enough,” Musk explained to his biographer Walter Isaacson, describing the most important step in his companies’ sacred five-point mantra, which he calls the ‘algorithm’: “An obsessive urge to hurry is our guiding principle.” Musk defined his life’s goal as taking humanity to Mars with his companies, whatever the cost, and transforming it into an interplanetary species.

Others have already paid the price: two people have already died in accidents at SpaceX. Not as a result of rockets exploding in the air, but during their production on the ground. In addition, at least 600 people have suffered various injuries, including crushed limbs, amputations, electric shocks, and head and eye injuries.

Supporters of democracy are “rather stupid”

The fact that Trump’s tech billionaires are being given free rein over AI is also down to the fact that they have become so important. US economic growth depends largely on the AI boom they are fuelling; by 2026, they had accounted for around a third to a half of it. They can therefore enforce their claims to entrepreneurial freedom and unconditional progress with all their economic might.



Minister Wildberger and Big Tech
“I consider Peter Thiel’s ideas to be extremely far-fetched”

Interview: Roland Peters and Hannes Vogel

They and their corporations have thus achieved what Peter Thiel had already been pondering at a libertarian conference back in 2010. Technology and politics were in a “race”, he said at the time, and technology could be used to force through changes without the voters’ consent. “We could never win an election on certain issues because we were such a small minority,” he said, recounting the thoughts he and Musk had during their early days at PayPal in the late 1990s: according to this view, one could essentially measure people’s IQ quite simply by how optimistic they were about politics. “The rather stupid people tended to think that absolutely everyone should go out and vote.” The antidote to participatory decision-making is technology. “Perhaps one could actually change the world unilaterally, without constantly having to persuade, beg and implore people who will never agree with you – and do so with the help of technological means.”

So why should tech billionaires currently agree to state regulation of AI through a democratic process? After all, Musk’s “obsessive urge to rush” is supported at the highest level by Trump. For some of the tech billionaires, voter participation merely slows down unconditional progress; liberal democracy stands in the way of it, beyond reform. If voters were to be replaced by a superintelligence through a new, hierarchical system, it would be worth it to them – or simply the logical conclusion.

Source: ntv.de

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