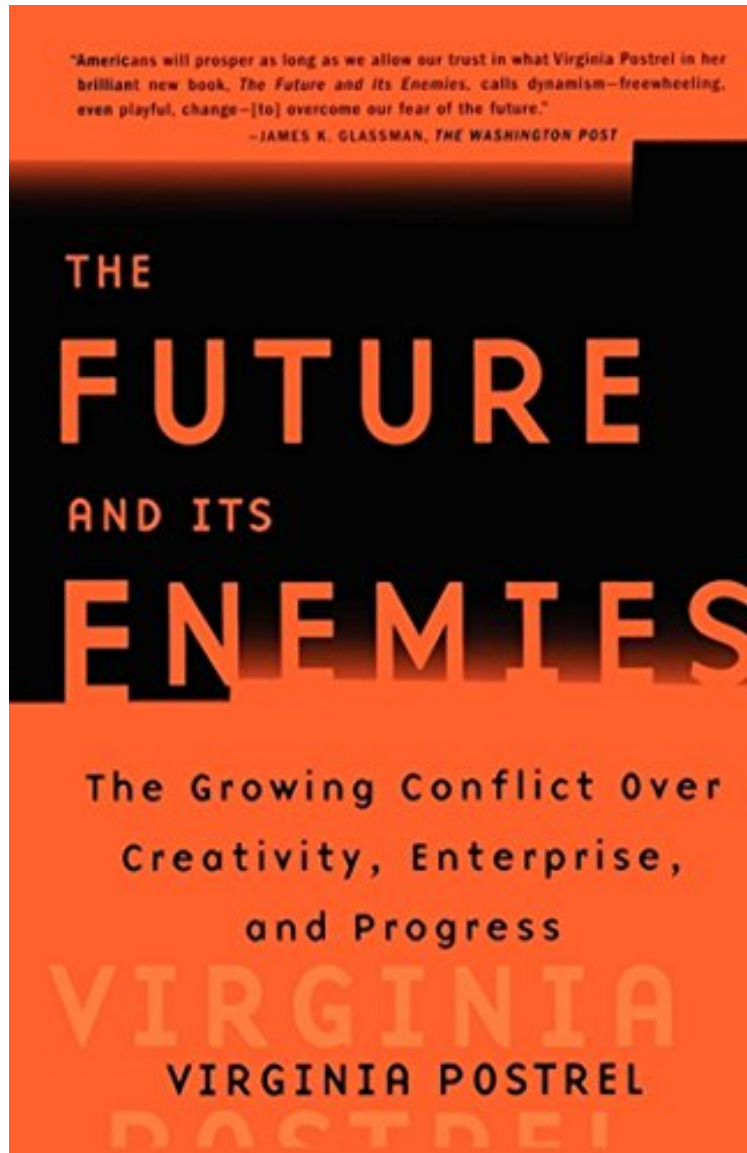


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## The Future and Its Enemies: The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise,

*Virginia Postrel*

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**Virginia Postrel : The Future and Its Enemies: The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise,** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Future and Its Enemies: The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise,*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An essential read for anyone who plans to live in what we loosely call "the future".By ProducerAlmost 20 years ago, this book book introduced me to the insightful work of Bloomberg

columnist Virginia Postrel. No matter on which side of the political divide you fall, this book is a must-read. The breadth of observation, depth of perception and value of her conclusions, as expressed in 'The Future and Its Enemies', have not diminished one whit since the book was published. In fact, the premise of the book has been validated by the events of the last 20 years. Buy it. You will not regret it. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Too long, fails to address some important questions. By NickI enjoyed the author's thoughts even if I am not inclined to agree with all of them. She could have stated her case much more concisely. She does an excellent job of citing her sources, but I thought she beat her subject to death and then some. The author likely has a point about individual and non-government directed successes. What she ignores are the thousands of years of state directed projects that still rank amongst the greatest achievements of all time. I would point out not only the Interstate highway system, the Panama Canal, the lend lease program of recent times. I would also point out that there are examples of state sponsored works of literature (the Aeneid) and music (the music composed for the courts of Europe) which are rather famous. The art and architecture of "stasist systems" include Versailles and the Peterhof. Not too shabby. I'm not suggesting statism (which is really what the author is talking about while using the term "stasist") is superior to anything in particular but for all the successes of the dynamist approach, their opponents have a few laurels to rest upon too. Why is that? What kind of a book could have discussed the ups and downs, the drawbacks and advantages of both her approach and the state directed and controlled systems she loathes, and why are they important? This book really doesn't address these questions and I think the author should have addressed them in at least the span of a chapter (while consolidating others). It's an argument that she either avoids for some reason or didn't consider, but "stasists" can mount a powerful rejoinder to her work, and a few reviewers here do just that. In some important ways, this book disappoints. I think it has some merit and persons interested in free markets, free enterprise, and entrepreneurship might find this work very useful, if far from comprehensively advancing the author's arguments. I rate this book three stars. Were it not so verbose and repetitive, I would probably have gone four stars, yet written a similar review. Interesting? For the first 125 pages, yes. Valuable? Perhaps, but not as a comprehensive or forceful manifesto for libertarian ideas. 15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Sharp insight from Virginia Postrel. By KI consider myself an optimist and insightful person, but somehow managed to miss many of Postrel's insights. She gives me even more hope that the future is going to be more wonderful than I previously thought. She does keep that hope in check, though, by talking about the enemies of the future- primarily protectionists and those that see free trade as a threat, instead of the blessing that it is. She thoroughly destroys the notion that 'there is nothing new under that sun'. While the universe, therefore our earth, is necessarily finite, we misunderstand this finiteness because we misunderstand the different combinations things can be arranged in. For example, a deck of cards has only 52 cards, but the number of combinations you can put the cards into is  $52 \times 51 \times 50 \times 49 \times \dots \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$ , which is a number larger than the number of particles in the universe! So whenever you shuffle a deck of cards, you can rest assured, that that is probably the one and only time that arrangement of cards will ever be in existence... ever. People are so inventive and creative and always looking for new things. Obviously, there will always be new things. Every time someone declares that we are nearing the end of history, science, technology, etc. it's safe to say they have no idea what they are talking about. We need to let people be as creative and as inventive as they can. It will only make our lives better, on the whole. There will always be setbacks, but as long as people can think, we will always find a way to make out of those setbacks. The book is a stunning, intelligent look at modern life. I liked it so much, I bought *The Substance of Style*, which is, yet, another insightful look at modern life.

Today we have greater wealth, health, opportunity, and choice than at any time in history. Yet a chorus of intellectuals and politicians laments our current condition -- as slaves to technology, coarsened by popular culture, and insecure in the face of economic change. The future, they tell us, is dangerously out of control, and unless we precisely govern the forces of change, we risk disaster. In *The Future and Its Enemies*, Virginia Postrel explodes the myths behind these claims. Using examples that range from medicine to fashion, she explores how progress truly occurs and demonstrates that human betterment depends not on conformity to one central vision but on creativity and decentralized, open-ended trial and error. She argues that these two opposing world-views -- "stasis" vs. "dynamism" -- are replacing "left" and "right" to define our cultural and political debate as we enter the next century. In this bold exploration of how civilizations learn, Postrel heralds a fundamental shift in the way we view politics, culture, technology, and society as we face an unknown -- and invigorating -- future.