

A Conversation with PETER THIEL

Peter Thiel is an entrepreneur, investor and the author (with Blake Masters) of the forthcoming [*Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*](#). He started PayPal in 1998, led it as CEO, and took it public in 2002, defining a new era of fast and secure online commerce. In 2004 he made the first outside investment in Facebook, where he serves as a director. The same year he launched [Palantir Technologies](#), a software company that harnesses computers to empower human analysts in fields such as national security and global finance. Thiel has provided early funding for LinkedIn, Yelp, and dozens of successful technology startups.

In their conversation, Thiel and Kristol discuss PayPal, Facebook, and Palantir, and the new model for a “founding vision” in business. The two also reflect on the great economic and technological challenges facing the country. According to Thiel, the U.S. economy is perhaps less dynamic and innovative than it once was. He also explains why he believes American higher education is in great trouble—and may be heading towards a fiscal crisis.

On education, Thiel says, “The real costs of higher education since 1980 have gone up about 400%; and it's not clear the quality has gone up at all.”

On business, Thiel challenges many conventional assumptions about business and start-ups, including the very term “entrepreneur.” The right mindset for businesses, he says, *“is that there are some very important problems that you're trying to solve. And it turns out that a new business is a form in which you solve that problem.”*

Chapter Links to PETER THIEL Conversation

[The Story of PayPal](#)

[Against Conventional Wisdom](#)

[Facebook](#)

[An Innovation Slowdown?](#)

[The Need for Growth](#)

[The Higher Education Bubble](#)