

# NEW GADGETS DO NOT NEW HUMANITY MAKE

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“ Mice, click-wheels, keyboards, computers, Internet(s), [ . . . ] none of them change in any fundamental way what the Framers were working with: human nature. ”

Let it be understood that what the Framers of our Constitution attempted to do was not create a document that would be stuck in a particular time, begging to be replaced as the years passed it by and technology and mores changed. They attempted to create chains, manacles, bindings, and a gag on the great beast they had been taught much of their lives to fear (often by experience): the state. By some estimates, governments killed over 200,000,000 of their own people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not even counting wars. The Framers' fears of government power (which are our fears of government power) appear to have been well founded. The Constitution they created existed in accord with the philosophy they expounded. Philosophy, unlike fads and technology, reflects things of eternal nature. The Framers believed that human nature was one of the eternal things about which they had a fitting philosophy.

What was the nature of man to those great men of 1787? Was he an animal, incapable of being trusted, incapable of civilization, constantly in need of supervision? Was he an automaton, ready for instructions from some authority, ready to be a means to a master's end, capable of being perfected with the best of directions? No, man was none of these things, at least not wholly. He was an animal to be sure, as could be seen by his basest acts of barbarism on the individual scale of a criminal, and on the collective scale of despotism and war. He could undoubtedly act the part of a will-less, soulless, robot, and exist in slavish thrall to some pretended authority on behalf of a prince. But certainly that was not the totality of man. Man was something far grander in the Founders' eyes. Man was an individual created by the Author of the Universe, each one a reflection of the Divine. As the Creator was master of the Heavens, each man was a master of the Earth. As all were equally creations and reflections of the Supreme Being, they were equal to one another, and no one had more natural authority than the next. This state of existence, where subordination and subjection were absent, this state of nature, as it was referred to, was a state of perfectly realized liberty.

To clarify some concepts further, let us hear from some early Americans. In 1775 Alexander Hamilton wrote, "*The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for, among old parchments, or musty records. They are written, as with a sun beam in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself; and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.*" Thomas Jefferson wrote the line "...all men are created equal..." in the Declaration of Independence, but here's what he wrote in an earlier draft: "...all men are created equal and independent; that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...". Continuing with Jefferson, we learn: "*Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add 'within the limits of the law,'*

*because law is often but the tyrant's will, and always so when it violates the right of an individual."*

Putting these ideas together, we learn that all people are equal, that from their equality inalienable rights are derived, and that all unobstructed actions are rightful so long as they don't transgress the rights of any other individuals. Any individual's inalienable rights (e.g., freedoms of contract, property, association, thought, religious belief, etc.) could not rightfully be infringed upon by any other individual.

Mice, click-wheels, keyboards, computers, Internet(s), higher resolutions, light-speed communications, microprocessors, nanomachines, optical fiber roll-outs, satellites, space travel, wi-fi, LCDs, LEDs, OLEDs, HDTVs, etc., none of them change in any fundamental way what the Framers were working with: human nature. So let us now turn to the present day, a time of the future relative to the Framers. Man's nature has not changed. Man can still act in a bestial manner as an individual villain, and his bestial acts can and have been magnified exponentially with power over other men. No technology has changed this fact. No new devices have made this less true today than it was in the Framers' time. On the contrary, the creation of atomic weapons in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the potential for genetic weapons in the 21<sup>st</sup>, has made this point only more profound.

Reality forced them to work with principles, just as it forces us to do today. Our modern gadgets and trinkets cannot obviate self-evident truths. Man can still act as a subject, to be instructed as if he had no will; to just follow orders, with all of the danger that that phrase implies. Jefferson again: "Nothing is unchangeable but the inherent and inalienable rights of man."

The answer to the question of what we might change if we were redesigning American democracy for the modern day turns out to have little to do with the ephemeral, unimportant, and frankly uninteresting aspects of the manner in—and frequency with which—the mob

votes, or the means by which we view and rate our elected representatives. These changes merely placate people by giving them the illusion of more choice. Technology is not the engine that drives freedom—it's a tool that can encourage or destroy it, and it does both. Freedom is the engine that allows individuals to better their lives through such things as technology.

What we would change has far more to do with the eternal, crucial, and highly compelling issue of rights: unalienable, individual, civil, constitutional, and human. In drafting the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, realizing that, as Jefferson said, "The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground," the Founders attempted to place strict bounds on the delegated powers of government. In that sense, these documents were a failure. We want to see even less opportunity for the majority to abuse the minority (the individual being the smallest minority of all). We would grant even less power to our servant, government. We demand even more restraints on that beast known as the state. With those changes, almost none of the legislation that does pass would pass. These United States, and the rest of the world, would be far better off for it. Collectivism won the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our hope is that individual liberty can win in the 21<sup>st</sup>.

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