

The Silicon Valley Ideology

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‘Critical thinking’ is the new creativity. Every employer demands it from job applicants, but few of them genuinely desire it. They crave people who think outside the “box,” but do not want anyone who will stray too far from it. Employers want someone who can solve ordinary problems that arise in any workplace, instead of anyone who shares Marx’s view that the task of critical thinking is the “*ruthless criticism of the existing order.*”

The recent phenomenon of Fake News has become part of this order that demands ruthless critique. Mark Zuckerberg revealed in his lengthy pseudo-manifesto, earlier this year, that Facebook was planning to fight for truth and launch a scheme combat the proliferation of Fake News. “Disputed” tags will be attached to news stories that have been discredited by Snopes, Associated Press, or other fact-checkers.

Contrary to Facebook’s intentions, however, the initiative is an assault on critical thought in two ways. First, the alt-right media argue that their posts will be unfairly targeted because they allege that the fact-checkers behind the scheme will have a staunchly liberal bias. When the facts of their stories are “disputed,” they will spin it to prove that nerdy liberals are attempting to shut down “free speech” and “truth.” Second, “disputed” tags outsource our ability to distinguish between facts and fabrications. Think of Slavoj Žižek’s notion of interpassivity: “disputed” tags release you from your responsibility to ruthlessly criticize.

Facebook’s scheme has unwittingly become part of the existing order. We must critique that which purports to critique on our behalf.

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