

The Lenses of Life

By Thomas R. Cuba

2022 1123

I recently wrote a piece about how a friend of mine saw the world through the lens of Now. With the exception of his personal life and pursuits, he had a tendency to accept things as they were and not as they could be or should be. When he assessed a situation or an event, it was through that lens. He felt that nothing he did was going to change anything on the grander scale of society or government, and so he went along with things, no matter how much he disagreed with them.

His views were strongly influenced by the same factors that led him to choose a career as an accountant. Everything he saw was, at some level, connected to the finances or economy. The most recent discussion came about regarding the question of whether or not the Federal Government should be allowed to own patent rights for inventions. The lens of Finance supported his opinion that if the Government financed the research leading to the invention, it should reap the financial rewards.

Another friend of mine fired back arguing that the government had no right to give the grant to develop the invention in the first place. "Nothing," he argued, "Nothing in the Constitution says that Congress can support research. His lens was that of the "Constructionist." And, truthfully, from that perspective, he was correct. Of course, that would depend on whether being a Constructionist was the appropriate stance to take regarding the Constitution.

My own lens is that of the Philosophy upon which the Constitution was written. Any action that would bestow more power on the Federal Government should come under very, very close scrutiny. The philosophy that is built into the Constitution is that power should be limited and widely distributed lest too much power fall into the hands of too few people. Over the years, the drift towards consolidated and centralized power has been slow but steady. From that perspective, should the Federal Government own a patent on a device that was in high demand by the public, that government could wield excessive power over who gets it and how much it costs.

I present these thoughts for a reason that has little to do with the Constitution. Our conversation is being used only as a vehicle to take me to the closing admonition. To wit, everyone has their own lens. There is the lens of the family; the lens of religion; the lens of personal finances, the lens of selfishness, and so on. Some lenses can even act as a filter, only letting a portion of the situation through. But there is one thing all lenses have in common; they distort the light that arrives on one side of the lens so that things appear differently on the other. That is why each of us see things a little differently from time to time, and often none of how we see things is how things actually are. And so, in having discussions or participating in friendly debate, it is advisable to be aware of the other person's lens. You will better understand him and better able to put your views in terms he would understand, if not accept.