



Jeffersonian Economic Architecture in the Digital Age

Robert S. Ellinger

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Robert S. Ellinger's *Jeffersonian Economic Architecture in the Digital Age* is an ambitious explanation of the contemporary digital economy, written within a Jeffersonian framework.

Ellinger asserts that the digital age is a great disruptor; the economy's bifurcation between decentralization possibilities and hypercentralization by technology monopolies is only possible because of digital drivers that can be harnessed and exploited. On top of this, the book shows the influence of new scaling, ever-changing digital architectures and frameworks, and new ways of engineering in regards to the post-cash, post-specie economy. Because of these innovations, Ellinger says, this is a revolutionary epoch, wherein economic speculation interacts with major changes in culture that are driven by digital tech.

Ellinger argues that all new innovations can operate within a Jeffersonian framework, showing that Jefferson envisioned the United States as a republic of independent farmers, and so operated under a notion of individualist radicalism that preferenced free markets, and with deep suspicion about urban economics and industry. Such Jeffersonian ideologies seem to be fundamentally in opposition to digital tech gurus, but Ellinger asserts that both can, and should, be united by a belief in dispersed opportunities and equality of chances.

To connect the two disparate value systems together, Ellinger invokes a variety of disciplines, including economic history, information technology, and spatial modeling. This work is dizzying, packing an excess of information into a compressed space. The book includes chapters about the OODA loop (a decision-making process familiar to the military), the gold standard, risk, and the prevalence of exploitation in the market. In total, its coverage is a lot to take in. Absorption is further complicated by the book's subsections, which squeeze their topics into the space of a page or so; some of their more obscured concepts, as with those about economic activity and the internet, remain in the dark. Still, Ellinger's work is supported by ample footnotes.

The book preferences academic jargon over lay terms, and its language is grandiose, further limiting its accessibility. Still, those who come into the book with prior knowledge of the concepts it discusses may find its thesis, which is supported with a considerable amount of examples and explanations, to be brilliant.

Asserting that early American sociopolitical ideals can still flourish within the US's contemporary economy and culture, which are radically different from those which Jefferson knew, *Jeffersonian Economic Architecture in the Digital Age* is a knowledgeable and complex text that proposes counterintuitive connections between the ideals of two differing eras.

BENJAMIN WELTON (June 3, 2021)

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