

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



A Tyranny Of Editors

How Wikipedia Became Another System of
Oppression

Magical Comrade Molotov Catgirl

September 8th, 2020

Techbros – cishet white men in the tech sector, usually upholding some kind of right-wing Libertarian views - made a lot of big promises they couldn't keep, one of which is free and open education. None illustrates that failure as well as Wikipedia, the so-called free encyclopedia. While it operates as a non-profit unaffiliated with any State or corporation, its user base created a strong bias in favor of right-wing rhetoric and viewpoints, anywhere from mildly Conservative to down-right Fascist. Like the Moon of Anarres from the novel *The Dispossessed*, it's a great case study in how implicit hierarchy can form in free spaces, and how that insidious hierarchy can sometimes be more dangerous than explicit ones.

Now, one might argue that since Wikipedia doesn't possess any authority, it doesn't really matter if it's run by a buncha techbros putting on the Reich, but the truth is that it does matter: authority is derived when the power of the many is controlled by an undeserving few, so when people give up doing their own research and rely on Wikipedia as a knowledge source, it gains authority in deciding what people believe to be

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objective facts. This is the same as when news outlets broadcast State or corporate propaganda: if enough people buy into the brainwashing, then the media has authority over them.

In that sense, Wikipedia is little more than a new paint applied to old media, in more ways than one. It demands “neutral points of view”, but will only consider sources provided by certain agencies and institutions, the vast majority of which are controlled by a Conservative establishment; their neutrality is really just a dogwhistle used to hide their right-wing bias. Their “notability” criteria means that any group that doesn’t yet have enough representation in mainstream media - be them political groups like Anarchists or minority groups like indigenous people - doesn’t deserve as much voice as large groups like Capitalists or cishet white men. And like all authoritarians, they never play by their own rules.

The fact that it’s decentralized and not controlled by one single individual means precious little when the vast majority of their contributors belong to the same privileged demographic and share the same Conservative bias, and the fact that they give certain people elevated privileges based on the quantity of their contribution just make it worse: it went from a tyranny of majority in a direct democracy to just plain tyranny controlled by a representative democracy, as corrupt as any current State or corporation.

Taking the issue of transphobia as an example: they deny that the Roman empress Elagabalus is a trans woman despite she explicitly asked to be called an empress and was willing to give a great reward to anyone that could perform bottom surgery for her, since none of their “neutral” and “notable” sources said as such; they wouldn’t acknowledge that author Richard K. Morgan is a transphobe even after he had repeatedly regurgitated transphobic propaganda and rhetoric, again because their deeply biased sources didn’t confirm it as such. They are quickly approaching a point where they can’t call the kettle black until one of their sources tell them so, but of course

that's not true: many pages on the site are filled with partial or misleading information, or just downright lies and slanders against marginalized people, and yet none of them bother to clean up these articles because they don't actually care.

While these issues may seem trivial from the position of privilege, it is a very serious matter to the marginalized. Erasing a trans figure from history reinforce the Fascist propaganda that being trans is a trend and thus encourage parents to "cure" their trans children of the fad, just like the way a case of police brutality is described can greatly color someone's perception on whether it's a case of police brutality at all. But just like the Dadaists had accused, the self-proclaimed "Rationalists" on Wikipedia start with conclusion that conform to their right-wing bias, gather information from sources based on said bias, and then presented a Conservative propaganda as objective and neutral facts and objective truth.

Evil triumphs when good people do nothing. The Fascists don't win when they have converted enough people into hateful bigots; they win when enough Capitalists, "Rationalists", and other cowards sit down and negotiate with them, with the lives of marginalized people and the existence of minority groups as bargaining chips. Right now, Wikipedia is making the Devil's bargain, by mindlessly deferring to right-wing authorities without question or challenge, they're willing corroborators who help the Fascists spread their hateful lies, no matter how much they dress the lies up as facts.

In this way, Wikipedia had went from a source for free education to nothing but another system of oppression, endlessly regurgitating Fascist propaganda and Capitalist rhetoric from their so-called "neutral" and "notable" sources, while gladly aiding in the oppression and prosecution of minority groups and marginalized people by erasing their struggle or misrepresenting facts about them. It doesn't matter if they don't have a Great Firewall or censorship bureau, when the vilest and most insidious censorship readily exists in their minds: prejudice

and bigotry. And like all system of corruption, one day it will have to be razed to the ground and burned into ashes. So to all the wikibros:

The day will come when our silence is more powerful than the voices you're throttling today.