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Written by **Selwyn Duke** on March 5, 2019

GoogTwitFace: Big Tech's Big Leftism and Big Intolerance

"Liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are attained: later on, there are no worse and no more thorough injurers of freedom than liberal institutions," observed philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. This is brought to mind by new research showing that at "Facebook, Google and many other tech companies the level of political intolerance is stunning," as Fox News' Garrett Johnson puts it.

At issue is a Lincoln Network-commissioned study that surveyed more than 1,900 tech professionals on the matter of "viewpoint intolerance." Released last week, it reported that nearly "half of Lincoln's 2019 Viewpoint Inclusion Survey respondents believe their companies promote a political agenda — specifically, a left-leaning one, with 47.7 percent of respondents saying their respective company has a clear liberal agenda, as opposed to the 37.9 percent who reported a conservative agenda," informs Johnson.

One problem with the research is already evident: Self-reporting relies on the (mis?)perceptions of the respondents. To the point here, tech companies are notoriously left-wing, so the notion that 38 percent work at companies with a "conservative agenda" sounds a bit fanciful (unless they all just happen to work at the same anomalous firm!). Can anyone name one prominent tech company that actually has a rightist agenda and cite what conservative causes it's pushing?

A better yardstick for tech firms' ideological bent is political donations (especially since today's Democrat Party is the embodiment of leftism). As to this, a whopping 97 percent of Twitter employees' "spending went to Democrats," reported the *Washington Post* in 2016. "At Microsoft, that number was more than 70 percent and at Facebook it was 68 percent. Apple employee political expenditures tipped the scales at almost 93 percent in favor of Democrats."

Note, too, that this does reflect the Big Tech norm. If any would dispute this, can they point to even one prominent tech company where most donations go to the GOP?

So more likely than a good percentage of tech firms having a conservative agenda is that they simply have some employees who can't tell left from right. The explanation is, as I wrote on a related topic last week, that "liberals tend to be solipsistic, bubble-blinded-and-immersed people who mistake their views as centrist. (There was such a fellow who used to comment at my website; he never took anything but a hard-left position but claimed "moderate" status.)"

In other words, exhibiting the "La Vida Loca" (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) phenomenon, they're so far left of left that they mistake left for right.

Regardless, conservatives are assailed at Big Tech. Johnson points out that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey even "admitted recently that conservative employees at his company 'don't feel safe to express their opinions.'" Moreover, one Lincoln survey "respondent who identifies as a moderate at an agenda-driven company expressed hopelessness over the issue of intolerance," Johnson further informs. "I am happy, with the exception of my time at work where I feel like the choices I have made in my beliefs label me

as stupid, a bigot, deplored, and more," the employee lamented. "I am coming to the conclusion that we cannot live or work together any longer."

In this vein, Johnson also reports that a stunning 63 percent of techies at agenda-driven firms report that ridicule for disagreeing with a coworker is common; this figure is only 21 percent at "apolitical workplaces."

In fact, Johnson relates that there's significant pressure on employees to either align themselves with their company's political bent or to resign, and he cites a libertarian who said that his CEO actually stated explicitly that anyone who voted for Trump in 2016 should leave the firm.

Yet the larger problem here is widely held incorrect assumptions — some of which Johnson reflects himself in his (opinion) piece. For example, he writes, "Of course, tech companies have every right to set their own cultural norms, including terminating employees for cultural fit issues."

While I agree with this freedom-of-association sentiment in principle, how is it reasonable within the context of a system that accepts "anti-discrimination" law? Will we disallow all sorts of politically incorrect "discrimination" — even forcing companies to hire cross-dressers — but then allow rampant discrimination against conservatives? This will be the exact result, too, if employees are fired for "cultural fit" issues because Big Tech and, increasingly, big business in general have a liberal culture.

In other words, Johnson's statement of principle rubber stamps precisely what he's warning of in his piece. It's basically saying: We'll allow anti-discrimination laws/standards to be by leftists and for leftists and used only to buttress the left-wing agenda.

Moreover, Johnson writes that "any employee that exhibits racist, sexist, homophobic or bigoted behavior unquestionably has no place in a healthy and inclusive workforce." The problem?

Who will define what constitutes such behavior? With leftists swearing that supporting Trump and securing the border are "racist," opposing faux marriage is "homophobic," and resisting equal-pay social engineering is "sexist," this standard enables what Big Tech is currently doing: discriminating against conservatives based on its own tendentious interpretations and definitions.

The deepest issue here, however, Johnson touched on when writing that perhaps "the most alarming piece of data from the report is the tech industry's blindspot [sic], wherein respondents who condone intolerant workplace behavior wrongly believe their companies' atmosphere encourages viewpoint tolerance."

This is an old story. Those preaching tolerance the most are the most intolerant *and* intolerable. Nonetheless, Johnson trumpets tolerance, too, saying we need more of it. Actually, we need first to understand it.

Austrian Karl Popper, a favored philosopher of radical leftist billionaire George Soros, once wrote of "the paradox of tolerance," wherein "unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them."

Yet one could ask: Who are the "intolerant"? Is it the Right, as Soros would claim; or the Left, as Johnson might? Is it everyone? After all, if we're intolerant of the Intolerant™, are we not also intolerant?

Actually, the intelligent question is: intolerant of *what*?

"Tolerance" has become a buzzword. But a far wiser philosopher than Popper, G.K. Chesterton, put it well, writing "Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions." It is also his vice. As I explained in my 2013 essay "The Acceptance Con":

> For tolerance is [virtuous] only when exercised as is necessary, since it implies a perceived negative. For example, you would have to tolerate an itchy rash or stubborn cold, but you wouldn't tolerate a fine car or a delectable meal — you relish those things. And while we may admire a man who tolerates suffering with a stiff upper lip, this may turn to contempt if he invites it upon himself with a tolerance for being a doormat; it then seems like weakness of character at best, masochism at worst.

The reality is that being tolerant is only noble in two situations. One is when the thing you are "putting up with" isn't objectively bad, but you nonetheless dislike it. An example is putting up with broccoli even though you find it distasteful.

The second is when you tolerate something that is actually bad (e.g., foul weather or the flu) because there is nothing you can do to improve the situation.

As for those bad things that can be changed, the virtue lies only in making them history.

In other words, intolerance is an enforcement mechanism for values — appropriate intolerance is an enforcement mechanism for *virtues*.

The problem with leftists is not that they're intolerant; as with the Puritans, ancient Greeks, and so many others, they actually demonstrate very effective use of social pressure. The problem is that they're disconnected from virtue, have all the wrong values, and, consequently, are intolerant of all the wrong things.

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