

Node 4005

Red and Green Projects: Work and Play

Ben Seattle -- Sept 20, 2020 -- 920.230.pm

Hi Winston,

This is my 2nd letter to you on topics related to the creation of prototype projects to help illustrate the potential of a social media platform that is based on **democratic algorithms**.

(1) getting caught up

Before I continue--I should note that you have not (yet) replied to my June letter (ie: "Democratic Algorithms for the Proletarian Mind", posted at: <http://communism.org/node/4002>).

If you would like to get caught up on that--you can do so in a few quick sentences: (1) indicate that you have read it and found it interesting, and will give thought to it, (2) list one or two things about it that caught your attention, (3) list one or two things about that might be problematic or in need of correction or clarification.

That's all that is really needed at this point.

Let me know that you are alive--that you have a **heartbeat**--and that you are not afraid to say what you think in the public arena.

<p>Q1 quadrant of urgency</p> <p>Decisive Action</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Goals easy to understand▶ Success easy to measure▶ Speed of execution is decisive▶ Primal passion unleashed <p>▶ What actions do we need to do right now?</p>	<p>Q2 quadrant of investment</p> <p>Decisive Depth</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Development of fundamental principles and goals▶ Visible success may not appear for a long time▶ Primal passion created <p>▶ What actions do we want to be remembered for?</p>
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Ben Seattle -- Jan 2011

Other people make all kinds of sacrifices to build a movement to create a world where black men (and others) are not shot down because they stand up for their rights or refuse to cower in fear. We can do our share too. We can think deeply and share our thoughts with well-chosen words. We can transform all the pain and sorrow we have experienced, all our joys and hopes, and all the rage and frustration we have ever felt--into words that move the hearts and engage the minds of our class.

It is likely that you (like most people) are inexperienced at serious writing, but there is a first time for everyone. You don't need to write a book--just a few sentences that make clear that you are an actual, **carbon-based lifeform** and that the idea of a social media platform based on **democratic algorithms**, and beyond the control of any corporation or government, seems to

be interesting. The node at **4002** has a link to where my first letter to you is posted in a Reddit forum, and that is a good place to post half a dozen sentences. And if you would like to reply to this 2nd letter, it is posted at node **4005**, where you will easily find a link to its corresponding Reddit post.

(2) Political and Technical sides

I should note that there are two sides to these projects: political and technical.

On the **political side**, I often write about the need for these kinds of projects--but it is safe to say that most political activists are (1) **too busy** "creating something now" and (2) **too ignorant** of the role of **algorithms** in what we can read and what we can say to others -- to have any clue as to what I am talking about.

I will give an example:

I wrote an essay ("The Gathering Storm", posted at node **4004**, together with a link to its corresponding Reddit location) giving an overview of the political situation in the U.S. in light of **the recent murders of anti-racist activists in Wisconsin and here in the Northwest**. I conclude the essay by saying something that no one else is saying at this time: that **the clear and certain path forward for humanity is the creation of a democratic social media platform**--to assist in (1) the organization of many kinds of struggles--and (2) to bring, to our class, consciousness of its historic mission (ie: getting rid of the rule of capital, and creating a world of peace, abundance and community for everyone who breathes).

I got one serious response from an activist, Art Francisco.

Art wrote that what I advocated (1) represented a "retreat" from what needed to be done and (2) was nothing more than a utopian daydream.

And, of course, that is par for the course. Most activists have similar views--but simply do not express them with such confidence, concision and elegance.

I know Art quite well, and acted as a mentor to him at the time we first met at the Seattle Occupy encampment, in late 2011.

I consider Art's reply to be uninformed and spectacularly shallow.

All the same, I believe Art's reply **represents progress**--because at least engagement at some level has begun. Every time Art engages with this question--he is forced to think about it--even if only a little bit. This idea (ie: a **democratic social media platform**) has now caught Art's attention, and he has explained (more than once) that he (like everyone else) considers it **hopelessly impractical**.

(3) Give it time

People change their views over **years**.

For example, it took me two years to decide that I was an atheist. I started seriously considering the question at age 12. One day in school, when I was 14, I overheard one 14 year old girl talking to another about this very subject, and I suddenly realized that I had made up my mind. It happened in about two minutes. One door

slammed shut and another one opened. My dad used to tell me that **the truth will out**. It does. You just need to give it time.

I would like to see Art eventually reach the same conclusion that I have: that the development of a **democratic social media platform** is of sufficient significance that it is worth devoting his life to.

If Art reaches this conclusion--it will not be because of clever arguments from me--but because it is true. It is not true because I say it is true. It is the other way around. I say it is true because it is. And the proof of this truth will come--not from me--but from **life**, from the struggles of countless millions of people to **understand the world, and live a life worth living**.

(4) The right place at the right time

And I am simply saying what no one else is saying (at this time) because--by whatever twist of fate--I happened to end up in **the right place at the right time**--trained as an information theorist (who studied Turing and Shannon) and politicized by the upheaval of the late 1960's (which led to the study of Mao, and then Lenin) at the time when the revolution in communications in this century is making the organization of information for the purpose of **information war** (understood as **a war of ideas, organized on a mass scale**) the primordial axis of development of the class struggle.

We are living in the century in which **political transparency** is emerging as an **invincible force** and in which the **proletariat** will **make itself conscious**.

For students of history, this has been a long time coming.

Art may not yet realize it--but the ideas I describe (ie: of using **democratic social media** to accelerate political transparency) are in total alignment with the work he is already doing now (Art runs a weekly video podcast, which he calls "The Marxist Line", which makes an effort to review or comment on articles or videos created by activists who consider themselves to be "marxists").

It is likely, Winston, that you are more comfortable with the **technical side** of these questions than the political side.

That is understandable in the context of our times.

Most political discussion today is dominated by **ignorance** and a total lack of **class consciousness**.

Political activists are somewhat better, but the left ecosystem is completely dominated by the practice of **supporting ideas and ideologies on the basis of what will earn you popularity--and help you recruit warm, living bodies into your cult**. Intellectual and scientific integrity is usually viewed mainly as an annoyance--and an obstacle to circumvent and overcome. I am not exaggerating. At this point, for example, **most trot groups**, imho, **would gladly embrace the idea that the earth is really flat--if it would help them recruit**.

I am writing to you because I need someone to talk to (and bounce ideas off of) related to algorithms (and supporting hardware/software infrastructure). You understand what algorithms (and infrastructure) are. That makes you qualified for this. And I believe you have sufficient political depth in your thinking to understand that a democratic platform could make a big difference in social and political development.

It is not necessary that you write about the political side of matters--however I believe it would be helpful for you to give thought to them--and I would like to encourage you to read "The Gathering Storm" at node **4004** (as well as Art's response--and my eventual reply, maybe later this year, to Art).

(5) Relatively modest projects

Naturally, the creation of a **democratic social media platform** that will bring consciousness to the proletariat, and liberate humanity, will not be a small project.

On the other hand, my efforts, my projects, will be far more modest.

I am thinking in terms of two broad projects, which I call the **Red Project** and the **Green Project**.

I would like, if possible, to create functioning projects that are used on a daily (or weekly) basis by at least 10 people. I would like to accomplish this before I die (or in the next 10 years, whichever comes first).

That, of course, is modest in comparison to a project that will reach something like 9 billion people. But as modest as my projects may be, I believe these are reasonable objectives to set for myself. I am not (by myself) the entire proletariat, and it would be foolish to attempt to substitute my efforts for the efforts of an entire social class.

Rather, I need to work on these projects in order to write about them. If I write about them--then readers will (legitimately)

expect me to illustrate my talk of democratic algorithms with something more than hand-waving. So, I need to do *something*, but it is OK if this something is relatively modest.

(6) Big ships and small canoes

In my writing, I am claiming that humanity needs to build an immensely large ship. In my software projects--I intend to build a small canoe or two. But that is ok because no one else has ever built even a canoe before. I can be the first to build a canoe (if I am sufficiently focused) simply because I am in the right place at the right time. And, by the time I am done, there may be many others who have made better canoes. And that's even better.

A canoe is not a ship. But, in building canoes, we may learn about things like buoyancy, balance, stability, cargo load, ocean waves, currents, wind and weather, propulsion, navigation and sea-sickness. Much of this will be useful when we scale up to the next step. And small-scale projects will accumulate the experience around which a community can organize itself.

- > **If you want to build a ship, don't drum up**
- > **people to collect wood and don't assign**
- > **them tasks and work, but rather teach them**
- > **to long for the endless immensity of the sea.**

-- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

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(7) The Red Project and the Green Project

The Red and Green projects correspond to the "**formal**" and "**informal**" roles we discussed over Thai food one afternoon, when you summed things up by saying that your informal identity is the one that someone would probably want to use when they were drunk.

That's not a bad summary.

The green system is where you would create content that is often for yourself, or which would need work in order to be ready for larger-scale or public consumption. The green system is where you would post when you were hungry, angry, lonely, tired--or high.

(8) The red-green division -- and brain lateralization

The **green system** would be the place to post all your **drafts** and **myriad scraps** of information that need to go someplace.

The **red system** would be where you post your final (and polished) product.

As I see it, someone might spend 98 percent of the time that they are **creating content** (ie: either writing or making a video)

posting to the green system--and 98 percent of the time they spend **consuming content** (ie: either reading or watching) from the red system.

It may be possible to understand, on an intuitive level, that this separation of red and green may, by itself, be helpful in maintaining a more powerful **signal-to-noise ratio**.

The other interesting feature of separating the red and green systems--is that it is loosely modeled on the separation of the left and right hemispheres of the brains of just about any animal with a brain bigger than a pea. This separation becomes more developed as we move up the evolutionary scale to mammals or birds known for complex behavior.

Nature has separated our hemispheres for a reason.

In essence, as a user, you will get one system for each of your hemispheres:

(1) The informal, **green system** will be useful for your **right hemisphere** (ie: internally focused on things, like truth and beauty, that cannot be quantified or measured, richer, deeper, **connected to the universal** and closer to the spiritual side of life, and to your core relationships with the **people** you love).

(2) The formal, **red system** will be useful for your **left hemisphere** (ie: goal-driven, externally focused on things that can be measured, hierarchical, good at manipulating **objects**, making things happen and **getting shit done**).

The Red System is for the products of **work**, and (to quote Roddy Piper in "They Live") "chewing bubble gum and kicking ass" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Du5YK5FnyF4>).

The Green System is for relaxation, recreation and **play**.

(9) How might this look?

Red systems

For my (relatively primitive) projects, I see **Red** systems as being relatively simple **web-based** systems to host **discussion and debate** and **organize public information** (for example: lists of political groups, or lists of interesting articles to read or videos to watch) in **relatively small and simple tables**.

Everything on the red system would be **public** and **permanent**. If you wanted to **delete** something you posted to the red system--you could not **erase** it--but you could mark it as **deprecated**--and in this way signal to other users (and the algorithms they use to find and view content) that you no longer stand behind that post.

My red systems may use common web scripting tools (ie: html, css, javascript, xml and php -- because the cool site at <https://www.w3schools.com> makes it easy to learn about and use these).

I would most likely use MySQL if it became necessary to hook this all up to a database. However, as part of my philosophy of **keeping things as simple as possible** (and avoiding, like the plague, all **unnecessary complexity**) my intention is to avoid use of a database system in favor of simple flat files (ie: txt or xml files) to hold data. (Eventually, a flat-file system would **prove impractical as the system grows**. However, such growth would itself provide motivation for me, or possibly others, to hook some parts of the system up to a database.) John Conway (who

recently died of Covid-19, by the way) created his famous mathematical "game of life" without the use of a database. In fact I believe he worked it all out using paper and pencil.

I would like to create a simple Red System so that Art (and his video podcast co-host, Andrew) could better and more easily organize the articles and videos they comment on for their show.

By using such a system, Art and Andrew could also (in the process) help me test and debug it. Furthermore, Art will likely better be able to understand the value of digital infrastructure when he is actually able to use it.

And I would like to create a public forum at communism.org, called "**The Public Arena**" where **all activists committed to a world that is not run by capital** (ie: activists who consider themselves to be marxists, or anarchists, etc) would be able to make at least one post per month as part of **organized public discussion and debate** on key issues.

Storage for red systems would probably be measured in **megabytes**.

(10) How might this look?

Green systems

Green systems, on the other hand, might be used by someone to help them organize information on their hard drive (whether it is their porn collection, or articles, memes or videos they are working on) write notes and maintain journals.

My green system might use a C# executable.

At least in the relatively simple system I am thinking of initially, the content of each person's Green system (at least most of the content) would neither be public nor even uploaded--**it would remain on their hard drive.**

If for some reason a user wanted to share parts of their green content with specific people--something could be worked out.

In the long run (ie: if these projects captured attention and were continued and expanded by others when I am no longer around) the tendency would probably be for much of the green content (which would require storage measured, not in megabytes, but in **terabytes**) to also become public in some way--as a **community** develops and creates the **traditions and culture** that would be **necessary** to support such a development in a mature, productive and healthy way.

The red and green systems would probably share common design to some degree (for example, I wrote in my first letter about something I call "nodes"). But, in general, the green system would be based on **more advanced and flexible algorithms** and structures, and the ideas and experience accumulated in green system work--could then be applied to red system work.

(11) The integration of green and red systems

We can briefly consider how the red and green system could work together.

Someone might use their **green system** to author an article. The green system would then break the article into a series of jpg or png images (such as I created from my first letter to you at node **4002**) which could then be shared to the big commodity social media sites (ie: facebook, instagram, twitter, WeChat, etc). The green system could also package these images together into a PDF file, suitable for printing.

The **red system** would provide a place to host the public node that would provide a centralized location to host the article (and all discussion threads about it). Each images which is shared would reference the public node--which would in turn link to (a) all images, (b) the PDF, (c) all discussion threads on Reddit or (d) on the commodity sites--and (e) provide links to many related materials and (f) related nodes.

Similar methods could also be used in relation to sharing videos, although, as far as my own work is concerned, I would use YouTube to actually host the videos, since they are large and unwieldy files.

Currently I do this kind of work manually, using Notepad, Wordpad, MS Word, PDF's, MS Paint, and then Notepad again to create html. This is all labor intensive and, as I am sure you can imagine, a pain. A green system could automate 80 or 90 percent

of this work and make it much easier to create and share content, and build discussion.

(12) Closing ..

That's it for now.

I would like to continue this conversation, but I believe you can understand that I cannot do it by myself. I need to know that someone with a **heartbeat** and a **thinking mind** is engaged and listening.

Put a few words on paper. Read it over a few times, until you are happy with them. Then post to Reddit. It can be as easy as 1, 2, 3.

All the best,
Ben