

Hacking ideologies, part 2: Open Source, a capitalist movement

Free Software, Free Drugs and an ethics of death

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Believe. "The World is Yours." (Ian Brown, 2007)

The Open Source initiative re-interpreted Free Software to include it into the neo-liberal ideology and the capitalist economy - whose aims are contrary to the FS starting axioms/freedoms. This platform will focus on ideological and political aspects of this. It will also suggest FS recovery strategies.

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What is Re-interpretation of FS by Open Source ?

In *The Revenge of the Hackers*, Eric Raymond talks about Open Source goals in clear terms:

"Our success after Netscape would depend on replacing the negative FSF stereotypes with positive stereotypes of our own--pragmatic tales, sweet to managers' and investors' ears, of higher reliability and lower cost and better features. In conventional marketing terms, our job was to re-brand the product, and build its reputation into one the corporate world would hasten to buy."

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The move of the Open Source initiative to bring Free Software closer to capitalism shows that:

- a) **there is a gap between the Free Software movement and capitalism;**
- b) without a significant institutional intervention and re-interpretation that gap can not be overcome;
- c) it is the founding documents (practice of Open Source doesn't differ), ethics that Richard Stallman stands by so fiercely, that are the bite that capitalism can not subsume, swallow in its original form.

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O'Reilly role: conferences, books, lobbying.

Here's some neo-liberal text-book propaganda:

"standardization, and thus commodification, are both natural market forces as well as key events in human history".

Ian Murdoch, founder of Debian
in "Open Source and the
Commoditization of Software" (O'Reilly)

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Multitude misunderstood - time for education

Lack of understanding of the difference between Open Source and Free Software is best seen when in one of the masterpieces of recent social theory (Hardt/Negri's "Multitude") term "open-source" was referenced with the "Free as in Freedom" book on Stallman.

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Freedom is Politics

Badiou/Zizek: politics is not parliaments, debates compromises, voting. On the contrary, it is subjectively, militantly, unilaterally, deciding what seems impossible at the time of the decision.

Actually existing freedom is to choose outside of the given coordinates in which choice takes place. It is to re-configure the conditions, to change the scope of "possible outcomes".

This is the difference between Lenin's concept of freedom and the liberal, parliamentary, formal freedom, which consists in participating in the what is already given, already structured. (Zizek, "On Belief")

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Truth of RMS (Badiou)

Could we not say that this is precisely what Richard Stallman did with his choice of leaving the job he had at the MIT Lab to devote all his time to re-create the world of software, from scratch, with an entirely new set of co-ordinates?

Respect or disrespect the printer licence? Neither! Free Software instead.

Badiou: acting in follow up to an event -- event that prompts our reaction/decision -- and pursuing the truth of it through fidelity to it, through fidelity to the retroactively constructed event that changes us.

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Paradox/Subject: axioms-openness, a missing link.

One might rightly assume that in the sphere of rational tasks knowledge and science would be the decisive spheres. Yet, some issues can not be settled that way.

No science is pure, cleansed of ideology.
Think maths. Axioms - Not to be questioned.
Does that make maths dogmatic? Of course not.
Sciences rely on axiomatic foundations.

ONE: Free Software relies on the set of principles called freedoms.
These are axioms. Not up for discussion.

TWO: Free Software communities function through open participation.
Its progress is through ongoing collaborative production and critique.

Stallman's truth (printer event + fidelity) stands in the sharp contrast, indeed in total opposition, to the attributes of the movement he founded.

Openness and collaboration flourished from closed starting points, from axioms. This is what i call The Paradox of a becoming Subject.

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GNU manifesto applied: punishment for capitalists?

food, shelter, health, education, labour

from GNU manifesto:

"Don't programmers deserve a reward for their creativity? If anything deserves a reward, it is social contribution. Creativity can be a social contribution, but only in so far as society is free to use the results. If programmers deserve to be rewarded for creating innovative programs, by the same token they deserve to be punished if they restrict the use of these programs."

Consider applying this to the economy. What would it mean to assert that economic productivity can be a social contribution only if its results can be shared? It is already shared, many would say: one gets a salary for one's work. This would not satisfy FS criteria. If we narrow down the concept of economic productivity to food, shelter, health, education - conclusion could be that capitalists restrict use of the above elements by subverting them into closed, private wealth generation schemes. And hence, deserve punishment.

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Inbuilt obsolescence - will they expire us one day, on the retirement day?

from GNU manifesto:

"Extracting money from users of a program by restricting their use of it is destructive because the restrictions reduce the amount and the ways that the program can be used. This reduces the amount of wealth that humanity derives from the program. When there is a deliberate choice to restrict, the harmful consequences are deliberate destruction."

Consider inbuilt obsolescence - a capitalist invention whereby products are designed to fail in order for the development of new products to be justified by demand created by the inbuilt timed failure of the old ones.

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AIDS/malaria today: Parliamentary Capitalist Ethics of Death

First, why parliamentary?

Because, as a supreme body, parliaments have the power to stop this. Yet, they don't. They actively encourage and protect it.

Given today's drugs, AIDS could be contained worldwide in relatively short period of time, but corporations, governments (and the catholic church) stand in the way of dying millions being protected (Alain Badiou, "Century", 2007).

The production of drugs could follow the example of Free Software, be created in a more collaborative way, publishing recipes and allowing it to be freely produced, by anyone, for any purpose.

When ethics and its laws allow death on such scale to occur, although the society has the means to prevent it, we have to ask: what is the difference between tens of millions dead in two world wars and the dead of malaria and AIDS today? The former were killed while later are let to die - by the ethics of death.

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Patents, Copyright, Mass Death

Hacking needs access to what it hacks on, and it needs sharing to grow the knowledge of how it operates. Parliamentary Capitalist law aims to limit access. Such law is opposed to the ethics of hacking.

Sharing of drug recipes for the prevention of deadly epidemics is explicitly and deliberately forbidden by the parliamentary capitalist law.

No humans, let alone hackers, should support such law.

Patents and copyright belong to the same ethics.

One that allows millions of AIDS and malaria deaths, annually.

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Open Source is a neo-liberal, parliamentary capitalist social movement.

Neo-liberalism claims they're ``just doing it" for the sake of a better economy, without any ideological beliefs. As if any economy, or any act, was possible without decisions determined by a set of ideas and beliefs.

This is why Nike's slogan ``just do it" is the best summary of the capitalist ideology ever.

And this is why ``*Open source is a development methodology; free software is a social movement*" (Stallman), misses the crucial point.

Open Source is not just a development methodology, but a social movement too, a social movement of a different kind, with different, parliamentary capitalist, goals.

Another problem lies in the claims that Open Source separates ethics from the technical side of Free Software (Stallman, "Why 'Open Source' misses the point about Free Software"), thus making it acceptable to corporations.

This implies two wrong statements about Open Source:

a) *it has no ethics of its own;*

b) *there are purely technical solutions which can be used without any ethical, political, or ideological commitments.*

The result of these mistakes is widespread comparison of Free Software and Open Source on false, crucially misleading terms:

- one (FS) operating under the weight and demand of its ethics;
- the other (OS) getting away without being examined at all, basking in the purity of its technical attributes and various business-friendly tags

This is how the ethics, the ideology and, indeed, the politics of Open Source slip through unexamined and unchallenged -- like the capitalist ideologies whose key strategy has historically been to accuse any political opponents of ethical commitments, while insisting on their own ``pragmatism" and on the purely technical aspect of ``just getting things done".

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Free Software - Free Drugs?

If we are to agree with Ranciere that democratic process is a process of subjects who ``**reconfigure the distributions of the public and the private**'', who challenge the privatization based on birth, wealth and 'competence', privatization guarded by the police and the State (p.61-2 "Hatred of Democracy", 2006) -- here's how a definition of Free Drugs, another possible process of reconfiguration of the public and the private, could be inherited from Free Software:

- The freedom to use the drug, for any purpose (**freedom 0**).
- The freedom to study how the drug works, and adapt it to your needs (**freedom 1**). Access to the drug recipe (blueprint) and acceptance through regulated clinical trials are preconditions for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies of the drug and its recipe (blueprint) so you can help your neighbour (**freedom 2**).
- The freedom to improve the drug, and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits (**freedom 3**). Access to the drug recipe (blueprint) and acceptance through regulated clinical trials are preconditions for this.

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Finally ... piracy? WHAT PIRACY?

Parliamentary capitalism (in its propaganda materials also known as liberal democracy) is based on the idea that majority should determine, via its representatives, how a state is governed and an economy run. Cisco tells us in their marketing materials that vast majority of the Internet traffic today is p2p traffic. If vast majority of users practice p2p and disregard law, should not then, by the capitalist parliamentary logic of majority rule, law be changed, since that is what majority wants?

Parliaments and representatives act to prevent us from having laws that will act on our behalf, regardless of our position of minority, or majority - the logic by which they operate is different, it is the logic of capital.

The hacks we desperately need are in the realm of thoughts - We need to change our thinking about the law and its relations to politics, while continuing expansion of p2p technologies and techniques.

If more hacking of ideas/thoughts was discussed and encouraged, we would soon render discussions on piracy/laws/illegal/legal obsolete. Instead, we would focus on what political and economic structures do we want, to protect whom, to encourage what? And how do we do it.

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