How to Fix the Future

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From the highly acclaimed author of *The Internet Is Not the Answer*, *How to Fix the Future* is a compelling new book that showcases global solutions for our digital predicament. Following the Industrial Revolution, civilized societies remade nineteenth-century capitalism into a more humane version of itself, and Keen shows how we can do the same in the wake of the Digital Revolution.

As consensus builds around the importance of making sure the Internet remains a force for good, we need a road map of what actions we can take to ensure that the Internet works for us, and not the other way around. Keen identifies five broad strategies to tackle the digital future: competitive innovation, government regulation, consumer choice, social responsibility by business leaders, and education. Traveling the world in order to identify best (and worst) practices in these five areas, Keen moves from Estonia, where tech giants are forming a model for Internet governance, to Germany, whose automobile titans are navigating the future of self-driving cars, to Scandinavia, Korea, and, of course, Silicon Valley. Powerfully argued and deeply engaging, *How to Fix the Future* provides hope that the future may yet become something that we can look forward to.

How to Fix the Future Details

Date   : Published August 1st 2017 by Atlantic Monthly Press
ISBN   : 9780802126641
Author : Andrew Keen
Format : Hardcover 288 pages
Genre   : Science, Technology, Nonfiction, Politics, Business, Social Science, Social Media

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From Reader Review How to Fix the Future for online ebook

Peter Mcloughlin says

It covers issues of identity protection, privacy, digital-driven inequality and has a few ideas on remedies. The book really just came off as another tech-book with a semi-gloomy outlook and TED kind of answers to it. It didn't hold my interest the way such an offering would a few years ago.

David Wineberg says

Tech has created at least as many problems as it has solved, and there are more on the way. Andrew Keen has sacrificed his stomach, meeting with experts in every field in restaurants around the world to discuss the ways out. This rambling tour of the world touches down where thinkers have identified potential solutions. They all have their opinions and some are acting on them. But it is totally scattered and no seismic shifts are evident. Even the universal basic income, which has support all over the world, is still stuck in the pilot project stage, despite endless proof of concept. So the fixes are not very specific.

The framework for How To Fix The Future is Thomas More's Utopia, now 500 years young. Keen keeps referring to aspects of it, showing how More's ideas do or do not apply to our situation today, as well as how little things have changed. He is particularly enamored of Holbein's map of Utopia, which can be viewed as human skull. Keen refers to it numerous times.

Basically, there are no new solutions, just old ones coming back to life. Musicians are striking against the streaming services. Uber, Lyft, UPS and Fedex drivers want recognition as full employees, not just "independent contractors". Schools are focusing on developing inquisitive humans (as opposed to test takers). More millennials are purchasing their music and news. Estonia and Singapore are making a lot of data public, and protected from fraud by date stamps. All over the world, small steps are appearing. But for every Redfin, paying real estate agents a living wage plus benefits, there is a Walmart, keeping employees part time, minimum wage, and relying on Obamacare for their health benefits. For every Freada Kapor Klein, there is a Martin Shkreli.

Keen separates fixes into five buckets:
-government or legal regulation (more accountability, and anti-trust activity)
-competitive innovation (encouraging and democratizing startups against the winner-take-all)
-social responsibility by citizens (relying on tech billionaires to do the right thing)
-consumer choice (including trade unionization)
-education (more physical activity, less screen time)

Keen admits these fixes are not star-crossed. They won't necessarily work or change the world, and they provide their own risks. But for Keen, who has been criticizing the internet for years, this is a turnabout.

David Wineberg

Darnell says

Important issues, but too many broad strokes and platitudes. I learned about a few new things, but only on a fairly shallow level - someone better informed than I am might learn very little.

I am growing increasingly annoyed with books where the author jets around the world to have face-to-face interviews with people. There's rarely enough synthesis of the ideas for it to be anything more than a casual tour.

Wei Li says

A rather generic proposition riddled with repetitions and typos, no doubt because this book was rushed to the printers. I really enjoyed Andrew's previous book, *The Internet is Not the Answer* for its research, insight, and acerbic wit. While this book has plenty of research, little of it is Andrew's and so the wit cannot really come out to play. He's really just compiling the research done by other people, something which he baldly admits to in the Acknowledgements, but it's rather disappointing because I had been so looking forward to Andrew's arguments. After all, he is the name on the cover. (Also, there's been far too many references to Thomas More's Utopia in the journalistic doom-and-gloom as of late. Let's leave More in peace.)

Jill says

Sub-titled 'staying human in the digital age' this book suggests a number of strategies for controlling the excesses of the tech revolution described in his earlier book 'The Internet is Not the Answer'. These include regulation, competitive innovation, social responsibility, worker and consumer choice, and education. At times his book reads like a travelogue as we read accounts of his visits to individuals, organisations and countries who are using these strategies with various degrees of success. In E-stonia citizens can access their on-line data and as a result have a high level of trust in their government. Singapore citizens are educated for a future digital world at government expense and in the US tech start ups with a community focus are promoted in Oakland. Unlike his previous book, Keen has a positive slant on the future of technology, but only if we all (especially governments) act to curb the excesses of the likes of Google, Amazon and Facebook.

Warren Mcpherson says

A survey of attitudes toward technology across the world.

It looks at how technology impacts civilization and how people are responding. The issue of mass surveillance is a challenging one with major implications for democracy. Technology also drives massive inequality. Some people approach technology as a development opportunity, some see it as a weapon. Some focus on the importance of information integrity and some focus on the need for privacy. Given how much technology is designed to be habit forming and addictive it is interesting how people try to protect their children. The reflection on Ralph Nader's book Unsafe and Any Speed is very interesting. The suggestion is the very design of technology needs to be reconsidered and there are similarities to what we saw with the

development of the auto industry. It looks at different efforts to safeguard society and culture including regulation, private development, and education. The book has a nice way of focusing on human issues rather than technical ones.

The book has an interesting collection of observations but it didn't feel the author developed a compelling synthesis or analysis.

Onno Bruins says

Ever since I saw Andrew Keen speak at The Next Web conference in 2008, and read "the cult of the amateur" I have been watching the technological developments with less enthusiasm than before. In his last book he clearly showed all the sectors of society that are being wrecked by internet based technology.

Keen has been a prophet of doom, 'the antichrist of Silicon Valley', for years. Now that most people acknowledge he has been right all along, it is very refreshing that his latest book is an optimistic one. How to fix the Future is a book about the way humanity can regain its agency in this age of technological change.

Not all his examples are equally great, but Keen clearly shows that with Regulation, innovation, social responsibility, worker and consumer choice, and finally a new way of educating our kids, the future may very well be as bright as we once hoped it would be.

It's a well written book that takes us from some important internet history and the ruins of the Kodak empire to the big data projects in the city state of Singapore and the e-government in Estland. Keen's style is easy to read and the book is full of historical anecdotes and themes that keep coming back and really put some persistent thoughts in your mind. If you work in technology, or in a business that is threatened by technology (aren't we all?) or you have young children, read this book.

Jenna says

In order to fix anything, we first must establish how it's broken, indeed, that it even **IS** broken. I don't feel that Andrew Keen did a very good job of that in this book, and thus only 3 stars.

How to Fix the Future is somewhat dismal in its outlook, though without leaving the reader exactly sure as to why. It deals mainly with issues of privacy in the digital age. and what problems we might see in the future if the big tech companies aren't reined in but instead allowed to gather more and more of our data. Actually, it doesn't get much into the latter part, of how exactly that can be used against us, only asserted that it won't be a good thing. I think most of us already are aware of that, and don't need a book to say, "Hey! Technology could be bad if it gets into the wrong hands and used for nefarious purposes!". Technology can always be used for good or bad, from fire-making to cars to the profligate installation of surveillance cameras that Singapore has installed. It can save billions of lives or it can take them away. Most technology is neither good nor bad in itself.

I did find it interesting to learn about Estonia's technological and digital advances, where everyone has a

digital identity that is owned by them and thus can't be tampered with or changed without the person knowing, and where the government is transparent when it comes to surveilling its citizenry as each person can see if their identity has been looked at, even if it's just by a police officer running their car's number plate. India too is working on a mammoth project of giving all 1.3 billion of its citizens a biometric ID through which they have access to everything from medical services to education to bank accounts.

Keen also talks briefly about countries that are now offering each citizen a basic income, in order to prepare for a future where most humans will be redundant, as AI takes over more and more of our jobs. He talks about how some countries, notably Singapore, are intent on educating their young people to succeed in a digital age.

Keen addresses these issues mainly by talking with the experts involved in these projects. It was interesting much of the time, and a bit informative on certain subjects, but again, I don't feel he really established HOW the future is broken, nor even how exactly we should aim to fix it. It was rather all over the place at times, not exactly the most coherent of books. Still, it gets 3 stars because I did learn a few things and because there were some interesting concepts.

Candy says

Keen reminds us of all that's messed up in the digital world - particularly the takeover by Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Google. But he ends on a positive note, believing that the upcoming generation will bring back digital trust and responsibility.

Thijs Pepping says

The goal of this book is to create a map of the future that places humans at its center. I think Keen succeeded in creating a map. He gives interesting and inspiring examples and keeps his vision nuanced. See below for more details (and spoilers).

• The goal of this book is to create a map of the future that places humans at its center.
• Andrew Keen is no longer called the Anti-Christ: his critisism of silicon valley has become main stream. p. xi
• Unless we act now, we increasingly risk beocming powerless appendages to the new products and platforms of Big Tech corporations This book is a call to arms in a culture infrected by a creepig tecnological determinism. In contrast with smart cars, the future will never be able to drive it self. p. xiii
• The firs step in fixing the future is to avoid the trap of either idealizing or demonizing technology. The second step is much trickier. It's remembering who we are. p. 16
• That's the story of mankind. We break things and then we fix them in the same way we always have. p. 16
• Thomas More's law, More's Law, is what it should mean to be responsible human being. p. 22
• We are confronted with Harari's"Dataism"versus "Humanism" p. 23
• Our relationship with smart tech will be the core of what it means to be human nowadays. p. 27
• Five tools to fix the future: regulation, competitive innovation, social responsibility, worker and consumer choice, education. p. 45
• America's nine rechest tech billionaires being collectively wealthier than 1.8 billion of the world's poorest people. p. 57

• We wanted reliability, privacy and fun from the internet, but only got fun. p. 59
• The primary business model of the internet is built on mass surveillance" concludes Bruce Schneier, one of America's leading computer security experts. p. 60
• Personal data has been locked up in solos: centralized big data companies like Gooel, Amazon, Facebook, and LinkedIn. p. 61
• Berners-Lee: "We don't have a technology problem, we have a social problem."p. 61
• "As the Silicon Valley giants prosper," warns the Financial Timers's Rana Foroohar, "everyone else is falling behind." p. 61
• Fakenews and addicition problems.. Marketeers study how to build habit-forming products p. 67
• Time well spent: believes there need to be new ratings, new criteria, new design standards, new certification standars to ensure against addictive products. p. 68
• Keen repeatedly stresses the importance of trust and being transparant.
• "Governments are realizing that they're losing the digital ientities of their citizens to American companies like Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Apple" Viik. p. 82
• Estonia: Our obsession with privacy is misguided, the real issue is dta integrity and transparancy. p. 88
• Putin's troll army in St. Petersburg. p. 95
• India's iD system: Aadhaar is based on biometric and emographic data and is designed to give a digital identity to all 1.2 billion Indians. There's still a lack of privacy in India and a need of 'social contract theory'. p. 98
• Singapore, smart nation, has a high trust rating in Edelmans Trust Barometer. p. 110
• The lesson: for the most part is fixing the future a political and social challange rather than just a technological one. p. 124
• Regulation: Keen sees Vestager and Europe as leading example in regulation. p. 126
• To regain believe in free market capitalism, monopolies need to be regulated. Otherwise we lack innovation. p. 127
• Monopolies in themselves aren't illegal. Instead, what is illegal under antitrust law is for a company to leverage it dominance in one economic area to benefit another part of its business. p. 132
• Steve Case, the founder of AOL believes in a Thrid Wave of innovation, in which government needs to play a much more central role in the digital economy. p. 147
• The Guardian found that Facebook actually hides or removes Holocaust-denial material only in the four countries where it fears it could be sued for the publication of this content: France, Germany, Israel, and Austria. So a private superpower like Facebook seems to respond only to realpolitik. p. 153
• The GDPR puts all the burden on the big data companies in terms of their accountability for the fate of online data. GDPR puts the citizen back in the driving seat. p. 157
• GDPR has the potnetial to trigger enormous innovation around privacy. p. 158
• Parralel with Unsafe at any speed - Ralph Nader: today's Big Data companies are unsafe at any speed. We are now at a time that people demand belts and safety procedures in the cars (big data companies) p. 190.
• Kant reminds us that with agency comes responsibility. p 200.
• What's needed in Silicon Valley are investments into down-to-earth schemes to win the future, and not just in personal endeavors to get a public shoulder path. p. 215
• In Oakland is a ethical tech movement emerging, which contrast vividly with what's going on over the Bay in Silicon Valley. p. 224
• Will there be a cultural renaissance? A strike lead by Youtubers, Uber drivers artists, hollywood stars? A strike against dominating platforms that abuse their power and pay their content creators little money? p. 245
• Some economists believe that we need to move away form the binary option of either the full-time employment model or the independent contractor model. p. 253
• How can we fix a future in which algorithms replace not only vast swtches of the manual labor force, but also skilled owrkers like lawyers, doctors, and engineers? p. 257
• In an ideal society, More is saying, work matters - but leisure matters even more. p. 258

• Education is often used to clean up the mess when we don't know how to solve a big problem. We shove this problem into the classroom and make underpaid and overworked teachers responsible for fixing it. p. 269
• The innovative start-up entrepeneur and the successfully educated student actually share many of the same attributes: independence, a propensity to take risks, and a willingness to rethink conventional assumptions, take moonshots, and fix the future. p. 275
• Our map is a multidimensional one. Our five tools for building the map of the future - regulation, innovation, social responsibility, worker and consuemr choice, and education - are all essential building blocks of the future. p. 289
• Designing a coherent map of the future requires a coherent knowledge of the past. That's why knowledge of the history of humanism is so valuable in an age in which we are once again grappling with the eternal issue of what it means to be human. p. 290
• Digital culture - especially obsessive social media usage - has become so stultifyingly orthodox that it will inevitably be rejected by future genreations of free-thinking kdis. p. 292
•

Jon Stonecash says

This is an important book for those who are concerned with the impacts of technology upon society. Andrew Keen covers a lot of those actual and potential impacts. He also tries to propose some solutions for softening the negative impacts. Ultimately, it comes down to having citizens act for the good of the community.

The problem that I have with the book is that Keen has very decided views upon what is good for the community. No one paying attention to what's going on in the public sphere would perceive that there is anything close to unanimity in deciding what that public good is. There is a loud, noisy, and irrationally exuberant debate about almost every point that one could bring up in that public forum. But Keen seems to ignore all of that confusion. He has an answer and never seems to have any doubt that the outcomes that he finds desirable are the right ones for everyone.

For example, he decries the disruptions brought about by the activities of Google, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft, requiring that the tech titans think through what the impacts might be before taking any actions. But, on the other hand, he applauds the disruptions brought about by Ralph Nader when he challenged the safety of American-made automobiles in the last half of the 20th century, even though those changes were just as profound. Understand, I don't think that Nader was wrong and that the tech billionaires are right. I just think that the authors viewpoint could be a little more nuanced.

Still, it's a good book to read as long as one reads with some skepticism.

Tony says

Thanks to Net Galley for the ARC. I saw Mr. Keen on an IQ2 debate. I use essays by his partner in that debate in one of my courses. I thought this was going to be a big hit. Honestly, it did not land on its feet the way I hoped. Mr. Keen mentions from the beginning that he was not going to be the subject of this book, but he constantly reminds us of other books he has written or that he is currently writing this book. Sir, I am not trying to be a jerk, but we know you wrote this book. We are holding it. You do not need to remind us. I

learned a lot. I have been given a lot to think about and for that, I thank you. I just did not really care for the way the book was presented. Information 3 Stars. Presentation 1 Star.

Apar Gupta says

Inaccuracy undermines credibility and reader confidence

Will you continue reading non-fiction book if you discover inaccuracy? When doubt grows? When it masticates your confidence, slowly - page after page - till it completely overwhelms and you abandon it midway? Though routinely common for readers, such feeling does not become any less unfortunate or tiring. It may one day even deserve it's own German word.

Andrew Keen though may be better known as the author of polemics against silicon valley sets himself up to be the perpetual contrarian. Having shown foresight in his previous books for calls of greater concern over the influence and impact of technology, at points that were awash with techno-optimism, with, *How to Fix the Future* he aims to cut against the prevailing angst. By building a diverse toolkit of proposals from anti-trust regulation to civic education, he aims to literally fix our future. Many of these proposals seem reasonable but their reasoning fails on closer scrutiny. While one does not expect the rigour of a doctorate thesis, lazy policy tourism pervades the book which only adds up to the author's frequent flier miles.

I discovered specifically in the context of India, where it treated complex narratives of privacy and digital identity with shocking irreverence. This occurred repeatedly in the context of the Government's biometric ID program called Aadhaar which is now a compulsory pre-requisite for almost any essential service in India including bank accounts or mobile phones, for the poor their food rations or old age pensions.

How to Fix the Future contrives a false equivalence between Aadhaar and Estonia's digital ID program despite their vast differences. Mischaracterization plagues this portion as one of the architects of the Aadhaar program, Viral Shah while sounding off concern on privacy, fails to mention that Aadhaar is an important factor in retarding the growth of a data protection statute in India. This even went to the extent to which the existence of the fundamental right to privacy was challenged in the Supreme Court of India.

It does not get better from here. There is a false statement made by Sharad Sharma who claims that the pro-Aadhaar lobby group ISprit is Mozilla supported. There also seems to be a lack of research into his background as even a casual internet search would show that Mr. Sharma has publicly apologised for running sockpuppet accounts on twitter to threaten and harass digital rights activists. However, without mention, he is presented as a credible spokesperson for Indian home-grown innovation. This is not to be unfair to the book. But given the theme of Keen's writing has been a critical assessment of the social and individual impact of technology there is a high chance that such errors are taken to be a reasonable assessment by a reader, not soaked in the dull world of internet and technology policy.

While the specific reason for complaint arises from the faulty and acontextual treatment of India, which by itself is tangential to the contents of the book, this undermined my confidence in the authority of the commentary. I believe that the structure, prose and the objective of a non-fiction book services the function of advancing knowledge and truth. Such an obligation comes at a higher threshold for a book-themed to advance moral, ethical and legal accountability to quell a growing social panic over technological change. Sadly it seems Andrew Keen wants to fix the future, without patiently engaging and understanding the problems of the present.

Disclosure: I serve as a lawyer on the Aadhaar case and personally hold a dim view of this project. While I do have a strong bias the primary reason for this review is not the opinions within the book but the mischaracterization of factual instances and the lack of context. This does not remove my bias and I encourage readers to read, research and form their own opinion.

Ramiro Breitbach says

Very interesting ideas on privacy and individual rights on the digital age, but the text is often repetitive and I skipped a number of parts. To me, the most interesting parts were the comparation between the experiences of Estonia, Singapore and China with digital government

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Camille McCarthy says

A promising subject but the delivery was all over the place at times. I liked how he tied in Thomas More's "Utopia" to the idea that we are working on creating our future, and it was interesting to see these issues of inequality and job scarcity from the perspective of tech, something I don't know much about. It was sometimes difficult to pin down exactly what he was talking about, however, because he would skip around to different subjects and anecdotes without quite finishing the point he had started off with.
The book definitely got more interesting for me towards the end, when he started talking about how technology would really affect the future and different takes on it. He had a very liberal stance on everything and his explanations of Marxism were lacking. One important thing was that he views everything as a top-down structure, reminding me of the Utopian socialists, because he is making points about which choices to make based on the idea that whomever is in charge will decide all these things for everyone, rather than thinking that people might be more democratically involved in every aspect of their lives in the future.
The book made me want to read his earlier books about the issues with technology and the internet, and I also have a desire to read more by Jaron Lanier, who writes about similar subjects but in a much more cohesive and understandable way.
I did appreciate all the research that went into this book but wish he had had more background information or a deeper explanation rather than putting in all the different Uber rides he took and describing where he had all of his interviews for the book. It also got me thinking about problems I have never thought much about, like how musicians can be paid fairly for their work in a digital age.