Dear Mr. Elon Musk, why don't you create a forum system in Twitter?

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The acquisition of Elon Musk has the potential to change Twitter in a big way. I don't know if it will be better or worse, but there seems to be no doubt that it will change anyway. So here's one suggestion. How about creating a forum system on Twitter to improve the online discourse space? Forum is a place where anyone can read, but only members can write, and it can prevent slander and libel and create a place for productive discussion. Here is a brief explanation

(1) Too Much Power of Information Dissemination

Discussions on the Internet are always rough. It is inevitable to be exposed to slander and calumny if one makes a conspicuous statement on the Internet, and recently the younger generation seems to think that the Internet is intrinsically such a thing and that productive discussion is impossible on the Internet.

However, the Internet was not always such a place. If you ask anyone who knew the early days of the Net in the 1980s and 1990s, they will tell you that there was a certain amount of productive discussion going on in places like PC communication boards, mailing lists, and newsgroups, and that it was more productive than it is today. It is only natural that people in the early days of the Internet were optimistic about the future of the Internet, given the productive discussions that were taking place at that time.

However, with the expansion of the Net into society as a whole, such places for productive discussion has disappeared. As we all know, slander and libel are now almost synonymous with the Net.

What is the reason for this? There are probably many reasons, but the reason, as I see it, is that the power of individuals to transmit information on the Internet is *too* strong. In other words, *anyone can start an argument to anybody on the Internet, and the recipient does not have the freedom to reject it*. In the case of Twitter, anyone can start an argument with anyone else by reply or DM, and there is no way to prevent the person from doing so. If you reply to the person's request on the Twitter, all of your followers will know about the person and the argument will be started as a result.

Even if you ignore or block the person, you have to read the message at least once before it, and even if you block the person, he/she can talk to you by changing his/her ID. If you do not read all the reply and DMs, you can cut off the relationship with everyone, but if you do that, you lose all discussion on the Net resulting that the usage of the Net make no sense.　As fa as you want to have communication on the Net you have to hear all the messages either you want or not. In this sense information transmission power of the sender is unusually strong on the Internet.

The extraordinary power of information dissemination can be illustrated by considering what would happen if the same thing happened in real life. Suppose, for example, that a person stands up from the audience at the lecture and expounds his or her own argument based on biased political beliefs. What would happen if the speaker of the lecture answered him and moved on to the next topic, but the person remained unconvinced and continued to talk on and on? What if the organizer of the lecture tries to get him to leave, but an iron-clad enclosure magically appears around him and prevents him from leaving? The audience around him would become fed up with his endless remarks, and the lecture would have to be cancelled.

Or, what would happen if a stranger appeared in the studio and began to speak, as if in virtual reality, during a talk show of the television?　What would happen if such stranger appeared one after another and not to stop speaking or leave the room? The program would become chaotic and uncontrollable, and eventually the TV show itself would have to be suspended.

What would happen if you wrote a controversial book and were inundated with letters and phone calls from readers which you have to read? Normally, the book's author's address and phone number are not published, so the letters and phone calls are blocked by the publisher and never reach the author. But what if they were made public and letter and phone were delivered directly to the author, and letters had to be opened and read before leaving the house, and incoming phone calls had to be answered? Authors would not be able to lead a normal life, and if they want to avoid this, they would have to stop writing controversial books in the first place.

Of course, such ridiculous things do not happen in reality. However, *it is in the world of the Internet, or Twitter, that such ridiculous things occur as a matter of course.* You can see how powerful the ability of individuals to transmit information on the Internet is. On the Internet, you can whisper in the ears of those who do not want to hear.

When information dissemination is strong like this, people who want to have productive discussions begin to withdraw from the discussion. Lectures are cancelled, TV stations stop broadcasting, and authors give up writing books. What remains in the

discussion room are the extremists who tirelessly continue to express their opinions one way. The place for productive debate, the foundation of democracy, is lost.

(2) Speakers' Corner and Academic Nature of the early Net

Speaker's Corner Metaphor

Too strong information dissemination inhibits productive discussion. To make this point more explicit, consider the case of Speakers' Corner.

Speakers' Corner is a place in Hyde Park, London, where anyone can make a speech. A wooden box called a "soapbox" is placed in the corner on which anyone can stand and give a speech. Figure 1 was taken from a BBC article describing the Speaker's corner. The audience goes in front of their favorite speaker and listens to him or her. If the content of the speech is good, many people gather to listen to him/her, and if the content is boring, no one gathers to listen to him/her. In Figure 2(i), many people gather at speaker A's place showing that his support is spreading, while few people gather at speaker B's place and his support is not spreading. The purpose of the Speakers' Corner is that public opinion is formed through free discussion in this way, which is interpreted as so-called the place of "market of ideas."　Although there are not many examples of Speakers' Corner being used in actual British politics, it is still often referred to as a prototype of democracy.
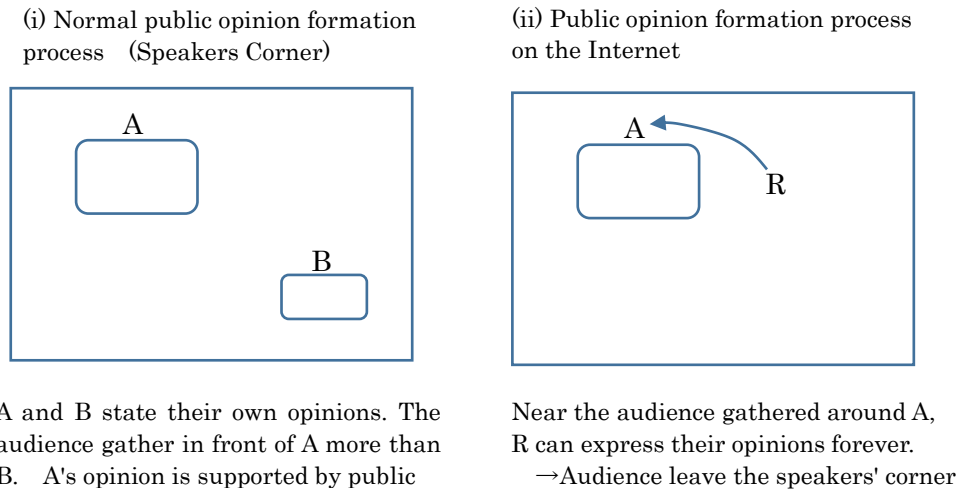
Figure 1: Speakers' Corner

Photo credit: BBC News, 5/15/2015, "Speakers' Corner: the home of free speech."
https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-32703071

Figure 2: Speakers' Corner and Formation of public opinion on the Internet

(i) Normal public opinion formation process　(Speakers Corner)

(ii) Public opinion formation process on the Internet

A and B state their own opinions. The audience gather in front of A more than B.　A's opinion is supported by public

Near the audience gathered around A, R can express their opinions forever.
　→Audience leave the speakers' corner

However, there is a hidden prerequisite for Speakers' Corner to work. That is that the speakers should address themselves apart and not interrupt each other. Let us assume that speaker R puts a wooden box next to speaker A while A is making a speech as shown in Figure 2(ii) and R continues to talk without substance for a long time. Then audience will start to complain and R will be removed from that place by them, saying that it is not your opinion that they want to listen. In the real world, this is how it is settled and the speech place is protected by limiting R's ability to disseminate information.

So what happens if it fails to do so, that is, if it fails to stop R from speaking near speaker A, and if more people like R appear one after another?　Audience there would be fed up with such chaotic situation and speaker A would get down the soap box and leave. The place for discussion would be lost. This is exactly what is happening on the Internet. The power of individuals to disseminate information is too strong to maintain a space for discourse.

Let's note that this is not a free speech issue. Freedom of speech is being able to say what you want to say, and here, that means that anyone can put a soap box somewhere in Speaker's Corner and start making speeches. That freedom is protected and must be protected. However, freedom of speech is not the freedom to force people who do not want to listen to you to listen to your opinion. It is people's free choice to listen or not to listen, and no one has the right to force people to listen to him or her.　1000 audience

gathered near speaker A want to listen to A's opinion, not R's.   If R interrupts to A's place and continues to speak, 1000 people is forced to listen to what they don't want to hear . This is not within the scope of free speech. It is simply a nuisance.

The reason why discussions on the Internet are so violent is that every individual has this "unusually strong power of information transmission," which is not included in the freedom of speech. The ability to whisper (or yell) one's words into everyone's ear as much as one wants is an extremely strong power of information dissemination.

Why is the ability to disseminate information set to be the strongest?

In retrospect, why is such an exceptionally strong information dissemination force い is set up on the Internet in the first place? Information dissemination power in electronic networks is not always such strong. For example, in personal computer communications which existed before the spread of today's Internet, there were moderators and local rules, and loose restrictions were placed on the ability of individuals to transmit information. Even on the Internet, it is possible to moderate the power of information dissemination (as in the case of forums, which I will discuss later). Why, then, is the power of information dissemination set so strong on the Internet today?

This is because the original Internet, the mother of today's Net, was an academic network. The Internet originally started in the 1970s by connecting computers between universities in the U.S. The original participants were graduate students and scholars in the sciences, thus it was an academic network. If it is an academic network, an individual's ability to disseminate information should be set to be the strongest, because academic freedom should allow a graduate student to say, "I think that's wrong," to an eminent professor at Harvard University at a research meeting. Thus, in the early days of the Internet, the power of individual information transmission was set at its highest level, and no one objected to this.

When individuals have the strongest ability to disseminate information, the discussion could be degenerated because of slanders and libel. At that time, however, this problem did not become so serious because the participants were only academic researchers. Researchers are trained in scientific discussion procedure, that is, hypothesis, deduction, and verification, thus they maintain logical consistency and productivity in the course of the discussion. In addition, they are not anonymous because their names are identifiable by the laboratory they belong to and their field of expertise, and they are scolded by their peers or bosses if they do anything too annoying. Thus, even though all individuals were given the strongest power to

disseminate information, abuse was moderately restrained and the productivity of discussions was somehow maintained.

However, the situation changed drastically when the Internet expanded to the entire society and a large number of people began to participate. There would be no need to follow the procedures of scientific discussion, nor no need to worry about annoying others because of anonymity, and no bosses or colleagues to scold. The majority of new participants will be calm, moderate, normal people. However, it is inevitable that a few peculiar people will appear.

For example, there will be those who just repeat their own beliefs without evidence, those who keep stating their particular political beliefs unilaterally, those who just want to debunk, conspiracy theorists, those who just want to show off, those who want to relieve their own stress anyhow, and even those who have a dark heart and want to see how people is suffered mentally. The world is deep and full of infinite heterogeneity and diversity, and people will emerge who were not expected in the age of academic networks. They are not prepared to engage in productive discussion in the first place. Such people may be few in number, but they still have the strongest information dissemination power as individuals, and they can continue to put their point of view in the other person's ear as much as they want forcefully.

What will happen as a result? Person who remain on the Internet will be people who tirelessly continue to argue their opinion one-sidedly, without listening to anything of the other person. Ordinary people who want to understand their opponents' view and engage in productive discussion will disappear from the Net. This is the reason why most discussions on the Internet are reduced to nothing but slander and libel. Summary is: t*he real cause of failure of the Net as a place of discussion is that it is too academic network which can't be applied to the entire world with vastly heterogeneity*

Today, only exceptional people with strong minds and high intellects continue to engage in productive discussions on the Internet. They are great people who deserve our respect, but they are the exception. For the majority of people, the Internet is not a place for discussion.

(3) Proposal of Forum system

Idea of Forum

So what should be done? Based on the above argument, the solution is to normalize the exceptionally strong information dissemination capability. One way to do this is the

forum system. A forum is like a room within Twitter where members can gather and discuss. It can be realized as an additional function within Twitter. Here is a list of the main points of the forum system.

1. (*Membership*) A presiding person establishes the forum. Only friends invited by the presiding person, or friends of the invited friends, can become members of the forum.

2 . (Asymmetry of reception and transmission) *Only members can write in the forum. However, anyone including outside forum can read it.*

3. The inviting person can remove the person he/she invited from the forum. If there are no posts for a certain period of time, the forum is automatically deleted.

The presiding person creates a forum and decides the theme discussed on the forum. The theme can be anything from social issues such as environmental problems and diversities to hobbies such as mountain climbing, pop music, and cooking. Then, as shown in Figure 3(i), the presiding person invites members. Member A, who is directly invited by the presiding person, can invite other members B and C.

Only members can post in this forum. By limiting posts to members, the ability of unknown third person to post in the forum is restricted, thereby limiting the power of information dissemination. By limiting the forum to members only, the forum is able to maintain the quality of discussions.

Figure 3: What is the Forum?

(i) membership   (ii) asymmetry in receipt and transmission
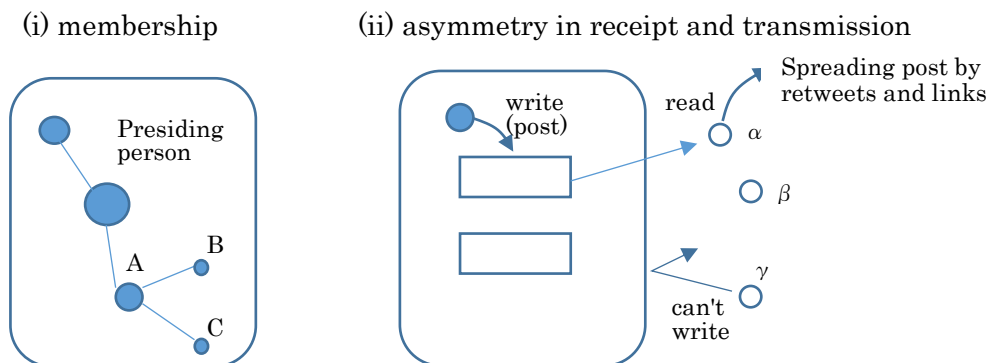
Source: Tatsuo Tanaka, Prescription for Net Segregation, Keiso Shobo, p.105 (in Japanese)

On the other hand, anyone outside the forum can read posts of the forum. If someone follow the forum, he/she will automatically receive all the discussions in the forum, and he/she is also free to retweet posts in the forum or post links to the forum on the web or other social networking sites to spread the discussion in the forum. In Figure 3(ii), α is following the forum and retweeting posts there to spread the discussion externally.

Let me explain a little more about the purpose of the forum. Examples of membership-based services to prevent slander include so-called online salons, e-mail magazines, LINE(short message service), and Facebook, all of which have succeeded in curbing slander by limiting the number of people who can write on them. However, since the number of people who can *read* them is also limited in these services, they have little power to shape public opinion. Facebook has a large number of users, and there is a fair amount of productive discussion going on inside the service, but it is surprising that it has little impact on online public opinion. The media which make public opinion on the Internet is Twitter and message boards, indicating that, in order to create public opinion, the message on the media have to be read by anyone. This forum maintains its ability to form public opinion while suppressing slander and libel by limiting posts to members only, but allowing anyone to read the posts.

The topics to be covered in the forum can be a wide range of topics, not just political discussions. For example, forums for various hobbies, NGO activities, academic discussions, regional forums, and so on. Hobby forums could include travel, driving, handicrafts, haiku, classical music, or any other genre. Forums started by celebrities and influencers will also appear and become popular.

Some of you may wonder if there is a demand for such a forum. I would like to tell you that there is already a precedent for such a forum. In the days of personal computer communications before the Internet, hundreds of forums (and similar ones) were set up to continue active discussions and communications. Those who know how lively it was back then will understand that there is a latent demand among people for such forums for discussion and communication.

Forum as a countermeasure against hate speech

Note that this forum has other effects besides making the discussion productive.[1] Of several side effects, it is important to point out that forums can also serve as a countermeasure against hate speech. Mr. Elon Musk calls himself a free-speech

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[1] For more information on the forum, please refer to my book, "Prescription for Net Fragmentation," Keiso Shobo 2022, chapter 4.

advocate who places the highest priority on free speech. When free speech have paramount value, hate speech becomes a problem as many journalist and scholars claimed after the acquisition.[2] While the forum doesn't solve the hate speech problem completely, it is expected to suppress the effect of the hate effect. As a final remark let me state why that is.

    First of all, let us confirm that the number of people who engage in hate speech is very small. Hate speech in Japan is mainly directed at Korean residents in Japan or foreigners in general, but the number of anti-foreigners is not large, on the order of 2~3% at most.[3] The reason why hate speech is so noticeable despite this small number is because, as I have already mentioned many times, the ability of individuals to disseminate information is abnormally strong.

    If hate speakers send hate speech on Twitter in a reply or DM to the speaker, he/she seen see the hate message at least once. If he/she has 100,000 followers, the hate reply will be seen by many followers. If he/she refute the hate speech, all 100,000 followers will read the hate. No one wants to read hate speech, but many people are forced to see it. This is the consequence of too much power of information dissemination.

    This uncomfortable consequence will be curtailed when the forum is fully spread out. First, forum members will not see hate speech posted by the third persons because members only see the posts of forum members as long as they are discussing within the forum. Other persons who follow the forum will also not see hate speech because there is no hate in the posts in the forum. Thus, people who write hate speech are less likely to find people who will read it. When many forums are started up and people follow around the forum, there is no room for hate speech. In other words, the ability of hate speech writers to disseminate information will decline.

    Hate speakers have no audience to begin with. A look at the number of followers of hate writers shows that most of them are in the double digits and have almost no audience of their own. Hate speakers can only make their opinions heard by interrupting the speech space of others. Therefore, if we make it impossible for them to interrupt, that is, if we normalize their ability to disseminate information, they will lose their audience. If they lose their audience, they lose their motivation and stall.

    One might be worried that such a measure is too weak, but there is a precedent for

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[2] For example see Sheera Frenkel and Kate Conger, 2022, Dec,2,"Hate Speech's Rise on Twitter Is Unprecedented, Researchers Find," New York Times
https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/02/technology/twitter-hate-speech.html
[3] For example, the following survey by Daisuke Tsuji and Ryosuke Saito puts the percentage at 2.1%: "Does the Net Spread Xenophobia in Japanese Society - An Empirical Analysis Based on a Quantitative Survey. https://www.taf.or.jp/files/items/1078/File/辻大介.pdf

this countermeasure to succeed. It is the countermeasure against hate speech in the real world in Japan. In the past, hate demonstrations in Korean neighborhoods and near Korean schools became serious problem in Japan in early 2000, but this has subsided considerably; NHK news reported that in 2013 there were over 100 hate demonstrations per year, but by 2020 the number had dropped to 9.[4]

This is not because hate speech has been legally banned. Hate demonstrations are still possible even though the Hate Elimination Act has been passed, because even if certain expressions and words are banned, hate is still possible if the expressions are changed. The reason for the calming down of the hate demonstration can be attributed to a change in the policy of permitting demonstrations and curbing the ability to disseminate information. In the past, demonstrations were held in Korean neighborhoods and near Korean schools, where hate speakers could forcefully talk in the ears of Korean Japanese who did not want to listen. Now, however, demonstrations are permitted only on distant streets or in parks. Then there is no one to listen. The only people around are counter-demonstrators against hate, and the demonstrations are mostly just shouting into the void. The futility of this was obvious, and the hate demonstrations eventually stopped gathering people and quieted down.

Note that in this case, hate speech was curtailed while protecting freedom of speech.[5] They can still hold hate demonstrations if they want.   But no one gathers and no one listen to. We can do the same thing on the Internet. They can make hate speech on the Internet, but if no one listen to it, it is as if it did not exist.

This is a solution by means of a free "market of ideas."   The free market of ideas is a concept that supports freedom of speech. The idea is that if all ideas and speech are allowed to be expressed freely, good ideas will survive through competition and selection. This does not seem to be the case on the Internet today, but that is because the power of individuals to transmit information is unusually strong and the market is not functioning. Using the metaphor of Speaker's Corner, if persons (hate speakers) can put the soap box next the speaker surrounded by 1000 audience and start hate speech as many times as they want, hate speech will not be eliminated. Those who want to say hate can go to Speakers' Corner every day and walk up to a gathering, where they can

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[4] NHK News Good Morning Japan, 2021/6/25 "Five years since the Hate Speech Elimination Law, remaining issues and countermeasures".

[5] For more on the argument that Japan has succeeded in curbing hate speech while protecting freedom of speech, see Shinji Higaki and Yuji Nasu (editors), 2021, Hate Speech in Japan: The Possibility of a Non-Regulatory Approach, Cambridge University Press. This book was written to introduce Japan's measures against hate speech to the rest of the world, and as the title suggests, its main message is that Japan has succeeded in curbing hate speech without using strong regulations like those in Europe and the United States..

shout hate and gain an audience. In economics terms, this equates to a huge external effect, and when there is an external effect, the market fails.

The only way to prevent market failure is to curtail this exceptionally high information dissemination. If someone wants to say hate, he should set up his own soap box in the Speaker's Corner and gather his own audience so that he has to speak. Since no one wants to hear hate, the day will end with no one coming to him. If he repeats this, he will eventually become tired of it and stop coming to the park. The free marketplace of ideas has weeded out hate speech. The reason that the free market of ideas is not working today is that the power of individuals to disseminate information is abnormally strong, and if this power is curbed, the free market of ideas will revive the weeding out of hate speech.

Twitter seems to have a policy of placing the greatest value on free speech. If so, it is necessary to create an environment in which the free market of ideas can work. Forums can help with that. So, Mr. Elon Musk, how about creating a forum system?