"Americans will prosper as long as we allow our trust in what Virginia Postrel in her brilliant new book, *The Future and Its Enemies*, calls dynamism—freewheeling, even playful, change—[to] overcome our fear of the future."

—JAMES K. GLASSMAN, *THE WASHINGTON POST*

THE FUTURE AND ITS ENEMIES

The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise, and Progress

VIRGINIA POSTREL

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Virginia Postrel

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INTRODUCTION

THE SEARCH FOR TOMORROW

In May 1998, for the third time in its history, Disneyland opened a revamped Tomorrowland. It didn't just add an attraction or two. It reimagined the future. Gone is the impersonal chrome and steel of the old buildings, along with the Mission to Mars ride, the PeopleMover, and the Circle-Vision theater. In their place is a kinder, gentler tomorrow where the buildings are decorated in lush jewel tones and the gardens are filled with fruit trees and edible plants. Tomorrowland still has spaceships aplenty—the new Rocket Rods ride is the fastest in the park—but it hasn't shut out things that grow.

Nor has it jettisoned the past to make way for the future. Just as the food plants connect human beings with nature, the new attractions connect yesterday and tomorrow. The area's design draws on the long-ago visions of Jules Verne and Leonardo da Vinci, and Tomorrowland has restored some of its own history. Its new restaurant is decorated with posters of 1960s rides, and Disney has rebuilt the classic Buck Rogers–style Moonliner rocket it once dumped as out-of-date.

"What we're saying here is that the future has a place for you in it," says Tony Baxter, a senior vice president at Walt Disney Imagineering and the chief spokesman for the project. People can love technology, Disney is betting, and also want a human-centered world of rich texture, warm colors, and sweet-smelling plants. Rather than prescribing a single ideal, the "one best way" to progress, the park offers a "culture of futures" that celebrates many different visions, both historical and contemporary. The goal, says Baxter, "is to get your dream machine

working in your mind, rather than turning you off by creating a clinically sterile future."[1]

The old modernist ideal was indeed too sterile for most tastes. Real people don't want to live in generic high-rise apartments and walk their dogs on treadmills, à la *The Jetsons.* Real people want some connection to the past and to the natural world. And Disneyland is in the business of catering to real people. It can't force customers to embrace its favorite future. All the park can do is propose possible futures and test them against the public's own dreams. When those dreams change, or the present becomes too much like "the future," Tomorrowland has to change too. "It is always right when you do it," says Bruce Gordon, who headed construction of the new Tomorrowland. "The question is, How long will it last?"[2]

To many observers, however, Tomorrowland's most recent adaptations represent not normal evolution but failure and broken promises. These social critics see the revisions as proof that the future is scary, progress a fantasy, and technology suspect. To them, a good future must be static: either the product of detailed, technocratic blueprints or the return to an idealized, stable past. The new Tomorrowland, says popular-culture scholar Norman Klein, is "no longer about planning in the long run, or about social imagineering."[3] To reject planning, in this view, is to reject progress. Writes the cultural critic Tim Appelo:

> A '60s kid could cherish the illusion of evolution as progress, especially if he was watching Tomorrowland's all-robot drama the Carousel of Progress. . . . Now, however, everybody thinks the jig is up for apes like us. . . . The Imagineers know we're scared of the future, and they've booted the scary old-fashioned Tomorrowland machines from their garden. . . . The old Disney dream of erecting a futuristic techno-paradise is dead.

Appelo quotes Judith Adams, the author of a book on the meaning and history of amusement parks, who claims that we have come to see technology as "a killing thing." It is, she says, something used "to destroy your peers, so you can be more successful yourself. You're never caught up with technology. You're never safe."[4] The new Tomorrowland, in this assessment, proves technology is bad. After all, it's always changing.

The idea that to be good the future must be finite and "safe" is a

common one. Disneyland itself once promised that sort of carefully controlled future. When the park was new in the late 1950s, many people saw it as a model of perfection not just for amusement parks but for the rest of life. City planning was in its heyday, and observers as varied as Vice President Richard Nixon and science-fiction writer Ray Bradbury praised Disney's meticulously designed world as the way all of society ought to be: a contrast to the spontaneous sprawl of southern California and the untidiness of eastern cities. Bradbury even suggested that Walt Disney run for mayor of Los Angeles, so he could impose his vision on that city.

But Tomorrowland undercut this static ideal. Its revisions in the 1950s and mid-1960s, writes historian John Findlay, "dramatized Disneyland's lack of control over the future. The success of the theme park was predicated on complete mastery of its world, but the future refused to cooperate, and thus it compelled the theme park to make constant adjustments."[5] Even the hypercontrolled world of the park was always changing, for two reasons. First, Disneyland was a competitive business. It could not afford to insist on a "tomorrow" that failed to attract customers, whether because of changing tastes, new inventions, or better rides elsewhere. When Tomorrowland added the Star Tours flight simulator in 1987, for instance, Disney wasn't revising the future. It was conceding the popularity of George Lucas's space opera; *Star Wars* wasn't even a Disney movie.

Second, the park's managers were always learning. Disneyland itself was a technology you could never catch up with. Not just Tomorrowland but all of the park continuously evolved. True, Disneyland started from scratch; the company bulldozed and reshaped every bit of the original landscape. Once established, however, Disneyland took on a life of its own, adapting through trial and error: The Autopia ride, which Walt Disney imagined as a great way for kids to learn the rules of the road, unexpectedly turned into a demolition derby, as wild-eyed children smashed all but six of the original thirty-six cars; the ride was remodeled to keep the miniature cars in their lanes. Another Walt favorite, the live circus, was eliminated after animals kept escaping; llamas stampeded through the streets and once, during a parade, a tiger and a panther smashed through the barrier separating them and began tearing each other apart.

Not every lesson was so dramatic or embarrassing. Over time, the

park replaced individual-ride tickets with ticket books and later with all-day, one-fee passes. It added whole new "lands," such as Toontown and New Orleans Square, and updated old ones. Disneyland was dedicated to what Walt Disney called "plussing": continuous improvement through both new ideas and changes to existing attractions. Control freak that he was, Disney loved the revisions the theme park allowed. Its open-endedness appealed to his desire for perfection. "If there's something I don't like at Disneyland, I can correct it," he once said. "I can always change it [here], but not in the films." The great thing about the park was that it "will never be finished. . . . It's alive."[6]

Outside Disneyland's walls, too, the future is alive. Like the present, the future is not a single, uniform state but an ongoing process that reflects the plenitude of human life. There is in fact no single future; "the" future encompasses the many microfutures of individuals and their associations. It includes all the things we learn about ourselves and the world, all the incremental improvements we discover, all our new ideas, and all the new ways we express and recombine them. As a system, the future is natural, out of anyone's control, though it is driven by the artificial: by individual attempts (including Disneyland) to fashion realms of personal control. This open-ended future can't be contained in the vision of a single person or organization. And, as Judith Adams says of technology, it is something we can never be caught up with.

How we feel about the evolving future tells us who we are as individuals and as a civilization: Do we search for *stasis*—a regulated, engineered world? Or do we embrace *dynamism*—a world of constant creation, discovery, and competition? Do we value stability and control, or evolution and learning? Do we declare with Appelo that "we're scared of the future" and join Adams in decrying technology as "a killing thing"? Or do we see technology as an expression of human creativity and the future as inviting? Do we think that progress requires a central blueprint, or do we see it as a decentralized, evolutionary process? Do we consider mistakes permanent disasters, or the correctable by-products of experimentation? Do we crave predictability, or relish surprise? These two poles, stasis and dynamism, increasingly define our political, intellectual, and cultural landscape. The central question of our time is what to do about the future. And that question creates a deep divide.

"I think there's a personality that goes with this kind of thing," says economist Brian Arthur about the emerging science of complexity, which studies dynamic systems. "It's people who like process and pattern, as opposed to people who are comfortable with stasis. . . . I know that every time in my life that I've run across simple rules giving rise to emergent, complex messiness, I've just said, 'Ah, isn't that lovely!' And I think that sometimes, when other people run across it, they recoil."[7]

The future we face at the dawn of the twenty-first century is, like all futures left to themselves, "emergent, complex messiness." Its "messiness" lies not in disorder, but in an order that is unpredictable, spontaneous, and ever shifting, a pattern created by millions of uncoordinated, independent decisions. That pattern contains not just a few high-tech gizmos, but all the variegated aspects of life. As people create and sell products or services, adopt new fashions of speech or dress, form families and choose home towns, make medical decisions and seek spiritual insights, investigate the universe and invent new forms of art, these actions shape a future no one can see, a future that is dynamic and inherently unstable.

That instability, or our awareness of it, is heightened by the fluidity of contemporary life: by the ease with which ideas and messages, goods and people, cross borders; by technologies that seek to surpass the quickness of the human mind and overcome the constraints of the human body; by the "universal solvents" of commerce and popular culture;[8] by the dissolution or reformation of established institutions, particularly large corporations, and the rise of new ones; by the synthesis of East and West, of ancient and modern—by the combination and recombination of seemingly every artifact of human culture. Ours is a magnificently creative era. But that creativity produces change, and that change attracts enemies, philosophical as well as self-interested.

With some exceptions, the enemies of the future aim their attacks not at creativity itself but at the dynamic processes through which it is carried. In our post–Cold War era, for instance, free markets are recognized as powerful forces for social, cultural, and technological change—liberating in the eyes of some, threatening to others. The same is true for markets in ideas: for free speech and worldwide communication; for what John Stuart Mill called "experiments in living"; for scientific research, artistic expression, and technological innovation. All of these processes are shaping an unknown, and unknowable,

future. Some people look at such diverse, decentralized, choice-driven systems and rejoice, even when they don't like particular choices. Others recoil. In pursuit of stability and control, they seek to eliminate or curb these unruly, too-creative forces.

Stasists and dynamists are thus divided not just by simple, short-term policy issues but by fundamental disagreements about the way the world works. They clash over the nature of progress and over its desirability: Does it require a plan to reach a specified goal? Or is it an unbounded process of exploration and discovery? Does the quest for improvement express destructive, nihilistic discontent, or the highest human qualities? Does progress depend on puritanical repression or a playful spirit?

Stasists and dynamists disagree about the limits and use of knowledge. Stasists demand that knowledge be articulated and easily shared. Dynamists, by contrast, appreciate dispersed, often tacit knowledge. They recognize the limits of human minds even as they celebrate learning.

Those conflicts lead to very different beliefs about good institutions and rules: Stasists seek specifics to govern each new situation and keep things under control. Dynamists want to limit universal rule making to broadly applicable and rarely changed principles, within which people can create and test countless combinations. Stasists want their detailed rules to apply to everyone; dynamists prefer competing, nested rule sets. (Disneyland's rules may be good for the park, but that doesn't make them the right rules for everyone else.) Such disagreements have political ramifications that go much deeper than the short-term business of campaigns and legislation. They affect our governing assumptions about how political, economic, social, intellectual, and cultural systems work; what those systems should value; and what they mean.

These are not the comfortable old Cold War divisions of hawks and doves, egalitarians and individualists, left and right. Nor are they the one-dimensional labels of technophile and technophobe, optimist and pessimist, or libertarian and statist that pundits sometimes grab to replace the old categories. They contain elements of those simpler classifications, but they are much richer, encompassing more aspects of life—more aspects of the emergent, complex future.

This book examines the clash between stasis and dynamism and explores those contrasting views. It starts by recognizing that the distinction between dynamism and stasis is a real and important one that

explains much that otherwise appears puzzling in our intellectual and political life. Beyond that recognition, it explores what dynamism is and how it works: What are the processes through which human creativity produces progress, prosperity, happiness, and freedom? What are the characteristics of a dynamic civilization, and how do they differ from the ways in which we usually hear our world described?

An unabashedly dynamist work, *The Future and Its Enemies* devotes most of its pages to limning the dynamic vision, which has rarely been articulated in full. It does not pretend to invent that vision from scratch or claim to discover new truths for a new age. In true dynamist fashion, it builds on the knowledge and experience of the past to better understand how dynamic systems work in general—and how, therefore, they work in our own particular time, place, and circumstances. It unites the work of scholars from many different fields and relates them to the textures of life in an evolving world, past, present, and future.

As a result, the book's rhetorical choices break the conventions of serious nonfiction: Why talk about political philosophy and hairstyling, economics and computer games, environmental policy and contact lenses, legal theory and doughnut shops, bioethics and Post-it notes in the same work? Why mix the high and the low, the masculine and the feminine, the exalted and the mundane, the abstract and the concrete? Why not stick to a single, static genre? It would make the book so much easier to sell.

The question, of course, answers itself. Static visions depend on hiding the connections between disparate aspects of life. My purpose is to expose them. Stasists gain credibility by treating dynamism as a shallow fad. My aim is to reveal its rich heritage. Stasists thrive by issuing prescriptions that ignore the details of life, believing that details are unimportant, the stuff of anonymous specialists, and can safely be ignored. My goal is to encourage respect for those details, even when they can only be evoked in passing. Piling up widely divergent examples, reflecting a tiny sample of the plenitude of life, is one way to do that.

Stasist social criticism—which is to say essentially all current social criticism—brings up the specifics of life only to sneer at or bash them. Critics assume that readers will share their attitudes and will see contemporary life as a problem demanding immediate action by the powerful and wise. This relentlessly hostile view of how we live, and how we may come to live, is distorted and dangerous. It overvalues the

tastes of an articulate elite, compares the real world of trade-offs to fantasies of utopia, omits important details and connections, and confuses temporary growing pains with permanent catastrophes. It demoralizes and devalues the creative minds on whom our future depends. And it encourages the coercive use of political power to wipe out choice, forbid experimentation, short-circuit feedback, and trammel progress.

Along the way, therefore, *The Future and Its Enemies* tries to capture some of the wonders we take for granted. It celebrates the complexities and surprises of the contemporary world, and of the world to come. I hope that instinctive dynamists will see themselves in that world, and will work to protect the systems that make it possible. The evolving future is for humans, just as Tony Baxter says. But sometimes we need a reminder that it's not confined to Disneyland.

A word about terminology: *Stasis* and *dynamism* are ordinary words, and I use them in a fairly ordinary way, to represent stable or evolving states. The only variation from the conventional meaning is that I use *dynamism* more precisely, meaning not just change but evolution through variation, feedback, and adaptation. Stasis and dynamism may be actual or envisioned states; their qualities, in either case, are described as *static* or *dynamic.* The coined words *stasist* and *dynamist*—which, like *feminist* or *socialist,* may be either nouns or adjectives—refer to intellectual positions and the people who hold them. A dynamist is one who supports dynamism.

For readers who would like more information about the ideas in this book, I have established a Web site at www.dynamist.com.

THE FUTURE AND ITS ENEMIES

CHAPTER ONE

THE ONE BEST WAY

One of the most common rituals in American political life is the television debate between right and left. Producers round up conservative and liberal representatives and set them to arguing with each other: about the federal budget, campaign finance, gun control, or whatever other issue is hot that particular day. Since the purpose is as much to entertain as to inform, and since many shows like to feature politicians, these debates tend to be predictable. They rehash familiar arguments, repeat familiar sound bites, and confirm traditional views of the political landscape.

Nowhere is the ritual more established than on CNN's *Crossfire.* The hosts and their guests are stuffed into familiar boxes—even positioned on the right or left of the TV screen according to political convention—and are expected to behave predictably.

Which is why the first *Crossfire* of 1995 was so remarkable.

For starters, the subject was an unusual one for a Washington show: the future. Not the future of the new Republican-led Congress or of welfare reform or of Bill Clinton's political career, but the future in general. The guests were Jeremy Rifkin, the well-known antitechnology activist, and Ed Cornish, the president of the World Future Society. Rifkin sat on the left, aligned with Michael Kinsley; Cornish on the right, aligned with Pat Buchanan.

Or at least that was how the producers planned it. That was how conventional politics prescribed it. Rifkin, the former antiwar protester and darling of environmentalists, clearly belongs to the left. Cornish, a technophile, becomes a right-winger by default. And hosts Kinsley and Buchanan were, of course, hired for their political positions.

But as soon as the discussion began, the entire format broke down.

Buchanan and Rifkin turned out to be soulmates. Rifkin answered Buchanan's opening question with a fearful description of "this new global high-tech economy" as a cruel destroyer of jobs. "You sound like a Pat Buchanan column," replied his interrogator. "I agree."

Both men were deeply pessimistic about the future, upset about changes in the world of work, and desperate to find government policies to restore the good old days. Both spoke resentfully of the "knowledge sector." Neither had anything good to say about new technologies. Neither could imagine how ordinary people could possibly cope with economic changes. "There are many, many Americans who are not equipped to do this kind of work. They're the ones losing their jobs," said Buchanan. Responded Rifkin: "Let me say I find myself in a position of agreeing with Pat once again, which gives me alarm, but I really do agree with you on this one."[1]

It was surely a bad day for the *Crossfire* bookers. They had managed to call the show's entire premise into question. How could such a thing happen? How could *Crossfire* become a love-in between Jeremy Rifkin and Pat Buchanan?

The problem lay not in the bookers' Rolodexes but in the conventional categories. Like a geographical territory, our political, cultural, and intellectual landscape can be divided many different ways. The features may be fairly stable, but the boundary lines change. A defining question in one era—whether to nationalize the railroads, give women the vote, outlaw racial segregation, or abolish the draft—may be settled, and therefore meaningless, in another. Or questions may be important to individuals without creating meaningful political divisions: Nowadays, "conservatives" may support careers for women, and "liberals" may back the death penalty; not since Walter Mondale's disastrous presidential bid have Democrats made raising taxes a defining "liberal" position. Similarly, the economic issues that have divided the American political landscape matter little in Israel, where defense and foreign policy dominate the debate.

Once upon a time, before the Berlin Wall came down, Buchanan and Rifkin did indeed belong on opposite sides of the *Crossfire* table. Whatever agreements they might have had about the evils of corporate restructuring, the dangers of new technologies, or the rigidity of job skills paled in comparison to their fundamental disagreements about how to deal with the Soviet Union. That defining issue has now van-

ished, and others have faded. Government spending is no longer seen, even by most liberals who support it, as a simple solution to the problems of poverty. Nor do conservatives all agree that expansive military spending and vigorous engagement abroad are the best approach to American defense. There are plenty of practical policy differences over such issues, but they no longer define clear ideological camps. People can change their minds without changing their political identities.

Meanwhile, seemingly strange alliances have popped up on subjects no one paid much attention to until recently. Treaties to loosen trade restrictions, once uncontroversial beyond a few protection-seeking industries, draw fierce opposition from a left-right coalition that includes both Rifkin and Buchanan. Indeed, the subtitle of Buchanan's latest book is *How American Sovereignty and Social Justice Are Being Sacrificed to the Gods of the Global Economy,* a bid to woo both "conservatives" (worried about "sovereignty") and "liberals" (concerned about "social justice").[2] In its lobbying efforts, the antitrade alliance emphasizes its apparent breadth; it has described itself as "a strikingly broad cross-section" and the "broadest range of [the] American political spectrum ever to jointly petition a president." In 1994, for example, a motley collection of activists—including not only Buchanan and Rifkin but consumerist Ralph Nader and New Right organizer Paul Weyrich, feminist Gloria Steinem and antifeminist Phyllis Schlafly—all signed a letter opposing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.[3]

Immigration attracts similar left-right opposition. In 1998, many leftists were shocked when the Sierra Club held a membership vote on whether to take an official stance supporting "an end to U.S. population growth . . . through reduction in net immigration," essentially an immigration moratorium. "Zealots Target Sierra Club," read a headline in the left-leaning *L.A. Weekly.* "The specter of xenophobic anti-immigrant sentiment now threatens to swallow the Green movement whole," said the article.[4] (The measure was defeated, 60 percent to 40 percent.) The movement to drastically curtail U.S. legal immigration levels has vocal conservative supporters, including Buchanan, former *National Review* senior editor Peter Brimelow, and Reagan administration immigration commissioner Alan Nelson. But the Sierra Club measure was supported by such leading environmentalists as Worldwatch Institute head Lester Brown, Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, and Earth First! founder

Dave Foreman. The foremost anti-immigration group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, was founded by population-control advocates from the green movement. And many smaller anti-immigration groups, such as the Carrying Capacity Network, draw almost entirely from the environmentalist left.[5]

We have also seen increasing numbers of "conservatives" and "liberals" uniting in opposition to new technologies. Thus Neil Postman, the left-wing media and technology critic, writes in the neoconservative magazine *First Things* that "our technological ingenuity transformed information into a form of garbage, and ourselves into garbage collectors. . . . Information is now a commodity that is bought and sold."[6] To oppose genetic patents, Rifkin, in 1995, rallied nearly two hundred religious leaders, prominently including representatives of the conservative Southern Baptist Convention.[7] Self-styled neo-Luddite Kirkpatrick Sale, a well-known environmentalist, concludes antitechnology speeches by smashing computers with a sledgehammer;[8] the cover of the conservative *Weekly Standard* magazine features a sledgehammer crashing into a computer screen, with the headline "Smash the Internet."[9]

Economic and cultural dynamism get similar treatment. The *Standard* praises cultural critic Tom Frank, an anticommerce leftist, for promoting the idea that "both free speech and a free market did much to democratize values and attitudes that previous generations would have largely dismissed as pernicious or infantile."[10] Attacking management guru Tom Peters for his emphasis on change, flexibility, and innovation, Frank himself waxes conservative. He denounces markets for disrupting the social order: "Capitalism is no longer said [by management thinkers] to be a matter of enforcing order, but of destroying it. This new commercial ethos, not a few movies and rap albums, is the root cause of the unease many Americans feel about the culture around them."[11] Former Clinton aide William Galston praises Republican Bill Bennett for his attacks on market-driven popular culture: "The invisible hand," says Galston, "no more reliably produces a sound cultural environment than it does a sound natural environment."[12]

What all these left-right alliances have in common is a sense of anguish over the open-ended future: a future that no Galston, Bennett, Frank, or Buchanan can control or predict, a future too diverse and fluid for critics to comprehend. Their anguish is not always coher-

ent, nor is it expected to be. If stasist criticisms are impossibly vague, they seem all the more profound. What matters is the general message: The world has gone terribly wrong, and someone needs to take control and make things right.

"The task of finding true meaning in a hyper-technologized and increasingly pointless society becomes ever more difficult. A gnawing feeling of hopelessness grows from the sense that living as a hero, or heroine, in one's own life is no longer possible," writes Gary Chapman, the former executive director of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility and now a technology critic. "The all-pervasive 'system' we've created closes off both the value of ordinary virtue and any escape routes. . . . How do we smash this particular system and build an alternative we can be proud of?"[13]

A mere three decades ago, "the system" looked very different. Technology, its critics believed, was oppressive; even its supporters said it demanded predictability and order. Back then, what young leftists like Chapman wanted to smash was not the dynamic, out-of-control future but the static, hypercontrolled present. Technocracy and repression, not dynamism and creativity, were the enemy embodied in technology. Conventional wisdom had declared the market an obsolete myth, too fragmented and unpredictable to manage or produce advanced technology. Bigness, stability, and planning ruled the imagination of sophisticates.

To see how dramatically attitudes have changed, consider the following 1974 news report on the Nixon administration's plans to deal with energy shortages:

> What happens when spring's heavy driving begins depends on when word can be passed to U.S. refineries to start cutting back on production of heating oil and increasing output of gasoline. . . . That decision, which could come at any time, is up to Federal Energy Office chief William E. Simon. One of his aides says:
>
> "It's absolutely critical. If we decide to trigger the switch to gasoline and a long cold wave hits, heating-oil stocks might not last to spring. Heaven help us if we're wrong."
>
> Meanwhile Simon and his staff are putting final touches on the Administration's gasoline-rationing plan. . . .

> The number of gallons a driver would be allotted is to depend on where he lives. Those in rural areas, or in urban communities of less than 100,000 people, would get the most. Drivers in large cities with good mass transit would get the least.
>
> Present estimates by the Federal Energy Office show a gasoline shortage of 1.2 million barrels a day, or about 20 per cent below normal demand. At that rate, officials say the maximum ration per driver would be 41 gallons a month. Residents of cities with fair mass-transit facilities would get 37 gallons, while those in areas with good mass transit would get 33 gallons.[14]

As a description of the U.S. government at work—under a Republican administration, no less—this perfectly routine news story reads like science fiction. Only a quarter-century ago, however, it was an obvious truth that central bureaucrats could efficiently decide when refineries should switch from heating oil to gasoline and could wisely allocate gasoline supplies, carefully differentiating between drivers who needed thirty-seven gallons a month and those who required forty-one. Such technocratic manipulations were not limited to Soviet-style planning.

"The enemies of the market are . . . not the socialists," wrote the economist John Kenneth Galbraith in his influential 1967 book, *The New Industrial State.* "It is advanced technology and the specialization of men and process that this requires and the resulting commitment of time and capital. These make the market work badly when the need is for greatly enhanced reliability—when planning is essential." We lived, critics and supporters agreed, in what Galbraith called "the technostructure," an oligopolistic industrial state where the future was carefully planned in advance, either through government or private bureaucracy. "With the rise of the modern corporation," wrote Galbraith, "the emergence of the organization required by modern technology and planning and the divorce of the owner of the capital from control of the enterprise, the entrepreneur no longer exists as an individual person in the mature industrial enterprise."[15]

In the era of Bill Gates, Ted Turner, and Andy Grove, no one much believes that any more. The efficient capital markets and entrepreneurship that Galbraith consigned to the crazed imagination of free-market ideologues are all too real and disruptive. Contrary to his confident claims, technology generates change, not predictability, and

corporations cherish flexibility, leanness, and just-in-time management. The small and adaptable flourish. And the quest for freedom and authenticity that once inspired many of Chapman's friends on the left has mutated into the cultural—and business—dynamism that today disconcerts stasists from Pat Buchanan and Bill Bennett to Jeremy Rifkin and Tom Frank.

Our new awareness of how dynamic the world really is has united two types of stasists who would have once been bitter enemies: *reactionaries,* whose central value is stability, and *technocrats,* whose central value is control.[16] Reactionaries seek to reverse change, restoring the literal or imagined past and holding it in place. A few decades ago, they aimed their criticism at Galbraithean technocracy. Today they attack dynamism, often in alliance with their former adversaries. Technocrats, for their part, promise to manage change, centrally directing "progress" according to a predictable plan. (That plan may be informed by reactionary values, making the categories somewhat blurry; although they are more technocrats than true reactionaries, Bennett and Galston inhabit the border regions.) Despite their shared devotion to stasis, reactionaries and technocrats are sufficiently distinct that it makes sense to examine each category separately.

Buchanan expresses reactionary ideas when he yearns for "the kind of social stability, rootedness . . . we all used to know," the world in which his father lived in the same place and worked at the same job his whole life. International trade, he warns, disrupts that stability and should be controlled.[17] In his book *The Way,* the influential British green Edward Goldsmith similarly emphasizes stability, imagining a quiet and peaceful past in contrast to dynamic, progress-driven modernity: "It is the failure of modern man to observe the constraints necessary for maintaining the integrity and stability of the various social and ecological systems of which he is a part that is giving rise to their disintegration and destabilization, of which the increased incidence of discontinuities such as wars, massacres, droughts, floods, famines, epidemics and climatic change are but the symptoms."[18]

On a more violent note, the Unabomber echoes countless environmentalist tracts: "For primitive societies the natural world (which usually changes only slowly) provided a stable framework and therefore a sense of security. In the modern world it is human society that dominates nature rather than the other way around, and modern society

changes very rapidly owing to technological change. Thus there is no stable framework. . . . The technophiles are taking us all on an utterly reckless ride into the unknown."[19]

Technocrats, by contrast, are less likely to emphasize the problem of social instability when they criticize the unruly vitality of contemporary life. They do not celebrate the primitive or traditional. Rather, they worry about the government's inability to control dynamism. Their nostalgia is for the era of Galbraithean certainties. In a 1997 essay for *Foreign Affairs,* the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., condemns the "onrush of capitalism" for its "disruptive consequences." While the economist Joseph Schumpeter depicted the "creative destruction" of the market as a strength, emphasizing its creativity, Schlesinger sees it as a horror. He warns of dire results from the dynamism of global trade and new technologies:

> The computer turns the untrammeled market into a global juggernaut crashing across frontiers, enfeebling national powers of taxation and regulation, undercutting national management of interest rates and exchange rates, widening disparities of wealth both within and between nations, dragging down labor standards, degrading the environment, denying nations the shaping of their own economic destiny, accountable to no one, creating a world economy without a world polity.[20]

Across the Atlantic, the French bureaucrat-turned-consultant Jacques Attali warns that "the market economy today is more dynamic than democracy" and that its dynamism is dangerous. Abetted by the decentralizing power of the Internet and the mobility of "high-tech nomads," he argues, the dynamic marketplace erodes the ability of political elites to enforce collective decisions—a power he equates with "democracy": "Under such circumstances, Western civilization is bound to collapse."[21] What terrifies technocrats is not that the future will depart from a traditional ideal but that it will be unpredictable and beyond the control of professional wise men.

The characteristic values of reactionaries are continuity, rootedness, and geographically defined community. They are generally anticosmopolitan, antitechnology, anticommercial, antispecialization, and antimobility. They draw on a powerful romantic tradition that gives their politics a poetic, emotional appeal, especially to people with liter-

ary sensibilities. With some exceptions, they oppose not only the future but the present and the recent past, the industrial as well as the postindustrial era. The reactionary vision is one of peasant virtues, of the imagined harmonies and, above all, the imagined predictability of traditional life. It idealizes life without movement: In the reactionary ideal, people know and keep their places, geographically as well as socially, and tradition is undisturbed by ambition or invention. "The central concept of wisdom is permanence," wrote E. F. Schumacher, the environmentalist guru, in *Small Is Beautiful.*[22]

In part because they do not fit neatly into left-right categories, reactionary thinkers are rarely acknowledged in conventional discussions. But their ideas regularly turn up in books from major publishers, in influential magazines such as *Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly,* and on the opinion pages of leading newspapers. Their work shapes the worldview of the yuppie-green consumers of the *Utne Reader* and of the trade-hawk followers of Pat Buchanan. The most hackneyed speech about "sustainable development," "national sovereignty," or "preserving community" is but one or two footnotes away from the work of reactionary intellectuals such as Schumacher.

Although they represent a minority position, reactionary ideas have tremendous cultural vitality. Reactionaries speak directly to the most salient aspects of contemporary life: technological change, commercial fluidity, biological transformation, changing social roles, cultural mixing, international trade, and instant communication. They see these changes as critically important, and, as the old *National Review* motto had it, they are determined to "stand athwart history, yelling, 'Stop!'" Merely by acknowledging the dynamism of contemporary life, reactionaries win points for insight. And in the eyes of more conventional thinkers, denouncing change makes them seem wise.

By personal history or political background, many reactionaries are classified as leftists. Whether cultural critics or environmentalists, however, that label fits them awkwardly. Their tradition-bound views of the good life make them true conservatives. And they frequently voice disappointment that their views aren't shared by mainstream Republicans. The late social critic Christopher Lasch, a scourge of the left from which he came, complained, "A movement calling itself conservative might have been expected to associate itself with the demand for limits not only on economic growth but on the conquest of space,

the technological conquest of the environment, and the ungodly ambition to acquire godlike powers over nature. Reaganites, however, condemned the demand for limits as another counsel of doom."[23]

As Buchanan's political career suggests, however, there is indeed a strong reactionary strain among elements of the Cold War right. Fred Iklé, the undersecretary of defense for policy in the very Reagan administration Lasch denounces, now attacks as "Jacobins" those conservatives who support "the philosophy of perpetual growth" and scorns as "xenophilia" the notion that individuals should ideally be free to trade across national borders.[24] He laments that "the intellectuals' jubilation throughout the world about our ever-expanding, homogenizing, perpetually-GNP-increasing global market creates a sense of inevitability even among the wisest of conservative thinkers."[25] Another conservative defense intellectual, Edward N. Luttwak, calls for "re-regulation and other measures to stabilize the economy, thus favoring *Gemeinschaft* over efficient *Gesellschaft*"—traditional, geographically settled life over cosmopolitan choice and fluidity.[26] He endorses the Unabomber's critique of conservatives as "fools [who] whine about the decay of traditional values, yet they enthusiastically support technological progress and economic growth."[27]

Similarly, the journalist Charlotte Allen excoriates fellow conservatives who support the "creative destruction" of market processes. She writes in the liberal *Washington Monthly:*

> Most of today's conservatives refuse to support the traditional social and economic arrangements—small towns, extended families, generational roots, secure livelihoods, and respect for the land—that create the stability in which a sense of duty to others thrives. Instead, conservatives function as shills for big business and, as if America weren't already the most prosperous country on Earth, "growth"—a perpetual frenzy of economic development designed to make life ever more expensive and transform people into slaves of consumption.

By "support" traditional arrangements, Allen does not mean simply "favor" or "adhere to" but rather "enforce through political action." Among her prescriptions: "Conservatives should work to destroy agribusiness" and "don't let Wal Mart wreck *your* downtown."[28] Both issues have in fact catalyzed coalitions of reactionaries from the "left" and the "right."

ment stores bottom out prices, muscle out local businesses, and eradicate local culture." Once transformed into a platform bland enough for yuppie consumption, the stability of self-sufficiency becomes the stability of economic protectionism. The goal is to eliminate price-cutting competition, tacky merchandise, and international trade. Along these lines, Werbach zealously attacks Wal-Mart, which sells, he says, "row upon row of imported, low-quality junk—anything you might need for your work, home, or pleasure."

Even in Werbach's suburbanized vision, however, the ideal remains the static peasant village, where "whatever is produced in the village must be used, first and foremost, by the members of the village."[40] This peasant ideal—the good life imagined as hand-spinning and subsistence farming—runs through much green thought. Drawn originally from the writings of Mohandas Gandhi, it was popularized by one of the most influential environmentalist works ever, *Small Is Beautiful.* In that book, E. F. Schumacher praises peasant societies, singling out Burma in particular, for having less "pressure and strain of living" than developed countries. He sharply criticizes modern transportation and communications for making people "footloose":

> Everything in this world has to have a *structure,* otherwise it is chaos. Before the advent of mass transport and mass communications, the structure was simply there, because people were relatively immobile. . . . Now a great deal of structure has collapsed, and a country is like a big cargo ship in which the load is in no way secured. It tilts, and all the load slips over, and the ship founders. . . . Everything and everybody has become mobile. All structures are threatened, and all structures are *vulnerable* to an extent that they have never been before.[41]

Lurking in the background, such reactionary attitudes exercise a powerful, though sometimes indirect, influence on most discussions of environmental policy. And they help explain trends that have puzzled observers who see environmentalism as simply a "left-wing" phenomenon. A cultural–political movement opposed to mobility and change will, over time, come to support restrictions on immigration, technology, and trade, regardless of what its leftist allies think.

It may even come to extol values and people "the left" has traditionally scorned. The Marxist historian Eugene Genovese, once a supporter of Soviet socialism, now praises the southern conservative

tradition represented by the Agrarians as the "most impressive native-born critique of our national development, of liberalism, and of the more disquieting features of the modern world." Among its other virtues, he notes, southern traditionalism has been "critical of capitalism's cash-nexus, recognizing it as a revolutionary solvent of social relations."[42]

Looking at a different traditionalist model, Lasch wrote fondly of the parochialism of urban ethnic neighborhoods:

> Lower-middle-class culture, now as in the past, is organized around the family, church, and neighborhood. It values the community's continuity more highly than individual advancement, solidarity more highly than social mobility. Conventional ideals of success play a less important part in lower-middle-class life than the maintenance of existing ways. . . . [Anthony] Lukas [in his chronicle of the Boston busing battles] contrasted the "Charlestown ethic of getting by" with the "American imperative to get ahead." The people of Charlestown, deserted by the migration of more ambitious neighbors to the suburbs, had renounced "opportunity, advancement, adventure" for the "reassurance of community, solidarity, and camaraderie."[43]

Buchanan's stump speeches and columns similarly invoke the stability of such neighborhoods and of industrial work—the Washington parish of his childhood, the steel mills of western Pennsylvania, the forges and factories of the industrial heartland. And Buchanan inspires disconcerted praise on the left: "I've been waiting my whole life for someone running for president to talk about the Fortune 500 as the enemy," *Village Voice* writer Tom Carson told him, "and when I finally get my wish, it turns out to be you."[44]

As Buchanan illustrates, in practical political terms the craving for stability translates most prominently into reactionary alliances against freer international trade—a stasist cause that neatly aligns the nationalism of Buchananites with the anticommerce instincts of greens. (It also draws ordinary interest-group support from unions and protection-seeking industries.) Analyzing the 1997 defeat of a bill to extend the president's "fast track" authority to negotiate trade agreements, *New Republic* writer Peter Beinart found many seemingly strange currents:

> I interviewed Congressman Cliff Stearns, a hard right, anti–fast track Florida Republican who last year held a press conference with Pat

Buchanan to oppose the Mexican bailout. "The administration cannot make the argument that the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] has been a winner," he said. "Public Citizen says 500,000 jobs have been lost." I wasn't sure that I had heard him correctly. "You're quoting Public Citizen, Ralph Nader's group?" I asked. "Oh," he replied, "let's not use that." Then, 30 seconds later, he noted that "the Economic Policy Institute says 11,300 jobs have been lost in Florida [as a result of NAFTA]." The Economic Policy Institute is a liberal think tank heavily funded by unions.

The exchange points to the most peculiar aspect of the nationalist transformation. In myriad small ways, the boundaries between right-wing anti–free traders and left-wing anti–free traders are blurring. . . . Last year, Pat Choate [a leading trade critic and Ross Perot's running mate in 1996] convinced the United Auto Workers to put up money for the United Broadcasting Network (UBN). The network, which now reaches 200 markets, boasts shows hosted by [Pat's sister] Bay Buchanan; nationalist San Diego Republican Duncan Hunter; Representative Marcy Kaptur, a passionate anti–fast track Democrat from Toledo; and populist Jim Hightower, the former Democratic Agriculture Commissioner of Texas.[45]

Despite intense lobbying by both the Clinton administration and the Republican congressional leadership, fast track went down to a shocking defeat, beaten by a reactionary coalition that defied the old categories.

Such victories are relatively rare, because the full reactionary package is a tough sell in contemporary America. Even trade protection, which enjoys support from interest groups that stand to benefit, has proven a consistent loser in presidential campaigns. And few people want to smash their computers, give up off-season fruits and vegetables, turn their backs on modern medicine, move in with their cousins and in-laws, or forgo higher incomes. Even fewer resonate to slogans like "Back to the Pleistocene!" But if, like Allen and Werbach, you want to stifle agribusiness and shut down Wal-Mart; if, like Schumacher and Sale, you want to make people less footloose and limit the size of cities; if, like Rifkin, you want to ban genetic engineering or, like Buchanan, you want to keep out foreign people and foreign goods; if, like Frank and Bennett, you want to rein in advertising and control popular culture, you can find powerful allies—and a friendly political

41. Steve Forbes press conference, Irvine, California, January 10, 1996.
42. *Inside Politics,* CNN, March 14, 1996.
43. "Indecency" is a legal category, distinct from "obscenity," that includes speech that is constitutionally protected in print but has been prohibited in broadcasting on the grounds that it is unfit for children. Radio shock jock Howard Stern is the most famous recent violator of indecency regulations; George Carlin's "Seven Dirty Words" routine is the most famous historical example.
44. Congressmen Christopher Cox and Ron Wyden, press release, June 30, 1995, p. 2.
45. Lynn Scarlett, interview with the author, December 21, 1997.
46. Godwin, interview with the author.
47. Randal O'Toole, interview with the author, December 12, 1997. During the 1980s, O'Toole studied the forest plans from more than half the national forests and came to the conclusion that the only way to explain the seemingly inexplicable behavior of the foresters was that they were responding to the incentives established by Congress and doing what maximized their budgets. In some cases, the response was ingenious. National forests are given no money for prescribed burning (which is necessary to allow sequoia seeds to germinate) unless the fire is part of a reforestation effort. So Sequoia National Forest clear-cut forty acres, leaving only one giant sequoia standing. It then did the burn, to allow the seeds from that tree to grow. Unfortunately, the shade from a single tree was insufficient to shelter the seedlings, and O'Toole could find only a single one surviving when he visited the forest.
48. Rauch, *Demosclerosis,* pp. 145, 178.
49. Mike Godwin, *Cyber Rights: Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age* (New York: Times Books, 1998), p. 300.
50. Thomas Sowell, *The Economics and Politics of Race: An International Perspective* (New York: Quill, 1983), pp. 243, 257.
51. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990) pp. 178–179.
52. Jonathan Kaufman, "How Cambodians Came to Control California Doughnuts," *The Wall Street Journal,* February 22, 1995, p. A-1.
53. Bob Secter, "Pol Pot Reprise. Who's Guarding the Guardians?" *Chicago Tribune,* August 3, 1997, Perspective section, p. 1. The Cambodian killing fields are a monument to what it really takes to turn even a less-developed modern society into the green-reactionary dream of a world without cities, trade, technology, or knowledge workers.
54. Jesse H. Ausubel, "Regularities in Technological Development: An Environmental View," *Technology and Environment,* eds. Jesse H. Ausubel and Hedy E. Sladovich (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989), p. 72.
55. Robert H. Williams, Eric D. Larson, and Marc H. Ross, "Materials, Affluence, and Industrial Energy Use," *Annual Review of Energy* (1987), pp. 99–144.
56. John Tierney, "Betting on the Planet," *The New York Times Magazine,* December 2, 1990, pp. 52–53, 74–81: "In October 1980 the Ehrlich group bet $1,000 on five metals—chrome, copper, nickel, tin and tungsten—in quantities that each cost $200 in the current market. A futures contract was drawn up oblig-

Fall of New York (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). Sean M. Fisher and Carolyn Hughes, eds. *The Last Tenement: Confronting Community and Urban Renewal in Boston's West End* (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1992). Robert Moses, *Working for the People: Promise and Performance in Public Services* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956).

7. Lynn Scarlett, chair of California's Inspection and Maintenance Review Committee, interviews with the author, October 1996. Also, Lynn Scarlett, "Smogged Down," *Reason* (December 1996): 67–70.
8. Freeman Dyson, *From Eros to Gaia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), pp. 242–243.
9. Peter Drucker interview with Peter Schwartz and Kevin Kelly, "The Relentless Contrarian," *Wired* (August 1996): 182.
10. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 31.
11. Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), p. 21. This romantic contempt for specialized competence can be found even among people whose instincts make them at least borderline dynamists. The late science-fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein wrote, in the voice of a fictional character, that "a human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects." The character was, however, essentially immortal, a rare condition that makes specialization less necessary. Robert A. Heinlein, *Time Enough for Love* (New York: Berkeley Medallion/G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), p. 248.
12. David Gelernter, *Mirror Worlds: The Day Software Puts the Universe in a Shoebox. . . . How It Will Happen and What It Will Mean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 52–53, 183. Gelernter is quite evocative on the human drive for topsight: "If *insight* is the illumination to be achieved by penetrating inner depths, *topsight* is what comes from a far-overhead vantagepoint, from a bird's eye view that reveals the *whole*—the big picture; how the parts fit together. . . . It is *the* quality that distinguishes genius in any field. (What Newton displayed when he saw planets reeling round the sun and teardrops falling as two pieces of one picture. . . .) It is the keystone of a beautifully transparent definition of *philosopher:* one who seeks 'to transcend the world of human thought and experience, in order to find some point of vantage from which it can be seen whole.' " Such "seeing whole," is, however, *not* seeing everything; it is the ability to abstract useful and relevant patterns. Confusing the ability to see patterns with a knowledge of the whole is a dangerous fallacy.
13. Ross Perot, speech at Reform Party Convention, Long Beach, California, August 11, 1996.
14. Rick White, speech at Progress and Freedom Foundation Aspen Summit, August 5, 1996. White was defeated for re-election in 1998.
15. Pat Buchanan, "Is America Becoming Two Nations?" *The Arizona Republic,*

October 17, 1994, p. B5.

16. In the 1970s the amount of carbon steel in an American car dropped by 35 percent, replaced by lighter-weight materials. Iddo K. Wernick, Robert Herman, Shekhar Govind, and Jesse H. Ausubel, "Materialization and Dematerialization: Measures and Trends," *Dædalus* (Summer 1996); 182.
17. Donald F. Barnett and Robert W. Crandall, *Up from the Ashes: The Rise of the Steel Minimill in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986); Richard Preston, *American Steel: Hot Metal Men and the Resurrection of the Rust Belt* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1991).
18. Jon Casimir, "Battlestations in Cyberspace," *Sydney Morning Herald Spectrum,* July 29, 1995, p. 5.
19. John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," February 8, 1996, available at www.eff.org/pub/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/barlow_0296.declaration, among other locations.
20. Ibid.
21. Kirkpatrick Sale, "Principles of Bioregionalism," in Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, eds., *The Case Against the Global Economy: And for a Turn Toward the Local* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996) p. 483.
22. Eric von Hippel, "'Sticky Information' and the Locus of Problem Solving: Implications for Innovation," *Management Science* (April 1994): 429–439.
23. Ibid., p. 431. The quote is taken from an interviewee cited by H. M. Collins, "The Seven Sexes: A Study in the Sociology of a Phenomenon, or the Replication of Experiments in Physics," *Sociology* (May 1975); 205–224.
24. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge,* p. 53.
25. Michael Lenehan, "The Quality of the Instrument," *The Atlantic Monthly* (August 1982): 46. Lenehan's article contains a wealth of examples of sticky local knowledge.
26. Michael Kass, conversation with the author, May 31, 1997, and e-mail to the author, January 6, 1998.
27. Preben Sander Kristensen, "Flying Prototypes: Production Departments' Direct Interaction with External Customers," *International Journal of Operations and Production Management* 12, nos. 7/8 (1992): 207.
28. Ikujiro Nonaka, "The Knowledge-Creating Company," *Harvard Business Review* (November–December 1991): 98.
29. Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 69.
30. Berry, *The Unsettling of America,* p. 20.
31. Sale, "Principles of Bioregionalism," in *The Case Against the Global Economy,* p. 482.
32. Berry, *The Unsettling of America,* p. 61.
33. Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), p. 467.
34. Sale, "Principles of Bioregionalism," p. 481.
35. Lenehan, "The Quality of the Instrument," p. 43.
36. David Owen, *The Man Who Invented Saturday Morning: And Other Adventures in American Enterprise* (New York: Villard Books, 1988), p. 149.

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