

Love the Very New and the Very Old

I love old farms and skyscrapers under construction, old cars and Elon Musk's newest spaceships. I think my ideal way of living would consist of working on a farm (or hunting/gathering out in nature) during the day and working on a high-tech project at night (call it "Jeffersonian futurism.")

I love the very old and the very new. I see no conflict in that – but I do see a necessity.

Futurists seem to miss the fact that old things contain worthwhile wisdom and usefulness. Traditionalism seems to miss the fact that static institutions become corrupt without change. Meanwhile, the modernists are so tied up in the recent past as to be blind to both tradition and innovation.

But in the years ahead, it's the futurists who will deliver us interplanetary travel, life-saving medical cures, and clean and renewable nuclear energy in the years ahead. It's the traditionalists who will help us to remember the human values of fidelity (marriage, etc), individual dignity, self-reliance, and honesty are the foundations of a society that can enjoy technological progress properly (i.e. without self-destructing).

If we're to appreciate and encourage this outcome, we need a way of thinking that embraces the dialogue between the old and new*. We need to understand that the only conflict is between the life-enhancing and the life-destroying, and that either force can be found in our newest inventions or our oldest customs.

Author Ross Douthat recently summed up the interesting fusion he posits will lead us out of the current "age of decadence" – a combination of old-time religion and high-tech futurism:

"So down on your knees - and start working on that warp drive."

I dig it.

*Credit to Jordan Peterson for first (in my experience) formulating this yin-yang interplay of liberalism/openness and conservatism/orderliness.

Originally published at JamesWalpole.com.