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# The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence

*Dinesh D'Souza*

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*Dinesh D'Souza, the John M. Olin Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of Illiberal Education (1991), The End of Racism (1995), Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader (1997), and, most recently, The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence. A graduate of Dartmouth College, he served as a senior domestic policy analyst in the White House during the final two years of the Reagan administration. He spoke at a Center of the American Experiment luncheon in March 2001.*

The issues we're talking about now in American politics—tax cuts, missile defense, private school vouchers—are eerily similar to the issues Ronald Reagan talked about twenty years ago. We're talking about privatizing Social Security, an idea that Reagan entertained in his 1964 speech for Barry Goldwater. We even have a president in the White House who is sometimes accused of being a not-very-bright fellow. It seems that we are almost back to the argument over Reaganism all over again, yet I want to suggest that in some ways we are entering quite a new and different debate.

One could say that the old debate

was over the creation of wealth. The new debate will be more about the use of wealth. The conservative movement, at one time unified behind Reagan, now has some very interesting fissures. An example is my own organization, the American Enterprise Institute. Once a band of loyal Reaganites, the folks at AEI are now bifurcated into two camps. One camp I call the economic optimists; in the other group are the cultural and moral pessimists.

If I come out of my office and go down one hallway, I meet none other than Jim Glassman, the author of *Dow 36,000* and a very upbeat fellow. He's usually impeccably dressed. He wears

the most fashionable suspenders. He's fragrant with perfume. One of his favorite words is "Yeah!" He is an economic optimist, and he is unfazed by the current gyrations in the stock market. He will point out to you, correctly, that in 1982, two years after Reagan took office, the Dow Jones average was 798. It's now dancing around 10,000. If you were upset about the Nasdaq, he would say that in 1991, the Nasdaq was below 500, and if someone had told you then that the Nasdaq would quadruple over the next decade, you would have been ecstatic. He is looking at the long-term upsurge in the markets, the rising tide of prosperity, the incredible promise of technology.

If I come out of my office and go down the other hallway, I see a different cast of characters: Irving Kristol, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and Judge Robert Bork, the author of *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*. Recently, in the AEI dining room, Irving Kristol was heard to say, "Western civilization is going to hell, but maybe we can live well in the meantime." These are the cultural and moral pessimists.

It is intriguing to me that these two camps are not fighting with each other. They are not arguing because they are talking about two different things. One group is talking about technology and the economy; the other group is talking about culture and values. One group is saying that our long-term portfolios are up. The other group is saying that our morals and our values are down.

This is a debate that did not exist under Reagan. Why? Because Reagan's optimism was based on the premise

that if you give people freedom and allow them to keep their own money, they use their freedom virtuously. Reagan believed that if you give people freedom, they will craft an American dream for themselves. Reagan's achievement was to make the Republican Party, in the 1980s, the party of liberty and the party of virtue, both.

There are three principles in American politics: liberty, equality, and virtue. Loosely speaking, if you have two, you win. Reagan largely conceded to the Democrats the issue of equality.

Reaganite unity has now fragmented. We are in a new debate over something that has been called "the new economy." Given the implosion of the dot-com stocks, it's worth asking what is new about the new economy.

## *The New Economy*

Some people say that what is new about the new economy is the revival of faith in capitalism. Well, yes, but we've had many previous eras of ebullience about capitalism—the 1920s, the 1950s and early 1960s—that came to a bad end.

Some people say that what's new is technology and, specifically, the Internet. Well, yes, but the telegraph and the telephone and the car and the airplane all had the effect of shrinking distances of space and of time. The Internet seems only continuous with these earlier technologies. Somebody at a high-tech conference said to me, "Cyberspace—that's what's new." But cyberspace is where you are when you speak on the phone. It's been around for more than a century.

One thing that really is new is the emergence in America over the past two decades of what may be called the first mass affluent class in world history. I call this group the overclass. Let's look at the example of millionaires. In 1980 there were about 700,000 American families with a net worth of \$1 million or more; about 2.5 million people inhabited a millionaire household. Today, 5 million families—15 to 20 million Americans—are living in millionaire households.

This is significant because previously, the great economic achievement of the West was to create a middle class, to elevate poor people to basic comfort. Being middle class means that you have a roof over your head and food to eat and a car, and you can take an annual vacation, but you don't have a lot of disposable income. You are not rich. What has changed significantly is the emergence of mass affluence, and this has big implications for education, philanthropy, religion, and politics. I will highlight only one.

It used to be an iron law of politics that as people became more affluent, they began to vote Republican. The only exception to this rule has been Jews. Irving Kristol says that Jews are the only people who earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans. But with this exception, it used to be true that affluence automatically added to the Republican ranks.

Until now. Suddenly, the affluent parts of the country are no longer safe Republican territory. Places like the main line of Philadelphia, the suburbs of Chicago, parts of Southern Califor-

nia, which were once decisively Republican, either voted very narrowly for George W. Bush or went for Al Gore or were tied. In the high-tech sector, by and large, the vote was pretty decisively for Gore, with Ralph Nader getting a substantial minority of the vote. There is something new about the new rich.

### **A New Ideology**

We are also entering into a new ideological argument that I'd like to take a moment to spell out. We have seen the rise of a new class of entrepreneurs, perhaps most visibly the tech entrepreneurs, but also entrepreneurs generally. These guys have said they are the new leaders of society. Society used to be ruled by the priest or the intellectual or the bureaucrat, but now it is the age of the scientist and the capitalist. I talked to a lot of these guys. They believe, in general, that earlier leaders failed because they were unable to solve the problem of scarcity; all they could do was to reconcile people to living with scarcity. These guys believe that, using markets and technology, we have now solved the problem of scarcity, at least in principle. They say we are going to make mass affluence a global phenomenon.

This is more than an argument about money. They say they are also motivated by idealism. They say they're going to give the kid in Barbados and Bombay the same access to information via the Web that a university professor has. And they're going to turn workers into free agents, and use electronic neighborhoods—cybercommunities—to help heal the disappeared

old neighborhoods, where people knew their neighbors and borrowed sugar from each other. They have an ambitious vision of capitalism and technology working hand in hand to liberate the world.

### ***Critiques of the New Economy***

Both from the left and from the right, an emerging unease and a critique of the new economy are gathering force. From the left, the critique is in the name of inequality. From the right, it is in the name of community and morality.

People on the left are saying that capitalism creates wealth, but in a ridiculously unequal way: a young entrepreneur's net worth exceeds the gross national product of Sri Lanka. There's something grotesquely immoral about that.

The argument from the right is that we used to have closer relationships to nature and family and community and God, and that while America is a vastly more prosperous society now, those relationships have become weaker and in some cases have dissolved.

A cultural historian who had just finished reading Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* recently said to me, "I asked myself, what made the greatest generation so great?" The answer, she said, is obvious: the Depression and World War II. The virtues of the greatest generation were the product of scarcity and war. And then she said, "I asked myself, why did the greatest generation fail?" The greatest generation did fail in one respect: it failed to repli-

cate itself. It could not create another great generation. Why not? This answer, she said, is equally obvious: affluence. The parents of the 1930s and 1940s wanted their children to have what they never had, and in giving their children everything they wanted, the frugal, self-disciplined, deferred-gratification, sacrificial generation of World War II produced the spoiled children of the 1960s.

Might there be an inverse relationship between technology and prosperity on the one hand and values like integrity and decency and community and solidarity and spirituality on the other? I want to try to give an optimistic answer to this question, but one that takes seriously the criticisms.

### ***Middle-Class Rich***

The old left-wing mantra that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer is now obsolete. For the past half-century, and certainly in the past twenty-five years, that has not been so. The rich have gotten richer and the poor have also gotten richer, but not at the same pace. Let me illustrate what I mean. In 1980, when Reagan came to office, America was actually quite an egalitarian country: the vast majority of Americans earned between \$15,000 and \$50,000. It's hard to believe, but if you made \$55,000 in 1980, you were in the top 5 percent of American income earners. Today, to be in the top 5 percent, you have to make \$160,000.

Lots of people who were in the middle class or the lower middle class have moved up. And in moving up, they

have increased the gap between themselves and the rest of the population, so inequality is greater. But to focus exclusively on inequality is to fail to appreciate that we have extended to millions of ordinary people in this country the avenues of freedom and security and liberation traditionally available only to an aristocratic few.

A decade ago, I'd see a yuppie in a Mercedes jabbering into a cell phone. Today, construction workers are chatting into cell phones. The ordinary man who has a hip replacement and a cell phone and a microwave oven is in some ways richer than J. P. Morgan or Louis XIV. J. P. Morgan was a very wealthy man, but if he wanted to go to Europe, it would take him two months.

As someone who grew up in a different culture—in Bombay, India—I am struck by the way in which affluence has extended to the ordinary person in America. We live in a country where the common man thinks nothing of walking into a coffee shop and spending four bucks for a nonfat latte. That wouldn't have happened twenty years ago.

It used to be that there were plenty of seats to stretch out on an airplane. Now, the planes are full. On one side, you've got a 300-pounder sitting next to you; on the other side, you've got the plumber taking his third wife to St. Kit's. On a recent flight, things got so bad I was reminded of something Oscar Wilde once said: the brotherhood of man is not just a utopian pipe dream; it's a depressing and humiliating reality.

## **Neighborhood vs. Cybercommunity**

I just finished reading *Bowling Alone* by the Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam. The premise is that there has been a precipitous decline of community in the neighborhoods where we once formed lasting friendships and associations. Putnam uses the metaphor of bowling: Americans used to belong to bowling leagues; now, apparently, they bowl alone. (To someone raised in a different society, the question is not why Americans bowl alone, but why they bowl at all.)

I do think that Putnam is right, that there has been an erosion of community. The question is what to do about it. The champions of techno-affluence, of entrepreneurship and technology, say the solution is cybercommunity. The electronic neighborhood will complement, and perhaps even supplant, the old neighborhood.

A libertarian magazine recently said that cybercommunity is better than traditional community. Why? Because traditional community is involuntary: when you move into a neighborhood, you're stuck with the people on either side of you, and you have to learn to get along with them. Cybercommunity is based on choice—an affinity for Mozart or Jim Croce or chess. If, like me, you were an immigrant not just from India but from an old Portuguese colony called Goa, you would be hard-pressed to find fellow Goan Indian expatriates down your street. But you might be able to find them on the Web. Cybercommunity is based on freedom.

I partly agree with this, and I probably benefit from it in some ways, yet I'm also reminded of something that the writer C. S. Lewis once said: the great benefit of involuntary communities—and he includes the ultimate involuntary community, which is, of course, the family—is that they compel us over time to appreciate the virtues of people we might not choose to hang out with.

The physicist Freeman Dyson was recently visiting England, and, somewhat appalled by the congestion of London, he drove out to the outskirts and found a village: beautiful pastures, cattle grazing lazily, thatched roofs, church steeple. But, he asked himself, Where are the farmers? Long gone, he realized. He peered into the thatched cottages and saw the whirring computers of high-tech firms.

The high-tech firms have moved out of the congestion of London, rebuilt the thatched cottages, put the church steeples up, got the church bells tolling again. They apparently pay the cows to walk around. Technology and affluence have made the village viable again.

### ***Searching for Significance***

My colleague Michael Novak, a theologian, says that we are seeing in America the beginnings of a most unusual phenomenon: a spiritual yearning or perhaps even revival that is being led, implausibly, by rich people. At first I thought that this was a ridiculous notion. The Bible says that the meek are going to inherit the earth; wealth is seen as a source of temptation and a snare. One gets the sense that

you come to God through brokenness and suffering.

Novak is saying that, for the first time, we're going to see, here in America, people coming to God through affluence. He says that the Bible teaches us that man does not live by bread alone, but very often you have to have bread to know that. As long as people are captive to necessity, it is difficult for them to see that there is anything beyond that. It is precisely the freedom and security and leisure that affluence affords that give us at least the opportunity to explore higher things.

One of the young entrepreneurs I talked to for my book said, "You know, I can do whatever I want for the rest of my life." But then, he said, "I had to ask myself, what is it that I want to do?"

Another fellow said, "I have abolished the scarcity of money in my life." Quite amazingly, in his mid-thirties he has, in fact, done it. But then he said, "I realize that I have not abolished all scarcity. What about the scarcity of time? What about mortality?"

Suddenly, in the materialistic, technological, scientifically driven, largely secular culture of high-tech entrepreneurship, there is a new movement: the search for meaning. At a conference I heard all kinds of people saying, "I don't want to go to work just for a paycheck. I don't want to go to work just for money. I want a sense of higher significance."

"You know," I said to one of these guys, "in previous eras it is true that the priest and the philosopher and the soldier derived a sense of higher significance from what they did. The Spartan

soldier bleeding to death on the battlefield didn't feel that his life was wasted; he gave his life for the greater glory of Sparta."

This fellow listened to me and said, "That's the way I want to feel about e-commerce solutions."

Whether it is possible to feel that way about e-commerce solutions I don't know, but it is interesting that these sorts of questions are being asked—and being asked by many people for the first time.

We are testing here not just Ronald Reagan's optimism that freedom will be used well, but the American dream itself. The American dream is based on the premise that prosperity can better the human condition. It's based on the notion that prosperity doesn't just make us better off, but also makes us better people and a better country.

For the first time in American history, we have the chance to find out if that's true. At the end of the day, I think we will find that it is. We will find that wealth and technology, used correctly, can give us the tools to produce not just material gains, but also moral and social gains. We will see that Reagan's optimism is vindicated, and we will find that there can be—indeed, there is—some virtue in prosperity.

**Following his speech, Dinesh D'Souza took questions from his American Experiment audience.**

**Mitch Pearlstein:** You finish your book by criticizing the enthusiasm of many of your interviewees for cloning

and doing other strange things genetically. Could you review that portion of your argument?

**Dinesh D'Souza:** I began to write about wealth and discovered that the champions of techno-affluence have become very interested in the marriage of technology and biology.

Part of their program for producing moral gains is not just abolishing poverty or healing the digital divide; it's really based on the notion that the basic problem with human beings is human beings, that there's a crooked timber of humanity—Immanuel Kant's phrase—and the real job of science is to straighten that out.

How to do it? Before things like cloning, this was all science fiction. But suddenly, with the incredible advances in biology and the acceleration of those discoveries through computing (they're doing experiments *in silico*, as they say, rather than *in vitro*), science has gained remarkable power.

Francis Bacon saw science as a tool for—his phrase—the conquest of nature. And I say, we've done that. We have our tentacles in the heavens. We have probed the smallest amoeba and the smallest cell. We have mapped the globe and the planets. We have established man's dominion over nature in a very decisive way.

The champions of technology say that now we have taken on the ultimate struggle: the conquest of human nature. The toolmaker now becomes the tool. People say that our greatest opportunity is to redesign our species, that having genetic control over our

offspring can produce a better kind of man. The experiments attempted by the communists and the Nazis failed because they did not confront human biology.

I showed one of these guys Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. He began to read about the separation of sex and reproduction, the conception of human beings in the laboratory, and so on, and I realized that the more he read, the more excited he got. He thought it was wonderful—it would give us ultimate control over ourselves.

So in the last part of my book, after discussing wealth and its social implications, I move into the debates about genetic engineering and the notion of designing your own children, and some of the biotechnological arguments that our society will soon have to confront. The technology to clone human beings exists right now. It used to be the case that nature erected unsurpassable boundaries between species. A horse and a donkey could produce a mule, but that was about it. A dog can't mate with a cat. But in the laboratory, that can happen. In the laboratory, you can inject the genes of a firefly into a wad of tobacco and make it glow.

The people who are doing this basically have the view that if something can be done, it should be done. Technology is limited only by scientific necessity. Man *should* do what he *can* do, particularly on the new frontiers of technology.

My book ends with a chapter discussing all this and expressing my belief that this is a betrayal of American principles and the principles of

human dignity rather than—as the champions see it—an affirmation of those principles.

**David Pence:** You've been one of my favorite authors since I read your *Catholic Classics*. It bothered me when I saw your new book come out, because it reminded me of George Gilder and Michael Novak: it felt like, "Now I'm going to go talk to the corporate guys, because that's where you can give a talk and make a lot of money." Is there a problem among great conservative cultural writers like you?—even conservatives would not have you come and talk about your racism book. To find the right group, do you have to write almost a whole different book?

**Dinesh D'Souza:** Interesting question, and a tough one. Maybe I'll begin this way. There is a sort of hidden connection in my books. All of them really are an attempt by somebody who grew up in a different culture to come to grips with the meaning of America.

I began with *Illiberal Education*, and as I talked about that book on college campuses, professors of Afro-American studies would come to me and say, "You're right about the speech codes and so on, but what about racism? You haven't been in this country very long. What do you really know about black history? You've got to get to the root of it." And so *The End of Racism* was an effort to grapple with the deeper argument about racism that *Illiberal Education* touched on the surface.

Then, in the mid-1990s, I realized that Ronald Reagan, for whom I had worked for a couple of years, was being

routinely derided as an incompetent and was being accused of having saddled us with interminable deficits and so on. *How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* was an attempt to square the argument against Reagan with what I saw as the reality—and by then the spectacular visible effects—of the Reagan presidency. The book grapples with a puzzle about leadership: How does a seemingly implausible leader like Reagan do those things, if indeed he did them? Reagan's great goal was to replace the era of the bureaucrat with the era of the entrepreneur.

When I came to this country in the 1970s, the ethos was John F. Kennedy. If you're young and idealistic, if you care, join the Peace Corps. Become a public servant. The assumption was that if you worked for yourself or if you were an entrepreneur or if you worked for a company, you were greedy and selfish, but if you worked for the government, you were devoting yourself to something higher.

Reagan challenged that idea, and the world that he fought for and predicted has in fact come to pass. We're living in the era of the entrepreneur. Parents want their kids to be like Bill Gates, not Bill Clinton. There's a cultural shift. There's something new going on among the mysterious people in this entrepreneurial culture. First of all, you've got all these guys in Silicon Valley saying they're not in it for the money. The largest wealth-creation scheme on the planet apparently is driven by nonprofit motives.

And then you've got these tycoons—Bill Gates, Warren Buffett—

announcing that they are not leaving their money to their kids. They don't want to create dynasties. They're going to give their kids some security and then give 99 percent of their wealth away. Rich people have never said this before. Now it has become a mantra.

My book is an attempt to recognize this new situation and new debate. The old debate was over collectivism; it was over how to create wealth. Capitalism has won the economic debate, but it really hasn't won the moral debate. I hear all these CEOs say, "I gave \$100,000 to endow a scholarship fund. I just felt I needed to give back to the community." And so I asked them, "How long have you been taking from the community?"

The assumption seems to be that philanthropy is a way of returning some of the businessman's ill-gotten gains. So, while capitalism is the best way to create wealth, we are still back to Adam Smith, who said that the capitalist is basically greedy and selfish. But Adam Smith says that the capitalist, against his intentions, by accident, through the invisible hand of competition, ends up serving the public good. And so, no matter how many jobs you create and no matter how much social benefit you point to, the fact remains that capitalism is vulnerable to an attack of motive.

The high-tech guys interest me because they are trying to fight back. One of them I quote in my book said that Bill Gates and Michael Dell have done a lot more good for humanity than Mother Teresa. This statement distinguishes between the morality of

intentions and the morality of consequences. Judged by intentions, Mother Teresa may be more noble. But judged by the actual amount of good that comes of putting the power of information and self-reliance in the hands of lots of people, maybe Michael Dell has done better. My book is not a Gilderite rah-rah for technology. On the contrary, it grapples with and takes seriously the critique of capitalism and expresses qualms about it. In the end, it is a moral defense of the new economy, true. But it's not the kind of defense that we've seen from, for example, George Gilder.

**Joe Selvaggio:** Marcus Aurelius says that it takes very little to be happy. I've used that statement a lot with poor people I've worked with. But, on the other hand, prosperity does lead to happiness. I saw the movie *Pollock* the other day; no matter how successful [the painter] Jackson Pollock was, he was unhappy, because his attitude was wrong. How much of a role does individualism play, as opposed to the societal things you're talking about?

**Dinesh D'Souza:** It was Aristotle's view that happiness does require some wealth: you need enough to be self-reliant and to meet your needs comfortably. After that, he says, wealth is superfluous and happiness comes basically through contemplation.

I argue in my book that the movement from poverty to the lower middle class brings huge moral gains. I think of the Indian family that lives in a hut where rain comes streaming in; wealth

can free you from that sort of drudgery, and that is incredibly liberating. Wealth that moves you from the middle class to the upper middle class also buys enormous gains, particularly security, the sense that your life is not hanging by a thread. Being middle class means that you have income, but a single disastrous event—a terrible illness, an incapacitating disease or accident—can destroy you. Suddenly the one breadwinner is out of commission and the whole family is in trouble. The movement to comfort and security is very important.

After that, wealth continues to have benefits, but at a diminishing rate. In my book, I quote a tycoon who said to me, "Dinesh, I have two things that you don't have. I have domestic staff and I have a plane." Those things are nice, he said, but they are the only two clear ways in which his lifestyle is better than mine. I've thought about that, and I comment on it in my book.

There is no easy answer to the question of how much happiness wealth buys, but it is interesting that this question is a matter of debate only among affluent people. The ordinary guy would say he'd love to have that problem. And that comes back to my point about how scarcity creates blinders that make it difficult to see the limitations of wealth, that it's only affluent people who know that wealth buys a lot but doesn't buy everything.

**Jim Sorensen:** Someone once observed that there are two classes of people: those who divide mankind into two groups and those who do not. Did

you find Thomas Sowell's division of people into constrained and unconstrained helpful or take it as a starting point? George Gilder definitely would be an unconstrained, manic person. Would you categorize yourself in that way?

**Dinesh D'Souza:** The Sowell distinction is helpful. There have been many efforts to draw the two new camps that Virginia Postrel, in *The Future and Its Enemies*, draws as the party of the future and the party of the past. She says that the high-tech guys and the entrepreneurs are the future. Those who criticize them are living in the past. That sort of historicism doesn't appeal to me because it is a way of rewarding an undecided event—the future—as a prize, when really we are arguing what kind of future we want and what constitutes progress.

We are seeing here something that I would call the libertarian fallacy: defending choice without reference to what is being chosen. The best way to defend capitalism and a free society is to defend the kind of person and the kind of society they produce.

But if you say, "Americans have prosperity and freedom, and 270 million people have chosen to live like Larry Flynt—what do you think about that?" a strict libertarian would have to answer, "No problem—they have freely chosen to go that way," and that's the end of the matter. But I would argue that you defend a society by looking at what kind of person comes out of it. Based on that, a strong defense of a free society can and should be made.

My own way of looking at it is different. Wealth and technology clearly are beneficial because they give us freedom to shape our own lives.

If I had stayed in India, I probably would have lived my life one mile from where I was born, married a girl of my identical religious and socioeconomic background, and become a doctor or an engineer, maybe a software programmer. My point is that I could tell you my opinions in advance. My life would be constrained; it would be a given. My destiny would be, to a large degree, handed to me.

America is a country that allows you to write the script of your own life, and this is why the idea of America is so irresistibly appealing all over the world. I don't know if you call that constrained or unconstrained. In a sense, it is unconstrained; it is allowing you to be the architect of your own destiny. But I'm certainly constrained in the sense that I believe that the choices you make are governed by an understanding of human nature and morality and law, upon which freedom depends.

**Kimberly Crockett:** You say that these techno-affluent entrepreneurs aren't voting Republican, which in my mind means that they are looking to government and other powers to preserve their newfound wealth. Is the downturn in the economy, however short or long it may be, going to revise their political or spiritual outlook? In other words, maybe make them Republican? Do they have to lose it to appreciate it?

**Dinesh D'Souza:** One should distinguish between the high-tech dot-com world and the mass affluent class. The mass affluent class is a broad phenomenon that is being driven by three things: the long-term upswing in the market, rising home values, and the most important source of wealth in America—the wealth that people have in their own business or professional practice. The typical rich guy in this country is not a twenty-seven-year-old Internet tycoon. It is a fifty-seven-year-old guy in Omaha, Nebraska, who owns a pest control business. That kind of wealth has not fundamentally been shaken by the market.

The Dow is only 1,400 points off its high. It's hovering around 10,000; its high, I believe, was 11,400. Even dot-com guys who have gone from \$1.5 billion to \$82 million are not yet having to sell the family china.

On the issue of politics, what's interesting is that the techno-affluent class is economically conservative and socially liberal. To the degree that they see the Democratic Party as having made its peace with capitalism during the Clinton administration, they don't feel that the Democrats are going to interfere with what they're doing. Bill Clinton generally went along with the moratorium on taxing the Internet. Al Gore convinced people that he was a high-tech guy. Many of these guys see the Republican Party as the party of Pat Robertson and Gary Bauer.

The Republican Party, in the 1980s, had three camps: the anticommunists, the free-market guys, and the social conservatives. But the first two are one. The anticommunists have to some degree gone home; you don't hear much from them. By and large, it is true that the market is running the economy and the government has become a spectator, so you don't hear as much from the second group. It is the third wing of the Republican Party that the Silicon Valley types see. The irony is that the Silicon Valley people are obsessively interested in values, though they are put off by the vocabulary of obligation and of dos and don'ts.

They see the issue of values through the lens of personal fulfillment, discovery, a quest, an attempt to find something higher. If you talk to them in that language, they are very interested in what you have to say. And unlike the cultures of Wall Street and Hollywood, the techno-rich are conservative in the way they live their lives. By and large, these are one-income families: the mom drives the six-year-old to school, and the venture capitalist is dragged along to see the school play, accompanied by his pager. It is a lifestyle that Pat Robertson would be pretty happy with. It is the traditional family being made viable by affluence. ■