

Jamie Susskind, *Future Politics*, Introduction and Chapters 19-20, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 1-26, pp. 345-366.

Susskind (2018: 2) opens his book *Future Politics* (2018) by putting forth and revising the modern question whether major aspects of collective life should be determined, and to what degree, by the state, the market, or civil society, in order to articulate the contemporary dominant question about what is the extent to which collective life will be controlled by digital technologies. Susskind (2018: 12) asks: "What is the connection between digital technologies and politics?" Susskind's initial question sets the tone for the rest of his introduction, but also the rest of his book (Susskind: 2018: 361), in which he emphasizes that our current view of digital technologies is consumption driven rather than political (Susskind: 2018: 5-6).

Drawing from political theory, Susskind's proposal (2018: 7-10) consists in making future oriented changes, taking into consideration the sociopolitical impact of digital media technologies; specifically, "information and communication technologies", which the author calls "hyper-political". Having come under corporate control, for Susskind (2018: 20), the Internet provides such an example of *hyper-political* space. The author ends his introduction by envisioning the interdependent character of the relations between digital technologies and individuals or collectives, which can potentially present limitations on classical liberal values, such as freedom of speech and thought, as well as autonomy (Susskind, 2018: 23).

In the last two chapters of his book, Susskind outlines his critical vision of a technological future relative to politics, to conclude that it is most likely that the future will not be political as we have known the political to be. However, he insists that classical liberal values, such as liberty, democracy and social justice, are maintained (Susskind, 2018: 366). Since the world will become increasingly unequal in terms of power and wealth, as the author points out, private and public entities will aim at gaining control of digital technologies (Susskind, 2018: 346). On the other hand, the author expresses his wish for a people oriented technological future, in which there is collective control over designing, theorizing and critiquing the collective world (Susskind, 2018: 346-347). The author defines this vision as "the principle of Digital Republicanism" (Susskind, 2018: 347). The author explains that, in future politics, democracy has to become even more important; however it need not be based on an anachronistic elitist paradigm, but on certain aspects, which he outlines as: Deliberative Democracy, Direct Democracy, Wiki Democracy, Data Democracy, and AI Democracy (Susskind, 2018: 348).

Susskind's insistence on the political, rather than the economic, features of the future technologically driven world points at the imbalance between the current emphasis on the justification of a tech firm's political power by market oriented standards, instead of political principles on a similar to liberal-democratic states model, to avoid several drawbacks of current corporate tech practices (Susskind, 2018: 349-350). Such an example is the practice of consent provided by the

customers of big tech corporations, which is necessary, but neither sufficient nor properly informed, in Susskind's view (2018: 352). Therefore, Susskind's future vision (2018: 354-355) calls for transparency and regulation as far as specialized algorithmic processes and data usage are concerned, so that they can potentially reflect customers and citizens values.

In view of the above, Susskind (2018: 357) examines the current legal status, including antitrust and competition law, applied on technological corporations. The author highlights the weight, which tech companies presently carry, permitting the concentration of economic and political power in private technological firms (Susskind, 2018: 357-358). The author concludes that there needs to be further democratization and regulation of big tech, in order for technological firms to serve customers and citizens following democratic principles (Susskind, 2018: 359-360). Susskind (2018: 360-361) exemplifies his mistrust in technology by presenting us with the hypothetical example of future algorithmically produced political speeches using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Susskind's book finishes with his suggestion of redefining the political in contemporary technologically driven global societies, before we can speak for or on behalf of a so-called politics of the future.

Question:

What is Susskind's vision about the future of politics in response to contemporary technological challenges?

What are the problems consumers and citizens encounter regarding big tech firms according to the author?

Do you think that his suggestion of applying political democratic principles on critiquing and potentially redefining corporate technological firms is desirable and viable? For instance, consider potential implications: say, whether it is preferable that the political is conflated with economic considerations; or, whether it is preferable that corporate companies adopt the model of the liberal nation state.