

[JTC: This piece argues – as I have long believed – that, barring nuclear annihilation, human ingenuity will always manage to stay ahead of bureaucratic manipulation. I’ve termed the current nexus the “technology of privacy.” Kurzweil (whom I’ve not read, but probably should someday) calls it the “singularity.” *Whatever!*]

## **As Technology Climbs the Curve**

### **Governments Will Become Road Kill**

By *George F. Smith*

Barbarous Relic August 15, 2022 [LewRockwell.com]

Bad news: Government is getting bigger and more oppressive.

Good news: As it gets bigger it also gets weaker.

Better news: Technology is making us, as individuals, stronger.

How do we know government is getting weaker? Because it is sustained by central bank counterfeiting and debt, and the lies of state sycophants. How long can massive fraud last? The whole apparatus of government — a bandit gang writ large, in Rothbard’s famous depiction — is an affront to civilization and human dignity. Yet it’s the absence of government — anarchy — that we’re supposed to avoid at all costs. We’re avoiding it, all right, and we’re paying dearly for it.

Meanwhile, a quiet revolution is ongoing that almost no one seems to understand, yet is talked about incessantly: The rising power of technology. Without asking our permission, technology is taking us down the path to anarchy. How is this so?

Technology today is climbing up the curve of the exponential but if you look at any one point it appears linear. In our day-to-day lives we are looking at points, seeing incremental improvements but nothing that would suggest radical innovation. Yet it happens. We see magic but consider it mundane. We have smartphones that can transmit live video from around the world, and say “So what?” We read about a young programmer who builds a self-driving car in his garage, and say “Huh.” We need to step back and look at the trend to see where all this is going.

Ray Kurzweil explains (*The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, 2005):

Early stages of technology – the wheel, fire, stone tools – took tens of thousands of years to evolve and be widely deployed. A thousand years ago, a paradigm shift such as the printing press, took on the order of a century to be widely deployed. Today, major paradigm shifts, such as cell

phones and the world wide web were widely adopted in only a few years time.

He adds:

A primary reason that evolution — of life-forms or of technology — speeds up is that it builds on its own increasing order, with ever more sophisticated means of recording and manipulating information. . . [p. 39]

For example,

The first computers were designed on paper and assembled by hand. Today, they are designed on computer workstations, with the computers themselves working out many details of the next generation's design, and are then produced in fully automated factories with only limited human intervention. [p. 40]

As the technology continues to build on itself, it will eventually take “full control of its own progression.” It will no longer need human intervention.

But fear not, he says. In the future we will not see super-smart robots controlling or wiping out humans; rather, what will evolve is a merger of humans with their technology. Humans, as his book's subtitle tells us, will “transcend biology.” Kurzweil:

It would mean that human performance is not necessarily dependent on the biological substrate that comprises our brains today. The biological information processing in our brains is, after all, much slower than information processing in conventional electronics today. Information in our brains is transmitted using chemical signals that travel a few hundred feet per second, which is a million times slower than electronics. [p. 122]

We will reach a point when “the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed.”

Or as Kevin Kelly, founder of Wired Magazine, [puts it](#): “all the change in the last million years will be superseded by the change in the next five minutes.”

Before we can say “So what?” again we will have reached what Kurzweil and others call the Technological Singularity.

### **Inexorable and universal**

Kurzweil refers to this progression as the **law of accelerating returns**. It is “inexorable,” and his books are packed with charts showing why this is so. According to his prediction the law will reach the Singularity by 2045. It sounds incredible but so have most of his other predictions that have played out to be true.

He also considers the progression to be in terms of price-performance, meaning that “all of these technologies quickly become so inexpensive as to become almost free.” [p. 430] It's not the case that only the rich will have access to them.

But what about government? Won't it feel threatened and impede innovation? As Kurzweil points out, "the nature of wealth and power in the age of intelligent machines will encourage the open society. Oppressive societies will find it hard to provide the economic incentives needed to pay for computers and their development." [p. 128]

He brings up a crucial point: The law of accelerating returns has always operated under government-controlled conditions. Government wars, depressions, genocides, currency debauchery, regulations, etc. have not slowed it down, or at least not for long. To repeat, the law is inexorable.

Innovation has a way of working around the limits imposed by institutions. The advent of decentralized technology empowers the individual to bypass all kinds of restrictions, and does represent a primary means for social change to accelerate. [p. 472]

Technology in the hands of the government can be a nightmare. But as it disperses into the lives of individuals it becomes empowering. Over time it quietly undermines government power, [as Gary North tells us](#):

Technological innovation is not going to be stopped by any local government, state government, national government, or the World Trade Organization. Technological innovation is about as close to an autonomous process as anything in history.

Technological innovation is decentralized on a scale never before seen. Because of the Internet, because of 3-D printing, and because of innovation of all kinds, technological innovation is a tsunami that is headed for all government welfare programs, all government central planning, all government regulatory agencies, every labor union, and every good old boy network. Technological innovation is simply sweeping everything before it.

This is going to change the whole shape of civilization, and it isn't going to take three generations. It is fairly far advanced now, and another 40 years of this is going to change the political landscape entirely.

I say 20 years, but either way government is doomed, liberty is enhanced.

That, I submit, is a comforting thought.

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The preceding is taken from Chapter 5 of Smith's book, [The Fall of Tyranny, the Rise of Liberty](#).

[The Best of George F. Smith](#)

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