I believe software patents have deleterious effects on both an individual and societal level.

As a software developer, my job is to encode symbols within a computer. Simply to represent an idea in the precise medium. Then I manipulate those symbols in whichever way seems logical.

To patent that process, to claim certain methods of writing and thinking are off limits, does not contribute to a free society, no matter how much money it allows an entity to make. Because a computer is only a tool for the mind, as a hammer is an extension of the arm. Patenting patterns of codified thought makes no more sense than patenting swings of the hammer.