Carey Nieuwhof ([00:00:00](#)):

Hey leaders! It's Carey here with a special announcement before we get into today's show. A lot of you are looking for podcasts to listen to, there's 3 million out there, and our team has just launched something brand new, called The Art of Leadership Network. It is a network of podcasters and includes world class leaders dedicated to helping you live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow in your business and in your life. If you like this podcast, we think you are going to like the others in the network. But it's got a variety, you're going to hear from top leaders on culture, entrepreneurship, executive leadership, organizational culture, nonprofit leadership, church trends, leader resources, influencers, and even healthy living. And well, it'll keep growing too, our podcasters in The Art of Leadership Network now include Chris Cook, Jenni Catron, Brad Lomenick, Jeff Henderson, Shane Benson, David Farmer, Kevin Jennings, our friends at Exponential and Sean Morgan.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:00:57](#)):

And you're probably saying, "Great, how do I find these?" Well, we got one easy spot, go to theartofleadershipnetwork.com, and that's a landing page for all of the shows inside our brand new network. Or of course you can just search The Art of Leadership Network inside whatever podcast app you're listening to and we will have a whole lot more on The Art of Leadership coming up. But we're kicking it off with this podcast network. Yeah, there's a lot more behind The Art of Leadership. We've been working on it for a long, long time. Hope you enjoy these shows as much as we do. And now to today's episode.

Announcer ([00:01:29](#)):

Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, a podcast all about leadership, change, and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before, in your church or in your business. And now your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:01:46](#)):

Well, hey everybody, and welcome to episode 473 of the podcast. It's Carey here, I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. Well, this wraps up our mini future series. We've had some great episodes. The last four have all been about the future and we covered everything from the metaverse to future trends, to Bitcoin, to the future of FinTech and online giving with Vance Roush. And today we're going to wrap it up with Max Chafkin. Max is a journalist. He's actually the Bloomberg business week editor. He's the author of an auto biography on Peter Thiel, one of Silicon Valley's prime movers. And we're going to talk about the unintended consequences of technology, power politics, and tech leaders, and the silence or absence of theologians and philosophers in this space. And today's episode is brought to you by Leadr. You can go to leadr.com, that's L-E-A-D-R.com and use the promo code Carey, to get 20% off your first year of their people development software. And it's brought to you by Remodel Health. You can register for their free webinar on understanding the 401(k) of health benefits by going to remodelhealth.com/webinar.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:03:01](#)):

I hope you've found this Future series really helpful. We've gotten some great feedback on it. I personally have loved it, and we may do a little bit more on that. I know I've got an episode on AI coming up, not necessarily as part of a miniseries, but I think this is really interesting. And to me, the more we know about it, the more we can be prepared. And there's no question that things are changing.

So today's episode wraps up part five of this mini series, but we will bounce into this subject from time to time again on the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:03:32):

And question for you, did the great resignation take a toll on your team? It did on a lot of teams because the data is telling us that 50% of people either already have, or still will be leaving their jobs for another one in the next 12 months. Why? Because they're looking for a workplace where they can be engaged and grow every day. And that's what Leadr, the first people development software helps you do. It helps you engage and grow every person on your team. Leadr wants to say goodbye to the great resignation and ask you to join them in the great resolution, making the care and development of your people the number one priority in 2022.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:04:10):

HBR, the Harvard Business Review, tells us that 70% of the reason a person leaves a team or job is because of their relationship with their manager, and Leadr wants to help you with that. They believe the one-on-one meeting is the most powerful leadership development tool that a manager has. So they built a platform to help you lead effective one-on-one meetings, develop leaders at every level of your organization and grow every person on your team. 500 churches and businesses are already using Leadr for effective one-on-one meetings. You can request your demo today by going to leadr.com, and use the promo code Carey. You'll get 20% off the first year of their people development software.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:04:56):

Also, record numbers of American employees are changing jobs for better health benefits. But with group health insurance cost going up every year, how can you possibly find something better for employees without breaking your budget? Well, the good news is that American health benefits have gone through a huge change. And even though you may not have heard about it yet, it's actually the same change that retirement health benefits went through back in the '80s, when group pensions were replaced by individual 401(k) plans. Now employers saved a ton of money and employees got better benefits.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:05:28):

The great news is that the 401(k) of health benefits has been around and growing for over a decade. Unlike old group plans, because the style of health benefits has become so popular, it's actually gone down in costs while giving better coverage. Small organizations and enterprise groups are saving millions of dollars, and so are listeners of this podcast. So because you're a podcast listener, probably means you love to learn, which is perfect because Remodel Health is offering a free educational webinar that will help teach you everything you need to know and understand the 401(k) of health benefits. Register today, by going to remodelhealth.com/webinar. Learn about this huge change. It's absolutely free. Go to remodelhealth.com/webinar.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:06:14):

Well, with all that said, let's dive into this fascinating conversation with Max Chafkin. Max, welcome to the podcast. It's great to have you.

Max Chafkin (00:06:22):

Thanks for having me, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:06:23):

Yeah, yeah. This going to be a fun conversation. So I don't think I've ever had anyone from Bloomberg on before, but you cover tech for Bloomberg and have done that for a while. I'd love to know, was this just a random assignment, like as a journalist it's, "Hey, you got tech?" Or have you been interested in this from the time you were little?

Max Chafkin (00:06:40):

Well, it's maybe a little of both. I'm 39 and that puts me right in the age where I was growing up just as the internet was becoming a thing. So I of course, remember the world before the internet, but also, I got to live all that change in a really intimate way. And when I was a kid, I was really interested in computers and I even was clumsily teaching myself how to code. I was really, really interested in the internet, (RED)Wire magazine.

Max Chafkin (00:07:19):

And then lost interest in tech and went to college and got interested in becoming a journalist. And wasn't particularly thinking about this as a journalistic path, but then basically wound up at a business magazine called Inc. Inc. is basically a magazine for entrepreneurs. I think basically, because I was the young one, they had me cover tech. At the time, this is like 2005, it was kind of a neat year for Silicon valley and for tech, where these companies had been very hot in the '90s. And basically the rest of the world had sort of decided, "Oh my God, we were totally wrong about this. And all these businesses are sort of stupid and we got to get back to basics." But of course there was still stuff happening there.

Max Chafkin (00:08:14):

So it was this weird side thing that because I was young and junior, I got to write about or had to write about. And as a result, I got to spend time with all of these people who are now famous, including Elon Musk and Jack Dorsey. I mean, I remember when Jack Dorsey, this founder of Twitter, former CEO of Twitter, working out this sad little cubicle thing. Anyways, so little space that when we had the interview, it was in a park while he had a burrito.

Max Chafkin (00:08:51):

And of course, one of those people I encountered during that time was Peter Thiel. I think I interviewed him the first time because I was writing a profile of Elon Musk who was this weird guy who was starting an electric car company and it didn't seem very realistic, and he also had this rocket thing. And then of course, fast forward at 15 years, that little industry that was a sideline in 2005 and that was not taken very seriously by some of the folks where I worked at Inc. at the time or by anyone really, of course is now this economic and cultural force, maybe the most important economic and cultural force in the entire world. And I think that that story of how that happened is really amazing. And it's what I think I'm covering both at Bloomberg and to some extent in this book.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:09:56):

Yeah. The Contrarian, which is really a biography of Peter Thiel. And we'll get into some of that. But it is interesting, one of the phrases that's come up over the last couple years has been unintended consequences. So you go back to those early days, Twitter, I mean, you remember it pre Twitter, I think

'05, '06 when it was an idea and a joke and you used to have to text in your status updates. Do you remember that?

Max Chafkin ([00:10:22](#)):

Yeah, of course.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:10:23](#)):

That was a weird thing.

Max Chafkin ([00:10:24](#)):

No. The big issue with Twitter was that people didn't have unlimited texting plans. So if you got too into it, you'd rack up a huge bill and it would become unusable. It's kind of funny now that our feeds are just, it's like a deluge now of information. So kind of funny to imagine that coming through SMS, but yeah, that's how it was.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:10:48](#)):

Yeah. That is interesting. You'd tell your kids, "Well, there were limits to text messages. I had a hundred text messages included in my plan." And they're like, "What are you even talking about?" They have no idea, which is fun. But unintended consequences. So when you go back, because now everyone's talking about big tech and the big five or the big six and the problems with that and comparisons to really what happened even a hundred and some odd years ago with the big oil companies and the antitrust suits that came up and the antitrust actions that the first Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt took, similar vibes today. But when you go back to those early days, did you have any inkling that this is where we would end up 17 years later?

Max Chafkin ([00:11:33](#)):

No. And I don't think that many people who are inside the industry did. And I'm sure we could go back and find critics, because there are always people who... Whatever. We live in a society with lots of different opinions. I'm sure there are people who are pointing it out, but it's certainly something I didn't feel because, and I don't think the folks who are now at the eye of the storm who are being criticized, really had any notion that this was the trajectory. I mean, they felt like outsiders. And they were revolutionaries who were - and I would put Thiel in this group, I would put Mark Zuckerberg in this group or Dorsey, Elon Musk. A lot of these folks felt like they were outsiders and they had no power and certainly no cultural salience or anything like that.

Max Chafkin ([00:12:24](#)):

And that's I think part of the reason why there was so little thought given to, well, is are our lives is really going to be better if we're spending eight hours a day or more staring at a smartphone screen? Or are our lives going to be any better if we have this direct connection to the viewpoints of hundreds of millions of people all, or billions of people all over the world? Because really, the networks were so much smaller and it just seemed like- and I think this was what was at play. If you back then said, "Hey, I don't think Mark Zuckerberg, you should be growing in this imperialistic way because if you succeed, you'll have 3 billion users and you won't have enough employees to control the content that's coming out in these corners of the world that are really unstable. And you might even cause genocides, if things get out of control." I mean, I don't think he would've had any idea how to respond to that-

Carey Nieuwhof (00:13:27):

He would've been laughed out of the room.

Max Chafkin (00:13:29):

... because what you're describing from their point of view was success. Having 3 billion users when you have a tiny company and no profits to speak of, it's hard to see that really as a warning. It's more like that's a goal. And I think that's kind of exactly what happened. And I get into this some in the book, I think Peter Thiel helped create this, an ideology with Zuckerberg and others, that both made that growth possible in terms of creating a playbook where that sort of showed, here's how these tech companies can grow really quickly. But of course, as I argued in the book, I think that philosophy has some limitations and in particular, some limitations around ethics and around impact, which really, I don't think were considered that deeply at the time.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:14:20):

So you do talk, I mean, The Contrarian, and you've written about this too, on your beat as well for Bloomberg and other places, but there is this widespread conversation now that you drill down on between ideology and Silicon Valley. And it's easy to think of tech as neutral. And I'm not sure back to unintended consequences that in the early days, Zuck was thinking, "Oh, we're going to be a factor in a presidential election," or, "I'm going to have my politics become an issue." That was what he did, but he was building this neutral platform. And let's think about this not so much as an origin, but even now, and I think you make this argument in the book, can tech be designed with ideology in mind?

Max Chafkin (00:15:06):

Well, I think there's a sort of thing you hear in Silicon Valley and that frankly has existed in the tech industry going back generations, that tech is kind of apolitical. And I think that's a pretty comfortable place to be if you're a technologist. Because politics is messy and if you're in business, it can, of course lead to regulation and lead to you having to pay more in taxes or being hauled in front of Congress, or whatever. So that's a position that I think had certain advantages and also had some kind of... I think that's a nice way to see yourself. It's nice to see yourself as building something that is sort of outside of ideology.

Max Chafkin (00:15:57):

But I don't think tech, I mean, I don't think really anything can exist in this world outside of politics and outside ideology, because of course, we all bring our biases to anything we do, including when we're writing software and how we design these apps and things like that. And sometimes of course, the saying like, "Oh, I'm just apolitical," can be a political statement because if somebody is saying, "Hey, would you like to provide some food aid to these poor people?" And you say, "Well, I'm apolitical." You're kind of making a political statement. And I think sometimes tech has done that.

Max Chafkin (00:16:40):

I think it's really a tricky question because the notion of technology platforms, Facebook and Twitter and so on, as these bastions of free speech, it's really compelling and important. And I think by creating these big platforms that have brought a lot of viewpoints onto the world, they've done a lot of good and they've opened people's eyes to things. But of course, there's just always going to be limits and it's hard to figure out where you... First of all, who should be the ones to police the platforms? Do we want to

trust Facebook? Do we want to trust the government? Do we want to trust some combination of the two? And that's where the rubber meets the road and, we're trying to figure that out. And depending on which political persuasion you talk to, they'll come up with different answers.

Max Chafkin (00:17:39):

But I think there's a growing awareness, I'd say on both sides of the political spectrum, at least in the United States, that these tech companies have a great deal of power over our speech and ultimately over our ideas and the things that we think. And we probably need, I don't know if it's creating limitations, but at least creating some sort of framework to think about do we want to put limits on that power? I don't know what the answer that question is.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:18:10):

So let's go back to, I don't think anybody really wants to, but the 2016 or 2020 election, the US presidential election. Power of tech did play a big role. I think it shocked everyone at the time for how big, particularly in 2016, tech played, and you cover that. So the algorithm, for example, you cover in your book, elevated certain posts above others. Then we got into censoring in 2020, to massive amounts of tech money that actually poured into certain candidates. So it's not just, "Oh, this is my platform" - elevating something that may be a bot or spam or false news or whatever, fake news. But then you've also got, you say Peter Thiel, really being the contrarian conservative ideal log in Silicon Valley, getting behind Donald Trump, et cetera. Talk about how those influences converge, because I think all of us were taken by surprise by it, at least the first time around.

Max Chafkin (00:19:11):

Yeah, and I certainly was. There's sort of two dimensions to this. One is these technologies as distribution platforms for ideas. And the sort of shift of campaigning from being something that's playing out in mass media and canvasing and things like that to... And of course those things are still important, but there's this new thing called social media that I think a lot of people became much more keenly aware of in 2016 in the aftermath. Now, the funny thing is, Trump, I think used social media in a very effective way, Trump and his supporters. And I think-

Carey Nieuwhof (00:19:59):

Astutely.

Max Chafkin (00:20:00):

Yeah. A hundred percent. And both in terms of how they literally were using it and how Trump was communicating and his tweets. And there are aspects of his personality that I think were sort of perfectly pitched to that thing. There was also an ability to sort of read the room, or just a lot of real combination of I think creativity and good timing. But the funny thing is, you go back four years earlier, the Obama campaign actually pioneered a lot of the techniques that Trump's campaign ended up using. The microtargeting and this attempt to slice and dice audiences and be able to target messages to specific people. That stuff was kind of in the water. I think Trump was just using a lot of these tactics that had already been developed, but then putting on top of that, just a personality and a persona and an understanding of the medium that maybe Obama and his folks didn't quite have.

Max Chafkin (00:21:06):

Now, and that's a tech story, and that's one where I think Trump and also Trump's ability, with the help of folks like Peter Thiel, to push Facebook and the social media outlets to regulate speech in the way they wanted it to be regulated, played a role. But a lot of 2016, I think was also just a more conventional campaign. It was a campaign where we had some new power players. I think social media played a role, but I think the tech industry, and in particular Thiel, played a role in helping Trump be seen as competent and a worthy candidate at a time when even when among Republicans, he was this outsider and there were all these Never Trumpers.

Max Chafkin ([00:21:56](#)):

So the way that I got interested in this is that Thiel stands up in summer of 2016 and endorses Trump for president in prime time, right before Trump delivers his remarks at the RNC. To those of us following tech, and in fact to a lot of people who were friends with Peter Thiel, had followed him for a long time, it was crazy because the tech industry was in so many ways 180 degrees from Donald Trump. Peter Thiel is somebody who's super interested in the future. He's a futurist, he wants to make things happen faster, sooner, now. He's an immigrant, he's gay and he's backing a candidate who is in some ways hostile to all of those things. I mean, Trump ran kind of as a reactionary, where we want to make things the way they were before the Democrats, whatever, ruined the country. And of course he ran as this kind of a hard line immigration candidate, which again, totally 180 degrees from what conventional wisdom was in Silicon Valley.

Max Chafkin ([00:23:07](#)):

And so I think Thiel's endorsement was surprising and also made a lot of people maybe think a little bit differently about Trump. When I would talk to folks in the Trump campaign, while I was working on this book, Thiel was really valuable to them because they did not have a lot of mainstream business folks who were supporting Trump's campaign. It was a lot of Trump had some business leaders, but they tended to be from the real estate world or entertainment or these areas that are not necessarily seen as the most reputable, not a lot of card carrying Davos attendees were backing Trump at that point. And here's Peter Thiel, who is both very conservative, but also totally in that club. He is on the Facebook board, he's somebody who built this new economy. And he's saying Trump is okay. And I think that made a huge difference.

Max Chafkin ([00:24:03](#)):

And then the other thing that happened at the RNC that I think was pretty significant is Thiel gave a speech where he talked about going back to the future and endorsing Trump's, like I said, reactionary vision. But he also said, "I'm proud to be gay and I'm proud to me an American." Thiel's somebody's really private, so that was a big deal for him, I think personally, but it was also a big deal for the Republican party. That was the first time at a Republican convention somebody had done that. Thiel didn't get booed, it wasn't awkward, they all cheered. And so I think it created this sense, now, however fleeting, I think a lot of these folks ended up pretty disappointed in Trump in the long run, that Trump maybe wasn't as polarizing as he was being presented and that he also was maybe more competent that he was being presented. So I think those things are just more old school conventional power, money, politics stuff, also played a role in addition to the algorithmic microtargeting dimension of the election.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:25:11](#)):

Well, it almost feels like the early 20th century, the robber baron era where you had guys like Henry Ford and Rockefeller and Carnegie who would lobby Washington, but were also subject to regulation.

And it almost feels like we're in that moment again, where the very people like Zuckerberg, Zuck gets subpoenaed to Congress and he has to testify, and Jack Dorsey does, and I'm sure Peter Thiel has at one point or another. And you're in that, but that hasn't really happened a lifetime at the level that's happening now, at least not in my lifetime. Am I missing something or are we just in one of those eras where-

Max Chafkin (00:25:55):

No, I think you're... I mean, and there have been books written about this that people have compared, I think Tim Wu wrote a book of comparing the response to the telecom monopoly to the internet, where... And I think that's probably good analogy and in that view, there's eventually going to be basically the government will eventually kind of de fang these big tech companies and that'll eventually allow for a new generation of players to come on the scene. If you want to live in a pluralistic world with competition and stuff, then I think that's what we'd probably be hoping for. Is that in the long run, these big companies will face real competition upstarts that will challenge them in some way that we cannot devise or whatever.

Max Chafkin (00:26:45):

But I do think that that modern robber baron analogy is pretty useful. And I also think it's probably important to say that a lot of these tech guys have a view of monopoly that is pretty out of the mainstream, at least out of how mainstream capitalists, citizens and capitalist democracies...

Carey Nieuwhof (00:27:06):

How so, how's it different?

Max Chafkin (00:27:07):

Well, so Thiel wrote a book called Zero to One. And it's basically a business book, but it also has people who are fans of his read sort of deep meaning into it. It's a really is a business book that maybe depending on your point of view doubles as a life philosophy type thing. But in the book, he argues that tech companies are sort of different from other businesses in that they are network businesses. And with a network business, basically you have a winner and everybody else. You can't have a million different Facebooks because going to be one network that is ultimately going to win. And therefore the goal of these companies is monopoly and that anyone who says otherwise is just a phony or a liar or something else like that.

Max Chafkin (00:28:01):

They're different ways you could read that. Maybe it's a subtle critique of these companies, he's sort of saying the quiet part out loud. But either way, I think that Zuckerberg and many of these other companies have really explicitly sought monopoly. And I think that's something that maybe hasn't happened for a long time. Although I think from the Peter Thiel view, he would just sort of say, "Well, all business leaders have been doing that, they just haven't been willing to admit it." But I think we have to figure out a way, especially with tech, if you want to have competition, you have to find a way to somehow undermine that. Because the observation from Thiel that these are networks and they're dominated by single player, it feels like it's factually true. So it may require either new tech or some kind of novel regulations to get around that.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:28:52):

Well, I think you're right. I'm sure they're not the first business people to think monopoly, but nobody has really achieved that in our lifetime. I grew up in an era where they were unbundling all that stuff, where they were deregulating it, where there was power, and this has sort of become unbridled. And now it's impacting all of us. What do you, because I want to get onto other aspects of tech, but when you think there's another election right around the corner, there always is, sadly. How much do you think elections are impacted by algorithms and that kind of thing, based on your perspective as a reporter, from what you've seen, and obviously a lot of deep research? To what extent do you think there is, I don't know whether the question is a bias, but just clearly this is a factor, but how would you define that fact?

Max Chafkin ([00:29:44](#)):

I think that we still have free will thankfully and-

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:29:51](#)):

We still have agency, this is good.

Max Chafkin ([00:29:52](#)):

And while there is, I do think these technologies, Facebook in particular, have the prospect to affect people and influence people in ways that are profound and important. People talk about, it's kind of a mind control machine or something, they help shape our perceptions. But of course mass media has done that too. So I don't know how different that is, but what I do think is that because these tools are very powerful and because the companies that are running them do not really seem to have their arms around that power, that creates a lot of potential for manipulation.

Max Chafkin ([00:30:37](#)):

I think that's what is troubling when you look at the history of 2016 and 2020, where it was clear even in 2016, even before the election, that there were sort of bad actors and there was junky, the term fake news has become it's like, I don't know, a radioactive word. But there was a false news and basically lies that were being pushed across the platform and many people believed them. And that the company Facebook responded by denying it and just slow walking any criticism and any scrutiny. And that's kind of happened over and over again, over the last five years.

Max Chafkin ([00:31:25](#)):

I think the result of that is it just creates vulnerabilities where somebody who is either smart enough or unethical enough, can potentially manipulate these platforms in ways that we don't understand. And then you have situations where you have this, just talking about what's going on today, I mean, you have this gigantic anti-vax movement amid a public health emergency, or you have QAnon rising a time when the election is under dispute or whatever. I just think it creates a lot of uncertainty and undermines trust and things like that in a bad way. But I don't think we are enthralled to these platforms, and I don't think we should mystify them and ascribe more power to them than they actually have. I mean, they're like information platforms, just like the mass media, although unlike the mass media, they're basically totally unregulated and so you can get really funky stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:32:34](#)):

Well, we could spend a lot of time there. I think I'm going to move on. I want to talk to you about some of the things you cover in the book, and then some general questions about tech in the future. Because we have a lot of leaders who are navigating tech right now and we all have opinions about it. But you cover growth hacking in the book, and that was something Peter Thiel is one of the co-founders of PayPal. And you talk about growth hacking, what is that as a concept? What are the dangers, if any?

Max Chafkin (00:33:01):

So I mean, it's basically the idea that, and this started really with PayPal and there are probably stories you could tell where there are other companies that had that similar growth trajectory. But right at this time, the early web, you had companies that were growing quote unquote, "virally". So with PayPal, the way it worked is you would open an account and they would give you $10 in your PayPal account of real money and $10 to refer somebody else. You could get $20 in real money that you could use to buy stuff on eBay. And that created this incentive for people to both to encourage their friends to sign up and also anytime somebody pays for something with PayPal that creates a further incentive for somebody to sign up. So you have quote unquote "viral growth".

Max Chafkin (00:33:51):

And starting there, basically business were able to grow much more quickly than businesses had ever been able grow anytime in human history. Investors saw that as really valuable and inevitably, you have all these engineers who are into optimizing things, try to find ways to kind of goose that and grow even faster. And growth hacking, all it means is just doing something to make it grow faster. But of course, this can very quickly lead you into ethical things. And growth hacking often implies, not necessarily anything that's super evil or anything, but it's more like...

Carey Nieuwhof (00:34:34):

It's like incentives, right?

Max Chafkin (00:34:35):

Trying to manipulate Google to send more customers your way or try... Yeah, manipulating incentives. And often you have companies that are kind of these smaller players that are sort of trying to find little tricks to either draft off a bigger player and steal their customers or whatever. And that is growth hacking. There are sort of really benign versions of that and maybe more malignant versions of that, where companies in the past have gotten into spam. They buy a big list of emails and sign everybody up for your email list, that would be bad.

Max Chafkin (00:35:13):

But the reason I talk about it in the book and the reason I think it's important is that ethic of just, "Let's grow as fast as we can, as quickly as we can. Norms and ethics and so on be damned." That I think is maybe okay, when we're talking about a tiny company, and it starts to get a little bit terrifying when it's playing out at the scale of a bigger company or a startup that is backed by billions of dollars in foreign money or something. So like Uber was a startup that I think was doing growth hacking. And I think there were times where they clearly crossed where they had all this money from investors. I mean, I said foreign money, it's like a combination of US money and money from SoftBank and so on, but-

Carey Nieuwhof (00:36:05):

And VC.

Max Chafkin (00:36:06):

Yeah. But anyway, they're spending just enormous sums of money to acquire a user base and along the way breaking laws in cities around the world and undercuting of course taxi medallion owners, but also workers. And it just has the potential to mess up the world in ways that you don't anticipate. And so I think with a lot of these, a lot of the Silicon Valley playbook, and that's the playbook that I think Thiel developed, I think it's not inherently bad or anything like that, it's just... And in fact, you can sort of see why it's useful to an entrepreneur or leader at a relatively early stage. I think we all agree that entrepreneurs, somebody who's a startup small business owner, maybe does a need to cross every t and dot every i, or maybe we can forgive them for that.

Max Chafkin (00:37:03):

But when it plays out across company like Facebook, which has 3 billion users and $1.5 trillion in market value and is the biggest media platform in the history of the world, then it starts to get a little bit scarier, at least scarier to me. Or just has more potential to cause disruption. And then of course, there's some people who see that disruption as a good thing. And that's the Facebook philosophy. When they talked about move fast and break things, that's the Facebook motto, that's basically saying the world's messed up and we're going to break stuff, but the thing we make in its place is going to be better.

Max Chafkin (00:37:48):

And I think that's Thiel's view. Thiel thinks that institutionally, things are a mess. And if you have to break a few eggs along the way, we're going to create a better future. And I think that that view, of course, I can understand why people feel that way, but that view of course, can very quickly spin out of control and can create an ethical framework that makes almost anything possible.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:38:18):

Well, it's one of those things where I can see, and as a person who takes, and I'm sure you do too, ethics very seriously, I'd want to think about any growth hacking and make sure it passes a test. But you're right, something intuitive about it making sense in the startup days. But again, when you have 3 billion users, are you still growth hacking. Because there is a natural life cycle to a company. And we all think our companies are going to last forever and ever and ever, but there is this tremendous appetite for growth and church leaders feel it, Max, business leaders feel it. Where we're like, "If we're not growing, we're dying." And it's a really good check, I think, in our conscience to say, "Okay," but are the methods sustainable? Are the methods ethical? Are they fair to society?

Carey Nieuwhof (00:39:09):

Which leads me to another question. Actually, I'm going to hang on to that question. I want to go to surveillance capitalism. So that is something you raise in the book. One of the companies that Thiel started as a surveillance technology company, it sounds very big brotherish, but I mean, I listen to Yuval Harari and look at some of the stuff that he's written. And I mean, we'll talk about AI and that. But do you want to just define for us what surveillance technology is and then what the implications are? We're in it already. We probably don't even realize that we're in it, but what is this part of the matrix that we're talking?

Max Chafkin (00:39:48):

Yeah, indeed. So there are a couple of different things. I mean, Palantir is a defense contractor primarily, although they do some work... So they're primarily working with US government and US allies, but they also do some corporate work. The main thing they do is data mining. So, and that can be very mundane. That data's just like, "Let's look up some information that's buried in our database." A lot of what Palantir does is super mundane. It's companies that need to project how many widgets they're going to need in Q2 or something like that. And so you gather all this data, which is maybe in a bunch of different places and you write some software, Palantir will help you figure out what software to write and charge you handsomely for that. And then hopefully create a situation where you can do better at projecting your demand or supply or whatever. That's the mundane version of it.

Max Chafkin ([00:40:50](#)):

And then there's a version of data mining that starts to get creepy, and it can actually get pretty creepy pretty quickly because of course, we're creating a huge amount of data about ourselves and our loved ones all the time. There's a really great story written in the New York Times, years ago, Times Magazine about how Target could predict who is pregnant based on their shopping habits. Which sounds kind of crazy, but of course it's obvious. Because if you're pregnant, you're buying diapers, you're buying diaper cream or whatever, maternity clothes. And yet that's really personal.

Max Chafkin ([00:41:31](#)):

I mean, and there are lots of things that are very personal that we are unwittingly disclosing to companies on the internet all the time. I have a Gmail account, Gmail has all of my emails from the last 20 years since this... If you knew what you're doing, you wouldn't just know who I sent emails to, you could develop a very sophisticated portrait of my psyche. And you could say when I was depressed. I mean, and so everything I'm ashamed of is in there, every embarrassment is in there, my deepest hopes, my deepest dreams and so on.

Max Chafkin ([00:42:09](#)):

And so, of course, that could be used by the government. And there's the prospect that data mining could be used in a way that would violate people's civil rights, and it could also be monetized. And that's where now this I'm going to move away from Palantir for a second. And that's the critique of say Facebook or something like that, where they're gathering these deep, emotional, and psychological profiles of us and effectively selling that to advertisers. And I think that makes people feel uncomfortable and I think rightfully uncomfortable.

Max Chafkin ([00:42:49](#)):

And I think there's the kind of civil rights question, which is like, okay, how should we find a way to manage how much data companies can get, should we find a way to manage how much data the government can get? Because a lot of this stuff, especially with Palantir, Palantir is just writing software. The government is the one that would be potentially using it. And so they're both actors in this. But then there's also maybe the deeper... And I think this is probably just as important, what it does to us on an emotional and psychological level to live in a world where we're always being watched. And that I think is what's scary about a lot of this stuff. It's not that the CIA is going to read my Gmail, it's that maybe I won't write the thing that I really want to write to my wife or to my kids on my computer, just on my own, because I'm afraid that somebody's going to read it. And that is pretty insidious.

Max Chafkin ([00:43:50](#)):

People who talk about what it's like to live in totalitarian societies, that's what they talk about. It's that you stop being free. Your thinking isn't even free because you're afraid to... And so that's the fear. That when we give companies all of this data and when we create ways for them to use it and permission structures where it's okay if they use it, we're not just violating privacy or whatever, but we're giving up a little piece of ourselves. And so anyway, Thiel has played a big role in that. And of course, Zuckerberg has played a role in that. But as I talk about in the book, in some ways there's been sort of a backlash to that. And Thiel, despite having played this big role in developing this world has also criticized it at times. So I think there's certainly potential for criticism and reform possibly.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:44:46](#)):

Couple of questions popping out of that. One is most of people who listen to this podcast are content creators, or business leaders in some way or the other, and all of us want to know more about the people we serve, the people in our church, the people who eat at our restaurant, who work out at our gym, who buy cars from us, who sell homes through our company, whatever our business happens to be. We're very interested in getting to know our clients better, partly mixed motives. Number one, we can serve them better, but number two, we might also grow and become more profitable, et cetera. But I think you make the argument. I used to do polls when I was preaching regularly, and I would just say through SurveyMonkey, "Hey, what are you struggling with?" And then I would bring those ideas into the message. And I think I'm a better pastor as a result.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:45:37](#)):

Is there in your view, an ethical line about where you draw it? I know that's like an unanswerable question, but I'd just like you to play in that for a moment and say, where is the line on that? Because we've all had the experience. It's like, "Hey, I wonder if we should buy a new car." And then you're like, "Ugh, I don't want to see car ads on my phone. I just said that out loud, are they actually listening? Are they not listening?" Or you Google new cars and next thing you know, all the ads are about new cars and you're like, "Leave me alone." Where is that line?

Max Chafkin ([00:46:08](#)):

Well, I mean, I think for me, and I'm not totally against all of these technologies, I think, as you say, they've made things better and there are things that are possible today thanks to social media and thanks to data mining, frankly, that weren't possible. So it's not like all this stuff should go away or I don't think we'd be better for it, but I just think that when consumers understand what's going on, that's a pretty good... And not understand because it's buried in point 35 of a 400 page privacy policy that literally no one reads, but understand it on an intuitive level when they're using the service that this is what's happening, I think that's the line. And if a regular person would be confused or would feel violated if you explained it to them, then I think you're doing something unethical and you should do it different.

Max Chafkin ([00:47:04](#)):

And I think a lot of tech companies have basically failed that test and failed it over and over and over again. But again, there are best practices. People talk about opt-out versus opt-in. This is a really simple one. If you're going to ask somebody to give up a little bit of their privacy, they should have to make that active choice. It shouldn't be like, "I can choose to be private." You should be choosing to be public. And again, that's something that all these tech companies did not do initially. It was always opt-out rather than opt-in, but that's something that you see kind of best practice type thing. And I just think privacy

policies that are simple, that regular people can understand, explaining to people how their information is going to be used. And I mean, clearly, this is not easy, because the European Union of course has created this structure around cookies that we all have to...

Carey Nieuwhof (00:48:05):

Every website you visit it's like, "Hey-"

Max Chafkin (00:48:07):

Accept cookies. And it's so confusing. And obviously that doesn't get there. I do think some of the things that Apple has done around their... Now, of course people have a lot of reasons to criticize Apple. And we could talk about that. I mean, they're definitely not beyond reproach. But I think the way that they are communicating around privacy is smart, where you're using the app, and this is Apple, I think forcing the companies to do this. And they're saying, "Hey, you're being tracked outside of this app. Do you want that to happen?" And forcing these app developers to adopt better privacy standards and stuff like that, I think that's pretty good. And I just think it's really just a question of would a regular person understand it and think it's okay. And if the answer is yes, then you're probably on the right side of things.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:48:58):

As a consumer I've asked this question myself, because I run a digital company and we do a lot of things that you're talking about. That's how I connect with people, email, text, podcasting, et cetera. And hopefully on my good days, I have a genuine heart to serve. I hope most of my days are good days. That's why I'm doing this at this stage of my life. But you also think I'm just tired of being tracked. There is no opting out though. I know one guy, friend of mine, who's not very techy, has a phone and that's about it, ended up with someone else on his mortgage because you're in some public database somewhere. I mean, short of living in the woods, off the grid with no technology, we're probably all in this somehow. Right?

Max Chafkin (00:49:45):

A hundred percent. I mean, and to get out of it as the question implies, you have to go so far. You don't want to miss out on pictures of your grandchildren. I've got young children and the school shares pictures, I want to see those pictures. And so, I think the technologies themselves are unavoidable and what we can do is basically protect ourselves. This is personal, approaching things that we see on social media with skepticism and all that. And of course there are companies out there that are more privacy forward. So there's Signal, it's a messaging platform that competes with Facebook and so on. And Signal, it's a nonprofit, they don't have ads. I use an email provider in addition to Gmail called Helm, that is another one of these privacy forward companies.

Max Chafkin (00:50:45):

So this is a market need. And there are companies that are meeting it, but there's no getting out of it. And I mean, that's what actually makes this thing so hard to regulate because... I don't really know, people talk about like, "Oh, the society, there's a backlash against tech companies and regulations companies." It's not really clear what they would do, because Facebook, for instance, is just so embedded. It owns the three biggest messaging platforms. It's like, I don't know how you regulate it in a way that undoes the stuff that makes people uncomfortable. But there are probably things you can do.

And then there are, of course, things you can do as a consumer, you can choose to use services that are better on privacy than others.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:51:34](#)):

Which leads us to the heart of the dilemma. I mean, I have followed tech for years and it's just, I don't know, a passion, hobby of mine, lots of devices, et cetera. But one of the things that's hit me, particularly around this subject of AI, there's so many ethical questions, so many philosophical, and I would suggest theological questions around AI and technology. And I'm seeing a few philosophers, but I'm not seeing a ton of theologians weighing in on this space. And a good example, I forget what podcast it was. It might have been Tim Ferriss. No, it was something else, but I almost never miss a Tim Ferris episode. But it was about self-driving cars. I think it was Tristan Harris was being interviewed. And imagine in your new EV, your electric vehicle, you have this mode and you have to choose on setup, when you're setting up your car, do you choose altruist mode or do you choose selfish mode? Altruist is the classic, there's an 80 year old lady crossing the street, do you kill her and save your family or do you sacrifice your family and save her?

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:52:44](#)):

I mean, those are really great questions. And right now human beings are making those questions. And most of us would probably choose selfish mode as much as we know the correct answer is save the sweet old lady, but you might have to program that into your car. And conversations like that, that's a real simple version of some very complex issues. I would love to know, how many philosophers, theologians are making these decisions, how many engineers are making these decisions and business people. It's just to me, there's just a void. I don't know. Max, what do you think?

Max Chafkin ([00:53:18](#)):

Zero.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:53:19](#)):

Zero philosophers.

Max Chafkin ([00:53:20](#)):

Theologists. I don't know. I hope, I wish, I think it would be really good if there were a few. And I'm probably wrong, right? Because-

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:53:29](#)):

Well, you've done a deep dive.

Max Chafkin ([00:53:29](#)):

... there's so much money sloshing around tech companies that I think some of them do have chief philosophers and things like that. Although, I'm not sure how much sway they have. And in a case of Tristan Harris, I think his job was some digital ethicist.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:53:44](#)):

Yeah, he was the ethics guy at Google.

Max Chafkin (00:53:46):

The whole point is no one listened to him. So there's the question of, are these people around? And I think they are, and when the rubber meets the road, sorry about the metaphor, do we listen to them? And I think the answer right now is no, unfortunately. And that's what's kind of depressing and maddening about following a lot of these companies is that they have acquired a lot of power. They're demented making more money than any company in history. And yet they're a lot of times seem to be making decisions that are really focused on short term bottom line stuff.

Max Chafkin (00:54:33):

I do think these are hard questions though. I mean there's this thing you're talking about with self-driving cars. It's playing out with Tesla right now where Tesla has put this very early, they call it self-driving, but it's kind of a driver assist system. And the driver assist system has made some mistakes and people have died and the company has argued, "Well, getting to full self driving mode is ultimately going to save a lot of people's lives so therefore it's worth it." It's kind of weird that that decision is being made just by private company, and like you said, by some engineers. And I do think there is a feeling like a lot of these technologists for most of the time that I've been following the tech industry, it was very fashionable and continues to be fashionable, to dis liberal arts majors or whatever, and dis people who read philosophy, or there's nothing to be learned from being humanities major.

Max Chafkin (00:55:49):

And of course, the comeback or a counterpoint is that I think we could probably benefit from some of that thinking. It would've been great if Mark Zuckerberg had just taken a few more art history classes. I know that he doesn't feel that way, but I don't know, you sort of attempted to say something like that. I also would push back on the idea that most people would choose the kill the old lady mode. And I think that...

Carey Nieuwhof (00:56:21):

Oh, I don't think you could, if it's explicit.

Max Chafkin (00:56:23):

Right. And I think that is actually one of the dangers of AI is that it brings... I guess what I'm saying is that I think a lot of us, if we were confronted with an ethical dilemma in real time will make the correct decision. And there's a risk in giving that power to an AI or to a piece of software that assumes things about human nature that aren't necessarily true. I don't know, I'm uncomfortable with the idea of whatever that choice and I would hope that we would trust that people would make good decisions.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:57:04):

Well, I would like to take the altruist mode and I think I would, but you don't know. Right? Like in the instant, it's funny, you're bringing to mind something that happened to me years ago when there was no technology in cars, it was basically an engine. So this is in the '90s. I'm driving to seminary with my wife, she is eight months pregnant. It's winter, we're north of Toronto. Traffic's a mess, so we're taking some side roads.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:57:31):

I go down this really big hill, and I see a school bus stopping in front of me. I'm way back there. And I start and touch the brakes and all of a sudden I realize, "Oh, this is not stopping." And all of a sudden I see the school bus in front of me. So it's two lane road. I see the school bus in front of me. I'm like, "If I hit that I could hurt school children." I see a transport truck coming fast up the hill, trying to make it up the hill. If I cross into the opposite lane, I'm going to hit a transport head on. There's already, I think it was a Camaro, off to the side of the road on the right. I'm like, "Who do I hit?"

Carey Nieuwhof (00:58:09):

And finally, I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to make for the left ditch." So I veer in front of the transport truck, intentionally put my car into the left ditch and we clear it. And the transport misses the mirror on my wife's side of the car by about an inch. She's still terrified, but it was instant ethics. And I'm like, "What do I do?" And it's like, transport truck, school bus, car, pregnant wife, one empty lane. And I don't know, it was so fast, it happened in like two seconds. And fortunately that was the right decision in the mode. But we are programming that's stuff into cars right now. And everything else in our technology. And it's just fascinating to me. And to be honest, as somebody who's on the inside of the church, I would hope we have theologians who can speak into that, but I don't know that we do. And it's like, "Guys, we better study hard. This is really big stuff."

Max Chafkin (00:59:07):

Yeah, absolutely. And I do think that some of this is just natural development where this was an industry that, as I said, was on the side of everything, they were a bunch of radicals overturning the system. And I do think that they will slowly hopefully bring more of that thinking into the design of their products. And I think people like Tristan Harris and others hopefully are part of that. At least part of getting that conversation going.

Carey Nieuwhof (00:59:43):

Oh, that's good. Okay. Let's talk about AI. And again, whole other podcast, whole other books, blah, blah, blah. But I'd love your view based on 15, 20 years of studying this. Benevolent or malevolent view of AI?

Max Chafkin (00:59:59):

I mean, I think that it's important not to make these technologies more mystical than they actually are. And I think that AI is scary and it could be malevolent and it could be whatever. I have all the same concerns of a lot of people who are worried about AI. Peter Thiel is a big AI skeptic. He talks about how basically AI is totalitarian. Like you get this...

Carey Nieuwhof (01:00:28):

So does Elon Musk, very skeptical.

Max Chafkin (01:00:31):

Yeah. And for a different reason. So Thiel's sort of worried that AI will turn us into communist China or something. And Elon Musk is worried that the AI will try to solve the spam problem and just decide to murder all of humanity to do it, or make some foolish decision that's based on a very narrowly assessed goal or something like that. But I mean, I think that we tend to overrate the potential of the most extreme things that are going to happen. And then underrate the smaller ways in which it could

potentially help us or potentially hurt us. And I think when we talk about artificial general intelligence, I think that stuff is really a long way away. And I know there are people who will say other things, but I mean, I think you really have to make some pretty big leaps in terms of our understanding of how the brain works and leaps that haven't happened yet.

Max Chafkin (01:01:38):

But I do think that AI is kind of dangerous in a more immediate way in that it ends up amplifying the worst human impulses. So you design an AI algorithm that's you think of an AI algorithm as being a neutral thing, but AI algorithm is just going to reflect the biases that we all bring to it. So you worry that we end up... AI is playing a bigger role in hiring right now, big companies use it to filter who they're going to interview and to assess candidates and things like that. If you just took a snapshot of where we are now and gave it to an AI, had the AI make all the... That would be bad because we would sort of bake in all our biases. You would think it would be meritocratic, but it wouldn't be, it would just be whatever biases we brought to it today.

Max Chafkin (01:02:35):

So I don't know. I mean, I think we just have to be both skeptical of AI, of the capabilities of software because software really just reflects the people who wrote it. But also not be overly panicky either because again, the doomsday scenarios I think are pretty remote and maybe a little bit overhyped.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:03:03):

Well, and Eric Schmidt and Henry Kissinger and people like that have a far more benevolent view of AI. They don't see it as the threat that other people do, which is interesting, and some of the good that it's doing in the world.

Max Chafkin (01:03:13):

Well, I find honestly, what they're saying to be a little bit scary, quite frankly, because their argument, the Schmidt argument is China is doing all this stuff with data and it's creating this crazy AI enabled society. And so to compete with China and make sure we don't turn into them, we need to invest in our own AI and data mining and things like that. And to me, it feels like an argument that's like, this thing is so dangerous that we need to become just like it. And that I think is really weird and just raised a lot of red flags for me.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:03:55):

No, I hear what you're saying.

Max Chafkin (01:03:56):

If you think that data mining is scary, then I don't think the answer is more data mining and that's kind of what Eric Schmidt is... I mean, maybe I'm being unfair to him, but I kind of think that's the argument.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:04:06):

That's a fair interpretation. On the other hand, if you look at what AI can do, not AGI, but AI can do in terms of drug development, for example. And my wife's a pharmacist. And so generally what's speaking in here's the simple example, I don't have a medical background, but you go into a lab, we are going to try to play with these proteins and this sequence and four o'clock rolls around you've accomplished

nothing, except you know this doesn't work. And AI can go through that so quickly. And they've actually now got medications to market that are AI enhanced. I mean, even my writing, Grammarly, if you're wondering what AI is, that's Grammarly. If you use Grammarly, it gives me a little report card on my tone every week. It's like, "You were frustrated this week or you were happy this week," or whatever. I mean, so it's...

Max Chafkin (01:04:56):

Oh God, that is horrifying. As a writer, I can't.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:04:59):

It is horrifying. Isn't it?

Max Chafkin (01:05:01):

I mean, but it's funny. Sometimes I think a lot of this stuff we call it AI, you could just call it software. And if you call it software, it doesn't have this doomsday quality to it, it feels more normal and less like we have to choose between a big brother future and one that isn't. And I totally agree that software and artificial intelligence, machine learning are doing amazing things in the world. And when I think about, my book has a lot of skepticism about tech and about Silicon Valley as it's constructed, but I am super optimistic about tech too, because we just lived through... You brought up drug development and the development of these vaccines.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:05:51):

And now with pills, theoretically, right?

Max Chafkin (01:05:53):

And a pill, yeah. Basically doing this faster than had ever been. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was like, "Oh, this is going to take five to 10 years." And they got it done in a year. And that's a credit both to politics and political will and Operation Warp Speed and so on, but also science, and in particular science powered by the technologies that we've developed over the course of the last 70 years.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:06:21):

Max, I'll tell you. It's so interesting. It sounds like getting to know you a little bit over this interview, you have ended up in a very similar place to me, which is like in the middle. I see the bad side, I see the good side, and I'm not sure I'm going to live off the grid in the woods right now. So here we are, what do we do with it? Before we leave you, crypto, and let's talk about blockchain technology. We've been diving into Web 3.0 a little bit on this podcast. Any thoughts on how far off that is, and again, the changes that we should be preparing for as leaders?

Max Chafkin (01:06:55):

So I feel like we were talking earlier about, how do you fix the things that are broken with social media, with these big technology companies, Facebook and Google. And obviously one answer to that is decentralization. You could create, and there are people trying to do this right now, basically the equivalent of Facebook on the blockchain or something, where instead of being tied into this one network that's controlled by basically a corporate dictator, Mark Zuckerberg controls Facebook, it controls the board and is not, it's decentralized and you would have sort of different ways to reach

audiences and stuff like that. And that would be enabled by blockchain. And in the same way, I guess you could think, crypto is like a decentralizing force in finance, where instead of these big banks and financial gatekeepers, you have kind of a free for all.

Max Chafkin (01:07:54):

And I think that's pretty cool. As somebody who has followed the history of open source, those ideas have been floating around the internet basically and Silicon Valley almost since the beginning. The thing is though they've lost every time. Maybe Web 3.0 will be different. And of course there are ways that they didn't lose.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:08:25):

WordPress is open source.

Max Chafkin (01:08:27):

Right. There's the sort of forces of decentralization have sort of been fighting against corporate centralization and monopoly capitalism, or whatever you want to call it, pretty much since the internet has been around. And even before then where you had like open source software versus Microsoft or whatever.

Max Chafkin (01:08:45):

And I think even if Facebook or somebody ends up owning a lot of Web 3.0, maybe you would still have a lot of value created and you still achieve some of these goals. But I do think that's the risk. And with crypto of course, right now, mainstream banks and stuff are of course pushing into this world and they're not just going to sit still and let some random Dow and Goldman Sachs or whoever, just turn over the entire function of their business to some dudes on the internet. And it's the same thing with Mark Zuckerberg. And we see it happening already where Facebook wants to do the metaverse. So I do think there's a real risk that these decentralizing technologies just end up getting appropriated by big companies. And maybe that's not even a risk, but that ends up looking very different than what the ideologues or sorry, what the people who really buy into the ideologies believe in what they espouse. And so I think that's going to be really interesting.

Max Chafkin (01:09:59):

And I also think, if you're trying to find some way out, some kind of way to have Facebook-like distribution without Facebook, then Web 3.0 offers a possible solution. And probably most importantly, it offers competition, because right now there is no competition to these big monopolistic tech companies. And so maybe in the end, these Web 3.0 things don't do everything that the most fervent believers think they're going to do. But maybe they press Facebook and these other players to change and hopefully that'll will create new energy that'll make us all enrich our lives and make us all happier, richer, whatever. So I'm kind of optimistic about that.

Max Chafkin (01:10:51):

I'm also just sort of optimistic about this new culture. I mean, crypto is an emerging, it's obviously it's a financial thing, but of course it's also this weird cultural movement. And I think that that's super interesting. And I think the prospect for new things to be created, it's always interesting, it's what the technology industry's about. And I think we need to be smart about how we meet those new structures

and everything. And of course, one failure, I think of society in retrospect with Web 2.0, which is like Facebook and so on, was that we were slow to see the ways in which they were breaking the rules, messing up society. Hopefully we will be quicker this time around to understand the ways that crypto and obviously in crypto, in some ways, poses a threat to the global financial system, that's going to have to be managed. And these Web 3.0 things probably will present threats to social cohesion and all that stuff, and that'll have to be understood and managed and confronted in the long run.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:12:01]):

Well, this has been fascinating. Any final word on the future for leaders who are listening? I feel like we've kind of went in a lot of different directions and in many ways, this interview has summarized a debate that's been going on in my head for years now. And yeah, there's no black or white. There's not like, "Oh, here's the solution," right? It's just, these are things we're navigating, we're doing it every day. Final word, Max?

Max Chafkin ([01:12:25]):

I feel like people tend to... you see a lot of pessimism about the future. And one of the thing, in the book, I talk about this, but Thiel's famous for saying, "We were promised flying cars, but we got 140 characters." It's easy to look at the state of technology in recent history and get depressed and miss the things that actually are good and miss the way... You brought up one, drug development. But there are lots of ways in which technology has made our lives better and that we don't need to see the future and technology as being this unsatisfying mess. I don't know, there's just so much potential and so much excitement. As skeptical as I am of a lot of stuff on the internet, every morning I go on the internet and I'm delighted and surprised and I learn new things. And so I think it's important to remember that there's still a lot of good to be discovered and built and experienced.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:13:34]):

Well, whether you like it or not, we're here, right? Here we are. We got to lead and live in this context. So Max, you write for Bloomberg, and tell us a little bit more about the book and where people can connect with you online.

Max Chafkin ([01:13:48]):

Yeah. I'm a writer editor at Bloomberg Businessweek, author of The Contrarian: Peter Thiel and Silicon Valley's Pursuit of Power. And you can buy that wherever books are sold. And I'm on Twitter @Chafkin, C-H-A-F-K-I-N. And you find me there happy to engage further if anyone has questions or whatever.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:14:10]):

That's fantastic. Max, can't thank you enough for taking time for our leaders today. Thank you.

Max Chafkin ([01:14:15]):

Thanks, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:14:16]):

Well, you can get more on this episode and the whole Future series by heading over to the show notes. You can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode473. And we have transcripts there, we've got insights, we've got quotes you can share on social. We want to get in your corner and help you with that. Also, hey, if

you haven't yet headed over to The Art of Leadership Network, we've got a series of podcasts now that are part of this brand new podcast network. We've got Jenni Catron, Brad Lomenick, Chris Cook, Jeff Henderson, Shane Benson, David Farmer, Kevin Jennings, Exponential, and Sean Morgan. You can find them all at theartofleadershipnetwork.com or just search The Art of Leadership Network wherever you listen to your podcast, but the easiest place, theartofleadershipnetwork.com.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:15:00):

I also want to thank our partners for this episode. Go to leadr.com and use the promo code Carey to get 20% off your first year of their people development software. And then have you registered yet for Remodel Health free webinar on how to save money on healthcare and give your employees better benefits? It's the 401(k) of health benefits. Go to remodelhealth.com/webinar, that's remodelhealth.com/webinar.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:15:31):

Well, some fascinating episodes coming up with the Future series in the past. That kind of sounds contradictory, but we're going to move on to regularly scheduled programming. We've got, who have we got? We've got Philip Yancey. Oh, my goodness, that conversation, I can't wait to bring it to you. Jennie Allen, Ian Morgan Cron, Bob Goff, Dave Hollis, and next time, Michael Bungay Stanier. He is someone I got to know through a friend and a fascinating guy. His coaching habit book has been called the defacto book on coaching your teams. He sold over 1 million copies. And well, his book has been called the best coaching book of the century. It's a pretty wide ranging interview. I went down to Toronto and we recorded it, that's where he's based out of, very close to my house. And we didn't know each other until this. So this was a fun conversation. Listen in.

Michael Bungay Stanier (01:16:25):

What if you got the wrong goal? It's like ISO 900 and you're like, "I've got a high quality thing that's wrong." I don't want that. I want people to claim ambition for themselves and for the world. I want them to have permission to be ambitious for what they want, but I don't want it just to be about them, I want them to serve the world. I want them to give more to the world than they take.

Carey Nieuwhof (01:16:47):

That's an excerpt and wow, I think you're going to love next episode. If you're new to the podcast, hey, please subscribe and do subscribe to The Art of Leadership Network. That's wherever you find your podcast. And when you do that, you can find, well, all the shows we've mentioned and announced today. So thank you so much for listening, and can't wait to do this again next time. And I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.

Announcer (01:17:16):

You've been listening to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change and personal growth to help you lead like never before.