

The Future and Its Enemies: Debate

Virginia Postrel & David From

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Synopsis

Virginia Postrel spoke about her book, *The Future and Its Enemies: The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise, and Progress*, published by The Free Press. She talked about the conflict between the people who want to shape the future today and her view that, due to technological progress and cultural changes, it can't be done. She debated this thesis with David From and they took questions from the audience.

Introduction

David Boaz: This book. The future and its enemies. The growing conflict over creativity. Enterprise and progress. Is author Virginia Postrel thoughts on the future. And she describes the conflict between people who want to shape the future today. And her view is that due to technological progress and cultural changes. It can't be done. She debates that basis next with David Frum. A contributing editor at The Weekly Standard. They spoke at the Cato Institute in Washington D.C.. Good afternoon and welcome to the Cato Institute.

I'm David Boaz executive vice president of the Institute. And I want to welcome. Some old friends and some new faces here for our discussion. We will be discussing our topic for a little while today and then we will go up stairs and serve some wine and cheese and invite you for further discussion. Up there. As you know we're going to talk about a big subject today. The future. Thinks the future is unpredictable and that that's what makes it interesting. But some people don't like unpredictability and they worry about economic disruption about moral decline about environmental destruction. And sometimes in doing all this worrying they don't seem to notice that we are living longer and richer and healthier than ever before in history. From Pat Buchanan to Ralph Nader from the nation to The Weekly Standard. There are. Surprising areas of agreement about what's wrong with modern life. Virginia argues in her book that the real division in cultural politics these days is not right versus left. But. Dynamism versus status. And I'll let her explain what that means. As you all know Virginia Postrel is the editor of Reason magazine. Prior to assuming that position in one thousand nine hundred nine she was a reporter for The Wall Street Journal and then served for a while as assistant editor of Reason. Under her editorship reason has three times been a finalist for a National Magazine Award. She herself has received a make an award and. Been honored also by the general Globe Awards for business and financial journalism and Jude wineskins media guide. And somehow in addition to editing reason Virginia finds time to write regular columns. For Forbes. Forbes asap. And intellectual capital dot com. And I have to say her columns. And also those that she publishes by Wally Olson are the best libertarian analysis of culture and politics. That you can find these days. Today of course she is here to discuss her new book. Just published by the Free Press. The future and its enemies the growing conflict over creativity. Enterprise and progress. Please welcome Virginia Postrel.

Opening Argument

Virginia: Thank you, thank you David and my thanks to the Cato Institute for helping to host the east coast debut of the book. I have been reading. I'm going to start by talking about something that's not in my book. Because since the book. Went to press I've been reading this new book by Daniel Callahan. Whom some of you may know as one of the nation's leading bioethicists up. It's called false hope. So why America's quest for perfect health. Is a recipe for failure. Now. Callahan who is one of the co-founders of The Hastings Center. Is a very establishment figure he is not a fringe figure he is not my own wonderful for oil Jeremy Rifkin. He's an establishment liberal. And Callahan is not at all happy with the state of contemporary medicine.

Neither am I because I have this cold. That. It hasn't managed to cure. But his problem is that the medicine is too ambitious he's upset that it has quote. Neither evident boundaries nor carefully considered finite goals. It's spirit he worries is that of. Unlimited horizons. Of infinite possibilities of. Ameliorating the. Human conditions. Medicine's future is to be open ended. It must go as far as it can and then try to go further. That this is really bad. In his view. And and. Callahan is very upset because patients. Do not share his attitude they share this medical attitude. They want to will not be satisfied with what nature dishes out. The self of modern medicine he writes. Is no less open in its possibilities than the medicine it uses to realize. Them. Is a protean self. The creation of its own capacities to make. Of human beings what they would like to be. Most of all they would like to be free of the constraints of nature. Which gives them too much suffering too much. Illness too early a death. Too many children too much genetic determinism and too precarious a hold on a life of their own choosing. If medicine is to change. Then its view of the self must be changed as well. And what Callahan is out to do in this book and through his work in bioethics. Is to change medicine. In place of today's. Open ended dynamic medical culture and practice. The advocates what he calls. Sustainable medicine. A phrase that will be familiar to those of you who work in the environmental Rina. He seeks. Quote a medicine that has. With public support very important they're embraced finite. And steady state health goals. And has limited aspirations for progress. And technological innovation.

Now one of the worst things to do. And a speech is to go on and on quoting people from a book. But I can't resist in this case even though. Ron Bailey who reviewed this book for a reason says that if he has a choice between having his fingernails ripped out and reading this book it would be a hard call.

I actually love this book. And the reason I love this book is that. Callahan so perfectly encapsulates. One side of our emerging political cultural and intellectual.

Landscape. I use the term liberal earlier in talking about him but that's not really meaningful in this case I could I could show you very similar quotes from his bioethicist colleague. Leon Kass a great favor of the Weekly Standard and commentary in other conservative magazines. You know what. Callahan doesn't like. Is this. Infinite sense he wants steady state goals. He hates the protean self. And he hates the market. So. And technological innovation that service. This is not just an argument about. medicine The same principles come up again and again on topics ranging from. International trade. To the Internet. From popular culture to the environment. The open ended future has become the central defining issue of our time. As important as the Cold War once was on one side of the new digs. Are those who like Callahan crave stay says their central values. Are stability and control. They want to curb the director and. The unpredictable. Trial and error experimentation. Through which the open ended future evolves. They are at war with creativity. Enterprise and progress. Their attacks however. Are aimed. Not at creativity enterprise and progress come on this is not a good slogan. Creativity is bad. There are attacks red. There are a at the processes that carry those values the markets the technological innovation the cultural exchange and the idea of the reinvention of the self. Now on the other side of this great divide are those who support dynamism. Their central value. Is learning an open ended process of discovery. And improvement. Dynamics Therefore seek not to impose a particular vision of the future. But rather to allow many different visions to compete. Dyna midst of defend progress in the very sense that Callahan attacks. Not as marching toward a particular utopia. But as an ongoing process the opposite of a steady state.

Now what I'd like to do in the rest of the time I have.

Is not to further discuss politics but rather to do. To explore progress. Because few states those are as honest and open about their goals as Daniel Callahan. To protect dynamism requires an understanding of where progress comes from. So we can perceive when it is threatened. If progress does not come from a master plan as we were once told from an inexorable. historical Force. How does that happen. So what I want to do is look at four components of how progress happens. Each of which can be wrecked by Saturday. Games. First the demand side of progress which I'll encapsulate in the infinite series of form follows failure. Second the supply side near infinite. Combinations. Third. How do you find those combinations the power of play. And forth.

Experimentation and feedback learning by trial and error. Now Callahan is concerned mostly about the first component. What the equally Stace of Southern agrarians of the one nine hundred twenty S. called the infinite series. Dynamism permits in fact.

Encourages an open ended. Quest for improvements. Now I like to talk. In the book I use lots of little homey examples and one of my favorite inventions is contact lenses. Because if you're like me and you can't say worth a damn they're very valuable inventions. Now. It took about a hundred years to come out with contact lenses that could be worn all day. Now if you're thinking like Callahan that should be good enough if indeed a contact lens is even something that serves a vital human needs. But the

fact is that once you have contact lenses. That can be worn all day. You start to think well gee. When I wake up in the middle of the night and want to see a clock or maybe there's been an earthquake. Which is important where I live. I would like to be able to see then so I would like contact lenses that could be worn all night. Or you start imagining different kinds of contact lenses you could invent Well of course there's. Things like astigmatism that would be good to cure. Or maybe we could protect your eyes from Alter violent raise or. Change I color. You know. Have your brown eyes be blue. Down the street from where I live there's an optometrist who advertises. On the wall of the store. As you walk down the sidewalk.

Lenses that can give you eight ball or vampire eyes or cat or star swirl AA is obviously this is not a I've got a human need as the. Environmentalist put it. Or maybe would like lenses that function as computer screens or we could have the global positioning satellite filter right into our context. The point is that each new invention. Suggests others and the constant perfect contact lens is always out of reach. And in fact given. Different needs different tastes. It's highly unlikely that a single best lens would ever suit everyone. Civil Engineering Professor Henry Petroski calls this quest. Form follows failure. By which he doesn't mean that new products are bad that they don't do what they're supposed to do. Some of them don't but many of them do. They nonetheless suggest. Further improvements. He writes in the evolution of. Things. The form of made things. Is always subject to change in response to their real or perceived shortcomings. Their failures to function properly. This principle governs all and. Invention. Innovation and ingenuity. It is what drives. All inventors. Innovators and engineers. And there follows a corollary. Since nothing is perfect and indeed since even our ideas of perfection are not static. Everything is subject to change over time. There can be no such thing as a perfected artifact. The Future Perfect. Can only be a tense. Not a thing. The very nature of progress. Dictates an inherently. Open and imperfect future. And that's what Stacey's don't like. Now inventions not only suggest their own improvements. They also suggest new inventions. New combinations like. Contact lenses that block U.V. rays and combinations are the supply side of progress the answer to the mouth. Challenge aren't we running out of resources. The real limit to progress. Isn't the amount of stuff we have or. Even the supply if I do use we have. It's all the different ways that stuff for those ideas can be combined. And once you start combining things the numbers get very very big very very fast. The Economist Paul Romer explains the general point this way. There have been ten to the eighteenth second since the Big Bang. And there are ten to the eighty eight. Particles in the known universe. Now these are extremely large numbers the. The smaller the number of seconds since the Big Bang. Is a million million million. But they're dwarfed by the number of ways that things are ideas can be combined. Even something as simple as a deck of cards can be rearranged in unimaginably numerous ways. There are ten to the sixty eight possible card decks. Which means that any order you happen to shuffle has probably never come up before in the entire history of cards. And card decks offer a relatively modest number of combinations. Recombining the ones and

zeros on an ordinary and rapidly growing. Obsolete. One point four megabyte. Floppy Disk. Could generate ten to three point five million different. Bit strings. Or think about D.N.A. or combinations of atoms. Everything we see in the world is one small example. ROEMER talks about a cow. As one example of a possible combination of certain. Atoms an amazing machine for turning grass into protein and suggest that. Who knows what others might be possible. The point is that the real constraint is not the number of objects in the world but the ways we can. Bind them. Where limited in a very real sense. Only by our imagination. And the time we have to exercise it. Time is the ultimate. Limited resource. Now fortunately for us. That time includes not only our own life spans. But all the life spans that have gone before us the creative legacies. The trial and error as experimentation. The mistakes and the lessons we've learned from them. Of past generations. All the experiments the inventions and the knowledge on which we can build.

So combinations are great things. But combinations don't just drop from the sky. Somebody has to come up with all those new ideas. And while there are many many different Spurs to creativity. One of the most important. Is often omitted in. Political discussions. The power of play. The things we do for their own sake. For the pleasure of overcoming the challenges they present. Now this source of progress runs counter to what I call the repression theory which follows turn of the century sociologist Max vapor and seeing the Puritan ethic. Of self-denial thrift and duty. As undergoing undergirding. Both scientific progress and capitalist economics. Now the repression theory which people. Both people who like repression. And people who hate repression tend to hold. Holds that our society. Depends on being an orderly society of drones otherwise civilization falls apart. The problem is of society of orderly drones can create nothing truly new innovation requires a different spirit. And here again there is a contact lens story to tell. Some of you may have seen the column I wrote recently for Forbes on auto with drily who died recently. What really was a Czechoslovakia and chemist who invented a soft contact lens. Back in one thousand sixty one. Now this was a guy if you cast him in a Hollywood movie he would be the villain. Because he was a guy who could definitely say that laughed at me and called me mad. And everybody thought he was crazy. His labs were constantly being shut down and he had all these theories that no one thought would work. Plus he was a political dissident. When it but. He was very very stubborn. And when his research got shut down he kept on going. He and his wife who was. Had a medical background. Set up. This gadget in their kitchen using a phonograph. And an erector set. And with this jerry rigged apparatus they managed to develop what he called the spun mold technique which made contact lenses a mass produced good. Now the repression they're exotic splaying Auto which is invention. Neither does great. By the way. For those of you who think Greta. Explains everything. Which really didn't make any money on his invention he was living in a communist country and the government owned all the rights. And the government being such fine businessmen sold the rights to soft contact lens. For three hundred thirty thousand dollars. Which And now it's a multibillion dollar business.

And of course. In a communist country the worst things you could get. Besides money. You could get a better apartment you could get on or you could get a better lab be more funding. Boys really didn't get those either because it was a political decision. Faxes labs were always getting shut down and he was always shunted aside. To much worse places than he would be on the basis of a scientific quality. So that doesn't explain what he did the reason he worked. It didn't seem to work out a duty to his family he was you know he was a good family man but that wasn't what drove him. He was. He was inspired primarily by the person. Pleasure of the pursuit. And the desire to prove his critics wrong. Completely pure and utterly self-centered motives. Like many innovators. Which really was able to see how these new combinations might work. These things that no one thought possible. Because he was driven by the spirit of play. The things we do for their own sakes. Now all of these principles form follows failure. The power of combinations. And the spirit of play. Come together in a dynamic process of decentralized experimentation and feedback learning by trial and error. Any effort to rig that discovery process whether by picking a winner in advance. Blocking competition an entry or limiting criticism hampers learning. And this is where politics really enters the picture so much for the nice little. Homey stories about contact lenses we're back to Washington. Stays us are constantly trying. Either to stop experiments altogether. Or to predetermine their outcomes to pick winners and losers or simply to protect the status quo. Now one of the most effective ways to protect stay says. Is to stamp out risk. Possibly by demanding more advance knowledge than any inventor can possess. Callahan is big on this naturally enough as people in the medical. Medical limiting business often are. He wants to require that every new medical innovation be proven in advance to be what he calls both cost effective and cost beneficial. In order to make such a judgement you would have to be able to compare the new thing. To everything that had gone before. Now it might be impossible to make such a judgement he admits. You we might lack the necessary comparison data. But then he says we'll just have to do without the new idea. The issue. He says should be resolved in favor of the standard of strictness. Even if this increases the odds that the technology will not be developed. Which having read most of his book I think is the whole point. Callahan like many. Very risk averse people. What's to stop the learning curve. Which is the process that drives down costs over time. Before it can even get started now rarely or Stacy is so bold in their prescriptions. They usually sell their risk aversion is common sense. I mean. You don't really want to stick glass in your eye that's crazy. Oh without realizing its implications. Or they react with panic to try to regulate away some crisis that's been created by new ideas before those new ideas. Have a chance to be debugged. In other cases many other cases. Daisey's. States has tried to hinder competition. To block experiments that. Challenge old ideas. Now depending on whose static vision is involved. That could mean keeping Wal-Mart out of town. Or outlawing private space shuttles. Or putting a death sentence on Solomon rushed. But the goal is the same. To stop experimentation and learning. To hold the world still. To impose someone's vision of the one best way.

In the end the battle between states and dynamism. Is a dispute over how civilizations learn. And whether in fact they should learn. Dinah Miss may have grand ambitions. But they make modest claims. They have knowledge that we are largely ignorant. And that there is always room for improvement. The knowledge about what people want. And how they'll use a new idea about what complimentary ideas goods or services might be available to help it. Or what competitors might beat it. Is scattered. We don't know in advance what will really represent progress. All we can do is start from where we are trying to do better. See what happens and create. Correct errors as we go. This infinite series of experiments. Many of which are destined to fail. Can be unsettling. Even scary. But all a through such efforts can we better ourselves in our posterity and. Only through them can we realize our full humanity. As Friedrich Hayek so aptly wrote. It is in this process of learning. And the effects of having learned something new that man enjoys the gift of his intelligence. It isn't curiosity. Problem solving and play. That we discover who we are. These are the very qualities and activities that make the. future Unknown. Unknowable. And full of promise. Thank you.

Opening Response

David Boaz: Thank you Virginia and I should remind everyone that there are copies of the book out front and encourage you to purchase a copy and get it signed. At this first. East coast opportunity. Our commentator today is David Frum who is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for whom he is writing a book on the seventy's. I must say I'm not keen on people writing historical books on decades that I remember. David also expresses his opinions widely as a contributing. EDITOR THE WEEKLY STANDARD a columnist for The Financial Post in his native Canada. A commentator on National Public Radio. And a frequent contributor to The New York Times and other publications he previously. Was on the editorial page staff of The Wall Street Journal and wrote a column on law for Forbes. He is the author of two books dead right. And what's right and. Who is your publisher David. Basic All right. We don't have in common that we're all free press.

Authors we probably simply have in common they were all disgruntled authors. Yeah. His formal bio says that dead right warns that a conservatism that loses its anti big government faith is doomed to futility. Which is not to say that he doesn't from time to time indorse bigger government himself at least when writing in the standard. Where I believe it is a requirement.

Please welcome from the Manhattan Institute David Frum.

David Frum: Thank you thank you very much that's a great honor to be here it would really is actually an honor to be at the Cato Institute. On the occasion of the release of a book by Virginia Postrel I there's something very familial about this in fact that the I think this this occasion has the feeling something of a bar mitzvah and I feel a little bit like Uncle Morty from Cleveland. Who is about to launch into his long series of reminiscences. But you have to have Uncle Marty. And so here I am.

I benefited enormously from reading for to his book and I expected that. Most of you will. Will feel the same way it's a very original book with. Many very suggestive ideas and. Really impressive. Range and breadth of research and. Virginia has has a gift as she showed in her talk for for taking the homely and drawing out of it things that I do that conclusions that. That really make you look at things in a new way. And. I think it's also remarkable because it's a very ambitious book The ambition is. Is is subtle. Sometimes there is manifest subtly but it's an important and interesting ambition and that's what I'd like to talk about this afternoon. Let me begin by first of all laying some cards on the table I have to admit to speaking not. As a libertarian. Because I'm not one but as a conservative who as. David Bowie's has generally favors. Libertarian means and. And policies but. Is is essentially and an outsider to too many

of these conversations. Here's what I think Virginia's book is. Is ambitious or her idea or projects ambitions. Libertarianism of course began life as a Nilo it's a substitute for classical liberalism you might not think it's a very good substitute having say six syllables but. Classical Liberalism has seven. And you pick up syllables. Everywhere you can. A classical liberalism. Was a philosophy of. Rules. It was about the kind of rules that a society ought to live by it emerged of course from a very specific context. From the violence and poverty of seventeenth century Europe. One of the century that. Rivals our own as the bloodiest in human history and. It proposed new a way to reach social peace. It said look ratchet down the ambitions of the rulers of society. Don't tell people how to pray. Don't tell publishers what to print. Don't tell individuals what prices or interest rates charge. And if you do all of that. You will have peace. Liberalism. Was as much a theory. Of law as it was a theory of politics and. It's interesting how often it's greatest exponents begin. As economists and end as lawyers. Higher higher. Being of course the greatest example. Liberalism is of course in libertarianism. Derivative Lee is a is a system of rules about procedures it's a procedural philosophy. It is not committed to a particular end. It simply states. The criteria by which good or bad rules. Are to be judged. Now. For Junior does. In this book is to transform libertarianism. From a procedural. To a substantive philosophy. To a subset of doctrine. It's no longer a theory of law so much as a theory. Of social change. It's not so much. A theory about what the rule should be. But about what the human personality should be what we should be like if we should be that. Virginia offers a vision of a social personality and indeed it's a very attractive and in many ways very admirable vision. It's torrent. It's creative. Open minded. It's experimental. It's expansive. It's optimistic. If it's true that all books are autobiographies that Virginia has painted a very attractive picture.

But it is a bold intellectual move. Because many if not all libertarians. Have shared this outlook. In fact many of the greatest. Of them have opposed the man after whom this building is name. John trencher. Wrote. Cato's letters. In the early eighteenth century. Advocated a minimal state. Precisely in order to thwart. What he saw. Correctly as the social progress of his time the Bank of England. The creation of paper money and credit. All of those things that are making Britain or England. A great power. He was passionately opposed to all of those things. And advocated a minimal state. As a way of breaking. Progress in the same way perhaps the most eloquent of American libertarians Thomas Jefferson was is also one most outstanding. Of American conservatives. Thomas Jefferson. Advocated minimal government precisely because he believed that minimal government would slow. Or maybe even halt. The trend away from the human agricultural society that he believed in. To the kind of society that John trencher. Had opposed Jefferson was opposed to. Paper money to banks. To statutes of incorporation to really anything that he thought. Would transform the United States when every cultural sense. Sidey. Into a commercial one and that's why he was a Libertarian.

This is not just an interesting. Curiosity or in an interesting theory this is not just a curiosity I should be for me to say but my curiosity is interesting on this not just

a curiosity. It I think is a very telling thing about the ambiguity of the libertarian doctrine. Now. I think Virginia. Would not agree with me that her. Move in this book is as bold as I'm suggesting. Because I think she believes that her procedural. Libertarianism. And her substantive dynamism. Will never conflict. That they're one in the same. But that's an empirical. And not a philosophical. Claim. It might be true. But then again. It might not be true that. It's probably true. In late twentieth century America with the culture. Experimental scientific culture that Americans have that a minimal state. Is the state that will be most conducive to technological social progress. I can think and I'm sure you can of lots and lots of places in which that's not true. And is even if we agree that it's mostly true about economic progress. It's certainly not true I think we would all agree with of social progress now I know. I know I know everyone who talks about these things is sick to death. Of examples drawn from the civil rights. Episode in American history which sometimes seems to be the only chapter in American history that's ever taught in the schools. But I think it is suggestive in this context. That in fact what happened there what people found of noxious what open minded people found of noxious. Was that in fact a society had very largely through non-state means not entirely. Largely come to a consensus about the role of two casts. Of people. And it took. In fact that the power and strength of a national state. To Blow that. System apart. And it was applied twice once. Well actually three times once the IT and sixty's again in the eight hundred seventy S. and then a third and final and fateful time. In the one nine hundred seventy S.. That's not all. All of the story of course but it's a large part of it. That a lot in that context. And there are others in order to create a social a social milieu conducive to the kind of personality that. Virginia. Holds up as admirable the. Tolerant creative. Optimistic personality that. What had to be done. Was that. Outmoded ways. Of thought and behavior had to be blown to smithereens. And that I could. If I were. If you. If time were not so finite we could multiply examples of that. What Virginia's. Book. Does is to. I think Remove the state. And the issue of the state in the place of the state. From the central place in libertarian. Thought. And I can't help noticing that. And that. That is. At first a subtle move but it's a move with large. Implications. One of the questions for example. That arises. After reading Virginia's book is. If we believe in the free play of competition. As a way as a as a way of finding the best future. Do we regard. Competitions. Among governments. For to set. Different rules. As a form of. This kind of creativity producing competition. Sometimes Virginia says yes. She cites the different the federalism differences among the incorporation laws. As an example of. In fact exactly the kind of truth discovery mechanism that she favors. Of trying new things out and testing them. And so that. In that case. The state can be a locus of competition. And at other times. For example with zoning laws she says no that the competition among the mean America municipalities come up with different rules of zoning. To govern. Construction that she regards as a uniformly. Bad Thing. I don't I'm not. I don't say the say. There that I have some right answer to offer in its place because I I think that that she has put her finger on something that is a great

ambiguity and in fact something that I found myself thinking very hard about. After reading Virginia's book and without any. Clear answer to offer. As to which I. I think is. Is right but nonetheless I think these two positions. Are different from one another. Now I don't make. Again I don't say all of these things. Simply to to make curiosities. Because and here's where here's where I want to go with this. I think the move from. Libertarianism or if I may call it here liberalism because you'll understand what I mean even if no one else will. I think move from liberalism. As a system. As a philosophy of procedure. And liberalism. As a substantive philosophy. Is a move that classical liberals have again and again and again throughout history. Made. John Stuart Mill is the outstanding example. Began as a liberal. And it is a socialist. Defending the same values all along the way. Gladstone another. Began as a classical liberal and it is a modern liberal. And again. Quite consistent. In many of his deep value commitments. Now I'm not predicting that. In Virginia is going to end up as high as a Democrat or something.

But I do think that. Well then you're inoculated for life. But I do think. I do think that. There are going to be moments when. If you agree with his philosophy. You are going to find yourself choosing between. Your delight in the experimental and the dynamic and. Your commitment to libertarian philosophy and let me cite just one that. I think is present in Virginia's book. And it's something. It's something that. Virginia touches on four or five times and always has some very interesting things to say about of medicine discussion of cloning. Now if there is a building block of the liberal philosophy it's a manual cance rule that human beings must always be treated as. Ends in themselves. And never as means to another person's ends that's the single that's that's his most important moral principle. And it's reflected and refracted all through liberal thought that. If anything. Violates that principle. It's cloning. The. You bring another human being into existence. For sight not in order to create a new life but precisely in order to replicate. Our own. Now. Virginia does not express in a book an opinion. For or against cloning. But in her book. I detect a certain. Exasperate and impatience with those of us who believe. After you are I that human cloning. Is a bad thing. And something that a government may legitimately. Prevent without falling into the pit of. Of big government belief but in fact. Executing the core mission of a liberal state. Which is to ensure that people are always respected as ends in themselves and not as means to the ends of others. I don't know whether and how we're going to be able to work out this conflict between. Our delight in technological progress and our awareness that. Around the corner of. Proceeding with human cloning there may be some benefits and. Also our commitment to the liberal faith. That individual should be treated as. Ends and not as means. But I think you can see here that there are two gravitational pulls one toward an exciting and exciting. And I share a lot of that excitement exciting. Vision of a future of. Limitless mastery over nature. And over ourselves. And one back toward certain philosophical principles that are the founding principles of classical liberalism. I don't know which will prevail either in society or.

Among the readers. Of Virginia's book but I do know that. One or the other. Must lose out. And I thank you.

Open Dialogue & Audience Questions

Thank you thank you thank you David. Very provocative critique Virginia do you want to respond at all before we open it up.

Virginia: Well I guess I know. The rest. Well that. There's a lot. There. A To take. Be the least difficult. thing I'll is the Conyers I just. Yes agreed that. Cloning violates the idea of human beings as means in themselves. Meaning unless you believe that any intentional begetting of a child violates... You know because you want to have a kid. Because a clone is still an individual. To be valued as an individual. In the south now we can get into issues of whether you know a undifferentiated cells are an individual in the classic liberal sense of the word and you know. On the other means of that but as far as. Cloning for the purposes of bringing a child into the world I don't see a problem there. I don't. I just don't see the problem that you say that you're raising. There might be other areas. In biotechnology where this would come up but this particular one doesn't strike me as. As being an issue. I agree that the issue of competition among governments. Is a very interesting and. And difficult one. I I think there is value and and. Competition among regimes including. State. Legal regimes. Particularly in areas such as intellectual property where they're very hard. I mean you know I can't tell you what the best intellectual property regime is I have no idea. I'm very concerned about their drive toward harmonization in that area. For that reason. But that obviously I you know there are some forms of composition of government that I don't really like that I think. Are it. Antithetical to what I'm talking about. And. You know and so I'm not. Not advocating that we have you know lots of totalitarian keep around the totalitarians just for the purposes of maintaining competition. So it's a difficult question. And a difficult problem.

As far as the procedural. Libertarianism vs. Subs and dynamism there. There are a couple of things going on. First of all that. This book is No one will believe this. Although it does say it. In the book. The dinosaurs are not libertarians via a new name. It is not that simple. What I'm trying to do is describe clusters. And now it goes to the political Lions is that we've become used to talking about in the context of the Cold War. So that there are differences within them and there are conservative dynamicists liberal done in most libertarian Dyna miss. Who agree on certain things and disagree on others and. Who in a different time and place might be a lot somewhat differently. So that's one thing that's going on I think you are somewhat correct I mean you're on to something that. Is there to some degree and his attention not only in my

book but in the authors of inflows me and mail you mention it's attention and high. As well. And there is this issue of procedural liberalism vs subs and dynamism Do they ever conflict. I mean. I do think that procedural. Libertarianism. Generally will give you dynamism I mean. It is that there are some libertarians who believe that if we have a libertarian legal regime. We will restore the old south. For example. And that's inconceivable to me. I mean I just I just as an empirical matter I. Doesn't seem. The solvency of Commerce and law. And other kinds of thing romantic love. By which we are such that. In the absence of extra legal terror I don't see that happening however I will I am the first to admit I am a product of the new South. I I. You know if I have to pick. I will probably cast my vote cast myself on the substantive dynamism it. Aside in that case although I am not sure you have to pick.

So now that I have to eliminate all libertarians in the room which fry all of you some for Jonathan.

Oh well let me. Exercise the moderators Parag a van and ask a question which sort of follows up on David's comment. I think there's been a criticism from time to time. That libertarians. Have had a sort of. Stare roll. And a cultural and a historical approach to issues to politics. That it's strictly theoretical. And that libertarians have wanted not to say whether. If we have libertarian. Rules. We would end up with stronger families or weaker families more pornography less pornography and so on. And if we look at it in terms of magazines for instance. I think if you read National Review. You have a sense that you're reading not just a conservative magazine but a magazine published by Catholics in New York. He's got a cultural feel to it. And if you read The New Republic I think you have a sense that you're reading a magazine. Largely edited by Jews in Washington. And that has a cultural feel to it and libertarian magazines I think it tended to try to abstract from that. You know we're we're we're not Jewish or Christian or atheist we're not pro family anti family we're just just for these rules as. As David talked about. And I wonder whether this. Dynamism approach. Is an indication of a cultural attitude that you think libertarians ought to adopt or perhaps simply that you adopt and would and would like to suffuse your magazine with. In addition to a commitment to liberty and political philosophy. Well I think is that you know everyone just loved. However since. Part of the attitude is that we have many competing that it's all of us is self-contradictory statement. So I'm perfectly happy to live in the world. Of. You know where we have. Vigorous evangelism. Of the many many starts. It is an attitude I think that reason. As a magazine. And institution. That Supports not just. Reason magazine does not just the magazine but does other projects as well including books. I think it is one that we increasingly do adopt and. That and I think it is consistent with. I mean we we could add some more syllables and call it like. Neo classical liberal. Of but. I mean it is a real. I think this attitude. Is a real part of the classical liberal tradition. Is a real extension of the classical liberal tradition. It is less about hating the state. And more about what you want to do with your life. Everyone. Why is it good for people to be free. You know. What is it that they do with their freedom I think that is important to to think about. That's not to say that

there isn't some value to just concentrating on sort of natural liberty keep out of my face. Which is particularly in this country a very important. Strain of libertarianism and. Of American culture. All right. With that let's open it up to questions. Please wait for a microphone to be brought to you then would you introduce yourself and ask a question and we'll start up there with Burt.

But my name is Bertie late for Junior. As you talk about Callahan and the other states is that they strike me as kind of the modern day Luddite. That's curious number one if you would agree with that it and second of all do you sense that that type of thinking to the think you the Luddite. Is something that has grown in popular appeal. In recent decades. Or possibly is losing its appeal. Even though there are some very articulate advocates idea of status. In the book I actually divide spaces into two different groups and Callahan is interesting because he perfectly combines both of them which is very unusual. One is what I call reactionaries. Which would include people that you would call a lot of but. People whose. Central value. Is debility. And who usually want to maintain that stability within some version of an imagined. Past. The two most popular versions being sort of the peasant. Village and be urban ethnic. Neighborhood. And that's where your. Out now we hate technology. What I type. People would fall. Although as Joe mark here points out or. Pointed out reason the historical Luddites were basically just protectionist who wanted to keep their jobs I mean they were not ideological. They if they were self interested. Which is a whole other category. The other category of states is is what I call technocrats. Which are people who say yes we're for progress and it will look like this here is our seventeen point plan you know our our our. You know health. Security plan if you remember that one. And their central values control. What's interesting about Callahan. Is that he combines the that the two of them. He is at. Actually much more out of a technocratic background that he's going to plan the rational. Type of health care for society and everything is assumed of course to be collective. But he has this very strong. Anti technology. Anti science anti discovery strain. Coming through that because he sees that that dynamic process. Does ROPS his schemes. Now in terms of the question of whether or not. What is a. more Or the sort of reactionary vision is growing or faint. I think what's happened is that the. Technocratic vision. Which has basically dominated our politics and our culture and our business a lot of nonpolitical aspects of American life. For a hundred years or so has lost a lot of intellectual vitality. And that on the static side what you have are all these. Technocratic apparatuses that are available. The F.D.A. The F.T.C.. The various sorts of tort litigation. All these kinds of. Sort of technocratic. Structures that are available. But the intellectual vitality. Is among the reactionaries who are very clever in many cases. A much smaller group of people but very clever. In using both those types of credit structures and. So these two groups that used to be more or less at war with each other if you go back to Southern agrarians I assure you they were not in in. Had they did not have any interest in making alliances with. Sort of technocratic. Progressive Liberals. But today. You see alliances. That's what the the. Reactionaries are that they're minority I mean this is.

This is of progress culture and there no question about it but. But they have a lot of technological a lot of intellectual vitality. Roger Pilon Kate. Institute. The competition among governments. Issue that you raise David. In response to Virginia. And you used. Incorporation versus zoning and. Virginia seem to be in favor of the former and not the latter I think the explanation is very simple. With incorporation. If you have fifty different incorporation statutes you can take your incorporation where you wish to be. Your corporation where you wish to be incorporated. There has been what Nader. Calls the race to the bottom which I take to be the race to the top. And they go to Delaware because that's where the laws are best. It's pretty hard to take if your pick up your real estate and go. Where a good zoning regime is and so you're stuck with the resulting regime. And so it strikes me it's very easy for. Virginia to come out in favor of the competition with respect to something like incorporation but not with respect to something like zoning because you're literally under a tyrannical regime if that's what your zoning regime is. And so it's and so this competition among governments I think. Just makes a very good sense. In certain areas. And not in other areas which leads me to my question I I I don't understand what you meant. With respect to the civil rights. Example. When you said that let that. Sometimes governments don't produce the most beneficent Let's say we say regimes. Because every example of government intervention in favor of. Beneficence if you will. Was against a prior government regime I mean after all. What was the. Fifty four and sixty four experience. If not impart against the Jim Crow. Which were you suggesting that. Left people left to their own devices. You know what you would produce Jim Crow. They didn't Jim Crow came from government. There was private. Segregation to be sure. But you know that's. You still have private segregation. And that's exactly what freedom permits. I mean. Let me deal with the second first I think. If you were.

A black in the south. In nineteen thirty five. You faced. Two sets of problems. Problem number one was state imposed you weren't permitted to vote. Equally. You would find that as a practical matter you weren't allowed to testify in court. Wrongs against you would not be. You would not be protected by the state. You had many grievances against government. It was also true that if you walked into a restaurant and wanted to use the bathroom. The restaurant owner. Wouldn't let you.

And the intuition. It was that the people who wrote the first set of American civil rights laws. Distinguish between. Political rights and civil rights in regard to the civil rights they were guided as in fact these rights. Many of these rights people. Accommodation which are go back which are first recognized in American law. And eight hundred sixty six. That's where whenever some news bill is passed I think it was sixty six. That and the one nine hundred ninety sixty four Civil Rights Act was an act that gave Congress the power to empower federal regulatory agencies to override the rights of people. To control their own restaurants their own apartment buildings out of the Equal Housing Act is. And those were I think obnoxious and probably to many people more obnoxious than the deprivations of political liberty. And sometimes it's true state governments would require. Landlords or other business owners to do

these things. But on the whole it's that that sort of social segregation was in force through a whole network of informal sanctions. That never rose to the level of state government it was Virginia says sometimes. But extralegal terror as well. That was a real back. But nonetheless that. The story. This is the story. Of I think it is simply an historical to say the story of the American South. Is. Is a story. Of the removal of legal impediments and thus people emerge free. That what happened there was that in fact you had a system of both legal rules. And social rules. The legal rules were repealed but the social rules were blown to pieces by the hand of government and. You know that. It's a complicated story. Now as the first thing. About the difference in corporation statutes and zoning statutes. You're right about zoning statutes. At the moment that the zoning statutes are first imposed back in the one nine hundred twenty S. or early or whenever it was at this point however that. Property is bought and sold subject to. Zoning rules and you have. You have a choice to live in. To live in a town with certain I mean. With certain kinds of rules or in a town with another kind of rules to locate your business. In a town with certain kinds of rules or other kinds of rules. Absolutely as to the first generation. Of property owners. That zoning was. Regulatory taking of sorts that had costs on them and. They didn't have any choice about the matter at all but. Everyone who comes after the wall is in place. Yes he is. He is it is form shop and you get to choose it. It's one of the reasons why. Places like North Carolina boom in places like New York. Suffers because North Carolina has better. Zoning rules and. I think that it is the federalism experience that is one of the things make. To that when zoning becomes more rational sometimes it's federalism that doesn't. And I don't say I have. I have an answer I mean obviously there are situations in which competition among rules is completely inappropriate we were to have competition among say see which one. You know. Could establish the swankiest religion that. You know some people choose downscale religions and other people would have full group of high church has been helping us in that that you wouldn't want to see but I don't. I don't know that you can. I mean that. What I was pointing out I was not taking attitudes on these things was that as. Virginia said just and. Just now in her last response that. What we have here. Are two ways. Of looking at the world that are meeting at a perpendicular angle. A commitment to progress. And change and of.

Legal and political philosophy and. That Virginia believes they are can grow and I think. Often especially in the context of America. They are in the context of nineteenth century job or they might not be but in context America they are. But they aren't always going to be. And that what you. What I think needs to be understood with with what Virginia. Is proposing here. That. Because these things are meeting at perpendicular angles. That if you board. You. know Your board you know you have to that their goal is going to a moment where you would have to choose where you want the cross-town bus or the Uptown bus and. What this has a practical. This is one practical effect. Is. I do think. As Virginia thinks we're in a moment of great ideological flux and. Libertarians often as individuals have to make the choice what they get on the cross-town bus. Or the Uptown bus. And what they're going to have one set of

friends or a different set of friends and. A lot of these choices. Are are implicit. I think in in. Virginia's book and I think that. The reason that the book this is an important book. And I do think it's a very important book. Is it describes it in a pregnant moment in American politics in which people are choosing up all sorts of new teams for the politics of the next century.

If you want to say. Yeah. I just one thing that occurred to me when I was writing the book. And I was thinking about the civil rights movement. This doesn't answer the deep question you're raising but it's just the specific one. I discuss in the book in addition very different context. The way change. In restaurants are always talked about by intellectuals. All of whom live in places that have millions of family.

Own ethnic restaurants and. Great variety. And none of that really lived in some place like Greenville South Carolina and. Where the chain restaurants brought great variety and and. But. I mean. Nowadays it's not an issue because it's a pretty big place. But in the sixty's it was and there were two when my parents moved there and I'm sixty four there were literally two restaurants. One of which was Howard Johnson's one of which was cafeteria. And it occurred to me. I would you know. If we had a way of like looking at a counterfactual and a little machine. It would be really interesting to see what would have happened. To Jim Crow. Both the state that I'm talking to the public accommodations type. Jim Crow. Both the state. Required type and there was. There were laws on the books that required. That if people sat down in a restaurant. It must be segregated. But if you took the stalls out. You didn't have to be. That sort of thing. What would have happened if McDonald's. Had come into the south. Before rather than. After Brown and and. The sixty four Civil Rights Act that. That spread of these chain restaurants. Into the south. Happened. Sort of simultaneously with the civil rights movement now. I don't know maybe this. Rights Movement enabled it or maybe there were completely. You know. There was no joint cause but it is and I started thinking about this. These these sort of. Yankee institution that's how I would have that were purely commercial purely profit driven. Because certainly the railroads. In the nineteenth century had no. Protect and I do talk about this in the book. They were willing to. segregate Their coach cars. A lot of the third class accommodations because they had enough whites and blacks to fill up both. But they were not willing to segregate. Their first class accommodations because it didn't pay. There weren't enough. There weren't blacks who want to first class accommodations but there weren't that many of them so you stick them up in the car with the whites. And the states. Were outraged by this and this is where. Out of this outrage comes. Altimeter like Plessy v Ferguson. Anyway that's my rambling thought as I said it doesn't answer the question question so it's a. Say one brief thing about that. It's an interesting counterfactual what would if happen we can imagine to imagine such a world and. I think that the answer that. Many people in the south. Would have had in one nine hundred sixty four and. The reason why so many influential important Southerners became. Southern liberals. Was they were said well what would happen. To with McConnell's is exactly what did happen to the railroads which is they're going to pass by. That McDonald's will not

open here so long as we have these rules and that's what happened with the. That's the whole history of the. Of the south from eight hundred seventy to one nine hundred sixty S. In fact it's often the richest people around who are the biggest opponents of segregation because they can see what it is. What does how it. How it frightens away northern investment. Which is where the investment is going to come from. But that. You know in a way doesn't that. Counterfactual illuminates a little bit the thing that I'm concerned about which is. It isn't always true. That libertarian rules. Are the key to social progress it's. True. I think for. In for technological progress. In late one thousand nine hundred. Late twentieth century America yes. I think that's right. I don't know that it would be true in. Eighteenth century.

Java had nine hundred job he's an example used for some other great a good example that we know is something I would just make up some but some some just not some society in which there are deep eyes. There are. There are deep deep. Traditions and ways of doing about it that people live like already a century Japan. Now because of us that. Late twentieth century Japan is a society where people think oh well this new way of growing rice doesn't work out I can always go to the supermarket and buy some more. Now I think actually the society that Edward Banfield describes in in southern Italy. That. This is a highly risk averse society it's not dynamic and in fact it is that. I don't I don't want to I don't want to belabor this point because I think it's a little bit remote from our concerns but you know I think it is an important one. We do not that I think that. Not that I believe that government is the path to progress not at all and not. I'm not making that point I'm I'm saying that I think. What. What happens though is if you are going to think of progress and. Dynamism and creativity as the touchstone. Of your politics. You're going to encounter circumstances. Probably in which. There's a cross-town bus. And there's an uptown bus and. You're going to have. At that point you're going to have to choose. And I think the crowd. When you think of. How is American politics going to shape up. I think it's probably true that the libertarian disposition not. Sort of libertarians of. Libertarianism is a doctor but the disposition. Is becoming much more widespread in American life.

And so is it if we're talking with an important group of people. And the question is which which way do they go to they grow. Go across town or do they go uptown I think it's a lot I think a lot is going to depend on the job.

Thanks for join you what I really want to know of course is what your book has to say about the Monica Lewinsky scandal but I'm pass on that for the moment. A good test for a book is. How would an intelligent adversary. Come out I was coughing in the middle of your question. I know that and. To me perhaps the most interesting intelligent adversary would be Al Gore meaning Vice President Gore not Senator Gore. And I think he would say that your book is a simple mischaracterization of his views on unsympathetic. Characterization rather than a substantive response I think he would say look I'm Dyna most. I'm for the future and lots of opportunity. And the way I want to do that is to use government creatively instead of statically So I want to have children having access to the Internet. What static about that I'm not telling them

where to go when they get there I want to take pictures of the Earth from space. So that we know how the world. I want to do something about global warming so that we'll have a future. He's going to say that your characterization of these as you probably would. As somehow control misses his whole point.

What would you say to him. Well I would. I the specific examples that you gave the first. About giving kids access to the Internet and. Taking pictures of the world from space. Are compatible with the dynamism. Vision. I mean I would agree with that. This is not libertarian as. Not libertarianism with a different name it is and. In other words they are. As you say. Open ended. The problem with Al Gore is as well. Like I mean like most politicians he's not a systematic thinker. I'm like most politicians. He takes a lot from people who are in stitches together and you know. I mean. I wish I had dead. Set confidence in that ability to characterize his Because work he is. His book. Earth in the balance contains things in it that are deeply deeply reactionary and drawn deeply reactionary thinkers I mean it's.

It's. There are not about not only is it not about planning they just they sort of had this hatred for technology and. Consumer choice and for. Materialism. That's bad thing. And he has been a great great great to friend. German Rifkin over the years. He also has had a big planner mentality and on Wednesdays he has this kind of. DIDYMUS. View when. And there are people who are quoted in the book or. Who are who are definitely in the dynamic camp like. Dan paying. Esther Dyson who think very positively of him and Dan Pink's case have worked for him so. I don't know you know he's a politician he's done an intellectual.

Well. As I say it's not libertarian I think I think we've talked about this is Tony Blair. You know. Dynamo side and I don't know enough about Blair the Blair government to know. But I get that kind. If. If you are a liberal. As opposed to a Libertarian. But you are in what I would call this dynamic coalition. You will look for things that provide opportunity and choice and try to prescribe. Outcomes. So for example the example one of the examples I use in the book is The support for charter schools. You know say no we're not for vouchers we. We want to keep this within the public schools but we want to have competition. And that is. You know clearly government is doing something Arum is providing education is not only paying for education it's actually delivering it. It's doing the educating. But within this competitive framework. You know so. Yeah I mean you could. There are there are disputes among Don Imus about where those lines should be drawn. Tom. Tom Palmer's is directed partly to David Frum and. I think you've mischaracterize some of the libertarian figures of the past notably trencher. And Jefferson who are by no means conservative in the sense in which you said they were in favor of. No innovation in government. We want to secure a legal order. They were opposed to for introducing.

Absoluteness powers. State banks with privileges above other banks and so on but both of them were very open to. Technological scientific. Artistic and economic progress. One of the bits of evidence. To dispel this hoary old.

Jefferson as an agrarian.

Is just per se. Was he translated. The works of destitute a tricity into English. Brought him to America from France. Possibly the most optimistic. Philosopher. In France of the nineteenth century. He said. This is the man to teach us about a dynamic social order. So isn't it compatible that you could be on the one hand conservative if you will about fundamental social institutions of law. Rights property and so on but have open attitude towards the future. So I see the dynamism going. Much deeper in liberal thought than you do. Well I don't want. I don't want to exhaust people's patience with going to deeply know the history of eighteenth century but it would seem to me that the. The great break. On English progress. In the eighteenth century. The great brave is they've got lots of good ideas they got new plows they got everything they own a lot of things. They got a growing population. Where they need the great break is the absence of credit. That this is a gold based economy. Without much way of mobilising of without mobile. Without. mobilizing Wealth with very high interest rates and. What the advocates of the Bank of England. There that they were there. For the government's military purposes as you say but what they. Also did was they created a credit. Revolution. And that was something that trench it was. Implacably. Against. And his op that was his number one ideological commitment that trumped everything was his opposition to banks and paper money. And this new front. And this new financial this new financial class and. He writes about it with tremendous paranoia. I mean it is that when you get you go through credit and parts of it the could figure very prominently and. So the more extreme letters to the editor of the Michigan Militia new letter. I mean that. That he believes there was this cabal of people who are using credit. In order to destroy English liberty. To impose war. At that.

And he's against it and. I I happen to think I think a lot of historians would agree that that that. It is the arrival of the Bank of England. Which is that is one of the most important explanations of why England. Emerges as the number one country. On the continent as a population a fraction the size of France. Again not to go too much of the Roma. Remote past it is a really remarkable book on this that I recommend everyone who is interesting is called by many John Brewer's approach. Was a professor of history at Harvard I don't use that anymore called the sinews of war. Makes the point that. You know we you know how we're all taught that the French Revolution was provoked by the excessive costs of the French court. Turned out the English court cost four times as much per capita as the French court did. But the English to pay for it because they had a bank. Trench it was against it and didn't for. Ditto for Jefferson did if I'm remembering right but just to trace it was also. It was a believer that let that. Wealth came out of the ground. And that paper money was not real money. And I wrong with the suit to Tracy. And certainly that the Great. Jefferson's disciples like John Taylor. These are people. And then. Andrew Jackson. I mean these are people who believe in gold. No paper money and. They are they are right that if you don't have that you're going to have it that agreconomy is going to be much much slower. That you come out and you'll merge from the economy agrarian in that context. They

were not wrong. Believe that libertarian philosophy would preserve. What looks to us awful like a primitive way of life.

Virginia: John Byrne has another great book. More recent called the pleasures of the imagination about culture and. Eighteenth century London. I'm drawing a little but my book. It's like. Here's where his publicist.

David: OK Right there. David.

Audience Member: As long as we're talking about the eighteenth century. It's not that I find our Saturday and. Over the people that are more relevant here. And it seems to me that Virginia's arguments are very much like. Condor Ses argument about the glories of progress. And things to come and. The. The gentleman who you quoted. Is takes a very. Russo. Position where his. His interests. Are more toward. Glorifying nature. And in his. You know it was the state of nature.

Back then but it seems that maybe these people who are arguing for sustainability. Are not arguing. It is in their minds against progress. They're arguing. You know. For preserving nature. And the thing that really worries me is that they want the science. You know that the of. Lightman Was pretty much won over by those people and. It seems to be that the argument for progress is kind of weak. Because progress. Involves turmoil and change and only the best people are going to reap the highest. And so. Aren't you worried a little bit. That. You know that the same thing can happen here and that you're really are going to a very small Ark audience. Well I do have a whole chapter in the book about nature and. The first half of it is about what is nature really like is nature really static. And the short answer is no and and. In fact I mean. If you look. If you talk to people who are actually. College is a scientific sense rather than the political sense. This is the thing. These days is to study turbulence and natural systems. The great.

Dimasts are minority and I think they always will be the great strength that they have is that they don't have to agree on an end state. Stace is. Sound like their majority. But then they can't they all want different you. tell Static. utopias And so they may. They may be formidable opponents on a particular issue. Because they can all gang up and and. Fight it. But the truth is the Jeremy Rifkin and Pat Buchanan don't want to live in the same static world. I mean. Even though they're both not only stays is but in the series I put them in the same camp. And they may agree on one cross fire bell. What's bad. So that. There is me I think that. First of all people do always want hope for the future and. And they are willing to undergo an amazing amount of turbulence. To live better and have their children live better. And the other thing is this just a numbers game. That if you don't have to agree on the one best way. It's easier to put together a coalition .

The right one last question. Right here. The corner.

A drink a drink right now or a couple of years ago. Coming back to the century now. Grover Norquist published a book. And which he postulated that. Much of the recent political change. Was due to what he called for remember correctly. The Leave me alone. Coalition. Gun owners home schoolers. Deregulators. Whose sole. Unifying

or similar attitudes were that they want to be left alone. To do whatever it is that they want to do.

Would you call these states this done amiss. Or are they irrelevant to your theory. Different ones fall into different camps. Unfortunately much as I adore Grover. His leave us alone coalition I was to leave you alone on certain things. You know. They're very good on homeschooling. They're not so good on cloning. They're not so good on.

Fetal tissue research are so. I mean I think that is a legitimate political coalition that has worked very well. In a fairly narrow time when I do not think it is a long term. I think it is going to be split apart. By the kinds of issues that I'm talking about. I don't I think there are people in that coalition who while they're very much do want to be left alone themselves. Are not going to be willing to let some of these process. Go forward. And extend that same tolerance others and it's happened on some the Internet issues that spends half an ounce of a biotech. Oh yeah I quite agree with Virginia I think that's a large part of what. What our conversation this afternoon is about. Is Virginia. Is positive what is positing that there is that that coalition is sitting on top of a tectonic plate that is going to split and. She may well be. Be right I'm not sure. And if she is right it will configure the landscape. I mean I think that. I mean there's that there's a question first of all in. Who is in this definition of who is the US was to be. To be left alone and that's why I think cloning is. Is an important issue and probably one of the short list of issues on which I would disagree with. Virginia on substance and that is an experiment that I think. Just shouldn't be undertaken and I think there are philosophical rate. I don't think we I think one of the things that I worry about with region is Virginia's approach is Virginia. Is I think prepared. After we do it to conclude. That was not a good idea. But I do sometimes believe that on some of these things you can apply some moral principles in advance so even in advance before you try it. Maybe even especially before you write it's important to understand why it's not a good idea but. I think Grover. That Grover's. Grover's vision of that coalition was. Was an important one. It worked in one thousand nine hundred four. Didn't work so well in one thousand nine hundred eight for a lot of a lot of reasons and. I think but I think it's not a bad coalition to try to keep a lot and. I think that. I think this. This. Glimmering of a vision of. Esther Dyson and Al Gore is possibly people that have some vision of the future that. I think that is not. Not for you of course. Because you wouldn't.

Well Esther that yeah I mean you know well he's a very important player in a lot of things. But. But that. That may well. That may well be in fact that may well. Augur some division among people who in the one thousand nine hundred ninety S. would have considered themselves libertarians or liberal minded people are more or less on the same side I think that's. Republicans don't get trounced among optimists. Yes and one among pessimists this last. That may just be an in party Al party. Boy. Well. I want to thank Virginia Postrel for being here to discuss her book with us and I want to thank David Frum for such a thoughtful critique. And on your way out to the wine and cheese pick up a copy of the future and its enemies were likely to sell out. Don't

delay. And if you do sell out you can buy on our website. Which the company and you find bookstores everywhere thank you yes I am fine. Thank you.

The Ted K Archive

Virginia Postrel & David From
The Future and Its Enemies: Debate
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