

Funding the Future

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As [The Guardian has reported](#), Peter Thiel has been lecturing in San Francisco about the Antichrist, Armageddon and a one-world order. What his Antichrist fixation tells us is a great deal about his views on power, but nothing on prophecy.

Thiel is one of the so-called and influential 'Tech Bros', and is a founder and major owner of [Palantir](#), which now controls a great deal of NHS (and so your) data and which now has a billion-plus-pound agreement with the Ministry of Defence. He argues that the great evils of our time are global cooperation, international law, and any restraint on the wealthy or on technology. He hints that the Antichrist could be Greta Thunberg. He toys with the idea that it could be the United States. He worries that regulation and climate action will end freedom and stop invention. "Peace and safety" is the slogan of the Antichrist, he suggests. Restraint is the road to ruin.

It would appear that he hates tax havens as he wants places where money can be hidden, and suggests that moves against them have been very bad for society. Maybe I am on his outlier list to be the Antichrist in that case, given how much work I did on that issue.

But let's be candid. These lectures were not theology in the sense that any theologian might recognise. Nor, as far as I can see, are they about Christianity as such, although he claims to be one. One of the labels [discussed here yesterday](#) might well apply in that case. Instead, Thiel's lectures represent the catechism of a class that has lost the habit of accountability.

Thiel speaks as if democratic guardrails are satanic because they limit what the very rich may do, and he treats global standards on finance, the rule of law, and basic environmental responsibility as existential threats not just to humanity, but to the unconstrained reach of private capital.

This, in my opinion, is the thinking of a mind deranged by money and power. And he has power over us. He bankrolls political candidates in the US. He funds campaigns to roll back regulation. His firms win security and data contracts from governments. He wants the privileges of empire without the duties of citizenship, and the spoils of technology without the obligations that come with it.

What he does is recast public oversight for the common good - one of the essential tasks of any state - as cosmic persecution. The Antichrist then becomes, in his thinking, a metaphor for any force that might tax, regulate or simply ask billionaires to answer to the public. In that story, climate policy is tyranny, the International Criminal Court is heresy (he is a friend of Netanyahu), and the UN is a portal to hell. It is convenient nonsense. It is also dangerous because it gives political cover to attack the institutions that protect the rest of us.

There is also another way to read this if the mumbo jumbo, faux theology and fake philosophy are removed from consideration. What if the menace here is not a mythical tyrant waiting in the wings, as Thiel claims, but is instead the billionaire who preaches that shared rules are evil and that only private power should decide the future? What if the Antichrist Thiel fears is actually his mirrored image staring back at him, and the creed that says markets must rule, wealth must concentrate, and democracy must stand down?

I am not interested in Thiels' absurd take on apocalypse. What I am interested in is the material project underneath it, which is to remove the last checks on corporate power. If you can brand cooperation as satanic, as Thiel does, then you can make greed look like virtue, and if you can call regulation the path to Armageddon, you can turn profiteering into a sacrament.

In that case, let me address what must be said, which is that free speech is not the freedom of billionaires to buy politics. In addition, innovation is not the right to experiment on society without its consent, and security is not the outsourcing of the state to surveillance vendors paid from public funds. A civilised economy sets rules first and then lets enterprise flourish within them.

What then follows is not complicated. We need:

- * Transparency over public contracts with data and defence firms
- * Full beneficial ownership disclosure to end secrecy
- * Hard limits on money in politics
- * An end to tax havens
- * Regulation of crypto-currencies
- * Antitrust law to control social media platforms, other media and other monopolies, and
- * Democratic oversight of high-risk technologies before they are unleashed.

In other words, we need the ordinary work of accountable government.

In his lectures, Thiel offers a choice between the Antichrist and Armageddon. I offer a better one, between oligarchy and democracy. If you want to see the real end of days, just look for the moment we decide that the richest man in the room gets to define what is good and evil, and you will know it has arrived.

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