

#1484 Elon Musk is Not Your Savior and He Is Actually Awful

Intro 4-20-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left* podcast, in which we should take a look at the bizarre halo effect that seems to be surrounding Elon Musk, and then thoroughly puncture it by just explaining a few things about him and his companies.

Clips today are from *Second Thought*, *Deconstructed*, *The Young Turks*, *Some More News*, *The Majority Report*, *What Next*, *TBD*, and *Left Reckoning*, with an additional members-only clip from *Tech Won't Save Us*.

The Myth Of The "Self-Made" Billionaire - Second Thought - Air Date 9-10-21

[00:00:31] **JT CHAPMAN - HOST, SECOND THOUGHT:** At the heart of every favorable depiction of a billionaire is this idea that they have earned their success and their wealth.

The most compelling stories are those of billionaires who, through sheer hard work and grit, so we're told, have conquered the American Dream and made a better life for themselves, those around them, and our society as a whole.

But there are a number of reasons this is simply incorrect. We'll get to exactly how this idea is wrong in a second.

But first we should talk about why the myth of self-made billionaires is such a problem. For starters, vanishingly few people ever become billionaires. In the U S, it's around 600 people, or 0.0002% of the population. Perversely however, the myth of the self-made billionaire tries to trick you into believing that anybody-- yes, even you dear viewer-- could one day be just like them. After all, if they can do, it so can you.

You already know how they attempt to sell this falsehood. It's always so incredibly simple. They tell you they started from nothing. That they were once

just like you. They too had a nine to five job that they hated. They too had trouble paying their bills.

But, instead of complaining, they just worked harder. And eventually, after a hundred hour work weeks, they were able to lift themselves up by their bootstraps. And just look at them now.

Here's where the problems start: if they can successfully convince you that; one, they have earned their wealth, and; two, that you can do it too, they can use those two assumptions to convince you of some far more nefarious things.

For starters, they can convince you to act against your own self-interest, and the interest of the vast majority of Americans. The most obvious example of this is making it seem like it would be better for everyone if billionaires paid less in taxes, if we just got the government out of the way of these people that have proven to us that they are visionaries, that they alone know how to manage money.

To be clear, the ultra rich already have a good way of avoiding taxes. You can see exactly how they do it in our video "How Billionaires Pay Less In Taxes Than You." But of course, that doesn't matter, since they'll always try to lower that number further and further. The more they do, the less money goes towards things that actually affect your day-to-day life: roads, public services, healthcare education. The more they keep of the wealth they have no intention of spending in the first place, the worse off we all are.

They'll convince you that that might be you someday, that when you're in their shoes, you'll want the same thing. After all, what's the government ever done for you?

We'll get to just how much it's done for them. But first let's get back to the self-made story.

In some cases, that story is simply a blatant lie. Take Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos. The last decade's favorite billionaire duo loves to weave a compelling story of their 100% American made success. Jeff Bezos likes to tell this story of a young guy who built a strong work ethic at his McDonald's job. He loves to emphasize how it was his hard work that eventually landed him a spot at Princeton, then on Wall Street, and finally pushed him to one day risk at all on the crazy idea of selling books on the internet. His story reaches a dramatic pause when he starts Amazon out of a garage with nothing but a dream, and it resumed satisfyingly when his company becomes the internet giant it is today.

Elon Musk tells a very similar story, that of an industrious kid, bullied for being too nerdy, and into science fiction, who climbed out of adversity and overcame the all too common American hurdles of student loan debt and people not believing in him with the sheer ingenuity of his entrepreneurship.

These stories are, of course, embellished. And while individual elements of them may not be false, the overall image they're trying to sell you is a lie. Because it wasn't the novelty of Amazon alone that catapulted it to the center of the internet, so much as the absurd head start that an initial \$300,000 investment that Jeff's parents gave him.

And although Musk likes to play up his version of the "Everyman" story too, his family is most infamously known for his father's ownership of a lucrative emerald mine and role as a property developer in apartheid South Africa.

These people didn't start from nothing. It wasn't just hard work. Billionaires, never get there alone.

They get there in any combination of three ways: one, family wealth and privilege; two, labor exploitation; and three, government help.

Let's start with number one. Family wealth and privilege explains the success of a lot of the billionaires that sit at the top of our social hierarchy. We've already seen how much of a role family wealth played in the success of even the quote "self-made" celebrity billionaires, like Musk and Bezos.

So it should come as no surprise that the great majority of billionaires have similarly favorable advantages. The racial and gender makeup of the billionaire class is not an accident. It is no surprise then that the people who face the fewest societal hurdles-- white men-- overwhelmingly dominate the Forbes rankings, while women and people from racial minority groups only make up a fraction.

But privilege doesn't explain every single billionaires climb to the top. Exploitation, however, does.

What do we mean when we say exploitation? Those familiar with Marxist literature will already know that exploitation is the expropriation of surplus value from labor by capital. Okay, but what does that mean? It's actually very simple. According to Marx society is divided into two classes: the owner class, the bourgeoisie; and the working class, the proletariat. I promise I'll make this quick, the owner class, people who own businesses, factories, farms, and so on

offer a deal to the working class, work or starve. As you already know, just about every single one of us takes that deal.

So, what do the owner class say? They say that for X amount of hours worked, workers will be paid Y amount of money. In order for that deal to be profitable for the owner class, they need to pay workers less money than the value they actually produce. That difference is what Marx calls "Surplus Value," the money that you make for the company will always be more than the money the business puts back into your hands in the form of a paycheck. Otherwise, it has no money to give the people who own the company, the stakeholders, who may never have even stepped foot on the premises.

If you want an idea of just how much value business owners steal from their workers, just look at this Ohio pizza shop, where for one day the owner decided not to siphon off that surplus value and instead put it back into the hands of the workers. The result: employees made \$78 an hour. That's the Marxist definition of exploitation. And every single capitalist business in the world relies on it, whether they want to, or not.

The most egregious examples, of course, are those we see with billionaires' companies, in which figureheads who no longer work on, or only ever held stock in the company, walk away with hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

But even with a more relaxed definition of exploitation, we see this kind of behavior playing a massive role in billionaires' wealth. You may have recently heard of exploitation occurring in newly-minted-billionaire Rihanna's Fenty beauty factories, or Beyoncé's Ivy Park sweat shops.

It's immediately obvious to us how sweatshop labor is clearly exploitative when workers, often children, make mere cents for each grueling hour spent in unsafe conditions.

Compare that to the billionaire status of those at the top and it's impossible not to see something deeply wrong and exploitative in the working arrangements they have created. While Rihanna and Beyonce might be the face of the club this week, they are no more or less culpable than their mega-wealthy peers, those whose less glamorous companies managed to avoid the spotlight.

Once again, how does this kind of behavior make a person self-made?

That brings us to point number three: government help. Here the conservative and libertarian views of the world's billionaires are the most evidently hypocritical.

Elon Musk is probably one of the biggest offenders, so let's come back to him for a second. Musk often talks about the government in very unfavorable terms. He regularly decries government regulation, does everything he can to avoid taxation, and fiercely defends the belief that markets should be free. That said the billionaire's companies-- SpaceX, Tesla, and Solar City-- would have no hope of existing without the government's absurd \$4.9 billion in loans and tax breaks.

We're using Musk as a flagrant example here, but the nature of our current economy is that throughout the entirety of the chain of production, government subsidies are granted from public money, only for the profits to be privatized by people who hoard wealth at a level we haven't seen since the Gilded Age.

Is Elon Musk a Fraud - Deconstructed - Air Date 5-14-20

[00:09:10] **MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** I've never been a fan of Elon Musk. Never bought the schtick.

[00:09:13] **NEWSCASTER:** Elon Musk is a genius. A crazy genius, no doubt..

Is Elon Musk a genius?

Elon Musk is a genius...

president Trump calling Elon Musk a genius!

CEO Elon Musk is a true visionary...

is he a true visionary?

He is an absolute visionary...

the Atlantic asking whether Musk is the greatest living inventor...

[00:09:33] **LISA SIMPSON:** Elon Musk is possibly the greatest living inventor!

[00:09:36] **STEPHEN COLBERT:** Are you sincerely trying to save the world?

[00:09:39] **ELON MUSK:** Well, I'm trying to do good things, yeah.

[00:09:41] **STEPHEN COLBERT:** But you're trying to do good things, and you're a billionaire. [Audience laughs.]

[00:09:44] **ELON MUSK:** Yeah.

[00:09:44] **STEPHEN COLBERT:** I mean, that seems a little bit like either superhero, or super villain. [Audience laughs.] You have to choose one.

[00:09:50] **MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** I'm team supervillain. I am!

Yeah, the cars are great. I'm not questioning his technology or products — though it's worth pointing out that Musk only gets to call himself a co-founder of Tesla, even though he joined the year after the company was actually named and founded, because he settled out of court with one of the actual two co-founders of the company back in 2009 in order to claim that right.

But that's by the by, and this is not a show about Tesla or its cars. I'm not here to question them, but to question him: Musk, the man, the brand, the cult.

Yes, cult. Because there are a certain type of people — often young, male, anti-establishment, a bit libertarian — who hang on his every word. Especially online, where they defend their guru, their prophet, their hero — on social media, on YouTube — with all the intensity, and even viciousness, that you'd expect from cult members.

And, by the way, on the subject of cults and fanboys, even Donald Trump has heaped praise on Elon Musk.

[00:10:47] **PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP:** He's one of our great geniuses, and we have to protect our genius. You know, we have to protect Thomas Edison. And we have to protect all of these people who came up with, originally, the lightbulb, the wheel, and all of these things, and he is one of our very smart people, and we want to, we want to cherish those people. That's very important. But he's done a very good job.

[00:11:07] **MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** He's a genius. He's a contrarian. He goes against the conventional wisdom, takes risks, takes on power and authority. He's the real life Iron Man.

The thing is, I'm old enough to remember when Musk, back in 2009, had to borrow nearly half a billion dollars from the Department of Energy just to keep Tesla afloat in the wake of the financial crash. He and his supporters like to brag about the fact that Tesla paid back that loan nearly 10 years early.

But the point is not that he paid it back, or even paid it back quick; the point is that he had to go to the government — the evil, dreaded, federal government — in the first place for a bailout, for help from Washington. In fact, an investigation by The LA Times in 2015 found that Musk's various companies, between them, have benefited from an estimated \$4.9 billion in government support and subsidies over the years.

And yet, this is a man who extols the virtues of capitalism and the free market, who has become one of the world's richest men before the age of 50. A gazillionaire, who likes to call himself "somewhat libertarian," but also likes to grab taxpayer money. Funny that.

Then again, he's also, rather ridiculously, called himself a "socialist." Which he's not, of course; there's nothing socialist about him. But like so many super-rich, self-styled intellectuals, he's not very well read. Musk once claimed Marx was a capitalist because he said, and I kid you not, Marx wrote a book on capital. Yeah, "Das Kapital," the book in which socialist Karl Marx outlines how capitalism will destroy itself.

Oh, Elon.

But, look, Musk is a true BS merchant, and the ultimate attention seeker, whether on Twitter or in real life. Remember the 12 boys and their soccer coach who were trapped in a cave in northern Thailand in the summer of 2018, about to drown?

[00:12:52] **NEWSCASTER:** The youth soccer team remains trapped in a Thai cave with no clear way out.

The danger grows for those Thai children trapped in a cave. Why a rescue might have to be attempted soon, ready or not.

[00:13:05] **MEHDI HASAN - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** Musk saw that news and immediately turned up in Thailand with a miniature, “kid-sized” submarine that he said would help rescue them. The Thai authorities disagreed, and said it wasn’t practical. So did the British diver Vernon Unsworth, who ended up actually saving the kids from the cave and, quite reasonably, called Musk’s proposal a PR stunt.

So what did Musk do? He called Unsworth a “pedo” and a “child rapist.” Unsworth, not surprisingly, sued the Tesla boss for defamation. But Musk won that case in court, because, of course, if there’s one thing the U.S. justice system is really good at, it’s looking after the interests of rich, white men.

Talking of race, by the way, Tesla under Musk has faced multiple lawsuits alleging the company is a toxic hotbed of racism and discrimination. Three employees claimed that the environment there was so bad as to be “straight from the Jim Crow era.” And when one former employee complained that the Tesla boss class were ignoring Black workers’ complaints of rampant racism, Musk sent out an email telling his workers only to be more, and I quote, “thick skinned.” Thick skinned!

On a side note, Musk grew his own thick skin back in apartheid South Africa, where he had a lavish childhood because his dad owned an emerald mine.

But it’s not just allegations of racism; there’s the actual working conditions at Tesla. Forbes magazine last year found that between 2014 and 2018, Tesla was the subject of 24 health and safety investigations, resulting in almost a quarter of a million dollars of fines for 54 violations — a much higher level of fines and violations than for other U.S. carmakers.

In 2018, an investigation by Reveal News into injuries at the Tesla car plant in Northern California revealed how a safety professional at the company went to her boss to complain about the lack of yellow hazard lines and pedestrian markings on the factory floor, and she was told: “Elon does not like the color yellow.”

I mean, this guy is beyond parody.

**Tesla SUED Over Racial Discrimination In
The Workplace - The Young Turks - Air
Date 2-12-22**

[00:15:02] **JAYAR JACKSON - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** Elon Musk. Oh, that guy from Tesla, he's known for these brutal workplaces that we've seen going around, but we haven't seen so much is that it's also a hotbed for racism, harassment, all across the board. Because yesterday California's civil rights agency, they filed a lawsuit against the company from the plant in Fremont on behalf of thousands of black workers who experienced blatant discrimination on the job.

Now this is after a decade of complaints and a 32-month investigation. This is some of the allegations that some of the workers have experienced there: Tesla segregated Black workers into separate areas that its employees referred to as quote, porch monkey stations -- that's great -- the dark side, the slave ship, the plantation is what this lawsuit alleges.

Only Black workers had to scrub floors on their hands and knees, and they were relegated to the Fremont, California factory's most difficult physical jobs, is what this suit also states. Graffiti, including KKK, go back to Africa, the hangman's noose, the Confederate flag, and F N-word were carved into restroom walls, workplace benches and lunch tables, and were slow to be erased, also what this lawsuit says.

Not only were Tesla's Black workers subjected to willful malicious harassment, but they were also denied promotions and paid less than other workers for the same jobs. They were disciplined for infractions for which other workers were not penalized.

Now this all comes when the percentages of the number of workers here at this plant were 20% of the Tesla's factory assemblers were Black, but there's no Black executives, and just 3% of the professionals at the Fremont plant are Black, is what this lawsuit also says.

This always comes straight to my mind is how everyone's saying, Hey, Elon, come on to Texas, come on to Texas, we don't care about our citizens' rights either. Maybe you can hire some more folks and treat them like this too.

Now we don't know if Elon is running around the plant going here, do this, do that. But we do know that this culture and this atmosphere was definitely allowed and whoever was hired to oversee this stuff definitely allowed it to go on. So last October, as part of this as well, there's a San Francisco federal court. They ruled that Tesla must pay former worker Owen Diaz approximately \$137 million after he experienced racism while working for the company. And the reason why he was able to even to settle with this is because this one

technicality, because they really never want this to happen. And maybe they do know how it looks. Let's read this part. "According to Diaz's attorney, the case was only able to move forward because the worker had not signed one of Tesla's mandatory arbitration agreements. Tesla uses mandatory arbitration to compel employees to resolve disputes behind closed doors, rather than in a public trial." That's weird. It's like they don't want anyone to know about what could potentially go on. Maybe they know what's going on.

Before we get to some of the sexual harassment, let's start with these racial divisions and injustices.

[00:17:52] **CENK UYGUR - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** It's an allegation. California's suing. And so whenever you see a lawsuit, we always tell you look, let's see how it turns out first. We'll tell you what the allegations are, but they have not been adjudicated yet. So then you have to see, well, is there any legitimacy to it or not, based on the evidence that we already see in public?

So what's the evidence that we see here? Well, this is not one or two isolated cases. These are not mild words. Oh, well, you know, it was around the edges. This is nowhere near the edges. Okay? This is over the top. And there are hundreds of allegations.

On top of that, Elon Musk actually wrote an email to his employees saying, Hey, listen, you know what? You just got to have tough skin.

No, no, I believe in thick skin. Okay I get it. Because we can't all operate based on if one person at a giant company gets offended or hurt, everyone else has to change policy. So you have to do a balancing act, right? But you can't tell people after they complain about nooses being hung and I can't even repeat the things that Jayar just said. Ah, just get some thick skin. You know what that says? Green light. Do whatever you want to the Black employees, there's going to be no consequences. That's why you don't have a couple of cases. You have hundreds of cases.

And then the last part is, well it's has been adjudicated that one person sued that Jayar just told you about, and won \$137 million.

You know why? Most of it was punitive damages, 'cause the jury was enraged at what was happening at Tesla when they saw the actual evidence.

And so now I've seen right-wingers online, going like, ah, look at this as absurd, man. You say the wrong word and it's \$137 million. No. No. When a company does it over and over again and rubs your face in it, when you finally get to the one case I could go to court because they're burying everything else in arbitration, the jury unleashes and says, no, not on our watch. This is exactly what you're not supposed to be doing, you monster.

[00:19:54] **RICKY STROM:** So, yeah, everything you guys said is accurate, but one thing that I remember when seeing -- and there were many, obviously -- but seeing the differences between Obama's rhetoric and Donald Trump's rhetoric was when Obama said, I'm the president. I take responsibility for everything. Now, granted, obviously he didn't all the time, but it's a nice thing to say. And then Donald Trump's saying, I take no responsibility at all during the height of COVID. Now how I view Elon Musk is, this is what he kicked other CEOs out to then rule. This is his baby. This is his thing. This is what he wants to be known for aside from SpaceX. This is his jam. So if it is this systemic over and over again, he should be answering for this. He should be answering for putting those people in those positions, or at least hiring people to then put those other people in those positions.

Some of the stuff that was brought up in the Times' piece is abhorrent, disgusting. There should be consequences for it. But as Jayar said, I find it rather interesting that they're saying, well, we're going to move to Texas as if that's like some sort of weird distraction. It's not. Like one of the parts that I saw as well, the lawsuit claims a female Black employee said her female white boss struck her with a hot grinding tool and called her stupid and the N word and insulted her intelligence.

The suits said the supervisor was fired but then rehired. So it goes to show, if this allegation is true, they're not even punishing those that are doing all of this abuse to their minority employees.

Elon Musk Is Not Your Friend - Some More News - Air Date 5-10-21

[00:21:41] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** They're all pretty bad. All part of a similar mentality, Elon and Gates, and the Bez'-- ol' shiny Bez'! And it can really be best summed up by very wealthy tech nerds who fantasize about getting us to a "Star Trek future," except for the part where money doesn't exist, and employees are treated with respect. Because it's hard to actually be utopian-leaning when you own all the money.

And so, what they really have is a, sort of, top-down thinking, where you try to create the end result-- or aesthetic-- of a utopia without actually doing the structural work needed to earn that. Shoot for "Star Trek," skip a bunch of steps and hoard, your wealth, and instead get "The Expanse." Because, again, some of the structural work would involve taking a bunch of their money.

Amazon wants a future where you can order anything you want on a device and get it that day without thinking of the toll that would take on local businesses and of course their employees, automation is invented without considering a universal basic income for the jobless. It would create. And of course, Tesla is creating "Time Cop" vehicles that drive themselves and run on electric power... without considering that it's cool, future shape is tragic on pedestrians, or that most firefighters have no idea how to put out their car fires, and most people are going to abuse the autopilot, and so on.

I really can't stress enough that I'm not trying to knock these inventions or technological progress; of course, I'd like one of these cars and would accept one if, for example, given to me and my crew for free in exchange for being less critical because... I take bribes!

But these inventions mean exactly nothing without a change in infrastructure and human rights to allow society to actually enjoy and benefit from them. Space communism didn't pop up because capitalists made personal rockets and batteries.

As important as electric cars are, they're actually useless in terms of the environment if their batteries are charged from fossil fuels, which a lot of them are. And some people even argue that their construction process, plus this fossil fuel fact, doesn't make them much better for the planet, but I'm not a car doctor.

It rather just strikes me as a great example of this top-down thinking, where Tesla is only now dabbling with the idea of setting up battery-powered cities that still need an energy source, and from there might finally think about actually generating renewable energy on a scale that would actually help.

But in fairness we don't expect other car companies to worry about this kind of thing. But also, in fairness, we don't treat the CEOs of other car companies like they're going to save the world, or make lists about how great of an inventor they are.

And I really can't stress this enough: Elon Musk hasn't invented anything! He has smartly invested in a lot of technology that already exists. And the extent of a lot of his ideas was to take a thing we have and think, "But what if online?"

It's a pretty common tactic. You take a thing, make it compatible with the internet, design it to look a little more slick, and charge more for it. Then hope that people don't notice, and call you a genius. Tesla's first \$100,000 sports car, versus the way-more affordable electric cars that were coming out at the same time. Or Lyft inventing the city bus and calling it something else and charging more money for it. Or inventing Slim Fast again. Or Elon Musk coming up with the idea for trees.

Although, to be fair, he has donated a million dollars to plant trees. Which is only \$159 million less than that lawsuit I mentioned.

And this seems as good a time as any to talk about Musk's Boring Tunnel, a great example of reinventing a thing that already works fine. What began as a really expensive way for Elon Musk to personally avoid traffic, the idea sold to the public was a futuristic new way for drivers to go long distances without interruptions of traffic, a sort of super-fast carpool lane promising to take people from Westwood to LAX in only five minutes. The final concept was a system of super-fast sleds that your car would descend into and then gleam that cube all the way to your destination. Real "Jetson's" trash that we love to imagine without really thinking about the logistics of.

And did I mention that the Boring Company is actually an offshoot of SpaceX? That's going to be important later.

By 2017, Musk was talking about installing these future tunnels in other cities like DC and New York and Texas and so on. In 2019 Musk was able to drive Tesla cars at around 116 miles per hour through this paved tunnel, provided they were controlled by a person and not by their autopilot feature, which, despite his name, is not an autopilot. but it was about this time. The public started to ask a very relevant question, which was wait Did you just make a tunnel because we have those, But to be fair, again, still, Elon's tunnels aren't like other tunnels in that they are really small and therefore inescapable in an emergency. So, there.

Things get more hilarious as a tweet the year before revealed that Musk decided that the Boring Tunnels would "prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over cars," meaning that it wasn't so much a super-tunnel for cars as it was subway system.

Cut to now and Musk had somehow managed to sell this idea to Las Vegas, only after failing in Chicago. Do we have a clip of his pitch to the city?

[00:27:20] **THE SIMPSONS CLIP:** Well, sir, there's nothing on earth like a genuine bonafide electrified six car monorail. What I say?

Monorail!

[00:27:26] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** This actual footage was back in 2018, when the city of Las Vegas put out a request for proposals for a new people-moving system, starting with our convention centre. They chose Musk out of several other proposals after promises of a cheaper process resulting in a futuristic shuttle system. So after all those millions, what did they come up with?

[00:27:47] **ARCHIVE NEWSCLIP:** Well, as you descend the escalator into the loop station, you see the Teslas waiting to whisk you into a tunnel 43 feet below ground. Now you might think, "Alright, it's like a subway." But this is more like a highway underground.

[00:28:02] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** Great Scott! It's like being regaled by the labyrinthine tales of some Wellsian sorcerer! Stairs that move downward you say? Highways beneath the Earth? Impossible, I tell you!

This CNBC clip continues, hilariously, as the people of Las Vegas try extremely hard to pretend like they weren't completely grifted into reinventing Boston's Big Dig.

[00:28:25] **ARCHIVE NEWSCLIP:** Here's how it works: you enter the station and call for a Tesla.

The system operates like an Uber or a Lyft, where you have an app on your phone. You say, "I'm here. I want to go there." Car comes up, has an identifier on it that matches with what is on the app on your phone.

Passengers don't have to make multiple stops, because there are multiple exits. You go directly to your station of choice. The Convention Center has three, but plans are in the works to build a loop system citywide.

[00:28:53] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** Congratulations on creating a literal highway only in a very small space, and

underground, and therefore less safe. Especially for Teslas, which catch on fire more than other cars.

Which all means that the tunnel can only carry a fraction of the traffic Musk promised it would. Specifically, only about 800 passengers an hour, and not the 4,400 the Convention had aimed. That's about 19,000 people per day, assuming it runs all day. Compared to the 4.3 million who use the subway in New York.

Did I mention that you can't drive your car, and have to call a Tesla driver to come get you? You go down an escalator, call a taxi, and then have someone drive you through a colorful tunnel and drop you off. It's managed to be worse than both a subway and a highway, somehow. It makes you, sort of, question Elon's predictive abilities. It makes you, sort of, question how much of an innovative futurist thinker he actually is. And it all, kind of, makes you wonder, if Elon Musk really thinks this is the future of transportation, so much as an expression of his distaste for being around other people, and an excuse to test out his Boring Machine.

Remember how I said it was developed as SpaceX? Well, that's because Elon's actual hopeful use for it is to mine on Mars. Of course it is. In other words, this Vegas project, his LA tunnel, all seems like a way to test a prototype, and get paid for it, and sell the dirt to the poor as an aside.

What actually goes in the tunnels is merely an afterthought, and conveniently involves Tesla cars he already built, as opposed to a train or shuttle. Like, the Vegas plans didn't even include a design for turnstiles or any way to regulate the flow of passengers. It didn't have any way to deal with fire regulations because they didn't actually care or know what they were doing. Because pretty much any infrastructure planning Elon does on Earth, sure seems like it's all just a big test for Mars, which is not Earth.

Elon Musk's Childlike Libertarian Fantasy That Government Is The Biggest Corporation - The Majority Report w/ Sam Seder - Air Date 12-9-21

[00:30:56] **EMMA VIGELAND - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Elon Musk has a take on what the role of government is. Um, and... and it's... it's, like, basically, taken out of a 13 year old's mouth who just read "Atlas Shrugged."

[00:31:08] **ELON MUSK:** You know, at some point, really what you're doing is capital allocation. So you're not... it's not money for personal expenditures. It's... what you're doing is... is capital allocation. And it does not make sense to take, uh, the... the job of capital allocation away from people who have demonstrated great skill in capital allocation to, uh, you know, an entity that has demonstrated very poor skill in... in capital allocation, which is the government.

I mean, you could think of the government, essentially, as a corporation in the limit. Uh, it is,... it is... uh, the government is simply the biggest corporation, with a monopoly on violence. And with... where you have no recourse.

[00:31:46] **EMMA VIGELAND - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:**
Pause it.

He's doing a, uh, Wall Street Journal summit there. There's two things, I just want to point out, I wrote down, like... the role of the government being for capital allocation: that's, like, an anti-government, anti-democratic, pro-fascist view. That's not the role of what government is supposed to be, even though, I'm sure, like, based on his contracts and discussions with certain government officials, maybe that's what he perceived it as. But that's not what it's supposed to be as.

And then when he says that the government has a monopoly on violence; I don't know, like, reopening your Tesla facility in the middle of a global pandemic, where hundreds of your factory workers got sick with a deadly viral infection that we didn't even know what the consequences of would be... Um, that might be construed as violence against them, since they could have long COVID, or die or have repercussions from that. Like, that's pretty damn violent. And you did that.

[00:32:38] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** Well, I'd also just say on the... particularly on the monopoly of violence thing: we don't monopolize it nearly enough, because we have mercenary groups that we allowed to just go to different countries, and things like that. We should have... we shouldn't allow any, uh, merc[enary]... Like TigerSwan, we... it's... it's just all privatized.

[00:32:54] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** He's complaining that the... they have the... the government has the ability to put you in jail if you..., you don't pay your taxes. Yeah.

But... but we should be clear. The government is, uh, no more like a corporation than, um, any enterprise or institution is like a corporation. The fundamental difference between a government and a corporation, is that there is, theoretically, at least, some type of accountability to the public. We are not even shareholders. We all have the same theoretical, I guess, share in our government. That is the fundamental difference.

And if you just hand wave that difference away, the rest is, I'll say it again, just commentary. The rest is just BS. If you don't accept the premise that an inherent good of a government, and I'm talking, just, I'm talking generically speaking, of a government-- because you can have a corrupt government, and a bad government, but government. The inherent good of a government is that it is accountable to the people. It's first... its primary function is to be accountable to the people.

[00:34:20] **EMMA VIGELAND - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Oh, it's not capital allocation?

[00:34:22] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** Yeah. Do we think that in this year, 2021, where we're running up against the limit of what the globe can handle in terms of like the atmosphere in the way that capitalists invest in say like oil technology and like, do we really think that capitalists have done such a really great job in allocating

the capital?

[00:34:39] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** And let's be clear, clear government does allocate capital. That's all that is all our politics does is determine who gets what money. That's it, everything that we do as a society. And it's just a question of who's getting the money. And in this society that we have now, the money runs towards those with more money.

[00:35:01] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** He goes to Elon Musk to put a tunnel underneath Las Vegas.

[00:35:05] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** It goes to, it goes to a wealthy in terms of subsidizing their, um, their means in which to create greater profits that goes, uh, to the wealthy and Safara is that their taxes, um, are, are in some way, subsidized, like look where when you get a reduction in your capital gains tax versus your income tax, we were were.

There is no society, which doesn't redistribute. You want to call a capital allocation call capital allocation, whatever it is they say that because it's because it's a, if you say capital allocation, it really does obscure and make it seem like this is a technological choice and we need to deal with efficiency as opposed to the primary function of society, which is

accountability and a democracy, which is, um, everybody participating in both the decision-making of the allocation of our resources as a society and in the benefits of it.

[00:36:12] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** The way he says he, he put, he pulls short of saying, we shouldn't take the, uh, duties of allocating capital out of the hands of capitalists, because if he said that everyone would be like, yeah, you idiot.

What are you going to go have Trump go build another golf course with it. Right. He says, the people who have proven to have done it well, that's not how you become a capitalist. How do you prove this to your dad? When it gives you like some, uh, skimming from the Emerald mine?

[00:36:36] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** And let's be. Elon Musk does not exist without our government allocating resources.

None of these, if you think that things have turned out well, it's because the government has made it possible for those things to turn out well. It's not a coincidence that Tesla is in America, as opposed to, I don't know Somalia. Because there is a, there is a, a government that creates an environment that makes it possible for these entities to flourish.

[00:37:07] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** Yeah, Elon's the guy that said we'll coup anyone we want when someone was talking about Bolivian, lithium, because that's why he's in America because he actually likes

[00:37:16] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** it, serves him. Exactly. And it's just like there, you know, it's just a question of like, who gets control of those levers. And there are times, and maybe it's a constant state of vigilance that you have to be in where the wrong people have control of the control panel. And, and to some extent it's a legitimate argument I think, to say like, it's always been the wrong people, but within that set of wrong people, there are people who are really, really wrong and people are a little bit less wrong. And the, the, the material difference for thousands, hundreds, millions of people, um, lies in the balance.

[00:38:01] **EMMA VIGELAND - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:**

Yeah. And it's like if the government was actually acting as a corporation, I doubt that they would have just been evidently been giving Elon Musk, basically subsidies to allow him to limit the risk of his cookie ventures that are actually not as innovative as he pretends they are.

[00:38:19] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** But the point is, is that like a government doesn't act as a corporation, a corporation acts as a government, but it's just a private one.

And that's the point like the government supersedes a corporation, a corporation does not exist in nature. It does not exist.

Whether it's the king or whether it's, uh, a democratic government or whatever, there is no corporation in a vacuum. This is the, the, the, the childlike libertarian fantasy.

Elon Trolls the SEC - What Next: TBD | Tech, power, and the future - Air Date 4-8-22

[00:38:52] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** If no account was dominating the whole platform the way Trump did, there is one that maybe comes close: 80 million followers; an avid fan of Twitter polls; you know who I'm talking about.

[00:39:04] **RANJAN ROY:** How does Elon Musk use Twitter? I think he uses it perfectly. Tesla famously does not spend on marketing. It does not have a PR department. He literally, with his account, replaces entire corporate functions.

One of the most brilliant ways he uses it is in how he replies and how he elevates other accounts. And then once you elevate an account, they essentially remain loyal to you. People regularly tweet how proud they are that he replied directly to them. So he creates this following that's so hyper engaged and hyper loyal to him. So I think, I think at every level he is the best user of the platform.

[00:39:49] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** Musk's tweets are enigmatic and weird. Sometimes they come in the middle of the night, and for years, everything he tweets has been under scrutiny, in particular from the Securities and Exchange Commission. And while the word "securities

regulation" might make your eyeballs glaze over, the SEC's job is to make sure that if Musk tweets from the hip, whatever he says doesn't jeopardize the stock market or people's investments.

[00:40:16] **RANJAN ROY:** August 2018 was when it really started. Elon Musk had tweeted that he's considering taking Tesla private at \$420 and then followed up and said that funding was secure.

[00:40:29] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** Those tweets sent Tesla's stock flying.

[00:40:32] **ARCHIVE NEWSCLIP:** As the stock surged, the questions swirled: who was providing the financing, what buyout shops would assist Musk in any kind of take private? How finalized is some sort of deal? And is \$420 per share a real buyout price?

[00:40:46] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** The SEC saw them and sued Musk for misleading investors.

[00:40:51] **RANJAN ROY:** September 2018, the FCC and Musk had reached a settlement, and there's a few different things that happened. First, Musk and Tesla each had to pay \$20 million, which for the now world's richest man, obviously this is nothing. Musk no longer be the chairman of Tesla, but then the third most relevant thing for what's happening this week, Tesla would have to put in place a process where any of Musk's statements -- that could include blog posts or tweets or anything like that -- had to go through some kind of internal legal process to make sure that they were vetted. It was kind of everyone would joke Musk's Twitter sitter, his babysitter overseeing his tweets.

[00:41:31] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** We can't know for sure. But based on his Twitter, it seems like Musk has not listened to his babysitter. In November 2021, he polled his followers on Twitter on whether he should sell 10% of his Tesla shares. They said yes. Musk sold \$16 billion in stock, which triggered a broad Tesla selloff. Yet again, the SEC was not thrilled. It subpoenaed Tesla after he sent the poll.

I think if you are not someone who follows financial markets or is particularly fascinated by, you know, how the SEC works, you might be like, okay, why? Why is it a big deal what Elon Musk tweets? Like yeah, he's a wacky billionaire. Why does the SEC get so upset by this?

[00:42:23] **RANJAN ROY:** I mean, if you can just imagine if Tim Cook -- Apple's trading around \$170 right now -- if he came out and just out of nowhere said they're taking the company private at \$200, or that our iPhone production is going to be twice what we said a week ago in an official earnings call, the stock's going to go crazy. And that stock is in the retirement accounts or you know, how many Americans own that stock. It's going to gyrate like crazy. Maybe it goes up in the short term. And then you find out it's not true. And then it collapses. If you're the CEO of a public company, you just can't make completely false or, you know, unpredictable statements about the entire financial future of your public company, where pension funds, people's retirements are all resting on these kind of tweets and these statements.

We've spent 100 years of financial market regulatory action to build a system of communications to regulate how executives can talk about their companies. Living in the U.S., you have such an advantage financially, in part because our markets -- everyone in the world wants to be taking their companies public in them -- because they work so well, especially relative to many other countries. And that's the thing that's in danger right now.

[00:43:45] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** Do you think it's fair to say that Elon Musk is thumbing his nose at those 100 years of rules of the road, by the way he tweets?

[00:43:54] **RANJAN ROY:** Yes, of course. Remember, Elon Musk went on *60 Minutes* and openly said, I do not respect the SEC.

[00:44:01] **ELON MUSK:** I want to I want to be clear. I do not respect the SEC. I do not respect them.

[00:44:06] **ARCHIVE NEWSCLIP:** But. But you're abiding by the settlement, aren't you?

[00:44:09] **ELON MUSK:** Because I respect the justice system.

[00:44:11] **RANJAN ROY:** He tweeted shortly after their settlement SEC is a three letter acronym, middle word Elon's, which I will let any listener figure out the Wordle puzzle there. But he's been very vocal, even in his recent court filings, the SEC is chilling his freedom of expression. He believes he should not be penalized for making public statements like he has in the past.

[00:44:37] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** In February, Ranjan says, things between Elon Musk and the SEC really heated up. Tesla

disclosed the subpoena over the Twitter poll. Then Musk and his lawyer claimed in a letter that the SEC was leaking information about him. On Twitter, he implied that the SEC was corrupt and colluding with hedge funds. Then in March, he filed a legal motion to have his original SEC settlement thrown out.

[00:45:05] **RANJAN ROY:** I'm sitting there, I'm like, Why is he doing this? He literally, after this original settlement, he has his Twitter babysitter. The SEC is supposed to be watching him. He's doing whatever he wants. And Tesla becomes the most valuable company in the world. And even right now, as of early March, Tesla as a business operationally is kind of humming along at the best it's been doing in a long time. So there was no reason he should be escalating this feud with the SEC and making such a big deal about it out of nowhere. They had this detente for like a couple of years. Suddenly he started making moves that it felt like something was just off, that there was no reason to be legally escalating things at that point.

[00:45:48] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** So why do you think he was doing it?

[00:45:50] **RANJAN ROY:** Okay. So we have come to find out, we can kind of go through a few possible reasons why has Musk done any of this. But Musk started buying shares of Twitter January 31st.

[00:46:03] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** We know this from securities filings.

[00:46:05] **RANJAN ROY:** Securities filings. This just came out this week. Then February 7th, he starts this escalation with the SEC. He starts pushing it much, much faster. And at the end of January, early February was also tweeting a lot about the Canadian truckers, freedom of speech. And he is also equated this entire SEC enforcement saga around his freedom of speech being chilled. So whatever the exact catalyst was, was it the SEC? Was it the Canadian truckers? Clearly, this topic of free speech was on his mind. The SEC was on his mind. He equates the SEC enforcement around free speech. So at some point he decided, I'm going to become the largest shareholder of Twitter. I am going to get myself on the board of Twitter, and I'm going to escalate things with the SEC and make this something that either I have to win or lose, but something's got to give. All this was happening in throughout the month of February and March.

[00:47:07] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** You really think it's that calculated? He couldn't just be a rich dude who wants to have fun on Twitter and decided to throw a lot of money at it?

[00:47:16] **RANJAN ROY:** No, no. This is the most important part of this. Writing a letter to a judge, filing a legal motion to throw out a settlement. It's one thing when he's again, maybe he's just tweeting and spending \$2.9 billion on Robinhood. That's one thing. To take the legal actions in parallel? That is not a knee jerk, send out a tweet, press one button on your phone. The world's richest man is in a fight with a government regulator over his usage of a specific platform. He just went and essentially bought the platform, or became the most powerful person within that company. That kind of behavior, it's crazy, in the US. In a functional capital market, these are the kind of things that you just would not normally think happen. Of course, there's plenty of discussion. Will he reinstate Trump's account? How will he handle -- will he go after Twitter employees if they make censorship decisions? You know, is he going to bring in new board members that are more favorable to his politics? So obviously, there's a million different ways to look at this.

[00:48:26] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** Do you expect him to throw his weight around on the board?

[00:48:31] **RANJAN ROY:** I think he will throw his weight around because that's the fun thing to do. Whatever anyone will say about Elon Musk, he loves Twitter. He loves the platform. He has shown himself to be one of the greatest users of it. So, yeah, I cannot see why he would take the board seat without trying to influence things. And again, remember, all of this over the last few months has been around this idea of censorship or his view of freedom of speech. So I do think that this is a topic that is genuinely important to him, whether you agree with his views on it or not. And I cannot imagine why he would go through all of this to not exercise some power or strength around the topic.

[00:49:17] **LIZZIE O'LEARY - HOST, WHAT NEXT: TBD:** I feel compelled as a journalist to point out that if you are talking about freedom of speech vis a vis the First Amendment, the First Amendment protects you from the government. It does not mean that Twitter can't tell you what to say on its platform. And I wonder what other people on the board -- I think about maybe boring, respectable people like Bob Zoellick, who was a long time hand in Republican administrations and head of the World Bank. Like, what do they do with that? What do they do with the Elon Musk view of free speech?

[00:49:51] **RANJAN ROY:** I think that's what makes this even more interesting, because board of directors over the last decade, especially around tech companies, have not been the most active, have not taken courageous stances in many cases. So I do think that -- I mean, would you want to be the boring board member that goes up against Elon? Up to date, we have not seen anyone outspoken around the issues that plagued Twitter from the board. So I don't, I cannot imagine anyone would just try to go up against him on anything.

Elon, Segregationist & Culture War in Colorado w/ Chase Woodruff - Left Reckoning - Air Date 2-23-22

[00:50:26] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** This is from consequences.net.

It's a description of other reporting, uh, extreme suffering, 15 of 23 monkeys with Elon Musk's Neuralink brain chips reportedly died, and the other eight also had severe damage. So this is just from Rutten graves out of the 23 monkeys implanted with Elon Musk's Neuralink brain chips at the university of California Davis I'll repeat that again the university of California Davis, uh, between 2017 and 2020, at least 15 reportedly died. Neuralink was founded in 2016 with the goal of helping people recover from traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, curing depression, and other mental health disorders and connecting humans to the internet for everything from music streaming to near telepathic communication. Oh, pie in the sky stuff. Why do you hate science?

If you're, if you're skeptical about where this is going, the company is often touted as successes, such as a demonstration on a pig in 2020 and a 2021 video of a macaque playing pong with its mind, a project has attracted a great deal of interest from Sylvia's a Grimes and the losers. And, you know, people suffering from the actual issues that it purports to want to solve, but skip a little bit ahead to this.

These findings here, pretty much every single monkey that had implants put in their heads suffered from pretty debilitating health effects. So the PCR's research advocacy director, Jerry Beckham, they were frankly may mean and killing the animals. Neuralink chimps were implanted by drilling holes into the monkey skulls.

One primate developed a bloody skin infection had to be euthanized. In other words, discovered missing fingers and toes, possibly from self mutilation, mutilation, or some other special unspecified trauma and had to be put down. A third began uncontrollably vomiting after surgery and days later appear to collapse from exhaustion, fatigue. An autopsy revealed that animals suffered from a brain hemorrhage.

And so there's there been response for these organizations and I will read that just in the interest of full. Uh, you know, just to era with their responses, but you find out it's not very satisfying, uh, because it's really like, we're technically following the rules, although debatable as the response to that is.

And are you getting in the way of science, if you don't allow us to. So, I just want to say this and their response to the allegations Neuralink said the use of research animals is nothing new to the field of novel medical devices and treatments. Uh, and to that a company, they are absolutely committed to working with animals in the most humane and ethical way profitable.

Sorry, let me say that again. The most humane and ethical way profitable, I'll try it again. The most humane and ethical way possible then the third time. Um, uh, right. And so while detailing their research process and their link sets, blah, blah, blah, I'm going to read this. I want to get to this response, uh, neural links, recent blog posts.

This is from the PCRs. Uh, in charge of the suit here, uh, neural links, recent blog post defending its use of 23 monkeys for surgical brain implant experiments doesn't change the perfect treatment that the public records reveal monkeys were used by Neurolink at UC Davis did have portions of our skulls removed and devices screwed to their skulls.

Neuralink did use a substance by the way. Elon Musk wants to have testing on U S sub human subjects. He said 20, 21, and now he says it's going to be 20 22, 20 22. Is this year, uh, continue, Neuralink did use a substance called bio glue, which was not approved for use in these experiments and has been widely known to be toxic to nerve tissue.

Since at least 2001 bio glue came into contact with the service of at least two monkey's brains causing damage and hemorrhaging one monkey suffered for days after the damage. I'm not going to read this entire thing, but suffice to say, like, it's a bunch of, it's the same sort of bullshit, right?

Like, yeah. Like the patterns are clear here.

[00:54:16] **DAVID GRISCOM - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** I mean, every kind of stop or, um, question mark, you know, ethically that they faced, they said, oh, we're just going to go. We're just going to plow through it essentially. I mean, imagine you know, the animal testing laws in this country are not perfect.

You know, certainly, but Lord, imagine if, uh, you know, this is them sort of like clawing at the edge of like acceptability for most people. Imagine if in particularly like legally, imagine if there were less protections for people. Um, I, I hate to, to, to think about, I mean, this just goes back to one of these things about Musk I said at the beginning of the show. That, you know, for all the people who try to present this person, as someone who, uh, is always a forward thinker, he's a futurist, he's a new con, a capitalist he's, uh, you know, bringing us into the next level. I mean, Jesus Christ, mass fact, like a, you know, put them into their like video game wars, you know, basically implying that he was the one who brought humans into space.

Right. You know, it's just like really, really, um, incredible and delusional stuff, but that was the, uh, you know, that was the PR game. Um, for most of the 2010s with him. But the fact is, is this guy is just, uh, old kind of gilded age capitalists from the racism in his factories, to the abuse of animals and nature, as much as, as he can get it on.

Um, this is not somebody who is forward-thinking and as much as he is somebody who sees that there are some kind of developments and directions, things are going into, and he's willing to put himself and his companies in a position where they will go further in breaking and testing the law than other companies.

Right. You know, you see that Matt and I did a whole thing a while ago about the autopilot system that he has. And one of the things that's notable is this thought that his company was the first one to develop that technology. His company was the first one to say that we are willing to put it out on the roads when it is not ready to be on the roads, despite the fact that that might kill people as it has.

Right. You know, Google for example, was also working on autopilot systems and they said, You don't Google again, not a nice company, but it was a company that they said we don't want to put something out there that could potentially hurt people and also hurt our brands, you know, reliability, right?

Whatever logic made the decision, the point is that they were saying that like, you know, the risks here are too hot Tesla and space X that, you know, these

other corporations they're willing to push far past what other groups of people, um, are willing to go and it's to our detriment.

If it was just like maybe one of the companies you could maybe say, well, you know, this is sort of the excess of like that industry.

But if you notice from project to project, you're getting the same stores. You know, it should give you pause.

[00:57:15] **MATT LECH - HOST, LEFT RECKONING:** Yeah. I want to read also one final paragraph for this, because I think UC Davis has role needs to be more like Elon has a certain degree of insulation from the sort of heat for some reason.

I mean, maybe I'll catch up with him. I hope so. But like, so here's this from this, um, if a marina poll of the physicians committee for responsible medicine, uh, that's suing over this Neuralink stuff. In addition, neural links claim that UC Davis was in compliance with federal animal welfare standards is demonstrably false in 2018 while Neuralink was funding primate experiments at the university seven infant primates at UC Davis died due to poisoning caused by the negligence of university employees.

The same year, UC Davis paid a \$5,000 fine, the U S department of agriculture due to its pattern of violating the federal animal welfare act. This is a, uh, a clear goal for like doing these segments about Musk. Is that when he comes to a place like UC Davis, and I don't know how ethical they are outside of doing shit for Musk projects, or like a municipality.

People are skeptical to the point of wary. Right. These partnerships have got to get blown up and this is the problem is like, why does he get to decide the shit is cause he was in the right rooms with your venture capital people a couple of decades ago.

And now he gets to sit at the helm of multiple pivotal technologies and basically where he gets his ideas for him is like you said, what is Google too responsible to do? Let me do that.

Elon Musk Isn't Saving Humanity w/ Manu Saadia - Tech Won't Save Us - Air Date 3-25-21

[00:58:50] **MANU SAADIA:** That's one of the first things that came to mind. It's like, how do you deal with these clowns? How do you engage with their statements? Given also that we are nobodies. We are people, but we are nobodies in the grand scheme of things because it's people like Musk and Bezos who have access and accumulate vast resources that have effectively the power.

So what we're discussing here are things and decisions that are already made, and not on our behalf. Because in the case of people like Bezos and Musk, you know, it's proof that democracy and capitalism are not only incompatible, but there are enemies. So we're going to discuss this, but you have to realize that this is done from a place of powerlessness because of the way the world is organized.

So that's also one of the things that come to mind. It's like, I can say whatever I want about Elon Musk. It doesn't matter. And it's not that I have any particular insight that's special about it, but it's more because of the way power is distributed, or unequally distributed, in the world.

[00:59:58] **PARIS MARX - HOST, TECH WON'T SAVE US:** Yeah, no, I think that is a fantastic point. Right? And I think that was really shown when Jeff Bezos made a similar statement a couple of years ago, when he specifically said that the only way he could see to spend his Amazon winnings was on space travel. And that really shows that there has been this massive distribution of wealth in the direction of the Jeff Bezos's and the Elon Musks. And that gives them a significant degree of power in determining not necessarily the futures that we will achieve, but the kind of things that we're going to set our sights on as a society, because they have the power to direct us in that direction.

[01:00:37] **MANU SAADIA:** They are big, big voices in a conversation that is mostly one way. So there's that. And on top of that, the thing that really irks me is remember a few years ago when SpaceX and Elon just sent that Tesla into space. They're like, oh, it's a prank. And you know, it's kind of a Valentine to all the Tesla employees and this and that. It's, you know, innocuous. But the thing is, it is not. Because that hotrod and whatever stupid mannequin in it, it's gonna outlive humanity. So this is one of the things that we'll leave to the universe.

So now imagine if future archeologists stumbled upon this thing, what are they going to think of it? What kind of trace is it that we're leaving, when we're sending basically the midlife crisis car that you drive on the freeway to impress the other wage slaves? It's like, this is our parietal art. This is the equivalent of Lascaux, you know, or the caves in South Africa. And this is what we leave? Okay. So there's that.

But on top of that, the fact that this is the whim of a single individual would just want to pull a prank. So, what we're leaving in space is junk. And the result of the juvenile imagination of somebody with too much money.

And he decided that he would speak on behalf of humanity. He is not speaking for me. This is not what I want to leave to the stars and to the billions of years that will come after us. This is not who I am. This is not who I want to present as.

So it's a problem. It's a problem of power and it's a problem of the spectacles of power and who has a voice and who doesn't.

They say history is written by the victors, right? Perhaps would be better off if it were written by the victims.

[01:02:43] **PARIS MARX - HOST, TECH WON'T SAVE US:** Yeah. I completely agree with that. I think that's a fascinating way to make us think about this conversation, right? And to make us think about the way that the space kind of discourses are made and who gets to decide what kind of space things that we talk about. Right? Because we have Musk making these decisions for all of us, but that doesn't mean it's the only way that we can approach space exploration. This notion from Musk and Bezos that we need to colonize the stars, that we need to actually have humans going out into space to do this work is not the only way that people think about how we should interact with space and what our approach to space should be.

So I was hoping that you could outline some of these different approaches to space, in different ways of thinking about how we should be engaging with space, and why the approach of Musk and Bezos, this one centered around colonization, is probably not the one that we should be pursuing.

[01:03:36] **MANU SAADIA:** There's a book that came out recently by a great scholar named Daniel Deudney, and it's called *Dark Skies*. And it's all about the future of space exploration. And that person is a rather serious and important scholar. And it's part of the people who sit on these panels to decide on future policy, so he's really very much an influential person and he's a very good scholar.

And the book is 500 pages. It's very extensive and exhaustive. But he points out something there important, I think, is that there are two paradigms in the way we conceive of space exploration. And on the one hand, there is the von Braun/Tsiolkovsky paradigm. So Wernher von Braun and Konstantin

Tsiolkovsky, people from the twenties and thirties who viewed the idea that humanity had to jump into deep space and colonize and multiply and settle everywhere. And that it's almost the species mission. That's one paradigm. And so the forced march towards technological improvements so that we can build rockets so that we can settle the moon and then Mars and you know, and all that.

And I think the spreading the light of consciousness to the universe, I think it's Tsiolkovsky. I'm not so sure, but I think it is. But it points to that, what Russians called Cosmism. So it's this idealistic idea of human spreading to the stars. And von Braun, who came from a different background, Prussian aristocrats turned Nazis, he was very much into that as well. And there was the sort of driving force behind his work first for Hitler, because Hitler was like, yeah, Von Braun's a genius, give him all the money to build these rockets, and von Braun was like, okay, there's a war now, but then later on with all that progress we made during the war, we'll be able to conquer the stars.

So he did not do it with Hitler, just did it with the people that arrested him and we're very much keen to leverage his engineering prowess.

[01:05:37] **PARIS MARX - HOST, TECH WON'T SAVE US:** What he has been one of the Nazi scientists or leaders who then moved to the United States after World War II?

[01:05:46] **MANU SAADIA:** Oh, very much so. Von Braun was basically the guy behind the Apollo program. He was the guy. He did something in the fifties though. It was kind of a very smart where he hooked up with Walt Disney and they put together a TV program -- Man's Race to the Stars, or Man's something, something to the Stars -- was watched by 50 million people at the time. And it was the sort of diorama of rockets going to the moon and Jupiter and this and that. This was in the context of the fifties, you know, sort of resurgence of science fiction. And so it helped cement this sort of imagination of a so-called new frontier for American ingenuity. And that this idea that technological progress is here to push us far beyond the reaches of our current Lebensraum, if you will.

But you find traces of that in the arguments for colonizing space, because space colonization is often couched as a sort of life insurance for the species. Elon Musk himself he says that quite often that we need to be an interplanetary species, so that if earth fails, then there will still be some refugees somewhere in space on Mars that will be able to continue the species. And so our precious bodily fluids will not go to waste. That life insurance thing is served on its face.

The only real threat to the biosphere on the habitability of earth is human industry, and lack of coordination. The average lifespan of a mammal species is a million years. So it's on average. Maybe we'll do more, maybe we'll do less. But mammal species on average live a million years. So we're about 300,000 to 400,000 years into our run. So, that gives us a lot of time still. Then probably earth's systems will stop when plate tectonics stops. So when the internal radioactivity of the earth is depleted by decay -- and that's, people, I've seen 600 million to 800 million years. So, there's plenty of time before things go to I would say shit on Earth. But there's a lot of time before earth becomes like Mars. And right now it's not. Right now it's like the most habitable spaceship.

So the life insurance thing. Okay. So, yeah, asteroids, whatever. If we're so good with rockets, then, finding an asteroid on the course to earth and knocking it off with just a little nudge, that would actually be a worthwhile use of resources. The current system for surveying apparent asteroids is woefully underfunded. But that would be an actual worthwhile use of resources. And it wouldn't be that expensive.

So the life insurance thing doesn't work. But it's grandiose, right? It is grandiose. And it shows prudence on the side of those who utter these words, because it shows that, oh, I'm thinking ahead. I'm a forward thinker. I'm a visionary. I want to manage the risk on behalf of all of humanity. Well, the current very pressing risks are not of that nature. And they're mostly the result of the lack of coordination or the spontaneous coordination of the market, which doesn't really work when it comes to public goods, such as the atmosphere.

So that's one paradigm. Okay. So we're going to circle back to the question of paradigm. So this is one paradigm. Like we need to go out. This is the species' mission. We've always explored. We're explorers, we're settlers. That's the paradigm, the von Braun/Tsiolkovsky paradigm.

And then Deudney points out the other paradigm, which is the Carl Sagan paradigm.

And I think it does justice to Carl Sagan. You know, we all know who Carl Sagan was, a great scientist and somebody very gifted with attracting funds for his projects. So that's also a part of being a great scientist. And Carl Sagan, he had this view that we should use our technology to explore for the sake of science, because in the sort of a seemingly purposeless, seemingly useless acquisition of knowledge. Because there are new economic purposes to sending probes or rovers to planets. And through that practice of looking at the world and the universe, we will learn a lot about the universe, but also about

ourselves. Meaning, if we can find traces in the layers of Mars, we can find traces of fossilized microorganisms, then what we learned from that is something very deep about our own places in the universe, about the frequency of the appearance of life spontaneously on planets, about the conditions which lead to evolution, about how long can life survive and thrive. So this is the means by which we learn about the light of consciousness in the universe, actually.

And Sagan, he was very adamant about being observers and being very careful and being very ginger about it. And this was really born out of a deep commitment and very earnest commitment to know more. Not just about the nature, but about ourselves, because we are part of nature. We are part of the cycles of nature.

That's ultimately the Sagan paradigm. So, you know, you send little probes, over-engineered, extremely well-built that can last for decades. And what you discover with these probes is mind boggling. Think about what the Voyagers, these two little things, 1973 technology, and they're still -- they're beyond the termination shock, the place where the sun's rays protect from the interstellar medium. So, so they're in the interstellar medium, these two probes. And they've shown us incredible things about Saturn and Jupiter and the outer solar system. Now there's New Horizon. I don't know if you remember a couple of years ago, the New Horizon flew by Pluto and it was launched before Pluto was downgraded to a planetoid. But what they found on Pluto was these geological formations. These are spikes of ice. So it's not water ice, but I think it's nitrogen ice or helium. So spikes of ice that you only find in Chile on earth. And they're the result of movements of ice and movements of the ground. And so this is extremely eerie because does that mean that Pluto is geologically active? We don't know.

And the question about is Pluto geologically active is actually fundamental, because if there's geological activity, then there's a chance of evolution.

So this fascination with life and with the facts of nature and with the cosmos in all its many modes and possibilities and the contemplation that goes with it. This is the Carl Sagan paradigm. This is what a lot of people who work at NASA today live by. It's the fascination.

So these two are not really compatible. And you'll notice, by the way, that Bezos and Musk and all these space bros, they're not interested in science. They're interested in engineering maybe, but they're not interested in science for science's sake. Because science doesn't make any money.

Summary 4-20-22

[01:13:16] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with second thought, breaking down the myth of the self-made billionaire deconstructed, highlighted many though, not all of the reasons why the myth of Musk is a fraud. Some just had to be cut for time. The young Turks looked at the accusations of rampant racism within Tesla.

Some more news highlighted the farce of the boring company. The Majority Report called out Musk's childlike, libertarian view on the functioning of government. What next TBD looked at? Musk's fight with the sec over Twitter and left reckoning highlighted the animal abuse inherent in Musk's Neuralink company as a window into the consistent pattern of reckless behavior throughout his companies.

That's what everyone heard the numbers also heard about his clip. Tech won't save us breaking down the two basic philosophies of space exploration, colonization for profit and scientific inquiry for the sake of knowledge. To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly into your new members.

Only podcast feed the child, receive sign up to support the show at Best of the Left dot com slash support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds, a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted. No questions asked and now we'll hear from you.

Back on the path - Dave from Olympia, WA

[01:14:38] **VOICEMAILER: DAVE FROM OLYMPIA, WA:** Hi, Jay it's Dave from Wilson. Washington,. This has been a long time and stuff has happened, uh, dropped off this world or series of crises, crises, I hit rock bottom with some of the crises. I dealt with some others and I was like, I have six months. That's the left of my feet. So I just went to the last one.

It was this back October, um, the propaganda episode. So I guess technically I'm in a time loop again. I don't know if I will be recording from my time travels or not, but oh, I find episodes, but also at the end, there's voicemail from V from New York and it was just. Oh, it was delightful. Uh, you know, dad driving the station wagon into the car Porter by heart moments and I'm like, oh, I'm home.

Okay. I remember why I love this. And it was these people. So as always awesome, awesome show, but you see better than that, you feel the community and that. As, or maybe more valuable, I don't know. So love you guys. Take care. I will catch up before, too long and start contributing VoicedMails but, just back on the past, and just wanted to say hi, I'm back on the path.

Take care.

Final comments on foundational ideas that help explain politics

[01:15:56] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Thanks to all those who called into the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at 2 0 2 9 9 9 3 9 9 1. Or write me a message to Jay at Best of left.com. Glad to hear from Dave from Olympia, obviously started to hear about his.

Crises that he's been dealing with. I do sometimes wonder where he's run off to when I don't hear from him for awhile, but he always comes back. So I try not to worry. It is sort of amazing that he is helping to pitch our discord community probably months before he will have heard about it. The community that may have formed around the sort of platform of VoicedMails on the show has now expanded to the discord platform where Best of the Left has a community.

And details on joining our in the show notes. So please do that. If you're interested, uh, Dave also would be a good person to ask about, uh, what we've learned in the past 15 years. Um, doing some research and thinking about that sort of stuff for episode 1500, but he probably won't even know about that till the fall.

You know, he'll be sick. Pumpkin spice latte and think, oh man, I would have had some good ideas for that. So if unlike day from Olympia, you are living in the present rather than six months in the past, I invite you to join our discord community. Although actually you can do that anytime. That's not a particularly time sensitive, but the second one is more time sensitive.

If you have any thoughts to share about major things you have learned about politics, maybe just the. 15 years, but maybe you learn something particularly interesting, uh, longer go than that. I'm prepping ideas to put into a special

edition for episode 1500. So what are the kinds of ideas that you feel like are somewhat foundational to your understanding of the world?

For instance, here's one for me that I learned, or, you know, had the thought about, um, more than five years ago, probably less than 10. It is easier to destroy than to build. And so there will always be a structural disadvantage for those who wish to use government power for good to build something out of it, compared to those who seek to simply dismantle the government, obviously, except for the citizen anti-abortion bounty hunter program.

And, uh, here's another one that comes up a lot free speech. Does not mean consequence, free speech. People get confused about that quite frequently. I think, I mean the New York times quite recently published an opinion piece, which stated that Americans have quote the right to speak their minds and voice their opinions in public without fear of being shamed or shunned on quote.

No, they don't shaming and shunning people who step too far outside social norms is actually foundational to maintaining a cohesive society and progressing it forward. I might add and speaking freely without consequence has never been the idea behind our first amendment, but almost any time anyone gets in trouble for saying something awful and they lose their job or have to face some other sort of consequence for it.

The, he almost inevitably make claims of their free speech rights being violated. And it's a sort of comedic, but we have to continue to clarify that. So you get the sense of the types of things that came to my mind at least, but feel free to interpret the question any way you like and also sort of separately parallel.

I've been putting out a call for recommendations of interesting stuff that you've been seeing or hearing could be a podcast episode, could be a video. You saw online, a documentary, whatever I want to know about it. So if you're a member and you're on our discord community, we have a whole section for these types of things, recommendations.

You know, I post things in there as well, and anyone is free to post them. So you can add your own. Um, but if you're not on discord or you're not a member or whatever, please feel free to send in your suggestions. You can tweet at us or you can send me an email or a voicemail or whatever. As always you can send in those kinds of recommendations or leave any sort of comments by calling in at 2029993991.

Or by emailing me to Jay at Best of the Left dot com. That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic, Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together.

Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism, segments, graphic designing web mastering, and bonus show co. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at Best of the Left dot com slash support through our Patreon page or from right inside the apple podcast app membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes.

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