

Go read this New York Times report on SlateStarCodex and Silicon Valley tech leaders



Last year, the pseudonymous writer behind the SlateStarCodex blog abruptly shut it down, claiming a forthcoming story from *The New York Times* was going to reveal his real name and potentially put him in danger. Reporter Cade Metz says he was able to easily find the blogger's real name –Scott Siskind–online. After a farewell post on the blog, Metz says he and his editor were harassed online by its angry fans. Now, Metz's reporting on SlateStarCodex and the philosophical views that made it so popular is finally here. It's a compelling look at the mindset among many in Silicon Valley's tech industry.

It was nominally a blog, written by a Bay Area psychiatrist who called himself Scott Alexander (a near anagram of Slate Star Codex). It was also the epicenter of a community called the Rationalists, a group that aimed to re-examine the world through cold and careful thought

Rationalists, Metz writes, believe AI could eventually destroy the world. Many were very into the musings on SlateStarCodex. The blog was read by top venture capitalists and startup leaders, he writes, who felt it was up to them to build AI in a safe way. Most held a deep-seated distrust of mainstream media (and some even contemplated ways to target a “single vulnerable hostile reporter” for doxxing).

Part of the appeal of Slate Star Codex, faithful readers said, was Mr. Siskind’s willingness to step outside acceptable topics. But he wrote in a wordy, often roundabout way that left many wondering what he really believed.

Metz goes deep into the blend of topics SlateStarCodex touched on and how the blog resonated with contrarians in Silicon Valley and others with more extreme views. Siskind has since reinstated old SlateStarCodex posts, and has launched a Substack newsletter for his continued musings where he revealed his real name.

Anyone who covers or plays close attention to Silicon Valley and its tech culture has been witnessing this undercurrent of tension for some time. Tech company leaders have a very specific view of what constitutes “free speech,” and many prefer not to have their views challenged by journalists. But Metz’s article suggests that there’s actually a guiding philosophy, beyond libertarianism, one which most tech industry leaders would prefer be kept quiet. Go read his fascinating article *Silicon Valley’s Safe Space*.

Update, February 14th at 12:30AM ET: You can read Siskind’s response to the New York Times article *right here*.

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