Hippies With Money

I was talking to a friend the other day about the interestingness of the times in which we live.

The fact that massively influential multimillionaires (sometimes billionaires) in the soon to be dominant crypto space spend time on Twitter calling each other names, using coarse language, and angrily arguing on live YouTube broadcasts is a radical deviation from past generations of leaders in business, tech, and finance.

In the 80's and 90's, you'd see these people wearing suits and giving boring, PR team drafted talking points. In the 00's, business leaders loosened up a bit. Steve Jobs did drugs. Mark Zuckerberg wears a hoodie. But even the trendy, edgy startup scene stays mostly boring and politically correct when it comes to public communication.

Not anymore.

Crypto might be the most extreme example, but there are others. Joe Rogan is one of the biggest podcasts in the world. He's incredibly unpolished and not afraid to get mildly drunk or high with guests. Nassim Taleb, a best-selling intellectual, will Tweet insults at people who don't lift weights. Then there's the U.S. President.

It hit me that this era has a lot in common with the 60's. But instead of busking for a few bucks, today's iconoclasts are wealthy. Imagine the radical activists, artists, and thought leaders of the 60's if they came up with iPhones in their pocket, high level tech knowledge, and venture capital. It feels kinda like that.

I gotta say, whatever the flaws (and there are flaws; spend a little time on Reddit and you'll see it), this era is vastly more interesting to me than eras in which influential people sanitize everything before entering the public sphere. Yeah, it can descend into a distracting pit of ad hominem, but in many ways, I think it clears distraction and brings attention back to ideas instead of personalities. When dirty laundry is a given, there's not a lot of juice in revealing someone's nasty side or calling names. When invective, misspellings, and absurdity aren't shocking, nit-picking language and presentation isn't valuable. This makes dealing with underlying ideas easier in some ways.

But for the old guard, accustomed to decorum, it's a bracing transition. Oh well. In the spirit of the age, I guess we just have to let them whine like little babies.