

# A School of Internet Philosophy

Seong-Young Her March 26, 2017

I think there's a school of 'Internet philosophy' like there is continental philosophy or Anglo-American philosophy, with its own dominant interests and a unique style of discourse. I'm trying to figure out what this consists of. It's a combination of demographics, dominant areas of interest (both within and without strict philosophy) and conventions and canons unique to the school.

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I think there's a school of 'Internet philosophy' like there is continental philosophy or Anglo-American philosophy, with its own dominant interests and a unique style of discourse. I'm trying to figure out what this consists of. It's a combination of demographics, dominant areas of interest (both within and without strict philosophy) and conventions and canons unique to the school.

It seems to me that there's an effect of the geography (of the Internet and its platforms). For example, web forums are usually egalitarian in organization and not demanding in terms of credentials. This means there's a different selective pressure acting on usership and content online than IRL.

That's a pressure towards the passionate or obsessive and against the dispassionate and casual: the former can be seen more often by more people. Just a few highly committed and enthusiastic posters can steer the direction of a community this way. Nonymity acts against this effect to some degree, as credentials build up and cliques form around them.

We can see extreme cases of this happening in Facebook groups dedicated to screencapping comments and posts made by celebrity shitposters. That's not to say that anonymity or egalitarianism defines our culture. Bottom-up organization can take the form of an anarchic /b/ or a fascistic /pol/. I think it's the kind of content and attitudes towards discussions, rather than organizational ideologies, that sets our school of philosophy apart from conventional ones.

There are various masses of community clusters with highly distinct styles of discourse and subject matters. The most obvious ones are whenever 4chan is compared against another site, like Tumblr or Reddit. Facebook is much more hazy because it's the site where collision between the various subcultures is happening, resulting in both new subcultures and colonies made up of immigrant users from other platforms.

An example of a uniting interest for all those disparate online subcultures and their distinct philosophies I've noticed is passion for low culture. Again, anime and 4chan is the obvious one, as is fandom culture (arguably, the latter subsumes the former). Maybe it's a chicken-or-egg situation where the Internet provided a channel for people to get together, because no analogous opportunities existed offline.

What do you guys think about this?

## **Selected Comments**

### **Thread 1**

**Cristian Gutierrez:** I think your point about Facebook being some kind of 'no-man's land' where all of these somewhat disparate groups come together is really spot-on and I've had my finger on it for a while.

Obviously Facebook has an extraordinarily large exposure base, but to me it seems there's something about the way various communities are using the platform that really kicks the development of memes

and subcultures into high gear if they make it outside of some of the more insular websites.

**Seong-Young Her:** I agree, and I think it's kind of like how many 'mongrel languages' like English developed through the turmoil of competing tongues (e.g. the thousands of words English took from French a thousand years ago)

**Cristian Gutierrez:** Another great point!

To further the analogy, Middle English inevitably had a lot in common with the Norman French of the time -but it's obviously developed a whole bunch since then! How much of an 'upper-bound' does Facebook have for this kind of development, I wonder? Perhaps we'll eventually see the divide widen such that people are treated as being 'from Facebook' as an internet community rather than 'on Facebook' (almost like a representative of some other demographic) as they arguably are now.

**Seong-Young Her:** Oh man, that's a really cool point about being 'from Facebook'!

I feel like Facebook is really succeeding at becoming the Internet in that people don't tend to think of someone being from Facebook in the same way they might even pejoratively accuse people of being from 9gag or Reddit. Maybe sub-communities on Facebook might become something like that (e.g. from leftbook)?

**Cristian Gutierrez:** I think you're right, and it really speaks to how personal FB is and tries to be; pejoratively saying someone is from leftbook doesn't seem too far divorced from just outright calling them a leftie or damn commie anyway.

This would be opposed to calling someone a Redditor in a negative sense, which is a more generalised comment on their cultural literacy/normie status/whatever regardless of what communities they actually engage with on that website.

There's a level of distinction there that Facebook seems to demand at the moment (or in the future).

## **Thread 2**

**Beau Perkins:** The chicken-and-egg analogy creates a false dichotomy for this problem, I think. Ardent, radical views have always been rewarded, whether presented by speech or script, shown from Horace's

warning against poets making mountains labor to beget mice to yellow journalism.

Written discourse associates itself with feelings of frustration and closed-mindedness. This is because the left hemisphere, in charge of language and abstraction, also is the source of the desire for power and control. When the left hemisphere can put things in its boxes, it can control them, and it won't want to move its boxes. When the left hemisphere can't fit something into its box, its natural reaction is "That's stupid, why does this person not fucking understand?" Writing, above irl conversation and telephone calls, is the baby who looks most like her arrogant father. As Heidegger said, it is language that speaks in us, not we who speak it.

We can't attribute the origin of all subcultures to that dynamic, of course. As others have already said, much more goes into it, and many groups have just been the result of people connecting their same thoughts. So the Internet philosophy culture has its roots pre-Internet, but the detached, immediate animosity that writing creates has made the web a rewarding home for weird subcultures.

(Originally posted to /tpmg/, a closed group)